

# Record number of pedestrian deaths seen in U.S.

27 February 2020



Walking on America's streets is getting ever more dangerous, a new report shows.

Based on data from the first six months of 2019, the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) predicts there were 6,590 [pedestrian](#) deaths that year, which would be a 5% increase over the 6,227 pedestrian deaths in 2018.

The 2019 figure is the highest number of such deaths in more than 30 years, according to the association.

"In the past 10 years, the number of pedestrian fatalities on our nation's roadways has increased by more than 50%," said GHSA Executive Director Jonathan Adkins.

"This alarming trend signifies that we need to consider all the factors involved in this rise, identify the high-risk areas, allocate resources where they're needed most, and continue to work with local law enforcement partners to address the

chronic driver violations that contribute to pedestrian crashes," Adkins said in an association news release.

Pedestrians are projected to account for 17% of all traffic deaths in 2019, compared to 12% in 2009, according to the GHSA's annual Spotlight on Highway Safety report, released Thursday.

While there's been a significant increase in pedestrian deaths over the past decade, the number of all other traffic deaths increased by only 2%.

Overall, traffic deaths in the first half of 2019 are projected to be 3.4% lower than in the first half of 2018, according to the report.

A number of factors are contributing to the rise in pedestrian deaths.

Most pedestrian deaths occur on local roads, at night and away from intersections, suggesting the need for safer road crossings and making pedestrians and vehicles more visible, the GHSA said.

Over the past 10 years, the number of nighttime pedestrian deaths increased by 67%, compared to a 16% increase in daytime pedestrian deaths.

Dangerous driving behaviors such as speeding, and distracted and drowsy driving threaten pedestrians, and alcohol impairment by the driver and/or pedestrian was reported in nearly half of pedestrian fatalities in 2018.

Pedestrians struck by a large SUV are twice as likely to die as those struck by a car. Passenger cars are the largest category of vehicles involved in pedestrian deaths, but pedestrian deaths over the past decade involving SUVs increased at a faster rate (81%) than those involving [passenger cars](#) (53%).

"Each year, thousands of additional people are dying in pedestrian crashes compared to a decade ago," said report author Richard Retting, national practice leader for safety and research at Sam Schwartz Consulting.

"Following 30 years of declining pedestrian fatalities, there has been a complete reversal of progress," Retting said in the release. "Pedestrians are at an inherent disadvantage in collisions, and we must continue to take a broad approach to pedestrian safety."

There was some good news in the report. Twenty states and Washington, D.C., had fewer [pedestrian deaths](#) for the first half of 2019 than in the first half of 2018, with double-digit declines in six states and consecutive years of declines in seven states.

**More information:** The U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has more on [pedestrian safety](#).

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