

Special Emphasis Report: Unintentional Motor Vehicle Traffic Injuries

Wisconsin Report: 2026

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 2024, for every MVT injury death in Wisconsin, there were five non-fatal hospitalizations and 54 emergency department (ED) visits (Figure 1). The rate of MVT injury deaths did not change significantly from 2020 to 2024 (Figure 2). The age-adjusted rate in 2024 was 9.4 MVT injury deaths per 100,000 people (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Wisconsin MVT injury pyramid, 2024

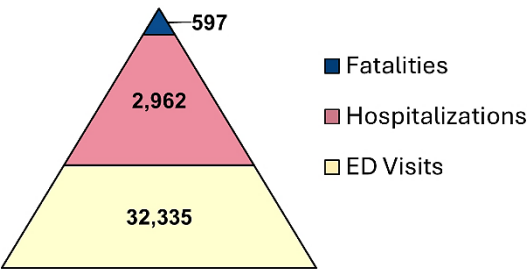
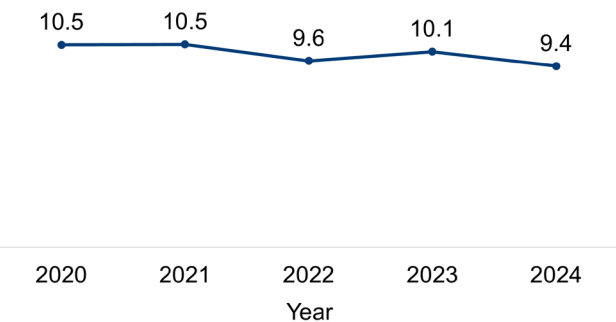


Figure 2: MVT fatality rate, 2020–2024

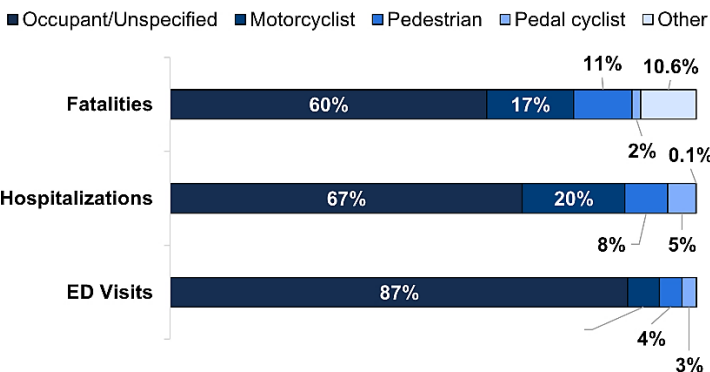
Age-adjusted fatality rate per 100,000



Injuries by type of person

Most people injured or killed by MVT injuries are motor vehicle occupants (drivers and passengers) (Figure 3). In 2024, occupants accounted for 60% of MVT deaths, 67% of MVT hospitalizations, and 87% 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 2024



*In relatively few cases, multiple person types were indicated on the same record. In these situations, the hospitalization was grouped into the more common category.

This document was produced by the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists Injury Surveillance Workgroup with support from CDC Cooperative Agreement Number NU38OT000297-03-00. This report was made possible by the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) under the non-research cooperative agreement CDC-RFA-CE21-2101: Core State Injury Prevention Program (Core SIPP) through the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. The contents of this publication are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the CDC.

Special Emphasis Report: Unintentional MVT Injuries

MVT occupant injuries by geography

In 2024, most MVT 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).

Table 1: MVT occupant hospitalizations by geography in 2024

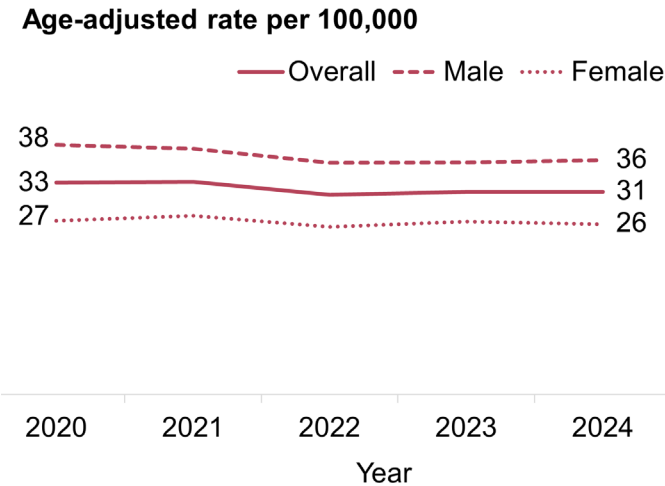
Region	Count	Hospitalization rate*
Southern	344	26.0
Southeastern	802	38.6
Northeastern	372	26.1
Western	267	29.6
Northern	196	36.1

*Rates are age-adjusted.

MVT injuries by sex and age group

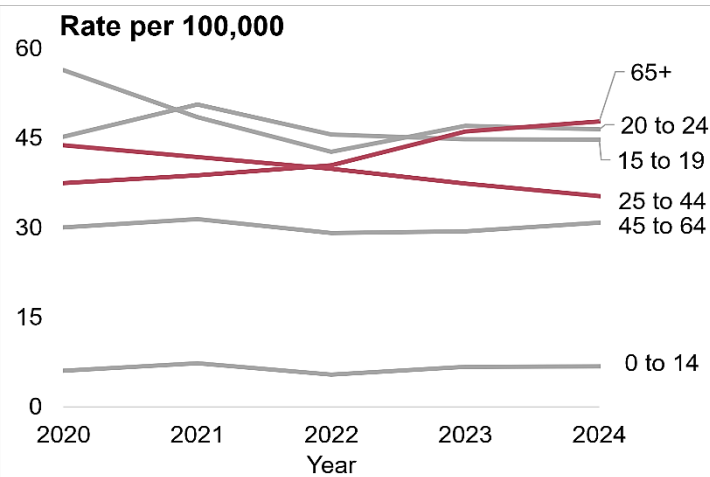
Males had higher non-fatal MVT-occupant hospitalization injury rates than females in 2024 (36.1 per 100,000 and 26.2 per 100,000, respectively) (Figure 4). Rates for both males and females remained relatively stable over the five-year period.

Figure 4: MVT occupant hospitalization rates by sex, 2020–2024



The rate of occupant hospitalization decreased significantly among 25- to 44-year-olds during this period (43.8 to 35.3 per 100,000) but increased significantly among adults 65 years and older (37.5 to 47.8 per 100,000) (Figure 5).

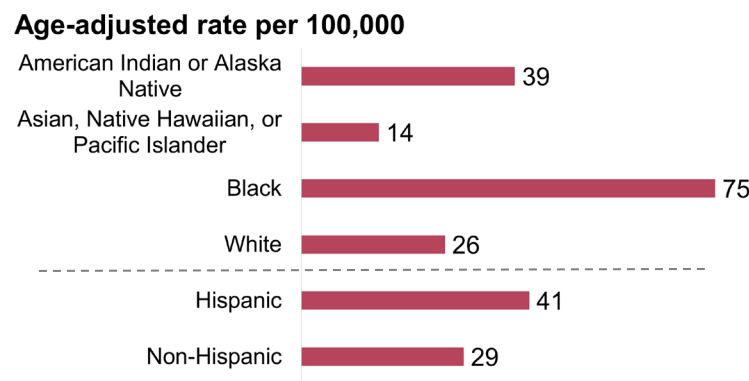
Figure 5: MVT occupant hospitalization rates by age group, 2020–2024



MVT Injuries by race and ethnicity

The highest MVT occupant hospitalization rate in 2024 was among Black residents. Hispanic residents had a higher rate than non-Hispanic residents (Figure 6). Learn more about why traffic injury varies among demographic groups on the [traffic safety website](#).

Figure 6: Age-adjusted MVT occupant hospitalization rates by race/ethnicity, 2024



Special Emphasis Report: Unintentional MVT Injuries

Quick facts

Seat belt use: According to the National Occupant Protection Use Survey, seat belt use in Wisconsin was 89.2% in 2024. In 2024, 51% of those killed in a motor vehicle crash over the age of 5 in Wisconsin were not wearing a seat belt (where restraint use was known).

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 2024, 33% of drivers with fatal MVT injuries in Wisconsin had a blood alcohol concentration higher than the legal limit (.08).

Cost of injury: In 2024, unintentional traffic deaths in Wisconsin cost \$8.39 million in medical costs alone.

Data from the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#), the [Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#), and the [Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System](#).

Data note: Significant changes were identified based on 95% confidence intervals. 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. Age-adjusted rates account for differences in age composition across populations and time and are recommended for comparisons between groups (except for specific age groups as in Figure 5). Counts and rates may differ slightly from other data sources due to differences in methodology.

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, [Safer People](#), [Safer Roads](#), [Safer Vehicles](#), [Safer Speeds](#) and better [Post-Crash Care](#) are all necessary.

Data resources: Community Maps and crash hospitalization module

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. Wisconsin Department of Health Services also offers a [crash hospitalization module](#) based on linked crash and hospitalization records. This module includes important crash characteristics including speed involvement, substance involvement, and specific injury outcomes.



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT
of HEALTH SERVICES