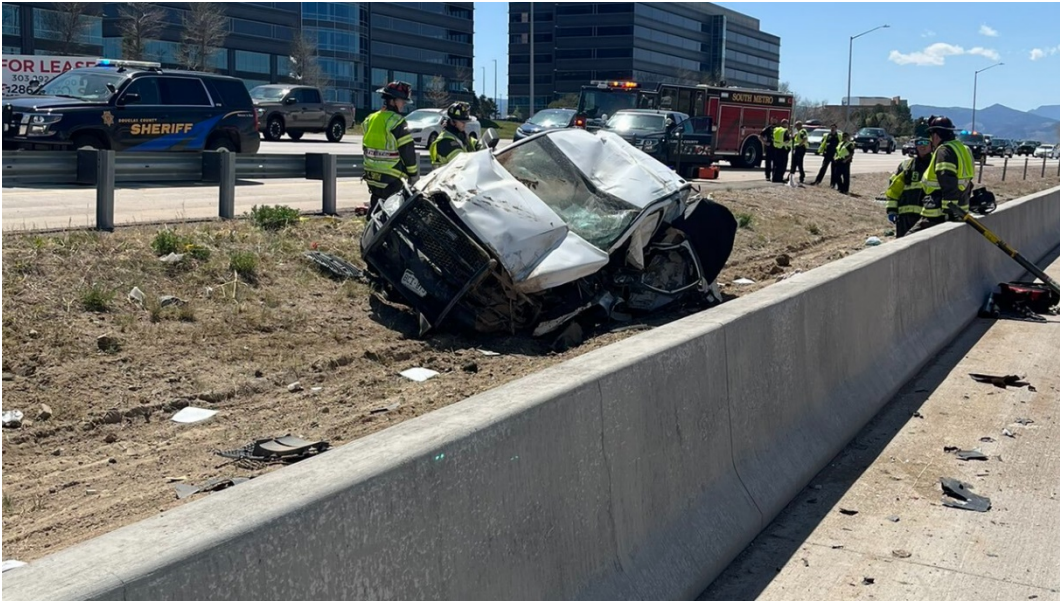# Colorado traffic deaths spiked even though people are driving less

Two people died, including a child, after a traffic crash on Saturday, April 30, 2022, on C-470 at Lucent Boulevard. (Credit: Colorado State Patrol)

by: DJ Summers

Wednesday, June 21, 2023

DENVER (KDVR) — Colorado drivers got more dangerous since 2019 than most other states.

TRIP, a national transportation research non-profit, released a report in June examining the causes of the spike in traffic deaths that has occurred since 2019. Nationally, the number of traffic fatalities jumped by 19% from 2019 to 2022.

The report cites studies by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety which explain the rise in traffic deaths the same way. In short, drivers simply became more reckless through the COVID pandemic.
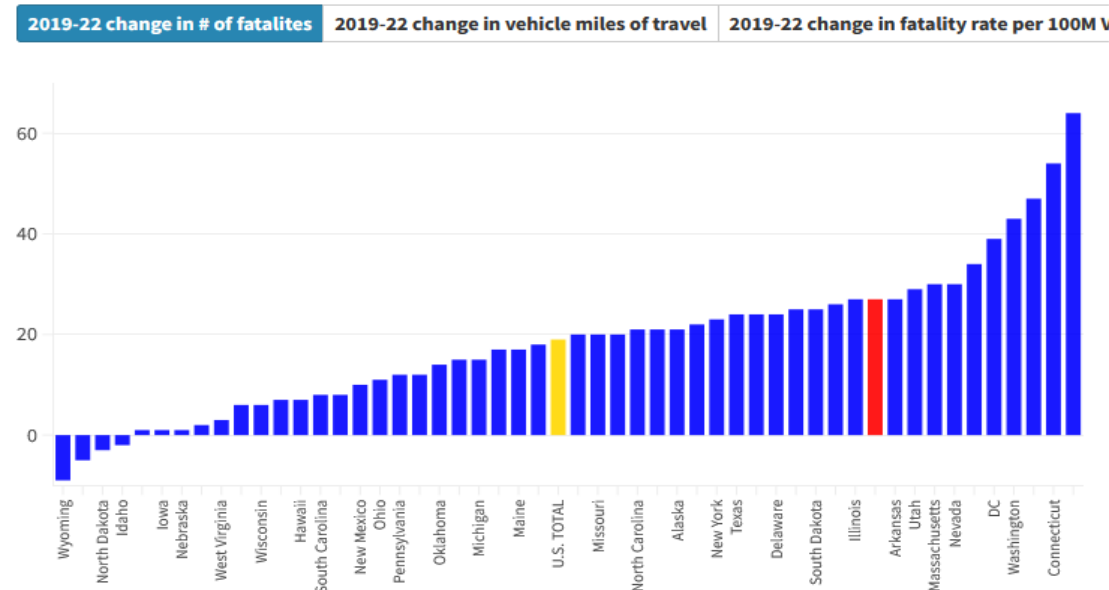
"After the declaration of the public health emergency in March 2020, driving patterns and behaviors in the United States changed significantly," the report reads. "Of the drivers who remained on the roads, some engaged in riskier behavior, including speeding, failure to wear seat belts, and driving under the influence of alcohol or other drugs."
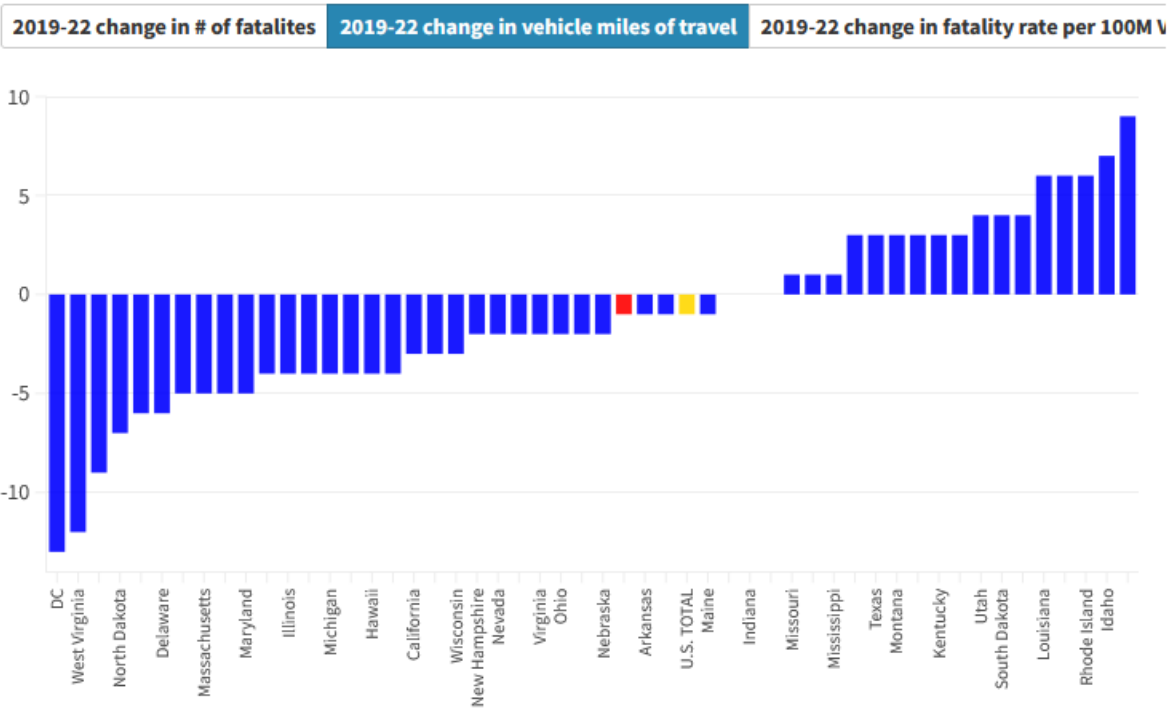
The issue is worse in Colorado than in most other states. Colorado's traffic fatalities rose by 27% between 2019 and 2022, tied with Arkansas and Illinois for the ninth-highest increase among states.
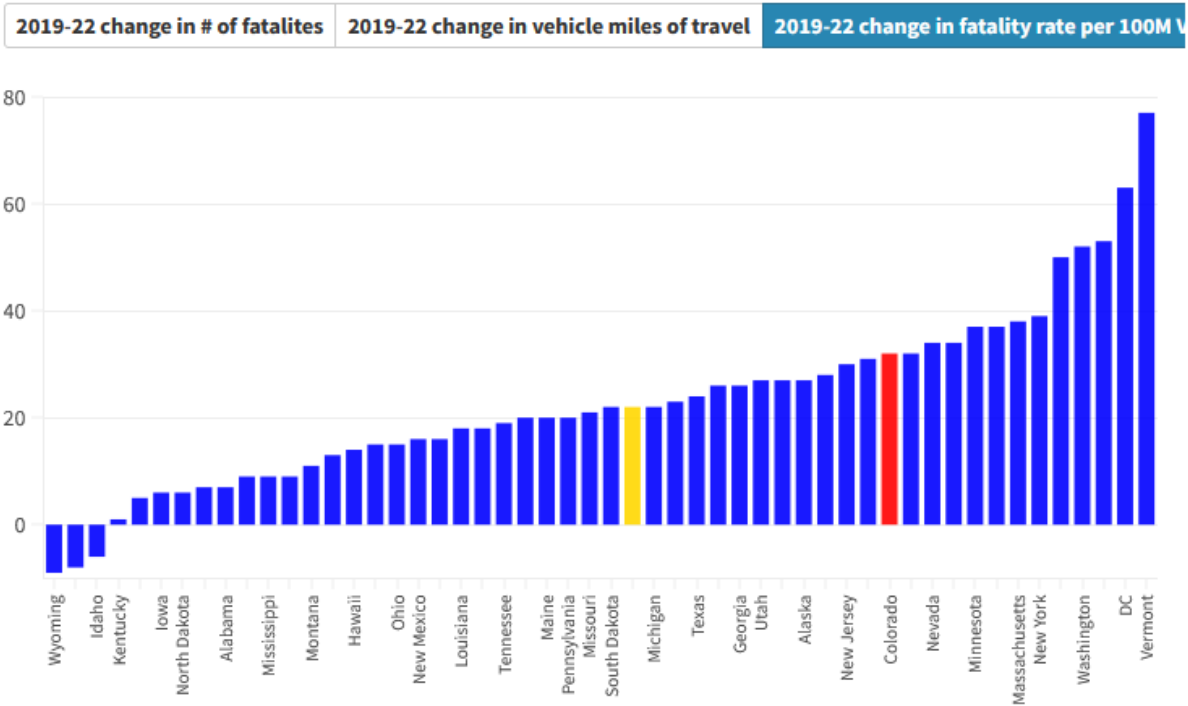
Change in traffic fatalities by state

2019-22

2019-22 change in # of fatalites	2019-22 change in vehicle miles of travel	2019-22 change in fatality rate per 100M V

Source: TRIP

Source: TRIP

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Source: TRIP

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This happened in spite of the fact that Coloradans were driving less in 2022 than they were in 2019. The number of vehicle miles traveled in Colorado shrank by 1% during the same stretch of years during which traffic deaths spiked.