

Still at Risk

Pedestrian Safety in New Jersey



Tri-State Transportation Campaign
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Summary of Findings

New Jersey had 153 pedestrian fatalities in 2004, up 4 percent from the previous year, but still down from the 177 deaths in 2002. The state made pedestrian and bicyclist safety a transportation priority beginning in the mid-1990's with the publication of the New Jersey Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. But a ten-year look at the trend in pedestrian fatalities reveals no perceptible reduction in pedestrian deaths, even as Census data shows fewer New Jersey residents walking.

Most of the pedestrian deaths are clustered in the denser urban counties of north Jersey. In 2004, the top 5 counties with the most pedestrian deaths were:

1. Essex County, 21 deaths;
2. Union County, 20 deaths;
3. Bergen County, 15 deaths;
3. Middlesex County, 15 deaths; and,
5. Monmouth County, 12 deaths.

Relative to other states, New Jersey continues to be among the most dangerous for walkers. In 2004, pedestrians made up more than 1 in 5 of New Jersey's total traffic fatalities, a rate third highest behind New York and Hawaii.

Incredibly, in ten New Jersey counties pedestrians comprised an even larger share of total traffic fatalities than the statewide average, indicating that walkers are disproportionately at risk in those counties. Those counties were:

1. Union County, 43.5 percent;
2. Cape May County, 40.0 percent;
3. Passaic County, 32.1 percent;
4. Bergen County, 30.6 percent;
5. Atlantic County, 28.2 percent;
6. Essex County, 27.6 percent;
7. Hudson County, 27.3 percent;
8. Middlesex County, 26.3 percent;
9. Monmouth County, 25.5 percent; and,
10. Hunterdon County, 22.2 percent.

153 pedestrians died in traffic crashes in New Jersey in 2004.

Recommendations

- Increase funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects around the state via the Transportation Trust Fund. Demand for such projects by New Jersey's cities and towns outstrips available DOT funding for them by a factor of five or more every year.
- Create a dedicated funding source for the DOT's "Safe Streets to Schools" program, and expand the program. DOT launched the worthy initiative to improve pedestrian and cycling conditions around schools last year but paid for it by reducing other pedestrian project funding.
- Municipalities and counties should work with the DOT to identify the most dangerous roads and streets for pedestrians and launch a DOT initiative to improve safety there as soon as possible.
- The DOT and Dept. of Community Affairs should further increase encouragement of municipal implementation of "traffic calming" techniques and other innovations to make walking safer and more pleasant.
- Fully fund the federal "Transportation Enhancements" program. This popular program is currently over-subscribed, with the state denying many promising applications which could improve pedestrian safety locally, but still not spending all of the federal funds available.

Introduction

In 1995, the New Jersey Department of Transportation issued the Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. This original report was updated in 2004, reaffirming the state's vision for bicycling and walking:

New Jersey is a state where people choose to walk and bicycle. Residents and visitors are able to conveniently walk and bicycle with confidence and a sense of security in every community. Both activities are a routine part of the transportation and recreation systems and support active, healthy life styles.

This is an ambitious and worthy vision, but one which New Jersey still has a long way to go to achieve.

This report examines the trend in pedestrian safety since the original Master Plan was published. We have found that despite the state's commitment to "improving our quality of life by making bicycling and walking an important part of our comprehensive transportation system,"¹ pedestrian deaths continue to be unacceptably high.



Too many New Jersey roads and streets still lack sidewalks.

1. NJDOT. New Jersey Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, Phase 2. 2004. <<http://www.bikemap.com/RBA/NJBikePed.pdf>>

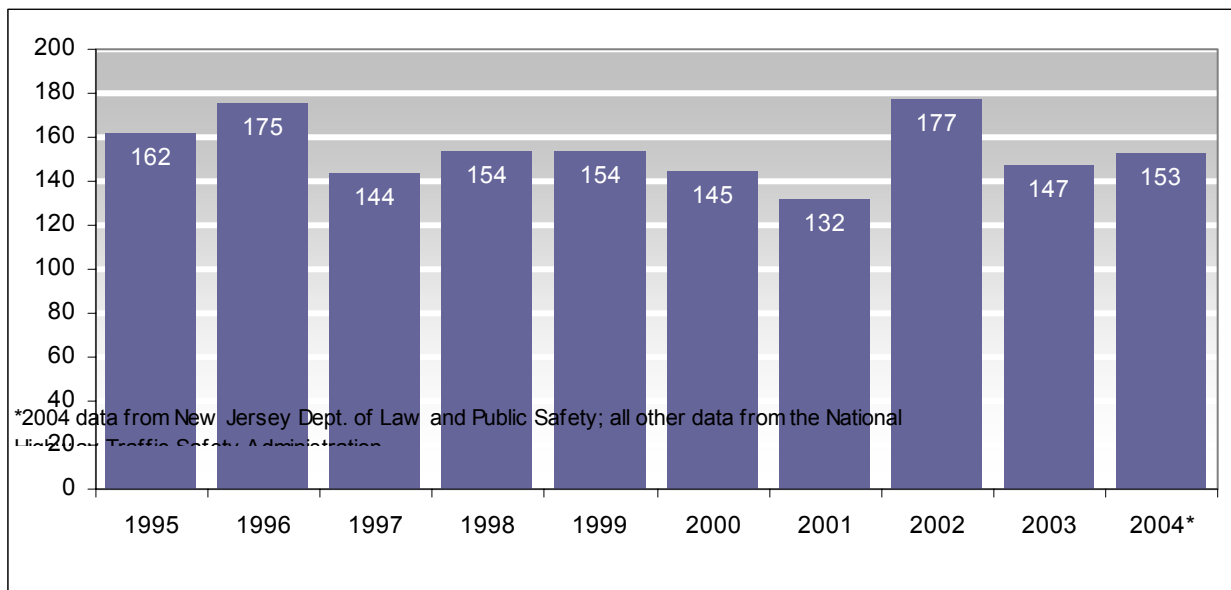
New Jersey ranks third highest in the nation in the portion of total traffic deaths that are pedestrians.

Statewide Pedestrian Deaths Hold Steady after Ten Years of Effort

New Jersey continues to be among the deadliest states for walkers, ranking third in the nation, behind New York and Hawaii, in terms of the portion of total traffic deaths that are pedestrians (20.8 percent). In 2004, New Jersey had one of its deadliest years for pedestrians in recent history. 153 pedestrians were killed while trying to cross New Jersey's streets, walking to school, waiting at a bus stop, or otherwise walking. Only 2002's 177 pedestrian deaths topped this figure in the last five years.

The trend in statewide pedestrian deaths has held more or less steady since 1995, averaging just over 150 annual deaths in the last ten years. This has occurred even as walking rates appear to have declined precipitously. In 1990, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, 4.1 percent of New Jersey residents commuted to work on foot. By 2000, that figure had dropped by almost 25 percent to 3.1 percent. In other words, though fewer people are walking in New Jersey, approximately the same number of people are being killed as pedestrians.

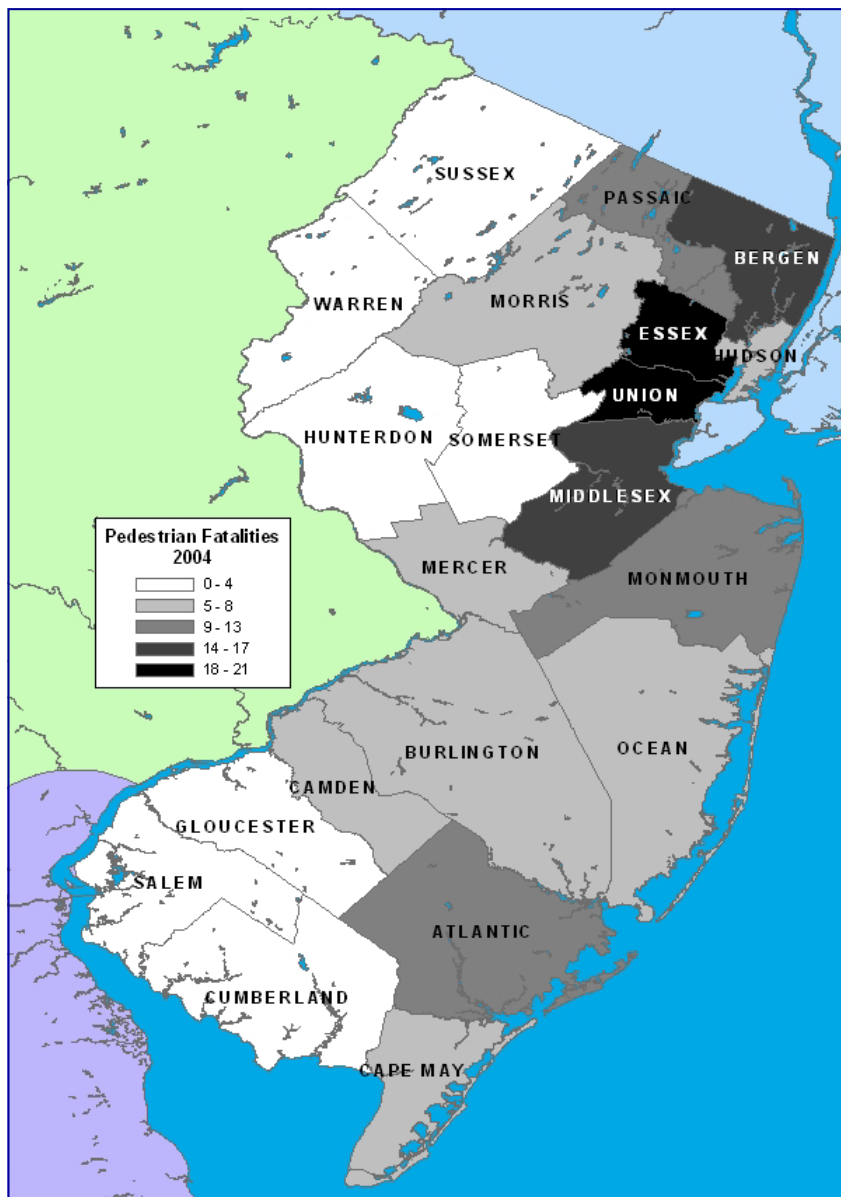
Statewide Pedestrian Fatalities (1995 to 2004)



Most Dangerous New Jersey Counties for Pedestrians

Not surprisingly, most of New Jersey's pedestrian deaths occur in the denser urban counties of north Jersey. Essex County, with 21 pedestrian deaths in 2004, earns the dubious title of most dangerous for walkers. Union County was close behind, with 20 deaths, followed by Bergen and Middlesex counties each with 15 deaths. Monmouth County rounds out the list of top five most dangerous, with 12 deaths.

New Jersey Pedestrian Fatalities by County (2004)



Pedestrian deaths in Union County nearly doubled from 2003 to 2004.

Looking at pedestrian deaths on a county-by-county basis reveals dramatic year-to-year fluctuations. The data also show that most counties have made little, if any, significant progress in reducing pedestrian deaths over the past decade. And several counties have seen pedestrian fatalities climb. For example, in Union County pedestrian deaths have increased steadily over the decade (aside from an exceptionally low number of fatalities in 2003) to 20 annually in 2004, the highest number reported in the last ten years, and double the figure ten years ago.

Table 1. New Jersey Pedestrian Fatalities by County (1995 to 2004)

Rank (2004 Deaths)		1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004*
6	Atlantic	6	12	10	9	4	5	14	9	10	11
3	Bergen	19	22	11	17	17	17	13	22	11	15
11	Burlington	6	11	4	7	2	8	7	11	4	5
11	Camden	10	17	11	12	11	9	5	12	14	5
9	Cape May	3	1	0	1	2	0	1	1	3	6
16	Cumberland	5	1	4	3	3	4	4	2	4	2
1	Essex	21	27	19	25	21	23	15	17	14	21
19	Gloucester	6	3	1	1	3	7	2	8	1	1
9	Hudson	13	11	18	7	18	11	10	9	14	6
16	Hunterdon	1	1	2	2	1	3	0	3	1	2
11	Mercer	4	6	4	7	3	5	4	10	7	5
3	Middlesex	15	15	13	10	15	10	9	22	13	15
5	Monmouth	9	7	15	14	10	7	6	6	12	12
11	Morris	8	6	5	6	7	4	5	4	6	5
8	Ocean	16	11	6	11	10	4	7	7	7	7
7	Passaic	6	8	7	10	9	5	8	5	9	9
21	Salem	0	1	2	0	4	3	2	0	2	0
15	Somerset	3	3	3	3	2	0	2	7	3	3
19	Sussex	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
2	Union	10	10	9	8	10	18	18	17	11	20
16	Warren	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	5	1	2

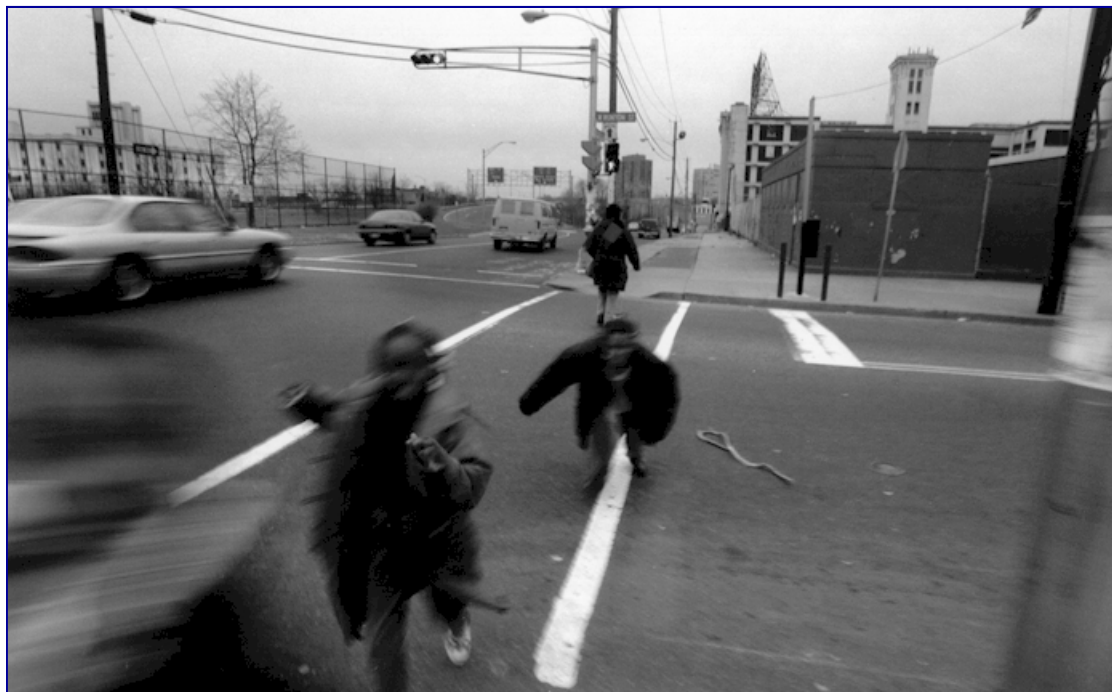
*2004 data from New Jersey Dept. of Law and Public Safety; all other data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

As noted above, pedestrians are disproportionately represented in New Jersey traffic deaths statewide. At the county level, the percentage of total traffic fatalities that were pedestrians shows starkly how vulnerable walkers are in certain counties. For example, in Union County, pedestrians represented 43.5 percent of total traffic fatalities in 2004. Four out of ten traffic deaths in Cape May County were pedestrians. And pedestrians made up nearly one-third of Passaic County's traffic fatalities in 2004.

Table 2. Percent of Total Traffic Fatalities that were Pedestrians by County (2004)

Rank		Pedestrian Fatalities (2004)	Total Traffic Fatalities (2004)	Pedestrians as a Percent of Total Traffic Fatalities
1	Union	20	46	43.5%
2	Cape May	6	15	40.0%
3	Passaic	9	28	32.1%
4	Bergen	15	49	30.6%
5	Atlantic	11	39	28.2%
6	Essex	21	76	27.6%
7	Hudson	6	22	27.3%
8	Middlesex	15	57	26.3%
9	Monmouth	12	47	25.5%
10	Hunterdon	2	9	22.2%
11	Mercer	5	31	16.1%
12	Somerset	3	19	15.8%
13	Camden	5	33	15.2%
14	Morris	5	36	13.9%
15	Warren	2	17	11.8%
16	Cumberland	2	18	11.1%
17	Ocean	7	66	10.6%
18	Burlington	5	56	8.9%
19	Sussex	1	22	4.5%
20	Gloucester	1	26	3.8%
21	Salem	0	22	0.0%

In ten New Jersey counties, people on foot comprised more than 1 in 5 traffic deaths.



Children in Newark's streets.

On a per capita basis, several of New Jersey's shore counties jump to the top of the list. Cape May County, which ranks 9th in terms of total pedestrian fatalities, is ranked 1st in pedestrian deaths per capita, with 4.4 deaths per 100,000 residents. Atlantic County falls 2nd, with 4.0 pedestrian deaths per 100,000 residents, followed by Union and Essex counties, with a rate of 2.9 and 2.2 respectively. With 2.0 pedestrian fatalities per 100,000 residents, Cumberland County ranks 5th. It is important to note that especially in Cape May and Atlantic counties, which see disproportionate numbers of summer tourists relative to residents, these figures may overstate the risk to pedestrians.



Table 3. Average Annual Pedestrian Fatalities per Capita by County (2003-2004)

Rank		Average Pedestrian Fatalities per 100,000 Residents (2003-2004)
2	Atlantic	4.0
13	Bergen	1.4
18	Burlington	1.0
7	Camden	1.8
1	Cape May	4.4
5	Cumberland	2.0
4	Essex	2.2
20	Gloucester	0.4
11	Hudson	1.6
16	Hunterdon	1.2
10	Mercer	1.7
9	Middlesex	1.8
6	Monmouth	1.9
17	Morris	1.1
15	Ocean	1.3
8	Passaic	1.8
12	Salem	1.5
19	Somerset	1.0
21	Sussex	0.3
3	Union	2.9
14	Warren	1.4

Pedestrian fatalities are averaged for 2003-2004; population estimates are for 2003, the most recent from the U.S. Census.

Recommendations

Even as New Jersey has made pedestrian safety a priority, earning national recognition as a leader in promoting walking and bicycling, the state continues to struggle to reduce pedestrian fatalities. Going forward, New Jersey has the opportunity to build from the state's excellent planning documents to improve walking conditions and reduce pedestrian deaths. We recommend the following actions:

- Increase funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects around the state via the Transportation Trust Fund. Demand for such projects by New Jersey's cities and towns outstrips available DOT funding for them by a factor of five or more every year.
- Create a dedicated funding source for the DOT's "Safe Streets to Schools" program, and expand the program. DOT launched the worthy initiative to improve pedestrian and cycling conditions around schools last year but paid for it by reducing other pedestrian project funding.
- Municipalities and counties should work with the DOT to identify the most dangerous roads and streets for pedestrians and launch a DOT initiative to improve safety there as soon as possible.
- The DOT and Dept. of Community Affairs should further increase encouragement of municipal implementation of "traffic calming" techniques and other innovations to make walking safer and more pleasant.
- Fully fund the federal "Transportation Enhancements" program. This popular program is currently over-subscribed, with the state denying many promising applications which could improve pedestrian safety locally, but still not spending all of the federal funds available.

The state should increase bicycle and pedestrian funding via the Transportation Trust Fund.

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