

Road Safety Factsheet

November 2017

Road Crashes Overview

Roads are essential to our everyday lives. We all use them in some way, by driving, riding, walking or travelling as a passenger, and we depend on them to obtain goods and services.

Unfortunately, this comes at a price, which includes people being killed and injured. The table below provides an overview of the numbers of people killed or injured on the roads in Great Britain in 2016, by road user group.

Table 1: Reported road casualties by severity and road user group, 2016¹

	Killed	Seriously injured	All severities
Pedestrians	448	5,140	23,550
Pedal cyclists	102	3,397	18,477
Motorcycle users	319	5,533	19,297
Car occupants	816	8,975	109,046
Total*	1,792	24,101	181,384

*includes all road users

Car occupants

Covering 252.6 billion vehicle miles in 2016, it is unsurprising that car occupants make up 46% of road deaths in Great Britain². 816 car occupants were killed, 8,975 were seriously injured and 99,255 were slightly injured. Of the 109,046 car occupant casualties in 2016, 68% were drivers and 32% were passengers.

Young drivers are more likely to crash and injure themselves, their passengers and other road users than more experienced drivers. Young drivers aged 17-24 make up only 7% of UK full driving licence holders, yet they were involved in 20% of fatal or serious collisions in which they were the driver in 2016³.

For more information on driver safety, visit: <https://www.rospa.com/road-safety/advice/drivers/>

For information on young driver safety, visit: <https://www.rospa.com/road-safety/advice/young-drivers/>

Motorcyclists

Injuries to motorcyclists are out of proportion with their presence on the roads. Although motorcyclists make up just 1% of vehicle traffic, they account for 18% of all road user deaths. In 2016, 319 motorcyclists were killed, 5,553 were seriously injured and 13,425 were slightly injured in road collisions in Great Britain². However, motorcycle deaths and serious injuries have been falling since 2008 when 493 motorcyclists were killed and 5,556 were seriously injured on the roads⁴.

For motorcyclists, the risk of being killed in a road traffic accident is roughly 38 times more likely than a car occupant, per mile ridden. This is largely due to the relative inexperience and vulnerability of motorcyclists who tend to be younger than drivers. Young riders represent 15% of motorcyclists but make up more than 38% of motorcycle rider casualties⁴. In an attempt to reduce the number of young motorcyclists injured, legislation requires some compulsory basic training, before being allowed to drive on the highway with 'L' plates. This is followed by a road test, where the examiner follows the rider and they are linked by helmet radios.

For more information on motorcyclists, visit: <https://www.rospa.com/road-safety/advice/motorcyclists/>

Pedal cyclists

The number of people cycling has increased significantly in recent years, with 3.5 billion vehicle miles cycled on Britain's roads each year².

Around six per cent of all people killed on the roads are pedal cyclists. Most pedal cycle accidents occur during daylight, with 44% occurring on a weekday in the morning or evening peak times from 7am-9am and 3pm-7pm. Around 77% of collisions occur on built up roads with a speed limit of 30mph and almost two-thirds happen at or near a junction. These accidents typically involve a collision with another vehicle, usually a car².

The highest proportion of pedal cyclists killed or injured are in the 12 to 15 years age group and overall, males are four times more likely to be injured while cycling than females, probably because they ride more and take greater risks. The most common accidents, in which cyclists are involved are: turning right, emerging from a driveway, failing to give way at a junction, young cyclists falling off cycles (no other vehicle involved) or a motor vehicle failing to give way at a junction.

For more information on pedal cyclists, visit: <https://www.rospa.com/road-safety/advice/pedal-cyclists/>

Pedestrians

We are all pedestrians at some time; most of us walk across a road at least once a day, and most pedestrian casualties happen in built up areas. Pedestrians account for about 13% of road accident casualties, but 25% of all road deaths².

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Since pedestrians have no protective shell, such as a car body, they suffer more severe injuries in any collision with a vehicle. 26% of pedestrian casualties in 2016 were aged between 0 and 15. In 2015, 511 pedestrians aged 0-16 were killed or seriously injured in an accident between 7:30 and 8:59am and 3:00 and 4:59pm on a school day⁵.

Those most at risk are 5 to 14 year olds, probably because they are inexperienced and more likely to take risks. Nearly one third of child pedestrian casualties are on their way to or from school at the time of the accident². As children become more independent and start to travel on their own, this corresponds with a rise in the casualty rate from the ages of 9-12⁶.

For more information on pedestrians, visit: <https://www.rospa.com/road-safety/advice/pedestrians/>

The 'why' of road accidents

Most road accidents have several causes, the main ones being human error, environmental problems and mechanical faults.

Human error is a factor in 95% of all road accidents. It can take many forms:

- **Alcohol**- Alcohol can have a devastating effect on driving ability. It is the biggest single factor in road deaths, especially among young people. It adversely affects decision-making, self-criticism, balance, co-ordination, sight, touch, hearing and judgement. For more information, visit: <https://www.rospa.com/rospaweb/docs/advice-services/road-safety/drivers/drinking-and-driving.pdf>
- **Inexperience**- With young people particularly, this can lead to mistakes, errors of judgement and irresponsible behaviour, especially driving too fast.
- **Tiredness/illness**- This reduces a road user's ability to cope with road conditions and situations. For more information, visit: <https://www.rospa.com/road-safety/advice/drivers/fatigue/road-accidents/>
- **Other reasons (children 0-15 years)** include- Poor parental/adult supervision, small physical stature, stress or being upset, curiosity and taking risks, spirit of adventure, ignorance of the world and its dangers, lack of knowledge and training, inability to judge speed and distance, lack of attention, being easily distracted. All of these can result in children dashing out into the road without looking.
- **Other reasons (Adults) include**- Impatience, stress, carelessness, negligence, absentmindedness, irresponsible behaviour, inadequate knowledge and training, ageing, drugs and medicines, a general disregard for personal health and safety.

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The road environment (road and junction design, and road surfaces) is a factor in around 12% of road accidents⁷.

- **Road design**- busy junctions that are fine for cars may be dangerous for other road users.
- **Road surface**- potholes, bumps and badly maintained roads can cause problems, especially for cyclists. If the road surface is wet and slippery, it takes longer to stop when braking. Road surface conditions, such as defects in the road surface, diesel spills and faulty manhole covers, are a also concern often raised by motorcyclists. They are more likely to skid on both wet and dry road surfaces, and in particular are put at greater risk by mud or oil on the road. Snow and ice seem to affect car drivers as much as motorcyclists although it is likely that motorcycle use falls significantly when ice and snow make riding very difficult and unpleasant.

Vehicle defects are a factor in 2% of road accidents⁷. This is a relatively small factor because of annual 'M.o.T.' tests to check vehicles' roadworthiness and improved vehicle construction.

References

¹ Department for Transport (2017) 'Table RAS30001: Reported road casualties by road user type and severity, Great Britain'

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² Department for Transport (2017) 'Reported road casualties in Great Britain: 2016 annual report'

URL: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/648081/rrcgb2016-01.pdf Date Accessed: 10/11/2017.

³ Department for Transport (2017) 'Table RAS30011: Reported Killed or Seriously Injured Casualties by Gender, Road User Type and Age'

URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/ras30-reported-casualties-in-road-accidents> Date Accessed: 10/11/2017.

⁴ Think (not dated) 'Motorcycling'

URL: <http://think.direct.gov.uk/motorcycles.html> Date Accessed: 10/11/2017.

⁵ Department for Transport (2016) 'Table RAS30030: Reported child casualties in accidents occurring between 7:30 and 8:59am or between 3:00 and 4:59pm on a school day, by road user type, severity, gender and age, Great Britain, 2015'

URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/ras30-reported-casualties-in-road-accidents> Date Accessed: 14/11/2017.

⁶ Public Health England (2016) 'Road injury prevention: resources to support schools to promote safe active travel'

URL: <https://www.rospace.com/rospaweb/docs/advice-services/road-safety/teachers/road-injury-prevention.pdf> Date Accessed: 14/11/2017.

⁷ Department for Transport (2017) 'Table RAS50005: Contributory factors in reported accidents by severity, Great Britain, 2016'

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