



**TRANSPORT  
SCOTLAND**  
CÒMHDHAIL ALBA

# Key Reported Road Casualties Scotland 2021

## Key findings

- There were 5,023 road casualties reported in 2021. Of these, there were 139 fatalities, 1,596 people were seriously injured and 3,288 people were slightly injured.
- The total casualty figures and fatality figures for 2021 are the lowest since records began. However, they are broadly similar to the previous lows recorded in 2020.
- Like the figures for 2020, the 2021 casualty numbers will be affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and the associated changes in travel.

Most notably, this included the 'second lockdown', which ran from 5 January 2021 to April 2021, and incorporated a legal requirement forbidding anyone from leaving their home except for essential purposes.

- The number of fatalities decreased by 2, from 141 in 2020 to 139 in 2021. This latest drop follows on from a long-term downward trend. Since 2000, the number of people killed decreased by 57%, and in the last decade the number decreased by 21%.
- Car users had the highest number of casualties in 2021 (2,862), followed by pedestrians (758) and pedal cyclists (500).
- Compared to last year, pedestrian casualties decreased by 7% and pedal cyclists by 18%. However, car casualties increased by 3% and motorcyclists by 8%
- Scotland's latest road safety framework includes 4 national casualty reduction targets due for delivery in 2030 (Table 1). These compare performance against a 2014-2018 baseline period.

Table 1: Casualty reduction targets from Scotland's 2021 Road Safety Framework

Target	2030 target reduction	2021 reduction achieved
People killed	50%	20%
People seriously injured	50%	45%
Children (aged < 16) killed	60%	23%
Children (aged < 16) seriously injured	60%	50%

Statistics in this publication are provisional. Final figures will be published in Reported Road Casualties Scotland in October 2022. Figures may change as a result of late returns and amendments to the data. These changes are likely to be small.

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## Introduction

This bulletin presents provisional statistics of reported injury road accidents in Scotland in 2021. These statistics are based on information Police Scotland collect for all road accidents where someone has been injured. Accidents in which there are no injuries, or accidents not reported to the police are therefore not included in these figures.

Final figures will be published in October 2022. The figures published here are provisional due to possible late returns and amendments. Final figures will be published in Reported Road Casualties Scotland in October and in figures included in later years' publications. The differences between the provisional and final numbers are likely to be small. More information on the data is available in Annex A.

In mid-2019, Police Scotland started to use a new accident recording system. The introduction of this new system has changed the way casualty severity is recorded, making direct comparisons difficult. For the years 2004 to 2019, this publication uses figures for slight casualties, slight accidents, serious casualties, and serious accidents that have been adjusted in order to maximise comparability with figures for the most recent years. This does mean that the figures for serious and slight accident and casualties are not comparable prior to 2004. More information is set out in the following section of this publication.

The statistics in this publication are used by Transport Scotland, Police Scotland, Local Authorities and road safety professionals across Scotland to target interventions to make Scotland's roads safer.

## Changes in severity reporting and ‘adjustments’ to figures

In the summer of 2019, Police Scotland started using CRASH (Collision Reporting and Sharing), an injury-based reporting system, for recording the data that feeds this publication. Before the introduction of CRASH, police officers would use their own judgement, based on official guidance, to determine the severity of the casualty (either ‘slight’ or ‘serious’). CRASH is an injury-based recording system where the officer records the most severe injury for the casualty. The system then automatically converts the injuries to a severity level from ‘slight’ to ‘serious’.

Since CRASH removes the uncertainty that arises from officers having to assess the severity of casualties based on their own judgement, severity information collected in this way is expected to be more accurate and consistent. However, the move to an injury-based reporting system tends to result in more casualties being classified as ‘serious’, which means that the number of serious and slight casualties are not comparable with earlier years.

The Department for Transport has carried out analysis which adjusts historical figures so that they reflect the numbers that *would have been reported if CRASH had been used to record the casualty severity in those years*. Within this publication, these adjusted figures are used to report on serious casualties, serious accidents, slight casualties, and slight accident for the years 2004 to 2019. This means that the adjusted figures for 2004 to 2019 are comparable with figures for 2020 and 2021, but not with figures for years prior to 2004.

As the adjustments relate only to serious and slight casualties, figures for total casualties and fatalities are unaffected.

Unadjusted figures are provided in the accompanying excel files. More information on the methodology used to produce these adjusted figures is available from the [Department for Transport](#).

## Reported number of accidents

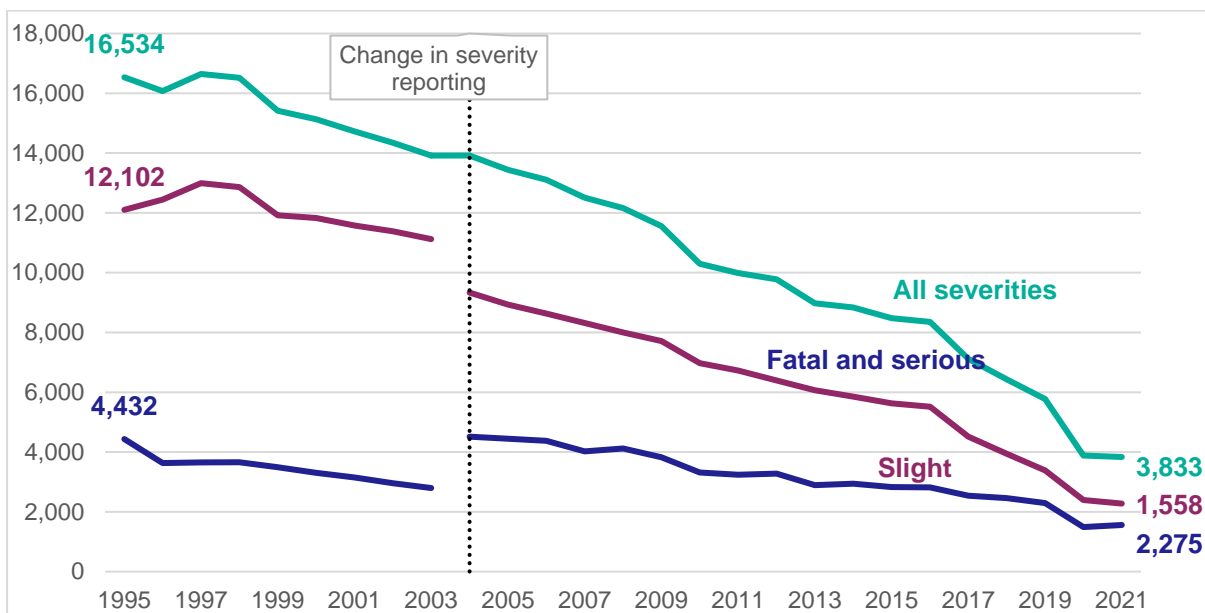
The 2021 casualty and accident numbers will be affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and the associated changes in travel.

Most notably, these changes included the ‘second lockdown’, which ran from 5 January 2021 to April 2021, and incorporated a legal requirement forbidding anyone from leaving their home except for essential purposes.

Figure 1 shows the long-term trend for injury road accidents recorded by the police.

In 2021, there were 3,833 accidents in which someone was killed or injured. This was 1% lower than in 2020 and the lowest number since records began. There were 134 fatal accidents in 2021, 3 (2%) more than in 2020. In 2021, there were 1,424 serious injury accidents; and 2,275 slight injury accidents.

Figure 1: Number of reported injury road accidents broken down by severity, 1999 – 2021.



Note for Figure 1: Due to changes in the way casualty severity is recorded, figures for the number of serious and slight accidents are not comparable with years prior to 2004.

## Reported number of casualties

The 2021 casualty and accident numbers will be affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and the associated changes in travel.

Most notably, these changes included the 'second lockdown', which ran from 5 January 2021 to April 2021, and incorporated a legal requirement forbidding anyone from leaving their home except for essential purposes.

Figure 2 shows that in 2021, 139 people were killed in road accidents in Scotland: 2 (1%) less than 2019.

Since 1978, there has been a clear, steady, long-term downward trend. More recent years' figures have fluctuated around a less pronounced downward trend. 2021 had the lowest number of fatalities ever recorded and 2020 was the second-lowest with 141 fatalities.

Figure 2: Total number of reported road fatalities, 1950 – 2021.

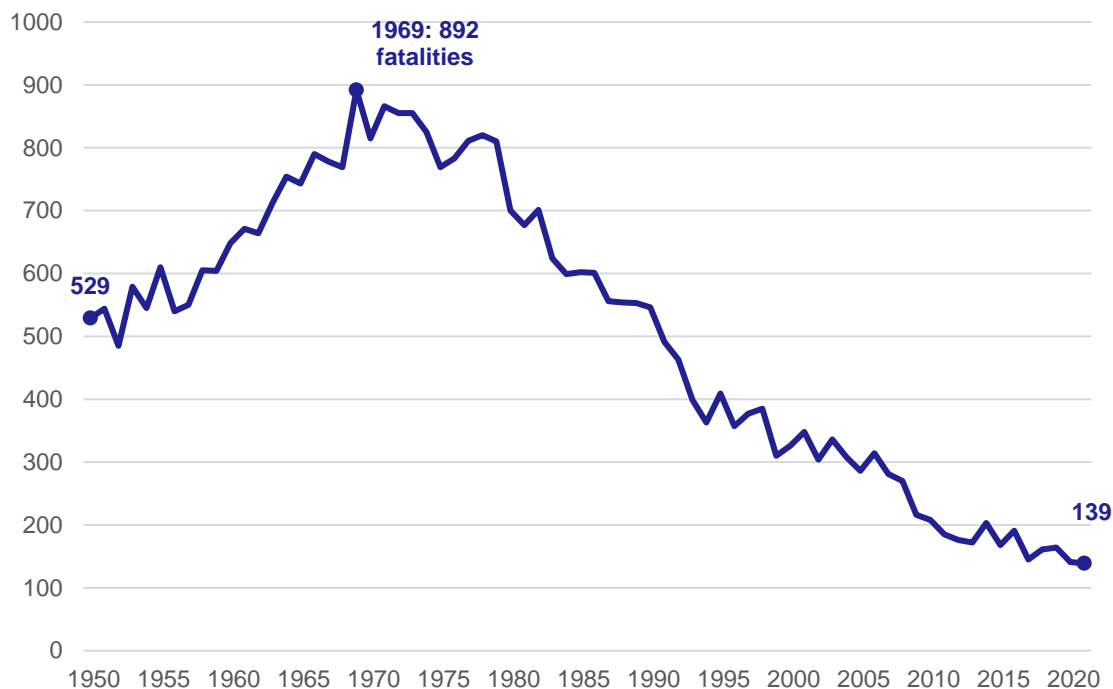
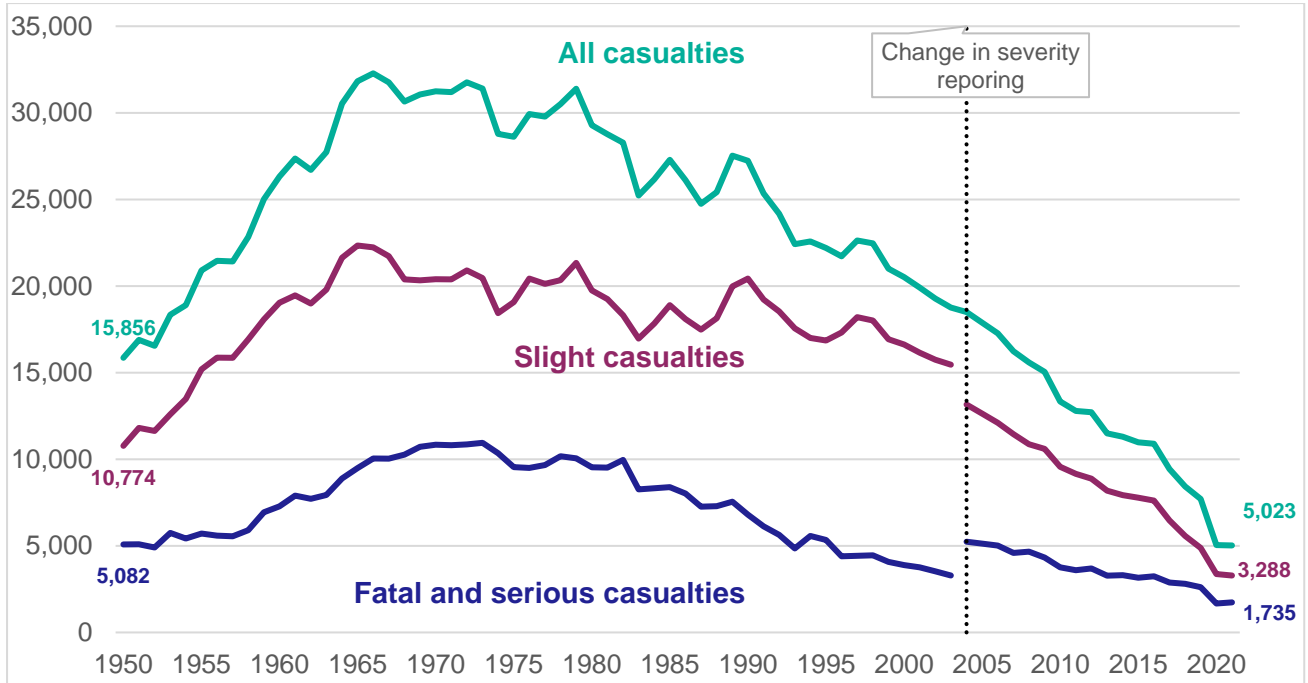


Figure 3 shows that there were a total of 5,023 casualties (of all severities) reported in 2021: 24 (0.5%) fewer than in 2020 and the lowest number since annual records began in 1950.

Between circa 1970 and 1990, the figures fluctuated around a general downward trend, with numbers falling from the short-term peak in 1989 & 1990 (of over 27,000).

Since 1998, there has been a consistent reduction, with numbers falling below 12,000 in 2013, which was half the level of the early 1990s.

Figure 3: Number of reported road casualties broken down by severity, 1950 – 2021.



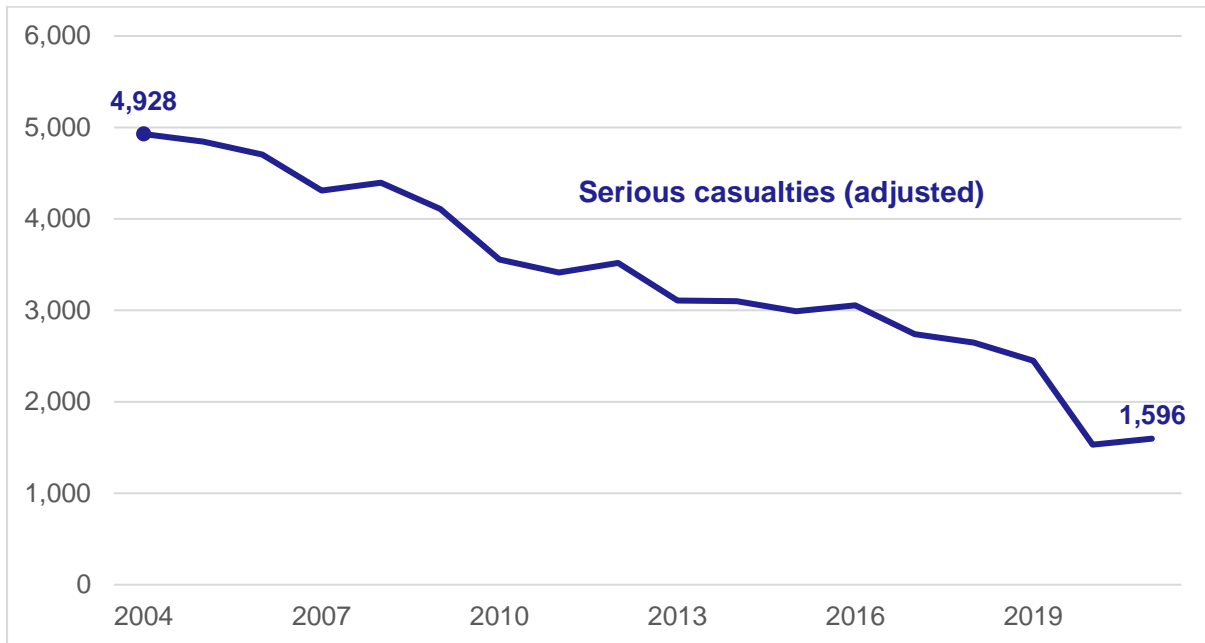
Note for Figure 3: Due to changes in the way casualty severity is recorded, serious and slight figures prior to 2004 are not directly comparable with later years.

In 2021, 1,596 people were seriously injured in road accidents. As outlined above, this figure cannot be directly compared to the reported figures prior to 2004. Figure 4 uses adjusted figures to show how many serious casualties there would have been in previous years if they had been recorded using an injury-based reporting system. On the basis of these, the number of people seriously injured in 2021 increased by 4% on 2020. Figure 3 shows that the longer-term trend for fatal and serious casualties has generally been downward since the early 1980s.

There were 3,288 people reported as slightly injured in 2021. Once again, this figure cannot be directly compared to the reported figures for previous years prior to 2004. The number of people slightly injured in road accidents in 2021 decreased by 3% on 2020. Figure 3 shows that the number of slight casualties has shown a clear downward trend since the mid-1990s.



Figure 4: Number of serious road casualties, adjusted 2004 – 2021.



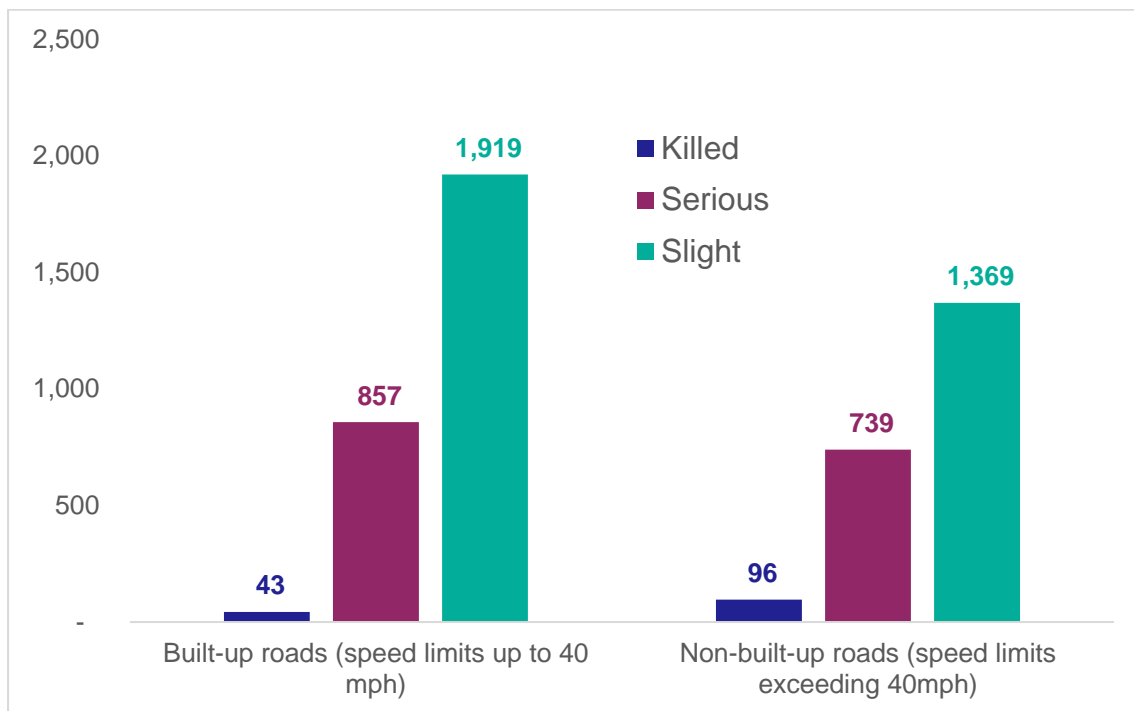
## Casualties by type of road

Figure 5 shows the number of casualties by road type. Built-up roads are those which have speed limits of up to 40 miles per hour (ignoring temporary speed limits on roads for which the normal speed limit is over 40 mph); non-built up roads have speed limits exceeding 40 miles per hour.

In 2021, non built-up roads accounted for over two-fifths of the total number of reported casualties (44%: 2,204 out of 5,023). However, they accounted for over two-thirds of those killed (69%: 96 out of 139) and over two fifths of the total number of seriously injured (46%: 739 out of 1,596). This will be at least in part due to the higher average speed on non built-up roads, and also because these roads make up two-thirds of Scotland’s road network.

Compared with the 2014-18 average, total casualties on non built-up roads have reduced by 46% and built-up roads by 54%. However, the reduction in fatalities on non built-up roads was greater (at 22%) than for built-up roads (at 15%).

Figure 5: Number of casualties by road type, 2021.



## Casualties by mode of transport

In 2021 there were 2,862 car users reported injured in road accidents; over half of all road casualties (57%: 2,862 out of 5,023) and a 3% increase on 2020. Of these, 56 were killed, a decrease of 20% from 2020, and 701 seriously injured.

There were 758 pedestrian casualties<sup>1</sup> recorded in 2021, one in seven of all casualties (15%: 758 out of 5,023) and down by 53 (7%) since 2020. Five per cent of pedestrian casualties were killed (37 out of 758) and 40% seriously injured (300 out of 758).

Pedal cycle casualty numbers in 2021 decreased by 18%. There were 500 pedal cyclist casualties recorded in 2021, and 10 died (one fatality fewer than in 2020).

Motorcycle casualties increased by 8% in 2021. 450 motorcycle casualties were reported, of whom 275 (61%) suffered serious injuries and 28 died, an increase of 12 fatalities on 2020.

A total of 78 bus and coach users were reported injured (a decrease of 8% on 2020), of whom 27 were seriously injured, two died.

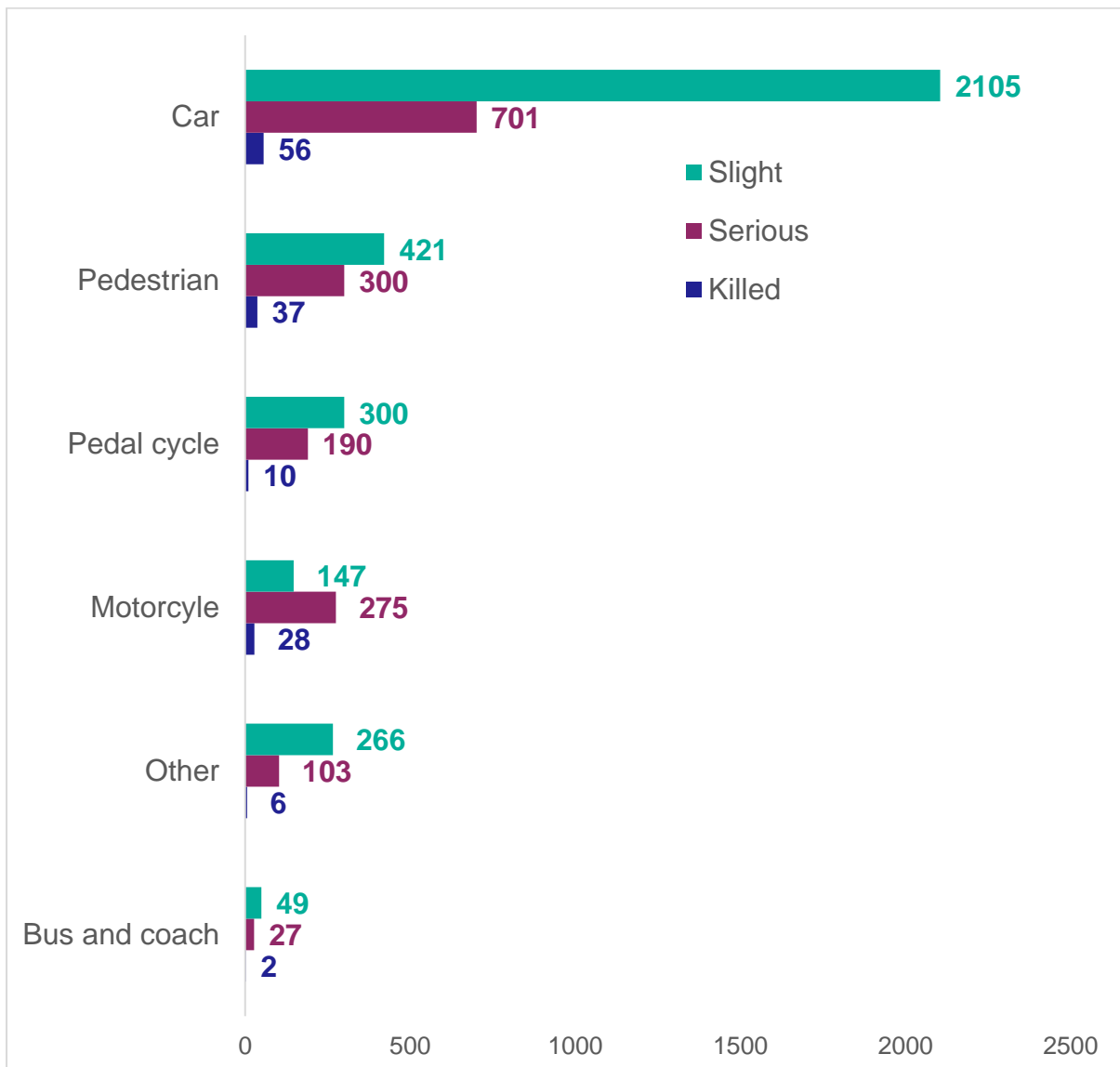
Together, all other modes of transport accounted for 7% of casualties in 2021 (375 out of 5,023), for 4% of those killed (6 out of 139) and for 6% of those seriously injured (103 out of 1,596).

Figures on numbers of casualties by mode should be compared with data on mode use since changes could be due to more or fewer people travelling by a particular mode. Information on mode use is published in the 'road traffic' and 'personal travel' sections of Scottish Transport Statistics (STS). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been significant changes to people's travel behaviour in both 2020 and 2021.

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to people walking, this category includes people riding toy cycles on the footway, people pushing bicycles, occupants of prams or wheelchairs, and people who alight safely from vehicles and are subsequently injured.

Figure 6: Number of casualties by mode of transport, 2021.

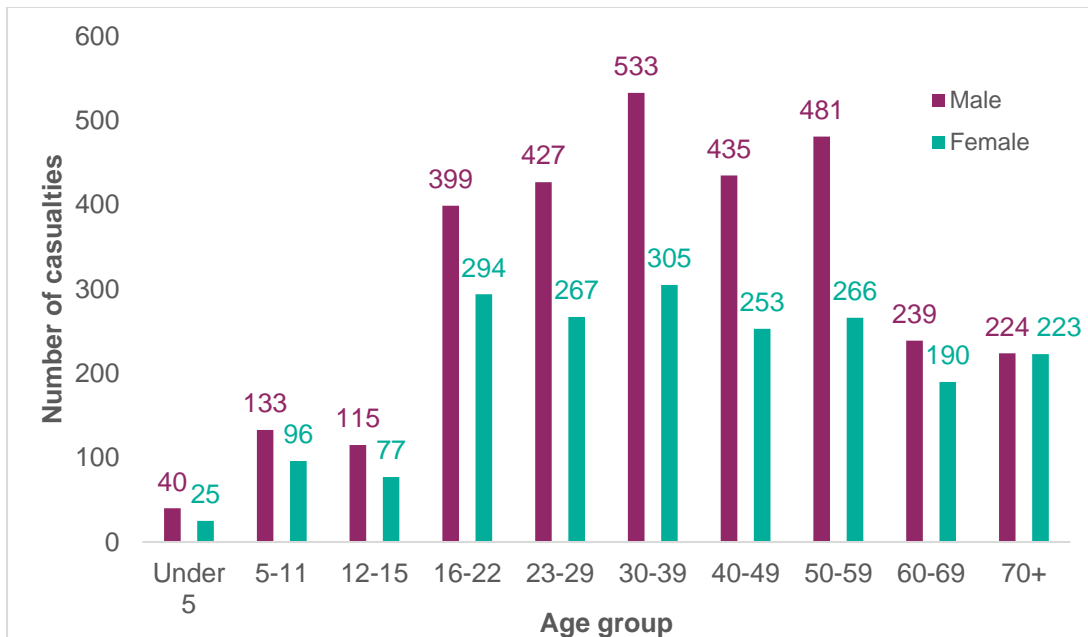


## Casualties by gender and age

Figure 7 shows the number of reported casualties by gender and age. This figure does not account for differences between age groups in the level of exposure to risk; for example, we do not control for the number of people in each group with driving licences or for the overall number of people in each age group.

In 2021, male fatalities fell by 5 to 110). Female fatalities rose by 3 to 34). Fourteen per cent (693) of all casualties were aged 16–22, a fall of 5% on 2020, of which 399 were male and 294 were female.

Figure 7: Number of casualties by gender and age, 2021.



## Child Casualties

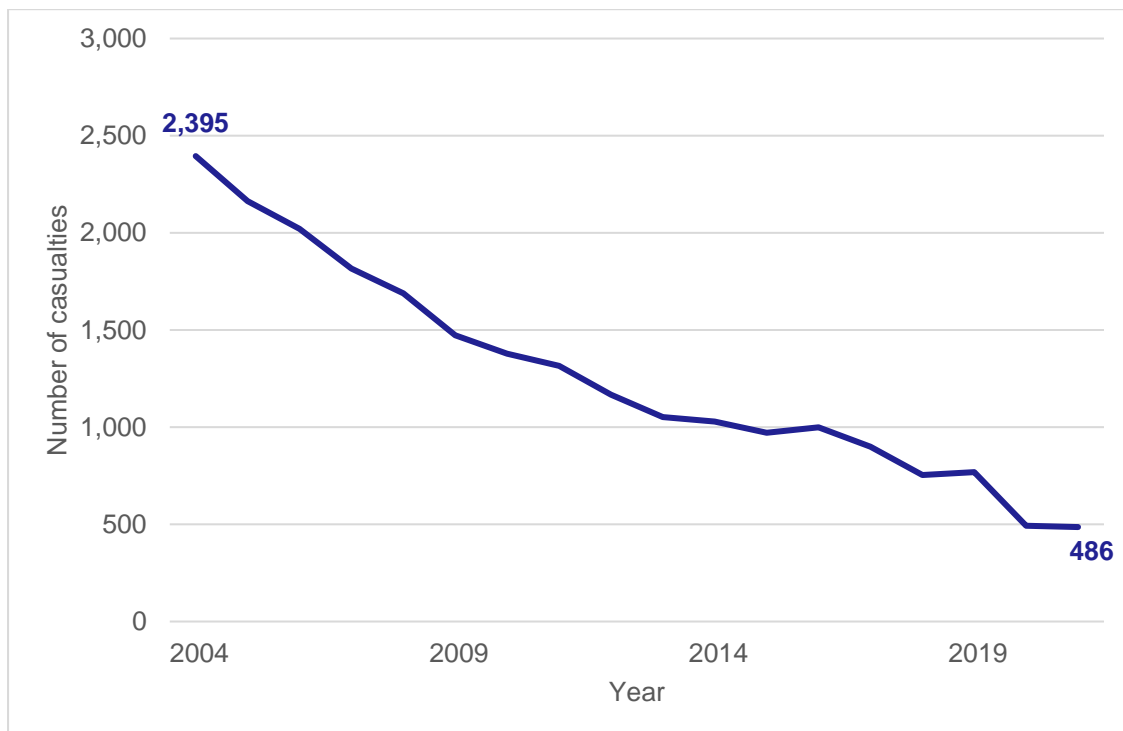
For the purposes of these statistics, casualties under the age of 16 are classified as child casualties. Figure 8 shows that there were 486 child casualties reported in 2021, representing 10% of all casualties (486 out of 5,023) and a decrease of 7 (or 1%) from 2020. Of these, 5 died, one fewer than in 2020. One of the children killed in 2021 was a pedestrian, two were car passengers, one was a pedal cyclist and one was using another mode of transport. The numbers of fatalities are small, so care should be taken when drawing conclusions from year-on-year changes and trends should be looked at over the longer term.

There were 241 child pedestrian casualties recorded in 2021. They accounted for 32% of all pedestrian casualties of all ages (241 out of 758). Of the child pedestrian casualties, 94 were seriously injured (1 died). The number killed was two fewer than in 2020.

In 2021, there were 167 child casualties in cars, 6% of all car user casualties (167 out of 2,862). Of the child casualties in cars, 24 were seriously injured (two died).

In 2021, there were 58 child pedal cycle casualties (12% of the total of 500 pedal cycle casualties of all ages) including 16 who were seriously injured, there was one child pedal cyclist killed in 2021, the same as 2020.

Figure 8: Number of child casualties, 2004 – 2021.



## Casualties by Police Force division and Local Authority area

Figures 9 and 10 show the average number of reported numbers of casualties in each Police Force division and each Local Authority area for 2017-2021. Since numbers for individual police force divisions and local authorities can be low, late returns and amendments can result in higher percentage changes than those seen in the national figures. In addition, there can be quite large percentage year-to-year fluctuations in the figures for local authority areas within Scotland, particularly for those with the lower numbers. We therefore present the average figures for the last five years.

For both police force divisions and local authorities, the highest number of casualties are seen in urban, densely populated areas. Figure 10 shows that Glasgow City and City of Edinburgh have the highest number of road casualties in the 2017-2021 period. Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands and Na h-Eileanan Siar have the lowest number of casualties.

Figure 9: Average number of reported road casualties by Police Force division, 2017-2021.

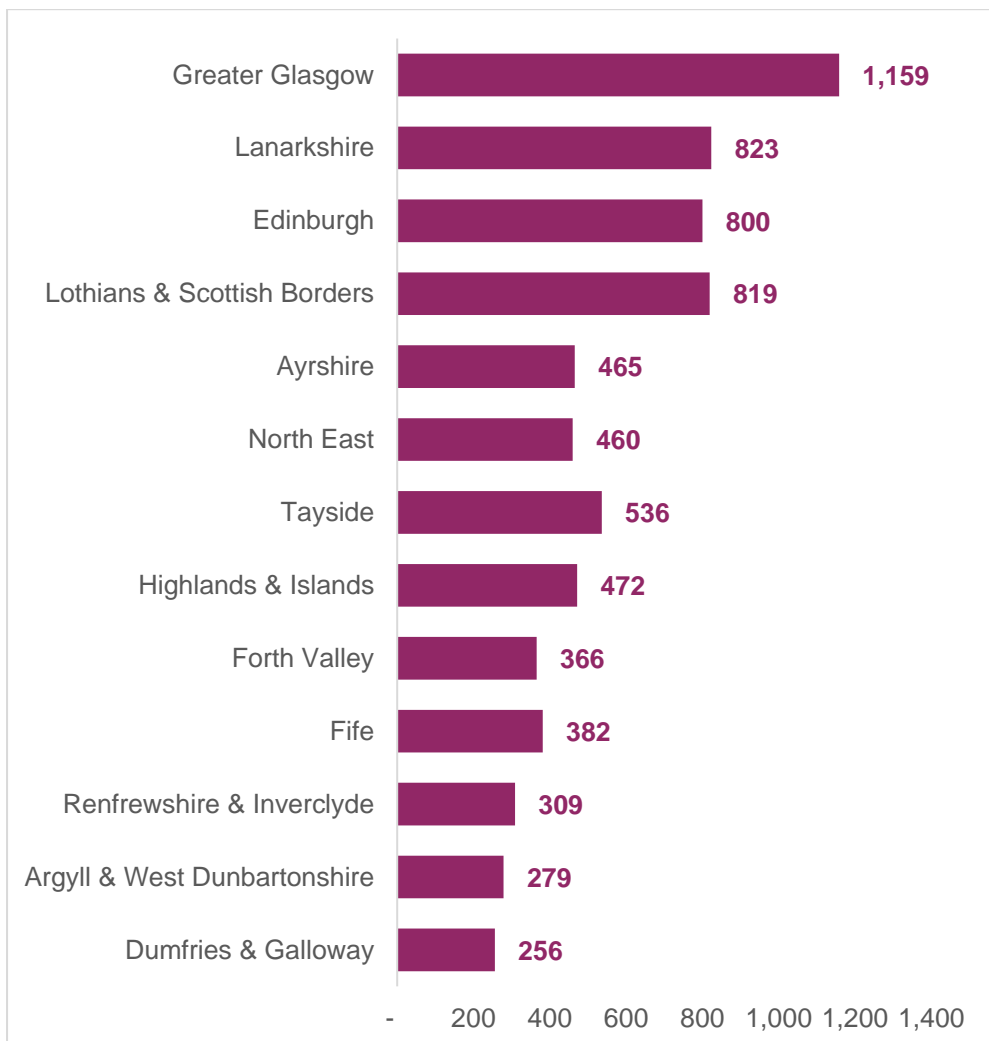
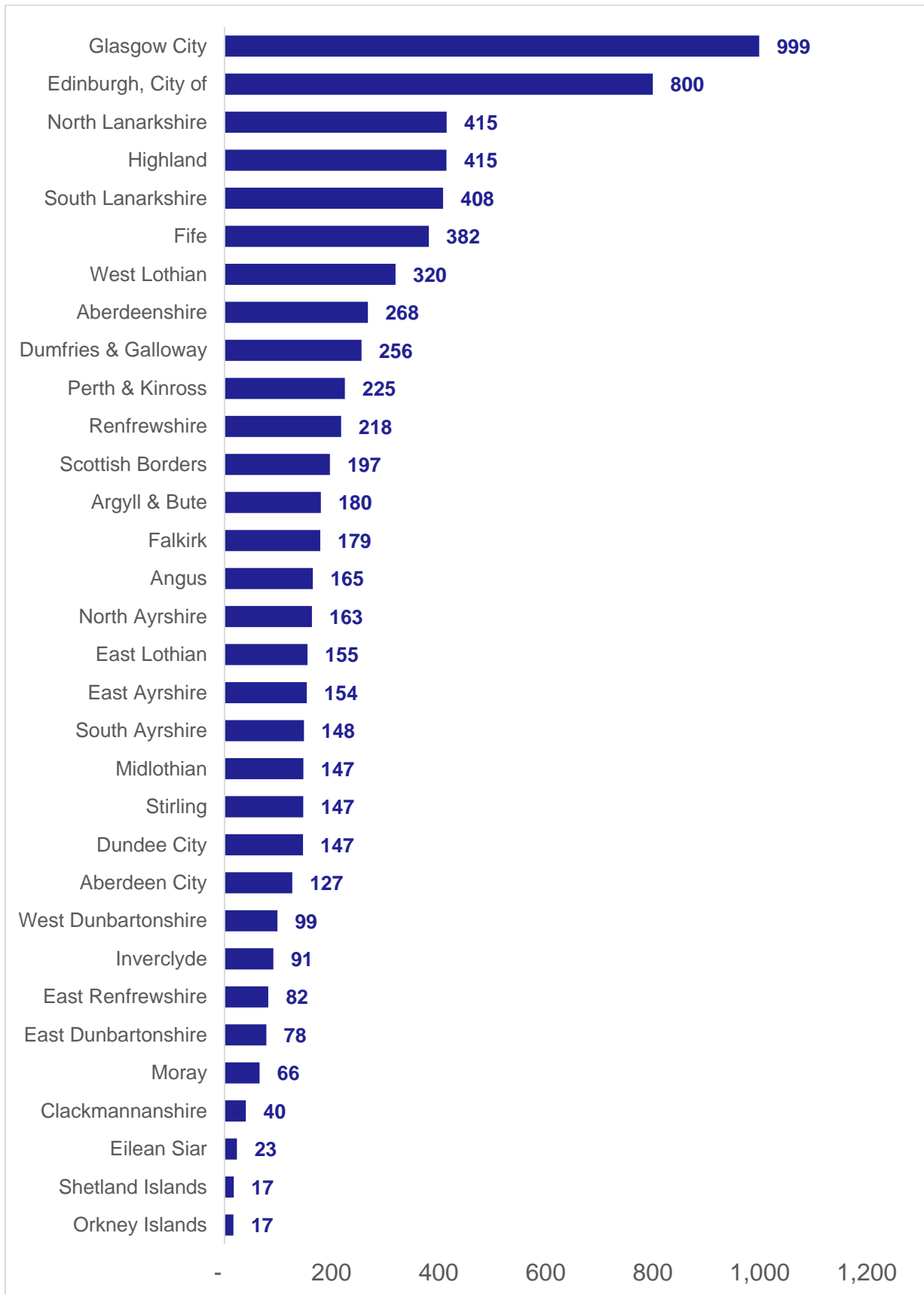


Figure 10: Average number of reported road casualties by Local Authority, 2017-2021.





## Progress towards casualty reduction targets for 2030

### Introduction

The Scottish Government recently published a new [Road Safety Framework to 2030](#). The following section provides information on the progress made towards the four main casualty reduction targets outlined in the framework. These targets are included in Table 2 and each reduction target is assessed against the 2014/18 average.

Table 2: Casualty reduction targets in Scotland's 2021 Road Safety Framework.

Target	2030 target % reduction
People killed	50%
People seriously injured	50%
Children (aged < 16) killed	60%
Children (aged < 16) seriously injured	60%

When reporting progress towards the two targets relating to serious injuries, years prior to 2020 (including the baseline period of 2014-2018) are reported on the basis of adjusted figures (see earlier section for more information).

## **Target: 50% reduction in those killed by 2030**

There were 139 people killed in 2021, a 20% reduction from the 2014-18 baseline average. Provisionally, the decrease seen to 2021 is not on track to meet the framework target for 2030 (a reduction of 50% from 2014-18 baseline). Figure 11 shows that the total number of fatalities in 2021 was above the indicative line required to achieve the target.

## **Target: 50% reduction in those seriously injured by 2030**

On the basis of adjusted figures, there were 1,596 serious injuries in 2021, a 45% reduction since the adjusted 2014-18 baseline level.

Figure 12 shows that, provisionally, the reduction is on track to meet the framework target for 2030 (a reduction of 50% from 2014-18 baseline).

## **Target: 60% reduction in children killed by 2030**

Due to small numbers and year-to-year fluctuations this target is measured using a three-year average. An average of 4 children a year were killed in the 2019-2021 period, a 23% reduction from the 2014-2018 baseline. Figure 13 provisionally shows that the reduction is on track to meet the framework target for 2030.

## **Target: 60% reduction in children seriously injured by 2030**

On the basis of the adjusted figures, there were 139 serious injuries in 2021, a 50% reduction since the adjusted 2014-18 baseline level. Figure 14 provisionally shows that the reduction is on track to meet the framework target for 2030 (a reduction of 65% from 2014-18 baseline).

Figure 11: Progress towards casualties killed reduction target.

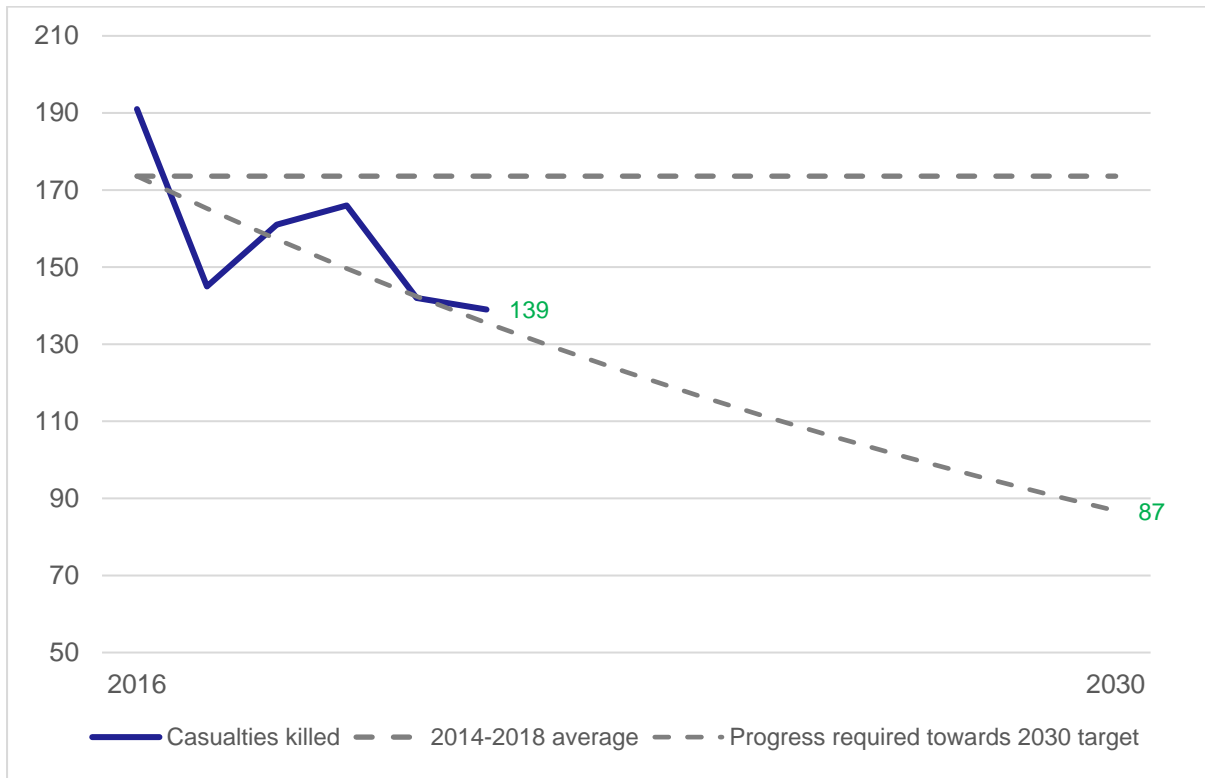


Figure 12: Progress towards casualties seriously injured reduction target.



Figure 13: Progress towards children killed reduction target.

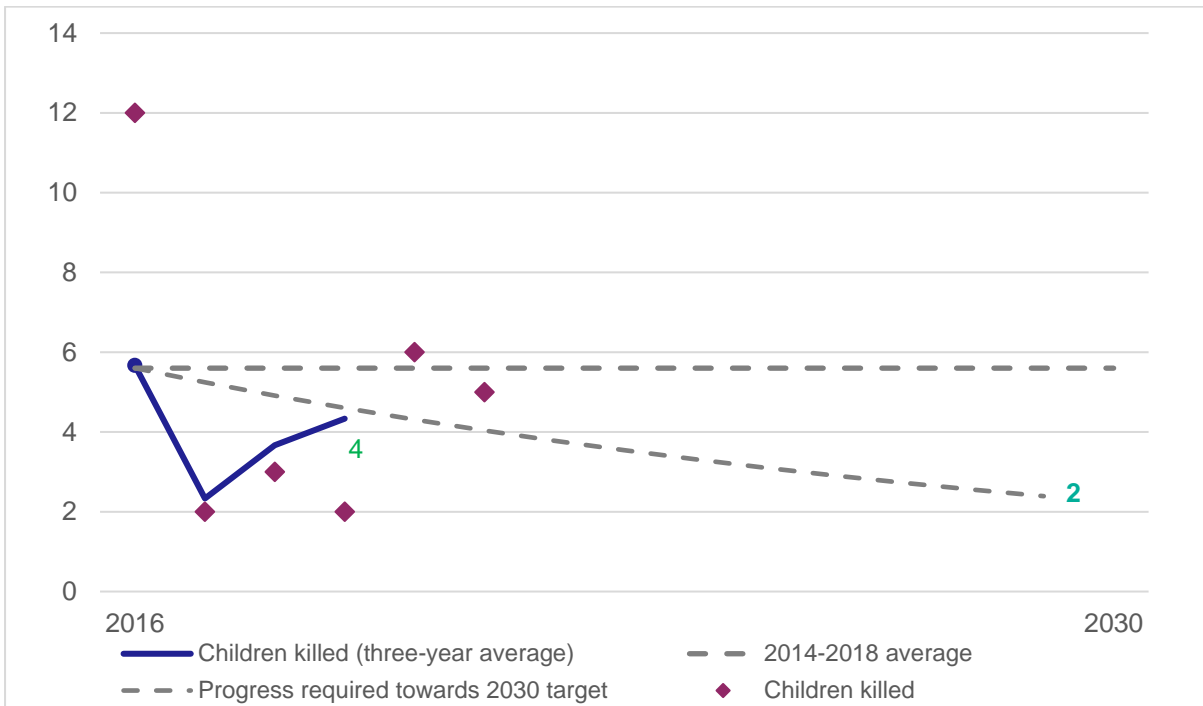
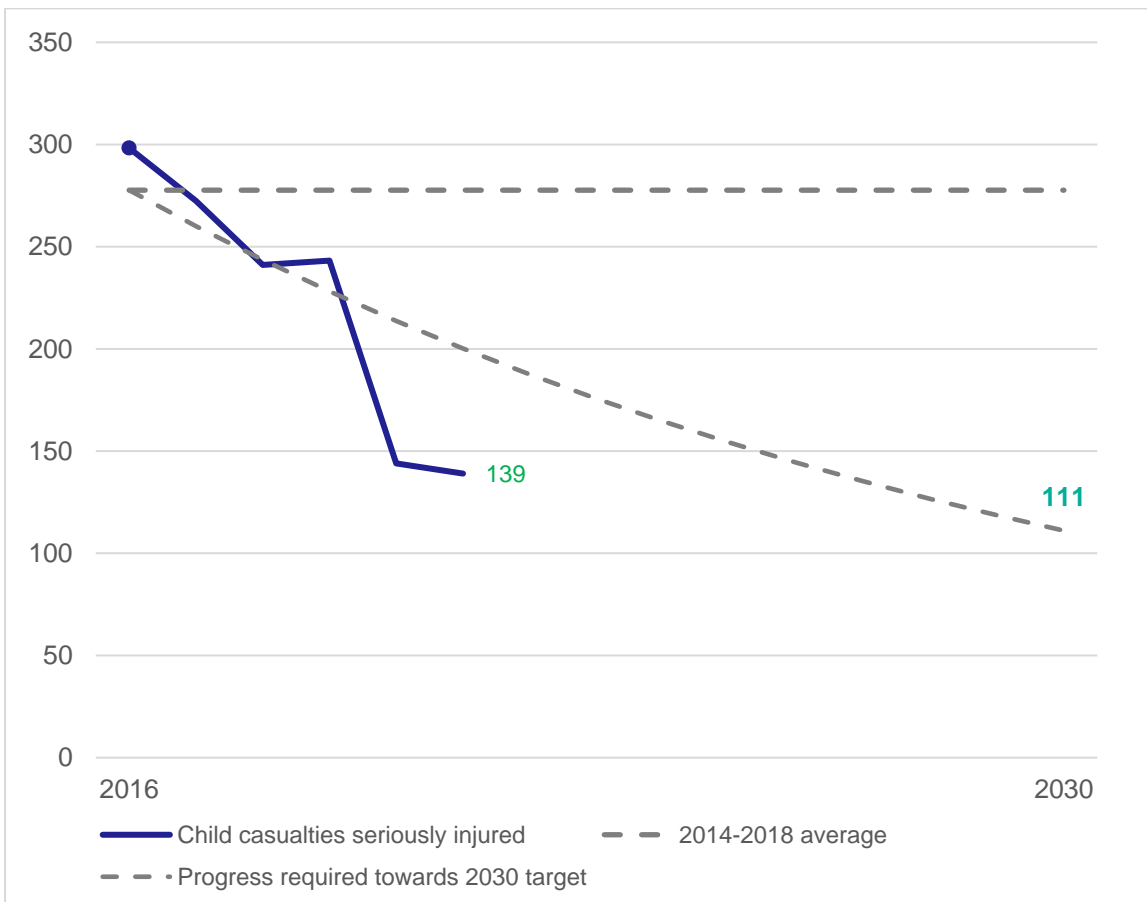


Figure 14: Progress towards children seriously injured reduction target.



## Annex A: Background, sources and definitions

### Sources of the data

The figures in this bulletin were compiled from Stats19 statistical returns made by Police Scotland. These returns cover all accidents in which a vehicle is involved that occur on roads (including footways) and that result in personal injury. Only injury accidents reported to the police are included. The vehicle(s) involved in the accident need not be moving, and need not be in collision—for example, the returns include accidents involving people alighting from buses. Damage-only accidents, in which no people are injured, are not included in these statistics.

There could be many non-fatal injury accidents which are not reported to the police, and as a result these statistics are expected to undercount the true number of road casualties. More information about this undercounting is provided in [Reported Road Casualties Scotland 2010](#), in the section entitled *Estimating under-counting of Road Casualties in Scotland*.

### Severity reporting

The classification of the severity of an accident (as “fatal”, “serious” or “slight”) is determined by the severity of the injury to the most severely injured casualty. The police usually record this information soon after the accident occurs. However, if further information becomes available which would alter the classification (for example, if a person dies within 30 days of the accident, as a result of the injuries sustained in the accident) the police change the initial classification of the severity. From the middle of 2019, Police Scotland have used the CRASH system for recording severity details of accidents. Table 2 lists the options for determining how severe an injury is. The introduction of CRASH means that the severity of injuries is recorded more accurately than before and has led to an increase in the recorded number of serious injuries. Figures recorded from 2019 onwards are therefore not directly comparable with those recorded prior to the introduction of CRASH.

Table 3: Classification of injury severity using the CRASH reporting system

Injury in CRASH	Detailed severity	Severity classification
Deceased	Killed	Killed
Broken neck or back	Very Serious	Serious
Severe head injury, unconscious	Very Serious	Serious
Severe chest injury, any difficulty breathing	Very Serious	Serious
Internal injuries	Very Serious	Serious
Multiple severe injuries, unconscious	Very Serious	Serious
Loss of arm or leg (or part)	Moderately Serious	Serious
Fractured pelvis or upper leg	Moderately Serious	Serious
Other chest injury (not bruising)	Moderately Serious	Serious
Deep penetrating wound	Moderately Serious	Serious
Multiple severe injuries, conscious	Moderately Serious	Serious
Fractured lower leg / ankle / foot	Less Serious	Serious
Fractured arm / collarbone / hand	Less Serious	Serious
Deep cuts / lacerations	Less Serious	Serious
Other head injury	Less Serious	Serious
Whiplash or neck pain	Slight	Slight
Shallow cuts / lacerations / abrasions	Slight	Slight
Sprains and strains	Slight	Slight
Bruising	Slight	Slight
Shock	Slight	Slight

Before the introduction of CRASH, the police used the following classifications for determining accident severity:

- a **fatal injury** is one which causes death less than 30 days after the accident;
- a **fatal accident** is an accident in which at least one person is fatally injured;
- a **serious injury** is one which does not cause death less than 30 days after the accident, and which is in one (or more) of the following categories:
  - an injury for which a person is detained in hospital as an in-patient, or
  - any of the following injuries (whether or not the person is detained in hospital): fractures, concussion, internal injuries, crushings, severe cuts and lacerations, severe general shock requiring treatment, or
- any injury causing death 30 or more days after the accident;

- a **serious accident** is one in which at least one person is seriously injured, but no-one suffers a fatal injury;
- a **slight injury** is any injury which is neither fatal nor serious - for example, a sprain, bruise or cut which is not judged to be severe, or slight shock requiring roadside attention;
- a **slight accident** is one in which at least one person suffers “slight” injuries, but no-one is seriously injured, or fatally injured.

Over the years, improvements in vehicle design, and the provision and use of additional safety features, together with changes in the law (e.g. on the fitting and wearing of seat belts), will all have helped to reduce the severity of the injuries suffered in some accidents.

Road safety measures should also have reduced the levels of injuries sustained. For example, if traffic calming schemes reduce average speeds, people may suffer only a slight injury in collisions that previously would have taken place at higher speeds and so might previously have resulted in a serious injury.

However, it is also possible that some of the changes shown in the statistics of serious injuries and slight injuries may be due to changes in administrative practices, which may have altered the proportion of accidents categorised as serious. For example, the distinction between serious and slight injuries could be affected by factors such as changes in hospitals’ admission policies. All else being equal, the number of serious injury cases would rise, and the number of slight injury cases would fall, if it became standard procedure for a hospital to keep in overnight, for precautionary reasons, casualties with a particular type of injury.

The increase in the number of serious injury accidents in 1994 was partly attributed to a change in the health boards’ policies in admitting more child casualties for overnight observation, which in turn changed the classification of many injuries from slight to serious. The number of child casualties recorded as having serious injuries in 1994 was 35 per cent higher than in the previous year. There could also be changes in hospitals’ procedures that would reduce the numbers of serious injury cases.

## Provisional data

Data used in this publication were extracted from Transport Scotland's reported road accident statistical database in May 2022. The figures published here are marked as provisional, as late returns and amendments will be included in the final figures published in Reported Road Casualties Scotland in October and in figures included in later years' publications. Table 3 shows the difference between the provisional and final number of casualties. In most years, the difference between the provisional and final figures is less than 0.5%.

Table 3: Difference between the provisional and final number of recorded casualties, broken down by severity, 2001 – 2020.

Year	Number of casualties				Rate (%)			
	Killed	Seriously injured	Slightly injured	All severities	Killed	Seriously injured	Slightly injured	All severities
2001	0	1	4	5		0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
2002	1	9	0	10	0.3%	0.3%		0.1%
2003	-1	9	29	37	-0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%
2004	-1	30	130	159	-0.3%	1.1%	0.8%	0.9%
2005	0	58	-29	29		2.2%	-0.2%	0.2%
2006	0	31	159	190		1.2%	1.1%	1.1%
2007	-1	66	85	150	-0.4%	2.8%	0.6%	0.9%
2008	-2	33	-18	13	-0.7%	1.3%	-0.1%	0.1%
2009	0	0	17	17			0.1%	0.1%
2010	0	4	6	10		0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
2011	0	2	5	7		0.1%	0.0%	0.1%
2012	4	15	82	101	2.3%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%
2013	0	5	0	5		0.3%		0.0%
2014	-3	5	23	28	-1.5%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%
2015	0	-1	13	18		-0.1%	0.1%	0.2%
2016	0	4	16	20		0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
2017	0	9	28	37		0.6%	0.4%	0.4%
2018	1	1	7	9	0.6%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
2019	-3	15	32	44	-1.8%	0.7%	0.6%	0.6%
2020	-1	8	41	48	-0.7%	0.5%	1.2%	1.0%



## On evaluating progress against targets Reported Road Casualties

One way of assessing progress towards the targets is to compare actual casualty numbers in each year with an indicative line that starts at the baseline figure in 2014-18 and falls, by a constant percentage reduction in each subsequent year, to the target for 2030. This is the approach adopted by the GB Road Safety Advisory Panel. The indicative line starts at the baseline figure in 2016 as that is the middle year of the baseline period. Other approaches could have been used: there are many ways of producing lines that indicate how casualty numbers might fall fairly steadily to the targets for 2030.

The method adopted to produce the indicative target lines shown in Figures 11, 12, 13 and 14 involves a constant percentage reduction in each year from 2016 to 2030. The resulting indicative target lines represent the percentages of the baseline averages which are shown in the table below. They are not straight lines, because of the compounding over the years effect of constant annual percentage reductions (to two decimal places, the falls are: 4.83% p.a. for killed and seriously injured to meet the 2030 target. For children killed and seriously injured the fall is 6.34.

## About this publication

### A National Statistics publication for Scotland

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 Official Statistics.

Designation can be interpreted to mean that the statistics: meet identified user needs; are produced, managed and disseminated to high standards; and are explained well.

### How to access background or source data

The data collected for this statistical bulletin:

- are available as part of a GB dataset on [data.gov.uk](https://data.gov.uk)
- may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact [Transtat@transport.gov.scot](mailto:Transtat@transport.gov.scot) for further information.

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