

road safety issues

New Plymouth District

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 key road safety issues in the New Plymouth District.

The total number of injury crashes in the New Plymouth District decreased significantly in 2004 compared with the previous three years. However, while there were a total of 53 fewer casualties than in 2003, the number of people killed or seriously injured showed a significant increase in 2004 over previous years. Accordingly, the social cost of crashes in 2004 in the district rose to \$73 million.

Car drivers made up 55 percent of the casualties in road crashes. In recent years, novice drivers on learner or restricted licences have been increasingly involved in crashes. Regardless of driver licence status, the main types of crashes in the New Plymouth District involved drivers losing control of their vehicle or crashing at intersections.

Vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists made up 20 percent of all casualties in the New Plymouth District.

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

Major road safety issues

New Plymouth District

Loss of control

Intersections

Vulnerable road users

Novice drivers

Nationally

Speed

Alcohol

Failure to give way

Restraints



2004 road trauma for New Plymouth District



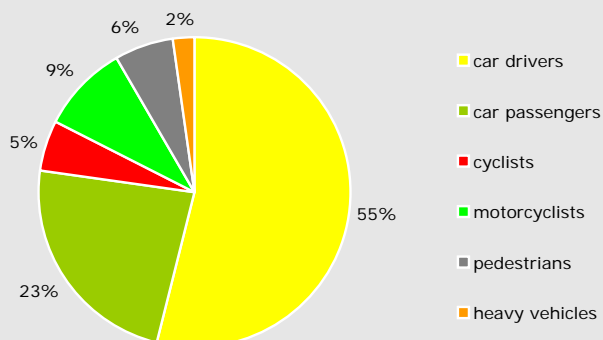
Deaths	10
Serious casualties	60
Minor casualties	173



Fatal crashes	9
Serious injury crashes	43
Minor injury crashes	115
Non-injury crashes	337

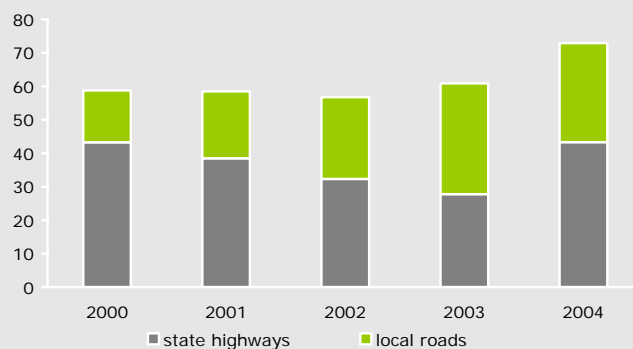
Road casualties 2000–2004

User type 2000–2004



Estimated social cost of crashes*

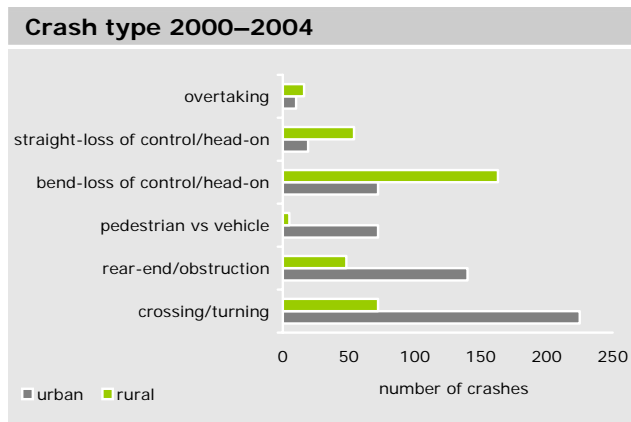
Social cost (\$ million)



*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

From 2000 to 2004 in the New Plymouth District there were 308 loss of control injury crashes resulting in 16 fatalities and 115 serious injuries. A further 354 road users suffered minor injuries as a result of drivers losing control of their vehicle. Overall, 34 percent of all injury crashes occurred when drivers lost control of their vehicle.



Seventy percent of loss of control crashes occurred on the open road, typically on a bend on the state highway. Compared with other crash types in the New Plymouth District between 2000 and 2004, a high proportion of loss of control crashes occurred at night and on wet or icy roads.

Poor handling, alcohol, travelling too fast for the conditions and driver fatigue were the leading contributing factors to loss of control injury crashes in the New Plymouth District over the 2000 to 2004 period.

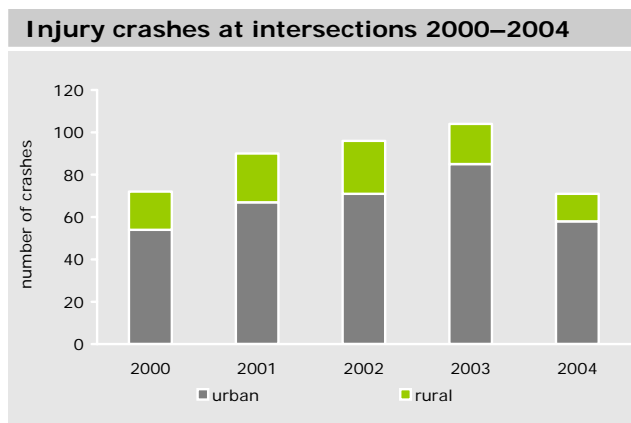
Drivers aged 15 to 19 years were involved in 30 percent of all loss of control crashes during the five-year period.

Loss of control 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. Vehicles leaving the road in the district most often hit objects such as poles, posts and trees as well as banks and fences.

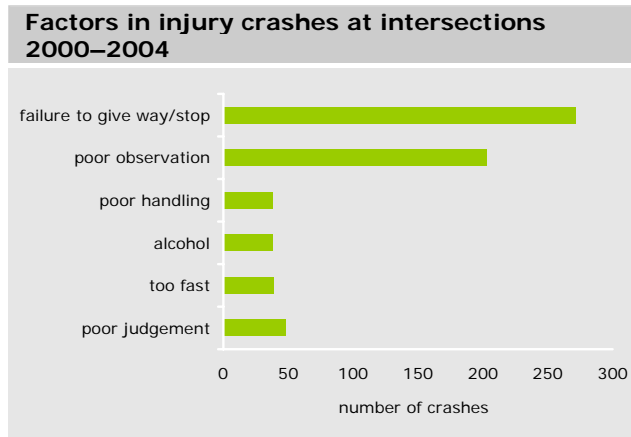
Intersections

During the five-year period 2000–2004, there was an average of 87 injury crashes per year at intersections. Injury crashes at intersections made up almost 48 percent of all crashes in the New Plymouth District.

While there had been a steady increase in the number of intersection crashes between the period 2000 to 2003, there was a decrease in 2004.



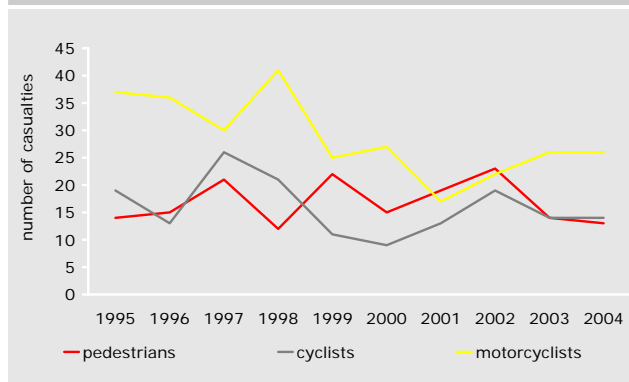
Drivers failing to give way or stop were involved in 63 percent of all injury crashes at intersections, while drivers displaying poor observation were involved in 47 percent of all injury crashes over the 2000 to 2004 period.



Vulnerable road users

Vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists made up 20 percent of the total casualties in the New Plymouth District between 2000 and 2004. The vulnerable nature of such road users means that crashes often involve fatalities and serious injury – 34 percent of vulnerable road user casualties were either killed or seriously injured compared with 20 percent for all road users.

Vulnerable road user casualties 1995–2004



Over the past 10 years there has been a slight upward trend in the number of pedestrian casualties in the New Plymouth District. Twenty-nine pedestrians were either killed or seriously injured between 2000 and 2004, while a further 55 suffered minor injuries. Forty-three percent of pedestrians injured in a crash were under 20 years of age with a further 23 percent aged 65 years and over.

Over the past five years, there has been an average of 14 cyclist casualties per year. Cyclist casualties tend to be between 14 and 19 years old (52 percent). Sixty-one percent of cycle crashes occurred at an intersection, with a further 22 percent at a driveway or private access.

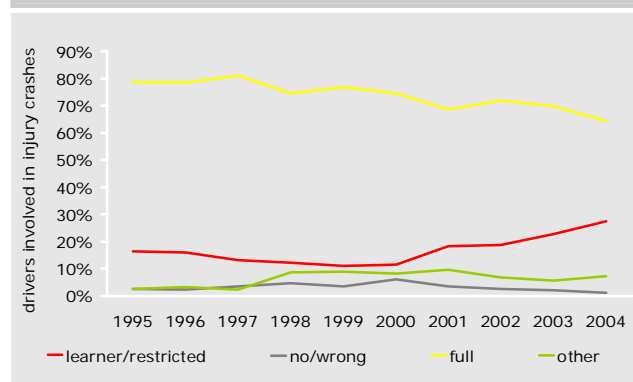
In total, 118 motorcyclists were injured between 2000 and 2004 in the New Plymouth District, with 42 percent of these casualties being either a fatality or sustaining a serious injury. While there has been a downward trend in the number of motorcyclist casualties in the district over the past 10 years, the proportion of such casualties in urban areas is significantly greater than in similar local authorities. Motorcyclists aged between 15 and 19 years were over-represented in the casualty statistics. Two thirds of motorcyclists were injured at either an intersection or a driveway.

Novice drivers

Age and inexperience play a major role in the high crash risk among young drivers: age because of lifestyle factors and the propensity to take chances; inexperience through failure to respond appropriately to traffic situations.

There has been an upward trend in the proportion of drivers on learner and restricted licences involved in injury crashes in the New Plymouth District. Between 1995 and 1999, 14 percent of all drivers involved in injury crashes in the district were learner and restricted driver licence holders. For the five-year period from 2000, the figure rose to 20 percent.

Driver licence status 1995–2004



Between 2000 and 2004, 30 percent of crashes involved one or more learner/restricted licence holders. Of these, 57 percent were aged between 15 and 19 years, with a further 22 percent between 20 and 24 years old.

Fifty-one percent of crashes involving learner/restricted drivers occurred at intersections in the New Plymouth District.

Dominant factors for crashes involving novice drivers included driving too fast for the conditions, poor observational skills, losing control of the vehicle, and hitting the rear-end of stationary vehicles or other obstacles on the road.

Speed

The faster drivers go, the more likely they are to crash and the greater the risk of serious injury or death. Thirty-two percent of crashes involving speed in the New Plymouth District from 2000 to 2004 resulted in a death or serious injury.

During this period, travelling too fast for the conditions was reported as a factor in 13 percent of injury crashes. However, speed as a factor in crashes has shown an increasing trend over the past five years. Speed-related crashes were over-represented during the hours of darkness in the New Plymouth District and over 40 percent of crashes involving excessive speed occurred during the weekend.

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 102 crashes in the New Plymouth District. These crashes typically occurred at night (76 percent) and at the weekend (63 percent).

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. Fifty-eight out of the 307 crashes where a driver failed to give way in the New Plymouth District between 2000 and 2004 resulted in a fatal or serious crash.

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 New Plymouth District was 95 percent, compared with the national average of 94 percent. The 2003 rear seat belt wearing rate was 82 percent compared with the New Zealand average of 81 percent.

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