

## NH traffic fatalities up 42% in last decade

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U.S. traffic fatalities fell in 2024 for the third straight year, four years after traffic fatalities surged in 2020 and 2021 as the nation grappled with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, despite the decrease in traffic fatalities over the past three years, traffic fatalities in 2024 remained significantly higher than a decade ago.

From 2014 to 2024 the number of traffic fatalities in New Hampshire increased 42 percent and the state's fatality rate increased 36 percent.

This is according to a report released last week by TRIP, a national transportation research nonprofit. The report, Addressing America's Traffic Safety Crisis, documents trends in traffic fatalities from 2014 to 2024 at the national and state levels, examines causes for the increase in traffic fatalities, and prescribes a broad, comprehensive approach to reducing traffic fatalities in the U.S.

"Traffic deaths have surged over the past decade, and that should worry all of us," said Jake Nelson, AAA's director of traffic safety advocacy and research.

"The recent progress is good news, but our roads are still way too dangerous—especially for people walking, biking, or on motorcycles. We know what works. Now it's time to act."

Based on NHTSA's traffic crash cost methodology, TRIP estimates that fatal and serious traffic crashes in New Hampshire in 2024 caused a total of \$11 billion in the value of societal harm, which includes \$2.7 billion in economic costs and \$8.3 billion in quality-of-life costs.

NH State Police spokesman Tyler Dumont said: "Far ahead of this report, members of the Department have been actively working to address these concerning trends, including on Governor Ayotte's Highway Safety Task Force.

In 2011 U.S. traffic fatalities dropped to 32,749, the lowest level since 1949 when there were 30,246 traffic fatalities. By 2018, U.S. traffic fatalities had increased to 36,835. Beginning in March 2020, when initial restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic were implemented, the number and rate of traffic fatalities began to increase, even as the rate of vehicle travel decreased dramatically.

The significant increase in traffic fatalities since the onset of the pandemic appears largely related to increased risks being taken by drivers.

In an October 2021 report, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration found that "after the declaration of the public health emergency in March 2020, driving patterns and behaviors in the United States changed significantly.

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 drugs."