

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 level of road trauma in the Waitaki district.

Road crashes in the Waitaki district over the five-year period killed 30 people and injured more than 450. There were 530 reported non-injury crashes over the same period.

Across most of Otago the number of crashes in 2001 rose sharply on previous years. In the region as a whole the number of injury crashes increased from 370 in 2000 to 754 last year. This is a result of a significant increase in reporting rates rather than an increase in crashes. By comparing hospital admissions it was estimated that in 2000 only 56 percent of injury crashes were reported to the LTSA. After much work that reporting figure has risen to 89 percent for Otago.

Although the Waitaki district does not show the same increase in crash numbers as other areas in the region, it is quite possible that there has been an increase in reporting rates here also. The 72 recorded injury crashes in 2001 continued the climb from a 10-year low of 44 in 1999.

Major road safety issues:

Nationally

Speed

Alcohol

Failure to give way

Restraints



2001 road toll for Waitaki district

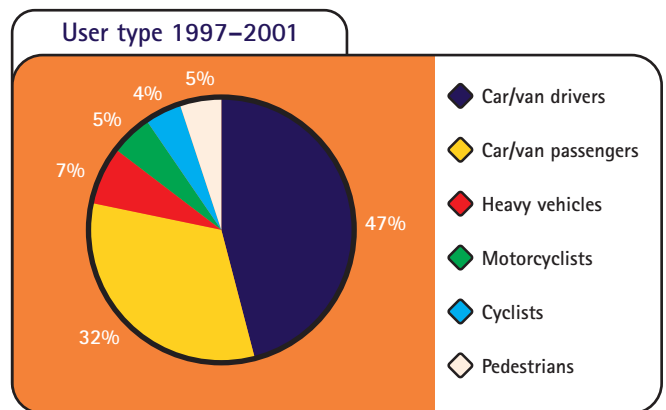


Deaths	7
Serious casualties	23
Minor casualties	84

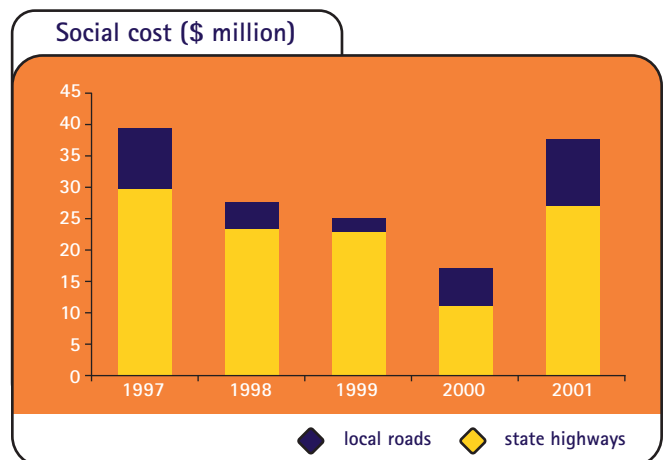


Fatal crashes	6
Serious injury crashes	15
Minor injury crashes	51
Non-injury crashes	93

Road user casualties 1997–2001

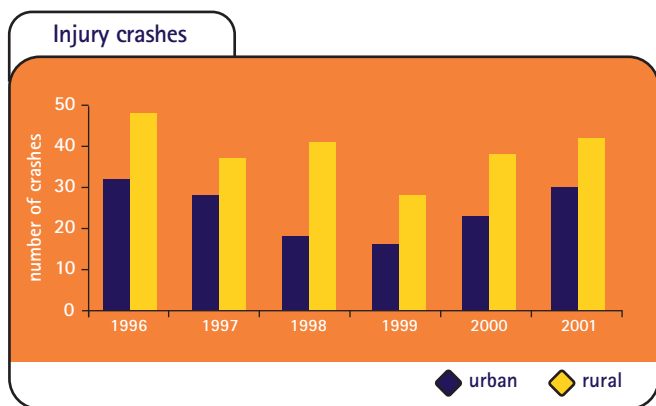


Estimated social cost of crashes*



* 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.

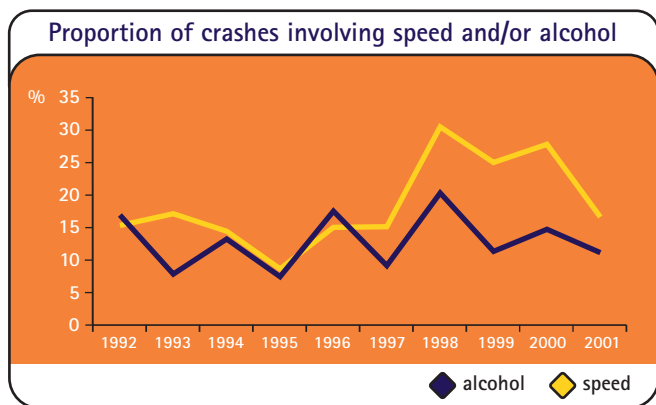
The report last year mentioned that 2000 was the first death-free year on Waitaki roads for over 20 years. Sadly this trend did not continue into 2001 when seven people died on roads in the district.



This graph shows the breakdown of injury crashes in urban and rural areas since 1996. Generally, more severe crashes occur on rural roads due to the higher speeds involved. Around one third of rural crashes in the district resulted in serious or fatal injuries.

Speed and alcohol

Alcohol remains one of the major national road safety issues, although Waitaki is no worse than any other area. In urban areas there were more alcohol-related crashes in 2001 than in the previous two years, but the numbers were small. Just 15 percent of urban injury crashes in the Waitaki district involved alcohol last year, on a par with national levels. In rural areas the number of alcohol-related crashes halved in 2001. Just under 10 percent of those crashes had alcohol as a factor, which was lower than was found nationally.



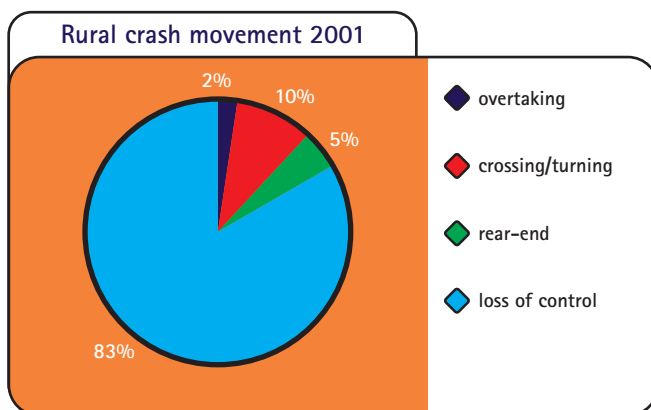
Crashes involving speed followed much the same pattern as alcohol in 2001. In urban areas the number went up slightly, in rural areas the number halved. The graph above shows the proportion of injury crashes involving speed and alcohol over the last 10 years. It can be seen that in 2001 the level fell back to what it was in the early 1990s, after a big increase in 1998.

Recommended actions

- Continue to support drink-driving strategic enforcement campaigns.
- Continue to support education campaigns aimed at drink-driving.
- Support host responsibility and designated driver programmes.
- Support enforcement campaigns aimed at speed control and education to make people more aware of the consequences of excessive speed.

Loss of control

As can be seen in the graph top left, more crashes happen on rural roads in the Waitaki district than on urban roads. In 2001, over 80 percent of these rural crashes involved a single vehicle losing control, either on a bend or straight section of road, as shown on the graph below.



During the last five years there were 160 crashes where a vehicle lost control and someone was injured. Twenty people died and over 260 were injured as a result.

Road conditions can have an effect on loss of control crashes. While the majority happened on dry roads, one quarter occurred in either wet or icy conditions. Alcohol was a factor in over 10 percent of all loss of control crashes last year, all of which were at night-time. Speed was estimated to be a factor in at least 20 percent of loss of control crashes in 2001.

Once a vehicle has lost control the result can be a head-on crash with another vehicle or, as is often the case, a collision with a fixed object. It is this part of the crash that often increases the severity. Over two thirds of rural crashes in the Waitaki district in 2001 resulted in a vehicle hitting a roadside object – anything from a fairly forgiving fence through to power poles and trees.

Recommended actions

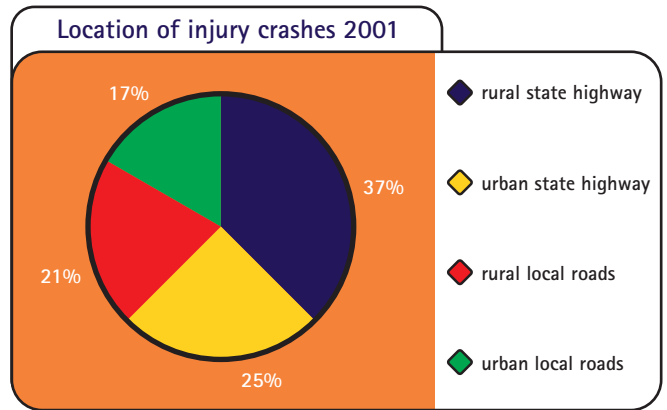
- Continue enforcement of and education on the issues of speed and alcohol to reduce crash numbers. These issues both play a part in loss of control type crashes.
- Support campaigns on adjusting speed for different road and weather conditions and on the need to be fully alert when driving.

Other issues

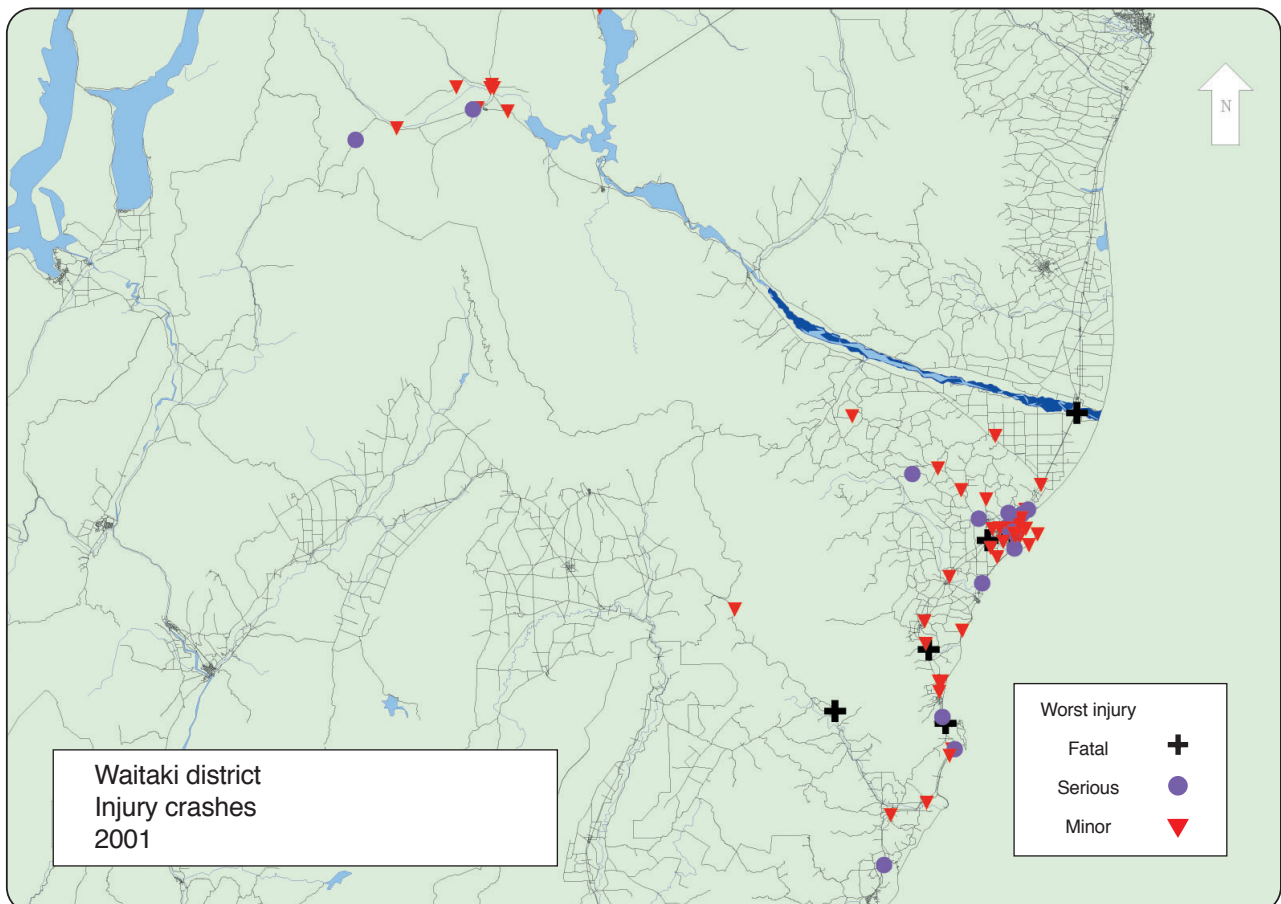
The rate of injury for both pedestrians and cyclists was below the national rate in 2001, with five of each being injured. The 10-year trend for both classes of road user is still downward. Over the last five years there was no real pattern to the age of pedestrians injured, apart from the fact that those aged 70 and above appeared to be over-represented. One third of all pedestrians injured were in this age group, which is unusually high.

Cyclists followed the national pattern in that 10 to 14 year-olds were the most likely to be injured in a crash. In Waitaki this age group was twice as likely to be injured as across the country as a whole.

The graph below shows a breakdown of where injury crashes occurred within the district last year. Unsurprisingly, the majority of crashes occurred on the state highway network, including all but one of the fatalities.



The map below shows the location of all injury crashes in the district last year although, for clarity, two near Lake Ohau are not shown. As would be expected, a large proportion of the crashes are in Oamaru. The site with the highest number of crashes over the last five years was the intersection of Thames Street and Severn Street. There were 27 reported crashes, including non-injuries, during that time.



New Zealand Road Safety Programme

Reducing trauma involves a multi-pronged approach, which includes education, engineering and enforcement. The New Zealand Road Safety Programme (NZRSP) provides funding to educate road users to change their behaviour through projects delivered by Road Safety Co-ordinators and community groups. The programme also funds the New Zealand Police for their targeted enforcement activities and support of community road safety projects. Transfund New Zealand provides funding to local authorities for roading projects through its National Land Transport Programme.

Community projects

Community funding of road safety projects aims to encourage local involvement and ownership of issues, and target local resources and effort to local risks. Central to community programmes is the need to develop and motivate local partnerships in road safety to help reduce the number of deaths and injuries in the Waitaki district.

Funding for community projects in Waitaki from the New Zealand Road Safety Programme for the 2002/2003 year has been confirmed as follows:

Project	Funding	Police hours
Road safety co-ordinator	\$38,000	
Rural driving	\$10,000	30
Urban road users	\$8,000	30

Waitaki district will also be involved this year in regionally funded projects to target high-risk issues that occur throughout Otago and Southland:

Project	Funding
Regional Tourism	\$20,000
Regional Alcohol	\$30,000
Regional Speed	\$30,000
Regional Fatigue	\$20,000
Regional Industry	\$18,000

Police enforcement

Police hours for enforcement of traffic issues are also allocated through the New Zealand Road Safety Programme. For the Waitaki district area, a further 11,430 hours will be delivered by the New Zealand Police as follows:

Project	Police hours
Strategic – alcohol/drugs, speed, restraints and visible road safety enforcement	9,220
Traffic management	1,230
School road safety education	500
Police community services	480

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