

road safety issues

The Land Transport Safety Authority (LTSA) has prepared this road safety issues report. It is based on reported traffic crash data and trends from the 1999–2003 period. The intent of the report is to highlight key road safety issues in the Ruapehu District.

The number of road users injured on roads in the Ruapehu District during 2003 was 92. This number was similar to the 88 casualties reported in 2001 and represents an improvement since 2002 when there were 107 casualties. The estimated social cost of traffic crashes in the Ruapehu District during 2003 was \$21.62 million. This is a reduction from the 2002 figure of \$26.37 million and continues the downward trend of recent years.

Reducing road trauma involves a multi-pronged approach, which includes education, engineering and enforcement. A combination of these initiatives should be used to address the major road safety issues affecting the nation as a whole and local areas. In recent years, the major road safety issues for New Zealand have included speed, alcohol, failure to give way and the lack of safety belt use.

Over 90 percent of roads in the Ruapehu District are rural roads with speed limits greater than 70 km/h. This characteristic feature of the Ruapehu District roading network influences the type and nature of crashes in the district, with those involving inappropriate speed or loss of vehicle control relatively common. Road factors have also featured in a substantial proportion of recent crashes on Ruapehu District roads.

Major road safety issues




Ruapehu District

- Speed
- Loss of control
- Road or environmental factors

Nationally

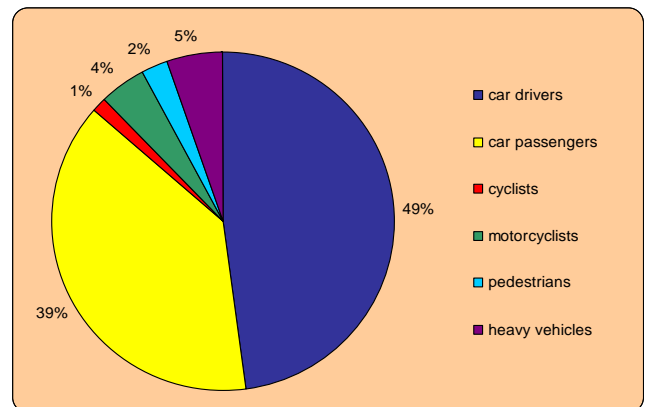
- Speed
- Alcohol
- Failure to give way
- Restraints

2003 road trauma for Ruapehu District

	Deaths	2
	Serious casualties	15
	Minor casualties	75
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	Fatal crashes	2
	Serious injury crashes	9
	Minor injury crashes	47
	Non-injury crashes	138

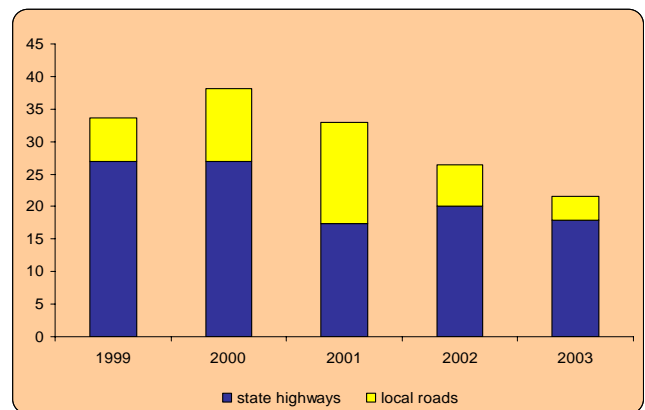
Road user casualties 1999–2003

User type 1999–2003



Estimated social cost of crashes*

Social cost (\$ million)



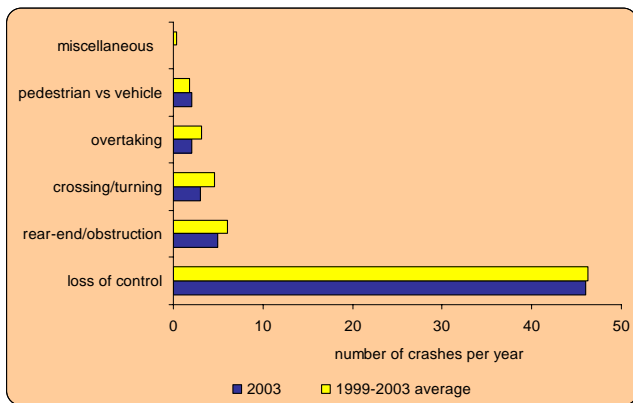
*The estimated social cost includes loss of life or life quality (estimated by the amount New Zealanders are prepared to pay to reduce their risk of fatal or non-fatal injury), loss of output due to injuries, medical and rehabilitation costs, legal and court costs, and property damage. These costs are expressed at June 2002 prices.

Loss of control

The total number of crashes where drivers lost control of their vehicle during 2003 within the Ruapehu District was 136. Forty-six of these caused injuries to road users.

These numbers appear relatively steady when compared with preceding years and indicate that loss of control has contributed to approximately 75 percent of all reported traffic crashes occurring on Ruapehu District's roads over recent years.

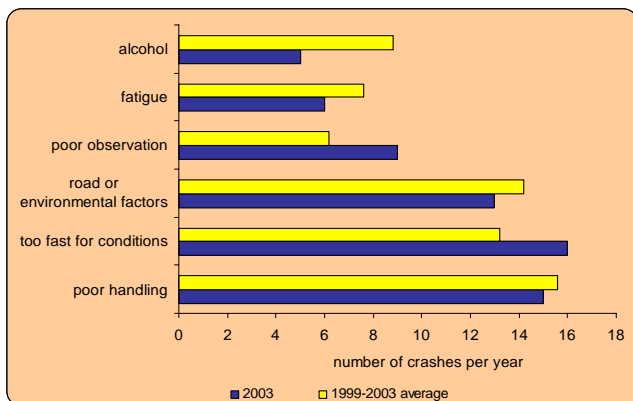
Movements involved in injury crashes



During the 1999–2003 period, over 80 percent of loss of control type crashes occurred on rural roads with speed limits greater than 70 km/h. The number of loss of control crashes occurring on urban roads (with speed limits of 70 km/h or less) was higher in 2003 than the average number reported during the 1999–2003 period.

Poor handling, speed too fast for the conditions and the presence of road or environmental factors were the most commonly recorded contributing factors in Ruapehu District's loss of control injury crashes in recent years.

Factors involved in loss of control injury crashes



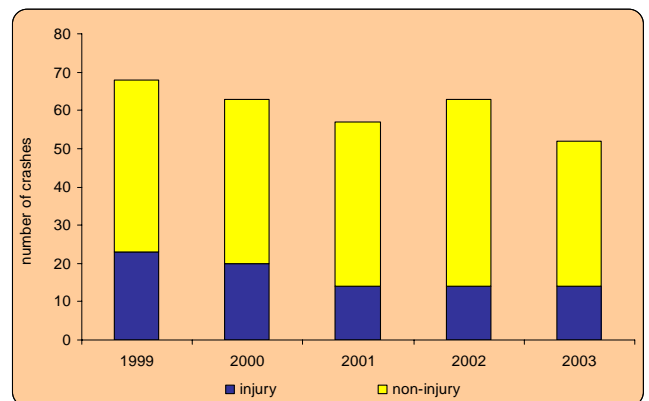
Road/environmental factors

The Ruapehu District is affected by extreme seasonal weather conditions. This is just one aspect creating a difficult environment in which to build and maintain roads.

Circumstances where road or environmental factors are recorded in a crash include where the road surface is slippery due to rain, oil, or loose material such as gravel, or if the road is obstructed because of a slip or fallen tree. The road or environmental factors most commonly reported in crashes on Ruapehu District roads were rain, ice or frost creating a slippery road surface, or where the road was undergoing maintenance or construction (roadworks).

During 2003, road or environmental factors were recorded as contributing to 52 crashes within the Ruapehu District. This was a reduction compared with recent years, but road or environmental factors contributed to 24 percent of all reported injury crashes on Ruapehu District roads during 2003 and 28 percent during the 1999–2003 period.

Crashes involving road or environmental factors

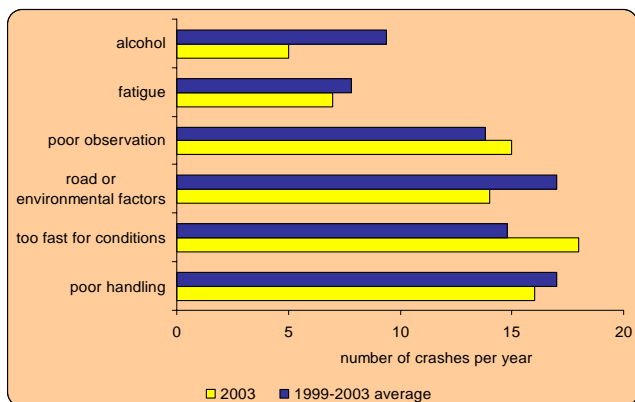


Factors relating to driver behaviour such as driving too fast for the conditions, poor handling and poor observation commonly featured in Ruapehu District crashes involving road or environmental factors. The involvement of drivers showing inexperience was also recorded in a number of these crashes.

80 Speed

The Official New Zealand Road Code states that drivers must drive at a speed suitable for conditions up to a maximum set by the prevailing speed limit. Drivers need to use their judgement to adjust speed to safely accommodate aspects such as loose material on the road surface or poor weather. Despite this, inappropriate speed, defined as too fast for the conditions, is identified as a major road safety issue both nationally and locally in the Ruapehu District.

Factors involved in injury crashes



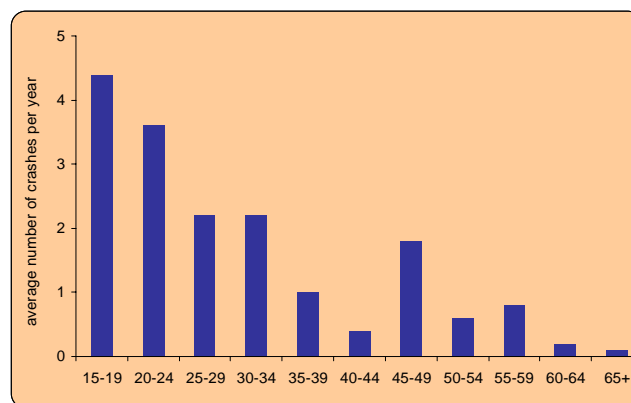
Excessive speed was identified as a contributing factor in 18 injury crashes (21 percent of all injury crashes) in the Ruapehu District during 2003.

Excessive speed is likely to increase the severity of a crash. Forty-four percent of all speed-related crashes reported during 2003 resulted in injuries to road users. This compares with just less than one third of all crashes in the Ruapehu District incurring injuries in the five-year period (1999–2003). The proportion of injury-causing speed-related crashes during 2003 was higher than the 1999–2003 average rate.

The number and proportion of speed-related crashes on urban roads (with speed limits of 70 km/h or less) was higher during 2003 than the average for the 1999–2003 period. Over the last five years, 19 percent of crashes on urban roads were speed-related and for 2003, the figure was 22 percent.

The most recent New Zealand Travel Survey, undertaken in 1997/1998, described the average distances driven by road users within different age groups. This survey indicates that the average annual distance driven by New Zealand drivers is greatest for those drivers aged between approximately 25 and 49 years. The age of drivers involved in speed-related injury crashes within the Ruapehu District highlights the possible over-representation of some particular age groups.

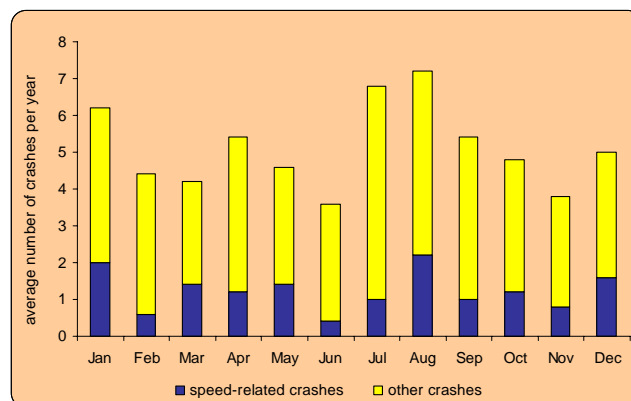
Age of drivers involved in speed-related injury crashes 1999–2003

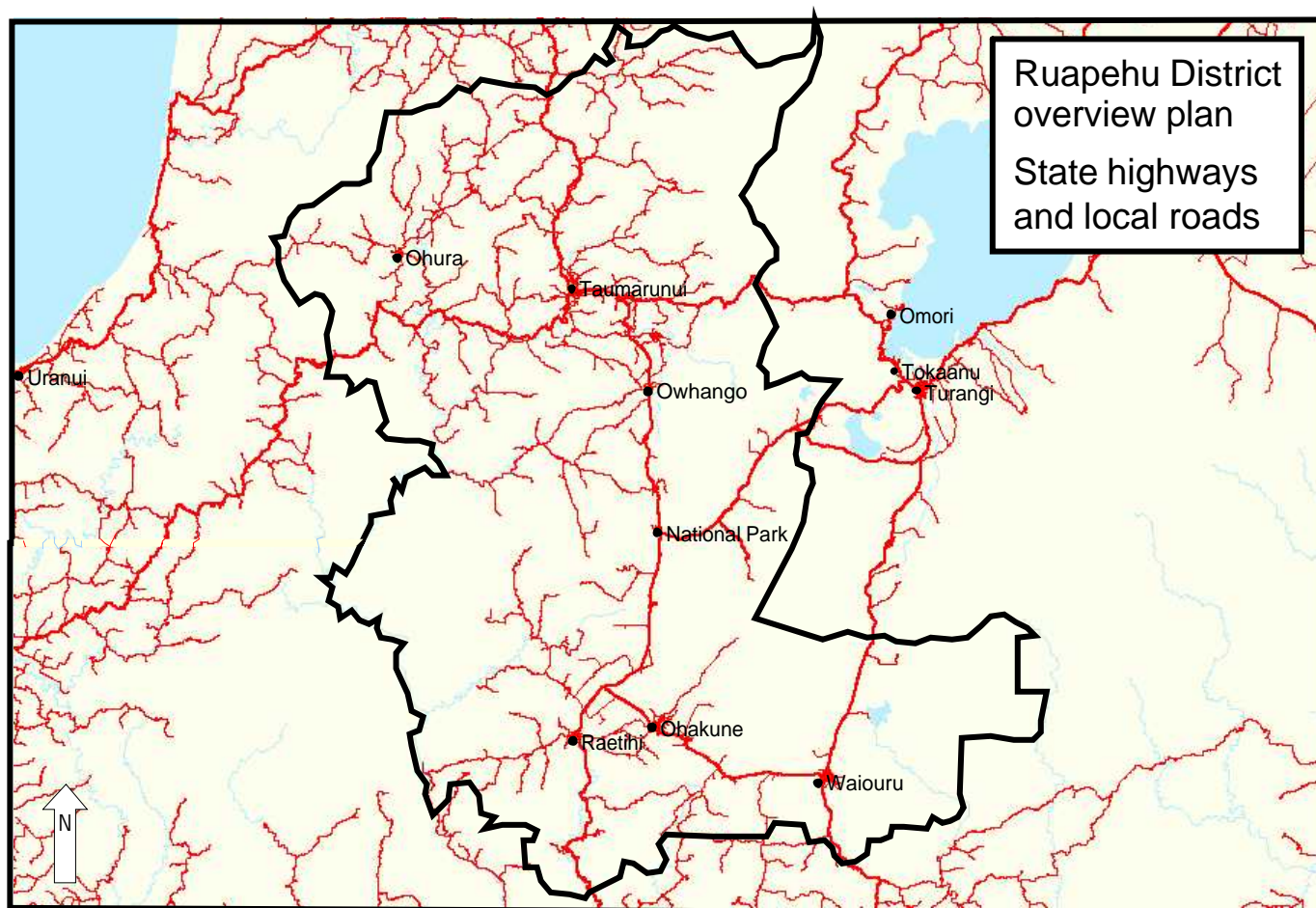


This graph indicates the involvement of a relatively high number of young drivers (aged from 15 to 24 years) in speed-related crashes within the Ruapehu District over the 1999–2003 period.

The Ruapehu District is a popular destination throughout the winter. Accordingly, the district’s monthly rate of injury-crashes peaks during July and August. Therefore, most speed-related injury crashes in the 1999–2003 period occurred during this time.

Month of injury crashes 1999–2003





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