

Special Emphasis Report: Unintentional Motor Vehicle Traffic Injuries

2025
Wisconsin

Understanding MVT injuries

Every day, thousands of Americans are involved in motor vehicle crashes on public roadways that result in injury or death. Unintentional motor vehicle traffic (MVT) injuries include those to motor vehicle occupants (drivers and passengers), motorcyclists, pedestrians, pedal cyclists, and other persons in crashes that occur on roads and streets.

Burden and overview

MVT injuries are a leading cause of hospitalization and death in the United States and Wisconsin. In 2023, for every MVT injury death in Wisconsin, there were 4 non-fatal hospitalizations and 52 emergency department (ED) visits. The rate of MVT injury deaths did not change significantly from 2019 to 2023 (see Figure 2). The age-adjusted rate in 2023 was 10.1 MVT injury deaths per 100,000 people.

Figure 1: Wisconsin MVT injury pyramid, 2023

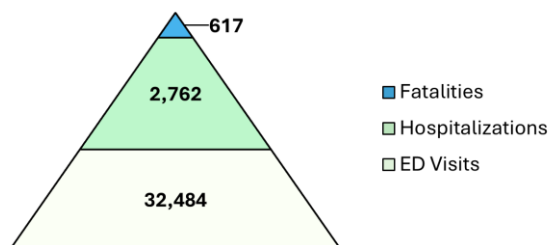
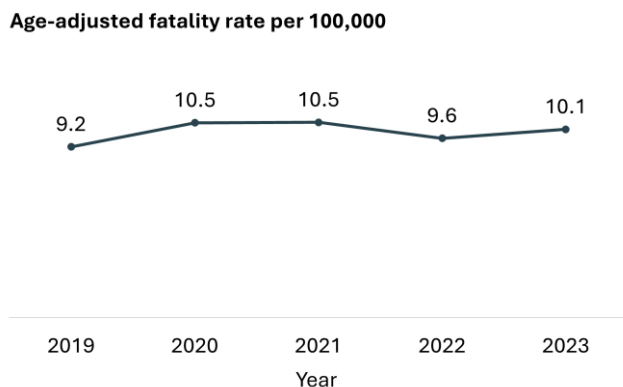


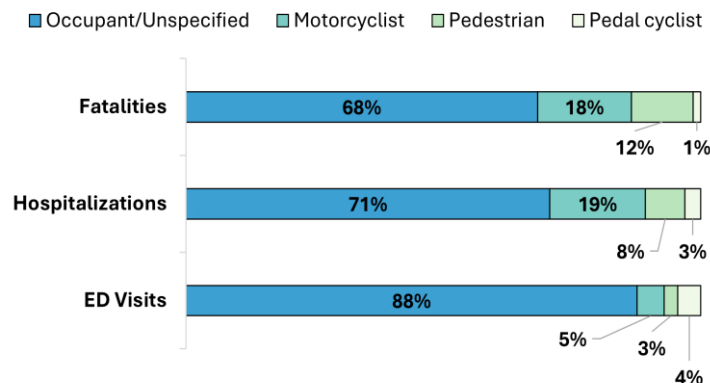
Figure 2: MVT fatality rate, 2019–2023



Injuries by type of person

Most people injured or killed by MVT injuries are motor vehicle occupants (drivers and passengers) (Figure 3). In 2023, occupants accounted for 68% of MVT deaths, 70% of MVT hospitalizations, and 88% of MVT ED visits. Table 1 and Figure 4 through Figure 6 will focus on occupant-related injuries.

Figure 3: Percent of unintentional MVT Injuries by type of person in 2023



Cases with ICD-10-CM/ICD-10 codes indicating type of person as “other” make up less than one percent of fatalities, hospitalizations, and ED visits and were not included in this chart.

Special Emphasis Report: Unintentional Motor Vehicle Traffic Injuries

MVT injuries by geography

In 2023, most motor vehicle traffic occupant hospitalizations in Wisconsin occurred in the Southeastern region. The highest age-adjusted rates per 100,000 residents were in the Northern and Southeastern regions. Table 1 presents the rates of MVT occupant hospitalization by region.

Table 1: MVT occupant hospitalizations by geography in 2023

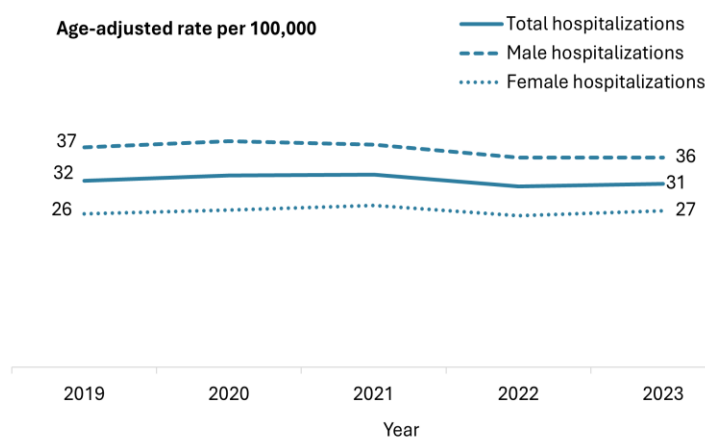
Region	Count	Rate*
Southeastern	821	38.8
Southern	337	28.2
Northeastern	316	24.6
Western	270	32.9
Northern	199	39.9

*Rate is age-adjusted

MVT injuries by sex and age group

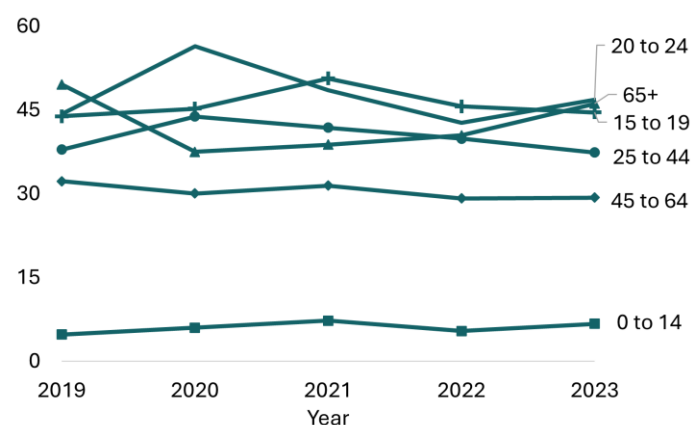
Males had higher non-fatal MVT-occupant hospitalization injury rates than females in 2023 (35.7 per 100,000 and 26.6 per 100,000 respectively). Rates for both males and females remained relatively stable over the five-year period.

Figure 4: MVT occupant hospitalization rates by sex, 2019–2023



The age groups with the highest MVT occupant hospitalization injury rates in Wisconsin were 20 to 24-year-olds and 15- to 19-year-olds. Rates remained relatively stable over the five period.

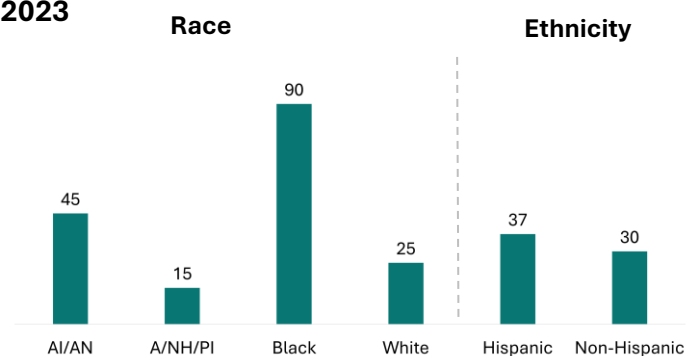
Figure 5: MVT occupant hospitalization rates by age group, 2019–2023



MVT injuries by race and ethnicity

Figure 6 presents non-fatal MVT-occupant hospitalization injury rates by race and ethnicity for Wisconsin residents. The highest rates were noted for Black and American Indian or Alaska Native residents. Hispanic residents have a higher rate of occupant hospitalization than non-Hispanic residents.

Figure 6: Age-adjusted MVT occupant hospitalization rates by race and ethnicity, 2023



AI/AN=American Indian or Alaska Native

A/NH/PI=Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander

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Quick facts

Seat belt use: According to the National Occupant Protection Use Survey, seat belt use in Wisconsin was 92% in 2023. This is higher than seat belt use five years prior (2018: 90%). In 2023, 46% of those killed in a motor vehicle crash in Wisconsin were not wearing a seat belt (over age 5).

Young drivers: In 2023, 39% of Wisconsin high school students did not always wear a seat belt, 17% of students rode with a driver who had been drinking alcohol in the past 30 days, and 48% of students texted or emailed while driving at least once in the past 30 days.

Alcohol level: In 2023, 31% of drivers with fatal MVT injuries in Wisconsin had a blood alcohol concentration higher than the legal limit (.08).

Cost of injury: In 2023, unintentional traffic deaths in Wisconsin cost \$9.27 million in medical costs alone.

Values reported are the most recently values available as of May 2025.

MVT injury prevention activities in Wisconsin

Safe System Approach

To prevent roadway deaths and injuries, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT) has adopted [the Safe System Approach](#). This approach aims to create a transportation system that prevents death and serious injury for all roadway users by focusing on the root causes of crashes. Instead of focusing on crash prevention at the individual level, the Safe System Approach also considers environmental factors that contribute to traffic injury and death. The Safe System Approach emphasizes that to prevent traffic injuries and deaths, we must have [Safer People](#), [Safer Roads](#), [Safer Vehicles](#), [Safer Speeds](#) and better [Post-Crash Care](#).

Community Maps

The Wisconsin DOT also offers [interactive Community Maps](#) to help inform traffic safety programming across the state. Users can visualize fatal and non-fatal crashes that occurred in Wisconsin from 2001 to the present on a map. The module allows the user to select specific crash characteristics such as older or teen driver, speed as a factor in the crash, or pedestrian involvement.

Data note: Hospitalization and ED visits count medical encounters, not individual patients. Patients who were transferred, re-admitted, or had multiple in-patient or ED visits are counted more than once. Racial groups are mutually exclusive and include both Hispanic and non-Hispanic people. Ethnic groups include all four racial groups. Multi-racial data is not displayed in this report. Death and hospitalization data may differ slightly from the Wisconsin Interactive Statistics on Health query due to different methodology.

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