

US pedestrian deaths decline for first time since pandemic

June 25 2024, by Ernie Mundell



For the first time since the pandemic, it got a little safer to cross America's streets in 2023, new statistics show.

According to [data](#) released Monday from the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA), 7,318 American pedestrians were killed by [motor vehicles](#) last year—a dip of 5.4% from 2022 and the first such decline

seen since the pandemic ended.

But it's no time for celebration: The 2023 number for pedestrian deaths is still 14.1% above pre-pandemic levels.

Still, the news is somewhat heartening, said GHSA Chief Executive Officer Jonathan Adkins.

"A decline in pedestrian deaths offers hope that, after years of rising fatalities, a new trend is starting," he said in a GHSA news release.

"Each death is tragic and preventable. We know how to improve safety for people walking—more infrastructure, vehicles designed to protect people walking, lower speeds and equitable traffic enforcement. It will take all this, and more, to keep the numbers going in the right direction."

The new data comes from the State Highway Safety Offices (SHSOs) in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, the GHSA said.

The report also gave insights into how and where pedestrians are most often killed:

- There's been no big change in the kinds of vehicles driven when a pedestrian dies, only that the percentage of deaths involving [light trucks](#) (SUVs, pickups and vans) is rising as they take up a bigger share of the motor vehicle market.
- You're far more likely to be hit by a car at night (78% of pedestrian deaths in 2022) than in the daytime, and "nighttime fatal pedestrian crashes nearly doubled from 3,030 in 2010 to 5,798 in 2022," GHSA said. That's a much steeper rise than happened for deaths occurring during the day.
- Sidewalks are crucial. In 2022, 66% of pedestrian deaths occurred in locales without sidewalks. "Sidewalks can help protect people walking by providing a [physical separation](#)

between them and [motor vehicle traffic](#)," GHSA said. "But they are missing or in poor condition in many parts of the country." Three-quarters of [pedestrian deaths](#) in 2022 were not at an intersection.

- You're most endangered when walking on what the GHSA called "non-freeway arterial roads," where 60% of deaths happened in 2022. But 1,300 Americans died while walking along freeways that year, too. "Stranded motorists exiting their vehicles, [first responders](#) and tow truck drivers are all examples of pedestrians who have been killed on freeways," the GHSA said. "All states have Move Over laws, but they are difficult to enforce."
- Alcohol is too often a factor, as well. "In 2022, 30% of pedestrians 16 and older killed in motor [vehicle](#) crashes had a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.08 or higher," the GHSA said. That was true for 19% of drivers who killed a pedestrian.

What can be done to bring these numbers down and prevent senseless tragedies on America's roadways?

According to the GHSA, "traffic safety cameras and engaging with unhoused populations" who are at special risks of roadside deaths is crucial. Adding in or repairing sidewalks could also help, as could digital alerts that warn drivers of vehicles parked on the roadside.

More information: Find out more about pedestrian safety at the [National Safety Council](#)

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