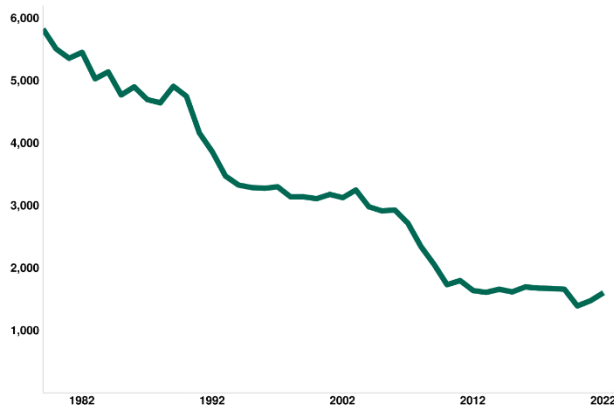


## Horses on the Rural Highways



Earlier this year the British Horse Society (BHS) released new statistics where they revealed that more than one horse still dies on British roads every week. It is a relatively small number compared to the reported casualties for people killed and injured in 2022.

The Department for Transport recorded nearly 30,000 incidents that year, where there were over 1700 human fatalities. Between 2022 and 2023, there was a small decline, which is encouraging.

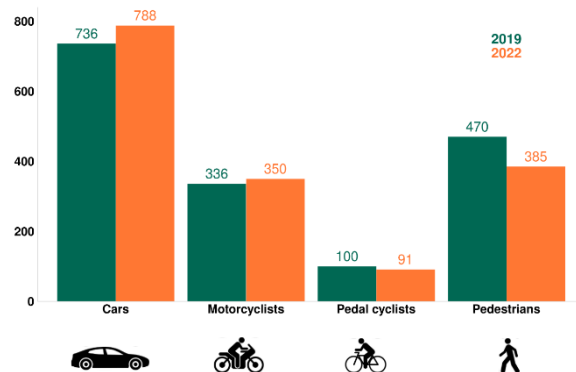


### Reported road fatalities in Great Britain, 1979 to 2022

In the decade prior to the pandemic in 2020, fatalities had been generally stable. 2022 broadly shows a return to pre-pandemic trends.

### Reported road fatalities by road user type in Great Britain, 2022 compared with 2019.

Although improving, vulnerable road users such as cyclists and pedestrians, continue to be at relatively high risk.



Changes to the guidance on passing horses safely came into force two years ago but of the 3,383 incidents reported to the BHS in 2023, 85% occurred because a vehicle passed too closely or too fast.

Our rural lanes are unfortunately more likely to be where collisions will occur, both between other vehicles and animals and humans. Despite more incidents happening in urban areas, the fatality rate on rural roads is ‘strikingly higher’ – at one for every 31 collisions, compared to one for every 120 on urban roads. About a quarter of such incidents involve livestock and horses and at least half of the collisions cite the impatience of drivers as being a significant cause.

The BHS has released its annual statistics covering incidents on the road, which show that three people died – the highest number of human fatalities since 2018 – and 94 were injured; 66 horses died and 86 were injured. In 2022, 68 horses were killed, and 125 injured, and 139 riders were hurt. Overall, the incidence has increased by almost a fifth since 2021.

Research found that spotting horses in the road ahead frequently leads to feelings of surprise and happiness in the drivers. Unfortunately, the strongest emotions evoked by cyclists were reported to be frustration and anxiety. Neither the less thoughtlessness on the part of some motorists is still a common experience amongst riders of horses.

Horse riders on the roads are encouraged to do what they can to reduce the risks of an accident. This includes ensuring that they are visible, the tack fits well and is in good condition and that they can properly control their mount in traffic. Clear signalling of intentions and acknowledging the presence of other road users goes a long way to reducing tensions, particularly at junctions and narrow sections of roads.

Passing horses at no more than 10mph and with a good 2 metre space was the key change in the Highway Code in 2022. Pedestrians are now listed as the most vulnerable road user, followed by horses and cyclists. Feral and semi-feral horses on Exmoor, Dartmoor and the New Forest are particularly at risk, despite encouragement for the fitting of reflective collars. In 2021, more than 100 crashes on Dartmoor left animals killed or injured. Excessive speed by drivers unfortunately is a common factor in those situations, leading to calls for lower speed limits in unfenced and open areas where animals roam.

In our local area, riders on horses are relatively common sights and we urge drivers to be responsible and for riders to show courtesy whenever possible.

Useful videos have been produced by Nottingham Trent University in collaboration with Esitu Solutions and the BHS. It can be viewed by following the links below:

[https://youtu.be/97uEbOXODas?list=PLzA7EYqgZz6v\\_KEF2jH6Hwg\\_Er99TMkOd](https://youtu.be/97uEbOXODas?list=PLzA7EYqgZz6v_KEF2jH6Hwg_Er99TMkOd)

[https://youtu.be/uRADI5kAuDI?list=PLzA7EYqgZz6v\\_KEF2jH6Hwg\\_Er99TMkOd](https://youtu.be/uRADI5kAuDI?list=PLzA7EYqgZz6v_KEF2jH6Hwg_Er99TMkOd)

[https://youtu.be/9JIzicy45Xc?list=PLzA7EYqgZz6v\\_KEF2jH6Hwg\\_Er99TMkOd](https://youtu.be/9JIzicy45Xc?list=PLzA7EYqgZz6v_KEF2jH6Hwg_Er99TMkOd)

[https://youtu.be/dpCPpIEBw\\_A?list=PLzA7EYqgZz6v\\_KEF2jH6Hwg\\_Er99TMkOd](https://youtu.be/dpCPpIEBw_A?list=PLzA7EYqgZz6v_KEF2jH6Hwg_Er99TMkOd)

Sources:

[“Rural roads are becoming more deadly again”](#) (Road Safety GB)

[Riding on roads | The British Horse Society](#) (British Horse Society)