

# Motorcycle Riders Foundation

## Motorcycle Statistics Fact or Fiction?



**Analysis** A number of inaccuracies and inconsistencies have been uncovered in examining data related to motorcycle crashes, injuries and fatalities. If the information is incorrect it can only lead to theories and conclusions that are also incorrect or, at the very least, suspect.

**Solution** Since much of the data is obviously flawed and most of the conclusions are therefore speculative at best, the only true solutions to motorcycle safety are proactive measures which prevent a collision from occurring at all rather than reactive steps that may offer some level of injury mitigation only after a crash has already taken place. Rider education that prepares the motorcyclist to interact with other roadway users by learning and practicing the skills necessary for hazard avoidance and developing a strategy to deal with real world traffic is the primary component of a comprehensive motorcycle safety plan. Additionally, educating all motor vehicle operators to be alert and free of impairment as they share the road with others is critical in deterring crashes caused by inattention.

### Training and Awareness are the Keys...



Examples of how the motorcycling community works to address and implement these measures are as follows:

**Lobby** for state legislated rider education programs and work with state program coordinator to develop, promote and improve training courses.

**Present** "Share the Road" programs to driver education classes, civic and social organizations and public meetings.

**Introduce** "Right of Way" legislation that provides prosecutors more opportunities in cases where a motorist's negligence causes injury or death to another.

**Create** Motorcycle Safety and Awareness Month to remind all motor vehicle operators of motorcyclists' presence on the road.

**Deliver** "Ride Straight" messages within the motorcycling culture encouraging everyone to ride and drive free of impairments.

*For more information, contact the Motorcycle Riders Foundation, 202-546-0983, [legislative@mrf.org](mailto:legislative@mrf.org)*

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## Possible Errors?

When errors, omissions or inaccuracies are discovered in reports or statistics, it calls into question the integrity of results. Additionally, small numbers can be easily skewed by slight or seemingly insignificant variations. Furthermore, numbers may be exploited if uncharacteristic highs or lows are used as a baseline. None of these discoveries are intended to argue against helmet use, but rather to demonstrate that suggesting a helmet law is not the solution to motorcycle safety. Individual states need to maintain the ability to determine what measures best address the needs and desires of their residents as suggested in the National Agenda for Motorcycle Safety (NAMS)

**FACT** Comparison of studies is complicated due to varying criteria, wherein one report references riders, it is unclear if that includes passengers or specifically operators. Other papers may refer to the numbers of persons, crashes or vehicles intermittently. This can be quite confusing as the numbers are usually very close and are frequently compared in error.

**FACT** A Minnesota motorcyclist survived a crash only to be struck by a car while standing on the road attempting to flag down a motorist for assistance. This was subsequently counted as a motorcycle fatality.

**FACT** A Pennsylvania taxi driver, with multiple suspensions, was responsible for about two percent of the state's total motorcycle fatalities when he caused a crash with three motorcycles and killed five helmeted riders in a single incident.

**FACT** Motorcycle fatalities dropped by 10% in 2009 and preliminary reports indicate that 2010 numbers will be further reduced by at least 2%. The Motorcycle Industry Council advises that sales of replacement tires were up by 6.1% in 2010, suggesting an increase in motorcycle usage. A decrease in fatalities despite an increase in exposure would suggest that motorcycle safety and awareness programs, specifically rider education courses, have been successful.

**FACT** The National Transportation Safety Board has investigated over 120,000 airplane incidents, over 60,000 surface transportation incidents, and just 6 individual motorcycle incidents in their entire 44 year history — Apparently enough investigation to warrant adding mandatory helmet laws for motorcyclists on their "top ten most wanted list".

**FACT** According to preliminary data from the Governors Highway Safety Association, states that have a mandatory adult helmet law had six fewer fatalities in 2010 than in 2009, while free choice states saw a reduction of 74. The state with the single largest decline in fatalities (Texas -60) is a choice state and a state which requires helmets on all riders tied for the greatest increase (New York +24).

**FACT** FARS continues to include "mopeds" in motorcycle crash statistics despite the fact that most states do not require registration of these vehicles. This practice skews the most respected method of measuring the effectiveness of motorcycle safety programs, which is the ratio of accidents, injuries and fatalities per 10,000 registrations.

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