

Factsheet: Which Stops Impact Serious Crashes?

Common offenses in traffic reform legislation

As of 2024, over a dozen states and cities have passed legislation to restrict police enforcement of certain low-level, non-safety-related offenses. These violations typically fall into eight categories of equipment and paperwork issues:

- Tinted windows.
- Lighting violations, such as a single broken head or tail light.
- Improper license plate or registration display.
- Vehicle defects, such as a missing bumper, loud exhaust, or cracked windshield.
- Rearview mirror or window obstruction.
- Expired or invalid vehicle registration.
- Expired or invalid inspection.

Impact of these stops on crashes

National and state data show that these offenses do *not* have a clear connection to traffic safety. The leading contributing factors to fatal crashes nationally are speeding and alcohol-impaired driving.[1] Administrative or paperwork issues are not present in national or state crash data because they are not associated with crashes. And equipment issues that are the basis for police stops are only associated with a very small fraction of crashes. Of all 272,921 vehicles involved in fatal crashes nationally between 2017 and 2021, only 638 **(0.2%)** had *any* of the following issues listed as contributing factors:[2]

- Head lights, signal lights, or other lights
- Wipers
- Mirrors
- Windows/windshield

Similarly, in Connecticut between 2015 and 2019, tinted windows and lighting issues were each listed as factors in **0.1%** or fewer of all crashes.[3] The most common equipment issues that contributed to a crash were related to brakes, steering, power train, or tires–issues that are not usually observable by police.

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[1] National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (2023). *Overview of Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes in 2021*. p. 15. https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813435

[2] National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Fatality Analysis Reporting System. (filter: Vehicles, Vehicle characteristics/event) https://www-fars.nhtsa.dot.gov/Main/index.aspx

[3] Letter from the Connecticut Racial Profiling Prohibition Advisory Board to the Logistics Subcommittee, Police Transparency and Accountability Task Force. (2021, February 4). https://www.cga.ct.gov/jud/tfs/20200116_Police%20Transparency%20and%20Accountability%20Task%20Force/Related%20Materials/Primary%20vs.%20Secondary%20Offense%20System%20Merits.pdf