

# road safety issues

July 2002

The Land Transport Safety Authority (LTSA) has prepared this Road Safety Issues Report. It is based on reported crash data and trends for the 1997–2001 period. The intent of the report is to highlight the key road safety issues and to identify possible ways to reduce the number of road deaths and injuries in Transit New Zealand (TNZ) Region Four.

It happens to all drivers – their attention is diverted or they are distracted by something when driving, or they simply do not see another party on the road until it is too late. But just how much are these lapses in concentration costing us? A lot, according to this year’s road safety statistics from the Bay of Plenty region. Lapses in concentration (we call it poor observation) are having more and more serious injury and fatal consequences in the region.

While speed and drink-driving remain serious road safety issues, we must also make drivers aware that lack of concentration on the road is having an increasingly high cost.

## Major road safety issues:

TNZ Region Four

Poor observation

Failure to give way

Drink-driving

Restraints and helmets

Nationally

Speeding

Drink-driving

Failure to give way

Restraints



## 2001 road toll for TNZ Region Four



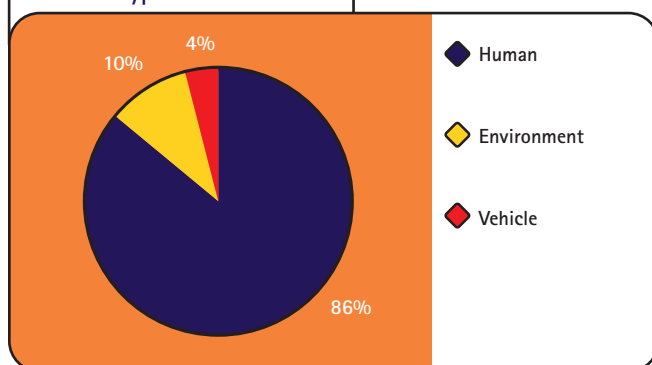
Deaths	30
Serious casualties	73
Minor casualties	245



Fatal crashes	23
Serious injury crashes	48
Minor injury crashes	128
Non-injury crashes	523

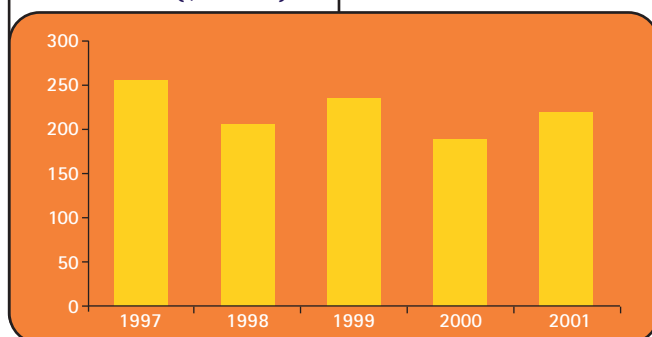
## Regional crash causes 1997–2001

User type 1997–2001



## Estimated social cost of crashes\*

Social cost (\$ million)

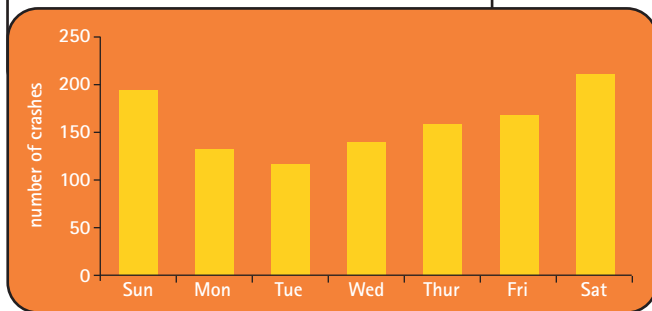


\* The estimated social cost includes loss of life or life quality (estimated by the amount New Zealanders are prepared to pay to reduce their risk of fatal or non-fatal injury), loss of output due to injuries, medical and rehabilitation costs, legal and court costs, and property damage. These costs are expressed at June 2001 prices.

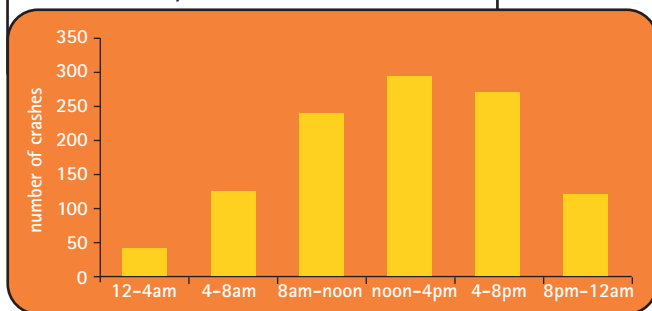
## When crashes occurred

Crashes resulting in injury can occur at any time, but in TNZ Region Four between 1997 and 2001, Saturday and early afternoon (12–4pm) were the worst periods.

Day of week for crashes 1997–2001



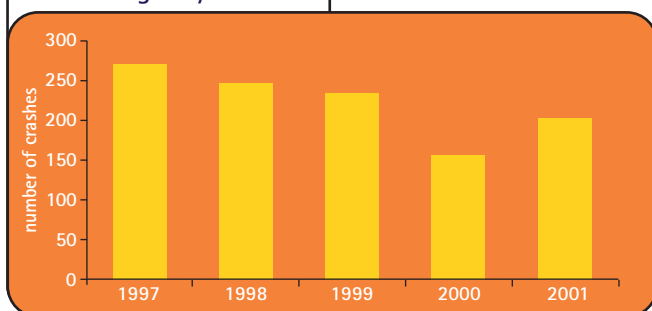
Time of day for crashes 1997–2001



## Where crashes occurred

During the 1997–2001 period approximately 77 percent of fatal crashes (where one or more people were killed) and 70 percent of injury crashes occurred on rural roads. In rural areas there was a greater chance of a fatal accident occurring than in an urban area, due to the higher speed limits.

State highway crashes



## Who was involved in crashes

Between 1997 and 2001, 1,944 people were injured on TNZ Region Four roads. Drivers accounted for 49 percent of persons injured and passengers 35 percent.

Other key road user groups represented among those injured in this period include motorcyclists (five percent), cyclists (two percent) and pedestrians (four percent).

### Licence status of all drivers involved in injury crashes in 2001

Licence status	Urban crashes	Rural crashes
Full licence	58%	60%
Learner or restricted	16%	17%
No or wrong licence	15%	9%
Forbidden or disqualified	–	–
Overseas	2%	1%
Unknown	9%	13%

## Poor observation

Poor observation is a challenging issue for all road safety groups to address. In particular, we need to consider how to address:

- complacency of drivers
- looking but not seeing
- roading networks that contain surprises for the inattentive driver.

Driving requires a driver to concentrate not only on what they are doing, but also on the actions of others sharing the road.

Poor observation includes:

- inattention or failing to notice, eg failing to notice traffic lights while driving home on 'autopilot' and thinking about what to cook for tea
- attention being diverted, eg talking on the cellphone or being distracted by children in the back seat
- not seeing or looking for another party until too late, eg not checking behind when changing lanes, experiencing near misses at intersections.

Nationally, not seeing or looking for other parties until too late was the third highest contributing factor in injury crashes in 2001 and resulted in a total social cost of \$499 million.

In TNZ Region Four, poor observation was a factor in 32 percent of injury crashes in 2001 – an increase from 2000 – and increasing in line with the national trend.

There were 262 poor observation related injury crashes reported in the last five years.

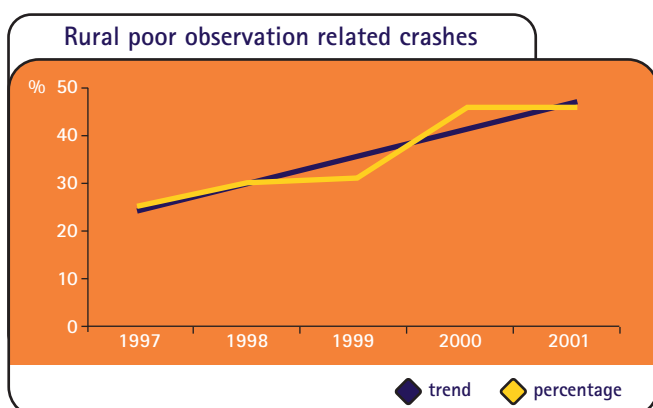
Poor observation was predominately a rural issue in TNZ Region Four in 2001 and was a factor in 46 percent of the injury crashes occurring on roads with a speed limit greater than 70km/hr.

Poor observation has increased as a factor on rural roads over the last 10 years, with the number of injury crashes rising from 31 in 2000 to 34 in 2001.

More than one third (38 percent) of poor observation crashes occurred at intersections.

## The initiatives

- Roads need to be clear and self-explanatory and reduce the scope for road user error. All road controlling authorities (RCAs) can help achieve this by ensuring that roadmarking and signage on their road network are maintained to appropriate standards and ensuring that motorists receive no surprises in their journeys.
- The LTSA driver licensing system now requires drivers to have their eyesight checked when they renew their licence (every 10 years) or when they apply for a licence, a new licence class or a new licence endorsement.
- Road safety audits can be used to ensure that appropriate and consistent sight distances and intersection controls are used by RCAs. The LTSA is able to assist with audits.
- The British government has established a long-term publicity strategy. Their THINK! campaign is about people using the roads safely, whether driving, walking, cycling or using public transport. Unlike previous campaigns, which concentrated on a particular road safety issue, THINK! is a year-round road safety banner for all campaigns, aiming to create a greater public awareness of all road safety issues. Further information can be found on the website: [www.think.detr.gov.uk](http://www.think.detr.gov.uk).





## Failure to give way

Failure to give way causes the highest number of crashes in New Zealand, ahead of drink-driving and speeding. In terms of social cost, it is the third biggest road safety problem.

Drivers who fail to give way generally fall into the following categories:

- Those who do not understand the road rules and assume they have the right of way.
- Those who assume the other car is going to let them through or stop (and may be travelling too fast to stop themselves).
- Those who lack courtesy in relation to lane changing and merging.
- Those who are complacent about (or deliberately ignore) the road rules.

Nationally, failure to give way was the third highest contributing factor in injury crashes during 2001 and resulted in a total social cost of \$499 million.

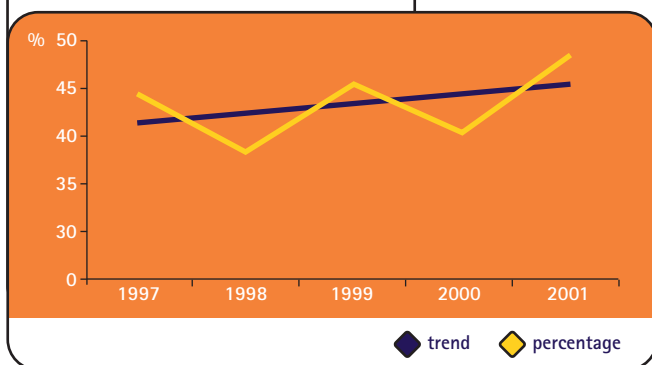
In TNZ Region Four, intersection crashes have fluctuated over the last 10 years making up 29 percent of all crashes in the region in 2001.

Forty-eight percent of urban crashes occurred at intersections in 2001 (up from 40 percent in 2000). These were typically turning and crossing type conflicts.

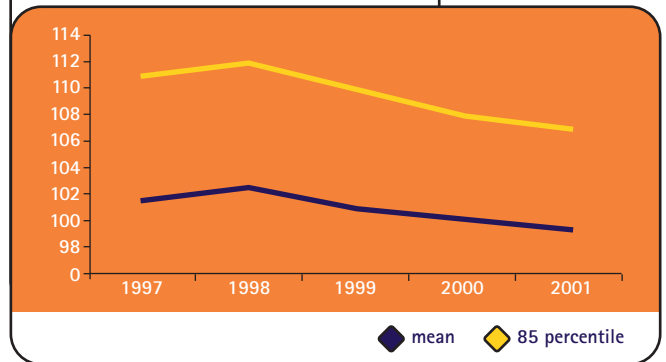
The main factor associated with urban intersection crashes in TNZ Region Four was a failure to give way or stop and poor observation.

Rural intersections accounted for a smaller proportion of crashes in TNZ Region Four than urban intersections, with 21 percent of rural crashes occurring at intersections in 2001.

Urban intersection crashes



Waikato region rural speeds



### Black spot intersections

State Highway 2 and Wairoa Road intersection

State Highway 2 and Domain Road intersection

State Highway 2 and Te Tumu Road intersection

### Increasing incidence sites\*

State Highway 30A – 450m east of Fenton Street

State Highway 33 – 5,500m north of Maniatutu Road

State Highway 5 – 1,300m south of State Highway 30

State Highway 2 and Pikowai Road intersection

State Highway 30 and Huna Road intersection

\* sites with significant increases in injury crashes in 2001

## The initiatives

- Knowledge-based enforcement will ensure that police activities are targeted to risk locations.
- Public consultation documents for the Road User Rule and Traffic Control Devices Rule are due for release in the near future. These documents are proposing a number of changes, including changes to the give way rules, requirements for road marking and use of roundabouts.
- Road controlling authorities can assist motorists by giving good, clear messages on their roading networks. Intersections can be improved by installing devices such as signals, roundabouts, traffic islands, Stop and Give Way controls.
- Signalised intersections also need to be checked regularly to ensure that detectors and signals are working correctly and that the phasing of the signals provides safe and efficient traffic movements.



## Drink-driving

Alcohol affects the way people drive. Studies repeatedly show that the risk of crashing increases as a driver's blood alcohol level increases. Contrary to popular opinion, people with a high blood alcohol level are more likely to be injured or killed in a crash than those who have not consumed alcohol.

For every 100 drink-drivers or riders killed in road crashes, 59 of their passengers and 36 other road users die with them.

Nationally, alcohol was the second highest contributing factor in road crashes during 2001 and resulted in a total social cost of \$681 million. In past years, alcohol contributed to over 20 percent of all reported injury crashes and over 40 percent of fatal crashes. For the 12 months to December 2001, alcohol-affected drivers contributed to 20 percent of all fatal crashes and 13 percent of all injury crashes.

In TNZ Region Four, alcohol was a factor in 19 percent of injury crashes in 2001 – a decrease from 2000 – and decreasing in line with the national trend.

Two hundred alcohol-related injury crashes were reported in the last five years.

Alcohol was predominately a rural issue in TNZ Region Four in 2001 and was a factor in 19 percent of the injury crashes occurring on roads with a speed limit greater than 70km/hr.

Alcohol has fluctuated as a factor on rural roads over the last 10 years, with the number of injury crashes rising from 25 in 2000 to 26 in 2001.

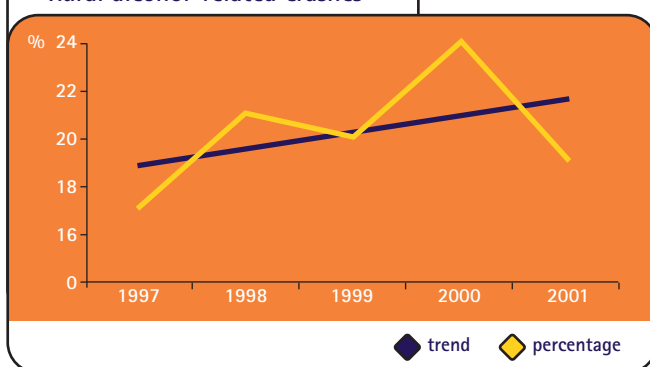
Responses from the Bay of Plenty region to the 2001 Public Attitudes Survey indicated:

- four percent of drivers agreed that there was not much chance of an accident when driving after drinking if you were careful
- 40 percent of drivers believed that the overall risk of being caught drinking and driving was small
- 84 percent believed compulsory breath testing helped to lower the road toll.

## The initiatives

- Knowledge-based road policing will ensure that police activities are targeted to risk locations.
- Last drink surveys completed by the New Zealand Police at the time of processing drink-drivers enable assessments to be made by liquor licensing assessment groups to identify at-risk premises.
- Roads need to be clear and self-explanatory, to reduce the scope for road user error. All road controlling authorities can help achieve this by ensuring that road marking and signage on their road network are maintained to appropriate standards and ensuring that motorists receive no surprises in their journeys.

Rural alcohol-related crashes

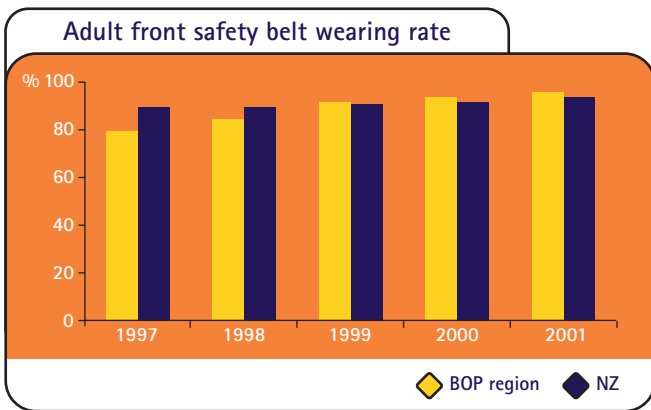




# Restraints and helmets

## Front seat safety belt use – adults

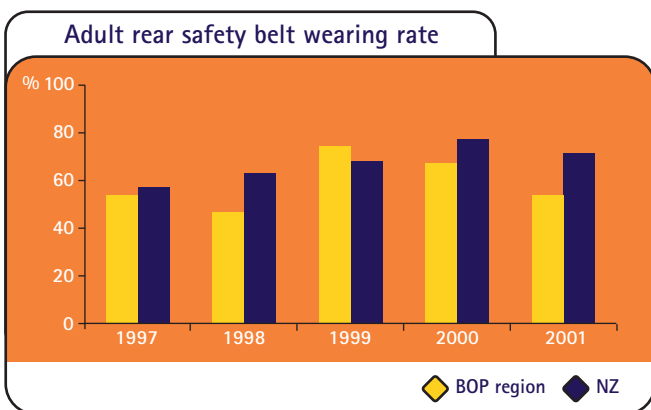
The national compliance rate for safety belt use by adults in front seats rose by two percent to 92 percent during 2001. In the Bay of Plenty region, the wearing rate continued to be above the national average and rose two percent to 94 percent.



## Rear seat safety belt use – adults

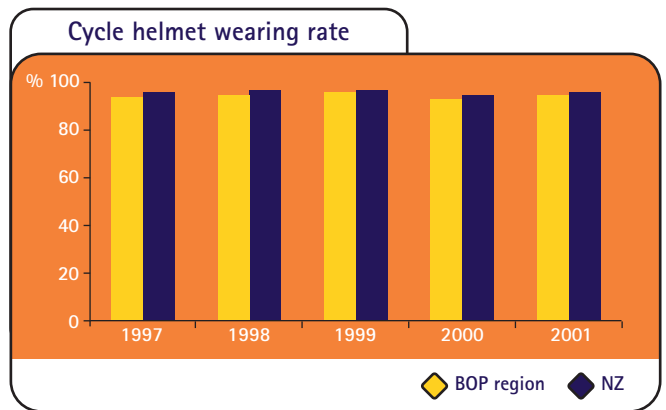
Responses from the Bay of Plenty region to the 2001 Public Attitudes Survey indicated that 11 percent of those surveyed thought that the chance of an adult being caught not wearing a safety belt as a rear seat passenger was very or fairly likely.

The national compliance rate of safety belt use by adults in rear seats fell from 76 percent to 70 percent in 2001. In the Bay of Plenty region, the wearing rate continued to be below the national average and fell a dramatic 13 percent to 53 percent.



## Cycle helmets

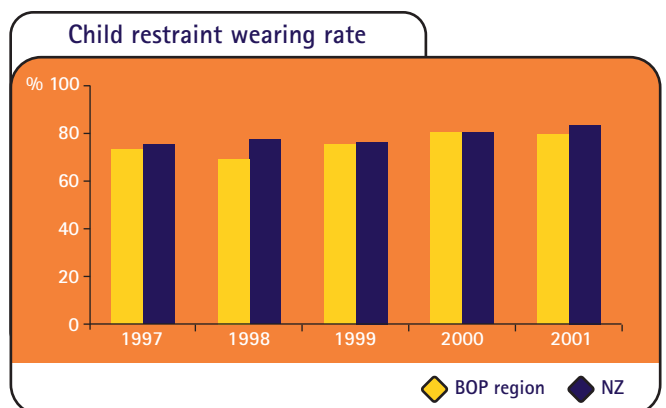
The national compliance rate for cycle helmet wearing improved by one percent to 94 percent during 2001. The Bay of Plenty region wearing rate also improved, rising two percent to 93 percent for 2001 – a similar level to 1998 wearing rates.



## Child restraint use

Responses from the Bay of Plenty region to the 2001 Public Attitudes Survey indicated that 27 percent of those surveyed thought that the chance of being caught if a child under five in a back seat was not in a child restraint was very or fairly likely.

Nationally, the child restraint wearing rate improved slightly in 2001 – up three percent to 82 percent. In the Bay of Plenty region, the wearing rate dropped slightly in 2001 – down one percent to 78 percent.



# Partnerships

The LTSA works closely with many road safety partners at national, regional and local levels. These include the New Zealand Police, local authorities, Transit New Zealand, Accident Compensation Corporation, health authorities and local service providers.

## Road Safety Partnership Plans

Road Safety Partnership Plans will be developed over the next 12 months to reflect the collaborative process whereby the key road safety partners agree on the risk, identify objectives, direct tasks, set targets and monitor and review road safety progress. Partnership Plans will focus on the joint local authority areas that reflect the seven New Zealand Police areas within the Waikato and Bay of Plenty regions, and will be based on Road Safety Action Plans.

Road Safety Action Plans (RSAPs) take a number of forms. RSAPs focusing on community education and road environment are developed annually by road controlling authorities and regional councils to outline the road safety issues and risk areas, objectives, actions and management systems. Policing RSAPs are developed quarterly by the New Zealand Police and used as the basis for weekly/monthly Risk Targeted Patrol Plans (RTPPs) for frontline staff.

## Community Road Safety Programme reviewed

A major component of the New Zealand Road Safety Programme, New Zealand's annual plan for road safety, is delivered through the Community Road Safety Programme (CRSP). The CRSP draws on major public health and community development strategies to assist its work including those set out in the Ottawa Charter for health promotion.

A review of the CRSP has recently been completed. The aim of the review was to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the CRSP, which is now responsible for more than \$6 million in funding annually.

The review recommendations fall into four main groups.

- Ensuring a common understanding of the overall context and concept of the CRSP and developing operational alignment with this understanding.
- Improving decision making and streamlining the administrative processes.
- Building capacity at the community, local and regional levels to operate the programme effectively.
- Developing and implementing a treaty strategy and a cultural strategy.

## Road safety engineering

'Road controlling authorities can continuously improve road safety performance by adopting quality assurance systems for the design and management of their roading networks. Leading RCAs, with LTSA's assistance, are currently developing safety management systems to identify road safety strategies, standards, expertise, management systems and audit regimes appropriate to their roading network. Safe road environments through RCA commitments to their safety management systems will support policing and education in halving the road toll over the next 10 years.'

Glenn Bunting  
LTSA Regional Manager, Waikato and Bay of Plenty

## Road policing

'Police in the Bay of Plenty have set out to reduce the road toll in the district by 20 percent (71 deaths in 2001 to 57 in 2002).

We are confident this can be achieved through better deployment of police resources to the four key risks – speed, alcohol, poor observation and not using safety belts.'

Superintendent Gary Smith  
District Commander, Bay of Plenty

## Land Transport Safety Authority

The LTSA Hamilton Regional Office is able to assist in road safety activities such as:

- crash reduction studies
- safety audits
- crash data provision and analysis
- general road safety advice
- general road engineering advice.

The LTSA website also contains road safety information, including electronic copies of this report and all of the others that have been produced for the country ([www.ltsa.govt.nz](http://www.ltsa.govt.nz)).

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