

road safety issues

Whangarei District

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 Whangarei District.

The issues in the Whangarei District cannot always be compared to the issues of the big cities but the Whangarei District can be compared with a peer group of similar authorities such as Hastings, New Plymouth and Rotorua. The Whangarei District had a population of 72,800 in 2005, which ranks it with the biggest population in the peer group. Within this group, it had the second highest proportion of crashes on higher speed or rural roads. Crash numbers have increased faster than the population growth; in 2001 there were 14 crashes per 10,000 people but this had risen to 31 in 2005.

Injury crashes in the Whangarei District

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Urban	51	68	106	97	117
Rural	66	77	96	118	108
Total	117	145	202	215	225
% SH	45%	35%	38%	35%	32%

Major road safety issues

Whangarei District

Speed

Alcohol

Intersections

Pedestrians

Nationally

Speed

Alcohol

Failure to give way

Restraints



2005 road trauma for Whangarei District



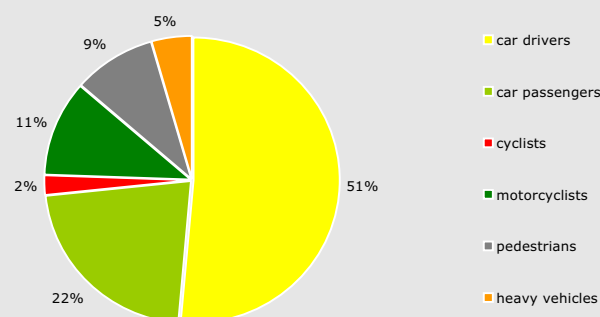
Deaths	6
Serious casualties	45
Minor casualties	241



Fatal crashes	6
Serious injury crashes	41
Minor injury crashes	178
Non-injury crashes	525

Road casualties

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.

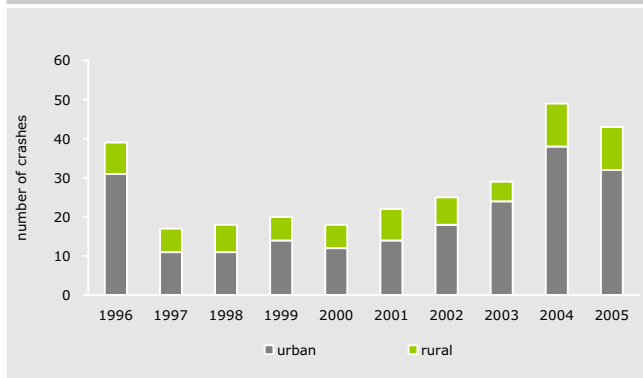
Crash types

The number of injury crashes reported in the Whangarei District has risen consistently since 2000. In 2005, 28 percent of crashes were fatal or serious; this was even higher on rural roads at 36 percent. The good news is that the proportion of fatal and serious crashes has been reducing. The severity ratio on urban roads has halved since 2000 and reduced by 40 percent on rural roads.

When compared to other districts, the Whangarei District has some areas where types of crashes are different from expected. Two crash types that were over-represented on urban roads were vehicles hitting pedestrians and rear-end crashes.

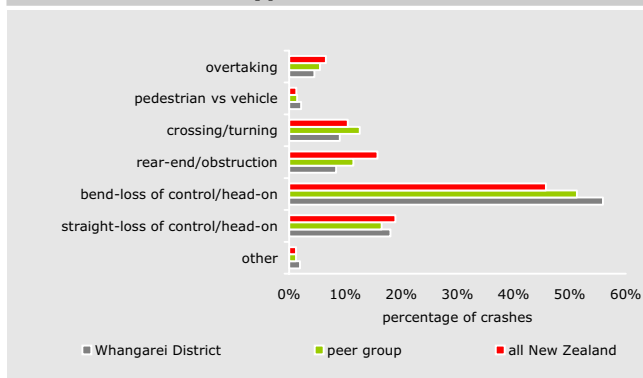
Crossing or turning crashes have been increasing, doubling in number since 2001. Some routes where these types of crashes occurred were the Nixon Street route, the Central Avenue/Walton Street route and the Kiripaka Road route.

Crossing and turning crashes



In rural areas where speed limits are higher, the movement type of losing control on bends dominated and is over-represented when compared to other local authorities. Of the rural crashes, 56 percent were of this type and a further 18 percent involved losing control on straight roads.

Rural road crash types



On Whangarei District's rural local road network (excluding state highways), an even higher 70 percent of crashes involved loss of control on bends. Key routes were Ngunguru Road, Heads Road, Maungakaramea Road, Vinegar Hill Road, Pipiwai Road and Mangapai Road.

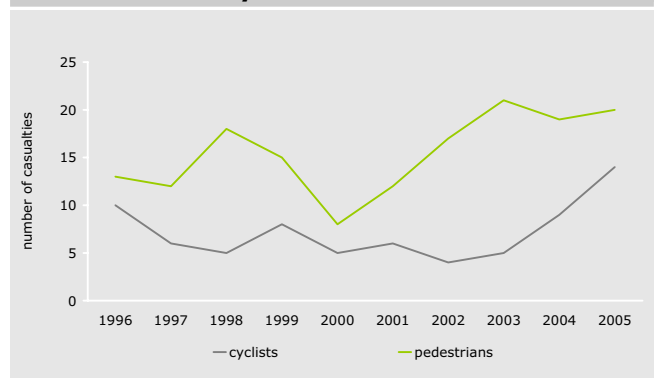
Road user types

Car drivers were the most commonly injured road users. Car and truck driver casualties have been increasing each year.

As a percentage of road users, pedestrians in urban areas were slightly over-represented. Pedestrian casualties continued to rise steadily. There are about 20 per year but notably there is a strong over-representation of children in the intermediate and secondary school age range.

Cyclist casualties have increased markedly since 2003. In 2005, casualties were three times the 2001 figure. Older cyclists in their 30s and 40s show up along with very young cyclists (under 10 years).

Pedestrian and cyclist crashes

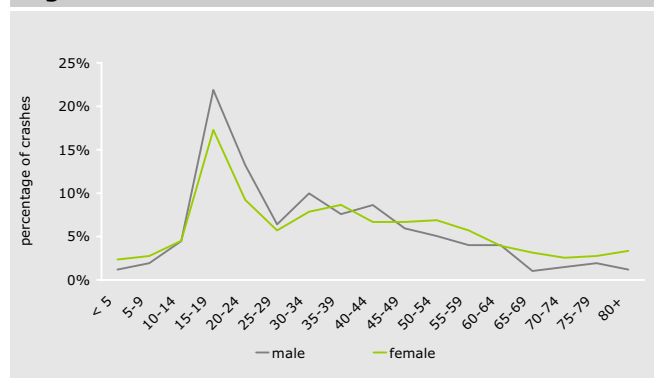


Passenger casualties have reduced markedly since 2001. This is possibly due to improved levels of safety belt wearing in the Whangarei District.

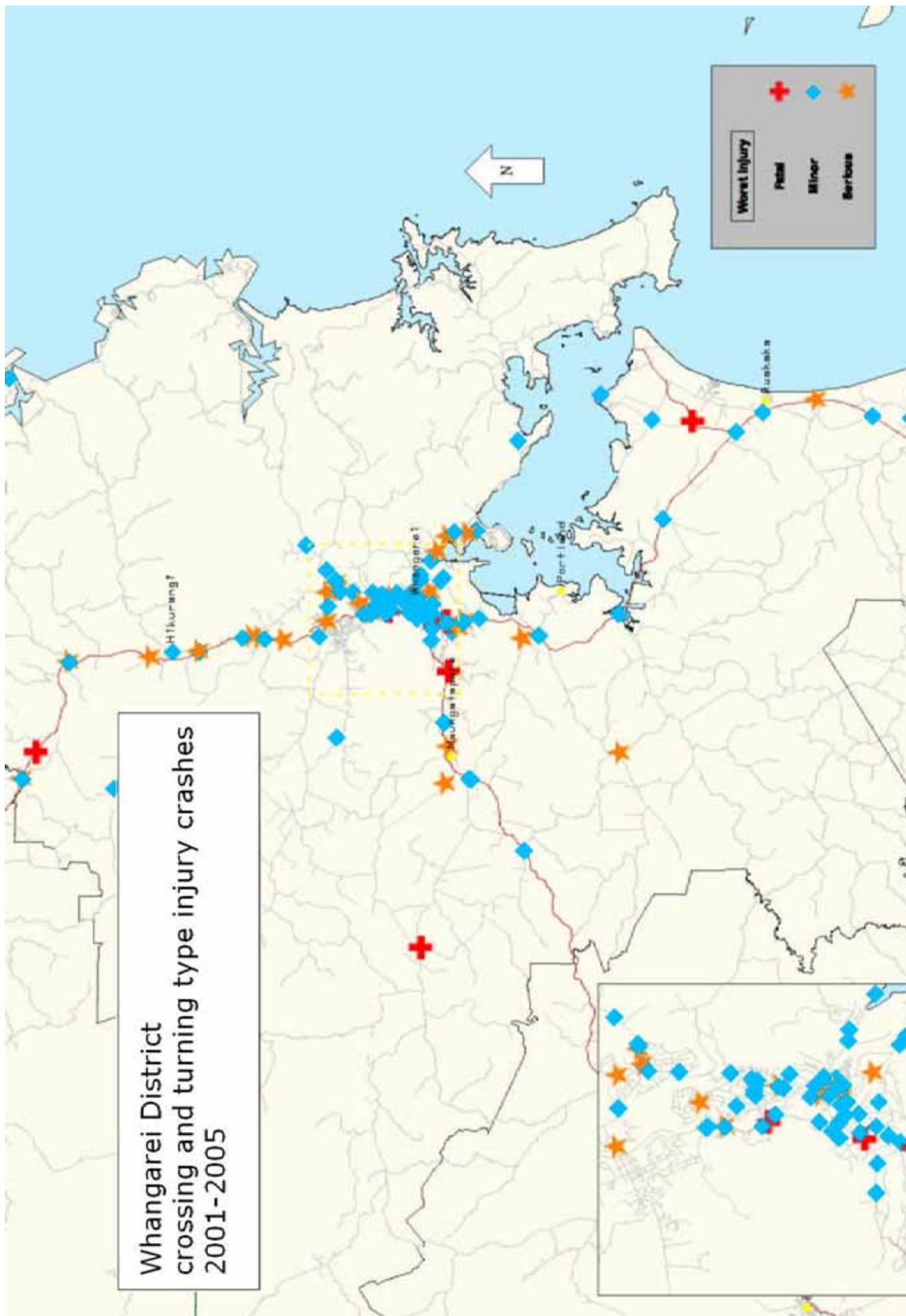
Motorcyclists now make up a significant proportion of the casualties in the Whangarei District.

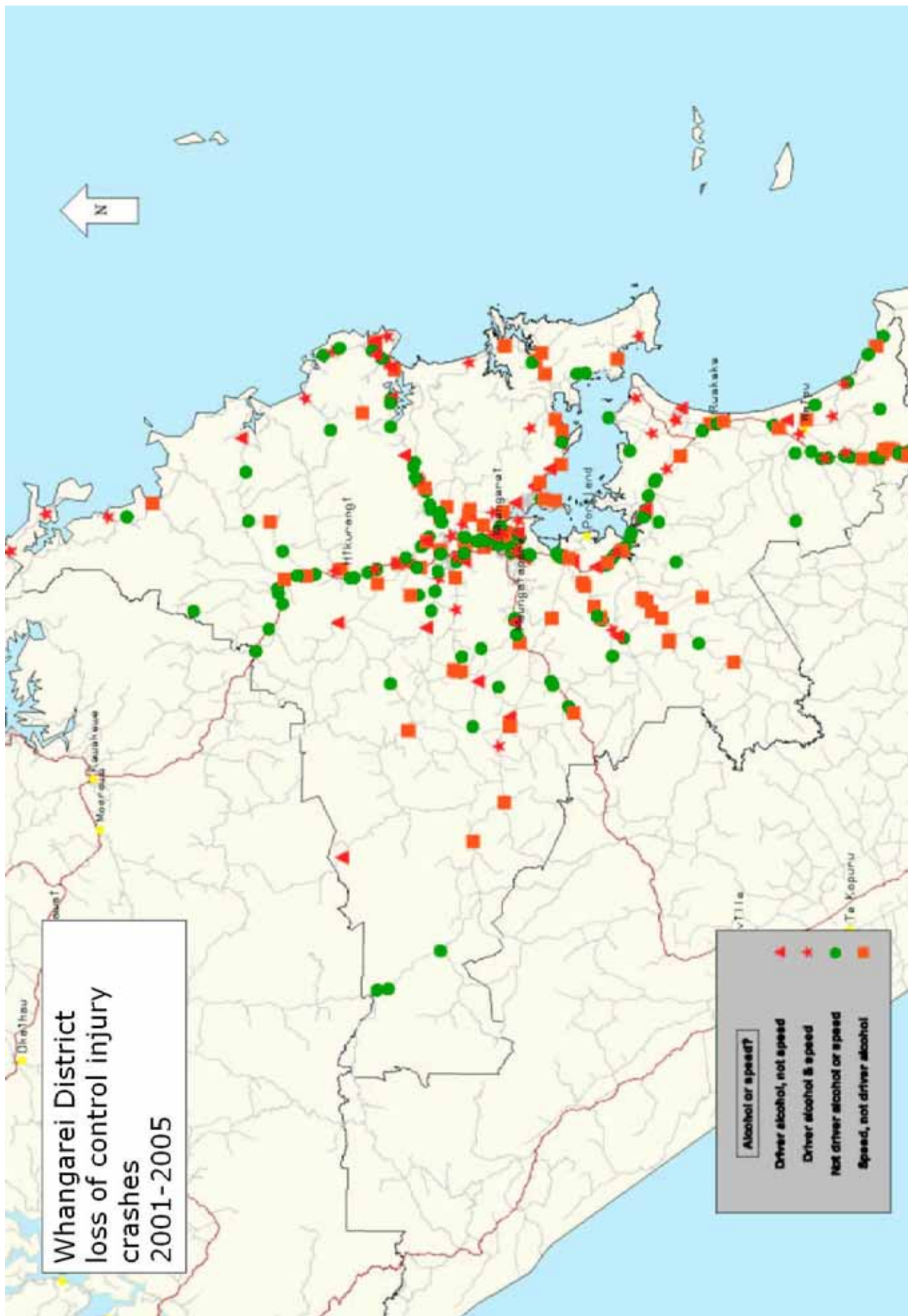
As in most parts of New Zealand, novice drivers from 15 to 19 years old were most commonly injured. Also males aged 30-45 and females aged 45-60 were over-represented as a proportion of casualties.

Age of casualties



Males previously dominated the casualty figures but this has changed over recent years. In fact, female casualties outnumbered males in urban areas in 2005.





Crash factors

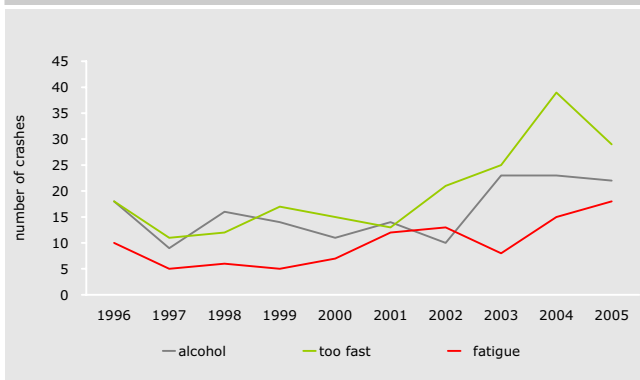
Crashes were often caused by drivers not paying attention, not being observant or checking adequately and poor vehicle handling skills. Failing to give way or stop, not checking and poor handling factors have risen considerably in the Whangarei District over the past few years. These factors are also common causes throughout New Zealand.

In the Whangarei District, pedestrian factors and road factors were over-represented in urban areas with cyclist factors also increasing. Speed as a factor in urban crashes has been reducing.

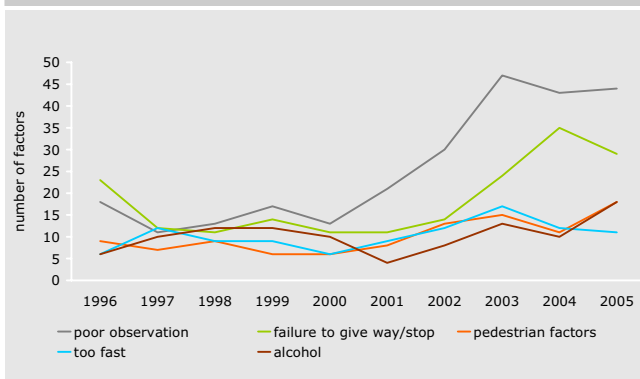
Speed, alcohol and fatigue were over-represented in rural crashes. Many crashes involved a combination of more than one factor.

With 18 percent of crashes involving alcohol, the Whangarei District is above the national average. National surveys have shown that Northland has the second highest rate of drivers travelling late at night with excessive alcohol levels. Northland is first equal for the percentage of crashes involving alcohol on the open road and second equal for urban areas.

Main rural crash factors



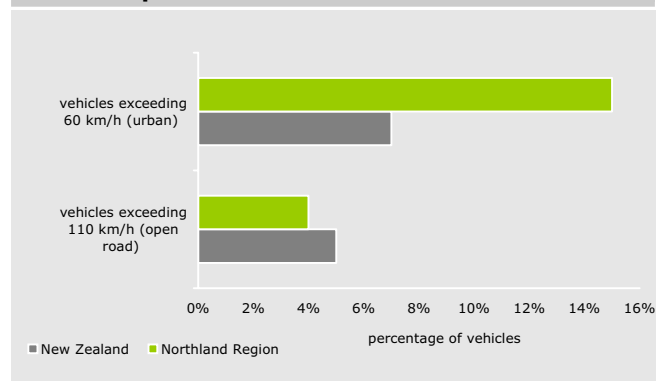
Main urban crash factors



The Whangarei District now has double the number of speed-related crashes on rural roads compared with 2001. Northland generally has a high number of speed-related crashes, not just on the open road but in urban areas too. Excessive speed for the conditions often contributes to the high number of crashes in the Whangarei District where drivers lose control.

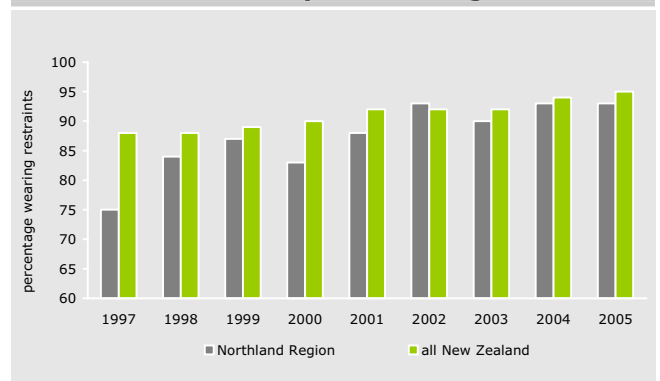
As well as drivers travelling at speeds too fast for the conditions, speed can also relate to drivers exceeding the posted speed limit. Observance of open road speed limits in Northland has improved but a high percentage of drivers are exceeding urban speed limits.

Vehicle speeds



Wearing a safety belt will reduce the chance of injury or death if a crash does occur and the wearing of safety belts in the Whangarei District has improved noticeably. Recent surveys showed 97 percent of adults were wearing front safety belts and 100 percent of children surveyed were in restraints.

Front seat adult safety belt wearing rate



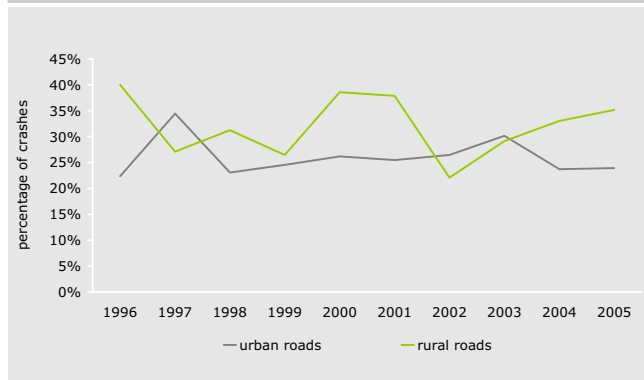
The higher wearing rate may be one factor in the reduction of passenger casualties and the reducing proportion of fatal and serious crashes.

Road and environmental factors

In the Whangarei District, the proportion of rural crashes that occur on the local authority roads (off the state highway network) has been increasing year by year. In 2005, the proportion of rural crashes that occurred on Whangarei District's local authority roads was 53 percent compared with 2001 when it was 36 percent.

Crashes on wet roads are above average with over one-third of rural crashes occurring on wet roads.

Wet road crashes

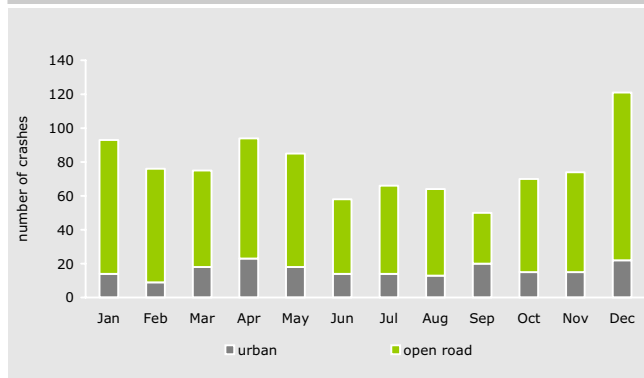


Hitting a solid roadside object can increase the possibility of injury or the severity of injury. Over 60 percent of the Whangarei District's rural crashes resulted in a roadside object being struck. Objects like ditches or trees were over-represented when compared to other districts.

Crashes on unsealed roads only made up about six percent of crashes.

December is the most common month for crashes and Saturday is the most common day. However, there were more crashes during the week than average. Generally, Thursday afternoons is when more crashes occur.

Crashes by month



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