Contents

Each year, the NCDOT releases its data regarding motor vehicle crashes, injuries, and fatalities from the prior year.

It truly is a mountain of data, and they do an excellent job compiling and publishing it. What's always missing, for us, is the human context.

We work with people who have been injured each day, dealing with the aftermath of crashes that injure or kill our North Carolina neighbors. Data is incredibly valuable, but at the same time, it reduces all that pain and tragedy to statistics. There's so much information that, sometimes, the human cost — and the useful trends and things we can do to change them — get lost in a sea of numbers.

That shouldn't happen. Our team has looked through the numbers and tried to tease out the most important statistics, trends, and revelations from the NCDOT's findings.

It is my hope that this book will highlight critical facts that point to problem areas. After all, we want to see fewer people injured and killed on our roads. We also want this data to be easily understood so that journalists, public servants, and educators can put it to good use.

This data is truly eye-opening. For example, our report shows:

- Crashes and injuries on the road dropped in 2020, but fatalities surged dramatically.

- Just 5% of North Carolina counties accounted for 24% of road fatalities.

- Despite explosive population growth in North Carolina over the past 20 years, alcohol-related crashes have actually declined over that period. But that decline has stopped in recent years.

I hope you find the information throughout this report enlightening and useful and that you stay safe on North Carolina's roads.

Jim Farrin

Main Findings — NC 2020 Traffic Crash Facts Report

Main Takeaways:

- **Crashes dropped, but fatalities surged in 2020.** In a year when there was reduced traffic on the roads, North Carolina experienced an alarming surge in vehicle fatalities. Though total reported traffic crashes and people injured in 2020 decreased 13% and 16%, respectively, fatalities jumped 13% compared to 2019, reaching a 13-year high. *Learn more in Section 2.*

- **Labor Day was the deadliest holiday for North Carolina motorists.** Of the 28 car crash fatalities over the Labor Day holiday, almost half were alcohol-related, and injuries in alcohol-related car crashes were higher than in other 2020 holidays. *Learn more in Section 3.*

- **Drug use reported as a contributing circumstance of all crashes rose dramatically (40%) in 2020.** This rise continued its long-standing annual reported climb, and alcohol use as a contributing factor in fatal crashes also increased (17%) over 2019. *Learn more in Section 6.*

- **The top cause of NC crashes in 2020 was drivers failing to reduce speed.** Authorities attributed 25.1% of all crash fatalities to speeding. *Learn more in Section 4.*

- **Mecklenburg, Wake, Guilford, Cumberland, and Robeson counties had a disproportionate share of fatal crashes in NC.** Despite making up just 5% of NC counties, they accounted for 24% of the state's 1,658 deaths. *Learn more in Section 2.*

Summary of Findings From Each Section

We have combed through the DMV's North Carolina 2020 Traffic Crash Facts report and highlighted a few key facts from each section on the following page.

SECTION 2:

North Carolina's Most (and Least) Dangerous Cities and Counties

Did you know that in 2020:

- The report ranked Robeson County as NC's most dangerous county for drivers for the fourth year in a row.
- Mecklenburg County experienced the most car crashes, injuries, and fatalities.

SECTION 3:

North Carolina Roads: What Holidays and Months Are Most Dangerous?

Did you know that in 2020:

- More car crashes occurred over the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays than any other holiday.
- August was the deadliest month on NC roads.

SECTION 4:

The Leading Causes of Car Crashes in North Carolina

Did you know that in 2020:

- Alcohol-related car crashes, injuries, and fatalities rose in 2020.
- Errant, reckless, negligent and/or aggressive driving were reported as most frequently contributing to fatal crashes.

SECTION 5:

Crashes Involving Teens

Did you know that in 2020:

- Although teens were involved in fewer total crashes and crashes that resulted in an injury, they were involved in more fatal crashes than in 2019.
- Lane departure was cited more than speed and alcohol in crashes that killed teens.

SECTION 6:

The Impact of Alcohol and Drug Use on North Carolina Road Safety

Did you know that in 2020:

- Drivers in the 20-29 year age group were involved in the most alcohol-related car crashes.
- Teen fatalities in alcohol-related car crashes soared.

SECTION 7:

Crashes by Vehicle Type

Did you know that in 2020:

- July was the safest month for motorcyclists.
- SUVs were involved in fewer injury accidents than pickup trucks.
- Mecklenburg County had nearly twice the number of school bus crashes as any other county.

SECTION 8:

Long-Term Trends

Did you know that:

- October continued to be the worst month for injuries resulting from a car crash.
- Overall driving safety is actually improving in the state.

We encourage you to read each of the following sections for more noteworthy details, facts, and graphs about the safety of North Carolina's roads.

Source: North Carolina Department of Transportation

North Carolina's Most (and Least) Dangerous Cities and Counties

Main Takeaways:

- **Despite the drop in crash and injury numbers in 2020, fatalities rose 13% across the state.** Meanwhile, just five of North Carolina's 100 counties (Mecklenburg, Wake, Guilford, Cumberland, and Robeson) accounted for 24% of road fatalities.

- **The fatal crash rate tended to be higher outside of the denser population centers.** For example, Mecklenburg County was 12th in total crash rate, but 97th in fatal crash rate and 90th in crash severity.

- **Robeson County is the deadliest county in North Carolina when population is factored in.** The county has the 24th most residents (131,315) but the 5th most fatalities (53). This is the fourth straight year Robeson County has led in that statistic.

- **Pitt had the largest percentage increase in fatalities in 2020.** Fatalities in the county jumped 181% compared to 2019, the biggest increase among counties with at least 20 total deaths.

- **Graham County had the state's highest average cost per crash.** Despite being 85th in the state for highest total crash cost, Graham County was No. 1 in average cost per crash, per person, and per 100,000 vehicle miles traveled, and it had the second highest cost per vehicle.

- **Durham County had the highest crash rate in the state.** The county averaged 68.17 crashes per 1,000 registered vehicles in 2020.

Crashes and Injuries Fell, But Fatalities Surged

Perhaps not surprisingly due to the pandemic and a sudden reduction in traffic on the roads, total crashes and total injuries from crashes dropped 13% and 16%, respectively, when comparing 2020 figures to 2019. But unfortunately, fatalities surged by 13%.

Why is this? James Scott Farrin attorney Jeremy Maddox suggested in his article, "Did Government COVID Response Result in More Traffic Deaths?" that it may be because of the type of people who ventured out onto NC roads during the pandemic. "People who were less risk-averse, and did not appreciably alter their behaviors, were more likely to be on those roads more often and were more likely to engage in behaviors including impaired driving and not wearing their seat belts," he wrote.

Ranking the Most Dangerous and Safest Counties for Driving

We all know that highly populated counties will tend to have the most fatalities, but that's usually because of overall traffic volume rather than because they are particularly unsafe to drive in. The question is, how does one determine which NC counties are the most dangerous to drive in, and which are the safest? To answer that question, we've created the Farrin Danger Index to rank them. The higher the score, the more dangerous the county is. A full explanation of the FDI is located at the end of this section.

Here is how we ranked NC counties based on our FDI score.

TOP 10 MOST DANGEROUS COUNTIES

	COUNTY	FARRIN DANGER INDEX[1]
1	HOKE	654
2	PITT	598
3	HARNETT	597
4	ROBESON	595
5	EDGECOMBE	584
6	LENOIR	584
7	CLEVELAND	574
8	WAYNE	574
9	GRAHAM	572
10	VANCE	572

TOP 10 SAFEST COUNTIES

	COUNTY	FARRIN DANGER INDEX[1]
1	TYRELL	90
2	POLK	126
3	SWAIN	133
4	CURRITUCK	135
5	CAMDEN	139
6	WASHINGTON	147
7	AVERY	178
8	HAYWOOD	179
9	MCDOWELL	182
10	DARE	192

[1]*The Farrin Danger Index (FDI) is a score that rates how dangerous counties are based on several factors, including reported crashes, crash severity, crash rates based on population, and estimated vehicle miles traveled. A detailed description of our formula is included at the end of this section. The higher the score, the more likely we believe you are to be involved in a crash involving injury or death in that county, based on NCDOT statistics.*

DEADLIEST COUNTIES BY # OF FATALITIES IN 2020

	POPULATION	COUNTY	CRASHES	INJURY CRASHES	TOTAL INJURIES	FATALITIES	% CHANGE VS 2019
1	1,115,482	MECKLENBURG	30,794	9,412	15,122	125	+32.9%
2	1,129,410	WAKE	25,546	6,556	10,042	88	+15.7%
3	541,299	GUILFORD	12,859	4,790	7,309	73	+14.0%
4	334,728	CUMBERLAND	8,341	2,586	4,014	58	+1.7%
5	116,530	ROBESON	3,894	1,131	1,802	53	+23.3%

The following charts highlight specific stats that provide further context on the overall risk of driving in certain NC counties.

TOP 5 COUNTIES WITH SHORTEST AVERAGE TIME TO NEXT FATALITY

	COUNTY	HOURS TO NEXT FATALITY
1	MECKLENBURG	76.8
2	WAKE	110.0
3	GUILFORD	128.8
4	CUMBERLAND	163.2
5	ROBESON	176.4

TOP 5 COUNTIES WITH THE HIGHEST AVERAGE COST PER CRASH

	COUNTY	AVERAGE $ PER CRASH
1	GRAHAM	$293,526
2	WARREN	$214,762
3	NORTHAMPTON	$202,283
4	PERQUIMANS	$201,340
5	YANCEY	$190,053
	ALL OF NC	$87,902

TOP 5 COUNTIES IN FATALITIES PER 100,000 VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED

	COUNTY	FATALITY RATE*	CHANGE FROM LAST YEAR
1	GRAHAM	4.43	—
2	CASWELL	2.72	+2
3	HOKE	2.70	—
4	NORTHAMPTON	2.54	-2
5	WARREN	2.33	+24
	ALL OF NC	1.17	

Fatalities per 100 thousand vehicle miles traveled (VMT)

About the Farrin Danger Index

So what is the Farrin Danger Index? It's a rating for each county that takes into account multiple statistics from the published NCDOT data and weights those relating to injuries and fatalities much higher. The end result is a score that quantifies your approximate risk of getting into a crash that causes an injury or a fatality compared to other counties in North Carolina.

We have provided our formula below so you can understand the Farrin Danger Index for yourself. We believe this metric is the best way to measure the relative danger to someone's "life and limb" when driving in each county.

The lower the FDI score, the safer a county is in our estimation; a higher score means a higher likelihood of a dangerous or even life-threatening crash on a per-person basis.

Farrin Danger Index Formula and Example

Using the NC Crash Facts Report published by the state, we took the state's rankings and statistics and aggregated them as follows:

(100 – **Estimated VMT (vehicle miles traveled) statewide ranking**) +

(100 – **Crash Rate per VMT statewide ranking**) +

(100 – **Non-Fatal Injury Crash Rate per VMT statewide ranking** x 2) +

(100 – **Fatal Injury Crash Rate per VMT statewide ranking** x 3) +

(% of **Alcohol-Related Crashes** x 10) = **FDI**

For example, here is the calculation for Mecklenburg County:

(100 – 1 = 99) +

(100 – 12 = 88) +

(100 – 6 = 94 x 2 = 188) +

(100 – 97 = 3 x 3 = 9) +

(2.3 x 10 = 23) = 407

Mecklenburg County FDI = 407

This rating puts Mecklenburg County right in the middle of the pack at 49th out of 100 counties. That's because while Mecklenburg County ranks near the top when it comes to VMT, crash rate per VMT, and non-fatal injury crash rate, it has one of the lowest rates in the state for fatalities — possibly because as home to the largest city in North Carolina, Charlotte, it has more low-speed crashes that result in injury but not death.

Source: North Carolina Department of Transportation

North Carolina Roads: What Holidays and Months Are Most Dangerous?

Main Takeaways:

- **August, October, and November were the most dangerous months for drivers.** The highest number of reported motor vehicle crashes occurred in November and the highest number of reported crash injuries happened in October. However, the state recorded the highest number of crash fatalities in 2020 in the month of August, which has not happened in over a decade.

- **Most crashes happened over Thanksgiving and Christmas.** In 2020, the highest number of accidents (2,828) and crash injuries (1,179) occurred December 23-27. Those figures narrowly edged out Thanksgiving in both of those categories.

- **Labor Day was the deadliest holiday in 2020 for motorists.** In 2020, there were 28 car crash fatalities over Labor Day, 75% more than in the previous year, even though there were fewer accidents than in 2019.

- **Alcohol played a significant role in car accidents over the Labor Day holiday.** Almost half (43%) of those deaths were in alcohol-related crashes. Injuries in alcohol-related crashes (115) were also higher than during any other 2020 holiday.

Labor Day Takes Title for Deadliest Holiday Weekend

As families hit the roads to visit relatives over the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, car accidents typically increase, along with the unfortunate injuries and tragic deaths related to the wrecks. What was different in 2020 was that another holiday, Labor Day, claimed the unwanted title of 'deadliest.'

2020 HOLIDAY VEHICLE CRASHES, INJURIES & FATALITIES		CRASHES	INJURIES FROM CRASHES	FATALITIES FROM CRASHES	INJURIES FROM ALCOHOL-RELATED CRASHES	FATALITIES FROM ALCOHOL-RELATED CRASHES
	NEW YEARS	702	321	7	42	4
	EASTER	1,193	513	19	66	4
	MEMORIAL DAY	1,641	800	9	104	1
	FOURTH OF JULY	1,453	725	20	101	10
	LABOR DAY	1,854	915	28	115	12
Source: North Carolina Department of Transportation	THANKSGIVING	2,713	1,131	23	108	4
	CHRISTMAS	2,828	1,179	23	95	6

Summer Months Were Deadliest Time for NC Drivers in 2020

After a major dip in overall crashes from February to April, likely due to the sudden shutdowns from the pandemic, crashes quickly rose again during the summer months. Fatalities increased as well, peaking in August.

MONTHLY CAR CRASHES, INJURIES, & FATALITIES IN 2020

Source: North Carolina Department of Transportation
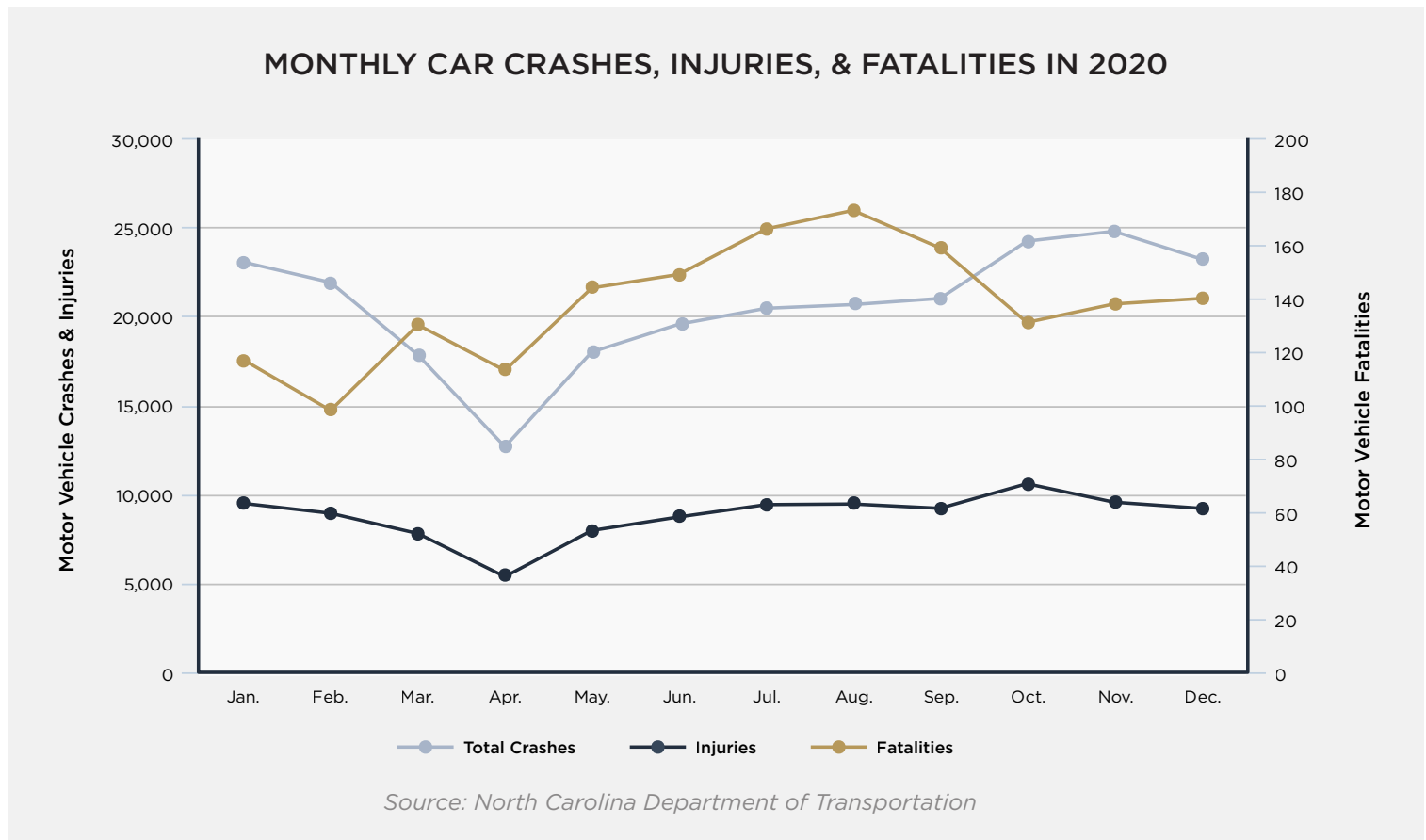
August Takes Over as the Deadliest Month on NC Roads

Fall is usually the most dangerous season to drive in North Carolina, and October has consistently been the month with the highest number of motor vehicle injuries. November has both the highest 5-year average for reported motor vehicle crashes and the highest number of accidents in 2020.

Prior to 2020, October had the highest 5-year average of vehicle fatalities. But in 2020, for the first time since 2006, August was the month with the most reported motor vehicle fatalities – hitting an alarming all-time high of 173 deaths.
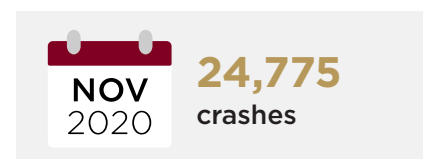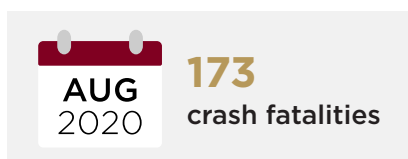
AUG 2020	**173** crash fatalities	OCT 2020	**10,567** crash injuries	NOV 2020	**24,775** crashes

Source: North Carolina Department of Transportation

The Leading Causes of Car Crashes in North Carolina

Main Takeaways:

- **Driving too fast was the top cause of NC crashes in 2020.** The state cited "failure to reduce speed" on 25.1% of all crash fatalities.

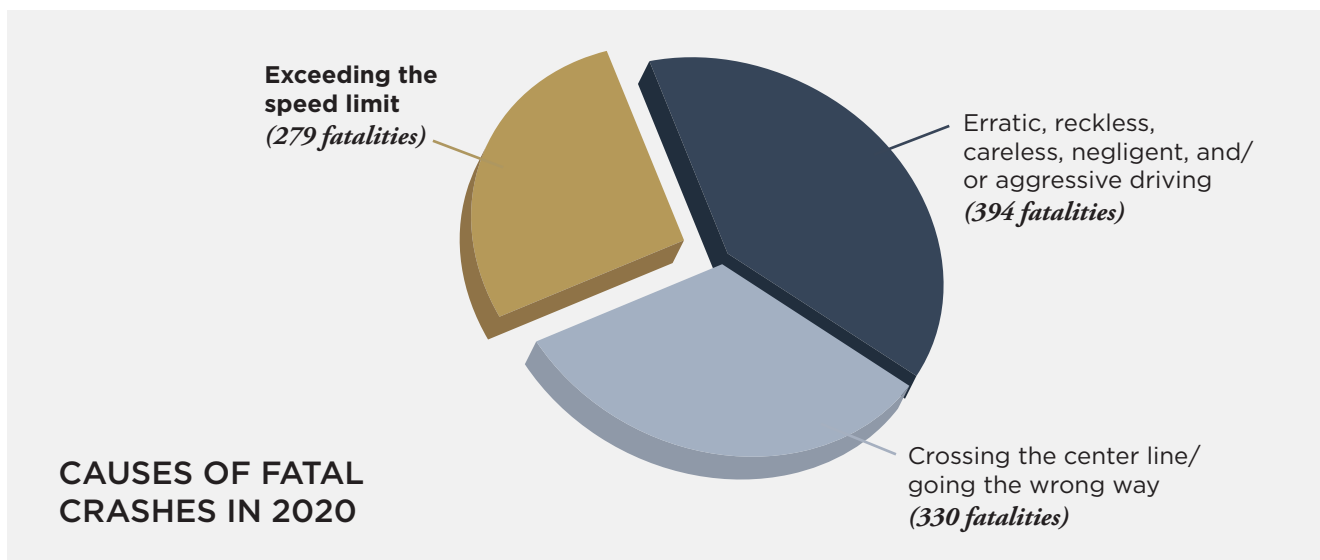- **Speeding and distracted driving caused the vast majority of crashes.** For 2020, the top two contributing circumstances to crashes in North Carolina – speed and inattention – were responsible for nearly as many crashes (97,698) as the next eight causes combined (112,080).

- **Drunk driving crashes dropped slightly, and have been relatively flat in recent years.** There were 11,475 crashes related to alcohol in 2020, which was about the same as in 2015 (11,487).

- **From 2015-2019, the average number of crashes related to distracted driving was nearly 54,000.** In 2020, the number of crashes was just over 44,000.

Speed Kills

Across any ranking metric, speeding drivers caused a staggering amount of damage on North Carolina roadways. Overall, if North Carolina drivers had kept to the speed limit (and reduced speed in poor driving conditions), there would have been nearly 75,000 fewer crashes.

More than 40% of all statewide crashes were caused by drivers simply going too fast. In addition to contributing to the most total crashes (56,349), failing to reduce speed contributed to the most crashes leading to injury (17,186). The list of circumstances most frequently contributing to fatal crashes looks a little different, but excessive speed still makes an appearance.

Exceeding the speed limit *(279 fatalities)*

Erratic, reckless, careless, negligent, and/ or aggressive driving *(394 fatalities)*

Crossing the center line/ going the wrong way *(330 fatalities)*

CAUSES OF FATAL CRASHES IN 2020

Drunk Driving Stays Flat Despite Population Rise

Alcohol remains a frequent contributor to crashes and the numbers have been consistent over the last five years. However, since North Carolina's population has increased by more than 400,000 over that time frame, or about 4%, it's possible that a lack of an increase indicates that drunk driving awareness campaigns are having a positive effect. However, those figures are still much higher than the average number of crashes related to alcohol for the five years prior, which was 10,834, which suggests there is room for improvement.

NUMBER OF CRASHES RELATED TO ALCOHOL
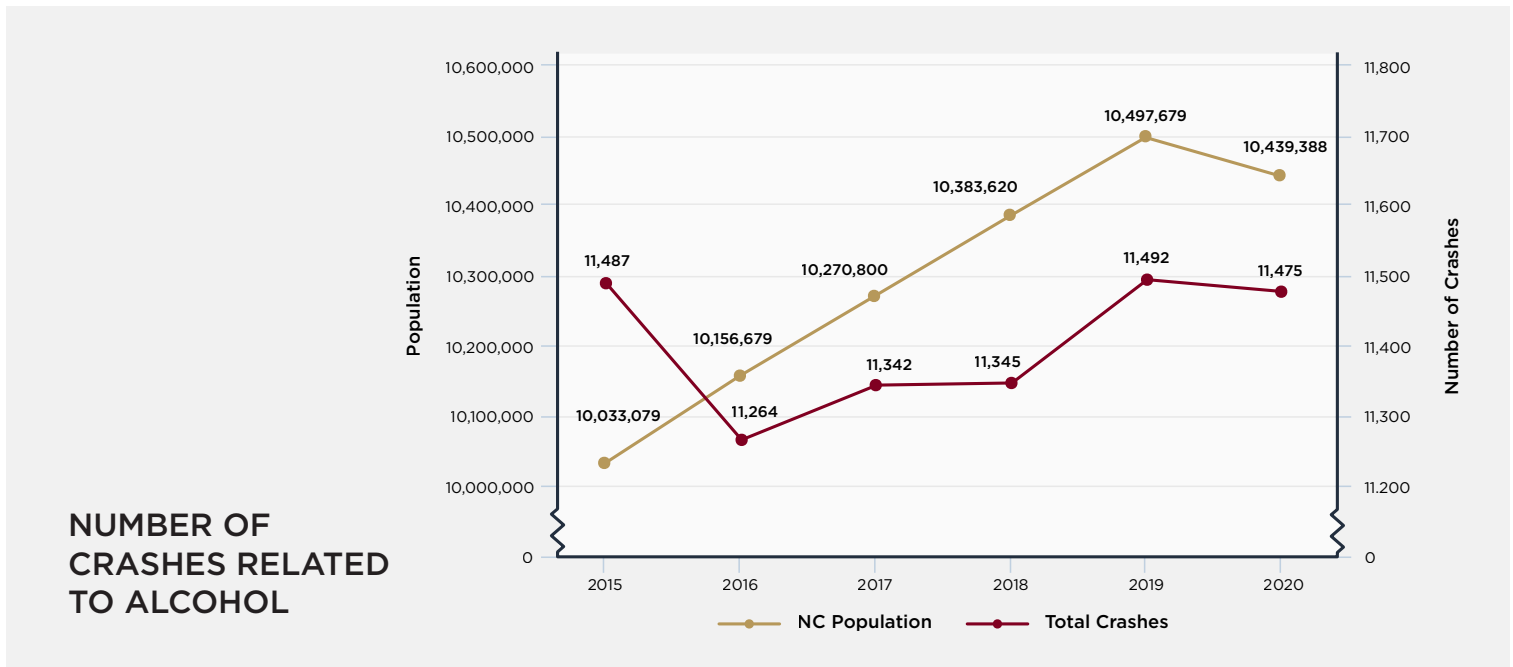
Biggest Contributors to Crashes

TOP 10 CONTRIBUTING CIRCUMSTANCES – NORTH CAROLINA CRASHES (2020)*
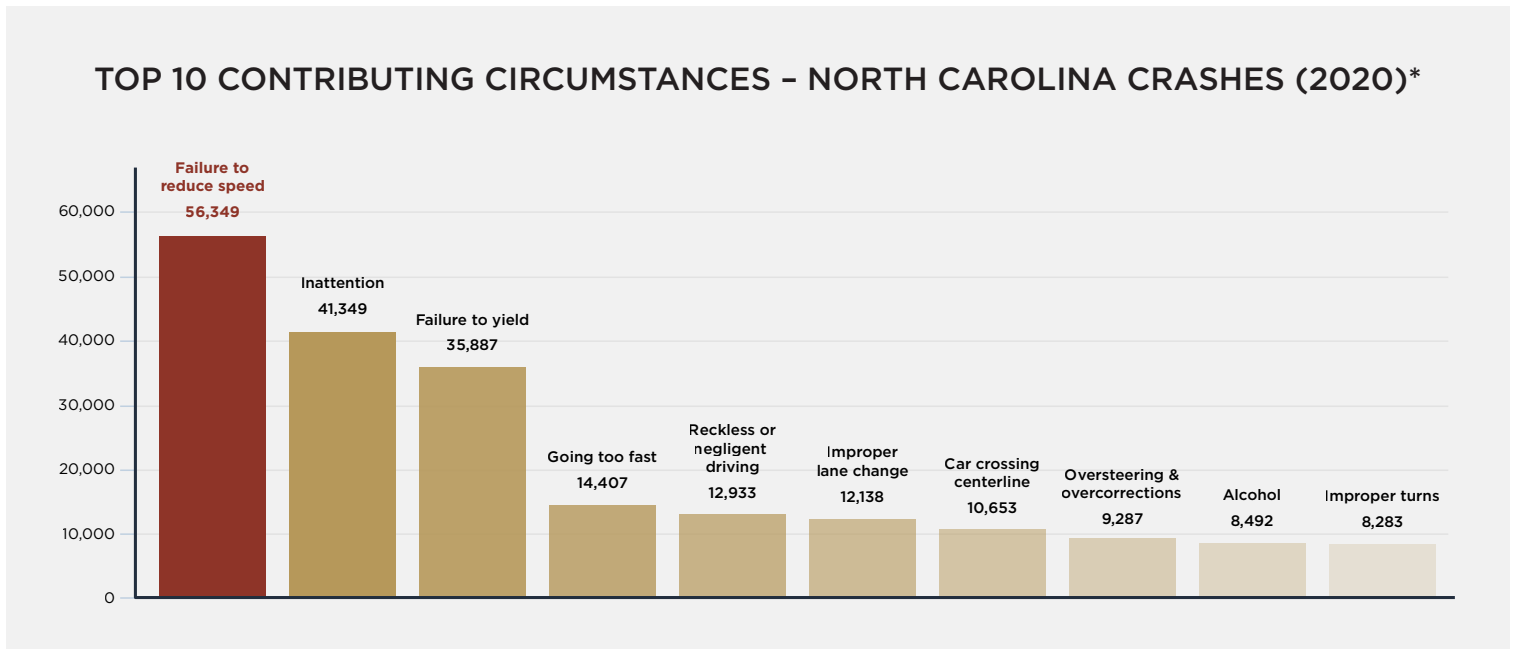
Age is a major factor: Just as speed is a disproportionate contributor to accidents, 20-29 year olds are disproportionate contributors to speeding. **In 2020, drivers ages 20-29 were involved in 7,073 speed-related crashes.** Compare this to the 3,452 speed-related crashes 30- to 39-year-olds were involved in. In addition, drivers ages 30-39 had nearly double the number of speed-related crashes as 40- to 49-year-olds.

Crashes Involving Teens

Main Takeaways:

- **Teens were involved in 16.1% fewer crashes than 2019.** However, there were 27.2% more fatal crashes.

- **Teen seat belt and alcohol data paint a troubling picture.** 2020 data showed 49% of fatally injured vehicle occupants age 14-19 weren't wearing seat belts. Additionally, 22.4% of teen road fatalities were alcohol-related, which is almost double the percentage in 2019 and nearly 5% over the five-year average.

- **Lane departure deaths were up, but speeding deaths were down slightly.** Lane departure was cited in 80.4% of crashes that killed teens in 2020, more than 8% above the five-year average. Speed was cited in 42.1% of fatal crashes, 2.2% below the five-year average.

- **A total of 42,849 (17.3%) of North Carolina's 247,214 crashes involved teens.** Also, more teens were injured or killed in crashes while driving (6,246) than they were when riding as passengers (4,140).

- **Four out of every five teen fatalities occurred in just 29 of North Carolina's 100 counties.** Also, the top five counties accounted for 32 of the state's 107 teen fatalities. Meanwhile, 51 counties in North Carolina reported zero teen fatalities. Another 20 reported just one teen fatality.

2020 More Deadly for Teens

In 2020, there was a sharp rise in teen road fatalities despite an overall drop in crashes and injuries.

CRASHES, INJURIES, AND FATALITIES INVOLVING TEENS

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
INJURY CRASHES	10,218	10,460	10,687	10,165	9,834	8,505
FATAL CRASHES	81	87	78	63	77	98
FATALITIES % OF CRASHES	0.16%	0.17%	0.14%	0.12%	0.15%	0.22%
FATALITIES % OF INJURY CRASHES	0.79%	0.83%	0.72%	0.61%	0.78%	1.15% (↑47%)
TOTAL	48,386	50,723	52,385	50,988	51,061	42,849

TOTAL TEEN FATALITIES: TOP 3 CAUSES BY YEAR

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
ALCOHOL	18	13	14	17	9	24
SPEED	33	48	34	35	33	45
LANE DEPARTURE	49	71	71	47	62	86
DISTRACTED DRIVING	6	12	10	7	5	8

Note that there may be more than one cause cited for a crash.

Worst Counties for Teens

Which counties were worst for teens? Not surprisingly, Mecklenburg County stands out — but it wasn't the deadliest.

TOP 5 COUNTIES: MOST TEEN DEATHS

	COUNTY	TEEN FATALITIES
1	GUILFORD	11
2	MECKLENBURG	9
3	DURHAM	4
4	WAKE	4
5	RUTHERFORD	4

TOP 5 COUNTIES: MOST TEEN CRASHES

	COUNTY	TEEN CRASHES
1	MECKLENBURG	4,985
2	WAKE	4,572
3	GUILFORD	2,256
4	CUMBERLAND	1,324
5	UNION	1,163

TOP 5 COUNTIES: MOST TEEN INJURIES

	COUNTY	TEEN INJURIES
1	MECKLENBURG	1,271
2	WAKE	922
3	GUILFORD	662
4	FORSYTH	414
5	CUMBERLAND	329

Source: North Carolina Department of Transportation

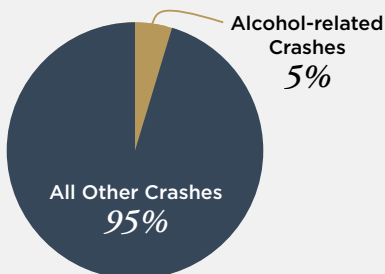# The Impact of Alcohol & Drug Use on North Carolina Road Safety

Main Takeaways:

- **Alcohol use contributed to more vehicle crashes, injuries, and fatalities.** The number of alcohol-related car wreck injuries as a percentage of total car wreck injuries reached its highest level (7%) since 2014, while the percentage of alcohol-related fatalities neared 25%. Alcohol use was cited in 8,492 crashes, the highest number since 2015. Alcohol use as a contributing factor of fatal crashes rose 17% over 2019.

- **NC drivers in the 20-29 year age group continue to be involved in the highest number of reported alcohol-related crashes.** In 2020, this age group experienced a 34% increase versus a year ago for alcohol-related crash fatalities, reaching the highest level in over a decade.

- **Teen fatalities in alcohol-related car crashes hit their highest point since 2011.** Twenty-four teens (ages 15-19) died in drunk driving car crashes in 2020, almost three times as many as in the previous year and 71% more than the 5-year average.

- **Charlotte had the most alcohol-related crashes, fatalities, and injuries, followed by Raleigh, Greensboro, Winston-Salem, and Durham.** While total alcohol-related crashes in Charlotte decreased in 2020, alcohol-related car crash fatalities jumped an alarming 81% versus a year ago.

- **Drug use as a vehicle crash contributor escalated in 2020.** Continuing its long-standing annual reported increase, drug use was cited as a contributing factor in 40% more crashes than in the previous year.

Fewer Cars on the Road, But Alcohol-Related Deaths Jumped

Even though there were fewer cars on the road in 2020, the incidence of alcohol-related crashes and injuries in 2020 remained relatively flat versus a year ago (-.1% and -3.1%, respectively), but alcohol-related deaths increased 18%. As a percentage of total car crashes, injuries, and deaths, those related to alcohol increased in 2020.

2020 CRASHES

Alcohol-related Crashes
5%

All Other Crashes
95%

2020 INJURIES

Alcohol-related Injuries
7%

All Other Injuries
93%

2020 FATALITIES

Alcohol-related Fatalities
25%

All Other Crashes
75%
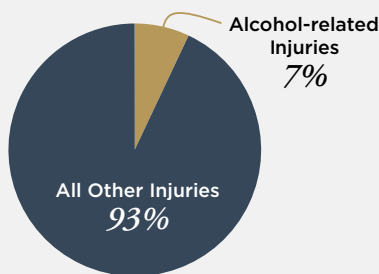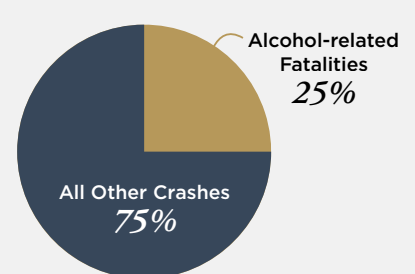
Drug-Related Crashes Continue to Rise

Alcohol use as a contributing circumstance increased in total crashes, injury crashes, and fatal crashes in 2020, with the largest increase (17%) in fatal crashes.

ALCOHOL USE AS A CONTRIBUTING CIRCUMSTANCE
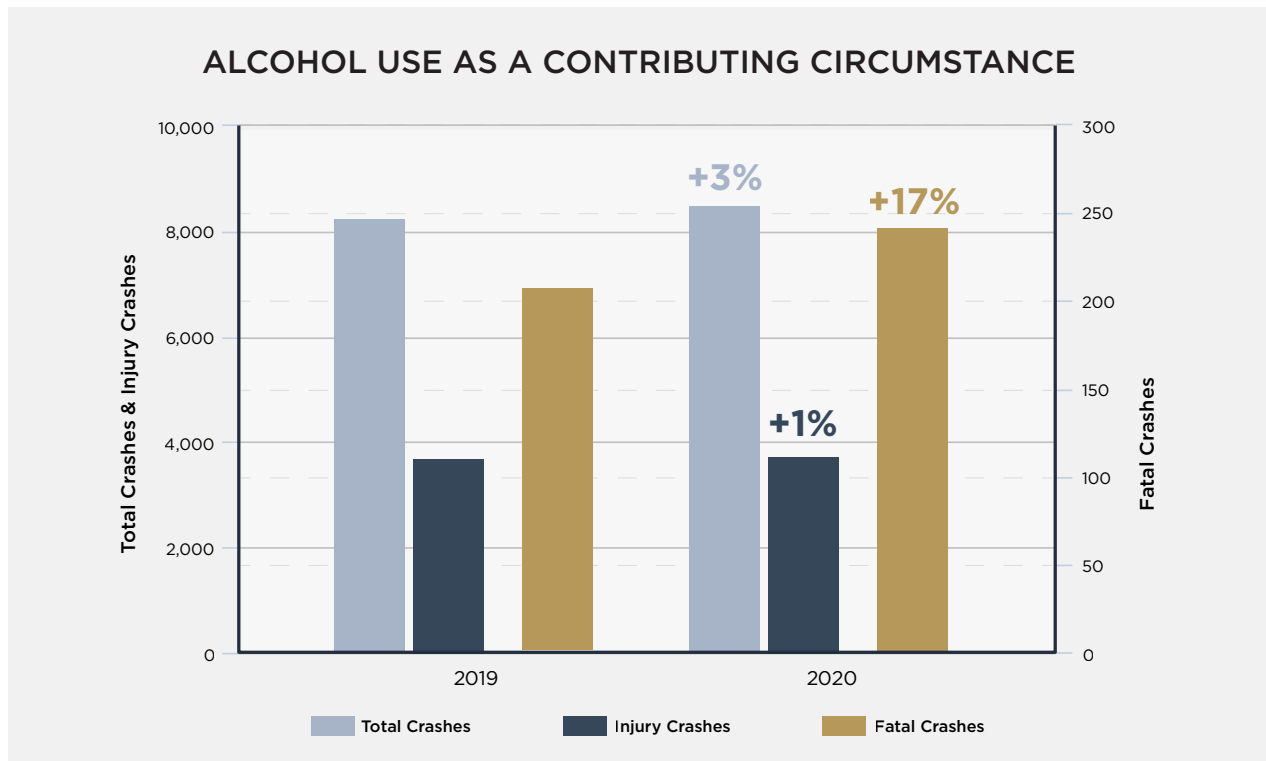
Drug use as a contributing circumstance in total car accidents continued to increase year-over-year. In 2020, the number of total car crashes in which drug use was a contributing factor increased 40%, and the number of fatal crashes and injury crashes with drug use as a contributing factor both rose approximately 30%.

DRUG USE AS A CONTRIBUTING CIRCUMSTANCE
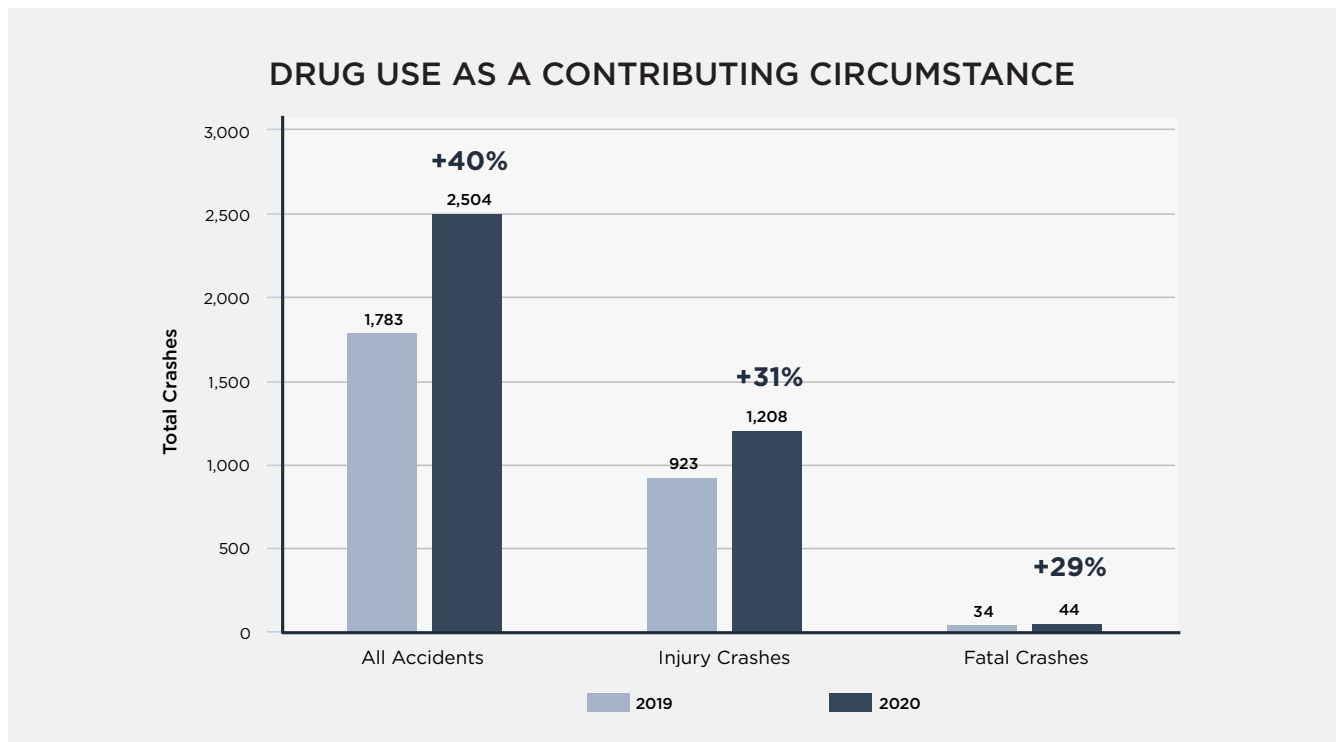
Source: North Carolina Department of Transportation

Crashes by Vehicle Type

Main Takeaways:

- **June was the worst month in 2020 for motorcyclists.** Out of 3,409 motorcycle crashes across North Carolina, 425 of them were in June.

- **Motorcyclists were almost three times more likely than occupants of a passenger car to be injured in a crash.** When a passenger car crashed in 2020, there was about a 30% chance of injury — but in a motorcycle crash, there was about an 80% chance of injury.

- **Pickup trucks had a disproportionate number of fatalities.** In 2020, just over 400 people died out of 92,000 SUV crashes in the state, but the same number died in about 61,000 pickup-related crashes.

- **Mecklenburg County had 70 school bus crashes in 2020.** That was nearly double the amount of school bus crashes of Wake County, which was in second place.

A Surprising Safety Discrepancy

Of course passenger cars are safer than motorcycles, but you may be surprised at how wide the safety gap is based on 2020 crash facts. In North Carolina, you're almost three times more likely to be injured in a crash while driving a motorcycle than if you were in a passenger car.

3,409
Total Motorcycle Crashes

Motorcycle crashes resulting in injury
78.7%

224,938
Total Passenger Car Crashes

Car crashes resulting in injury
29.7%
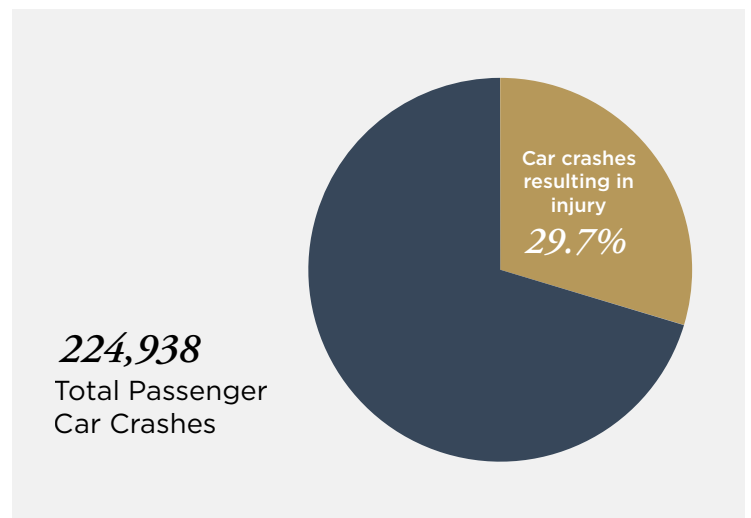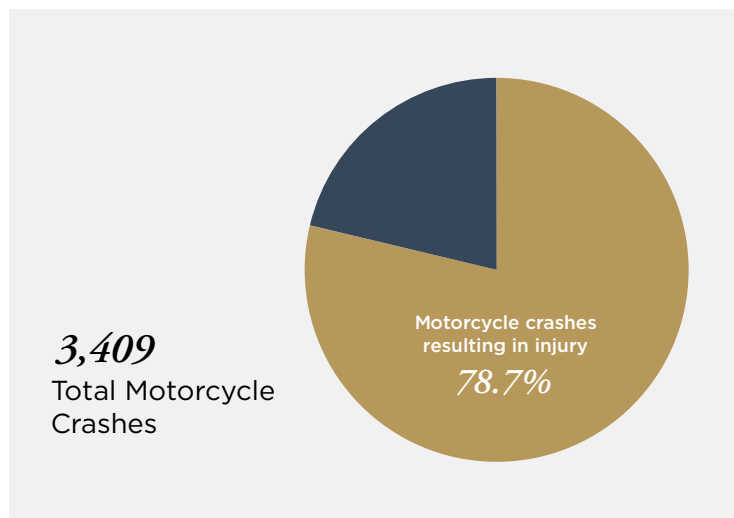
Go Forth on July 4th?

Summer road trips are a national pastime, and riding your motorcycle on North Carolina's roads can't be beat. July may be the ideal month to hit the road. Based on 2020 statistics, June is the worst month all year for motorcyclists, with 425 crashes and nearly 400 injuries. July sees fewer crashes (376) and injuries (331) than June before both climb again for August (395 crashes, 367 injuries).

Pickups May Not Be as Safe as You Think

SUVs and pickups are both big, strong vehicles, but drivers of SUVs were more likely to survive a serious crash on NC roads. There were 431 fatalities out of 92,016 SUV crashes, but nearly the same number of fatalities (421) out of 61,175 pickup-related crashes. There were only about 600 more fatalities for cars than pickup trucks — despite cars being involved in 163,763 more crashes.

RELATIVE LIKELIHOOD OF A FATAL CRASH BY VEHICLE TYPE

Cars	SUVs	Pickup Trucks
.45%	.47%	.69%
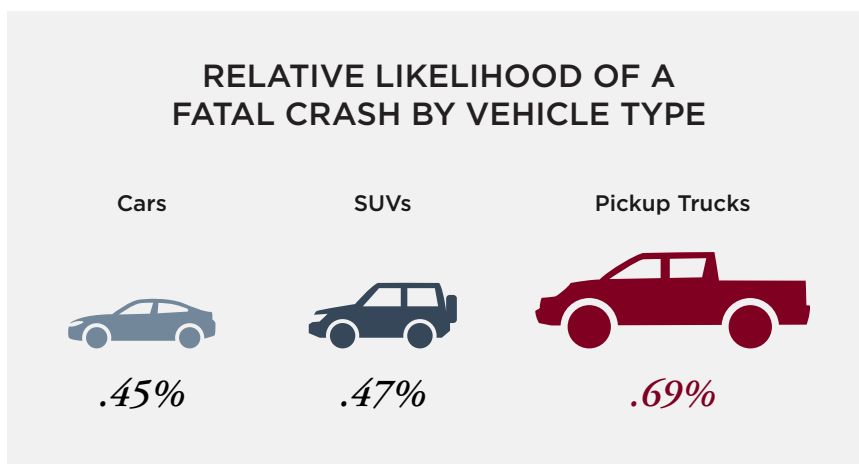
School Bus Stats in the Charlotte Area

Mecklenburg County had far and away the most school bus crashes in the state. While Wake, the second-most dangerous county for school buses, saw 36 crashes involving school buses, Mecklenburg had 70. Only five other counties had more than 10 crashes.

In terms of injuries, Mecklenburg County also reported the most from bus crashes — 85, including one fatality. Second-place Johnston County reported only 18 injuries from school bus crashes. Meanwhile, only two other North Carolina counties reached double digits in injuries for 2020.

MOST SCHOOL BUS CRASHES BY COUNTY

	COUNTY	CRASHES
1	MECKLENBURG	70
2	WAKE	36
3	DURHAM	17
4	JOHNSTON	16
5	GUILFORD	14

Source: North Carolina Department of Transportation

Long-Term Trends

Alcohol Awareness Campaigns May Be Working

The North Carolina population has exploded since the start of the 21st century, increasing from just under 8 million in 2000 to about 10.4 million today. Despite that, alcohol-related crashes have decreased from 14,177 in 2001 to 11,475 in 2020. The numbers have remained relatively flat since 2015, so it may be time for a new effort to combat drunk driving.

ALCOHOL-RELATED CRASHES VERSUS NC POPULATION

Alcohol-related Crashes data (Number of Crashes):
- 2001: 14,177
- 2002: 12,280
- 2003: 10,908
- 2004: 11,489
- 2005: 11,349
- 2006: 11,374
- 2007: 11,795
- 2008: 12,009
- 2009: 11,395
- 2010: 10,677
- 2011: 10,672
- 2012: 11,242
- 2013: 10,769
- 2014: 10,808
- 2015: 11,487
- 2016: 11,264
- 2017: 11,342
- 2018: 11,345
- 2019: 11,492
- 2020: 11,475

North Carolina Population data (millions):
- 2001: 8.20
- 2002: 8.31
- 2003: 8.40
- 2004: 8.52
- 2005: 8.66
- 2006: 8.85
- 2007: 9.05
- 2008: 9.23
- 2009: 9.36
- 2010: 9.46
- 2011: 9.66
- 2012: 9.75
- 2013: 9.84
- 2014: 9.93
- 2015: 10.03
- 2016: 10.16
- 2017: 10.27
- 2018: 10.38
- 2019: 10.50
- 2020: 10.44

" *Advocacy groups, like Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), bring the impact of drunk driving to the forefront of society. With MADD's advocacy, North Carolina's legislature passed strict laws involving drunk driving in 2007. Even with an increasing population, drunk driving in North Carolina has stagnated and is expected to fall as the population ages."*

James Scott Farrin attorney Preston Lesley

Be Extra Careful in October

October is typically the most dangerous month to drive in North Carolina. Over a period of 15 years, October was the worst month for injuries and fatalities on average resulting from a car crash in North Carolina.

INJURIES AND FATALITIES FROM OCTOBER CRASHES

Number of Injuries / Number of Fatalities (2005–2020)

Injuries from October Crashes: 10,387 (2005); 11,497 (2006); 11,423 (2007); 10,201 (2008); 9,248 (2009); 10,303 (2010); 10,008 (2011); 10,202 (2012); 9,721 (2013); 11,197 (2014); 11,904 (2015); 11,740 (2016); 12,155 (2017); 12,329 (2018); 12,204 (2019); 10,567 (2020)

Fatalities from October Crashes: 152 (2005); 131 (2006); 155 (2007); 145 (2008); 123 (2009); 119 (2010); 117 (2011); 116 (2012); 123 (2013); 131 (2014); 113 (2015); 157 (2016); 150 (2017); 127 (2018); 141 (2019); 131 (2020)

- Injuries from October Crashes
- Fatalities from October Crashes

Buckle Up

In 2020, 545 unbelted persons died on North Carolina raods, the highest total since 2007 and a growing cause of concern over the last decade.

UNBELTED FATALITIES SINCE 2010

Category	Value
Average unbelted persons killed (2010-2014)	387
Average unbelted persons killed (2015-2019)	426
Total unbelted persons killed (2020)	545
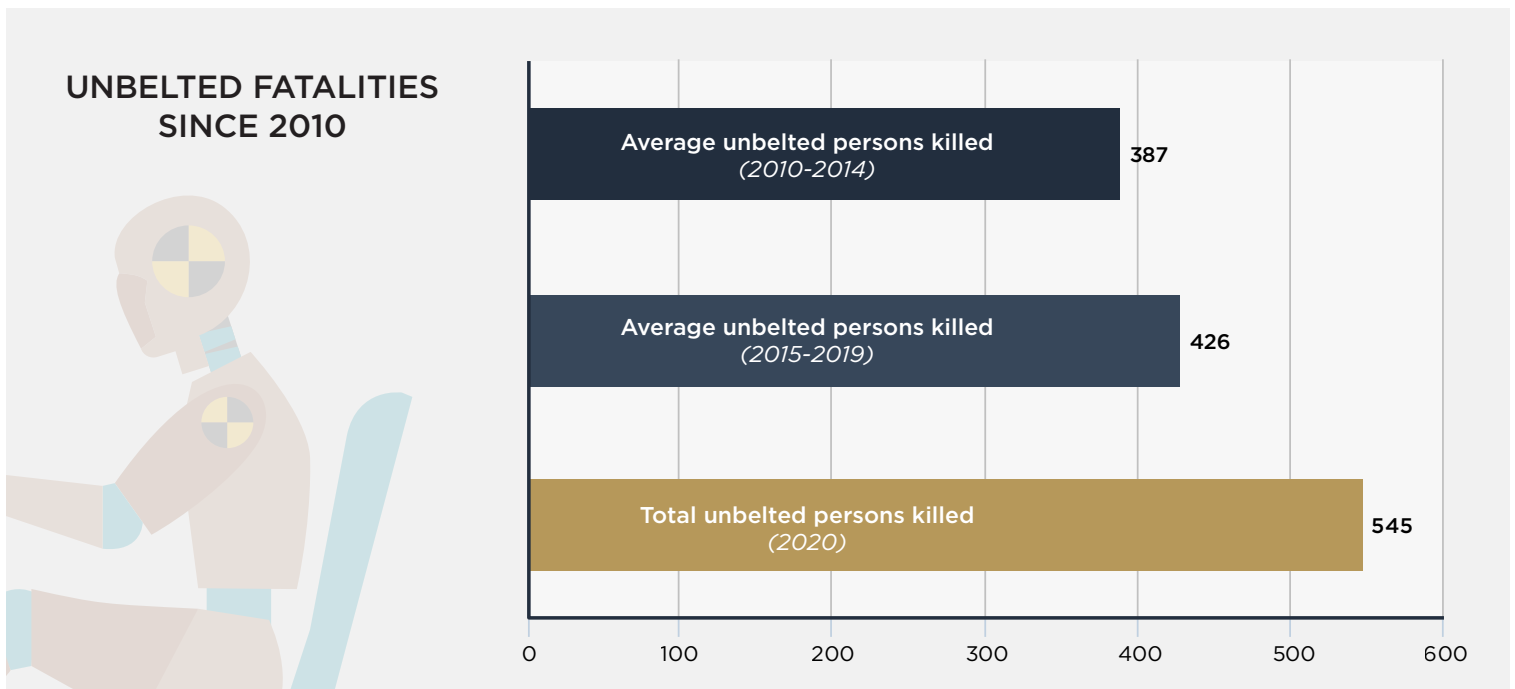
Overall Driving Safety Is Improving in North Carolina

Since 2000, the rate of **persons injured per 100 million vehicle miles traveled** has significantly decreased. Simultaneously, when cars do crash, the rate of **persons injured per 100 crashes** has also gone down consistently.

RATE OF INJURY CRASHES IN NORTH CAROLINA, 2000-2020
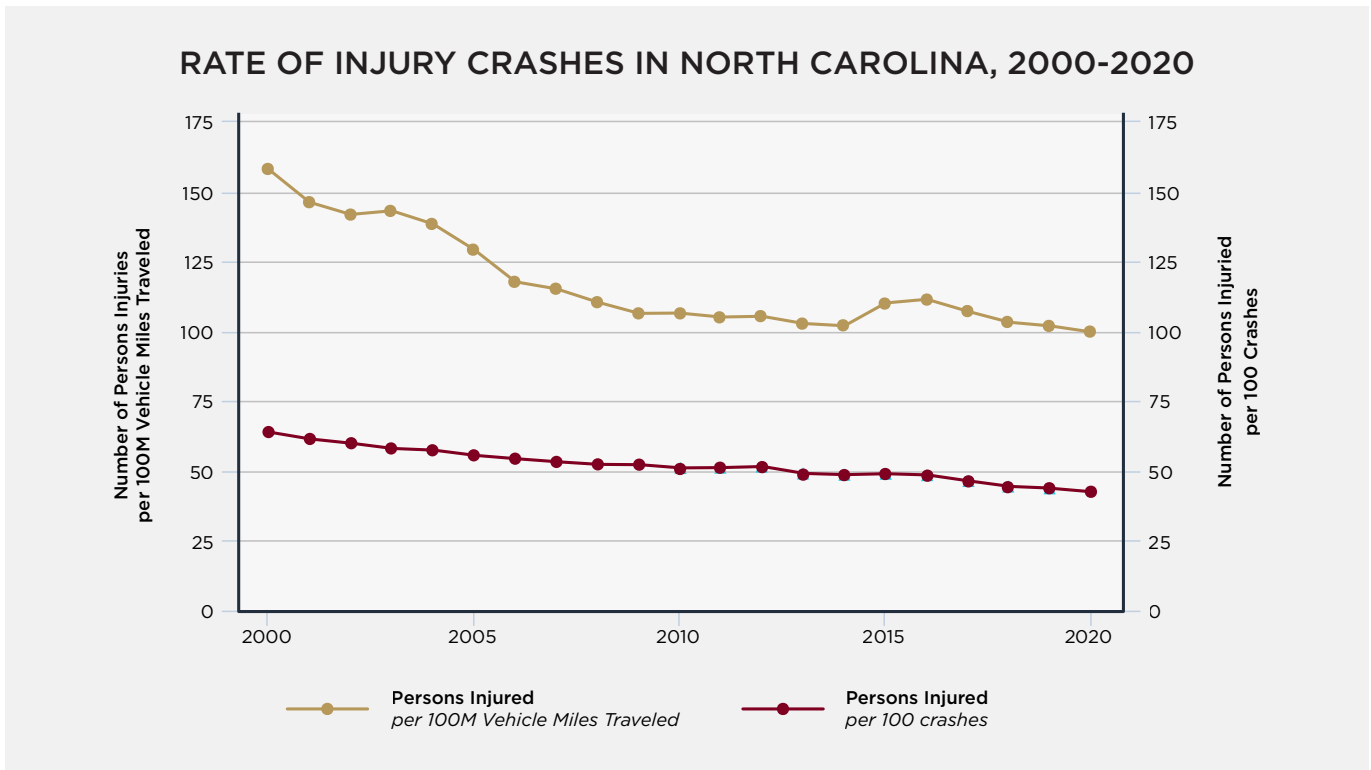
Are cars getting safer, or are drivers improving their behavior? It could be a combination, as the data shows drivers are also getting into crashes less often.

MILES TRAVELED BETWEEN CRASHES AND INJURIES, 1960-2020
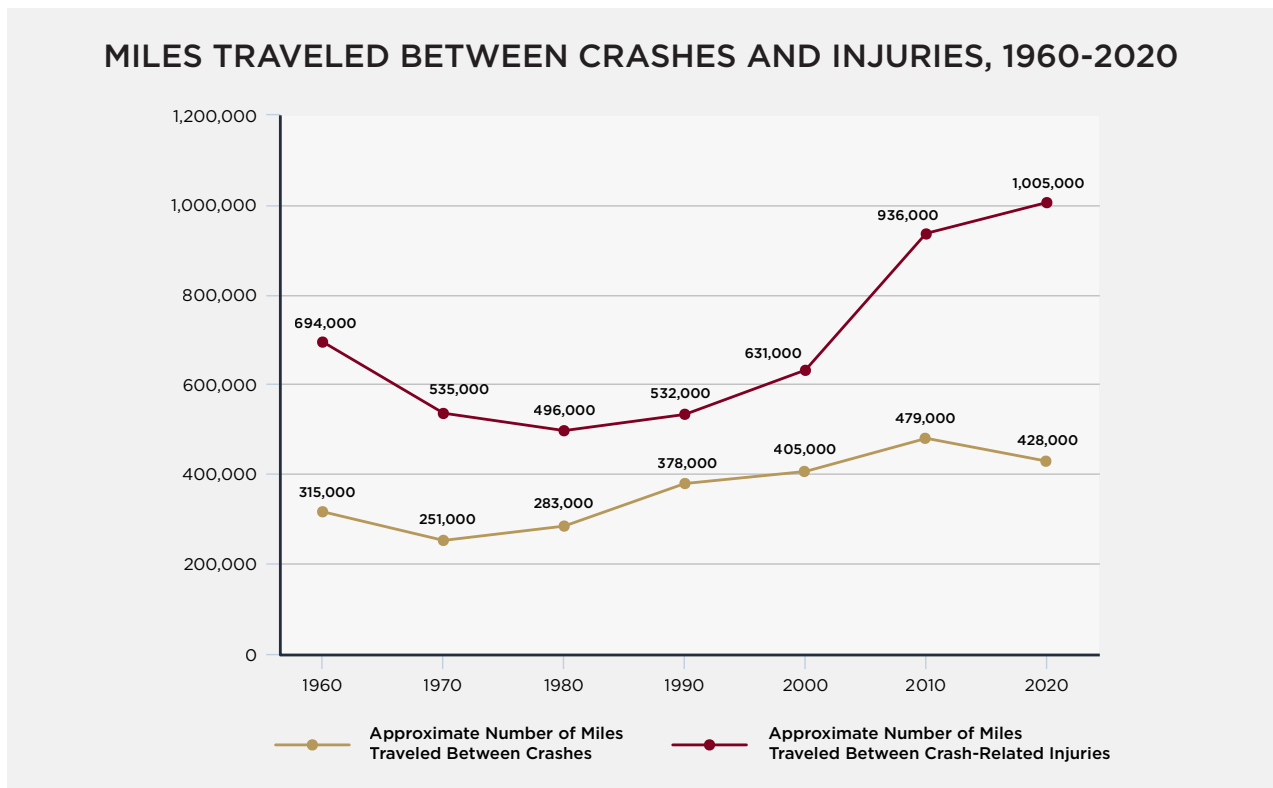
Source: North Carolina Department of Transportation

Charlotte

POPULATION: 912,096*

Population: 10-Year Trend
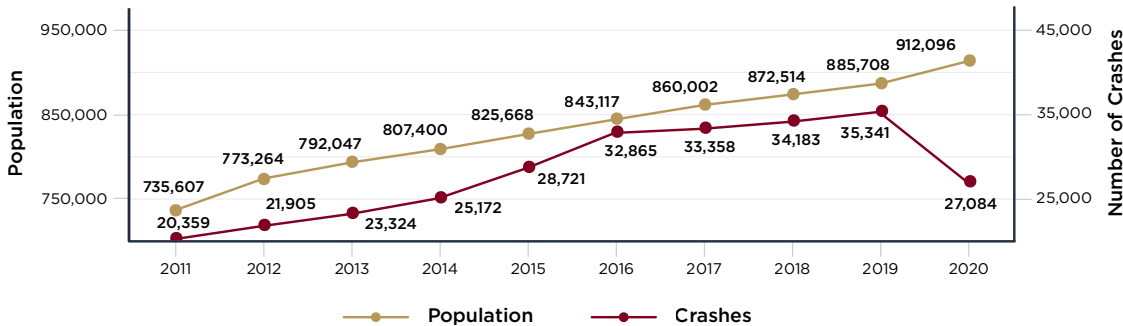
Injuries and Fatalities: 10-Year Trend
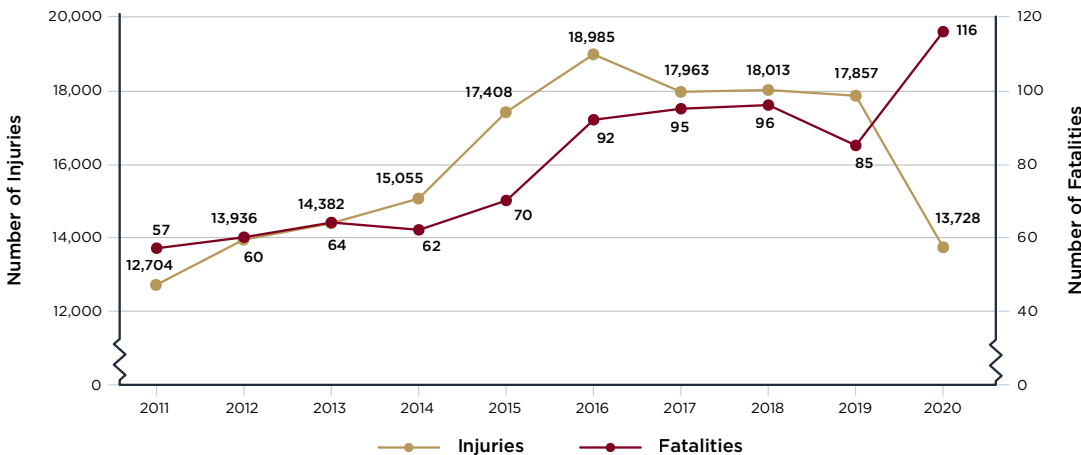
2020 BY THE NUMBERS

Crashes:

27,084

Fatalities:

116

Injuries:

13,728

Alcohol-Related Crashes:

780

Pedestrian Injuries/ Fatalities:

329/27

Bicycle Injuries/ Fatalities:

74/4

Ranking on NCDOT's Most Dangerous List: 10-Year Trend[1]

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
6	3	12	7	11	5	3	1	1	1

*Based on 2020 U.S. Census data.

[1]This graph shows the annual ranking for the city on the North Carolina Department of Transportation's list of most dangerous cities.

Source: North Carolina Department of Transportation

Raleigh
POPULATION: 483,579*

Population: 10-Year Trend

Population / Number of Crashes by year:

Year	Population	Crashes
2011	413,958	12,879
2012	423,304	13,732
2013	431,391	14,586
2014	439,503	14,925
2015	449,503	16,982
2016	459,469	17,967
2017	465,469	17,761
2018	465,776	17,745
2019	460,314	18,995
2020	474,069	13,481

Legend: ● Population ● Crashes

Injuries and Fatalities: 10-Year Trend

Year	Injuries	Fatalities
2011	4,979	31
2012	5,548	29
2013	5,963	46
2014	6,375	33
2015	6,964	32
2016	7,324	31
2017	6,947	22
2018	6,819	28
2019	7,354	35
2020	5,570	40

Legend: ● Injuries ● Fatalities

2020 BY THE NUMBERS

Crashes:
13,481

Fatalities:
40

Injuries:
5,570

Alcohol-Related Crashes:
446

Pedestrian Injuries/ Fatalities:
153/13

Bicycle Injuries/ Fatalities:
31/1
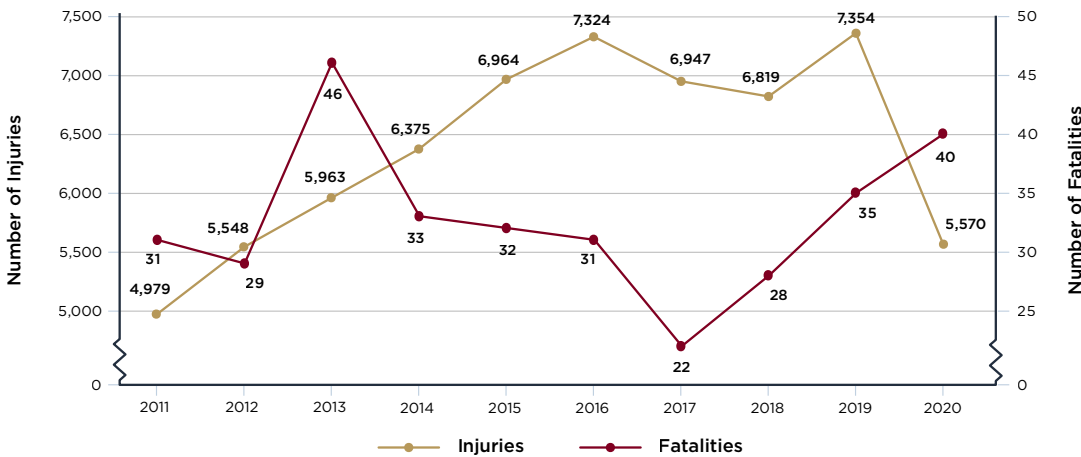
Ranking on NCDOT's Most Dangerous List: 10-Year Trend[1]

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
15	14	13	11	12	13	18	11	10	10

*Based on 2020 U.S. Census data.

[1]This graph shows the annual ranking for the city on the North Carolina Department of Transportation's list of most dangerous cities.

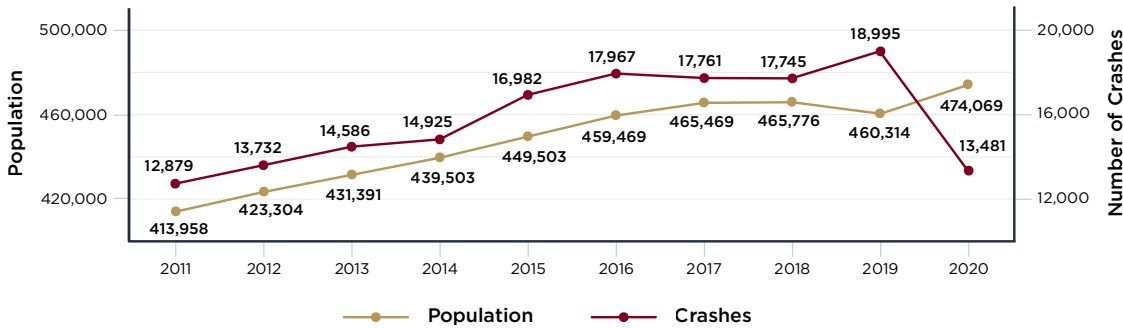*Source: North Carolina Department of Transportation*

Greensboro

POPULATION: 301,094*

Population: 10-Year Trend

Population / Number of Crashes trend, 2011–2020:

- 2011: Population 272,430; Crashes 6,690
- 2012: Population 276,041; Crashes 6,981
- 2013: Population 279,244; Crashes 7,228
- 2014: Population 282,261; Crashes 7,627
- 2015: Population 284,610; Crashes 8,588
- 2016: Population 289,182; Crashes 9,373
- 2017: Population 291,537; Crashes 9,603
- 2018: Population 294,518; Crashes 9,477
- 2019: Population 296,710; Crashes 9,668
- 2020: Population 301,094; Crashes 8,073

Legend: Population, Crashes

Injuries and Fatalities: 10-Year Trend

Number of Injuries / Number of Fatalities trend, 2011–2020:

- 2011: Injuries 4,032; Fatalities 14
- 2012: Injuries 4,713; Fatalities 20
- 2013: Injuries 4,641; Fatalities 28
- 2014: Injuries 4,859; Fatalities 23
- 2015: Injuries 5,420; Fatalities 23
- 2016: Injuries 6,085; Fatalities 23
- 2017: Injuries 6,018; Fatalities 41
- 2018: Injuries 5,873; Fatalities 30
- 2019: Injuries 5,863; Fatalities 32
- 2020: Injuries 5,017; Fatalities 36

Legend: Injuries, Fatalities

2020 BY THE NUMBERS

Crashes:
8,073

Fatalities:
36

Injuries:
5,017

Alcohol-Related Crashes:
349

Pedestrian Injuries/ Fatalities:
145/9

Bicycle Injuries/ Fatalities:
16/0

Ranking on NCDOT's Most Dangerous List: 10-Year Trend[1]

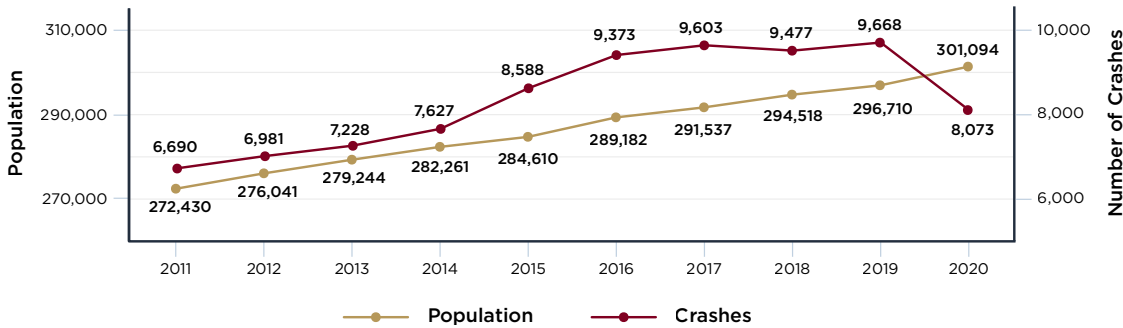| 2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
9	7	19	13	13	11	7	2	2	2

*Based on 2020 U.S. Census data.

[1]This graph shows the annual ranking for the city on the North Carolina Department of Transportation's list of most dangerous cities.

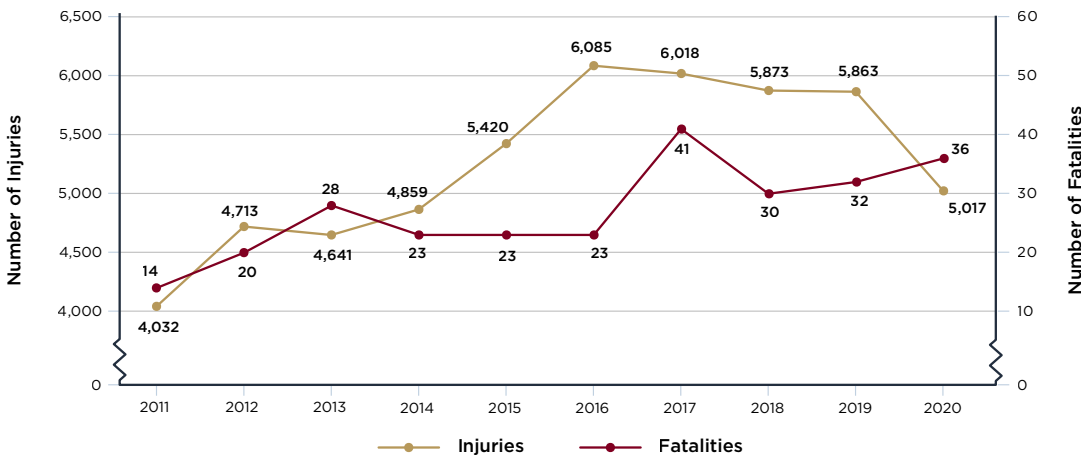Source: North Carolina Department of Transportation

Durham

POPULATION: 287,865*

Population: 10-Year Trend

Population / Number of Crashes chart (2011–2020):

Population: 235,341 (2011), 241,117 (2012), 246,992 (2013), 253,290 (2014), 258,647 (2015), 265,499 (2016), 269,844 (2017), 274,577 (2018), 278,993 (2019), 287,865 (2020)

Crashes: 6,805 (2011), 7,068 (2012), 7,299 (2013), 7,695 (2014), 8,226 (2015), 9,005 (2016), 9,195 (2017), 9,638 (2018), 9,898 (2019), 7,073 (2020)

Injuries and Fatalities: 10-Year Trend

Injuries: 2,702 (2011), 2,906 (2012), 2,946 (2013), 2,945 (2014), 3,273 (2015), 3,424 (2016), 3,383 (2017), 3,619 (2018), 3,645 (2019), 2,902 (2020)

Fatalities: 6 (2011), 14 (2012), 19 (2013), 17 (2014), 18 (2015), 14 (2016), 20 (2017), 23 (2018), 22 (2019), 29 (2020)

2020 BY THE NUMBERS

Crashes:

7,073

Fatalities:

29

Injuries:

2,902

Alcohol-Related Crashes:

226

Pedestrian Injuries/ Fatalities:

122/9

Bicycle Injuries/ Fatalities:

22/0

Ranking on NCDOT's Most Dangerous List: 10-Year Trend[1]

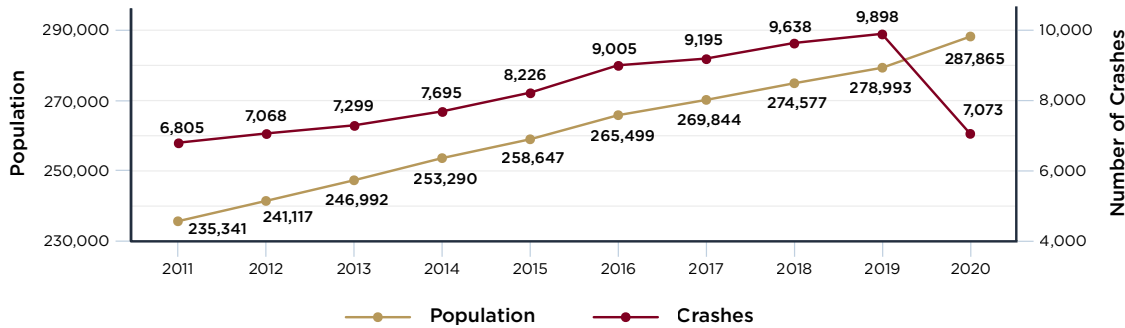| 2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
24	21	23	25	29	28	26	16	16	15

*Based on 2020 U.S. Census data.

[1]This graph shows the annual ranking for the city on the North Carolina Department of Transportation's list of most dangerous cities.
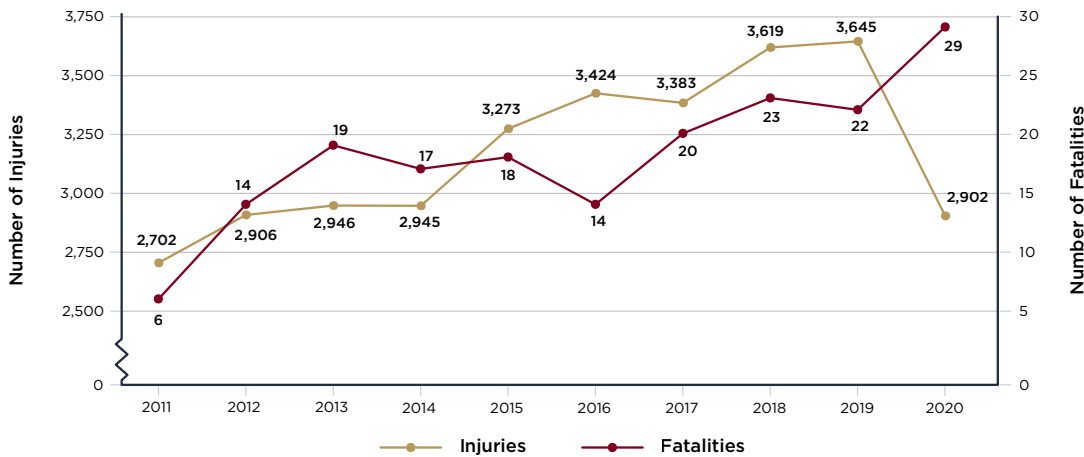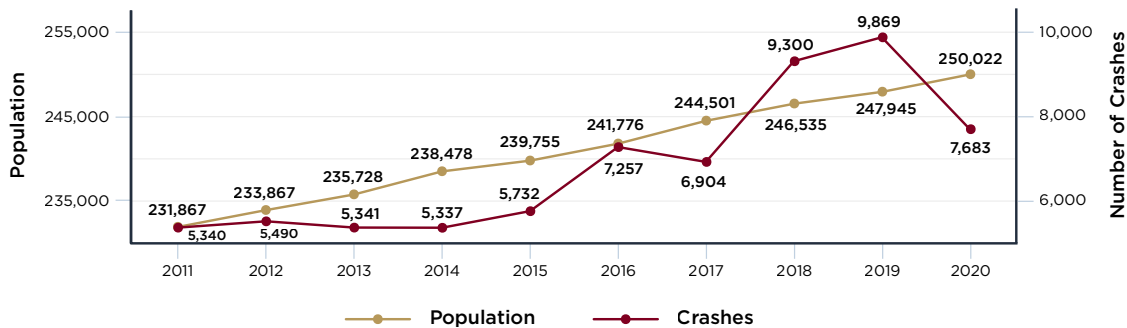
Source: North Carolina Department of Transportation

Winston-Salem

POPULATION: 250,022*

Population: 10-Year Trend

Population / Number of Crashes

- Population: 2011: 231,867; 2012: 233,867; 2013: 235,728; 2014: 238,478; 2015: 239,755; 2016: 241,776; 2017: 244,501; 2018: 246,535; 2019: 247,945; 2020: 250,022
- Crashes: 2011: 5,340; 2012: 5,490; 2013: 5,341; 2014: 5,337; 2015: 5,732; 2016: 7,257; 2017: 6,904; 2018: 9,300; 2019: 9,869; 2020: 7,683

Legend: Population / Crashes

Injuries and Fatalities: 10-Year Trend

Number of Injuries / Number of Fatalities

- Injuries: 2011: 2,409; 2012: 2,551; 2013: 2,374; 2014: 2,365; 2015: 2,661; 2016: 3,257; 2017: 2,959; 2018: 3,862; 2019: 3,933; 2020: 3,060
- Fatalities: 2011: 19; 2012: 24; 2013: 17; 2014: 14; 2015: 22; 2016: 23; 2017: 23; 2018: 31; 2019: 16; 2020: 23

Legend: Injuries / Fatalities

2020 BY THE NUMBERS

Crashes:

7,683

Fatalities:

23

Injuries:

3,060

Alcohol-Related Crashes:

347

Pedestrian Injuries/ Fatalities:

101/3

Bicycle Injuries/ Fatalities:

14/0
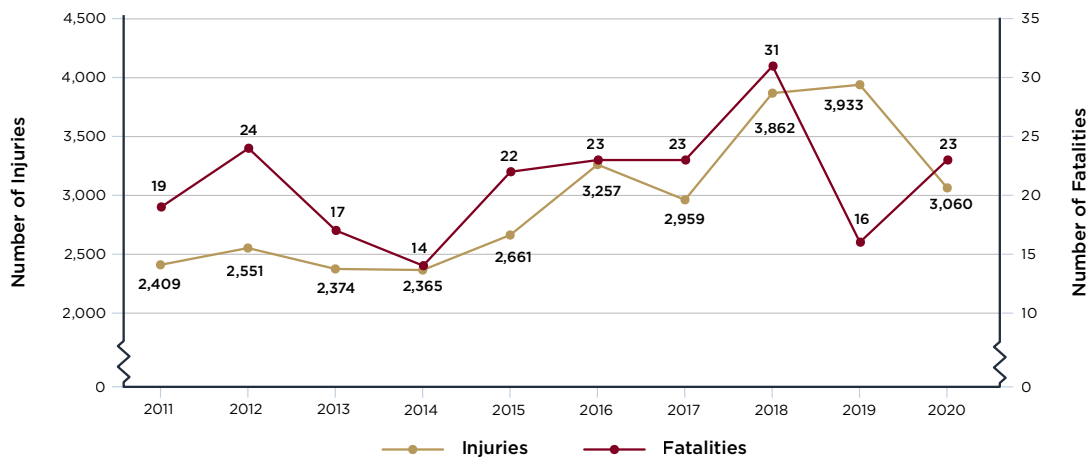
Ranking on NCDOT's Most Dangerous List: 10-Year Trend[1]

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
17	20	31	30	34	33	30	6	4	7

Based on 2020 U.S. Census data.

[1]*This graph shows the annual ranking for the city on the North Carolina Department of Transportation's list of most dangerous cities.*

Source: North Carolina Department of Transportation