

Oklahoma ranks 10th in traffic fatalities despite improvement



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Oklahoma [roads and highways](#) have the 10th-highest rate of traffic

fatalities of any state in the country, according to an analysis of data published by TRIP, a national transportation research nonprofit.

According to [TRIP's report released in September 2026](#), Oklahoma has a traffic fatality rate of 1.35 deaths per 100 million miles traveled. The national average is just 1.1 fatalities.

Traffic deaths spiked during the COVID-19 pandemic but fell again by 2025, the most recent year for which data is available. The significant increase in traffic fatalities following 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 "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."

The improvement is borne out in Oklahoma's data. Since 2020, the rate of fatal crashes in the state has fallen by 13%.

Oklahoma is top 10 in traffic fatalities

A total of 4,130 people were killed in traffic crashes in Oklahoma between 2020 and 2025. That averages to nearly two deaths per day during the same period.

Last year, there were 645 traffic fatalities, according to the data. When stacked up against the number of fatalities in other states measured against millions of miles driven, Oklahoma sits firmly in the top 10:

- **New Mexico:** 1.59 deaths (per 100 million vehicle miles traveled)
- **Mississippi:** 1.52
- **South Carolina:** 1.51
- **Arizona:** 1.5
- **West Virginia:** 1.46
- **Arkansas:** 1.43
- **Montana:** 1.43
- **Louisiana:** 1.38
- **Kentucky:** 1.36
- **Oklahoma:** 1.35

Oklahoma neighbors Colorado (1.28) and Texas (1.21) help round out the top 20.

Fatal crashes come with massive societal price tag

TRIP's analysis notes that fatal and serious traffic crashes in the United States cost society \$1.75 trillion in economic and quality-of-life harm.

Just counting economic costs like medical care, lost productivity, legal costs, insurance, property damage and other factors, the U.S. lost \$435 billion due to fatal crashes.

The 2025 analysis also includes data on pedestrian, work zone and bicycle crashes. In Oklahoma, highway work zone crashes resulted in 117 traffic fatalities from 2020 to 2024. During the first eight months of 2026, the Oklahoma Highway Patrol reported there were 413 crashes in Oklahoma work zones that led to an injury. Thirteen were fatal.

"Every traffic fatality represents a life lost, a family changed forever, and a reminder that roadway safety demands continued attention and investment," said Haley Jenkins, integrator and co-owner of Direct Traffic Control in Muskogee, and chair of the American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA). "While four straight years of declining fatalities show that safety improvements are making a difference, more than 36,000 people were killed on our nation's roads in 2025. Rising pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities further reinforce the need for a comprehensive, coordinated approach to safety. Continued investment in infrastructure, innovation, and proven safety solutions is essential to creating safer roads for all users."

Some traffic fatality stats improved in 2025

Oklahoma's fatal crash rate improved 13% over the past five years, according to the data. It wasn't the only positive sign in TRIP's analysis.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration found that the number of people killed in speeding-related traffic crashes in the U.S. decreased by 11 percent from 2020 to 2025. Speeding crashes represented about 26 percent of U.S. traffic fatalities in 2025.

NHTSA also found that the number of deaths occurring without the use of a seatbelt fell dramatically since 2020, by a total of 21%. Nine out of 10 adults sitting in the front seats of a car wear a seatbelt.

"The continued decline in traffic deaths is encouraging, and the return toward pre-pandemic levels marks real progress," said Jake Nelson, director of Traffic Safety Advocacy and Research at AAA. "But improvement is not the same as success. Too many people are still dying on our roads, and traffic deaths remain higher than they were a decade ago. We need to build on this

momentum with proven strategies that make every trip safer for every road user."

In early 2022, the U.S. Department of Transportation adopted a comprehensive National Roadway Safety Strategy, a roadmap for addressing the nation's roadway safety crisis based on a Safe System approach, which is also being adopted by state and local transportation agencies. The objectives and elements of the approach include the following:

- **Safer People:** Encourage safe, responsible behavior through education on speeding, impaired driving, safe pedestrian and bicycling behavior; extension of safety belt laws and enforcement; and enhanced enforcement and penalties for speeding and impaired, aggressive or distracted driving.
- **Safer Roads:** Design roadway environments to mitigate human mistakes, account for injury tolerances, encourage safer behaviors, and facilitate safe travel by the most vulnerable users.
- **Safer Vehicles:** Expand the availability of vehicle systems and features that help to prevent crashes and minimize the impact of crashes on both occupants and non-occupants. Support the development, testing and deployment of connected and autonomous vehicle technology such as collision avoidance, lane departure avoidance systems and turning detection systems.
- **Safer Speeds:** Where appropriate, provide roadway features to encourage safer speeds, including traffic roundabouts and curb extensions; improved signage and dynamic speed signing at high-risk locations; education on the consequences of speeding; and increased speeding enforcement, particularly at high-risk locations.
- **Post-Crash Care:** Enhance the survivability of crashes through expedient access to emergency medical care, create a safe working environment for vital first responders by preventing secondary crashes through robust traffic incident management practices, increase access to level one or two trauma centers for seriously injured crash victims.