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Study: Roads are safer in urban areas

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Enlarge By Chip Somodevilla, Getty Images

Traffic flows over the American Legion Bridge along the I-495 beltway between Virginia and Maryland.

By Larry Copeland, USA TODAY

Your odds of dying in a motor vehicle crash vary dramatically because of one simple thing: where you live.

The safest places to drive in the USA are Washington, D.C., and Massachusetts. Among the most dangerous: Montana, Wyoming, Louisiana and Mississippi. Those conclusions are based on federal data of traffic fatalities per 100,000 population and per 100 million miles driven.

The primary reason for the difference: Urban roads are safer than rural roads.

LIST: Highway death rates DRIVING: States take aim at distracted pedestrians

Even in states with low overall road death rates, rural areas often have rates twice as high as urban ones. That's because urban areas usually have roads with lower speed limits, more safety engineering features such as divided highways and faster access to emergency medical care than rural routes. Many rural deaths occur when vehicles leave the road and crash into trees or other obstructions.

"An urban state in the Northeast is going to have a much lower fatality rate than a rural Western state with a lot of high-speed, two-lane rural roads, where serious crashes are more likely to happen," says Russ Rader, spokesman for the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

Many traffic safety groups such as the Governors Highway Safety Association argue that such comparisons don't accurately reflect how safe a state's roads are. A better measure, they say, is whether states have enacted proven

RISKS ON ROAD

States with highest and lowest road death rates per 100,000 population in 2009:

Highest:

Lowest:

Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

safety enhancements such as motorcycle helmet laws and primary seat belt laws, which allow police to stop motorists solely for being unbuckled.

State legislatures around the country are gearing up this month to debate scores of highway safety measures that address everything from texting while driving to booster-seat use.

The National Transportation Safety Board urges states to adopt five "most wanted" safety measures, covering extreme drunken driving, seat belt use, child-occupant protection, eliminating distractions for young drivers and motorcycle safety.

Judith Stone, president of Washington, D.C.-based Advocates for Auto and Highway Safety, says the group does not consider fatalities when issuing its annual report card on states. "We look at laws and whether they've been passed," Stone says.

Advocates of stronger laws say it's difficult to persuade a state such as New Hampshire, which has no seat belt or motorcycle helmet laws, to enact such rules when its death rate is below the U.S. average. "States like ... New Hampshire could certainly save more lives by passing stronger laws," says governors safety association spokesman Jonathan Adkins. "Legislators note these states have relatively low fatality rates and tend not to see the benefit in passing stronger laws."

Odds of dying in road wrecks, by state

Highway death rates vary dramatically state by state. 2009 deaths and rates per 100,000 population:

States Deaths Rate

Ala. 848 18.0

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Most of those that die in auto accidents in the Fly Over States are usually from large Cities and urban communities and don't really know how to drive safely in the real world. The worst thing about it is that they kill a lot of children passengers, and a lot of local rural residents with their inability to adjust their driving style to match the road and weather conditions.

=====
Rural drivers don't watch for pedestrians, or yield at crosswalks.
=====

Your posted words are 100% wrong!
We're even used to watching out for BOOM, in your lane wild life, like deer, elk, and moose.

=====
Not people. I almost got hit by several rural MN drivers in downtown Minneapolis. And I had the right-of-way.
Drivers don't yield to pedestrians when turning right-on-red.

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wineandcheeze (14 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 29m ago

Its my understanding that 30% of the accidents are alcohol related. So... obviously the biggest problem is from the 70% that have not had a drink. They are causing the most accidents. Rural or urban....I think it's important that we get those non drinkers off the road.