

ROAD TRAFFIC SAFETY

U.S. Traffic Fatalities Show Long-Term Spike, Recent Decline

New report finds U.S. traffic deaths have risen sharply over the past decade

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A new report from TRIP, a national transportation research nonprofit, highlights a troubling long-term increase in traffic fatalities across the United States, despite a recent downward trend that signals cautious progress in improving roadway safety.

The report, [“Addressing America’s Traffic Safety Crisis: Examining the Causes of Increasing U.S. Traffic Fatalities and Identifying Solutions to Improve Traffic Safety,”](#) reveals that from 2014 to 2024, the number of traffic deaths increased by 20%, while the fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled rose by 11%.

The highest recent fatality count was recorded in 2020, when 39,007 people lost their lives in traffic crashes. In contrast, the fatality total in 2014 was 32,744. The fatality rate peaked in 2021 at 1.38 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled — the highest rate in over a decade.

The rise in fatalities during the early 2020s is widely attributed to behavioral shifts during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the report. With fewer vehicles on the road, dangerous driving behaviors such as speeding, impaired driving and seat belt nonuse became more prevalent. Although vehicle miles traveled dropped in 2020, the number and severity of crashes climbed.

Encouragingly, from 2021 to 2024, the fatality rate decreased by 13%, suggesting that recent investments in traffic safety strategies, infrastructure improvements and enforcement may be reversing the trend.

TRIP’s report calls for a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach to improving traffic safety, including targeted infrastructure investments, robust traffic enforcement, public education campaigns and technological advancements in vehicle safety systems.

The report supports ongoing efforts by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), which recently published its 2023 National Highway Traffic Safety Strategy. This federal initiative aims to further reduce traffic-related deaths through collaborative safety initiatives.

The full TRIP report, including detailed data and an appendix of annual statistics, is available at tripnet.org.

Source: [Tripnet.org](https://tripnet.org)