



Police recorded road accidents, 2020

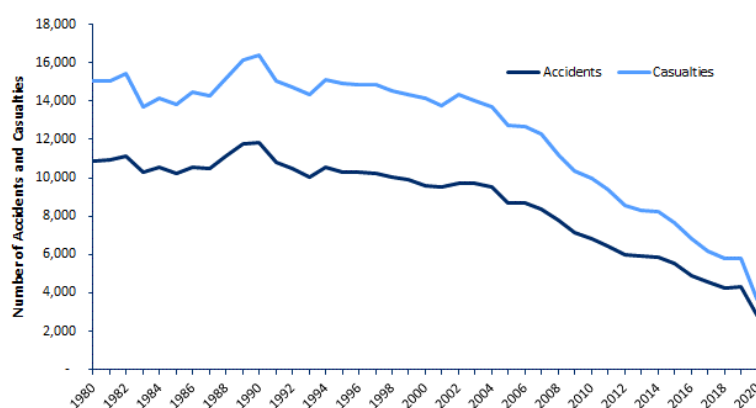
23 June 2021
SFR 181/2021

Overview

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. The restrictions generally resulted in reduced traffic volume for all types of motorised vehicles. The fall in traffic volume consequently led to a decrease in road accidents and casualties.

- Road accidents and casualties decreased by 33.9% and 36.4% respectively compared with 2019, the largest annual decreases since records began in 1979.
- The number of accidents and casualties reported in 2020 were the lowest since records began.
- The number of accidents and casualties were at their lowest during the initial 'stay at home' period throughout spring 2020, and during the period between October and December 2020.
- Motorised traffic in Wales decreased by 23.4% compared with 2019, the largest decrease out of the UK countries

Chart 1: Trend in road Accidents and Casualties, Wales, 1980-2020



Source: Road Accident Statistics, Welsh Government

The Welsh Government set targets in the [2013 Road safety framework](#) to reduce the number of vulnerable road users killed or seriously injured (KSI) on Welsh roads by 2020. These are reported on page 14.

About this release

An annual release about road accidents and casualties in Wales providing the latest police recorded road casualty figures for 2020. Data comes from Welsh police forces and includes details of vehicles and casualties involved in personal injury accidents on Welsh roads.

In this release

Definition and data coverage	2
Impact of COVID-19 on traffic volume	2
All road accidents	3
KSI accidents	4
Casualties	6
KSI casualties	7
Casualties by road user type	9
Casualties by road speed limit	11
Causes of accidents	12
Road safety targets for Wales	14
Accidents by Police Force Area	16
Key quality information	18

Definition and data coverage

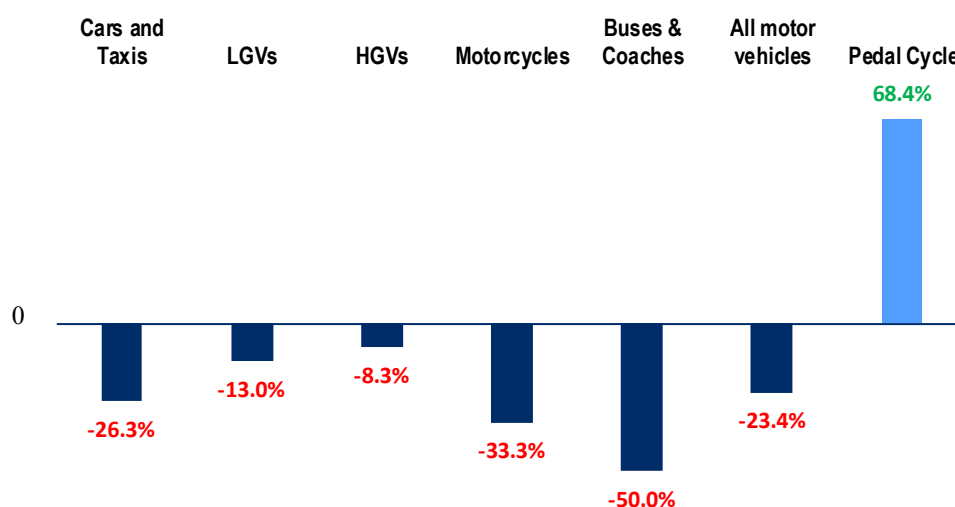
The data presented in this report reflect the personal injury road accidents *recorded by police forces* in Wales. While these data are the most detailed and reliable source of information on road accidents and casualties, they do not provide a complete record of all such incidents – for example, hospital, 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

Traffic volume decreased considerably during year 2020 in light of the COVID-19 pandemic (a decrease of 23.4% compared to 2019). The Bus and Coaches category registered the highest decrease in traffic volume, down by 50% compared to 2019 followed by Cars and Taxis, Chart 2. However, Pedal Cycle volume increased in 2020 by 68.4%, the largest increase since records began in Wales.

Chart 2: Change in traffic volume by vehicle type, Wales, 2020 compared to 2019



Source: Welsh Government analysis of Road traffic Volume, Department for Transport

All road accidents



During 2020, 2,864 road accidents involving personal injury were recorded by the police in Wales, 33.9% lower than in 2019. Of these accidents:

- 71 were classed as fatal,
- 657 were classed as serious and
- 2,136 were classed as slight.

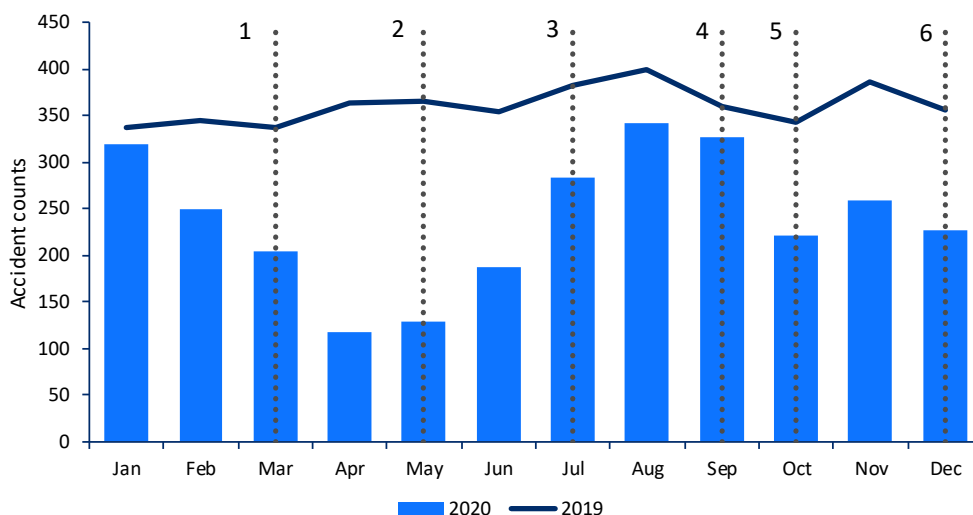
Accident severity is determined by the most seriously injured casualty in the accident. For example if there are five casualties and one fatality, the accident is classed as fatal.

Road accident trends varied considerably by month when compared to a year earlier. Compared to 2019 road accidents decreased by 40% in March 2020, 68% in April 2020 and 65% in May 2020 during the initial 'stay at home' lockdown which started on 23 March 2020. Casualty numbers followed a similar trend with the largest decrease reported in April, 73%.

From late May 2020, the 'stay at home' message in Wales became 'stay local' which was later lifted in early July 2020. These periods were accompanied by increased accidents and casualty levels.

During the two week firebreak lockdown in Wales in late October both accidents and casualties decreased by an average of 35% and 39% per month respectively compared with 2019 until December 2020.

Chart 3: Monthly trends of road accidents in Wales 2019-2020



Note:

- 1 - Stay at home announced 23 March
- 2 - Stay local announced 29 May
- 3 - Stay local lifted 6 July

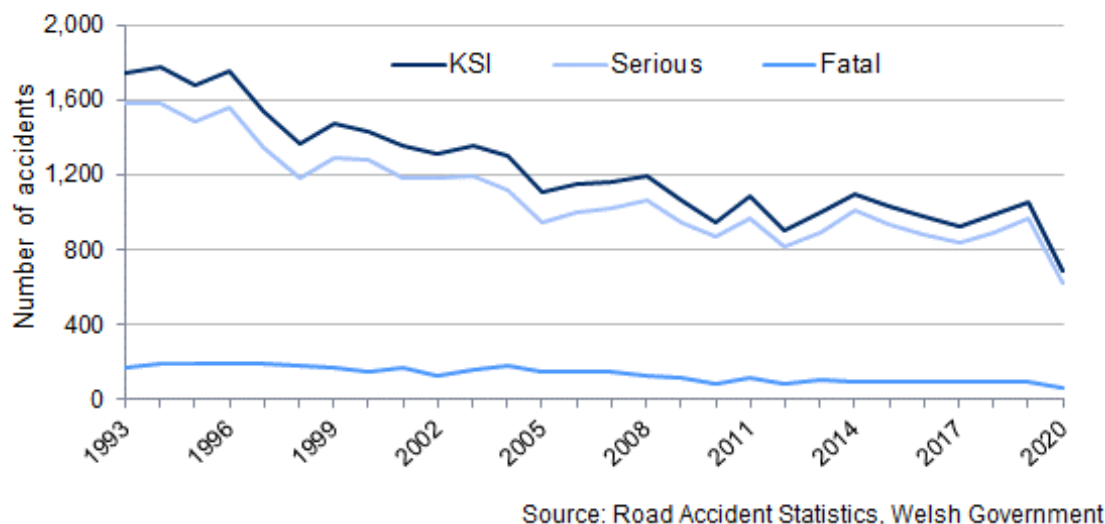
- 4 - Local lockdowns begin with Caerphilly 7 September
- 5 - 2 week firebreak begins 23 October
- 6 - Alert level 4 begins 19 December

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 2020 there were 728 KSI accidents, 329 fewer (31.2%) than in 2019. Our [interactive road accidents dashboard](#), published alongside this bulletin, also allows you to explore features of the data including location and demographic characteristics in more detail.

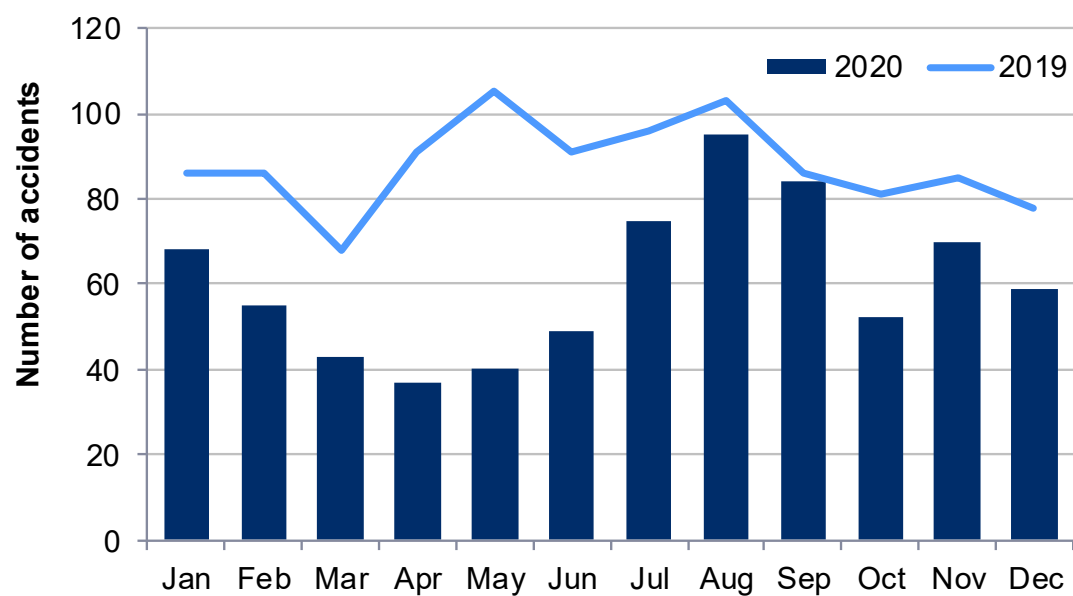
Chart 4: Number of KSI accidents on Welsh roads 1993-2020



The number of fatal accidents has been broadly stable over the past nine years up to 2019 after falling significantly over previous decades. The number of **serious accidents** has followed a similar trend to that of road fatalities. In 2020, there were 657 serious accidents.

There is a significant amount of variation in the monthly KSI accidents numbers reported in 2020. The highest number of accidents was in August (95) when many of the COVID-19 restrictions had been lifted. There were 8 fewer KSI accidents in August 2020 compared to August 2019. The lowest number of accidents were reported in April (37), which was the first full month of COVID-19 restrictions across the UK. The month of April had recorded the second highest monthly decrease in 2020 of 59.3% after May (61.9)% compared to the same month in 2019, [Chart 5](#).

Chart 5: KSI Accidents by month, 2019 and 2020, Wales



Source: Road Accident Statistics, Welsh Government

All road casualties

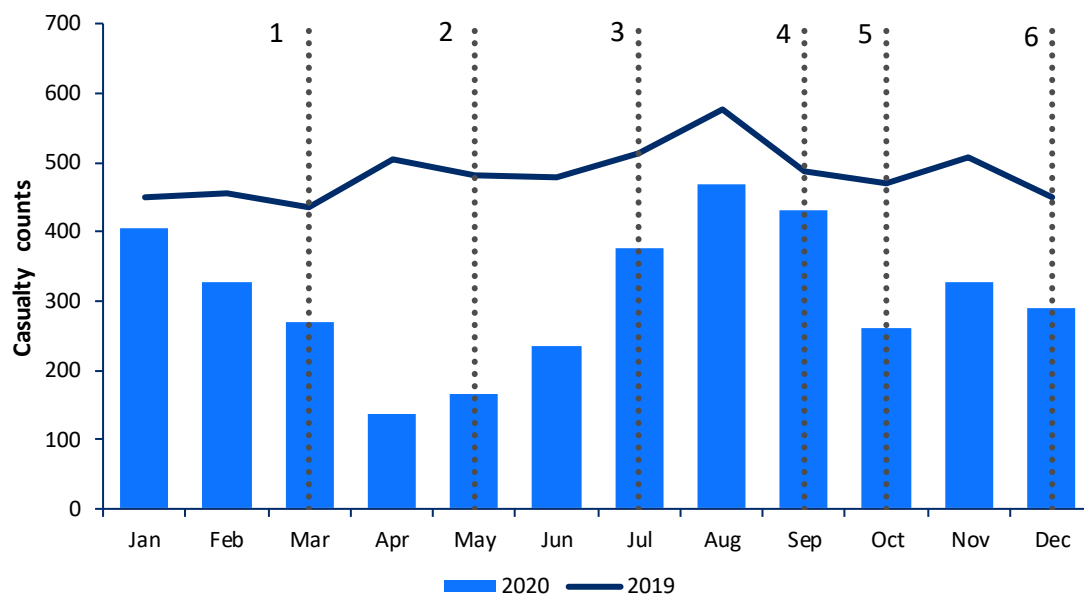
Individual accidents can result in multiple casualties with different severity of injury. 25% of accidents involved more than one casualty.

During 2020, police recorded road accidents resulted in 3,692 casualties; of these

- 72 were fatal, 23 less (24.2%) than in 2019
- 747 people were seriously injured, 351 fewer (32.0%) than in 2019,
- 2,873 casualties were slightly injured, down by 1,742 (37.7%) compared to 2019.

Reviewing the monthly number of casualties in 2020 shows a similar trend as that of road accidents with April reporting the largest decrease 137 (-73%) compared to the same month in 2019, Chart 6.

Chart 6: Monthly trends of road casualties in Wales 2019-2020



Note:

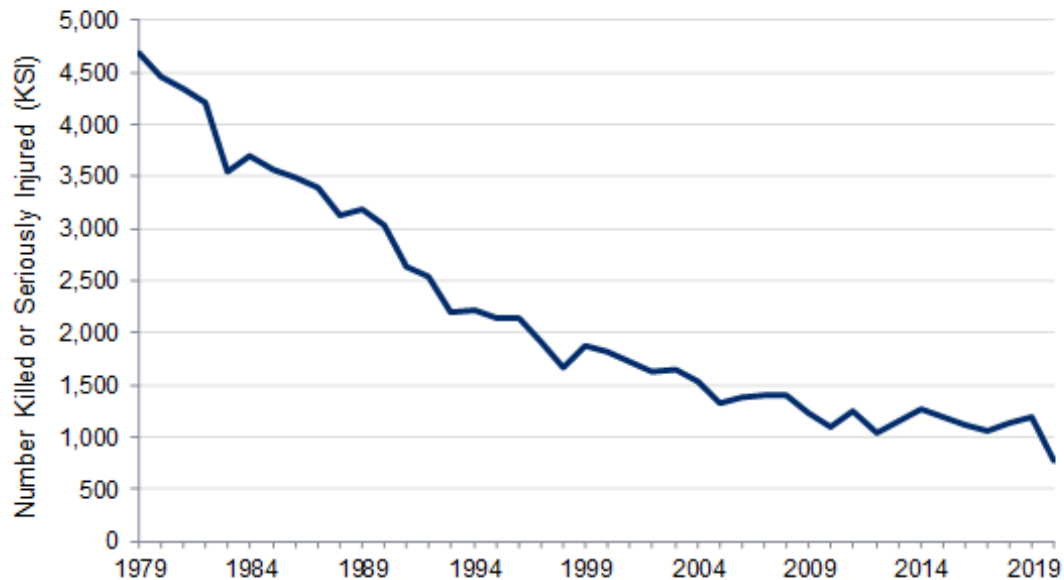
- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
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Source: Road Accident Statistics, Welsh Government

Killed and Seriously Injured (KSI) casualties

The number of KSI casualties has been falling steeply from 1979, (the earliest year for which data are available), when there were 4,678 people killed or seriously injured on Welsh roads (Chart 7). In 2020 the drop in KSI casualties reflects the impact of COVID-19 on road traffic and road transport accidents. A total of 819 KSI casualties were reported in 2020.

Chart 7: Number of KSI casualties on Welsh roads, 1979 – 2020



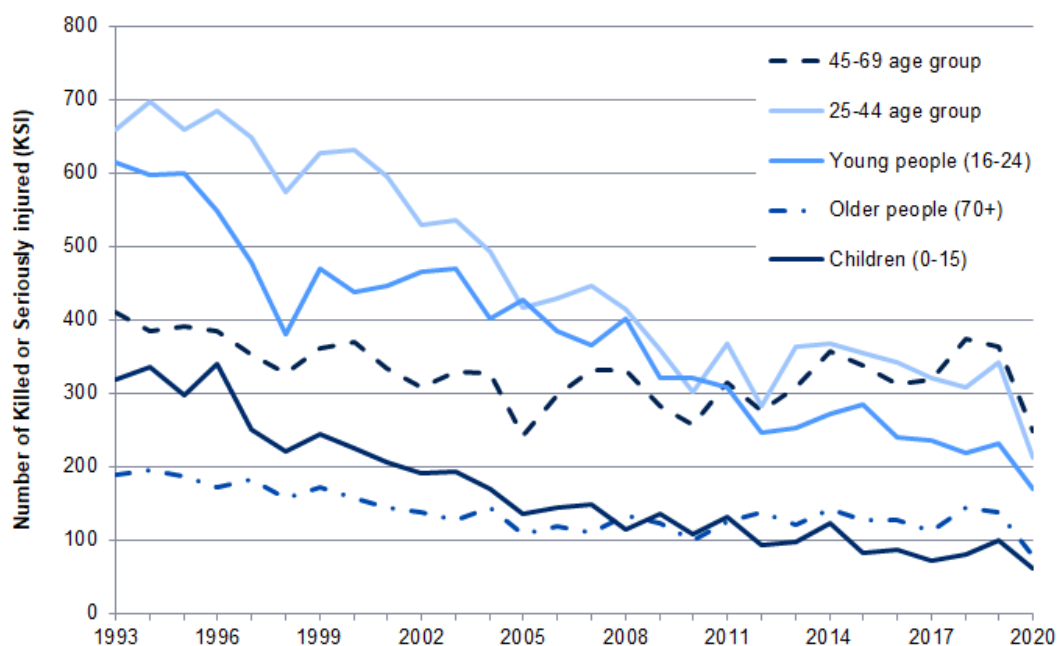
Source: Road Accident Statistics, Welsh Government

KSI casualties by age group

In 2020 there were 819 KSI casualties reported. This was a decrease of 374 (31.3%) compared with 2019.

[Chart 8](#) shows the long term trend in the number of KSI casualties by age group. Since 1994 the numbers have fallen across all age groups with Children (under 16) having the largest relative decrease (81.3%), followed by the 16 to 24 age group (70.3%). For the 45 to 69 age group, the number has decreased by 32.8% since 1994.

Chart 8a: Number of KSI casualties by age group 1993 – 2020



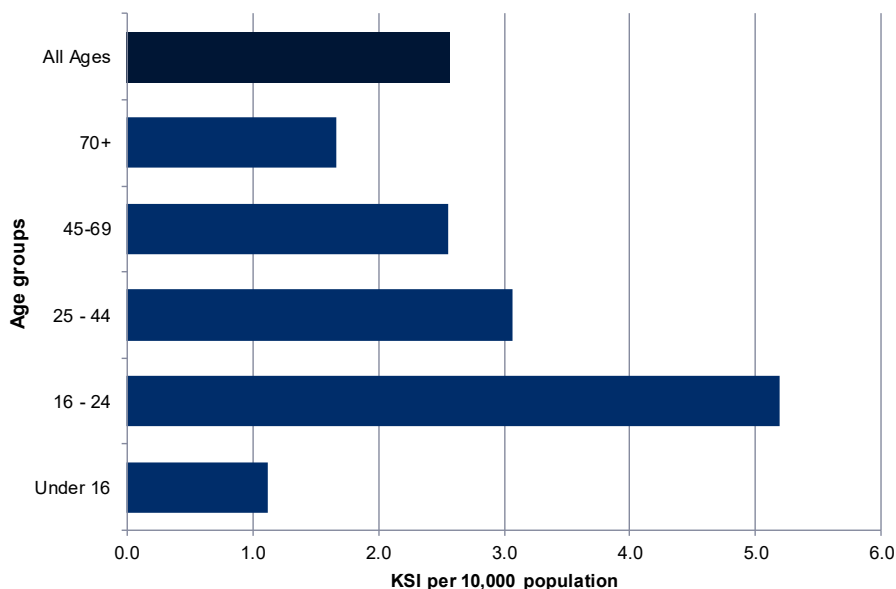
Note:

(a) Does not include the unknown age group

Source: Road Accident Statistics, Welsh Government

Chart 8b highlights the disproportionately high rate of KSI casualties among young people (16-24) compared with older people (70+) and children (under 16) in 2020. The distribution of KSI casualty by age group is similar to previous years for Wales.

Chart 8b: KSI casualties per 10,000 population, by age group, 2020



Note:

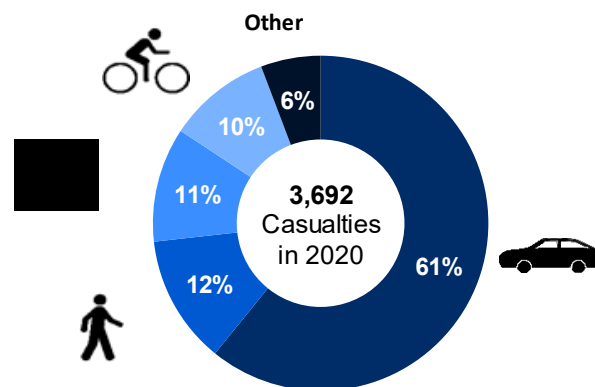
Source: Welsh Government analysis of Police Road Accident Statistics

2019 Mid-year population estimate used

Casualties by road user type

This section deals with casualties by the type of road user chart 9. Each category of road user has a different chance of having a serious injury. Pedestrians, motorcyclists and pedal cyclists are considered to be vulnerable road users as they are at a higher risk of being involved in an accident (relative to distance travelled) or are more vulnerable in terms of becoming a casualty, if involved in an accident.

Chart 9: Casualties by road user type in Wales, 2020

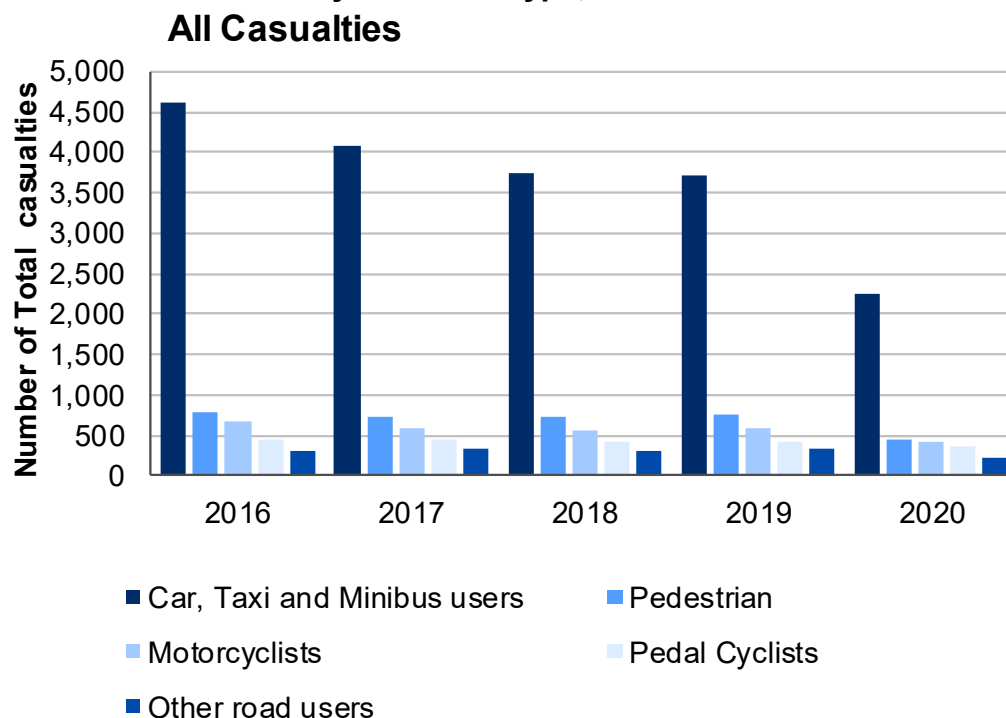


Source: Road Accident Statistics, Welsh Government

In 2020, the number of casualties decreased for all road users when compared with 2019 ([Chart 10](#)).

- Car, taxi and minibus users remained the largest category of casualties (61%) in 2020.
- Pedestrians (12%), motorcycle (11%) and pedal cycle users (10%) account for 33% of all casualties (Infographic 1).
- The remaining 6% covers other road users such as bus/coach users, horse riders and drivers of goods vehicles and mobility scooters. These proportions are broadly similar to previous years.

Chart 10: All casualties by road user type, 2016 – 2020



Source: Welsh Government analysis of Police Road Accident Statistics

The latest road traffic figures for Wales showed that traffic volume on Welsh roads was 24.6 billion vehicle-kilometres in 2020. Cars, taxis and buses represented 76% of this traffic but they accounted for proportionally fewer casualties (72%) (Table 1). Pedal cyclists and motorcycle users accounted for just 2% of the traffic volume but 21% of all casualties and 35% of those killed or seriously injured. They are therefore significantly more likely to suffer serious injury as a result of an accident relative to road use.

Table 1: Proportions of casualties and traffic volume by road user type

	<i>Percent</i>		
Proportions of:	Traffic volume (a)	All Casualties	KSI Casualties
Car, taxi & minibus/bus	76%	72%	59%
Goods vehicles (light and heavy)	24%	5%	5%
Motorcyclist & pedal cyclist	2%	21%	35%

Notes:

Source: Road Accident Statistics, Welsh Government

(a) For traffic volume, DfT include minibuses under bus/coach so 79.0 % is for car, taxi & bus.

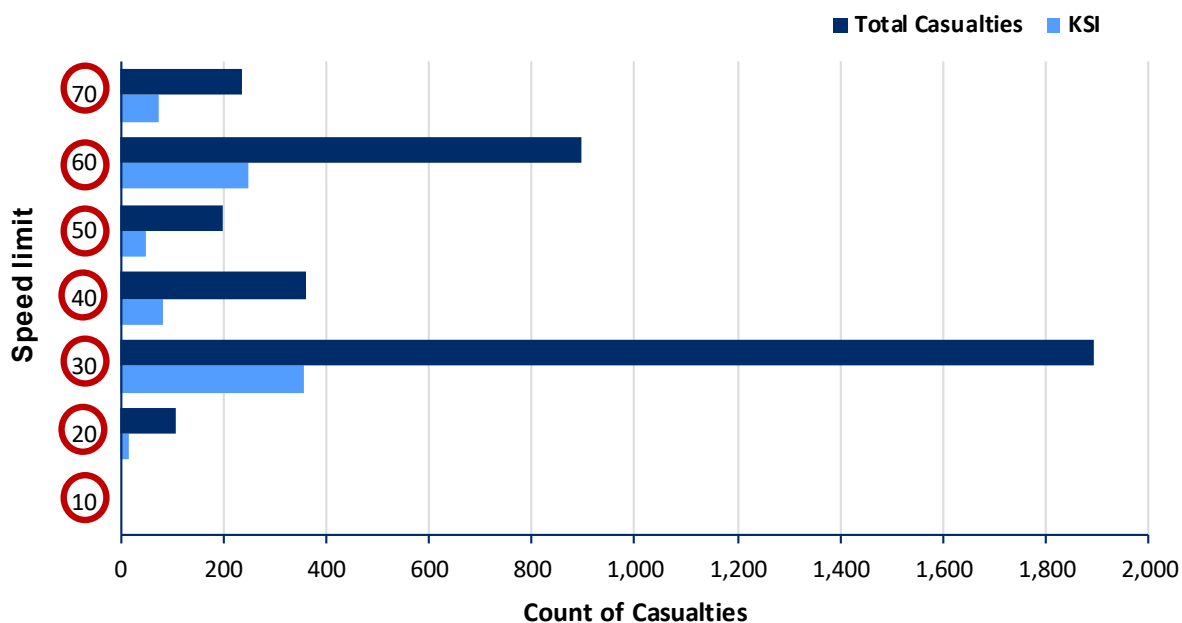
For road accident data the category is just car, taxi and minibus.

(a) Traffic volume is over 100% as pedal cyclists are included and volume of traffic is only as a percentage of all motorised traffic

Casualties by road speed limit

Chart 11 shows that during 2020 the highest proportion of all casualties occurred on 30mph roads with 1,894 casualties (51%) with the next highest on 60mph roads 897 casualties (24%). The proportion of casualties in each of the other speed limits was not more than 10%.

Chart 11: Road casualties by speed limit, 2020



Source: Road Accident Statistics, Welsh Government

Of all casualties on 70 mph roads, 31% were KSI in 2020, the highest proportion by road speed and almost double the proportion in 2019. The lowest proportion occurred on 20 mph roads, with 13% of casualties on these roads KSI. .

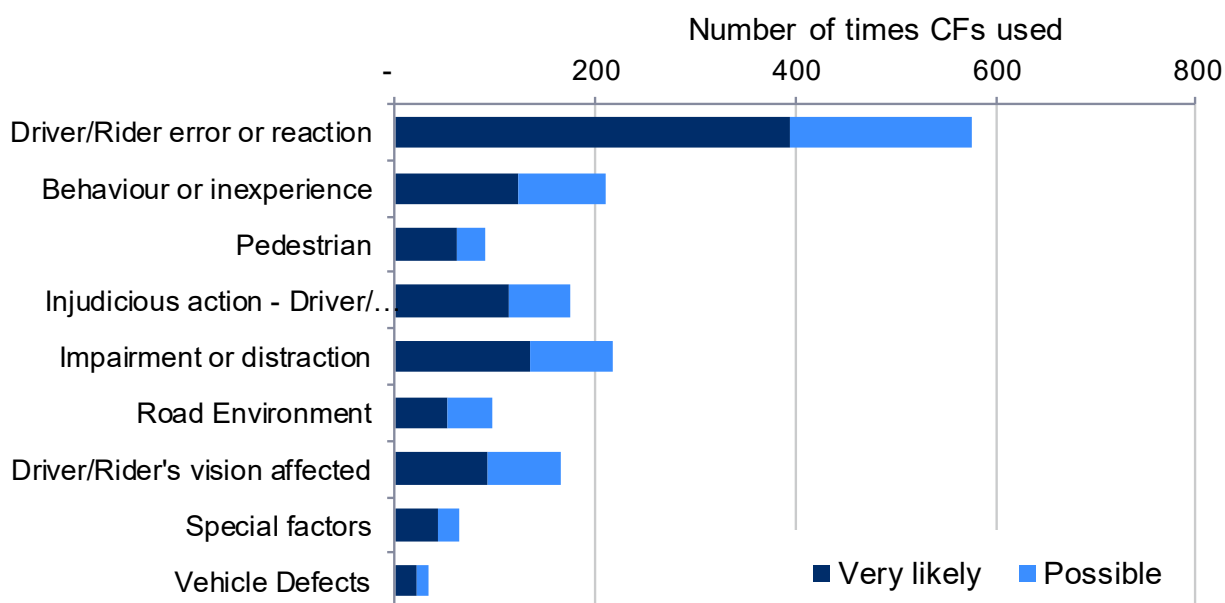
Causes of accidents

Contributory factors (CFs) in road accidents are the key actions and failures that led directly to the accident. They show why accidents occurred in the opinion of attending police officers and provide clues about 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 2020 a total of 1,628 CFs were recorded. The most common CF category identified by the police was driver/rider error or reaction, used 576 times. This represents 35% of all CFs. The least common CF category used was vehicle defects, which was used a total of 33 times, representing 2% of all the CFs used. Chart 12 shows the main contributory factors by likelihood. The distribution of CF is similar to previous years.

Chart 12: Contributory Factor categories listed as cause, by likelihood, 2020

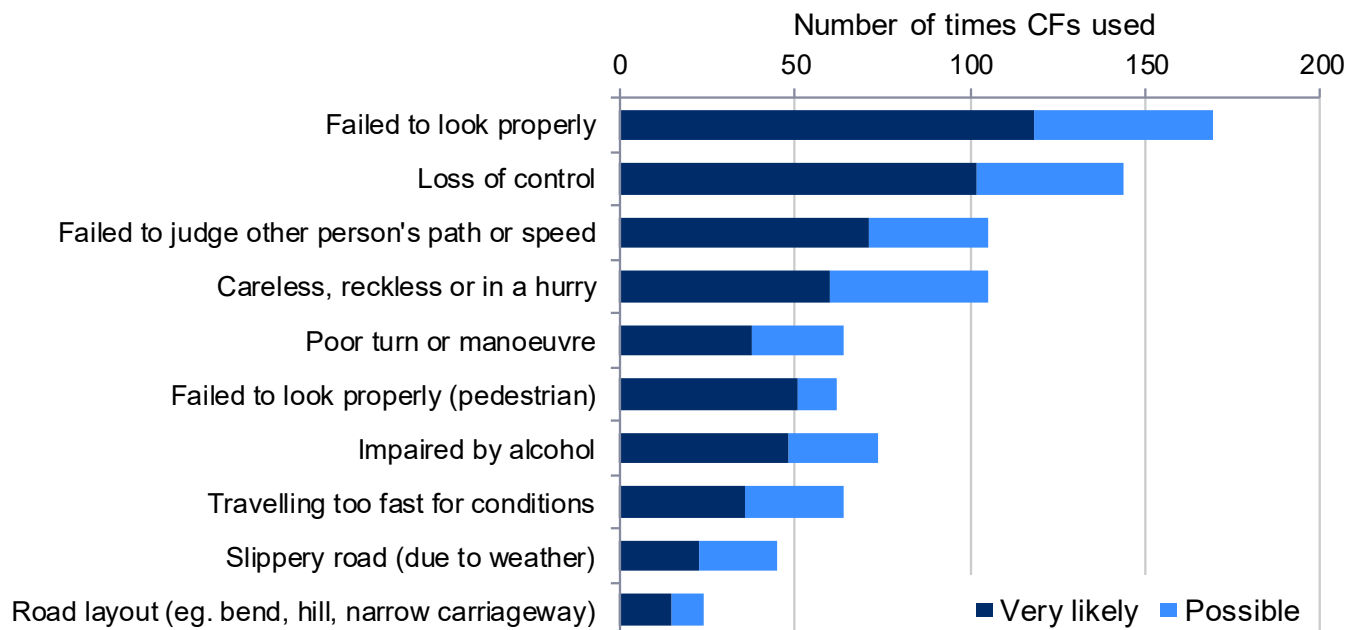


Source: Road Accident Statistics, Welsh Government

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. They are classed as either very likely or possible based on the officer's confidence that they caused or contributed to causing the accident.

Chart 13 shows the ten most common individual CFs judged to be either possible or very likely causes for KSI accidents in 2020. The two most common contributory factors were failing to look properly (169 cases) and loss of control (144 cases). Seven of the top ten CFs relate to the driver/rider, two relate to the road environment and one relates to pedestrians. There were 7 instances where police officers judged that a driver/rider using a mobile phone may have caused an accident.

Chart 13: The 10 most common causes of KSI accidents, by reporting officers' confidence, 2020



Source: Road Accident Statistics, Welsh Government

Road safety targets for Wales

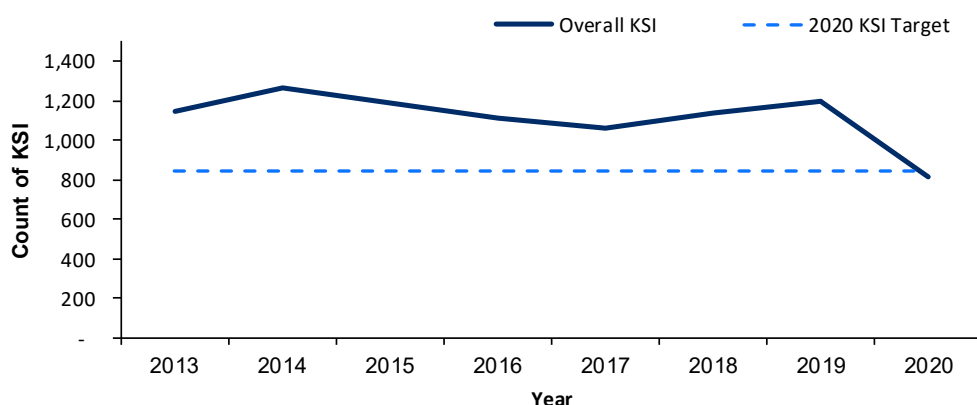
The Welsh Government set three targets in the [2013 Road safety framework](#) to reduce the number of vulnerable road users killed or seriously injured (KSI) on Welsh roads by 2020 when compared with the average for 2004-08. This section provide a time series of progress made.

COVID-19 had a significant impact on the number of road accidents and casualties in 2020. As a result, the figures for 2020 are most likely lower than they would have been had the pandemic not occurred. This has likely accelerated the achievement of the three targets and therefore the success of the targets should be considered in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Target 1: Reduce People killed or seriously injured on Welsh roads by 40%

In 2020 all KSI cases fell by 42% compared with the 2004-08 average, 2% further than the 2020 target (Chart 14A). Over 2016-19 the average was 20.0% lower than the 2004-08 average.

Chart 14a: Reduce overall KSI by 40% by 2020

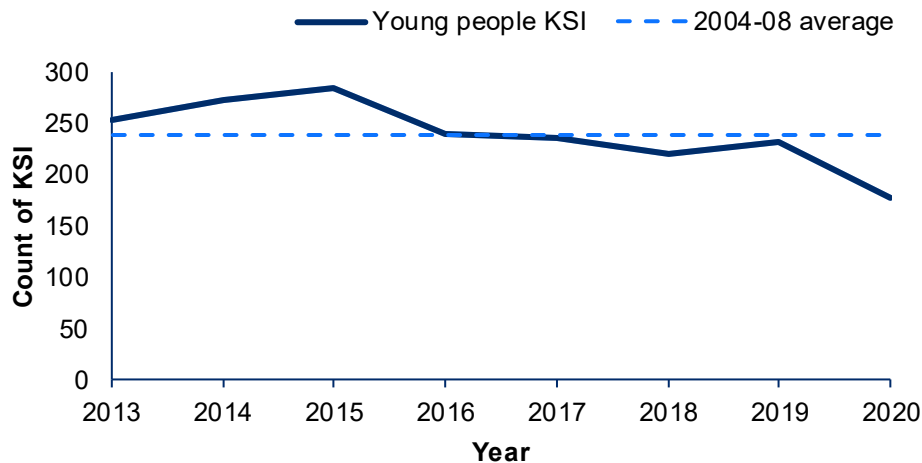


Source: Road Accident Statistics, Welsh Government

Target 2: Reduce Young people killed or seriously injured on Welsh roads by 40%

For young people (aged 16 – 24), the target reduction was reached in 2016, and further reduced in 2019 to 41% lower than the 2004-08 average [Chart 14b](#). In 2020, the number of young people KSI was 55% lower. Over 2016-19 the average number of young people KSI was 231, 41.6% lower than the 2004-08 average.

Chart 14b: Reduce Young people (16 – 24) killed or seriously injured by 40%

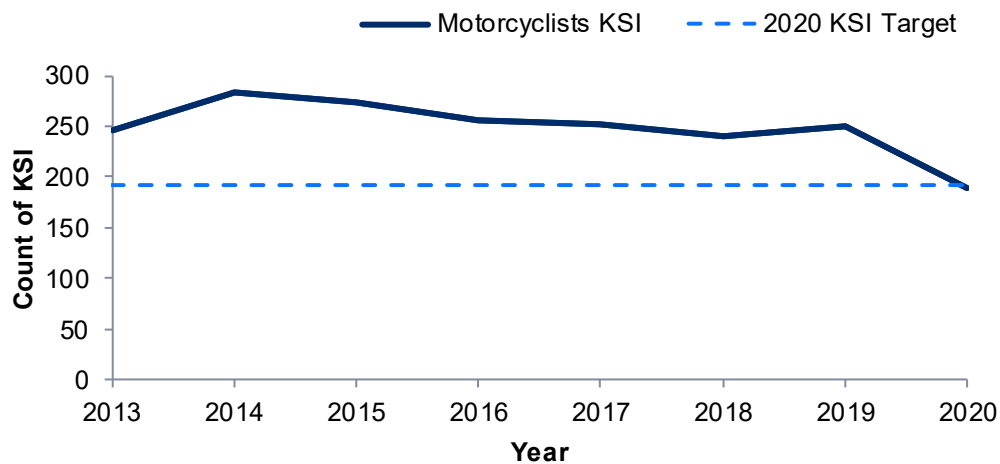


Source: Road Accident Statistics, Welsh Government

Target 3: Reduce Motorcyclists killed or seriously injured on Welsh roads by 25%

Relatively little progress has been made towards the motorcyclists target. In 2020 the number of motorcyclists KSI was 26% lower than 2004-08 average, just achieving the target of a 25% reduction Chart 14c. The average reduction over 2016-19 was 250, 2.7% lower than the baseline average.

Chart 14c: Reduce Motorcyclists killed or seriously injured by 25%



Source: Road Accident Statistics, Welsh Government

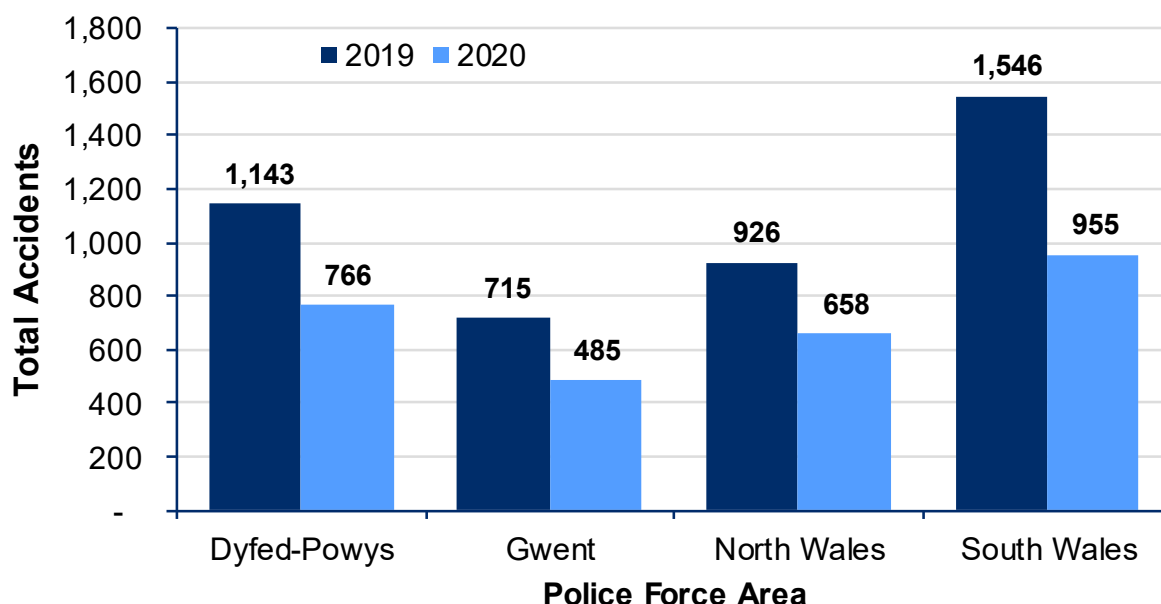
Accidents by police force area

Police officer attendance at accidents

In 2020, police officers attended all fatal accidents, 91% of serious accidents and 88% of slight accidents reported to the police. Between 2017 and 2020 police officers' attendance at accident sites has ranged from 99 to 100% for fatal accidents, 91 to 93% for serious accidents and 86 to 88% for slight accidents.

All police force areas in Wales experienced a reduction in the number of road accidents in 2020 compared to previous year, Chart 15. South Wales Police recorded a total of 955 road accidents in 2020 representing a 38% decrease on 2019 numbers. This was followed by Dyfed-Powys who saw a 33% decrease in reported road accidents.

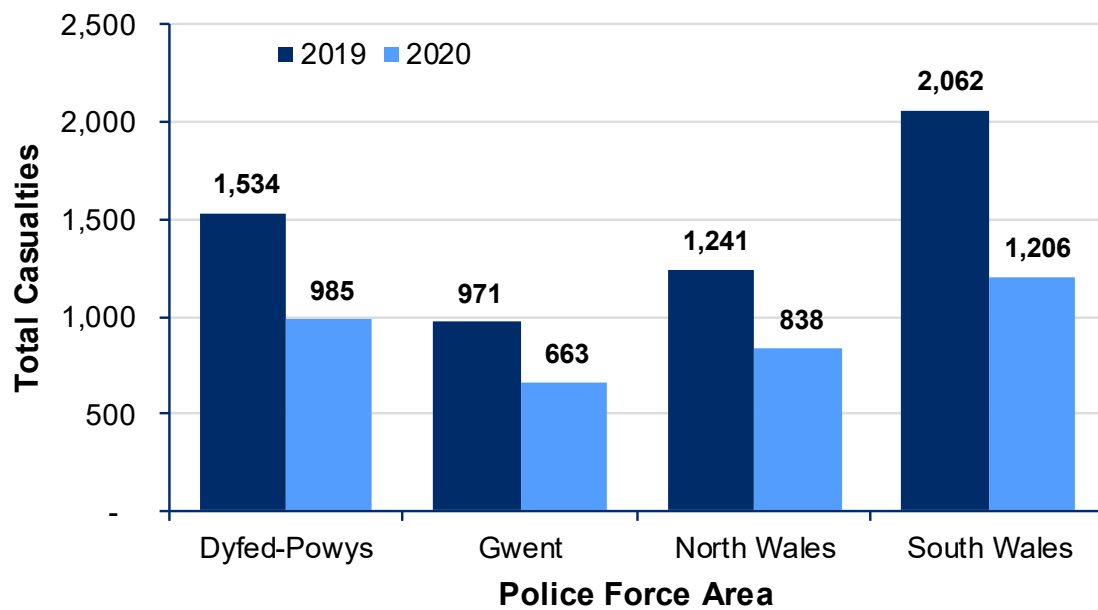
Chart 15: Road accidents by Police force area 2019-2020



Source: Road Accident Statistics, Welsh Government

[Chart 16](#) shows number of casualties reported by police forces in Wales. Compared to 2019 South Wales police had recorded a 42% decrease in casualty numbers in 2020 followed by Dyfed-Powys (36%). Gwent Police and North Wales recorded the least decrease in casualties (32%)

Chart 16: Casualties from road accidents by Police force area 2019-2020



Source: Road Accident Statistics, Welsh Government

Accidents by local authority in Wales

In the year 2020 all Local Authorities in Wales reported a reduction in Police recorded road accidents with Rhondda Cynon Taff recording the largest decrease 45% compared to 2019. Wrexham recorded the smallest decrease (15%) followed by Blaenau Gwent (18%).

Six Local Authorities Rhondda Cynon Taff (45%), Neath Port Talbot (44%), Merthyr Tydfil (42%), Cardiff (41%), Isle of Anglesey (40%), Monmouthshire (40%) saw a reduction in reported road accidents of over 40% in 2020 compared to 2019. More information can be found on our [StatsWales tables](#)

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 context for road safety interventions by the Welsh Government and its partner organisations is the 'Road Safety Framework for Wales' published in July 2013. These targets are that by 2020, and compared with the 2004 to 2008 average, there will be:

- A 40 % reduction in the total number of people killed or seriously injured (KSI);
- A 40 % reduction in the number of young people (aged 16 to 24) KSI
- A 25 % reduction in the number of motorcyclist KSIs.

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 2020 are due to be published in June 2021.

Transport Scotland publishes "Key reported road casualties Scotland" annually. Statistics for 2020 will be published later in the year.

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 Detailed Trends Report 2020](#)' on 18 June 2021.

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. These issues are discussed in more detail in the [quality report for Welsh road casualties](#).

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

The quality report summarises the sources and methods used to compile the road accident and casualty figures for Wales. It also reviews the quality of the resulting figures in terms of the six dimensions of statistical quality of the European Statistical System. The aim is to provide background information about road casualty statistics for Wales in a single document for all users of the published statistics.

The Welsh Government is working with the Welsh police authorities to quality assure the data systems that are used to produce these statistics. A report on the quality of these statistics, in line with the National Statisticians guidance on quality assurance of administrative data sources will be published in due course.

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 in the process of reviewing the terminology used in the release and a further update will be provided in future publications.

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](#).

Results for Great Britain will be published by the Department for Transport in June 2020 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 2020.

Road accident statistics are fully comparable across Great Britain. Results for Great Britain will be published by the Department for Transport in June 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 well-being of Wales. The Act puts in place seven well-being 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 Well-being goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before Senedd Cymru. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016 and this release does not include any of the national indicators.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the well-being goals and associated technical information is available in the [Well-being 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 well-being assessments and local well-being plans.

Further details

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

Next update

June 2022 (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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