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## **New Report Finds Older New Jersey Pedestrians at Risk**

*Analysis shows people aged 60 years and older suffer disproportionately high pedestrian fatality rates*

New Jersey pedestrians 60 years and older are disproportionately at risk of being killed in collisions with vehicles while walking, according to a new study by Tri-State Transportation Campaign.

From 2003 through 2012, 453 pedestrians aged 60 years and older were killed on New Jersey roads, according to Tri-State's report, *Older Pedestrians at Risk: A Ten Year Survey and Look Ahead*. Though comprising only 18 percent of the state's population, people aged 60 and older accounted for 30 percent of the total pedestrian fatalities during the 10-year period. Those aged 75 years and older represent just 6.5 percent of New Jersey's population, but almost 14 percent of pedestrian deaths. The pedestrian fatality rate for New Jersey residents 60 and older is nearly twice that of residents under 60. For residents 75 and older, the pedestrian fatality rate is 2.5 times that of those under 60.

"In 10 years, the share of New Jersey residents 60 and older increased from 17.3 percent of the population to 19.7 percent— 2.4 percentage points," said Renata Silberblatt, Tri-State Transportation Campaign's senior analyst. "As our population ages, it is imperative for municipalities and state officials to design communities with the needs of active older residents in mind."

According to AARP, decreased bone density exacerbates injuries sustained by seniors. Coupled with mobility issues that hinder their ability to cross a road quickly, this age group is particularly prone to critical injuries from car collisions.

"Despite older pedestrians' increased risk of being killed while walking, simple roadway improvements – clearly marked crosswalks, longer crossing signals and wider pedestrian islands – make walking safer and easier for older residents and younger residents alike," noted Veronica Vanterpool, executive director, Tri-State Transportation Campaign.

Tri-State's research showed that Atlantic County had the highest average older pedestrian fatality rate of any county in New Jersey and the fourth highest of the 41 counties in the tri-state region (Connecticut, New Jersey and downstate New York counties). Almost 25 percent of Atlantic County's 97 pedestrian fatalities were 60 years or older. The chart below ranks New Jersey counties by older pedestrian fatality rates:

Rank	County	Avg. Older Pedestrian Fatality Rate per 100,000* (2003-2012)	Avg. Younger (under 60 years) Pedestrian Fatality Rate per 100,000* (2003-2012)	Older (60+ years) Pedestrian Fatalities, 2003-2012
1	Atlantic County	4.58	3.26	24
2	Passaic County	3.89	1.44	32
3	Mercer County	3.85	1.33	24
4	Hudson County	3.83	1.19	35
5	Essex County	3.72	2.01	47
6	Union County	3.47	1.95	32
7	Middlesex County	3.32	1.54	44
8	Bergen County	3.18	1.02	58
9	Camden County	3.11	1.60	28
10	Ocean County	2.47	1.55	38
11	Gloucester County	2.44	1.10	12
12	Cumberland County	2.24	1.80	6
12	Monmouth County	2.24	1.29	26
14	Burlington County	1.69	1.68	14
15	Salem County	1.61	1.72	2
16	Morris County	1.49	0.96	13
17	Cape May County	1.44	1.98	4
18	Somerset County	1.28	0.94	7
19	Hunterdon County	1.27	1.03	3
20	Warren County	1.02	0.90	2
21	Sussex County	0.76	0.25	2
n/a	New Jersey	2.85	1.46	453

*\*Fatality rates are calculated according to the population of the relevant age group (i.e., population aged 60 years and older, population under 60 years).*

“With the substantial advances our society has made in healthcare, enabling people to live well into their 90's, we must provide safe communities where the aging can continue to live healthy lifestyles with no danger of being injured or killed on our roadways. We must put the same emphasis on our street infrastructure as we have on healthcare,” Cyndi Steiner, executive director of New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition, stated.

“The data show clearly that it’s time for our elected state leaders and transportation officials to implement strategies we know are effective in reducing pedestrian fatalities. New Jersey’s new Pedestrian Safety Action Plan Update includes several key recommendations, such as increased funding incentives for local governments that adopt complete streets policies, better reporting on the extent to which NJDOT infrastructure projects are in compliance with its complete streets policy and increased use of available federal funding for pedestrian safety projects,” said Brian McGuire, associate state director for AARP New Jersey.

Tri-State recommends that:

- New Jersey should prioritize roadway improvements in areas with high concentrations of older residents and along roads with high concentrations of pedestrian fatalities.
- New Jersey and the state's metropolitan planning organizations should allocate funding to regional trails such as The Circuit in Southern New Jersey so that these trails can serve as key transportation and recreation corridors. Pedestrian and bicyclist improvements must be prioritized on roads that provide access to these trails to create safe connectivity to the trails and surrounding roads and communities.
- NJDOT should continue to incentivize municipal and county-level adoption of complete streets policies that require the design of all roads to accommodate the needs of all users, including older pedestrians.
- Municipalities and counties that have passed complete streets policies should create implementation plans.
- When applying to NJDOT for local aid or transit village funding, complete streets projects should be given priority funding.
- Road resurfacing projects should consider including complete streets elements, such as sidewalks and bike lanes, consistent with NJDOT's Complete Streets Policy.
- The state legislature should pass a vulnerable users bill that would stiffen penalties for drivers who kill or injure pedestrians, bicyclists, highway workers or other non-motorists using the roadway. The state should also pass a safe passing bill that clearly indicates how motorists should act when passing a vulnerable user on the roadway.
- The state should increase funding to match application demand for the Safe Streets to Transit and Transit Village programs.
- NJDOT should adopt the National Association of City Transportation Officials' (NACTO) Urban Street Design Guidelines. The guidelines provide technical standards that departments of transportation can use to create streets that safely accommodate all road users, including pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders. The Federal Highway Administration, thirty-seven cities, including New York City, and six states have adopted NACTO standards.
- Communities across the state should pursue transit oriented development, which ensures that housing, shops and offices are in proximity to existing bus and rail routes.

Tri-State Transportation Campaign Senior Analyst Renata Silberblatt conducted the Campaign's analysis using data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) Encyclopedia and the U.S. Census Bureau to examine fatality rates by age and gender for each county in New Jersey, downstate New York and Connecticut.

The full report, as well as county fact sheets and maps showing the locations of pedestrian fatalities throughout the region can be found at [www.tstc.org](http://www.tstc.org).

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*The Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a non-profit organization working toward a more balanced, transit-friendly and equitable transportation system in New Jersey, New York and Connecticut.*