



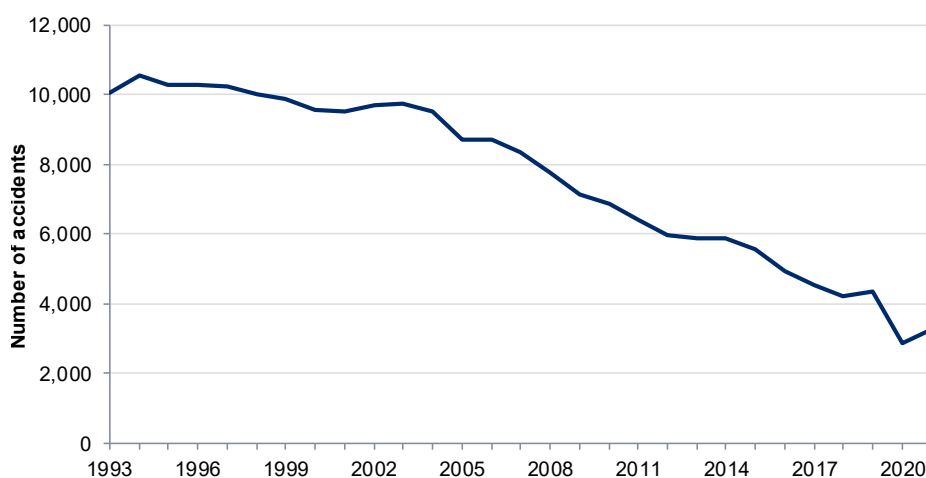
Police recorded road accidents, 2021

29 June 2022
SFR 155/2022

Main points

- In 2021 police forces in Wales recorded a total of 3,288 road accidents, an increase of 416 (14.5%) compared to 2020 which was the lowest year on record.
- These road accidents in 2021 resulted in 4,348 personal injuries. Of these, 86 people were killed, 925 people were seriously injured and 3,337 'slight' injuries were recorded.
- During 2021, over half of all road accidents (53%) occurred on 30mph roads with the next highest proportion (25%) occurring on 60mph roads. Road sections with a 20mph speed limit had the lowest proportion, accounting for 3% of all accidents.

Chart 1: Recorded personal injury road accidents, 1993 - 2021



Source: Road Accident Statistics, Welsh Government

- Looking at the long-term trend, there has been an overall fall in personal injury road accidents recorded by police forces in Wales.
- In recent years, the number of accidents resulting in fatalities or serious injury has been relatively stable, with the overall decline in accidents accounted for by a continued fall in 'slight' injury accidents.

About this release

An annual release about road accidents and casualties in Wales providing the latest police recorded road casualty figures for 2021. The data comes from Welsh police forces and includes details of vehicles and casualties involved in personal injury accidents on Welsh roads. The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic restrictions impacted on travel during 2020 and 2021.

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Definition and data coverage

The data presented in this report reflect the personal injury road accidents *recorded by police forces* in Wales. While these data are the most detailed and reliable source of information on road accidents and casualties, they do not provide a complete record of all such incidents – for example, hospital, survey and compensation claims data indicate that many non-fatal accidents are not reported to or recorded by the police.

Overall, the available sources show that accidents reported to, and recorded by, police forces represent only a subset of all personal injury road accidents, but that coverage of serious injuries and fatalities is good (see [Quality Info](#) for further information).

Impact of COVID-19 on traffic volume

Police recorded road accident and casualty numbers throughout most of 2020 were affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic which saw restrictions on how, where and why people could travel within Wales. Traffic volume decreased considerably during 2020 in light of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic (a decrease of 23.4% compared to 2019). COVID-19 restrictions continued to impact travel in 2021, though to a lesser extent. Traffic volume data for 2021 is not currently available but is due to be published by the Department for Transport (DfT) in Summer 2022.



Road accidents

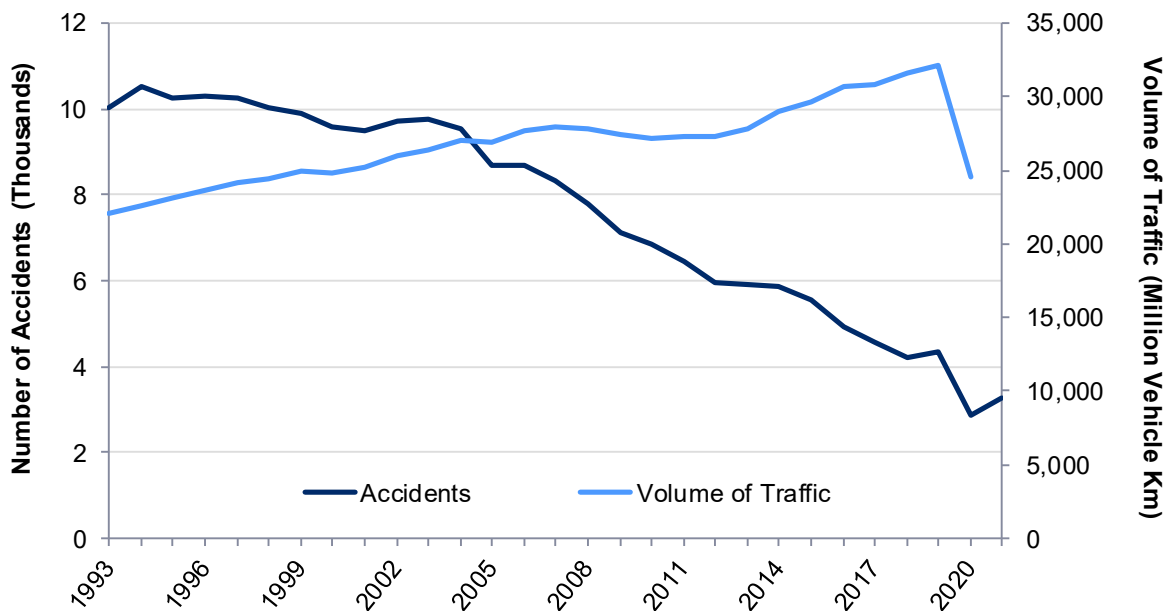
Individual accidents can result in multiple casualties with different level of injury severity. During 2021, 3,288 road accidents involving personal injury were recorded by police forces in Wales, 14.5% more than in 2020 (the lowest year on record) and 24.1% less than in 2019. Of these accidents:

- 82 were classed as fatal,
- 783 were classed as serious and
- 2,423 were classed as slight.

Accident severity is determined by the most seriously injured casualty in the accident. For example, if there are five casualties and one fatality, the accident will be classed as fatal.

Chart 2 illustrates the contrast between the downward trend in accidents on Welsh roads since 1993 and the gradual increase in the volume of road traffic. The introduction of compulsory wearing of seat belts in the 1980s and improvements to vehicle technology are likely to have contributed to the reduction in the number of accidents with personal injury.

Chart 2: Personal injury accidents and traffic volume on Welsh Roads, 1993 – 2021
(a)



Note:

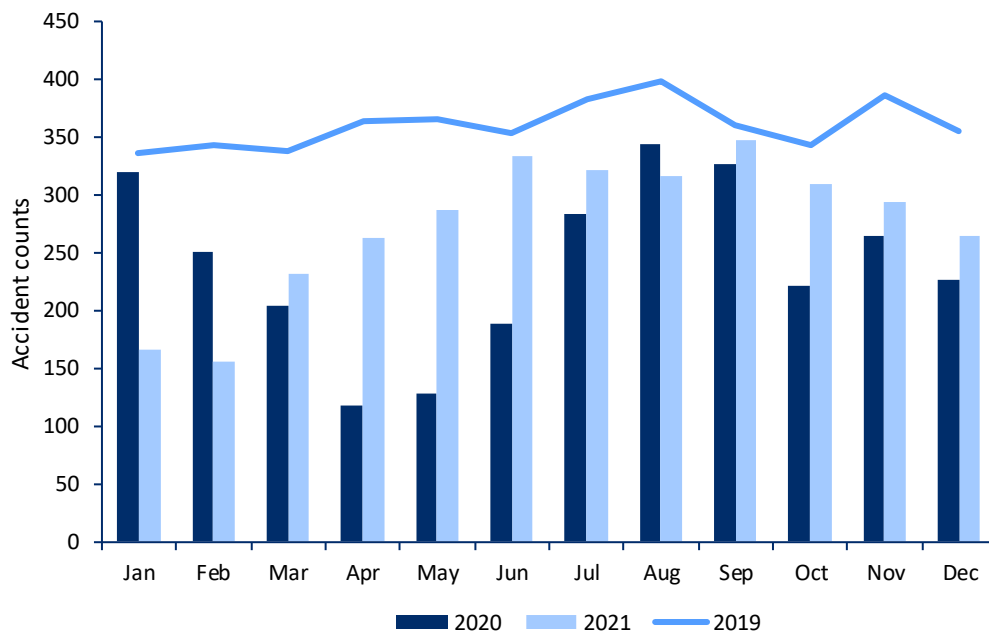
(a) Traffic volume data is up to 2020 only

Source: Road Accident Statistics, Welsh Government
Road traffic counts, Department for Transport

With the easing of some coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions, and the subsequent increase in road traffic, the monthly road accident numbers reported in 2021 were higher than the same month in the previous year for 9 of the 12 months. Despite the increase in these monthly figures compared

to 2020, accident numbers throughout 2021 remained below pre-pandemic figures for the same month in 2019. ([Chart 3](#)).

Chart 3: Accidents in Wales by month, 2019, 2020 and 2021



Source: Road Accident Statistics, Welsh Government

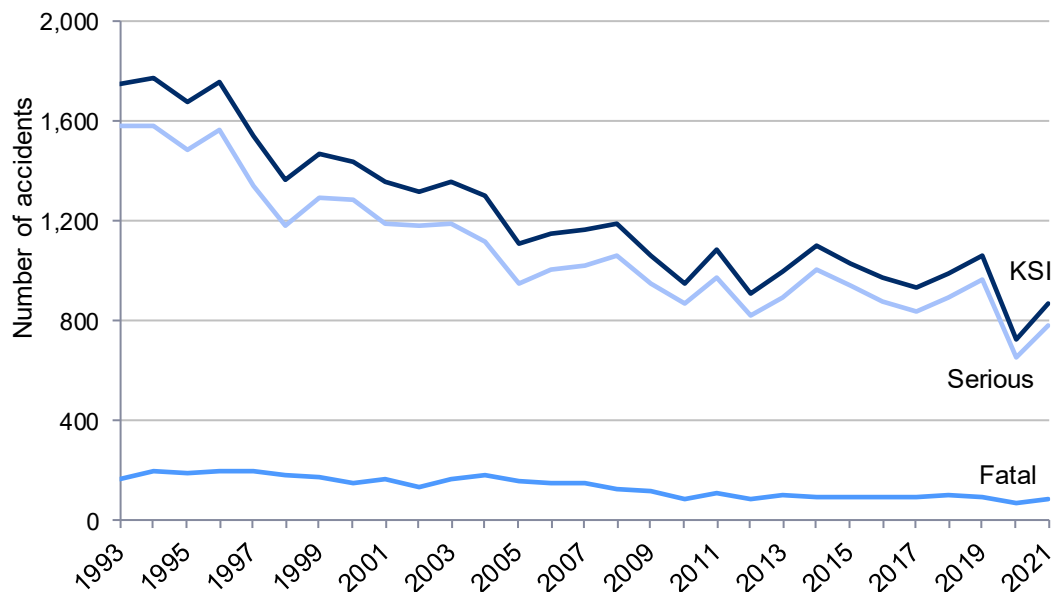
Accidents with Killed or Seriously Injured (KSI) casualties

There has been a long-term downward trend in the number of KSI accidents on Welsh roads, Chart 4. In 2021 there were 865 KSI accidents, an increase of 136 (18.7%) compared to 2020 but 18.2% lower compared to 2019. Our [interactive road accidents dashboard](#), published alongside this bulletin, provides breakdowns of the data by features such as location and demographic characteristics in more detail.

There was a total of 82 reported fatal accidents in Wales in 2021, an increase of 9 on the previous year. Looking at the historical trend, the number of recorded fatal accidents has been broadly stable since 2010 after falling significantly over previous decades. Wales recorded the lowest number of fatal accidents in 2020 (73) which is likely due to coronavirus (COVID-19) travel restrictions that saw reduced traffic levels on roads. The average number of road fatalities for the last three years (2019-2021) was 83, a 55% decrease compared to the 1993-1995 average but again likely due to COVID-19. ([Chart 4](#)).

Care should be taken when interpreting changes in small numbers, such as fatal accidents per year. For detailed breakdowns or analysis of change over time it may be more appropriate to look at trends in total KSI accidents.

Chart 4: Number of KSI accidents on Welsh roads 1993-2021



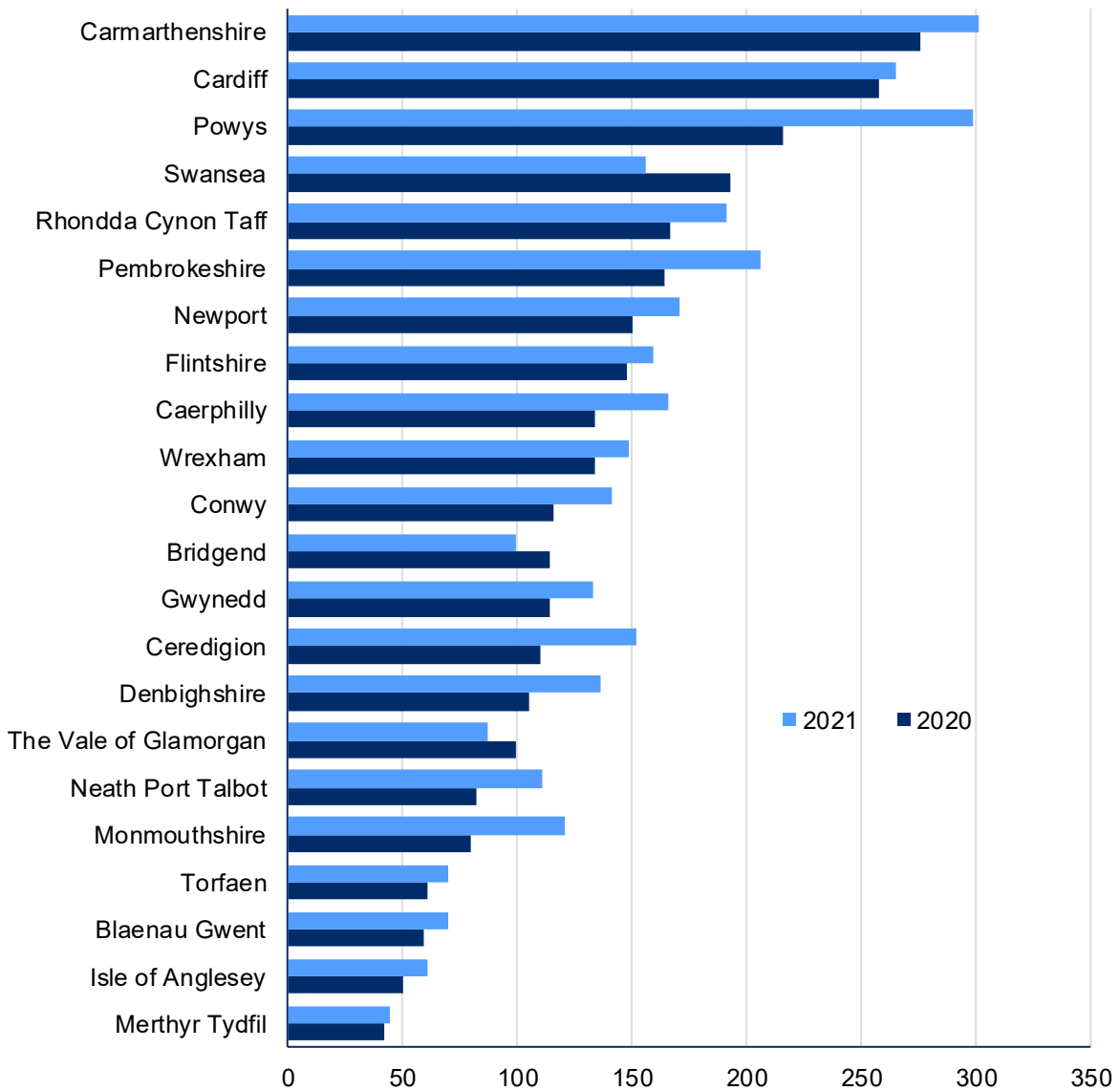
Source: Road Accident Statistics, Welsh Government

In 2021, there were 783 serious accidents, an increase of 127 on the previous year. Over time, the number of serious accidents has followed a similar trend to that of fatal accidents. The average number of serious accidents for the last three years (2019-2021) was 801, a 48% decrease compared to the 1993-1995 average.

Road Accidents by local authority in Wales

In 2021, 19 of the 22 Local Authorities in Wales reported increases in Police recorded road accidents with the remaining 3 Local Authorities Swansea (-19%), Bridgend (-13%), and the Vale of Glamorgan (-12%) seeing a reduction in reported road accidents when compared to 2020 ([Chart 5](#)). Further details can be found in our [StatsWales tables](#).

Chart 5: Road accidents by Local Authorities 2020-2021



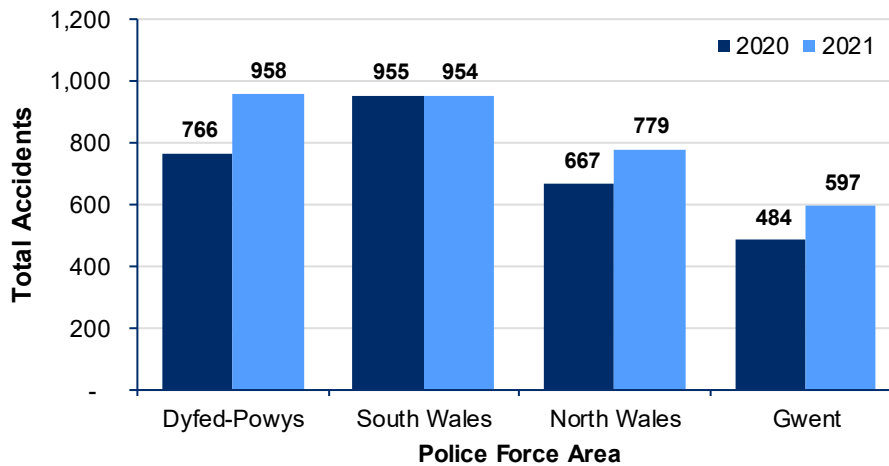
Source: Road Accident Statistics, Welsh Government

Road Accidents by police force area

In 2021, police officers attended 100.0% of fatal accidents, 89.3% of serious accidents and 85.1% of slight accidents reported to the police.

Dyfed Powys Police recorded the most accidents in 2021, a total of 958 (an increase of 25% on the previous year), followed by South Wales Police who recorded 954 road accidents over the same time period (a decrease of 0.1% on the previous year). North Wales Police recorded 779 accidents in 2021 (an increase of 17% on the previous year) and Gwent Police Force recorded the lowest number of road accidents at 597 (an increase of 23% on the previous year).

Chart 6: Road accidents by Police force area 2020-2021



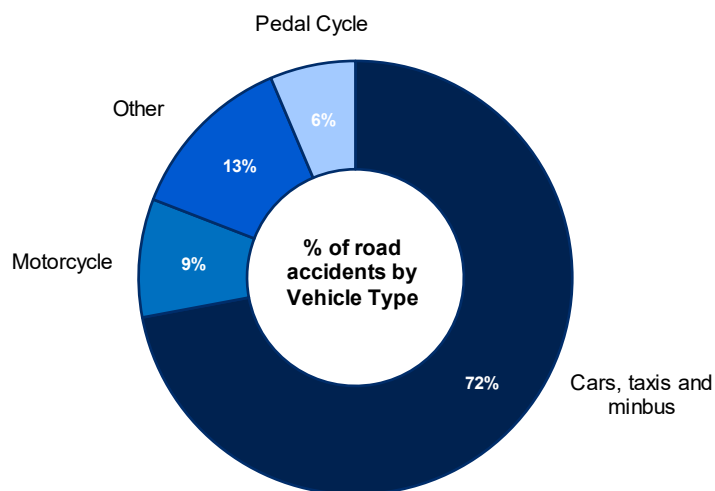
Source: Road Accident Statistics, Welsh Government

Road Accidents by vehicle type

The proportion of road accidents by type of vehicle are shown in Chart 7. In 2021, 72% (4,205) of all road accidents were accounted for by ‘cars, taxis and minibuses’ followed by ‘other vehicles’ accounting for 13%. Pedal Cycle accounted for the lowest proportion of road accidents at 6%.

Trends in road accidents since 1996 have shown a decreasing trend in the number of road accidents for all vehicle types. Overall, there was a 15.7% increase in the number of vehicles involved in road accidents in Wales in 2021 compared to 2020. By vehicle type, the number of ‘Cars, taxis and minibuses’ involved in a road accident increased by 15.3%, motorcycles increased by 22.9% and ‘other’ vehicles increased by 24.8%. Pedal cycles involved in a road accident recorded a 3.1% decrease compared to 2020.

Chart 7: Road traffic accidents by type of vehicle, 2021



Source: Road Accident Statistics, Welsh Government

(a) Other: Includes buses, coaches, goods vehicles, invalid vehicles, motor caravans, other and unknown vehicles.

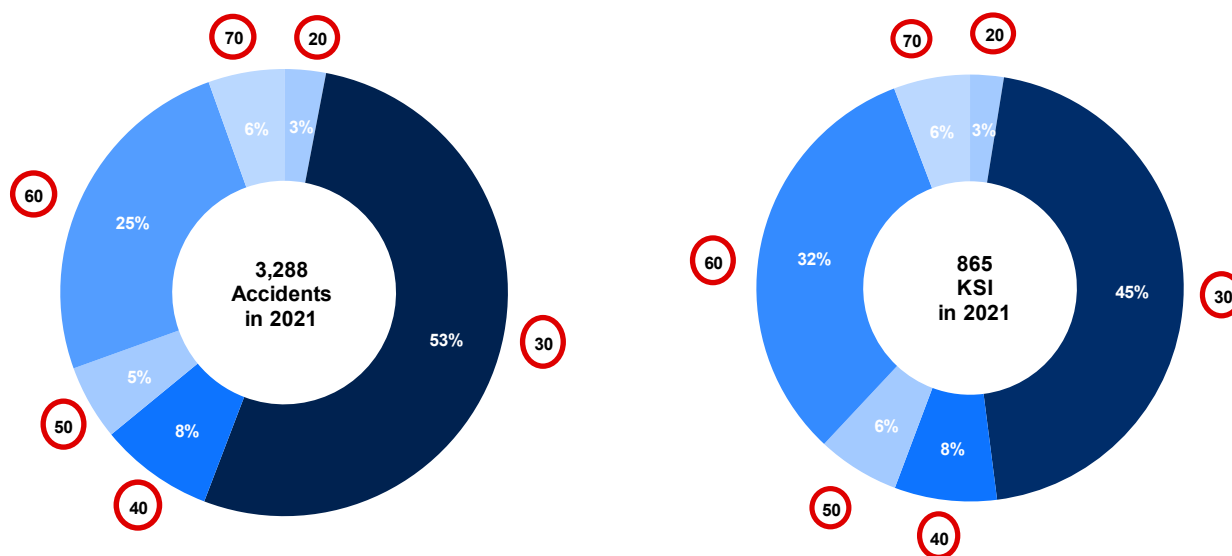
Road Accidents by Speed limit in 2021

Chart 8 shows that during 2021, over half of all road accidents (53%) occurred on 30mph roads with the next highest proportion (25%) occurring on 60mph roads.

Road sections with a 20mph speed limit had the lowest proportion of accidents in 2021, accounting for 3% of all accidents. Road sections with this speed limit have always had the lowest proportion of accidents in Wales since data collection began in 1979.

For KSI accidents, the distribution was broadly similar to total accidents with the largest proportion occurring on 30 mph roads (45%), although this is a smaller share than for all accidents. KSI accidents occurring on 60 mph roads accounted for 32% which is a higher proportion than for all accidents, showing that accidents on 60 mph roads were more likely to result in fatalities or serious injury.

Chart 8: Accidents by road speed limit, total and KSI 2021



Source: Road Accident Statistics, Welsh Government

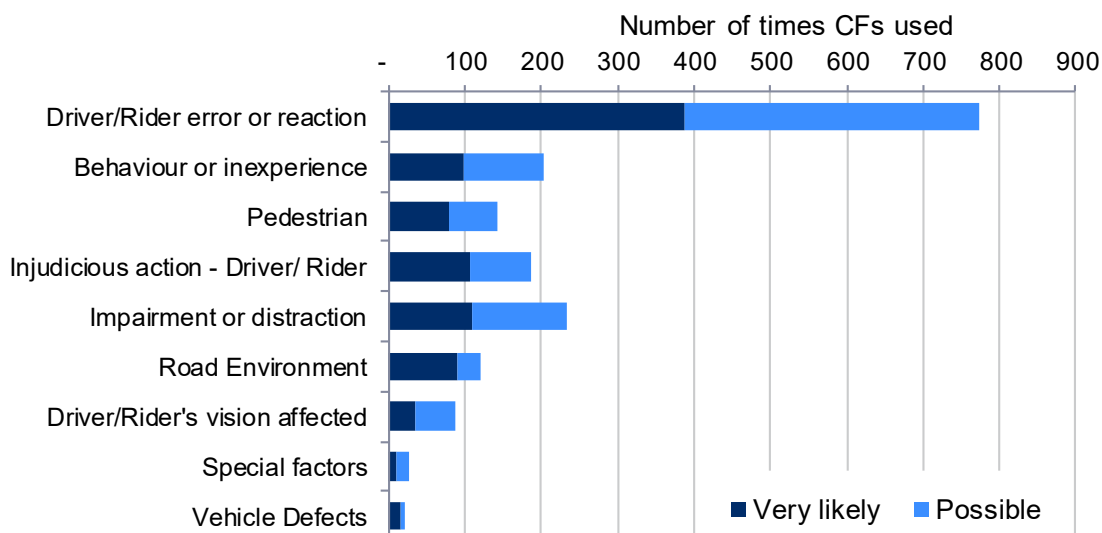
Causes of accidents

Contributory factors (CFs) in road accidents are the key actions and failures that led directly to the accident. They show the opinion of attending police officers for why accidents occurred and provide clues around how they may have been prevented. Attending police officers may record up to 6 CFs for each accident from a list of 78 possible CFs. This analysis focuses on accidents which involve casualties who were either killed or seriously injured, as police officer attendance is much more common at these accidents.

The 78 CFs are subdivided into 9 categories (Chart 12). These cover a number of factors such as Driver/Rider error, Pedestrians, failing to signal or look properly and loss of control, carelessness and drivers affected by alcohol.

In 2021 a total of 1,850 CFs were recorded as causes of Killed or Seriously injured accidents in Wales. The most common CF category identified by the police was driver/rider error or reaction, used 819 times (representing 44% of all KSI recorded CFs). The least common CF category used was vehicle defects, which was used a total of 21 times (representing 1% of all recorded CFs). Chart 9 shows the main contributory factors by likelihood. CFs are classed as either very likely or possible based on the officer's confidence that they caused or contributed to causing the accident.

Chart 9: Contributory Factor categories listed as cause for KSI accidents, by likelihood, 2021

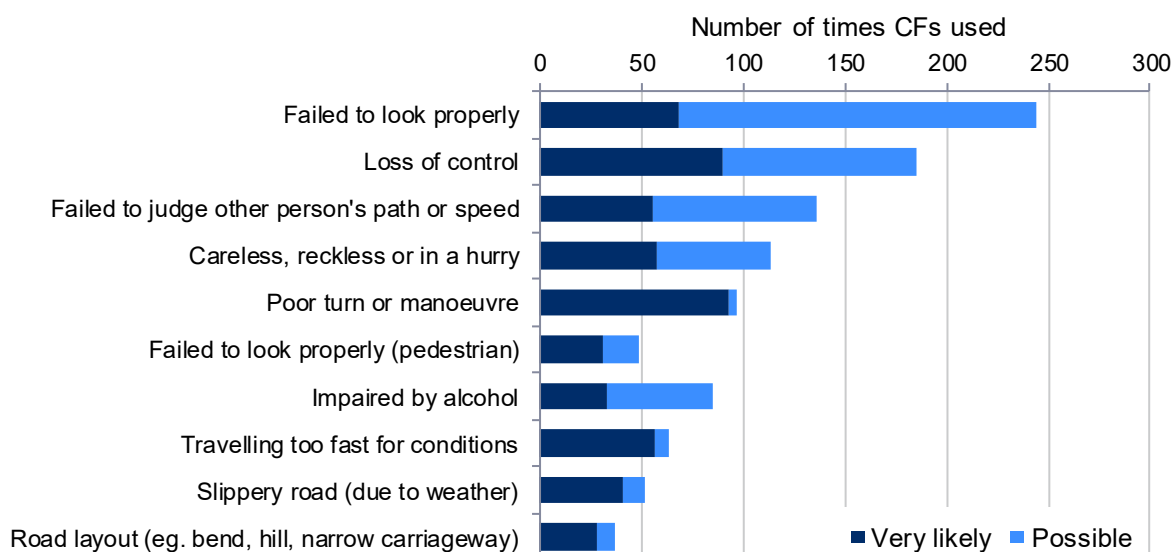


Source: Road Accident Statistics, Welsh Government

Factors are identified on the basis of evidence, and this may come from various sources such as witness statements and vehicle and site inspections. CFs may be subjective and depend on the skill and experience of the investigating officer to reconstruct the events which led directly to the accident. They reflect the reporting officer's opinion at the time of reporting and are not necessarily the result of extensive investigation.

[Chart 10](#) shows the ten most common individual CFs judged to be either possible or very likely causes for KSI accidents in 2021. The two most common contributory factors were failing to look properly (244 cases) and loss of control (185 cases). Seven of the top ten CFs relate to the driver/rider, two relate to the road environment and one relates to pedestrians.

Chart 10: The 10 most common causes of KSI accidents, by reporting officers' confidence, 2021



Source: Road Accident Statistics, Welsh Government

Reported road casualties

Individual accidents can result in multiple casualties with different severity of injury. In 2021, around 25% of accidents involved more than one casualty.

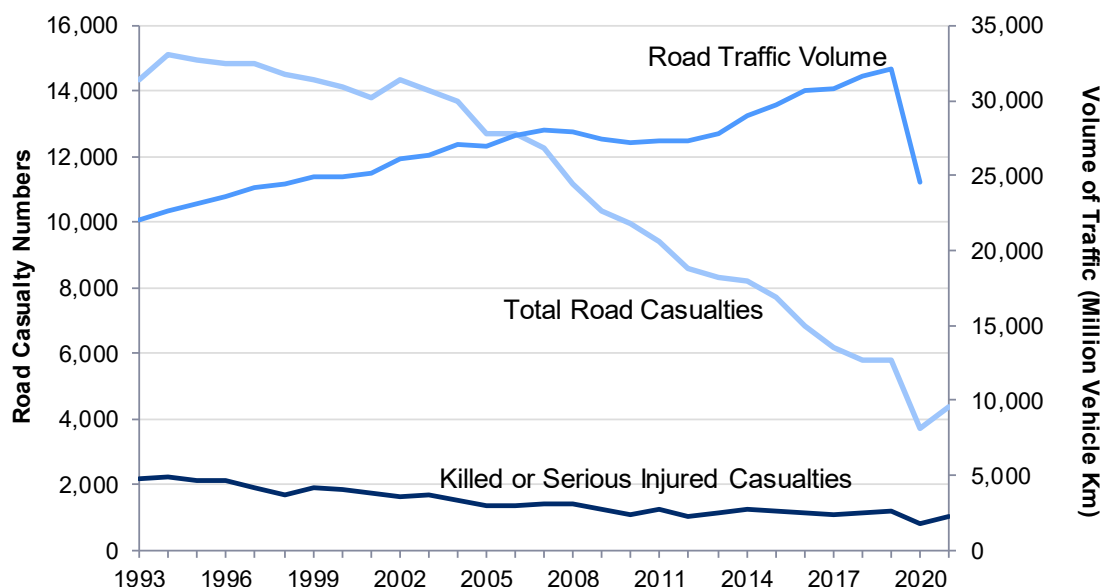
This section includes high level information on casualties, breakdowns of this data is available in our [Reported Road Casualties Wales bulletin](#) which will be published on 20th July 2022. The Reported Road Casualties Wales bulletin will include further breakdowns such as road users, age and sex.

During 2021, police recorded road accidents resulted in 4,348 casualties. Of these casualties:

- 86 were fatal, 12 more (16.2%) than in 2020
- 925 people were seriously injured, 179 more (24.0%) than in 2020.
- 3,337 casualties were slightly injured, up by 456 (15.8%) compared to 2020.
- Compared to 2019 (the last full year prior to pandemic), fatal casualties decreased by 9.5%, serious casualties decreased by 15.8% and slight casualties decreased by 27.7%.

Chart 11 illustrates the trend in the number of total and KSI casualties since 1993 compared to road traffic volume. Over this time there was a significant fall, from 15,000 total casualties and 2,208 KSI casualties in 1994 to a low of 5,808 and 1,193 in 2019 respectively. Comparisons have been made against 2019 to provide an indication of the trend over time. Traffic volume decreased considerably during 2020 in light of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic which also impacted the accident and casualty figures for this time period. The downward trend is in direct contrast to the gradual increase in the volume of road traffic during that period. The trend in KSI casualties has been broadly stable over the last decade, while traffic has increased overall.

Chart 11: Total and KSI casualties and volume of traffic on Welsh roads, 1993 – 2021



Note: Source: Road Accident Statistics, Welsh Government and AADF data
 (a) Traffic volume is up to year 2020

Key quality information

Context

This bulletin provides information relevant to road safety policy in relation to police recorded road accidents and provides a starting point for any further, in-depth investigation of the accidents resulting in casualties.

Road safety targets for Wales

The Welsh Government road safety targets previously presented in this bulletin ended in 2020. Information on these can be accessed in [previous versions of this release](#). Once new safety targets for Wales have been set we will look to include information on these in future publications.

Related publications

Related publications relating to the Stats19 data (i.e. [police recorded road accidents](#) data) are available on the [statistics and research website](#).

The Department for Transport publishes "[Reported road casualties in Great Britain main results](#)" annually. Statistics for 2021 have been published as provisional covering period up to June 2021.

Transport Scotland publishes "[Key reported road casualties Scotland](#)" annually. Statistics for 2021 were published in May 2022.

The road traffic collision statistics team of the Police Service of Northern Ireland published this title '[Police Recorded Injury Road Traffic Collisions and Casualties Northern Ireland 2021 Key Statistics Report](#)' on 29th April 2022.

Data covering previous years' accident, casualty and vehicle data are published on [StatsWales](#) quarterly. Accompanying the data is individual accident level data and a data dictionary outlining the variables that are included in the collection of Road Accident Stats19 data.

We also publish an interactive dashboard alongside this statistical bulletin. The dashboard allows users to explore a range of geographical, demographic and other features of the data.

Relevance

There are a variety of organisations that use the Welsh road traffic accident and casualty data.

The Welsh Government uses road traffic collision and casualty data to help set road safety policy. It is also used for performance indicators, both for the Welsh Government's Transport Strategy and for some Health Performance indicators.

Other users include Highway Authorities, covering the Welsh Government, which is responsible for the motorway and trunk road network, and local authorities, which are responsible for other roads in Wales. Other bodies involved in road safety include the Safety Camera Partnership, Trunk Road Agents, and Police & Community Safety Partnerships. Welsh Government also provides data to transport planning organisations to support road safety assessments.

Accuracy

The statistics refer to casualties resulting from personal injury accidents on public roads reported to the police and forwarded to the Welsh Government. The police compile statistical data about road

traffic accidents and casualties (called Stats19 data) for the Welsh Government and the Department for Transport (DfT). This follows police attendance at accidents that involve any personal injury, together with members of the public reporting personal injury accidents directly to the police. The figures are based on information available to the government 14 weeks after the end of the latest quarter. In addition, changes in police recording practices may mean that the statistics are not directly comparable over time.

The figures shown may change in future if there are late amendments. Similarly, the figures for earlier years may differ from those previously published. The figures cover only road accidents reported to the police involving personal injury.

There is some possibility of under-reporting and under-recording as well as the misclassification of accidents, though these are minimised by local authorities and the Welsh Government conducting a number of data validations. For example, Welsh Government data analysts may query the location of an accident with a police force when the grid reference of an accident is in a different local authority to the one specified in the data return.

This data is obtained from administrative sources and thus may be affected by changes in procedures within those systems.

The Welsh Government is working with the Welsh police authorities to quality assure the data systems that are used to produce these statistics. In 2022 the Welsh Government together with Police Forces established a Stats19 Data Collectors user group to discuss challenges faced and collaborate on solutions around data collection and validation.

The UK Department for Transport explores the additional sources in some detail in its [Reported Road Casualties report for Great Britain](#). Its analysis of National Travel Survey (NTS) data suggest that approximately 50% of accidents involving some degree of personal injury, and two thirds of all non-fatal road casualties, are *not* reported to police. Examples of injuries reported in the NTS include whiplash and minor cuts and bruises, but it is not known how many of these would have qualified as recordable injuries had police attended the scene. Analysis of motor insurance claims statistics indicates that a very significant proportion of the injuries not reported to police are likely to be whiplash.

We are involved in the process of reviewing the terminology used in the release and further updates will be provided in future publications, where appropriate.

Timeliness and punctuality

This release will be followed by a supplementary Statistical Bulletin to provide users with more information on key topics.

Related publications are available from the [Statistics and Research website](#).

Road Accident statistics for Wales are available on [StatsWales](#). Road Accident dashboard that accompanies the report is available on [Police recorded road accidents: interactive dashboard](#)

Results for Great Britain will be published by the Department for Transport in June 2022 via the [Road accidents and safety statistics web page](#).

Accessibility and clarity

This statistical release is pre-announced and published on the Welsh Government's Statistics & Research website and all the data in this bulletin, as well as for previous years, are available on [StatsWales](#).

Comparability and coherence

This first release will be followed by a further publication that is intended to provide users with more information about road accidents and casualties in Wales during 2021.

A casualty is defined as, a person killed or injured in an accident. One accident may give rise to several casualties. Casualties are subdivided into killed, seriously injured and slightly injured categories. Casualties reported as killed include only those cases where death occurs in less than 30 days as a result of the accident. They do not include those who died as a result of natural causes (e.g. heart attack) rather than as a result of the accident, nor do they include confirmed suicides.

Data quality issues/ under reporting issues

- For the 2012 data: Between April 2012 and the beginning of 2013, South Wales Police made changes to their procedures for recording this data which led to a number of slight and serious casualties being recorded that would not have been the case in previous and subsequent years. This means that the comparison of 2013 with 2012 overstates the change in slight and serious casualties. This issue does not affect the measure of road traffic fatalities.
- For the 2015 data: South Wales Police experienced difficulties with their Road Accident software and were unable to provide their full set of casualty data. The extent of this under-reporting is thought to be roughly 10 accidents missing from the data presented in this release and includes at least one fatal road accident.
- For the 2015 data: The number of accidents for Gwent Police for 2015 is much lower than for 2014.
- With the imposed COVID-19 travel restrictions in 2020, the collection of STATS19 data was affected by different factors. These factors include police force staff involved in providing data adjusting to home working (requiring additional IT system resets by all police forces) and missing spatial data for some accidents (this did not affect the data presented in this release).

National Statistics status

The [United Kingdom Statistics Authority](#) has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate. The designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in July 2013 following a [full assessment against the Code of Practice](#).

Since the latest review by the Office for Statistics Regulation, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and have made the following improvements:

- Improved visuals by de-cluttering and standardising charts and tables

It is Welsh Government's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. The Act puts in place seven wellbeing goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators ("national indicators") that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the wellbeing goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before Senedd Cymru. Under section 10(8) of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, where the Welsh Ministers revise the national indicators, they must as soon as reasonably practicable (a) publish the indicators as revised and (b) lay a copy of them before the Senedd. These national indicators were laid before the Senedd in 2021. The indicators laid on 14 December 2021 replace the set laid on 16 March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the wellbeing goals and associated technical information is available in the [Wellbeing of Wales report](#).

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local wellbeing assessments and local wellbeing plans.

Further details

The document is available at: <https://gov.wales/police-recorded-road-accidents>

Next update

June 2023 (provisional)

We want your feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to:

stats.transport@gov.wales

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