

road safety issues

Northland Region

Land Transport New Zealand has prepared this road safety issues report. It is based on reported crash data and trends for the 2001–2005 period. The intent of the report is to highlight key road safety issues and as a resource, identify possible ways to reduce the number of road deaths and injuries in the Northland Region.

With a population of 148,600 in 2005, the Northland Region is tenth in population size in the group of 14 regional authorities. The crash rate for the Northland Region ranks higher though, with the Northland Region in sixth place for crashes per head of population. Northland Region crash numbers have increased faster than the population growth. In 2001, there were around 20 crashes reported per 10,000 people, but by 2005, there were 33 crashes per 10,000 people. The crash rate on open road state highways is higher than most with the Northland Region ranking fourth out of the 14 authorities. The crash rate per kilometre travelled on rural state highways is 32 percent higher in the Northland Region than the national average.

The good news is that less crashes occurred on the open road across the Northland Region in 2005 compared to previous years. Fatal and serious crashes also reduced and the cost to society as a result of crashes in the Northland Region was lower than previous years, totalling \$213 million in 2005.

Major road safety issues

Northland Region

- Alcohol
- Loss of control on bends
- Speed
- Crossing and turning crashes

Nationally

- Speed
- Alcohol
- Failure to give way
- Restraints



2005 road trauma for Northland Region



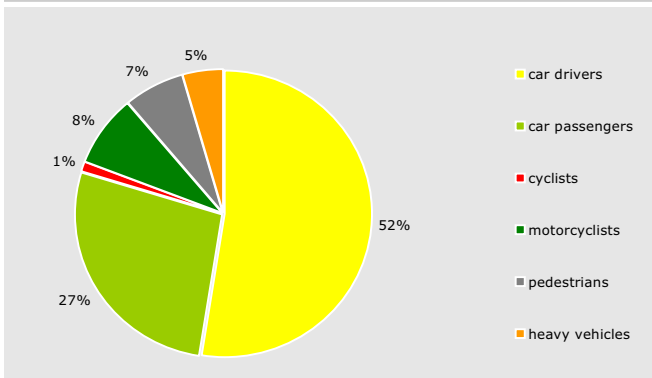
Deaths	22
Serious casualties	132
Minor casualties	542



Fatal crashes	21
Serious injury crashes	106
Minor injury crashes	360
Non-injury crashes	939

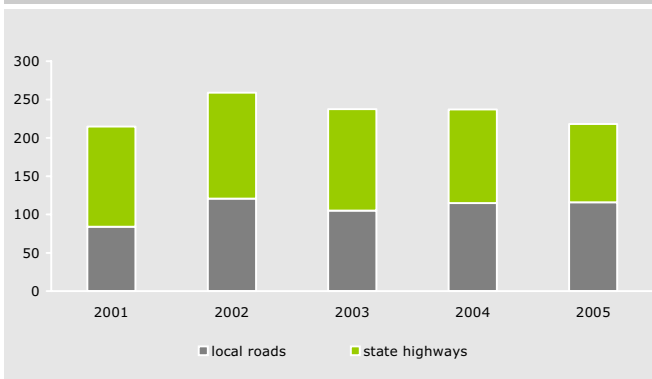
Road casualties 2001–2005

User type 2001–2005



Estimated social cost of crashes*

Social cost (\$ million)

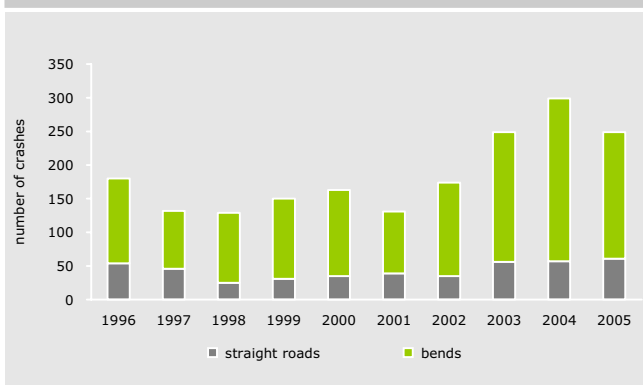


* The estimated social cost includes loss of life or life quality (estimated by the amount New Zealanders are prepared to pay to reduce their risk of fatal or non-fatal injury), loss of output due to injuries, medical and rehabilitation costs, legal and court costs, and property damage. These costs are expressed at June 2005 prices.

Crash types

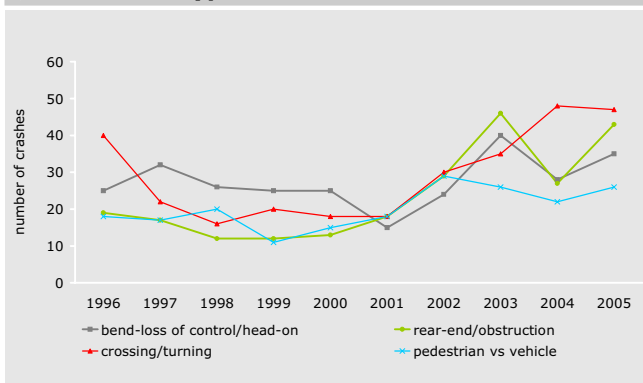
In rural areas, on high-speed roads, losing control on bends dominated and these crashes were over-represented when compared to other parts of the country. The trend for this crash type has been increasing over past years. In 2005, 59 percent of the Northland Region's crashes on rural roads involved losing control on a bend. The proportion was even higher on the local road network (excluding state highways) where 68 percent of rural crashes involved losing control on a bend.

Rural loss of control crashes

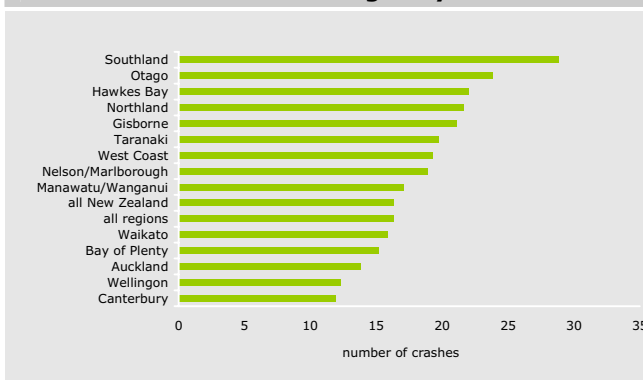


The two crash types that were over-represented in urban areas were vehicles hitting pedestrians and rear-end crashes. Over the past few years the number of crossing or turning crashes, rear-end crashes, pedestrian crashes and loss of control on urban bends has been increasing.

Urban crash types



Crash rate on rural state highways



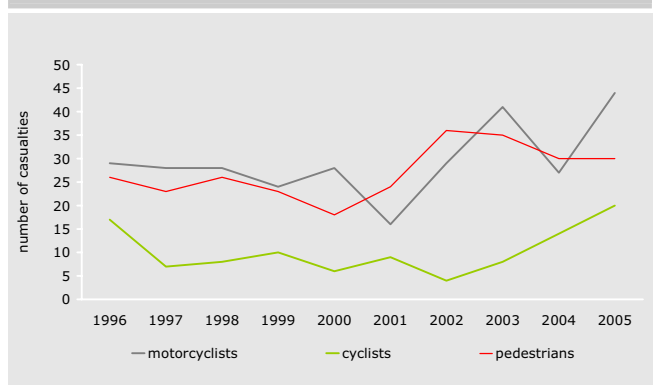
Road user types

Car drivers were the most commonly injured road users in the Northland Region. The number of car drivers, passengers, cyclists and motorcyclist casualties has increased in recent years.

Females now make up more of the casualties. In urban crashes, female casualties outnumbered males in 2005. The most common age group for both male and female casualties was 15-19 years.

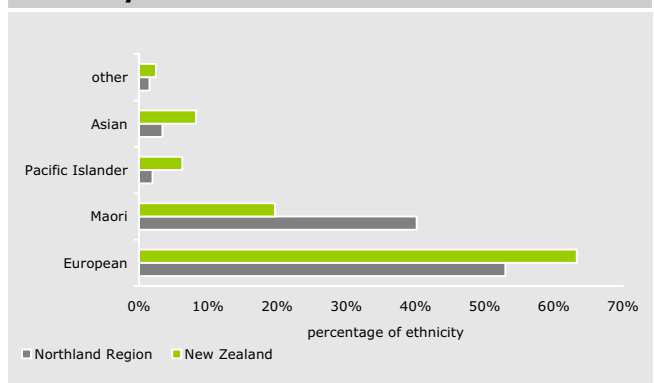
Pedestrian crash numbers increased in 2002 and remained at that level over the next three years. Children are over-represented in the pedestrian casualty figures.

Vulnerable road user casualties



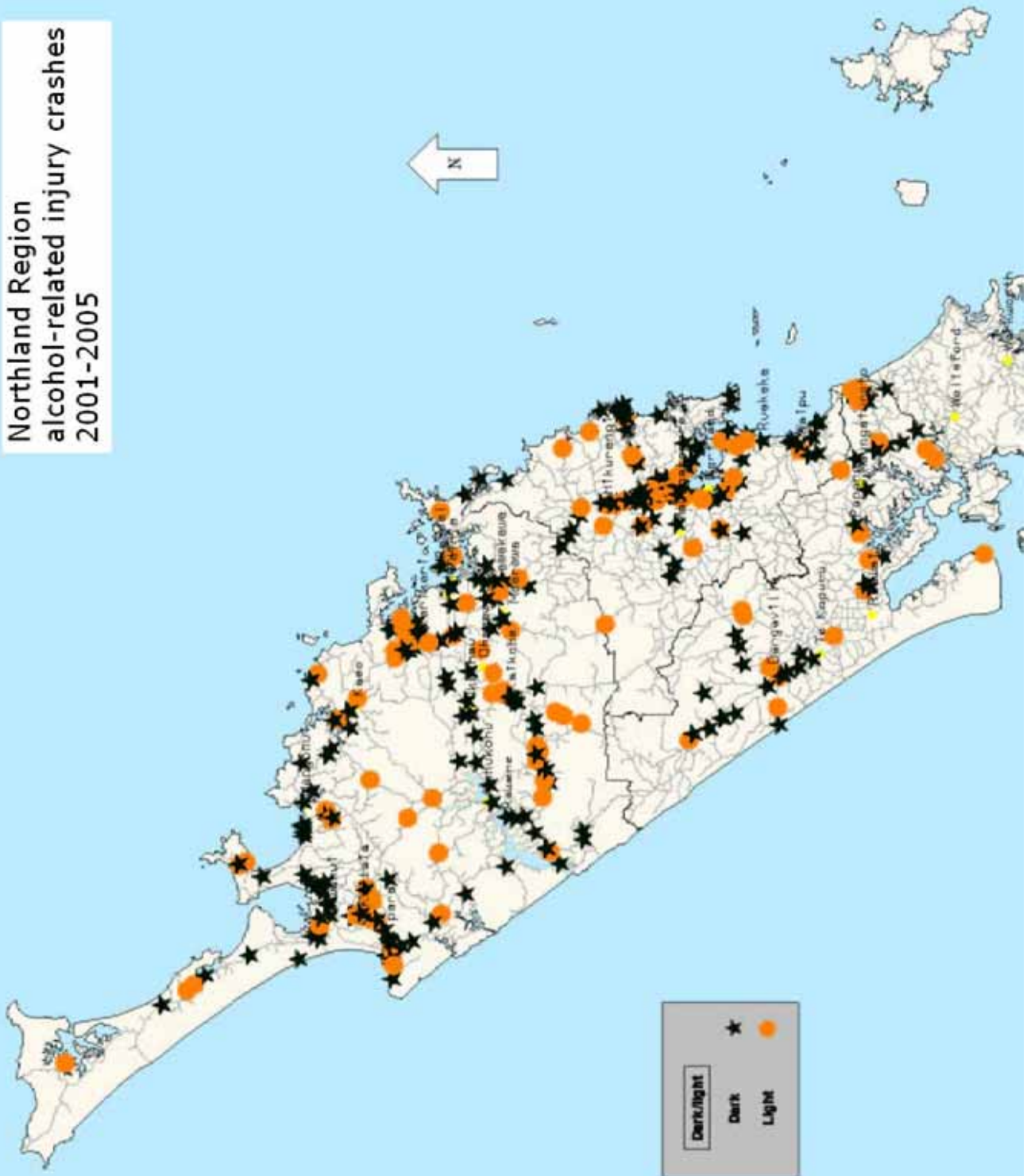
A large proportion of casualties in the Northland Region are Maori who made up 46 percent of urban casualties and 38 percent of rural casualties.

Ethnicity of casualties



Wearing a safety belt dramatically reduces the chance of injury or death if a crash does occur. The wearing of safety belts in the Northland Region has improved noticeably. Recent surveys showed 93 percent of adults were wearing front seat safety belts compared to 88 percent in 2001; however, this is still behind the national figure of 95 percent. Child restraint use was measured at 98 percent in the Northland Region, well above the national figure of 89 percent.

Northland Region
alcohol-related injury crashes
2001-2005



Crash factors

Crashes are often caused by drivers not paying attention, not being observant or not checking adequately. Poor vehicle handling skills are often mentioned. These factors are common in many crashes but are also often combined with other factors.

Over-represented factors in the Northland Region's rural crashes have been identified as speed, alcohol and road factors. In urban crashes, speed, alcohol and road factors were also identified along with pedestrian factors.

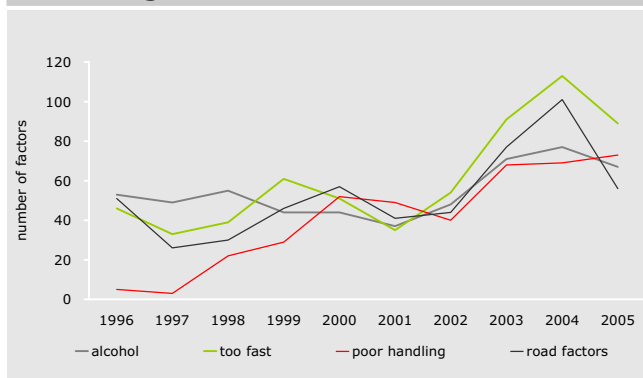
The Northland Region has one of the highest proportions of crashes involving alcohol and one of the highest levels of drivers exceeding the alcohol limit.

Alcohol factors have hovered at around 15–18 percent of urban crashes over recent years and at about 20–21 percent of rural crashes.

Within the Northland Region, the Far North District is particularly over-represented in alcohol-related incidents.

For crashes on rural roads, contributing factors included speed, poor handling, alcohol and road factors. These have increased in recent years.

Increasing rural crash factors



Travelling too fast for the conditions was a factor in 28 percent of rural road crashes in 2005. The Northland Region generally has a high number of speed-related crashes, not just on the open road but in urban areas too. This could contribute to the high proportion of crashes where drivers lose control.

As well as drivers travelling at speeds too fast for the conditions, speed can also relate to drivers exceeding the posted speed limit. Observance of open road speed limits in the Northland Region has improved but a high percentage of drivers are exceeding urban speed limits.

In urban areas, the crash factors of failing to give way or stop, not checking, poor handling and cyclist involvement have risen considerably over the past few years. Speed as a factor in urban crashes showed a decline in 2005.

Road and environmental factors

In the Northland Region, the proportion of rural crashes on local authority roads (off the state highway network) have been increasing year by year. In 2005, 47 percent of rural crashes occurred on local authority roads compared with 2001 when this was 32 percent.

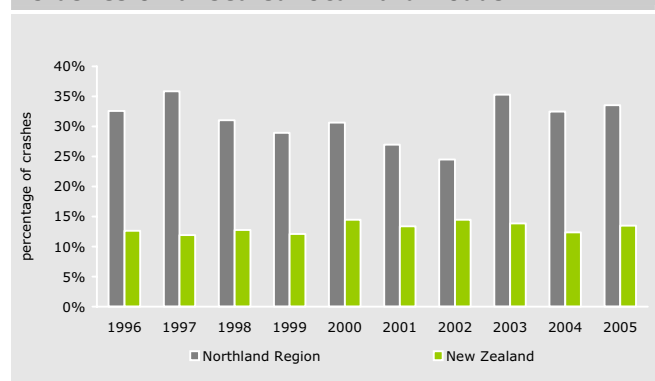
Over the past few years, there has been a reduction in the number of crashes at rural intersections.

Crashes on wet roads remain above average in the Northland Region with around a third of rural crashes occurring on wet roads and around a quarter on urban roads.

Crashes at night have been increasing. In 2005, 37 percent of rural road crashes occurred in darkness.

The Northland Region is well over-represented in crashes on unsealed roads, particularly on local roads in the Far North and Kaipara Districts. In 2005, 34 percent of the crashes on Northland Region's local road network were on unsealed roads.

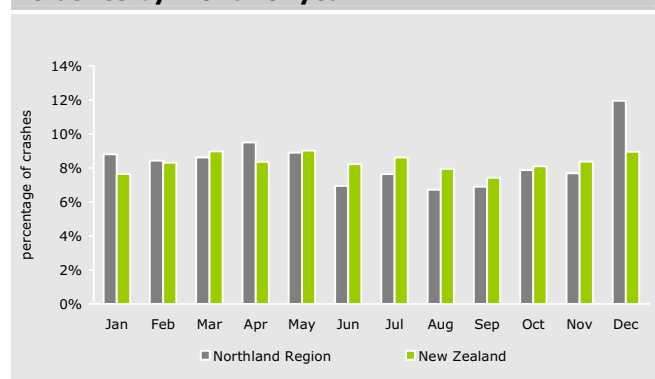
Crashes on unsealed local rural roads



Hitting a solid roadside object can increase the possibility of injury or the severity of injury in a crash. In the Northland Region, ditches, trees and cliffs or banks were over-represented as objects struck in a crash.

December is clearly the most common month for crashes and Saturday is the most common day of the week.

Crashes by month of year



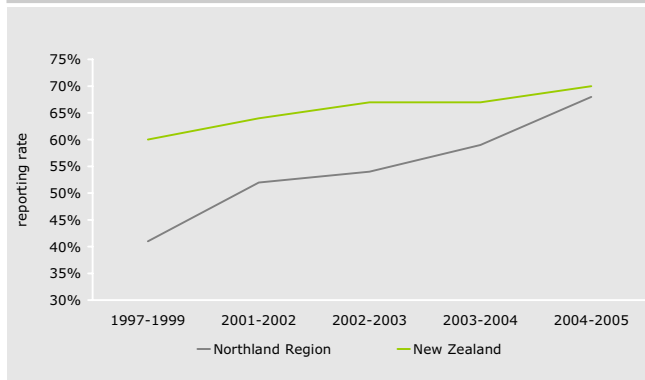
Reporting crashes

Crash reporting rate

Not all crashes are reported to the Police; not even all the serious ones. The reporting rate measure compares the number of serious casualties reported to hospitals with those that are reported by Police. The reporting rate of crashes in the Northland Region has increased from 2001 when it was 56 percent, to 68 percent in 2006. The national rate is now 70 percent.

This means that more information on crashes is now available for targeting resources on improving roads, directing enforcement and developing community programmes.

Reporting rate of serious injuries to hospital admissions



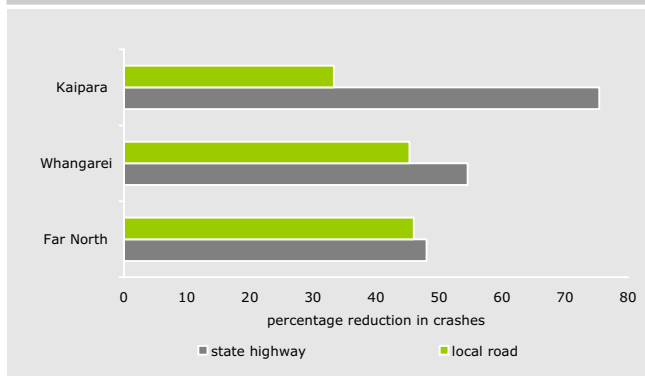
Hospitalisations

Crashes that result in admission to hospital are being measured. In the Northland Region, the hospitalisation rate had been reducing but started to increase again in 2005.

Crash reduction studies

All three district councils in the region and Transit NZ are now conducting regular crash reduction studies to find and treat the high-risk crash locations on the local road and state highway networks. The treated sites are being monitored for reductions in crash numbers and have shown impressive results in crash and casualty savings.

Crash reductions at study sites



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