

Why Are California Traffic Fatalities Rising as More People Are Leaving?

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In the past few years, Californians who were known to complain about traffic, housing costs, and the general quality of life have kept their word and left the Golden State for cheaper places to live.

A recent study found that the number of road deaths has gone up even though there are fewer people living in the state.

[A study by TRIP](#), a nonprofit transportation research group, found that the number of traffic deaths in California rose by 22% from 2019 to 2022. During the same time period, researchers also found that the chance of dying in a car accident went up by 28%.

Studies from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and other sources came to the same findings. The NHTSA said that in 2021, there were more road deaths than at any time in the past 16 years.

The TRIP study also looked at traffic deaths across the country and found that they had gone up by 19%.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of cars on the road dropped by a lot. However, as the safety laws put in place during the pandemic ran out, more people started driving again. Rocky Moretti, TRIP's Director of Policy and Research and the study's author, told KTLA that by 2022, car traffic in California was back to where it was before the pandemic.

So why are road deaths going up when the number of people living in California is going down? Well, that's mostly because people are driving more dangerously.

"We've seen a big rise in the number of people killed in traffic accidents who weren't wearing seat belts. We've also seen a 23% rise in accidents caused by speeding and a 22% rise in accidents caused by drinking," said Moretti.

"The research shows that drivers were more aggressive and took more risks on the roads after the pandemic," he said. *"And we can see that from the numbers, which show that there have been a lot more traffic deaths during that time."*

Still up for discussion is why people are driving more dangerously. Moretti says that the reason may be different for each driver. Still, the sharp rise in traffic-related deaths in California has made it clear that something needs to be done to make sure everyone's safety on the roads.

Moretti says that for this goal to be reached, state and federal transportation agencies should have enough money to fix up the roads for everyone.

"That can include adding rumble strips, paving shoulders, adding turn lanes, and putting up lights in urban areas," Moretti said. *"The study says that in California, 29% of traffic deaths involve people on foot or on bikes. So, the task is to make the roads as safe as possible for drivers, walkers, and bikers."*

When the Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017 was signed into law, the state's roads, freeways, and bridges would get \$5.4 billion every year to fix them. The federal government also gave the state more money for road improvements in 2021.

On a personal level, drivers should follow safe driving rules like not speeding, not driving while drunk, and making sure their seat belts are fastened to avoid accidents and deaths caused by traffic.