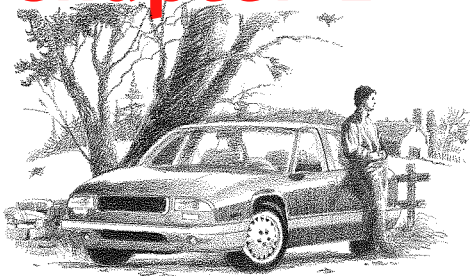


# Chapter 1



## Crash Trends

Maine's crash frequency has shown an improving trend but the number of fatalities has significantly increased in the past two years. There are several areas of crash concern and many will be covered in the chapters of this publication. Some of the overall Maine crash data findings include:

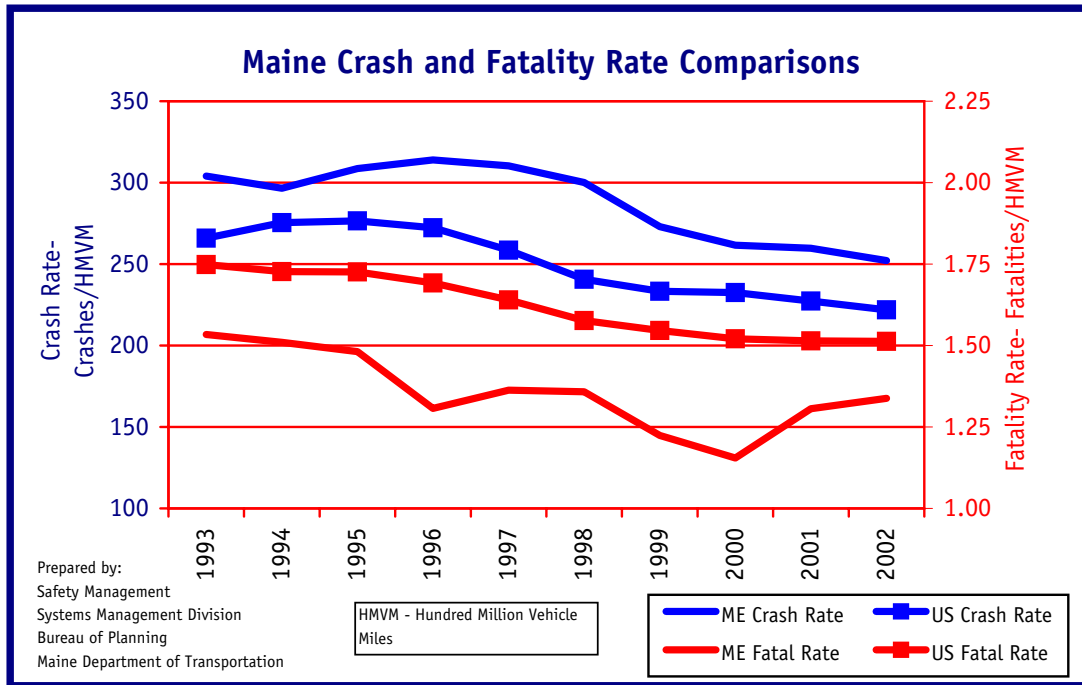
- Run Off the Road and Head On Crashes. (collectively referred to as Lane Departure crashes). These are Maine's leading fatal crash types.
- Seat Belt Use. Maine has the third lowest seat belt usage rate in the U.S. at 59%.
- Aggressive Driving, including Speed. Maine's crash frequency is increasing for collisions when aggressive tendencies are reported.
- Younger and Older Drivers. Younger and older drivers have a much higher crash and fatality rate than the overall driver population.
- Driver Inattention. This is the leading contributing factor in Maine crashes.
- Driving on Wet, Snowy or Icy Road Surfaces. More than one third of Maine crashes occur on wet, snowy or icy road surfaces.

### Statewide

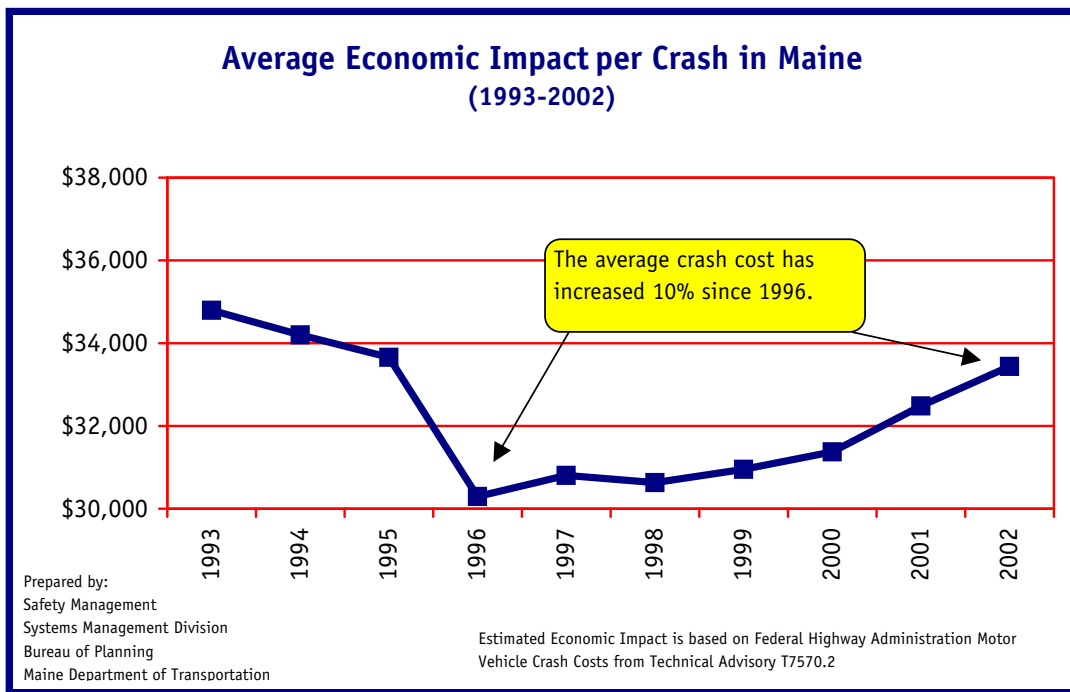
- The number of crashes in Maine has decreased from a high of 42,581 in 1997 to 36,943 in 2002. This trend occurred during a period when vehicle travel on Maine roads increased – total Estimated Vehicle Miles Traveled increased about 6% during that period. (Note: The law regarding reportable crashes changed in 1999 when the minimum property damage required for police reporting was increased from \$500 to \$1,000.)
- Fatalities increased during the last several years. In the last decade, Maine had its lowest number of fatalities (169) in 2000. The number of fatalities steadily increased since then to 216 in 2002, the highest number in the past 10 years.
- Injuries decreased to a ten-year low of 15,885 in 2002. In 1993 there were 16,884 injuries. The ten year peak was 17,640 in 1997.

### Comparison with National Trends

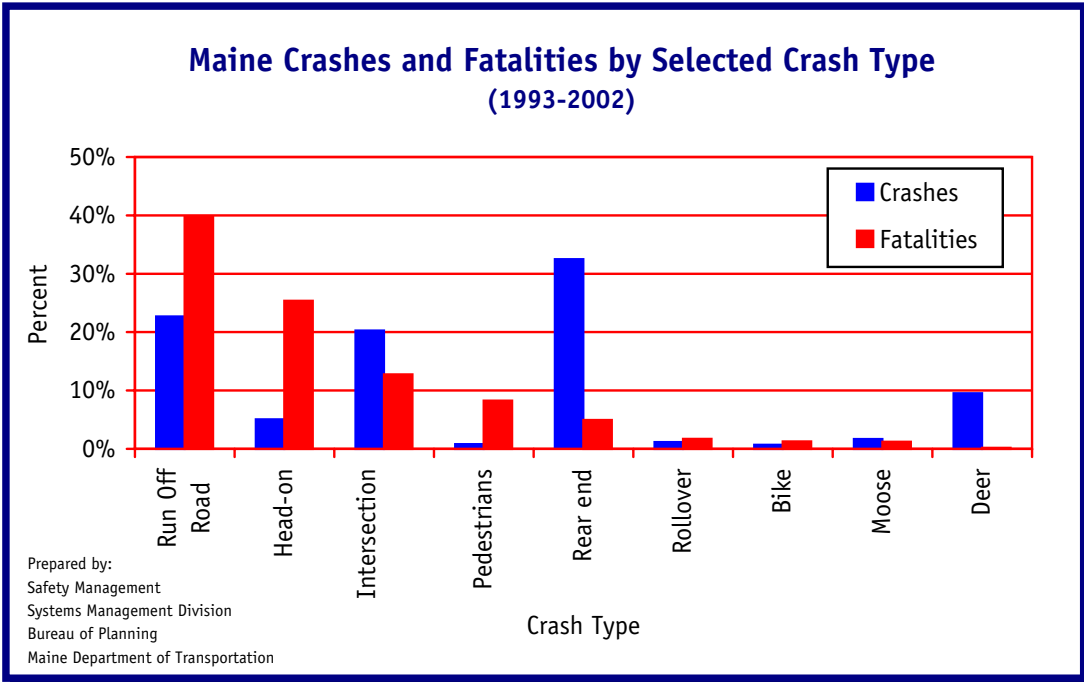
- Although Maine's fatality rate has been increasing over the last several years, it remains below national rates, but the gap is closing. National rates have been steadily decreasing during the last 10 years to a current rate of 1.51 fatalities/hundred million vehicle miles (HMVM). Maine fatality rates have been increasing since 2000, to a current rate of 1.34. Maine fatality rates have been as high as 1.53 fatalities/HMVM and as low as 1.15 during the past 10 years.
- Maine's crash rate of 252 crashes/HMVM is higher than the national rate of 222. National rates have been declining throughout the last 10 years. Maine's numbers have also been decreasing, with a 10 year high of 314 in 1996 and the current low of 252 in 2002.



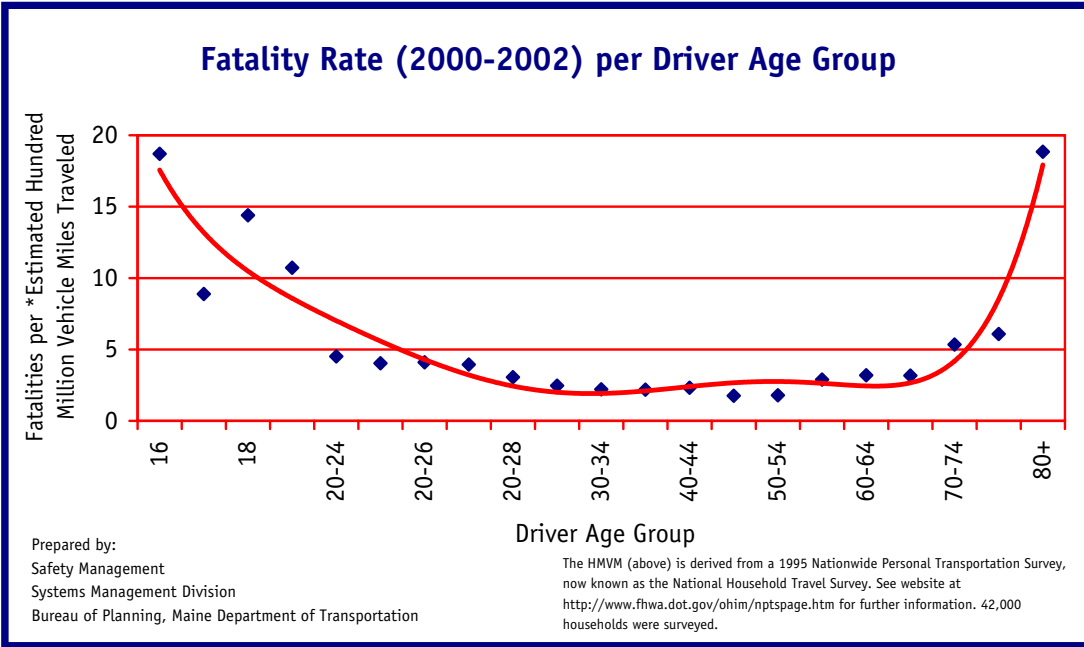
Maine crash rates have been decreasing, but remain above the national rate. Maine's fatality rate is below the national average. It had been decreasing through 2000, but with the recent increase in crash fatalities, the fatality rates have increased during the last two years.



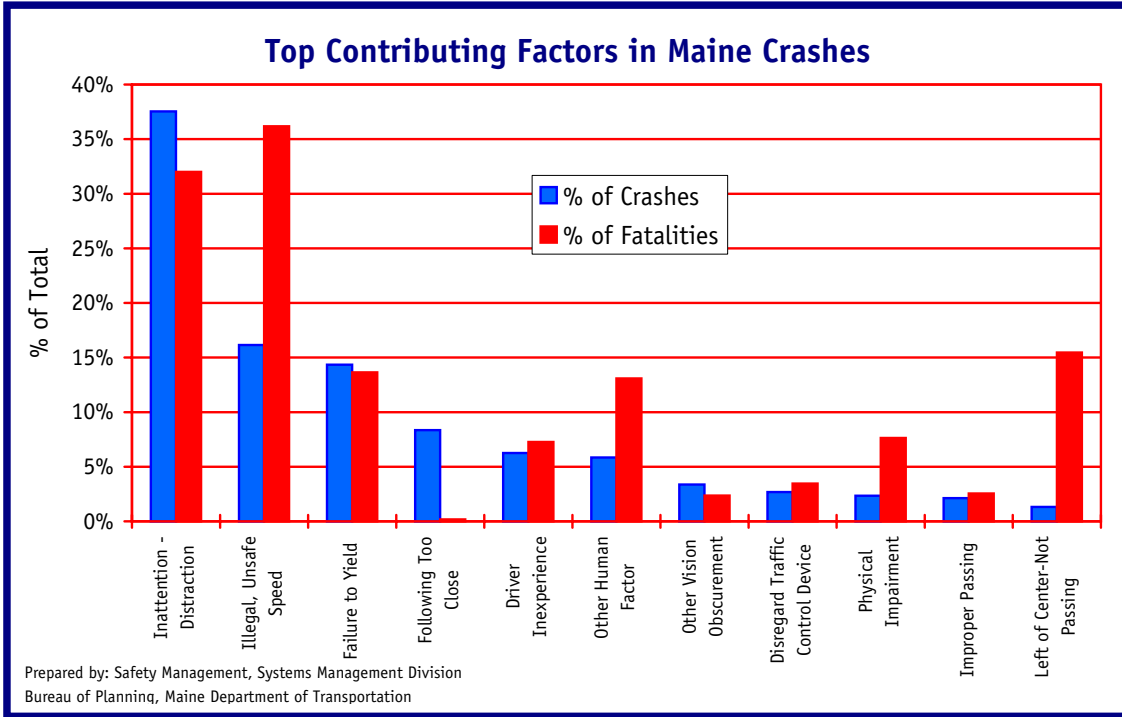
The above chart shows changes in the average economic impact per crash using constant estimated values for injuries and fatalities. The trend has been increasing since 1996 due to higher numbers of fatalities and injuries relative to the number of crashes.



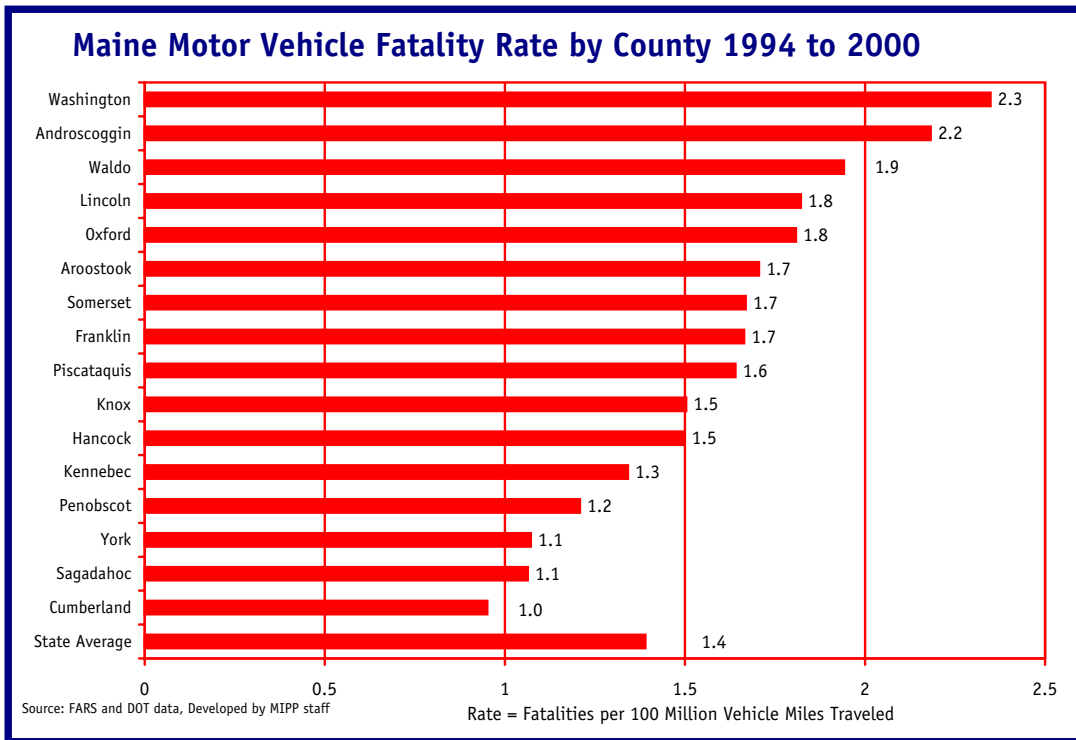
Crash types are shown in order of resulting fatalities. Run Off Road and Head On (Lane Departure crash types) are the most deadly. Rear End is the most frequent crash type.

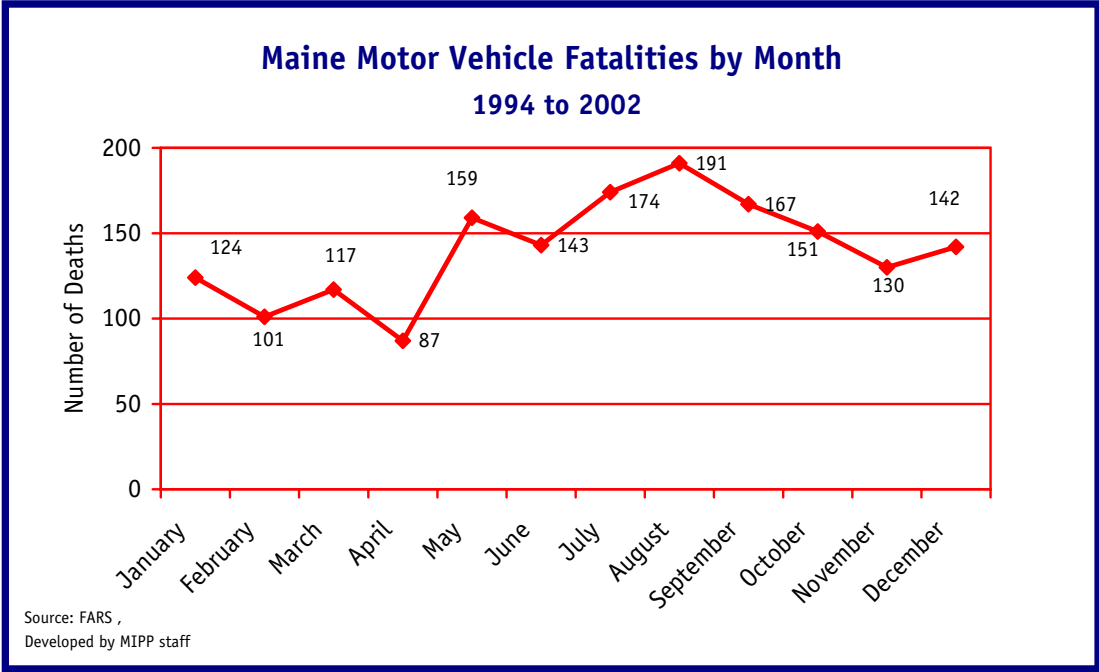


Fatality rates are much higher for drivers aged 16 to 19 years old and those over 75.

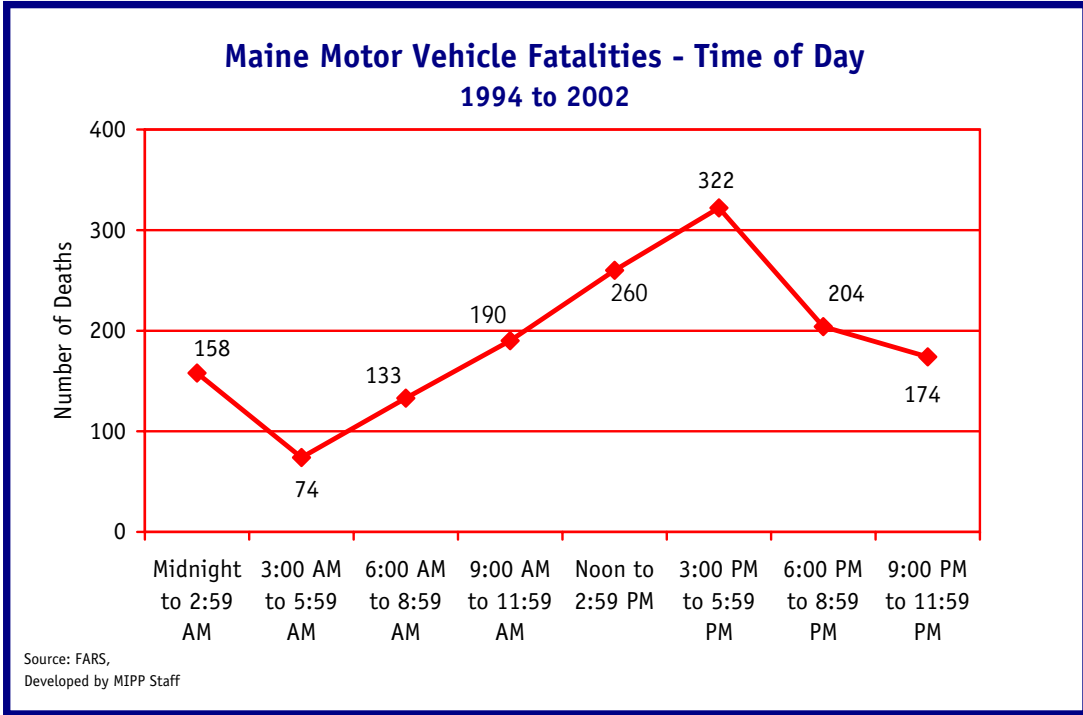


Inattention/Distracted is the most frequent contributing factor, Illegal/Unsafe Speed leads to the most fatalities.





Peak fatality months are July through September, when Maine experiences increased vacation traffic.



The hours from Noon to 6 PM are when most traffic fatalities occur. The 158 fatalities occurring from Midnight to 3 AM occur during hours when traffic volume is very light, so the fatality rate is very high during this time period.