

Maryland Statewide FFY2022 Problem Identification

Overall

In 2019, 534 people were killed—a 4.3% increase from 2018—in 115,916 police-reported traffic crashes in Maryland, while 48,656 people were injured, and 82,503 crashes involved property damage only. In total, 303 drivers (232 vehicle drivers and 71 motorcycle operators), 135 non-motorists, and 96 passengers were killed on Maryland roads. On average, one person was killed every 16 hours, 133 people were injured each day (6 injuries every hour), and 318 police-reported traffic crashes occurred every day.

The fatality rate for Maryland decreased from 0.93 in 2017 to 0.86 in 2018, then rose again to 0.89 in 2019. The overall fatality rate has consistently been lower than the national fatality rates every year since 1992.

On average, crashes in the Baltimore and Washington metropolitan regions account for 90.0% of the state's annual crashes.¹ More than 20,000 crashes occurred in Baltimore and Prince George's Counties in 2019, accounting for over 36% of all crashes reported statewide. Prince George's County was also the site of the greatest number of fatal crashes in Maryland in 2019.

Crashes occurred consistently through the year on Maryland's roadways, spread relatively evenly through the calendar year. On average, however, slightly fewer crashes occurred in January, February, March and April. Crashes tended to increase significantly in May but occurred most frequently in October, November, and December. Regardless of the month, more crashes occurred on Fridays and during afternoon or early evening hours in Maryland. Nine percent of daily crashes occurred from midnight to 5 am.

Young adult drivers, ages 21 to 29, represented approximately one in every five drivers (19.4%) involved in Maryland crashes. These young adults also comprised a large share of injuries (23.0%) and deaths (23.0%) resulting from crashes on Maryland roadways.

Females accounted for one-third (32.8%) of drivers involved in crashes yet accounted for nearly half (49.4%) of the drivers injured. Males accounted for 47.4% of drivers involved in crashes yet accounted for over three-quarters (77.4%) of fatally injured drivers.

Impaired Driving

Impaired driving crashes have increased by approximately nine percent since 2015, which was the lowest point for impaired driving crashes within the past five years. However, impaired driving crashes have remained relatively steady over the past two years, declining by 0.7% since 2018.

¹Baltimore Region: Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, Howard, Queen Anne's, Baltimore City
Washington Region: Calvert, Charles, Frederick, Montgomery, Prince George's, St. Mary's

While only one in 50 crashes involving driver impairment resulted in a fatality in 2019, over one-fourth (26.5%) of all fatal crashes in the State involved alcohol and/or drugs. Although every impaired driving crash does not result in a fatality, impairment is often a factor when a fatality does occur. This relatively high rate of occurrence and correlation between impaired driving and fatal crashes and fatalities on Maryland roadways has made impaired driving a crucial focus point for traffic safety and law enforcement professionals throughout the state.

In 2019, Maryland law enforcement officers issued 52,588 citations for impaired driving (total of all citations issued, not total persons cited; in a single stop, an impaired driver may be cited for two or three violations), which translates to a total of 18,620 arrested drivers. This is compared to 18,447 in 2018 and 18,903 arrests in 2017. Comparably, the MHSO and its SHSP EAT partners are turning more attention to drugged driving in Maryland. In 2019, there were 7,827 citations issued to drivers for operating a vehicle while impaired by drugs or controlled dangerous substances (CDS), compared to 6,907 written in 2018 and 6,005 written in 2017.

Occupant Protection

In Maryland during 2019, nearly 2,200 occupants of passenger vehicles or light trucks were injured or killed in crashes. Despite increases in observed belt use rates in Maryland and across the nation, 20% of all Marylanders killed in motor vehicle crashes were not wearing seat belts. Research has shown that seat belts, when used properly, reduce the risk of fatal injury to front-seat passengers by 45.0% and reduce the risk of moderate to critical injury by 50.0%.

In 2019, Maryland law enforcement agencies issued a total of 29,666 citations for seat belt use violations (which includes 3,788 child safety seat violations), reflecting the first increase in belt use citations issued within several years. There were 27,342 such citations issued in 2018 (3,689 of which were for child safety seat violations) and 30,791 issued in 2017 (3,947 for child safety seat violations). The increase in the fine has been cited as a possible cause for fewer citations being written in recent years, or the issuance of a warning in lieu of a moving violation. Also cited has been the “Ferguson effect” where the tense climate of public interactions with, and increased scrutiny of, law enforcement may be affecting the number of vehicle stops. The MHSO will continue to analyze these data trends and work with its law enforcement partners to understand the changes seen in law enforcement interventions for traffic violations.

Distracted Driving

Over 55,000 distracted driving crashes occurred on Maryland roads each year between 2015 and 2019. For this latest five-year period, distracted driving was a factor in an annual average of one-half of all traffic crashes (48%), more than half of all injury crashes (53.7%), and about one third of all fatal crashes (34.3%). Distracted driving was a factor in 54.3% of injuries and 34.2% of fatalities. Thus, distracted driving is significantly over-represented in all crashes, and even more so in injury crashes. However, the difficulty in accurately capturing distracted driving as a cause on crash reports would indicate that distracted driving is, potentially, still under-

reported. Combined with the significant contribution of identified crashes, distracted driving is most likely a larger problem than currently indicated. Hence, distracted driving is a major focus for traffic safety professionals in Maryland and across the nation.

In 2019, Maryland law enforcement officers issued 31,036 citations for cell phone use and 2,370 citations for texting while driving. These numbers represent a slight increase over those of the previous year, the first such increase observed in several years, following the 2013 law that banned the use of cell phones without a hands-free device on Maryland roadways. In 2018, there were 30,782 handheld cell phone citations issued along with 2,173 texting citations. In 2017, there were 33,560 handheld cell phone citations and 2,577 texting citations.

Aggressive Driving

During the latest five-year period, 2015 through 2019, aggressive drivers have been involved in an average of 4,195 crashes on Maryland roads each year. For the same five-year period, aggressive driving accounted for an annual average of 3.6% of all traffic crashes, 4.5% of all injury crashes, and 7.1% of all fatal crashes in Maryland. Aggressive driving was a factor in 4.9% of injuries and 7.4% of fatalities.

In 2019, Maryland law enforcement officers issued 825 citations statewide for aggressive driver violations, compared to 762 in 2018 and 781 in 2017. Difficulties exist in obtaining convictions for violating the aggressive driving statute because of the requirement that officers observe three separate driving violations in order to issue an aggressive driving citation. This requirement almost certainly contributes to the low number of citations written each year for aggressive driving in Maryland, since law enforcement officers are typically trained to take immediate action upon seeing a violation. Waiting to observe two or more additional offenses before taking enforcement action is counter intuitive to officers. It is suspected that many of the aggressive driving citations are directly related to police pursuits.

Among the 12 individual acts that comprise aggressive driving outlined in Maryland law, enforcement officers in 2019 cited 6,440 drivers for failing to yield, 40,772 for failing to obey traffic control devices (such as stopping for red lights and stop signs), and 13,437 drivers for lane violations. By comparison, in 2018 officers wrote 6,874 citations for failing to yield, 39,560 for failing to obey traffic control devices, and 12,982 drivers for lane violations.

Speeding

Between 2015 and 2019, an average of 9,810 speed-related crashes occurred on Maryland roadways each year. For the same five-year period, speeding was involved in an annual average of 8.5% of all traffic crashes, 9.3% of all injury crashes, and 15.0% of all fatal crashes in Maryland. In addition, driver speed was a factor in 9.3% of injured persons and 15.3% of fatalities. In 2019, 9,179 speed involved crashes occurred across the State, resulting in a 13.8% reduction in the number of crashes that occurred in 2018.

In 2019, Maryland law enforcement officers issued 182,322 citations to drivers for speeding violations, compared to 195,659 in 2018 and 206,485 in 2017. The number of speed-related citations issued in 2019 represent a 6.8% decrease from the previous year and an 11.7% decrease since 2017.

Motorcycle-Involved

Compared to the previous year, motorcycle-involved crashes in 2019 decreased by 1.7%, though fatality crashes increased by 32.1% over the same period. During the 2015-2019 five-year period, an average of 1,400 motorcycle-involved crashes occurred on Maryland roads each year.

From 2015 through 2019 in Maryland, motorcycle-involved crashes accounted for 2.4% of injuries and 13.8% of fatalities. Thus, motorcycles are significantly over-represented in fatal crashes.

While a relatively low 5.0% of motorcycle crashes result in a fatality, the fact that 13.8% of all statewide fatalities involve a motorcycle is cause for concern among traffic safety experts. This significant involvement of motorcycles in fatal crashes and their effects on overall traffic fatalities in Maryland indicate the need for greater motorcycle safety efforts such as awareness, education, training, and enforcement.

Pedestrian-Involved

The incidence of pedestrian on foot-involved crashes in Maryland has increased by 1.3% since 2015 (not accounting for population changes in the state), but fatalities have increased by 25.9% over the same period. Approximately 3,150 pedestrian-involved crashes occurred on Maryland roads in 2019, and an average of 3,300 such crashes occurred per year between 2015 and 2019.

For the same five-year period, pedestrians were involved in an annual average of 2.8% of all traffic crashes, 8.7% of injury crashes, and more than one in five (23.2%) of fatal crashes. Pedestrians involved in crashes accounted for 6.7% of injuries and 21.7% of all fatalities, although only 3.5% of pedestrian-involved crashes resulted in a fatality. These facts alone show cause for concern among safety professionals, as pedestrians are significantly over-represented in fatal crashes. The apparent risk to pedestrians involved in Maryland crashes calls for improved pedestrian safety as a major focus for traffic safety professionals across the State.

Bicycle-Involved

The 2019 incidence of bicycle-involved crashes in Maryland increased by less than one percent when compared to 2015. From 2015-2019, an average of approximately 830 bicycle-involved crashes occurred on Maryland roadways each year. During the same period, bicycles were involved in an annual average of fewer than one in 100 (0.7%) of all statewide traffic crashes,

2.0% of statewide injury crashes, and 2.2% of statewide fatal crashes. Bicycle-involved crashes accounted for just over 1.4% of injuries and two percent of fatalities.

Bicycle crashes are more likely to involve younger than older riders. Over one-quarter (28.7%) of crashes in 2019 involved children of age 17 or under. By contrast, bicycle riders aged 20 to 29 accounted for 19.8% of all crashes and riders aged 40 to 54 accounted for 15.2% of all crashes.

Bicycle riders, like pedestrians, do not have the structural protection afforded by vehicles, are not as visible as other vehicles, and are (generally) not motorized. These factors together put bicycles at a great disadvantage on roadways, especially where motorized vehicles are traveling at much higher rates of speed. From 2015-2019, more than half of all bicycle-involved crashes (57.4%) occurred on state, county, and federal roadways, but 81.8% of all fatal crashes involving bicycles occurred on the same roadways.

Note: Citation frequencies and percentages reported here may be underestimates of actual issued citations due to an ongoing system conversion.