

road safety issues

The Land Transport Safety Authority (LTSA) has prepared this road safety issues report. It is based on reported crash data and trends for the 1999–2003 period. The intent of the report is to highlight the issues in the Transit New Zealand (TNZ) Wellington Region covering state highways in the region.

The number of injury crashes reported on state highways in the Wellington Region remained virtually the same as 2002 with 245 crashes. The number of non-injury crashes reduced from 692 to 603. However, the number of fatal crashes rose to 17 after falling for two years from a five-year high of 18 in 2000. Crashes and injuries in urban areas have fallen but risen in rural areas. The social cost of crashes in 2003 was \$287 million.

Car drivers and passengers were the principal casualties in the region. Pedestrian, cyclist and motorcyclist casualties were over-represented when compared with national figures. While pedestrian and motorcyclist casualties have declined slowly over a 10-year period, cyclist casualties have remained constant.

The most common crash type on Wellington Region state highways was rear-end collisions and collisions with an obstruction, poor driver skills being the major factor.

In 2003, there was a marked increase in the number of crashes in the dark as a proportion of all crashes.

Both local and national road safety issues are identified below. The specific issues for state highways in the Wellington Region are considered in detail overleaf, while national issues are considered on the back page.

Major road safety issues

TNZ Wellington Region

Vulnerable road users

Poor observation

Rear-end/obstruction

Crashes in darkness

Nationally


Speed


Alcohol

Failure to give way

Restraints

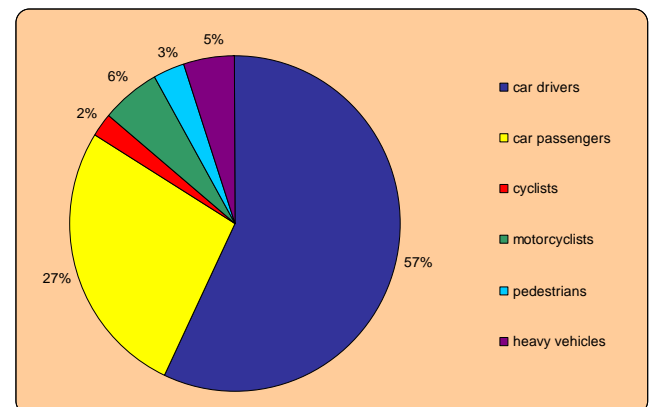
2003 road trauma for TNZ Wellington Region

	Deaths	18
	Serious casualties	72
	Minor casualties	306

	Fatal crashes	17
	Serious injury crashes	48
	Minor injury crashes	180
	Non-injury crashes	603

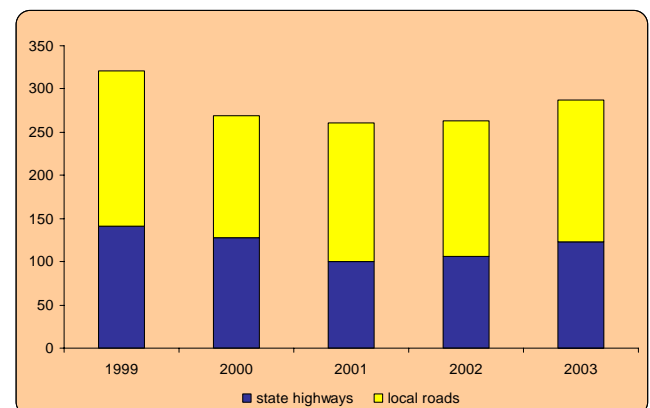
Road casualties 1999–2003

User type 1999–2003



Estimated social cost of crashes*

Social cost (\$ million)

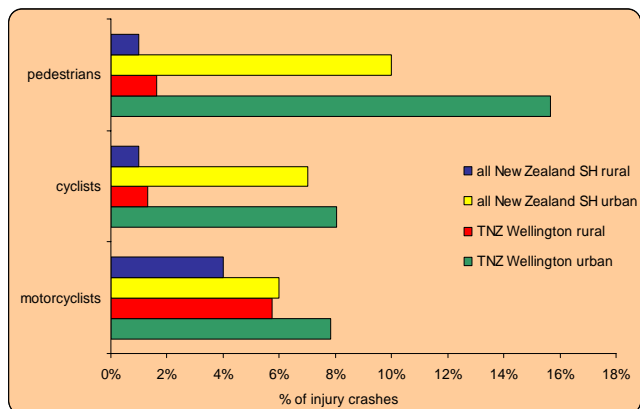


*The estimated social cost includes loss of life or life quality (estimated by the amount New Zealanders are prepared to pay to reduce their risk of fatal or non-fatal injury), loss of output due to injuries, medical and rehabilitation costs, legal and court costs, and property damage. These costs are expressed at June 2002 prices.

Vulnerable road users

Vulnerable road users are pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists. The percentage of crashes involving vulnerable road users in the TNZ Wellington Region was higher than the national average.

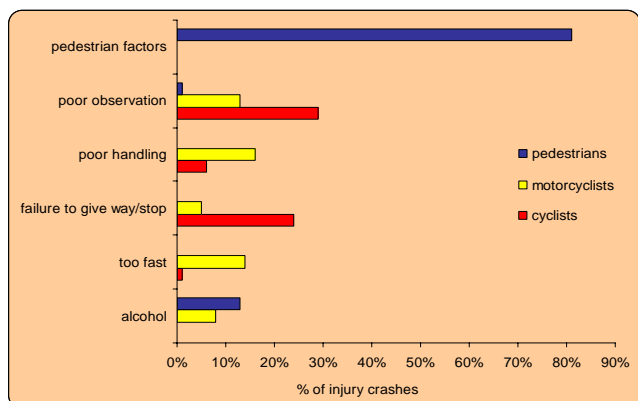
Vulnerable road users 1999–2003



In urban areas, pedestrians were the largest casualty group and were involved in 16 percent of all urban state highway crashes. Seventy-five percent of pedestrian crashes occurred in the urban environment and the majority of these were in Wellington City. The most common cause recorded for these crashes was classed as pedestrian factors, ie pedestrian error. Pedestrian crashes have decreased over the last five years but the proportion of crashes involving pedestrians in the TNZ Wellington Region was twice the national average and requires attention.

Crashes involving cyclists increased significantly between 1999 and 2002, from nine to 17, but they returned to the lower level in 2003. The most common factors in cyclist crashes were poor observation and failure to give way by cyclists.

Factors in vulnerable road user crashes 1999–2003

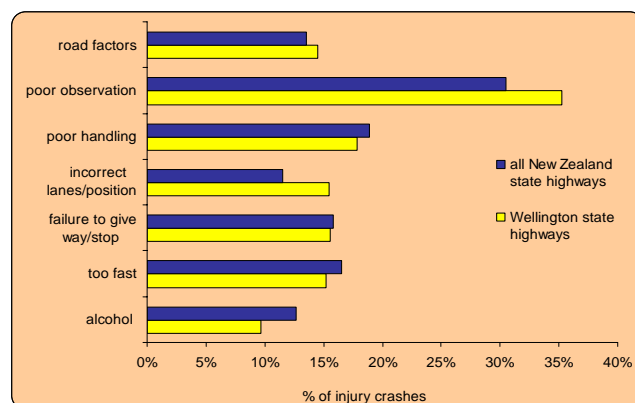


Overall, motorcyclists were involved in more injury crashes (121) than pedestrians or cyclists. Unlike pedestrians and cyclists, the majority of motorcycle crashes occurred in the rural environment. In urban areas the most common factor in motorcycle crashes was poor observation, accounting for a third of all such crashes. In rural areas, the most common crash factors were poor observation, poor handling and riding too fast. Of the poor observation crashes, 52 percent were attributable to motorcyclists and 48 percent to car and truck drivers. As with pedestrians, motorcycle crashes have decreased over the last five years but the proportion of crashes involving motorcyclists in the TNZ Wellington Region is still significantly higher than the national average.

Poor observation

The largest contributing factor to crashes on the state highway was poor observation. In total, there were 441 such crashes, 147 in urban areas and 294 in rural areas. Crashes involving poor observation occur when a driver fails to notice changes in the road ahead due to lack of attention or their attention has been distracted. Crashes where the driver fails to look properly before undertaking a manoeuvre are also classed as poor observation.

Crash factors 1999–2003



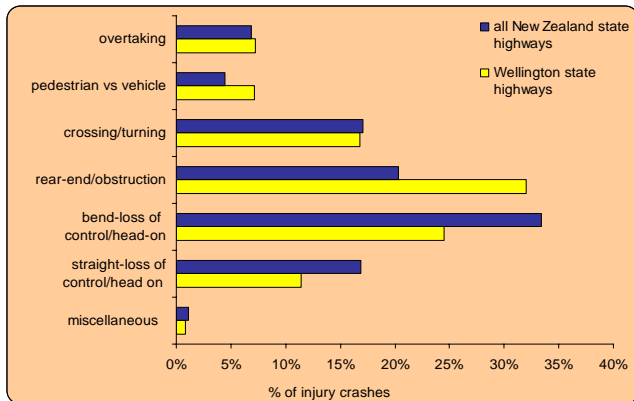
In the 1999–2003 period, poor observation was a factor in a higher percentage of crashes in the Wellington Region (35 percent) than was the case nationally (31 percent). This difference was particularly significant in rural areas where the percentage of poor observation crashes was 33 percent as opposed to 25 percent nationally. In urban areas, the proportion of these crashes in the Wellington region was lower than that recorded nationally, 42 percent as opposed to 45 percent.



Rear-end/obstruction

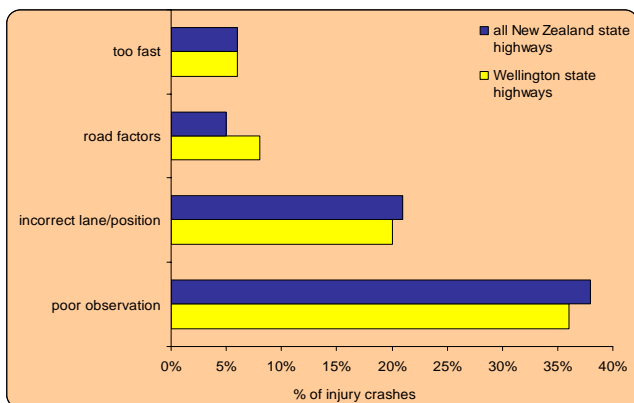
Rear-end/obstruction crashes were the most common crash type on state highways in the Wellington Region with a total of 400 occurring in the 1999–2003 period. They accounted for 32 percent of all crashes, far more than the national average of 20 percent.

Crash movement types 1999–2003



Rear-end collisions accounted for 77 percent of these crashes and collisions with obstructions accounted for 23 percent. On state highways in the Wellington Region, 77 percent of rear-end collisions occurred in rural areas as did 60 percent of collisions with obstructions. Forty-four percent of these crashes occurred at intersections in urban areas and 20 percent were in rural areas.

Factors in rear-end/obstruction crashes 1999–2003



The most common factors in rear-end/obstruction crashes were poor observation by drivers and incorrect positioning on the road. Together they accounted for 56 percent of rear-end/obstruction crashes. The figures indicate that drivers were following the vehicle in front too closely and driving too fast for the conditions.



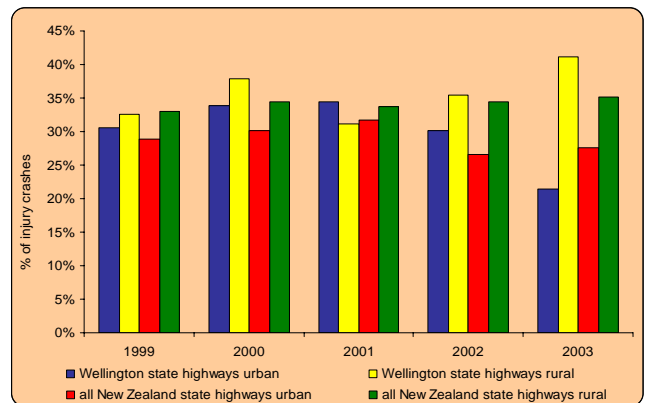
Crashes in darkness

There are two distinct trends with regard to crashes in darkness. These can be split into urban and rural environments.

In urban areas, crashes in darkness remained constant between 1999 and 2001 with 22 crashes occurring each year. They rose slightly in 2002 before falling to a 10-year low of 14 in 2003. The percentage of all urban crashes that happened in the dark in the Wellington Region was 22 percent compared with the national figure of 28 percent.

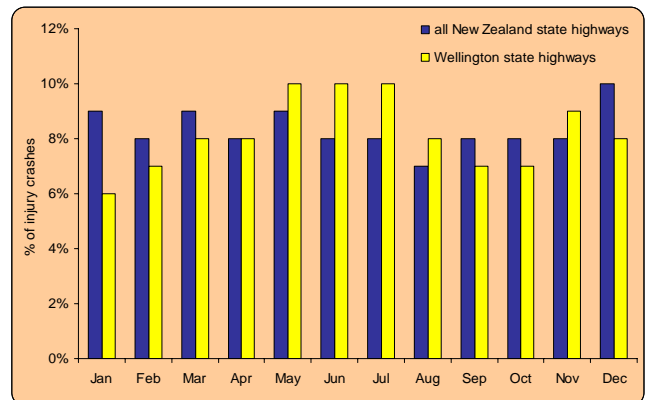
In rural areas, crashes in darkness fell to a 10-year low of 49 in 2001, but have risen constantly since then to reach 74 in 2003. Forty-one percent of rural crashes happened in the dark in the Wellington Region compared with a national figure of 35 percent.

Crashes in darkness 1999–2003



Crashes during the winter months in the Wellington Region were also higher than the national average, as shown in the chart below.

Crash months 1999–2003



Speed

The faster drivers go, the more likely they are to crash and, the greater the risk of serious injury or death.

On state highways in the Wellington Region, the percentage of crashes classed as involving excessive speed, or driving too fast for the conditions was lower than the national figure in both urban and rural areas. Between 1999 and 2003 there were 190 such crashes.

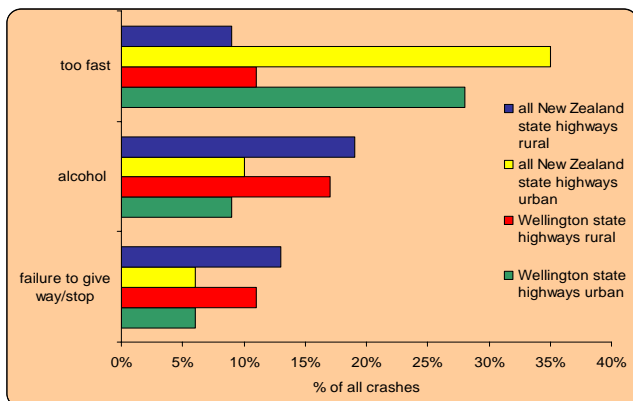


Alcohol

Alcohol has a large effect on the way people drive.

The graph below shows that the percentage of crashes involving alcohol was below the national level on all classes of road for the period 1999–2003. The percentage of crashes involving alcohol in rural areas reduced steadily between 1999 and 2002 but in 2003, returned to the 1999 level. In urban areas, the number of crashes involving alcohol has been significantly below national levels since 1996.

National issues 1999–2003



Failure to give way

For the 1999–2003 period, the percentage of crashes involving failure to give way was below national levels in both urban and rural areas. However, the overall number of crashes in rural areas has increased steadily since 1999. In 2003, 25 percent of rural crashes occurred at intersections compared with 19 percent nationally. This would suggest that in the Wellington Region there is an increasing problem at rural intersections on the state highway network.



Restraints

Wearing a safety belt reduces the risk of death or serious injury in a crash by 40 percent.

In the 2003 national restraint wearing survey, it was observed that the front seat safety belt wearing rate in the Wellington Region was 91 percent compared with the national average of 92 percent.

Contacts

Land Transport Safety Authority

Regional Manager

Demetra Kennedy

See LTSA staff contact details at bottom of page

Transit New Zealand

Road Safety Engineer

Stanley Chesterfield

PO Box 27 477

Wellington

Phone 04 801 2592

New Zealand Police

Road Policing Manger

Wellington Central

PO Box 693

Wellington

Phone 04 381 2000

Wellington Regional Office
Master Builders House
234–242 Wakefield Street
PO Box 27 249, Wellington
Phone 04 931 8900, Fax 04 931 8929
www.ltsa.govt.nz