

Rural Nashik, Pune report most severe road accidents: What is derailing India's road safety efforts?

The report highlighted that most accidents are concentrated in known locations, and focusing efforts on them could prevent a significant number of fatalities. Here are its main findings.

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India ranks first globally in terms of the number of annual road accident fatalities. (Express File Photo)

*As many as 59% of all road accident fatalities do not involve any traffic violation, indicating that road engineering is one of the biggest contributory factors for deaths.

*As many as 53% of deaths occur in accidents occurring between 6 pm and 12 am, and eight out of 10 victims are hospitalised by means other than the government's 108 ambulance service.

These are among the key findings of a report on India's top 100 districts in terms of severity of road accident fatalities. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) and the NGO SaveLIFE Foundation released the joint report on Thursday (January 8), ranking Maharashtra's Nashik Rural at the top spot, followed by [Pune Rural](#), Patna and Maharashtra's Ahmednagar.

<i>District</i>	<i>Crashes</i>	<i>Fatalities</i>
Nashik Rural	4336	2678
Pune Rural	4886	2781
Patna	3120	2222
Ahmednagar	4807	2433
Purba Midnapur	2294	1742
Solapur Rural	3267	1887
Muzaffarpur	1911	1626
Belagavi	5718	2230
Kanpur PC	4120	1876
Bulandshahar	2836	1638

The findings shed light on what is derailing India's efforts to make its roads safer. They noted that most accidents are concentrated in known locations, such as specific road stretches, crash-prone spots, and police station areas. It noted that if the government's schemes and budgets are directed toward such locations, a significant number of deaths could be prevented.

This aligns with the recent statements of MoRTH Minister [Nitin Gadkari](#), who has said that poor civil engineering and substandard detailed project reports (DPRs) are [driving the rise in road accidents](#) and fatalities.

Curbing fatalities is key for India, which ranks first globally in terms of the number of annual road accident fatalities. Additionally, its numbers are far ahead of second- and third-ranked

countries: China accounts for just 36% of India's total road deaths, and the United States for 25%.

The report also stated that 89,085 people died in these 100 districts alone during 2023 and 2024, accounting for over a quarter of all road accident deaths during that period in India. A total of 3.5 lakh people died in 9.68 lakh accidents in these two years.

Key findings

Uttar Pradesh accounted for most of the top 20 districts. [Tamil Nadu](#) has 19 “severe” districts in terms of fatalities, followed by 11 districts in Maharashtra, nine districts in Karnataka and eight in Rajasthan.

India has the second-largest road network in the world, totalling about 63.45 lakh km. This comprises National Highways, Expressways, state highways, Major district roads, other district roads and village roads. Of these, National Highways account for 1.46 lakh km, State Highways for 1.80 lakh km and Other Roads for 63.45 lakh km.

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The data show that 63% of the total road crash fatalities occur outside of the National Highways. “The road crashes and consequent fatalities are shaped by local road design, policing patterns and hospital readiness,” the report said.

Around 54% of all fatalities were reported on 18 target corridors of the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) and state Public Works Department (PWD) roads, with 379 critical locations on these stretches.

On average, 455 people die in car crashes in each of the 100 severe districts every year. The report showed that 58% of the total deaths were recorded on the crash-prone locations and 42% on the critical corridors. Rear-end, head-on and pedestrian crashes were responsible for 72% of all fatalities. On violations contributing to crashes, speeding accounted for 19% of deaths, followed by rash driving (7%) and dangerous overtaking (3%).

According to the report, damaged crash barriers, absent or faded pavement markings, unprotected hard structures, damaged or wrong signage, and inadequate illumination are among the top 20 most common engineering issues on the road.

The Stockholm Declaration on Road Safety, adopted at the 3rd Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety in February 2020, set a global target to reduce road traffic deaths and injuries by 50% by 2030. India is also a signatory.

Case of Nashik Rural and road accidents

The report narrows the focus of road safety efforts by putting fatalities into perspective and showing where and why they are occurring.

Take the case of Nashik Rural. According to the report, 2,678 people died in the district in two years in 4,336 accidents, and 2,194 others were grievously injured. The investigation reveals the following about the district:

21% of the fatalities were reported due to speeding and rash driving.

50 critical locations accounted for 26% of fatalities due to critical violations such as overspeeding, dangerous overtaking, rash driving and zig-zag driving.

60% of the fatalities were attributed to head-on and rear-end collisions, and pedestrian crashes.

After the accidents, 18.8% people used 108 ambulances, 19.8% used private vehicles and 57% used private ambulances.

19 of 39 police stations accounted for more than 76% fatalities.

Months of January, April and May accounted for 30% of the fatalities.

Plan for rectification

The report recommended that NHAI and state PWDs should conduct a comprehensive Road Safety Survey on each corridor and identify the prevalence of engineering issues from the list of 20 repetitive issues on each critical corridor.

For the critical crash-prone locations, it has recommended site-specific interventions under the relevant Indian Road Congress (IRC) and MoRTH guidelines.

Along with this, it has recommended upgrading the critical police stations with adequate manpower for undertaking enforcement activities, auditing all 108 ambulances for compliance with the National Ambulance code and setting a target for 108 ambulances to cover 75% of hospitalisations.

The report stated that no new schemes are needed to reduce fatalities. Instead, existing government schemes must be utilised effectively, with better coordination among key departments — police, hospitals, and road agencies.

“The current budget should be aligned for engineering, enforcement resources and health capacity. Reducing road deaths is not about more effort. It is about better systems, clearer authority, and sustained leadership,” said the report.



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