

THE ROLE OF DEFENSIVE DRIVING EDUCATION

Road traffic injuries remain a major public health challenge globally, and Jamaica is no exception. According to data from the **National Road Safety Council (NRSC) Jamaica Road Safety Unit**, the country recorded **425 road fatalities in 2023**, representing a **13 percent** reduction compared with the **488 fatalities** reported in **2022**. While this decline is noteworthy, the overall burden of road traffic deaths in Jamaica remains substantial and continues to warrant urgent policy attention.

Comparative data from the **World Health Organization (WHO)** underscores the seriousness of the issue. In its **2021** global assessments, the WHO estimated that Jamaica experiences approximately **18 road traffic deaths per 100,000 population** annually. This figure exceeds the average fatality rate for the Region of the Americas, which stands at **14.1 deaths per 100,000 population**.

According to the Mona Geoinformatics Institute, Jamaica recorded **315 road traffic collisions and 365 fatalities in 2024**. **January accounted for the highest monthly fatalities (33)**, while **St. Catherine recorded the highest parish-level total (74)**. Compared with the same period in **2023**, which documented 384 collisions and 425 fatalities, these figures represent a **17.97%** reduction in collisions and a **14.12%** decrease in road traffic fatalities.

However, more recent data indicates a reversal of this downward trend. Statistics released by the **Island Traffic Authority (ITA)** on **September 27, 2025**, report **289 fatalities** arising from **253 fatal crashes as of September 26, 2025**. This reflects a **6% increase (17 additional deaths)** and a **9% increase in fatal crashes** compared with the corresponding nine-month period in **2024**.



This disparity highlights several critical concerns:

- Jamaica’s road traffic fatality rate is significantly higher than the regional average.
- The country experiences a disproportionate number of road deaths relative to its population size.
- Elevated fatality rates often reflect systemic challenges, including:
 - Substandard or unsafe road infrastructure
 - High-risk driving behaviors such as speeding and impaired driving
 - Inadequate enforcement of traffic laws
 - Limitations within emergency medical and trauma response systems

The consequences of road traffic fatalities extend well beyond the immediate loss of life. They place considerable strain on Jamaica’s health care system, disrupt family and community structures, damage national infrastructure, reduce workforce productivity, and exert a negative influence on national economic performance and gross domestic product (GDP).

Implications for Road Safety Policy

Taken together, the available data suggest that road safety in Jamaica constitutes a critical public health issue. While recent reductions in fatalities are encouraging, sustained and comprehensive interventions are required. Strengthening road safety legislation, improving enforcement mechanisms, expanding public education initiatives, and investing in driver training and emergency response systems are essential components of an effective national strategy to further reduce traffic-related deaths.

International Comparison: The United States

For comparative context, data from the **Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS)**, the **International Transport Forum**, and the **Highway Loss Data Institute** indicate that the **United States** recorded **40,901** motor vehicle crash deaths in **2023**. This corresponds to approximately **12.2 deaths per 100,000 population** and **1.26 deaths per 100 million miles traveled**.

Data from the **Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)** consistently identify transportation incidents as the leading cause of occupational fatalities in the U.S. In **2023**, these incidents accounted for **36.8 percent (1,942)** of all workplace deaths, underscoring their disproportionate impact on worker safety. Recent U.S. data demonstrate relatively stable traffic fatality rates, fluctuating between **12 and 13 deaths per 100,000 population** during the **2022–2023** period. While the absolute number of fatalities in the United States is higher due to population size and vehicle miles traveled, Jamaica’s per-capita fatality rate remains markedly higher, reinforcing the need for targeted interventions within the local context.

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The Role of Defensive Driving Education

One of the most effective evidence-based approaches to reducing road traffic crashes and fatalities is defensive driving education. In Jamaica, Grennell's Driving School offers tailored defensive driving programs designed to enhance driver competence and reduce crash risk. The institution can be contacted at (876) 977-5249, and additional information is available at <https://grennellsdriving.com/>.

OSHAccredited Safety Institute

Complementing local initiatives, the OSHAccredited Safety Institute, a Jamaican-owned and Florida-based organization, provides high-quality, affordable online defensive driving programs. These courses were developed by Dr. O'Neil G. Blake, an industry expert with over 25 years of professional experience, a Doctorate in Public Safety, and Certified Safety Professional (CSP) credentials. Dr. Blake is also a certified defensive driving instructor with the U.S.-based National Safety Council.

OSHAccredited Safety Institute's Defensive Driving courses are fully voice-narrated, mobile-friendly, and designed to deliver practical, real-world driving safety skills through engaging, self-paced modules. Participants may enroll in the Defensive Driving (DDC-5.0) course at any time, allowing them to complete the training at their own pace and convenience. Upon successful completion, learners can immediately download their certificate to verify and document their training. The course is available at <https://oshaccredited.com/130-defensive-driving-3/>.

Core Topics Covered in OSHAccredited Defensive Driving Course

The online course addresses a comprehensive range of critical road safety topics, including the risks associated with speeding; cellphone use and other forms of distracted driving; proper following distance; vehicle inspection and preventive maintenance; the effects of

alcohol and drug impairment; fatigue recognition and management; right-of-way compliance; and the effective use of occupant protection systems, including seatbelts. You can explore the full range of courses offered by OSHAccredited Safety Institute on their website at <https://oshaccredited.com>.

Conclusion

Reducing road traffic fatalities in Jamaica requires a multifaceted approach that integrates policy reform, infrastructure improvement, enforcement, and education. Defensive driving programs both local and online represent a critical component of this effort, offering measurable benefits in driver behavior and crash prevention. Continued investment in evidence-based interventions will be essential if Jamaica is to achieve sustained reductions in road traffic deaths and improve overall public safety outcomes.

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