

U.S. pedestrian death rate leveling off, but still too high

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Governors' safety group reports more than 2,100 killed in early 2014.

(HealthDay)—The number of pedestrians killed on U.S. roads is expected to remain unchanged from 2013 to 2014, according to a report from the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA).

But that number is still about 15 percent higher than it was in 2009, the report says.

The analysis of preliminary data from the first six months of 2014 found that 2,125 pedestrians died nationwide, compared with 2,141 in the first six months of 2013.

"This is a clearly a good news, bad news scenario," Jonathan Adkins, GHSA executive director, said in an association news release.

"While we're encouraged that pedestrian fatalities haven't increased over the past two years, progress has been slow. Protecting pedestrians is a priority for GHSA and our members; we're determined to drive the number down to zero," he added.

Even as a growing number of Americans choose walking as their preferred way to get around, efforts to improve [pedestrian safety](#) have stalled, according to report author Allan Williams, former chief scientist at the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

"Pedestrian deaths declined steeply from 7,516 in 1975 to 4,735 in 2013. But when you consider the percentage of pedestrians killed in all motor vehicle crashes, the gains are less pronounced. The rate was 17 percent in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It fell to a low of 11 percent in the past decade, but climbed back to 14 percent in 2013," Williams said in the news release.

He noted that that nation's four most populous states—California, Florida, Texas and New York—accounted for 43 percent of all pedestrian deaths in the United States in 2013. Delaware and Florida had the highest rates of pedestrian deaths at nearly 3 per 100,000 residents.

In 2013, pedestrians accounted for the highest percentage of road deaths (45 percent) in Washington, D.C. In New York, pedestrians accounted for 28 percent of road deaths, followed Nevada and Delaware, where pedestrians account for 25 percent of the road deaths in each state.

The report did offer some good news. In 24 states and the District of Columbia, pedestrian deaths were down in the first half of 2014 compared with the same period in 2013, while deaths remained the same in five states. There were nine or fewer pedestrian deaths in 16 states, with Nebraska and Wyoming each reporting just one.

There have been large drops in pedestrian deaths involving seniors and children since 1975. For example, children aged 12 and younger accounted for 21 percent of pedestrian deaths in 1975, but that rate fell to 4 percent in 2013. However, the report found there was a 28 percent increase in the deaths of pedestrians ages 20 to 69 between 1975 and 2013.

About 70 percent of pedestrian deaths involve males, and many of them are hit by vehicles at night and in the fall and winter months, the report said.

Alcohol appears to be a major risk factor for pedestrian deaths. In 2013, 36 percent of [pedestrians](#) 16 and older who died had blood alcohol concentrations of .08 or higher, according to the report.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about [pedestrian safety](#).

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