



POLICY ANALYSIS

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Urgent Need to Address Weak Enforcement and Outdated Provisions in the National Road Traffic Act (NRTA) 2012

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Executive Summary

Road safety remains a major public policy challenge in Nigeria despite the existence of traffic regulations and enforcement institutions such as the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC). Nigeria records thousands of road crashes annually, resulting in significant loss of lives, injuries, and economic costs. Official data shows that over 5,421 people died in 9,570 road accidents in Nigeria in 2024, while thousands more sustained injuries. The persistence of road accidents highlight serious gaps in Nigeria's road traffic regulatory framework, including weak enforcement, outdated penalty provisions, poor driver discipline, and infrastructural deficiencies. Traffic offences such as reckless driving, speeding, driving under the influence of alcohol, and vehicle mechanical defects remain widespread across the country.

Although various traffic regulations exist, implemented by agencies such as the FRSC and state traffic authorities—penalties for many offences remain relatively low compared with the economic and social costs of road crashes. For example, some traffic violations attract fines ranging from ₦2,000 to ₦50,000, which may not serve as strong deterrents against reckless behaviour.

Addressing the weaknesses in Nigeria's road traffic regulatory framework, and ensuring strict compliance, the analysis proposes the following recommendations:

- ✓ The National Assembly through its Senate and House Committees on Federal Road Safety Commission, may wish to initiate amendment of the Regulation 220 (offences and penalties) of the NRTR 2012. Review and Increase Traffic Penalties. Traffic fines should reflect current economic realities as higher fines would increase deterrence against reckless driving.
- ✓ The Senate and House Committees on Federal Road Safety Commission, through its oversight function may wish to advise the Federal Government through the FRSC, on the need to deploy smart traffic monitoring systems. Use technology such as: speed cameras, traffic sensors, and automated enforcement.
- ✓ Improve collaboration among FRSC, Police and state traffic agencies.

1. Introduction

Road transport remains the most dominant mode of transportation in Nigeria, accounting for over 90 percent of passenger and freight movement across the country¹. However, the rapid expansion of road transport has been accompanied by rising road safety challenges. Road traffic accidents constitute a major public health and development problem globally. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), road crashes are among the leading causes of death worldwide,

¹ National Bureau of Statistics. (2025). Transport statistics. NBS. <https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/pdfuploads/TRANSPORT.pdf>



particularly in low- and middle-income countries². Nigeria is not exempt from this trend. Data from the Federal Road Safety Corps shows that road crashes continue to claim thousands of lives annually. Between January and September 2025 alone, 7,715 road traffic crashes occurred, resulting in 3,915 deaths and over 24,000 injuries³. Common causes of road accidents in Nigeria as reported by FRSC include: speeding, reckless driving, overloading, drunk driving, fatigue and distracted driving, mechanical vehicle defects. These persistent challenges raise questions about the effectiveness of Nigeria's road traffic regulatory framework.

Consequently, this policy analysis examines the weaknesses in Nigeria's road traffic regulatory framework, analyses the penalty provisions and enforcement challenges. The analysis proposes policy options and legislative reforms aimed at strengthening road safety governance and reducing road traffic fatalities in Nigeria.

2. Analysis of Nigeria's Road Traffic Regulatory Framework (with Statutory Provisions)

Nigeria's road traffic regulatory framework is not contained in a single codified "Road Traffic Act," but rather operates through a combination of statutes and subsidiary regulations. The most relevant legal instruments include: Federal Road Safety Corps (Establishment) Act, 2007; National Road Traffic Regulations (NRTR), 2012⁴; Nigerian Highway Code⁵; and State-level traffic laws.

This section analyses the framework by referencing specific statutory provisions and how they operate in practice.

a). Institutional and Enforcement Framework

The Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) (Establishment) Act, 2007⁶ provides the legal foundation for road traffic enforcement in Nigeria. Key Provisions:

Section 10(4) FRSC Act, empowers FRSC officers to arrest and prosecute traffic offenders. Section 28(2) FRSC Act, grants authority for enforcement of traffic regulations and compliance mechanisms. The Act establishes FRSC as the lead agency for road safety administration, including public education, enforcement, and coordination.

Observations: While the FRSC has enforcement powers, there has been legal controversy over its authority to impose fines directly, with courts emphasizing that only courts can determine guilt. This creates a legal ambiguity between administrative penalties and judicial powers, weakening enforcement effectiveness.

b). Regulation of Road Use and Driver Conduct

² World Health Organisation. (2023). Road traffic injuries. WHO. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/road-traffic-injuries/>

³ Nwaoku, O. (2025). FRSC: 3,915 deaths, 24,674 injuries in 7,715 road crashes from January to September. Guardian NG. <https://guardian.ng/news/frsc-3915-deaths-24674-injuries-in-7715-road-crashes-from-january-to-september/>

⁴ PLAC. (2012). National Road Traffic Regulations, 2012. <https://sabilaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/National-Road-Traffic-Regulations-2012.pdf>

⁵ Nigerian Highway Code. <https://www.highwaycode.com.ng/download-pdf.html>

⁶ The Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) (Establishment) Act, 2007. https://frsc.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/DCRMA-COMPENDIUM_2022.pdf



The National Road Traffic Regulations (NRTR), 2012⁷—made pursuant to the FRSC Act—contain detailed provisions governing road usage. Key Regulatory Areas:

- i. Driver Behaviour and Obligations: The law criminalizes: reckless or dangerous driving, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, use of mobile phones while driving, disobedience to traffic signs and signals. These offences are enforceable under FRSC powers and regulations.
- ii. Speed Regulation: Drivers must comply with prescribed speed limits, including special zones such as construction areas.
- iii. Licensing Requirements: Driving without a valid licence constitutes an offence punishable under the regulations.

c). Vehicle Safety and Roadworthiness Provisions

The regulatory framework places obligations on vehicle owners to ensure roadworthiness. Key Provisions include; that vehicles must have functional lights and signals, be free from mechanical defects, and carry safety equipment (e.g., fire extinguisher, spare tyre). Offences include: worn-out tyres, broken windscreen, and excessive smoke emission. Penalties are imposed for non-compliance. These provisions are comprehensive but poorly enforced, especially in rural and peri-urban areas.

d. Traffic offences and penalty regime

The NRTR 2012 particularly Regulation 220 (offenses and penalties) establishes a structured penalty system. Examples of Statutory Penalties:

- i. Dangerous driving (reckless overtaking, excessive speeding, and endangering other road users) as contained in regulation 151 NRTR 2012 attracts a penalty of ₦50,000
- ii. Driving under influence of alcohol as contained in regulation 152 NRTR 2012, it attracts a penalty of ₦5,000
- iii. Regulation 148(1) NRTR 2012, mandates use of seatbelt. Violation attracts ₦2,000, which applies to drivers and front-seat passengers
- iv. Regulation 148(3) NRTR 2012, requires use of child restraints for minors. Child restraint violation is ₦3,000
- v. Driver's licence violation (driving without licence, expired licence, and fake licence) as contained in regulation 16 & 17 NRTR 2012 attract a sum of ₦10,000.

Most fines range between ₦2,000 and ₦50,000, which are relatively low given current inflation levels.

3. High rate of road traffic fatalities

Nigeria continues to record high levels of road accidents and fatalities. Recent statistics from the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) indicate: 5,421 deaths in road crashes in 2024⁸. 3,915 deaths

⁷ PLAC. (2012). National Road Traffic Regulations, 2012. <https://sabilaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/National-Road-Traffic-Regulations-2012.pdf>

⁸ Nwannekama, B. (2025). Road crashes claim 5,421 lives in 2024, up by seven per cent. *Guardian NG*. <https://guardian.ng/news/road-crashes-claim-5421-lives-in-2024-up-by-seven-per-cent/>



recorded between January and September 2025⁹. These figures demonstrate that road safety remains a major national challenge.

4. Factors Contributing to Road Crashes

So many factors have been outlined to contribute to the rate of road crashes in Nigeria. Some of them include as follows:

- i. Weak penalty provisions: Weak deterrence from traffic penalties can be argued to be a contributing factor to the rate of road crashes in Nigeria, as many traffic offences attract relatively small fines which are not in tune with the current economic realities of the Country. Considering inflation and the current cost of living, such penalties may not effectively discourage risky driving behaviour.
- ii. Weak enforcement capacity: Although traffic laws exist, enforcement remains inconsistent. There are challenges of inadequate manpower, lack of surveillance technology, and weak prosecution mechanisms.
- iii. Poor road infrastructure: Many Nigerian roads suffer from potholes, poor signage, inadequate lighting, lack of pedestrian infrastructure, and poor infrastructure increases accident risks.
- iv. Driver behaviour and road culture: Driver indiscipline remains one of the major causes of accidents. Key behaviours include: reckless overtaking; excessive speed; mobile phone use while driving; and alcohol-impaired driving. Research indicates that speeding alone contributes to more than 50 percent of road crashes in Nigeria.

5. Key Areas for Legislative Intervention

To strengthen road safety governance, the following reforms are recommended:

- i. The National Assembly through its Senate and House Committees on Federal Road Safety Commission, may wish to initiate amendment of the Regulation 220 (offenses and penalties) of the NRTR 2012. Review and Increase Traffic Penalties. Traffic fines should reflect current economic realities as higher fines would increase deterrence against reckless driving.
- ii. The Senate and House Committees on Federal Road Safety Commission, through its oversight function may wish to advise the Federal Government through the FRSC, on the need to deploy smart traffic monitoring systems. Use technology such as: speed cameras, traffic sensors, and automated enforcement.
- iii. Improve collaboration among FRSC, Police and state traffic agencies.
- iv. The National Assembly through its relevant Committees may wish to utilize oversight function to advise the Federal Government, through the Ministry of Works and Housing on the need to prioritize safer road design, better signage, and improved lighting.

6. Conclusion

Road traffic accidents continue to pose serious social and economic challenges in Nigeria. Despite existing regulations and enforcement agencies, thousands of Nigerians die each year in road

⁹ Nwaoku, O. (2025). FRSC: 3,915 deaths, 24,674 injuries in 7,715 road crashes from January to September. Guardian NG. <https://guardian.ng/news/frsc-3915-deaths-24674-injuries-in-7715-road-crashes-from-january-to-september/>



crashes. Weak enforcement, outdated penalties, poor road infrastructure, and risky driver behaviour contribute to the persistence of these problems. Reforming Nigeria's road traffic regulatory framework requires a combination of legislative amendments, stronger enforcement mechanisms, improved infrastructure, and technological innovation. Drawing lessons from countries such as Kenya, Rwanda, Ghana, and South Africa can help Nigeria strengthen its road safety system and significantly reduce traffic-related fatalities. Improving road safety is not only a matter of law enforcement but also a critical component of public health, economic productivity, and sustainable development.

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