

St. Mary's County FFY2024 Problem Identification

Overall

St. Mary's County accounted for 1.9% of the population and 1.6% of the vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in the State of Maryland on average over the past three years (2019-2021). During that time, an annual average of 16 traffic fatalities have occurred in the County, which have been increasing, ranging from 15 (2.8% of all fatalities in the State) to 14 (2.4%) to 20 (3.6%). The number of serious injuries (defined as KABCO=4 on the police crash report) over the past three years in St. Mary's County has fluctuated, ranging from 96 to 93 to 98, which are 3.1%, 3.4%, and 3.2% of the State total for serious injuries in 2019, 2020, and 2021 respectively.

Usually several hundred thousand citations for traffic violations are issued across the State and adjudicated in Maryland District Courts each year (435,907 in 2019 and 320,078 in 2020). However, only 308,384 citations were issued and adjudicated in the year 2021 across the State. Over the previous three years, the number of traffic citations issued in St. Mary's County has decreased significantly from 12,465 (2.9% of statewide traffic citations) in 2019 to 9,470 (3.0%) in 2020 to 7,874 (2.6%) in 2021. These citations were issued anywhere within the boundaries of St. Mary's County to a resident of any jurisdiction, state, or country.

Aggressive Driving

Aggressive driving fatalities in St. Mary's County during the past three years have stayed about the same, with 1 occurring in 2019, 1 in 2020, and 2 in 2021. Serious injuries resulting from such crashes in the County have been increasing, ranging from 3 in 2019 to 4 in 2020 and 6 in 2021. Aggressive driving crashes occurring in 2021 accounted for 6.1% of all fatalities and 3.5% of all serious injuries in the State.

Aggressive driving citations are rarely issued because a driver must be observed committing three or more specific infractions to qualify under the aggressive driving statute. In Maryland, 738 such citations were issued on average over the past three years. Of those, an average of 5 were issued in St. Mary's County (6 in 2019, 5 in 2020, and 3 in 2021).

Distracted Driving

Since 2019, there have been an annual average of about 5 distracted driving fatalities occurring in St. Mary's County. In 2021, distracted driving in the County added 4 deaths to the State's distracted driving fatalities, a point on a trend that has been steady over the previous three years (6 in 2019 and 5 in 2020). Serious injuries resulting from distracted driving crashes in the County have been alternating over the past three years, from 61 in 2019 (4.1% of all distracted driving serious injuries in the State) to 49 in 2020 (4.0% of all) to 58 in 2021 (4.2% of all). In 2021, 20.0% of all fatalities and 59.2% of all serious injuries recorded in St. Mary's County resulted from distracted driving crashes.

Distracted driving citations issued in Maryland during the past three years have decreased significantly, ranging from 33,974 in 2019 to 19,432 in 2020 and 17,466 in 2021.

During the same period, distracted driving citations issued in St. Mary's County have seen a significant decrease, ranging from 673 in 2019 to 579 in 2020 and 403 in 2021. As a proportion of the distracted driving citations issued statewide, those handed out in the County accounted for 2.0% in 2019, 3.0% in 2020, and 2.3% in 2021.

Impaired Driving

Over the past three years, an average of 4 impaired driving fatalities occurred per year in St. Mary's County. Fatalities from such crashes have remained almost steady, ranging from 4 (2.6% of all impaired driving fatalities in Maryland) in 2019 to 3 (2.5% of all) in 2020 to 5 (2.8% of all) in 2021. Serious injuries resulting from such crashes in the County over the same time period have stayed about the same, ranging from 14 in 2019 (2.9% of all impaired driving serious injuries in the State) to 13 in 2020 (2.9% of all) to 14 in 2021 (3.1% of all). In 2021, 25.0% of all fatalities and 14.3% of all serious injuries in St. Mary's County resulted from impaired driving crashes, compared to 31.6% of all fatalities and 14.9% of all serious injuries from impaired driving crashes occurring throughout the State.

Impaired driving relates to driving while impaired by alcohol and/or drugs or controlled dangerous substances. Several citations may be issued at the point of an encounter with an impaired driver. Therefore, all judicial figures related to impaired driving will be quantified using arrests, not individual citations. Impaired driving arrests have seesawed in Maryland over the past three years, from 19,022 in 2019 to 14,017 in 2020 to 14,855 in 2021. During the same period, impaired driving arrests have decreased significantly in St. Mary's County, ranging from 513 in 2019 to 435 in 2020 to 390 in 2021. As a proportion of impaired driving arrests in the State, the number of impaired driving arrests in the County accounted for 2.7% in 2019, 3.1% in 2020, and 2.6% in 2021. Of the impaired arrests in the County in 2021, 3.8% were of older drivers (ages 65+) while 2.8% were of young drivers (ages 16-20).

Speeding

During the past three years, St. Mary's County averaged 3 speeding related fatalities per year, which have been increasing over that time: 1 in 2019, 2 in 2020 and 5 in 2021. Serious injuries resulting from such crashes in the County over the past three years have been increasing, ranging from 7 in 2019 to 8 in 2020 and 13 in 2021. In 2021, 5.2% of statewide speeding related fatalities and 3.7% of statewide speeding related serious injuries resulted from crashes in St. Mary's County. Over the same year, 25.0% of all fatalities and 13.3% of all serious injuries recorded in St. Mary's County were the result of crashes involving driving speed.

Speeding citations are very common even though those adjudicated through the District Court do not include automated enforcement. Speeding citations issued in St. Mary's County have seen a significant decrease over the past three years, with 7,901 (4.3% of statewide speeding citations), 5,768 (3.8% of statewide), and 4,527 (3.2% of all) issued in 2019, 2020, and 2021, respectively. Statewide speeding citations have decreased significantly over the same three years: 182,169, 151,093, and 139,797. Speeding citations comprised 57.5% of all St. Mary's County citations in 2021.

Non-motorists

Non-motorists are defined here as pedestrians (on foot) and bicyclists. Pedestrian fatalities in St. Mary's County have stayed about the same over the previous three years, from 2 (2019) to 2 (2020) to 1 (2021), while serious injuries have remained almost steady, ranging from 7 (2019) to 6 (2020) to 8 (2021). The occurrence of bicyclist fatalities in St. Mary's County has been rare, with 0 in 2019, 0 in 2020, and 0 in 2021, while serious injuries to bicyclists have remained almost steady, ranging from 1 in 2019 to 2 in 2020 to 1 in 2021.

Very few non-motorist citations are issued throughout the State, to either the pedestrian or the motor vehicle driver. Typically, more violations are issued to drivers, and in St. Mary's County 5 were issued to drivers against pedestrians or bicyclists in 2021, while 0 were issued to pedestrians or bicyclists that year. As a proportion of statewide totals (648 and 182), those numbers represent 0.8% and 0.0%, respectively, in 2021.

Motorcycles

Motorcycle rider fatalities have stayed about the same over the past three years in St. Mary's County, ranging from 2 (2019) to 2 (2020) to 3 (2021). Serious injuries to motorcyclists have increased, ranging from 5 (2019) to 8 (2020) to 13 (2021). The 2021 figures account for 3.9% of motorcycle rider fatalities and 4.0% of rider serious injuries that occurred in the State.

Maryland has had a universal helmet law in place for several decades; consequently, the incidence of unhelmeted motorcyclists involved in a crash is low. The State has averaged 9 unhelmeted motorcycle rider fatalities per year over the past three years; unhelmeted motorcycle fatalities in St. Mary's County have been infrequent (an average of 0 per year). However, 5 seriously injured riders in St. Mary's County were unhelmeted in 2021, which is 4.8% of the State total (compared to 0 in 2019 and 2 in 2020).

Older Drivers

In Maryland, older driver safety programs focus on drivers of age 65 years or older. The data presented here on fatalities and serious injuries include any person involved in a crash with an older driver. Older drivers were involved in crashes that resulted in an average of 91 fatalities in Maryland each year (105 in 2019, 91 in 2020, and 78 in 2021). During that time, serious injuries resulting from these crashes in Maryland have oscillated, ranging from 512 in 2019 to 381 in 2020 to 429 in 2021. Fatal crashes involving older drivers in St. Mary's County averaged 3 over the same period (ranging from 3 in 2019, 4 in 2020 to 3 in 2021). Further, serious injuries resulting from these crashes in the County have declined, ranging from 20 in 2019, 21 in 2020, to 18 in 2021.

A total of 10,350 citations for moving violations or restraint usage were issued to drivers of age 65+ in Maryland in 2021. Over the past three years, the number of traffic citations issued to older drivers in St. Mary's County has seen a significant decrease from 455 (2.6% of those issued statewide) in 2019 to 314 (2.9%) in 2020 to 307 (3.0%) in 2021.

Young Drivers

In Maryland, young driver safety programs focus on individuals between ages 16 and 20. The data presented here on fatalities and serious injuries include any person involved in a crash with a young driver. Young drivers were involved in crashes that resulted in an average of 54 fatalities in Maryland each year (46 in 2019, 56 in 2020, and 61 in 2021). During that time, serious injuries resulting from these crashes in Maryland have been alternating, ranging from 407 in 2019 to 345 in 2020 to 376 in 2021. In 2021 there was 1 fatality involving young drivers in St. Mary's County, a number that has stayed about the same over time, with 2 in 2019 and 1 in 2020. Further, serious injuries due to crashes involving young drivers have trended down then up over the same period, from 27 in 2019 to 12 in 2020 to 15 in 2021.

A total of 33,462 citations for moving violations or restraint usage were issued to drivers of ages 16-20 in Maryland in 2021. Over the past three years, the number of traffic citations issued to young drivers in St. Mary's County has steeply decreased: 1,438 (3.5% of those issued statewide), 1,082 (3.1%), and 864 (2.6%) in 2019, 2020, and 2021, respectively.

Occupant Protection

An unrestrained occupant is defined as a child under the age of eight reported to be not restrained in a child safety seat (which includes harness and booster seats) or a person over the age of eight reported as not restrained by a seat belt while riding in a passenger vehicle or light truck. Unrestrained occupant fatalities have stayed the same over the past three years in St. Mary's County, ranging from 4 (2019) to 4 (2020) to 4 (2021). Serious injuries have declined over the same period: 11 (2019) to 10 (2020) to 8 (2021). The 2021 values accounted for 2.9% of the unrestrained fatalities and 2.1% of the unrestrained serious injuries occurring in the State.

In 2021, 14,994 citations were issued statewide for safety equipment violation (including seat belt violations and child safety seat violations), which decreased significantly when compared to the numbers issued in the previous years (29,653 in 2019 and 16,833 in 2020). In St. Mary's County, 479 such citations were issued in 2021, representing 3.2% of the statewide total, compared to 790 in 2019 and 575 in 2020.

The MHSO conducts an annual roadside survey of seat belt usage in Maryland. The statewide observed seat belt usage rate for Maryland in 2022 among drivers and front seat passengers of all vehicles was 92.7%, while the overall observed seat belt usage rate for St. Mary's County was 90.7%.

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