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CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS IN ROAD ACCIDENTS OCCURRING IN WALES DURING 2005

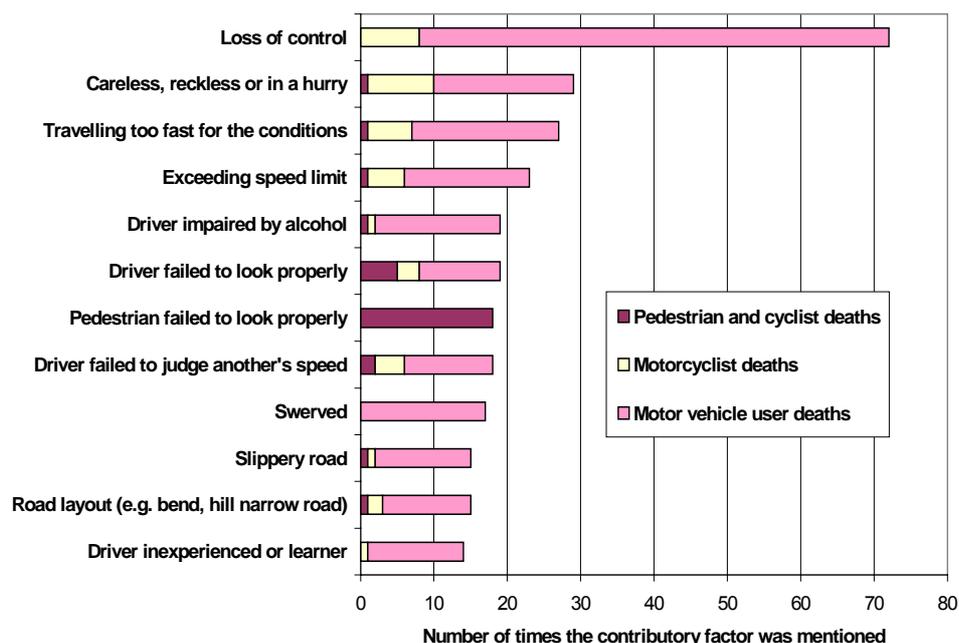
The police compile statistical data about road traffic accidents and casualties (called Stats19 data) for the Welsh Assembly Government and the Department for Transport (DfT). This follows police attendance at accidents that involve any personal injury. The coverage of this statistical data was extended in 2005 to cover the "contributory factors" for each accident.

This Statistical Bulletin reports about the contributory factors for road traffic accidents in Wales during 2005.

Summary

There were 180 road traffic accident deaths in 2005, and there were 172 deaths in accidents where contributory factors were recorded. The chart below summarises the relative importance of the most important contributory factors to road traffic deaths in Wales.

Main contributory factors to deaths in traffic accidents: Wales, 2005



This chart shows the number of times each contributory factor is mentioned for traffic-related fatalities. For example, there were 72 traffic-related fatalities for which "loss of control" was cited as a contributory factor in the accident; and of this total 8 were motorcyclist deaths. A single fatal accident can have more than one fatality and more than one contributory factor; so, for example, if an accident with 2 factors resulting in 2 deaths will potentially be recorded four times in the chart.

It only shows the main contributory factors, that is those factors mentioned in 10 or more traffic related fatalities in 2005 (for more detail see Table 3).

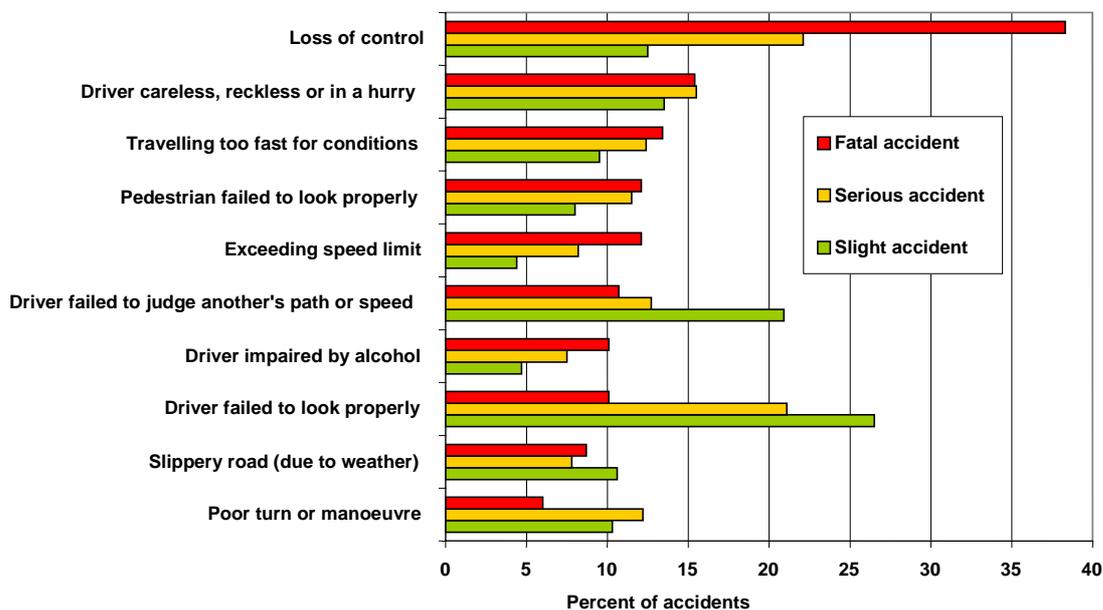
It shows that "loss of control" accidents have a leading role in car occupant fatalities. The next group of contributory factors cover travelling too fast for the conditions; careless driving; driver impaired by alcohol; "swerved"; and exceeding the speed limit.

The leading role in pedestrian fatalities is the pedestrian concerned failing to look properly, followed by the pedestrian being impaired by alcohol. For motorcyclists, it is careless driving. Since the mid-1990s, pedestrian and pedal cyclist fatalities have tended to fall, whilst those to car occupants and motor cyclists have not (though 2005 motorcyclist fatalities were low). Car occupants and motorcyclists in Wales accounted for 66% of traffic-related fatalities in 1994-98, and for 79% of fatalities in 2005.

The Transport Research Laboratory (TRL)¹ has looked at this issue for Great Britain, and their assessment could apply to Wales as well. Their conclusion is that at a time when improving car technology ought to be reducing car occupant fatalities, this has been offset by declining driving standards among part of the population. This includes more drink-driving². The role of poor driving is suggested by the prevalence of "loss of control" accidents which are often the results of reckless behaviour.

The chart below compares the relative importance of various contributory factors to different severities of accident (fatal, serious or slight - determined by the worst casualty). It shows the contributory factors recorded for accidents, given that an accident can have more than one contributory factor. In this case, if a single factor was reported more than once at a particular accident (e.g. because two cars were involved, with the drivers making the same mistake) then that factor has only been counted once.

Major Contributory factors for accidents: By severity of Wales,



The chart shows the major contributory factors; that is where 10 per cent or over of accidents (for any severity) recorded that contributory factor (for more detail see Table 2 below).

The chart shows that "loss of control" is more likely to be a factor in fatal accidents than in injury-only accidents. Some other contributory factors that are more likely in fatal accidents are "driver careless,

¹ The TRL references used here can be found at:

http://www.trl.co.uk/store/report_list.asp?pid=211

See "Monitoring progress towards the 2010 casualty reduction target - 2005 data" (see section 7 - conclusions) and "Trends in fatal car accidents: analyses of CCIS data" (see section 1 - introduction)

² See Statistical Bulletin SB 9/2007: 2005 Road Casualties Wales: Drinking and Driving

reckless or in a hurry"; travelling too fast for the conditions; and exceeding the speed limit. These, together with loss of control, all suggest that higher speeds are more likely to be involved in fatal accidents compared with injury-only accidents.

Other contributory factor codes that are more associated with fatal accidents are "pedestrian failed to look properly"; and driver impaired by alcohol. These results are (apart from pedestrian failed to look properly) consistent with the TRL analysis about fatal accidents being linked to poor driving standards.

Looking at the contributory factors for injury-only accidents, particularly slight accidents, suggests that these are more likely to be caused by driver mis-judgement or inattention. For example factors that are more likely for slight accidents are "failure to judge another's path or speed"; "failure to look properly"; or poor turn or manoeuvre.

Detailed figures

The following tables are shown in the Excel workbook associated with this Statistical Bulletin:

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| Table 1 | This shows all contributory factors, ranked in order of frequency across all accidents. It shows the numbers that the police officer concerned considered to be (1) very likely, or (2) possible. |
| Table 2 | Number of contributory factors, for each level of severity of accident by type of contributory factor. |
| Table 3 | For road-traffic related deaths, the number of time each contributory factor was mentioned, by type of road user, by type of contributory factor. |
| Table 4 | For serious injuries, the number of time each contributory factor was mentioned, by type of road user, by type of contributory factor. |

In summary, there were in Wales during 2005:

- 8,710 road traffic accidents, these resulted in:
 - 180 Deaths
 - 1,146 serious injuries
 - 11,407 slight injuries

Of the 8,710 accidents:

- 8,582 had CFs recorded (98.5% of the total); there were
- 19,444 CFs recorded in total (as shown in Table 1), but this fell to
- 18,696 CFs recorded, when each CF was only counted once for each accident (as shown in Table 2).

Key Quality Information

The aim of collecting the CFs is to help to identify the key actions, failures and occurrences that led directly to the actual impact. The factors recorded in the Stats19 **reflect the reporting officer's opinion at the time of reporting the accident** (or, in some cases, the opinion of a person whose duties include deciding which CFs should be recorded in the light of the information contained in the officer's report). The factors are based on the information which was available at that time, so **may not be the result of subsequent extensive investigation** (indeed, subsequent enquiries could result in the reporting officer's opinion changing).

Some CFs may be less likely than others to be recorded, since clear evidence of them may not be available, or may be very difficult to obtain, after an accident has occurred (e.g. in the case of the "nervous, uncertain or panic" factor). Participants and witnesses may provide incomplete or conflicting accounts of what happened. The CF data therefore depend upon the skill and experience of the

reporting officer to reconstruct the events which led directly to the accident, and so are more "subjective" in nature than other "Stats 19" data. This should be kept in mind when using these results.

A road accident will usually have more than one factor contributing to it.