

## Traffic deaths surged in New York during pandemic; drivers prone to 'riskier' behavior?

Thomas C. Zambito

New York State Team

Deaths from traffic accidents surged in New York state between 2019 and 2022, despite fewer vehicles on the road, according to a new report by a transportation research group.

There were 1,148 traffic fatalities in the state last year, compared to 931 in 2019, a 23% increase, according to the nonprofit TRIP.

The New York findings track with an increase in traffic fatality rates across the U.S. during the pandemic. Nationally, traffic fatalities went from 36,096 in 2019 to 42,795 in 2022, a 19% jump. However, the 2022 total was a small improvement from 2021 when there were 42,939 fatalities.

Similarly, New York's 2022 total was down slightly from 2021 when there were 1,157 fatalities on state roads.



Nationally, vehicle traffic is 1% below what it was in 2019, a study concluded. But the rate of traffic fatalities, per 100 million vehicle miles of travel, has risen from 1.11 in 2019 to 1.35 last year.

MARK VERGARI/THE JOURNAL NEWS

### Why the increase?

Federal safety experts say drivers have been engaging in riskier behavior — speeding, driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs, and not wearing seat belts — since the start of the pandemic in 2020.

A 2022 AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety report, based on a 2020 survey of drivers,

found a parallel between risky behavior and drivers who ventured out during the pandemic.

"It is possible that many of the individuals who were willing to travel — and even increase their travel — despite the health risks associated with the pandemic were already more willing than average to take other risks," the AAFTS report found.

Between 2019 and 2022, there was a 22% increase in the number of people killed in alcohol-related crashes reported to police, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. And during the same time frame, there was a 20% increase in the number of deaths of passengers not wearing seatbelts.

### Are there more cars on the road now?

Yes.

Nationally, vehicle traffic is 1% below what it was in 2019 before the pandemic started, the TRIP study concluded.

But nationally the rate of traffic fatalities, per 100 million vehicle miles of travel, has ticked upward, from 1.11 in 2019 to 1.35 last year, a slight improvement over last year's 1.35.

New York has seen a 39% increase in fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles, from .75 in 2019 to 1.04 last year, down from 1.06 in 2021.

New York's vehicle miles of travel in 2022 was 9% below 2019 levels. Between 2019 and last year, vehicle miles went from 124 billion to 112 billion. Last year's total was up from 2021 when the state tallied nearly 107 billion miles of travel.

### Is there a financial impact?

The TRIP survey estimates serious traffic crashes in New York caused \$136 billion in so-called societal harm. That total includes \$102 billion in quality-of-life costs like physical impairment, reduced life span and physical pain.

Another \$34 billion was for economic costs like insurance, emergency services and property damage.



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SPORTS, 1B

## The Journal News

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 2023 | LOHUD.COM

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Traffic deaths surged in New York state during the pandemic; a variety of factors are blamed



### Congestion pricing toll plan clears new hurdle

Feds sign off on MTA report; NJ governor weighs legal options

Colleen Wilson

NEWS/OPINION, 10P, JUNE 27

The Federal Highway Administration has opted not to require a deeper study of the potential environmental effects of congestion pricing, paving the way for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority to finalize its controversial toll for entering midtown Manhattan.

New Jersey's congressional delegation, led by U.S. Rep. Josh Gottheimer and Gov. Phil Murphy have sent numerous letters asking the FHWA to require the MTA to conduct a full environmental impact study, which the federal government's Internal FHWA officials said they were satisfied with the more than 4,000-page study the MTA submitted last year, known as an environmental assessment.

The agency determined that the environmental assessment "addresses the public comments, considered the environmental impacts, and ensured that adverse effects are mitigated below significant levels," FHWA

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### Riskier business

Thomas C. Zambito

NEWS/OPINION, 10P, JUNE 27

USA TODAY NETWORK

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TOP: Federal safety experts say drivers have been engaging in riskier behavior since the start of the pandemic in 2020. This includes speeding, driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs, and not wearing seat belts. FRANK RECICCA JR./THE JOURNAL NEWS

Bottom: Smoke from Canada's raging wildfires is expected to blanket New York state today, raising unhealthy air quality levels — again.

A cold front entering Western New

York from the southwest early this morning is projected to bring rain and face smoke statewide. Gov. Kathy Hochul's office said in a news release. It's set to reach peak intensity by this evening.

As we closely monitor the changing forecast, New Yorkers should be prepared for the potential return of smoke from the Canadian wildfires," Hochul

said in a statement. "I encourage every New Yorker to remain vigilant, especially if you are vulnerable to air pollution, stay up to date on the latest information and take steps to protect yourself."

For air quality updates, visit the federal website at: [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)

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### Unhealthy wildfire smoke will return to region

Eduardo Cuevas

NEWS/OPINION, 10P, JUNE 27

USA TODAY NETWORK

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### Audio could weaken Trump's assertions

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — An audio recording from a meeting in which President Donald Trump discusses a "highly confidential" document with an interviewer appears to undermine his later claims that he didn't have such documents, only magazine and newspaper clippings.

The recording, from a July 2021 interview Trump gave at his Bedminster, New Jersey, resort for people working on the memoir of his former chief of staff, Mark Meadows, is a critical piece of evidence in special counsel Jack Smith's indictment of Trump over the mishandling of classified information.

The special counsel's indictment

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