

# Fatal traffic accidents in Indiana up 18 percent since start of COVID-19 pandemic

By Ethan Sandweiss, IPB News | Wednesday, June 21, 2023



*Indiana roads have gotten more dangerous for pedestrians as well as motorists. (Adam Pinsker, WFIU/WTIU News)*

ongoing, those rates may be leveling off.

“While the trend may be sort of reaching a plateau, it’s still at a level across the country and here in Indiana that’s higher than what we want to see,” Manning said.

Overall, TRIP estimates fatal and serious crashes could have cost Hoosiers up to \$47 billion last year.

Indiana isn’t alone. The number of annual fatalities rose nationwide in the same period by 19 percent, from 36,096 to 42,795.

The increase in fatalities occurred despite cars spending less time on the road in 2020 and 2021.

The National Highway Traffic Administration (NHTA) found that more drivers engaged in risky behavior, such as alcohol consumption (up 22 percent), speeding (23 percent) and distracted driving (13 percent).

TRIP and NHTA haven’t been able to answer why this is the case. Manning isn’t sure, either, but thinks it may be related to changing traffic patterns as a result of the pandemic.

“That had an impact on the traffic volumes, not just here in Indiana, but across the nation and across the globe,” Manning said.

State and federal government are taking measures to bring down the number of deaths. The Indiana legislature passed a law allowing [ticket-issuing speed cameras](#) in work zones, where 31 people were killed and 1,426 injured in 2022.

Manning said INDOT also is working on engineering solutions to the problem, such as converting four-way stops into safer roundabouts.

The U.S. Department of Transportation also is adopting a new [National Roadway Safety Strategy](#) as a roadmap for limiting serious crashes based on a holistic model of road systems that accounts for human error as an inevitability.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, traffic accidents remain the eighth leading cause of death globally.

Traffic fatalities in Indiana are up 18 percent since the start of the pandemic. That’s according to [a study](#) by the transportation research group TRIP, which showed annual increases from 809 in 2019 to 955 in 2022.

Those numbers include motorists, pedestrians and cyclists who were struck by cars.

Until the mid-2010s, roads were [getting safer](#). Traffic fatalities decreased significantly for three decades before stalling and eventually rising in 2020.

Scott Manning, deputy chief of staff for the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), said that although data collection for 2023 is