

# US roadway deaths marked small decline in 2022

April 21 2023, by Cara Murez

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Traffic deaths are down on U.S. roadways, but the small drop pales in

comparison to the surging rate of recent years.

Deaths in [traffic crashes](#) fell 0.3% last year compared to 2021, according to the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). On average, crashes claimed the lives of 117 people a day—more than 42,000 in all for 2022.

"Any reduction in roadway deaths is positive, but the minor decrease announced by NHTSA follows an unprecedented pandemic-fueled surge in roadway fatalities and [dangerous driving](#)," said Jonathan Adkins, chief executive officer of the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA). He spoke in a news release from the governors' group responding to the NHTSA announcement.

The GHSA noted that [traffic deaths](#) surged 30% over the past decade. Between 2019 and 2022, they rose from 36,355 to 42,795, an increase of nearly 18%.

Dangerous driving behaviors, including speeding, impaired driving and not wearing a seat belt all increased between 2020 and 2021.

Pedestrian deaths reached a 40-year high of nearly 7,500 in 2021, according to a GHSA analysis. Early indications are that 2022 was also a deadly year for people walking, the group said.

"These roadway deaths are heartbreaking, unacceptable and preventable," Adkins said. "We will not accept such incremental safety progress after two years of escalating deaths and more dangerous driving on U.S. roads."

Adkins pointed an approach outlined in the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Roadway Safety Strategy.

It calls for a number of measures, such as equitable traffic enforcement; infrastructure that slows down drivers and protects pedestrians, bicyclists and other non-motorized road users; and community engagement campaigns developed with local input. It also recommends [vehicle technology](#) that protects people both inside and outside the vehicle and investments in post-crash care.

The GHSA is urging the U.S. Senate to quickly confirm the nomination of Ann Carlson as NHTSA administrator. Carlson has been both chief counsel and acting administrator at NHTSA.

NHTSA has been without a Senate-confirmed leader for the past six years, except for three months in 2022, the association said.

**More information:** The U.S. National Institutes of Health has more on [safe driving](#).

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