

Motorcycle deaths continue to climb, report says

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Researchers note that improving economy, better weather mean more riders on the road.

(HealthDay)—An estimated 5,000 motorcyclists were killed on U.S. roads in 2012, an increase of about 9 percent from the previous year, a new report shows.

Last year's number of motorcyclist deaths is near an all-time high, and [motorcyclists](#) remain one of the few [roadway](#) user groups where no progress has been seen over the past decade, the Governors [Highway Safety](#) Association (GHSA) report noted.

"In my state [Oregon], an improving economy and a longer window of nice weather meant there were more riders and riding days. The [fatality](#) increase is disheartening. Every motorcyclist deserves to arrive at their destination safely. These numbers represent real people—they are

family, friends and neighbors," Troy Costales, GHSA's immediate past chairman and head of Oregon's highway safety program, said in a GHSA news release.

The projected number of motorcyclist deaths for 2012 is based on state-by-state data for the first nine months of the year. Similar projections in previous years mirrored the final numbers.

Comparing the first nine months of 2011 and 2012, the report found that motorcyclist deaths increased in 34 states last year, decreased in 16 states and remained the same in the District of Columbia. Increases were seen in every region of the country and were quite high in many states. For example, motorcyclist deaths rose 32 percent in Oregon and 29 percent in Indiana.

With the economy improving, more people have [disposable income](#) for buying and riding motorcycles, the report noted. At the same time, high [gas prices](#) lead to more people buying fuel-efficient vehicles such as motorcycles.

The report also found a decrease in the number of states with laws that require all riders to wear helmets. That number is currently 19, down from 26 in 1997.

"All of the trends with motorcyclist deaths are really going in the wrong direction. This report is an urgent reminder that we must do more to address a problem that will only get worse with increased ridership. We are talking about 5,000 tragedies a year with no sign of progress," GHSA chairman Kendell Poole, director of Tennessee's highway safety program, said in the news release.

"The good news is that we know how to prevent crashes and the resulting injuries and fatalities involving motorcycle riders and their passengers.

There are effective strategies that, when implemented, can make a difference," he added.

The [report](#) outlined a number of ways to reduce motorcyclist deaths. These include: increasing helmet use; reducing speeding and impaired riding; providing rider training to all who need or want it; ensuring proper licensing of riders; and encouraging all drivers to share the road with motorcyclists.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers a [motorcycle safety guide](#).

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