

road safety issues

Transit New Zealand West Wanganui Region

Land Transport New Zealand has prepared this road safety issues report. It is based on reported crash data and trends for the 2000–2004 period. The intent of the report is to highlight the key road safety issues in the Transit New Zealand (TNZ) West Wanganui Region. This region covers the local authority areas of New Plymouth, Stratford, South Taranaki, Ruapehu and Wanganui.

The number of crashes recorded on the state highway network in the region in 2004 was the lowest in a decade. Despite this record, 17 people were killed and a further 69 were seriously injured.

The estimated social cost for crashes on the state highway network in 2004 was \$95 million, up slightly on the previous year.

Two thirds of all crashes in the region from 2000 to 2004 occurred in rural areas, with drivers losing control of their vehicle being the main crash type. Over this same period, speed has been increasingly reported as a contributory factor in rural crashes, while driver fatigue has also been identified as an issue. On urban roads, crashes mainly occurred at intersections.

Both local and national road safety issues are identified below. Details of specific issues for the TNZ West Wanganui Region are considered overleaf, while details of national issues are outlined on the back page.

Major road safety issues

TNZ West Wanganui Region

Loss of control

Intersections

Speed

Fatigue

Nationally

Speed

Alcohol

Failure to give way

Restraints



2004 road trauma for Transit New Zealand West Wanganui Region



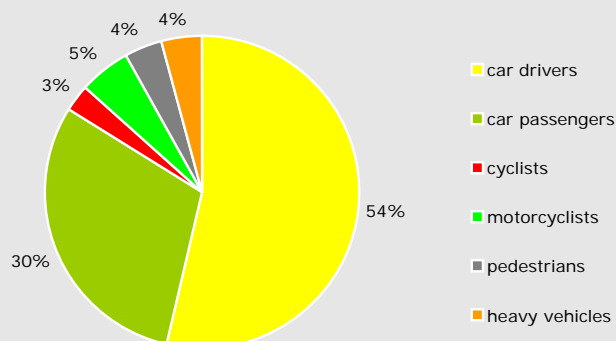
Deaths	17
Serious casualties	69
Minor casualties	225



Fatal crashes	13
Serious injury crashes	47
Minor injury crashes	141
Non-injury crashes	384

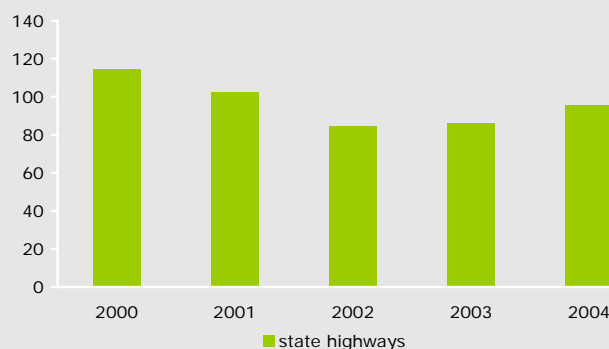
Road casualties 2000–2004

User type 2000–2004



Estimated social cost of crashes*

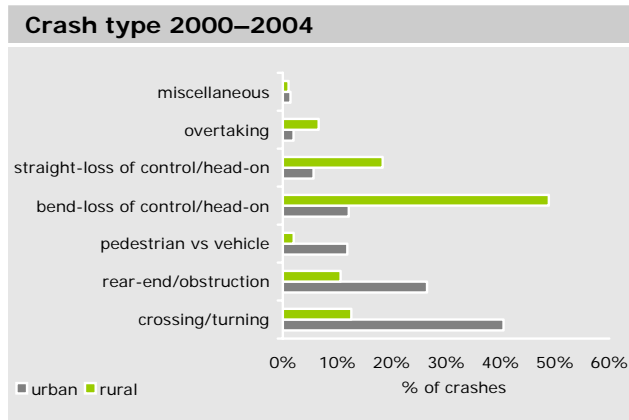
Social cost (\$ million)



*The estimated social cost includes loss of life or life quality (estimated by the amount New Zealanders are prepared to pay to reduce their risk of fatal or non-fatal injury), loss of output due to injuries, medical and rehabilitation costs, legal and court costs, and property damage. These costs are expressed at June 2004 prices.

Loss of control

The most common type of crash on the TNZ West Wanganui state highway network from 2000 to 2004 involved a driver losing control of their vehicle, either on a bend or a straight section of road. Over this period, there were a total of 565 loss of control crashes resulting in 48 deaths and 215 serious injuries. Eighty-nine percent of loss of control crashes occurred in rural areas.



Speed too fast for the conditions was a contributory factor in 24 percent of loss of control injury crashes between 2000 and 2004. Other significant factors included poor handling skills, failure to keep left, poor observation, alcohol and fatigue.

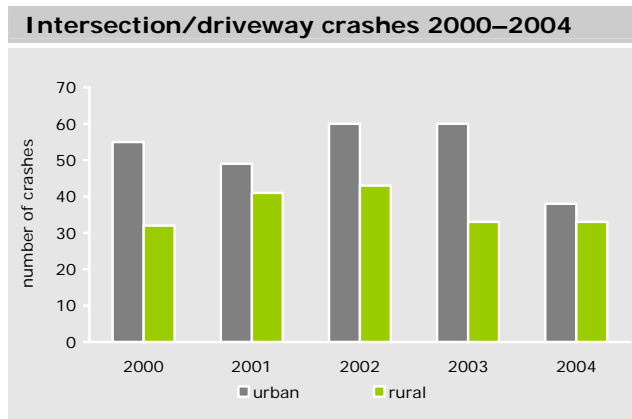
Loss of control crashes can result in either a head-on collision with another vehicle or the vehicle leaving the road and potentially colliding with a roadside object. Such an occurrence may increase the severity of a crash. While vehicles often hit cliffs and fences when leaving the road on the TNZ West Wanganui state highway network, they also hit stand-alone objects such as posts, poles and trees.

Compared with all reported injury crashes on state highways in the TNZ West Wanganui Region, a higher percentage of loss of control crashes occurred in the dark or on wet and icy road surfaces.

While motorcyclists made up only four percent of the casualties involved in loss of control crashes on the state highways in the region, 60 percent of these were killed or sustained serious injuries.

Intersections

From 2000 to 2004, there were a total of 444 crashes at intersections and driveways on the state highways in the TNZ West Wanganui Region. Of these, 14 percent occurred at driveways. Fifty-nine percent of intersection and driveway crashes occurred on urban sections of state highway.



In total, intersection and driveway crashes resulted in 15 deaths and 102 serious injuries.

Nineteen percent of crashes at intersections and driveways in the region involved motorcyclists and/or cyclists. A further seven percent involved pedestrians.

Failure to give way and poor observation were the main contributory factors for intersection and driveway crashes in the region. While the majority of these crashes involved drivers making a turning or crossing movement at the intersection, 18 percent of crashes involved a vehicle being hit from behind – for instance, when in a queue waiting to pass through the intersection.

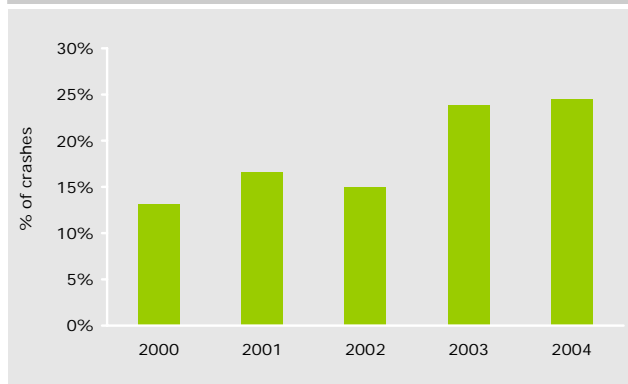
In urban locations, over half of intersection and driveway crashes occurred at crossroads, typically controlled by either traffic signals or a Stop sign and markings. The majority of rural crashes occurred at T junctions (54 percent), with 24 percent at crossroads and a further 19 percent at driveways.

Speed

The faster drivers go, the more likely they are to crash and the greater the risk of serious injury or death. Sixty-two (39 percent) crashes involving speed on the state highway network in the region between 2000 and 2004 resulted in a death or serious injury to a road user. A further 98 people received minor injuries in speed-related crashes.

From 2000 to 2004, there was a total of 160 crashes involving speed too fast for the conditions. Eighty-seven percent of these occurred in rural areas. While the proportion of injury crashes involving excessive speed on state highways in the region was lower than the national average, the percentage of speed-related crashes on rural sections of the state highway network has been increasing in recent years.

Speed-related rural crashes 2000–2004



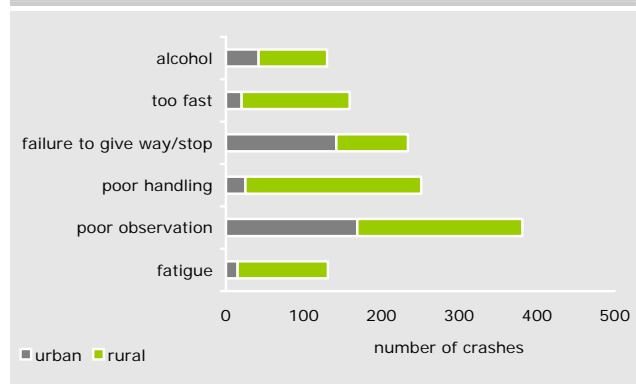
Speed-related crashes typically resulted in drivers losing control of their vehicle, especially on a bend. A high proportion (43 percent) of speed-related crashes occurred on wet or icy roads, while 44 percent were during the hours of darkness, often on weekdays rather than the weekend.

Fatigue

Fatigue includes tiredness, weariness or exhaustion, and road users can be fatigued enough to impair their driving well before falling asleep at the wheel. Fatigue can slow driver reaction times, reduce vigilance and contribute to poor decision making. Ninety-four percent of fatigue-related crashes on the state highway network in the region involved a driver losing control of the vehicle, either on a bend (50 percent) or on a straight section of road (44 percent).

Fatigue is very difficult to measure – it is a natural physiological function that often isn't recognised. Accordingly, it is likely that fatigue is under-reported as a factor in crashes. Nevertheless, fatigue was identified as a factor in 131 crashes (12 percent) on state highways in the TNZ West Wanganui Region from 2000 to 2004. On rural state highways, fatigue-related crashes in the region were significantly higher than the national state highway average.

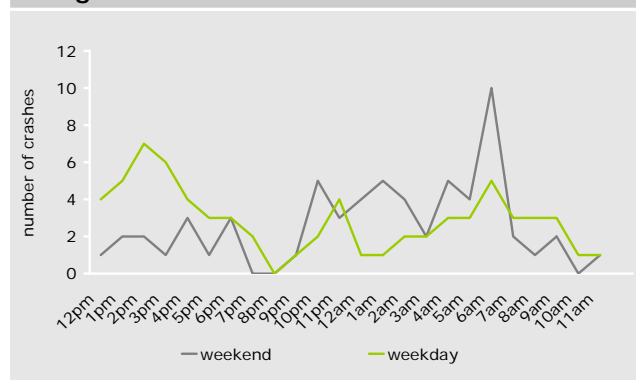
Factors in crashes 2000–2004



Driver fatigue often combines with other factors, such as alcohol, to cause road crashes. Alcohol can affect a driver's alertness long before the legal limit has been reached. Alcohol was identified as a contributory factor in 17 percent of fatigue-related crashes in the region between 2000 and 2004.

The body clock programmes us to feel sleepy during the early hours of the day and in the mid-afternoon. In the TNZ West Wanganui Region from 2000 to 2004, fatigue-related crash numbers differed according to whether it was the weekend or a weekday.

Fatigue-related crash times 2000–2004



Speed

Speed-related crashes on state highways have been identified as a specific issue for the TNZ West Wanganui Region.

Alcohol

Alcohol has a big effect on the way people drive. People who drink and drive (with a blood alcohol level over 80 mg per 100 ml) are three times more likely to be involved in a crash than a sober driver.

Between 2000 and 2004, alcohol was identified as a factor in 139 crashes (13 percent) on state highways in the region. Half of these crashes occurred at the weekend; 69 percent occurred during the hours of darkness.

Failure to give way

While most failure to give way crashes result in non-injury or minor injury crashes, failing to give way at an intersection can have severe consequences. Between 2000 and 2004, 51 of the 243 crashes where a driver failed to give way on the state highway network in the TNZ West Wanganui Region resulted in a fatal or serious injury.

Restraints

Wearing a safety belt reduces the chance of death or serious injury in a crash by 40 percent. Whether in the front or the back seat, the risk of serious or fatal injury if not wearing a safety belt is virtually the same.

Results from the 2004 national restraint wearing survey showed that the front seat safety belt wearing rate for the local authorities in the region was 92 percent, compared with the national average of 94 percent.

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