

Are Larger Cars Safer Than Smaller Cars?

When it comes to purchasing a car, safety is often a top concern for buyers. One of the most common questions asked is whether larger cars are safer than smaller cars. Many assume so because of larger vehicles' weight and structure. This belief is often based on the idea that a bigger car will offer more protection during a crash. But is this assumption accurate?

Larger cars, such as SUVs and trucks, do offer some advantages in terms of safety. The biggest one being that they are heavier and can absorb more impact during a collision, potentially protecting their occupants from injury. There are, however, other things to consider when determining if larger or smaller cars are safer, especially in the case of a [car accident](#).

Looking at Vehicle Size and Safety Statistics

According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), the vehicle size that has led to the most deaths for every 10 million miles from the years 2015-2018 is a minicar. These small vehicles have over double the amount of deaths than any other category except for small cars, which have 45 fatalities per 10 million miles. The full breakdown can be seen below for each size of car:

- Large Luxury Cars: 20 deaths
- Midsize Luxury Cars: 20 deaths
- Large Cars: 36 deaths
- Midsize Cars: 30 deaths
- Small Cars: 45 deaths
- Minicars: 78 deaths

When looking solely at the numbers, it can be seen that smaller cars do lead to more deaths than larger cars. Besides cars, there are many other vehicles on the road such as SUVs, pickup trucks, and minivans. The IIHS's stats show that SUVs and trucks do lead to fewer deaths than cars—19 and 18 respectively—versus the average of 36 deaths for cars. The vehicle statistically that is safest on the road is the minivan, with only 15 deaths per 10 million miles.

When considering buying a vehicle, it is important to keep these stats in mind. But there are other factors that can impact how a vehicle and its occupants will fare in an accident as well.

How Different Crashes Play a Part in Vehicle Safety

Larger vehicles, such as SUVs, trucks, and vans, are more likely to protect their occupants in certain types of crashes. In a collision involving two vehicles, the heavier vehicle often handles it better because it absorbs less energy. The smaller vehicle, being lighter and smaller, ends up having to absorb more of the impact and this can lead to greater risk for the occupants. However, in the case of a car accident, it's not just about size but also the nature of the crash itself.

There are many other types of accidents, though, and the dynamics of these can lead to many different outcomes. For example, in rollover crashes, larger vehicles have a higher risk of flipping over, especially if they have a higher center of gravity, which can be quite common in [SUVs and trucks](#). Smaller cars have lower profiles and so are less likely to roll over in these situations. This makes rollovers a significant factor when considering the safety of larger vehicles.

Because larger vehicles, particularly trucks and SUVs, weigh more than cars, they can also be at higher risk of being in an accident when quick reaction is needed. In a case where they must brake quickly, they can take longer to come to a full stop due to their weight. Larger vehicles may also have larger blind spots that reduce visibility, leading to higher chances of accidents, especially when maneuvering in tight spaces or during lane changes. As a result, while larger vehicles may protect their own occupants, they can increase the risk of an accident occurring.

How New Technology Impacts in Car Safety

Advancements in car safety technology over the last few decades have also significantly leveled the playing field between larger and smaller vehicles. Features like electronic stability control (ESC), airbags, crumple zones in cars, and advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) are now standard in many modern vehicles. These technologies are designed to prevent accidents and minimize the severity of injuries, no matter what the size of the car. These features help ensure that even smaller vehicles can provide a high level of protection for their drivers.

Safety Ratings: Looking Beyond Size

When evaluating the safety of a vehicle, it's important to refer to safety ratings rather than just focusing on its size. Institutions like the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) conduct crash tests and issue ratings based on a variety of factors, including crashworthiness, rollover risk, and collision avoidance features.

In 2025, looking at the vehicles awarded in the IIHS's Top Safety Picks, some small and midsize cars, like the Mazda 3 and the Toyota Camry, actually rank higher for safety ratings than some small and midsize SUV vehicles.

These ratings help to provide a more accurate assessment of a vehicle's safety performance, as they take into account the entire safety package, not just the size of the car. A smaller car with high crash-test ratings and advanced safety features can be safer than a larger car with outdated technology or poor crash-test performance.

Vehicle Size is Only One Factor

While larger cars tend to offer better protection in certain crash scenarios due to their size and weight, they also come with their own risks, such as a higher likelihood of rollovers and a greater potential to cause harm to other road users. The size of a vehicle is just one factor in determining safety. It's important to look at other factors such as the presence of modern safety technology, crash-test ratings, and the type of accident.

In the aftermath of a car accident, it is important to understand your legal rights. If you are [involved in an accident](#), whether it's in a larger or smaller car, seeking legal representation can be crucial. A lawyer can help navigate the complexities of insurance claims, medical bills, and potential liability. They can also ensure that your rights are protected and that you receive the compensation you deserve for your injuries and damages. No matter the circumstances of the car accident, having a skilled attorney on your side can make a significant difference in your case's outcome.