

Speed-Related Crashes in Wisconsin



Did you know...

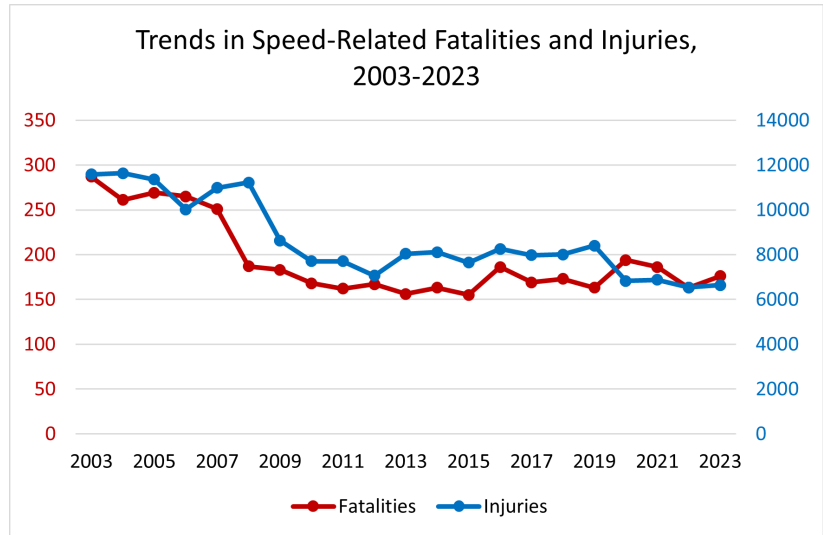
In Wisconsin, one person was injured or killed in a speed-related crash every 1.3 hours in 2023.

- 16,401 speed-related crashes occurred in Wisconsin in 2023.
- In these crashes, 176 people were killed and 6,641 were injured.
- Speed was listed as a contributing cause in 13% of all crashes and in 31% of all fatalities in 2023.

Scope of the Problem

Over the years, Wisconsin has experienced a general decline in speed-related injuries and fatalities. A major drop in speed-related fatalities and injuries occurred between 2008 and 2009 when the economy worsened and seat belt laws were strengthened.

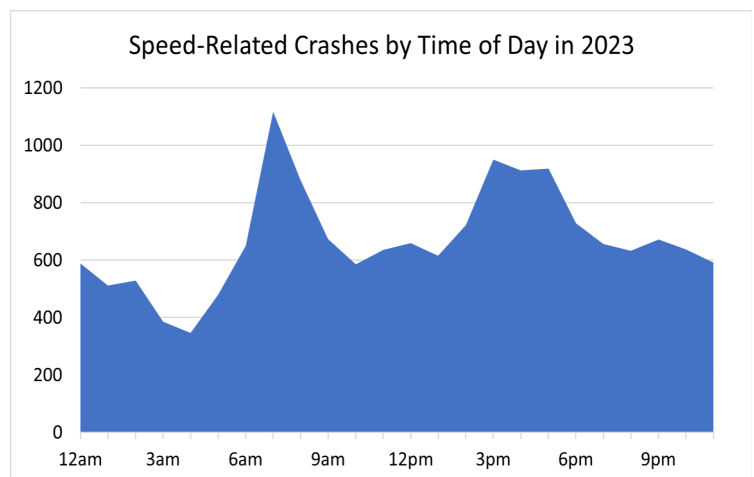
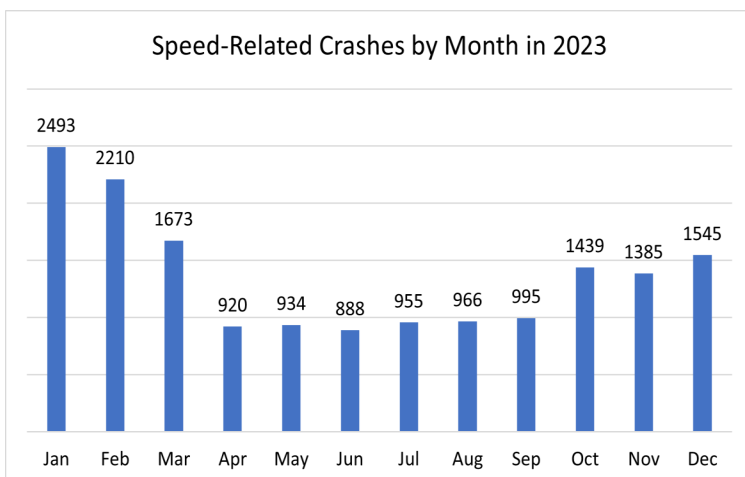
This slow decline is likely due to rising seat belt use over the past several decades, the introduction of graduated driver's licenses, and much safer automobiles. In 2023, we saw a slight increase in speed-related fatalities compared to 2022.



When do Speed-Related Crashes Occur?

Speed-related crashes most often occur in the winter months. This does not necessarily mean that there is more speeding in those months, merely that speeding is more likely to cause a crash in such weather. In 2023, road conditions such as snow, sleet, and freezing rain accounted for 20% of speed-related crashes.

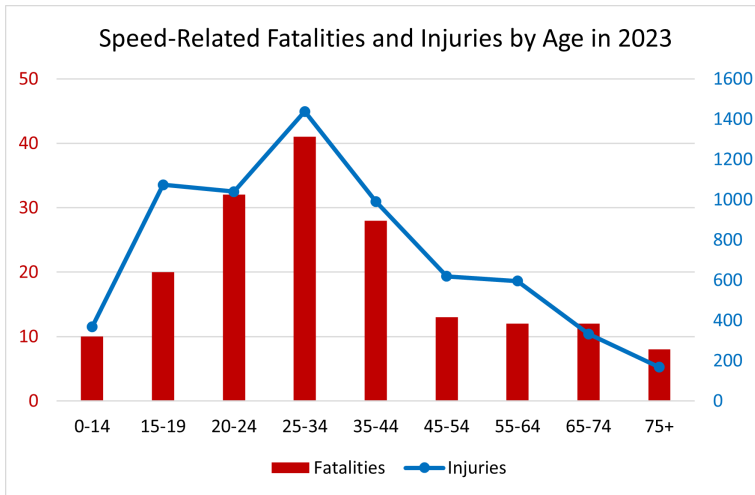
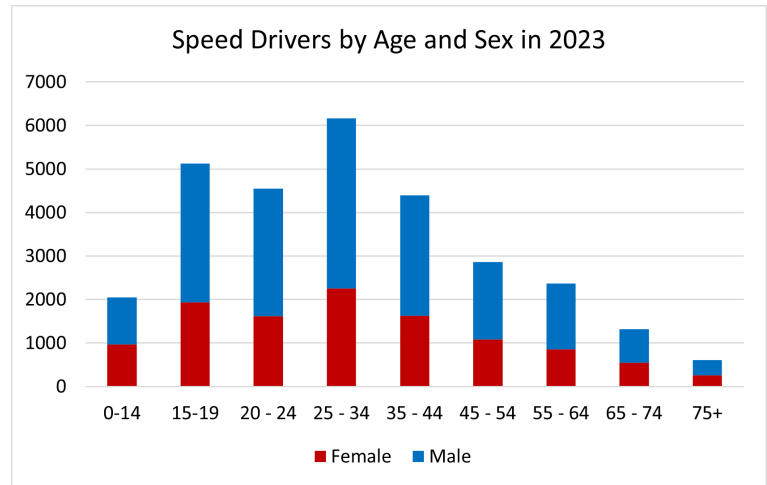
Over the day, speed-related crashes peak from 7-8 am, with a smaller peak observed between 2-5 pm. The morning crash peak is likely caused by drivers rushing to work.



Who is at Risk for Speed-Related Crashes?

Male drivers account for nearly 62% of all speeding drivers. Moreover, 21% of all speeding drivers were young male drivers (ages 16-24). Inexperience and the likelihood to engage in risky behavior may be factors for drivers in these cohorts.

Speed-related fatalities and injuries generally follow the same pattern: fatalities and injuries rise steadily among young drivers until they dramatically decline for drivers in their mid-30's. This is likely due to an increase in driving experience.



Counties in Wisconsin are largely proportional in their percentage of speed-related crashes to their percentage of the state population. Some counties see a larger percentage of speed-related crashes proportional to their population estimates. For example, Milwaukee County accounted for 18.6% of speed crashes in 2023 while representing 15.7% of the state population. Additionally, 3.9% of speed-related crashes occurred in Rock County despite only representing 2.7% of the state population.

Current Speed Laws

Speed laws are defined in Wis. Stats 346.57 (2) and (3) and (4).

Drivers are required to drive at a speed that does not exceed the posted limit and is reasonable given conditions of the road. The speed of the vehicle must be in control to avoid colliding with any object, person or vehicle.

Locations that may require reduced speeds include: intersection approaches, railway crossings, curves, hillcrests, narrow and winding roads, and school-adjacent streets.

Drivers may not drive in excess of the following fixed and posted limits: 15 mph in school zones during school hours; 15 mph in safety zones when pedestrians are present; 15 mph in an alley; 25 mph on highways within corporate city limits unless modified and posted; 35 mph in outlying districts of city limits or semi-urban areas outside of city limits; 45 mph on designated rustic roads; 55 mph in the absence of any other fixed or posted limits; and 65 mph on freeways and expressways.

What Can You Do?

- Obey speed limits, and drive cautiously in inclement weather and in the previously mentioned high-risk locations.
- Be alert when driving in work zones, school zones, and railway grade crossings. Speeding fines are usually doubled in such locations.
- Wear a safety belt to reduce the risk of being injured or killed in a speed-related crash.
- Remember, speeding is not worth a ticket...or your life!