



**MOTORCYCLE HELMET LAW AND SAFETY**

April marks the fifth anniversary of Michigan's partial universal motorcycle helmet law repeal. Since April 13, 2012, there has been a 25% decline in statewide helmet use and a 14% increase in head injuries among crash-involved motorcyclists. This month's Injury Spotlight focuses on advocacy and policy efforts in preventing motorcycle-related injuries and fatalities. It features a policy fact sheet on outcomes following Michigan's partial helmet law repeal, a U-M Injury Center member working on advocacy and policy, and resources supporting this injury topic.

**INJURY FACT SHEET**

**Effect of Michigan's Helmet Law Repeal**

**INJURY FACT SHEET**

**Effect of Michigan's Helmet Law Repeal**

Michigan's universal helmet law was partially repealed in April 2012. In a recently published study of motorcycle crash data, the University of Michigan Injury Center found that the partial repeal of the helmet law resulted in a 25% decline in statewide helmet use and a 14% increase in head injuries (topping trauma center treatment).

**Introduction**

58,291 allowed riders 21 years and older to ride without wearing a helmet if they met the following requirements: 1) they carried first party medical insurance of \$20,000 or more, and 2) passed a motorcycle safety course or held a motorcycle endorsement for at least two years.

**Impact of the repeal on helmet use**

- Overall helmet use among riders in the state declined from 99.4% to 75% following the repeal.
- Among hospitalized riders involved in a crash, helmet use also declined 27% following the repeal.
- Lower rates of helmet use among crash-involved riders were observed among those who were intoxicated (45.7%).

**Impact of the repeal on head injuries and fatalities**

- While fatalities did not change overall, head injuries among hospitalized, crash-involved motorcyclists increased 14% following the repeal, affecting nearly 50% of all crash-involved riders seeking trauma care.
- Among those with head injury, a greater percentage were attributable to skull fractures following the repeal, with fewer injuries occurring as a result of minor concussions.
- The need for invasive neurosurgical procedures (e.g., craniotomies) nearly doubled following the repeal (3.7% to 6.5%).
- Overall, among motorcyclists involved in a crash, not wearing a helmet doubled the odds of a head injury and disabled the odds of a fatality.

**Financial implications of the repeal**

- According to national data, 1 out of 3 motorcycle riders involved in crashes have public insurance (e.g., Medicaid), are self-payors, or are uninsured.
- The average acute care cost for non-helmeted riders who are hospitalized after a crash is about \$33,000, which is 50% higher than the cost for helmeted riders.
- While motorcyclists represent 2% of all assessments paid into the Michigan Catastrophic Claims Association, they account for a disproportionate share of money paid out of the MCCA—4% of all claims reported.

**Statewide Helmet Use**

Year	Statewide Helmet Use (%)
BEFORE Repeal (2006)	99.4%
AFTER Repeal (2014)	75%

**Percent of Head Injuries Among Crash-Involved Riders Seeking Trauma Care**

Time Period	Percent of Head Injuries (%)
12 Months BEFORE Repeal	43.4%
12 Months AFTER Repeal	49.6%

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The U-M Injury Center developed a policy fact sheet on the statewide impact of Michigan's partial universal motorcycle helmet law repeal. Since the passing of the repeal, helmet use among all motorcyclists has declined while head injuries among hospitalized riders have increased. Although the statewide fatality rate did not change significantly overall, the fatality rate among unhelmeted riders was nearly two times higher than that of helmeted riders.

Research continues to show that motorcycle helmet use decreases the risk for a head injury and fatality following a motorcycle crash. This policy fact sheet is a resource that public health professionals, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers can utilize in their injury prevention advocacy and policy efforts.

[Download](#) the policy fact sheet for more information on the statewide impact of Michigan's partial repeal on helmet use, head injuries, and fatalities.

**DOWNLOAD POLICY FACT SHEET**

**INJURY PREVENTION EXPERT**

**Member Highlight: Jenifer J. Martin, JD**

Jenifer Martin is the Director of Government Relations at the U-M School of Public Health and the Co-Lead of the Policy Workgroup at the U-M Injury Center. In these roles, she leads government relations and advocacy strategies to promote and advance relevant expertise and research findings to the state of Michigan, federal agencies, U.S. Congress, and other health policy stakeholders.

Ms. Martin works with several interdisciplinary centers housed at the U-M School of Public Health. She provides training in effective advocacy and policy writing for students, faculty, staff, and community partners to inform legislators on policy implications of public health. Through courses and workshops, Ms. Martin prepares students, faculty, and health practitioners to develop comprehensive and comprehensible materials for policymakers and other external stakeholders, and to communicate research findings in a concise and timely manner.



[View](#) Ms. Martin's full member highlight to learn more about her current public health advocacy work.

**VIEW MEMBER HIGHLIGHT**

**RESOURCES**

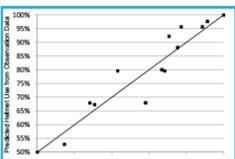
**Michigan**



**Double-Digit Rise in Head Injuries After Michigan Helmet Law Repeal:** This press release shares findings from a study conducted by researchers at the U-M Injury Center which examined the statewide impact of the partial helmet law repeal on helmet use, fatalities, and head injuries, as well as factors related to an increased risk for motorcycle fatalities and head injuries among crash involved riders.



**Live Free and Die: Michigan's Motorcycle Helmet Law Four Years Later:** This news article provides varying perspectives on outcomes of Michigan's partial helmet law repeal. Hospital studies report an increase in fatalities and medical costs among non-helmeted motorcyclists, while proponents of the current helmet law argue that increased motorcycle fatalities are attributed to unlicensed riders.



**Observation of Motorcycle Helmet Use Rates in Michigan After Partial Repeal of the Universal Motorcycle Helmet Law:** This research study examines state-wide helmet use among motorcyclists following the partial repeal of Michigan's universal motorcycle helmet law in April 2012. It reports overall helmet use in Michigan, differences in helmet use by road type, motorcycle class, and time of day, and characteristics of helmeted motorcyclists.

**National**



**Estimating Lives and Costs Saved by Motorcycle Helmets with Updated Economic Cost Information:** This research brief describes the process that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration utilized to estimate the number of lives and potential costs saved by the use of motorcycle helmets in 2013. It concludes that an estimated 1,630 lives were saved and economic cost savings amounted to approximately \$2.8 billion due to helmet use.



**Federally Mandating Motorcycle Helmets in the United States:** This research article proposes a federal motorcycle helmet law to ensure that states adopt and implement motorcycle helmet usage. It discusses the history of motorcycle helmet law in the U.S. and the human and economic costs of motorcycle crashes, calling for a federal policy to prevent further head injuries and deaths.



**Motorcycle Helmet Use in 2015 – Overall Results:** This research note highlights 2015 results from the National Occupant Protection Use Survey. This brief shows that states requiring all motorcyclists to wear helmets have higher helmet use rates compared to states without the same enforcement, yet non-compliant motorcycle helmet use in the U.S. has increased from 4.8% in 2014 to 10.6% in 2015.



**Motorcycle Safety Overview:** The National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL) shares statistics on motorcycle safety including current state motorcycle helmet laws. It lists other documents such as fiscal notes related to motorcycle helmet legislation and traffic safety for state legislatures to access.



**State Traffic Safety Legislation Database:** In partnership with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, NCSL presents a database with information on traffic safety bills introduced in the U.S. from 2007-2017. Traffic safety topics within the database include motorcycle safety.



**Traffic Safety Trends | State Legislative Action 2015:** This report discusses traffic safety bills proposed and legislation debated among state legislators in 2015. Traffic safety topics range from driver licensing and speeding to motorcycle safety among many issue areas.

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