

MOTOR-VEHICLE DEATHS AND CHANGES, TOTAL UNITED STATES, APRIL AND 4 MONTHS, 1968

Months	Deaths				Percentage changes				
	1965	1966	1967	1968	Corresponding month			4 months moving Average ¹	
					1966-68	1966-67	1967-68	1966-67	1967-68
January.....	3,478	3,667	3,840	3,570	-3	-----	-7	-----	(?)
February.....	3,118	3,320	3,180	3,590	+8	-----	+13	-----	+3
March.....	3,297	3,770	3,860	4,320	+15	-----	+12	-----	+5
April.....	3,670	4,319	3,930	4,130	-4	-----	+5	-----	+5
4 months ..	13,563	15,076	14,810	15,610	+4	-----	+5	-----	-----
May.....	4,059	4,290	4,460	-----	+4	-----	-2	-----	-----
June.....	4,111	4,391	4,460	-----	+2	-----	(?)	-----	-----
July.....	4,243	5,031	4,820	-----	-4	-----	-2	-----	-----
August.....	4,733	5,024	4,840	-----	-4	-----	-1	-----	-----
September.....	4,202	4,632	4,900	-----	+6	-----	(?)	-----	-----
October.....	4,804	5,008	4,920	-----	-2	-----	-1	-----	-----
November.....	4,426	4,615	4,730	-----	+2	-----	+1	-----	-----
December.....	5,022	4,974	5,160	-----	+4	-----	+3	-----	-----
Total.....	49,163	53,041	53,100	* 53,900	(?)	-----	-----	-----	-----

¹ 4 months moving average is based on changes between the totals for 4 months instead of 1 month. Adding several together tends to smooth out single month changes which may be affected by differences in the number of weekends in a month from 1 year to the next, random variations, etc.

² Less than 0.5 percent.

* Deaths for the 12-month period ending April 1968. All 1965 figures are from the National Center for Health Statistics. All 1966, 1967, and 1968 figures are National Safety Council estimates.

Speed studies by the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads show that the average speed on main roads continues to increase. Other studies show that the chances of being killed in an accident increase at a faster rate than the increase in speed; for example, in accidents occurring at 65 miles per hour, occupants are twice as likely to be killed as they are in accidents at 55 miles per hour.

During the early 1960's, the number of American compacts and foreign small cars increased rapidly. One study showed a 25 percent increase in the number of these vehicles from 1960 to 1963. Several studies have shown that the occupants of these smaller cars have fatality rates considerably higher than the rates for occupants in larger cars.

In recent years, the number of motorcycles has increased sharply, and with death rates for these vehicles about five times higher than the rates for automobiles, the impact of this increase has been significant.

Not only have there been increases in the various factors cited above, but all of them have reached totals generally not expected for many more years, indicating further the heavy burden that these changes have placed on facilities and programs.

Despite the tremendous growth in the size of the problem in recent years, there have been some noteworthy accomplishments, relating the numbers of traffic deaths to the opportunity for traffic deaths, shows that safety efforts, even though operating at levels far below what the experts agree are necessary, have almost been holding the line in one sense. This is reflected in the mileage death rate which in 1967 was nearly identical with the rate in 1959. The 1967 rate was higher than in some years since 1959, but it was lower than in every year before 1959.

Despite further sharp increases in 1967 in the numbers of vehicles and miles driven, the death total of 53,100 was about unchanged from the 1966 count of 53,041, while the death rate dropped from 5.7 to 5.5 (deaths per 100,000,000 vehicle miles of travel). In terms of rates, the problem is being contained. But in terms of actual numbers of deaths, injuries, and property damage accidents, the battle is not going well.

One other clue to the future deserves mentioning here. Our statisticians have been computing special statistical series of deaths and death rates since the end of World War II. A unique property of one of the series is its apparent ability to forecast trend changes in the future.

In the latter months of 1965, for example, this series indicated that 1966 would be a very bad year; deaths actually did increase in that year by nearly 4,000 over the previous year. In the latter months of 1966, this series indicated that 1967 would be a more favorable year; as mentioned previously, deaths were relatively unchanged in 1967 compared with 1966.