

Newsday DANGEROUS ROADS

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Peter Gill
He is a transportation reporter for Newsday. Before joining Newsday in 2024, I worked for The Columbus Dispatch, the daily paper in Ohio's capital. Prior to that, I was a reporter in New York, where I covered courts, transportation, and even sometimes restaurants — via my reporting stories. Reach out with his questions or suggestions at pgill@newsday.com



Newsday's database of 18,812 crashes on Long Island roads. 73 deaths in the first six months of the year compared to 73 in the first six months of 2024. Credit: Newsday/Steve Piro

For Newsday transportation reporter Peter Gill, filling in for my colleague Alfonso Casillo this week, and bringing some good news. It's looking like 2025 is going to be a better year than 2024, as far as traffic safety is concerned, at least nationally and across New York. But don't uncork the Champagne yet — we're still a long way from a level of safety comparable to most other wealthy nations, much less achieving zero deaths, as the [Vision Zero movement](#) aims to do.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recently published [preliminary statistics](#) showing 17,140 people were killed in traffic crashes in the first six months of 2024 across the U.S., compared to 18,860 during the same period in 2023. That's an 8.2% reduction, and it represents a quickening of a decline in deaths that began in the second quarter of 2022, after traffic deaths reached a peak during the pandemic, as roads emptied out and speeding became rampant.

In New York, the improvement was even more dramatic, with deaths dropping 17.3% in the first half of this year compared to last year, or from 496 to 407.

We don't have complete Long Island-specific numbers yet, but Newsday keeps a running tally of [local traffic fatalities here](#). That list shows 70 deaths in the first six months of this year compared to 73 in the first six months of 2024. The list relies on police news releases and does not necessarily count victims who die weeks after the crash, so isn't complete.

Robert Sinclair Jr., who works for AAA Northeast, told me that while it's good we're still docking from a peak during the pandemic, traffic deaths are still at unacceptable levels.

People "got into a lot of bad habits during the pandemic, and it seemed that bad habits continued, despite more vehicles being on the road," he said. "The numbers are down, but we're still talking about 17,140 people who died on the roads the first half of this year."

Relative to population, more Americans die in traffic crashes than residents of any European country, according to the most recent [World Health Organization data](#) for 2021. That year, Americans were more likely to die on the road than people in Rwanda, Sri Lanka or Indonesia, to name just a few of the 114 countries that outperformed us.

And deaths, of course, are just one aspect of the damage wrought. "How many people aren't walking as a result of a crash? How many are paralyzed or have lost limbs?" Sinclair said. "I think we take driving for too cavalierly."

New fatality counter

As part of the Dangerous Roads series, [Newsday has launched](#) a counter on its homepage of Long Island's police-reported deaths from crashes. The numbers are pulled from the [traffic database](#) that staff combs, which lists where the crashes took place, the age of drivers and victims, and a link to local coverage.

Do you think roads have gotten safer compared to a couple years ago? Let us know at roads@newsday.com.

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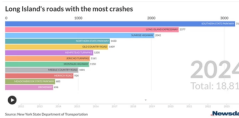
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