

Wales's biggest killer

Rural roads are Wales's biggest killers, accounting for three-quarters of all road deaths, according to research by the IAM Motoring Trust.

This week, an average week in Wales, three people will die in traffic accidents – at least two of them losing their lives on country roads. Men and young drivers are most at risk, and the most deadly roads are single carriageways, according to the IAM Trust's report: *Rural Roads – the biggest killer*.

The report is based on accident figures for six years from 2000 to 2005 in which over 1,000 people died on Wales's roads and eight times as many were seriously injured.

Third of all killed or injured in cars driven by under 25s

Just over a third (36%) of all rural road deaths and serious injuries are in cars with young drivers, aged between 17 and 25 years old. This age group is more likely to have single vehicle accidents in which the vehicle left the road and more likely to be in fatal collisions involving three or more car occupants. Half of all deaths are in cars driven by a driver under 40 years old.

The report reveals that middle-aged drivers were more likely to be involved in head-on collisions; and older drivers were more frequently involved in accidents at junctions.

Country claims the lives of men

Men – whether in cars, on motorcycles, bikes or as pedestrians – are more likely than women to be involved in fatal accidents on rural roads. Men account for two-thirds (66%) of pedestrians; 70% of car drivers and occupants; 94% of cyclists; and 96% of motorcycle riders/passengers who are killed or seriously injured.

Pedestrians crossing

The report highlights the dangers for pedestrians: those who ignore the Highway Code and walk with their back to the traffic rather than facing it – are half as likely again of risking death and serious injury. The absence of safe crossing points takes its toll on pedestrians, with two thirds of road deaths and serious injuries occurring while crossing the road.

Dying for the weekend

Friday, Saturday and Sunday see half of all deaths and serious injuries on country roads. Just 12 per cent of deaths and serious injuries occur on country roads on Wednesdays compared to 19 per cent on Sundays.

IAM Trust director, Neil Greig says: This report gives us a crucial insight into the nature of deaths and injuries on rural roads.

Rural drivers need to travel further to reach businesses, shops and places of entertainment. Emergency services have further to go to attend accidents and on quieter roads it may take longer for some types of accident to be discovered and for the emergency services to be called. Rural authorities also have smaller populations and less political power to force the necessary improvements to their longer road networks.

As overall deaths on our roads continue to fall the large numbers of the worst accidents on rural roads is brought more into focus. This will have implications for road authorities, enforcers and educators.

As well as a long-term investment to upgrade our worst rural roads, an imminent government consultation on revised driver training and testing is – literally – a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to equip drivers and riders to cope with rural dangers.

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A full copy of the IAM's Report: *Rural Roads – the biggest killer* is available at www.iamtrust.org.uk along with regional comparisons and a further breakdown of the findings.

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