

Pedestrian Injuries and Fatalities for Santa Cruz County, 2013

This report presents pedestrian injuries and fatalities that occurred in Santa Cruz County in 2013 based on data obtained from the California Highway Patrol (CHP) Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System¹ (SWITRS). According to SWITRS, in the 2013 calendar year there were a total of 97 collisions that resulted in 98 pedestrian injuries and two pedestrian fatalities. Of these collisions, four were bicycle/pedestrian, two were motor vehicle/bicycle/pedestrian and 91 were motor vehicle/pedestrian.

In Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2013, the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) reported 104 pedestrian injuries in Santa Cruz County and two deaths. Based on these numbers, the 2013 county pedestrian injury rate per 100,000 population was 39. This is a significant increase from the 2012 rate of 27 and is higher than the 10-year average rate of 35. The California state pedestrian injury rate per 100,000 population for 2013 was 33, marking a decrease since 2012.

The 2013 county pedestrian fatality rate was 0.7, a decline from the 2012 rate of 0.8, and lower than the 10-year average rate of 1.2. The state pedestrian fatality rate was 1.8, an increase from the 2012 rate of 1.6. Nationwide in 2013, there were 4,735 pedestrians killed and an estimated 66,000 injured. This represents an injury rate of 21, and a fatality rate of 1.5 per 100,000 population. Nationwide, pedestrian deaths accounted for 14% of all traffic fatalities, and 3% of all people injured in traffic collisions.²

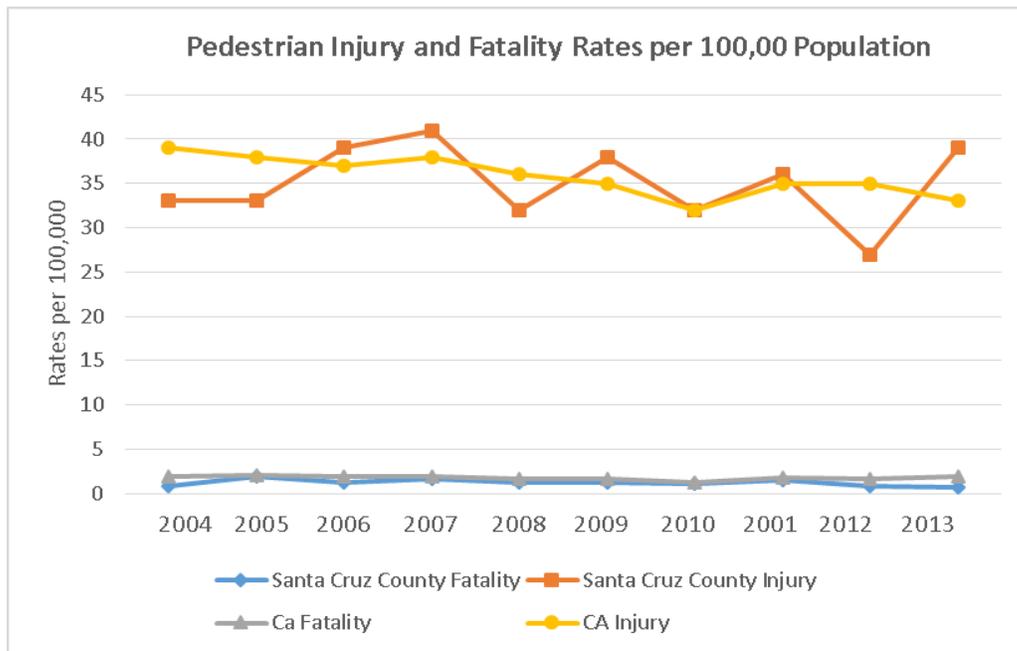


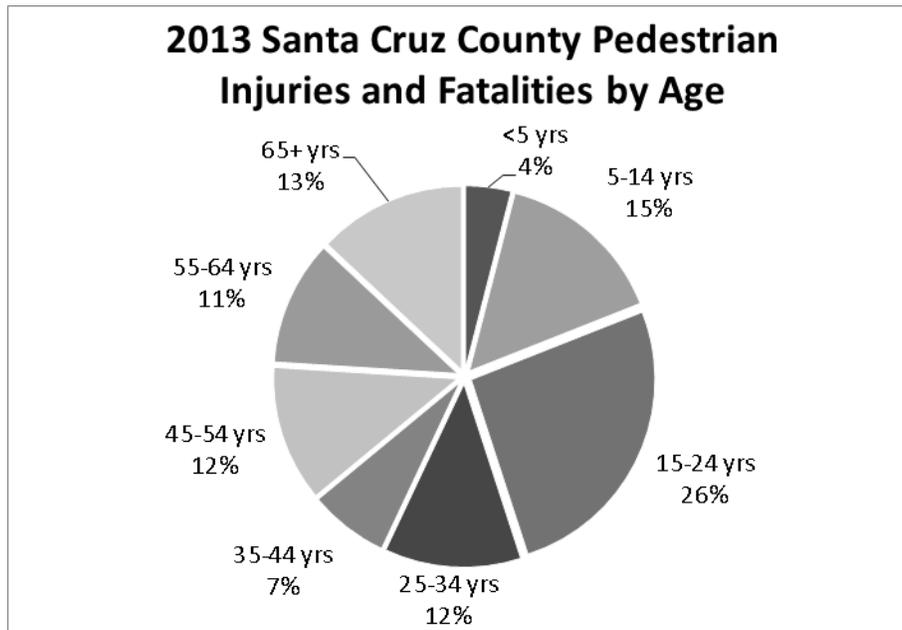
Table One: State and County Pedestrian Injury and Fatality Rates per 100,000 Population

Rates by Location	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009*	2010	2011	2012	2013
Santa Cruz County Fatality	0.8	1.9	1.2	1.6	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.5	0.8	0.7
Santa Cruz County Injury	33	33	39	41	32	38	32	36	27	39
CA Fatality	2	2.1	2	1.9	1.7	1.7	1.2	1.8	1.6	1.8
CA Injury	39	38	37	38	36	35	32	35	35	33

*Note: As of 2009, the number of pedestrians injured and killed is reported by federal fiscal year rather than calendar year by the California Office of Traffic Safety.

Injuries and Fatalities by Age Categories

Countywide, pedestrians aged 15 to 24 years were injured more often than any other age group, accounting for 26% of county pedestrian injuries and fatalities in 2013. Nationally, those 15 to 24 years of age accounted for 585 of 4,735 fatalities (12%) and 15,000 of 66,000 injuries (23%). Children aged 5 to 14 were the second highest injury group in Santa Cruz County at 15%. Those aged 65 and older were the third highest group at 13%. Both of the pedestrians killed in Santa Cruz County were males, one 28 years old and the other 65 years old.



Santa Cruz County Injuries/Fatalities by Jurisdiction

The number of pedestrian injuries in 2013 were almost the same in the City of Santa Cruz (29), the City of Watsonville (29) and the unincorporated area (28). Both pedestrian fatalities occurred in the unincorporated area of the county. The City of Capitola had six pedestrian injuries and Scotts Valley had five. The University of California at Santa Cruz reported one pedestrian injury.

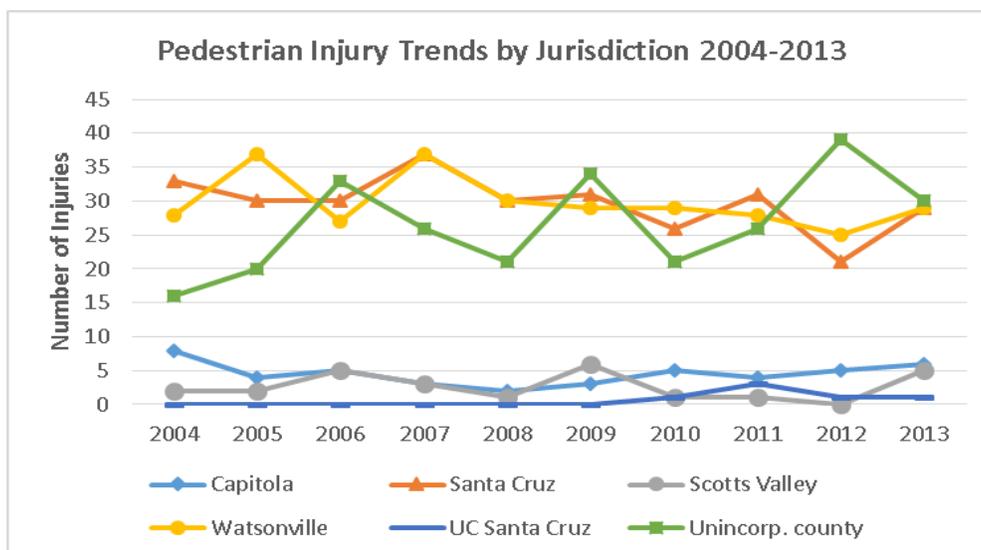


Table Two: Pedestrian Injuries and Fatalities by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Pedestrians Injured (Killed)									
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Capitola	8	4	5	3	2	3	4 (1)	4	5	6
Santa Cruz	33	29 (1)	29 (1)	36 (1)	30	28 (3)	26	31	21	29
Scotts Valley	2	2	5	3	1	6	1	1	0	5
Watsonville	26 (2)	37	27	36 (1)	29 (1)	28 (1)	28 (1)	28	24 (1)	29
UCSC	na	na	na	na	na	na	1	3	1	1
Unincorporated	16	16 (4)	31 (2)	24 (2)	19 (2)	34	20 (1)	24 (2)	38 (1)	28 (2)
SC County Total	85 (2)	88 (5)	97 (3)	102 (4)	81 (3)	99 (4)	80 (3)	91 (2)	89 (2)	98 (2)

*Note: UC Santa Cruz data not available prior to 2010; S.C. County Total injuries not shown in graph.

There were a number of locations in the county where multiple pedestrian injuries occurred. In the City of Santa Cruz, there were three collisions on Laurel Street and three on Front Street. In Watsonville, there were five collisions on both Lake Avenue and Freedom Boulevard. There were five collisions on 41st Avenue (three in Capitola and two in the unincorporated area) and three on Highway 9. Both pedestrian fatalities occurred in the unincorporated area on Highway 129.

Collision Factors

In examining the SWITRS data for primary collision factors, the driver was listed at fault in 57% of the cases in 2013. For drivers, the most common collision factor, occurring 27 times, was failure to yield to a pedestrian who had the right of way. Improper turns were the second most common, occurring eight times, followed by unsafe speed. Unsafe driving speed was listed as the primary collision factor in one of the two pedestrian deaths. Pedestrians were at fault in 31% of incidents, including three of the four bicycle/pedestrian collisions. The most common causes were crossing the road while not in a crosswalk (19 cases) and walking in the road (seven cases). In 11% of collisions fault was not determined.

There were two collisions in which the driver's use of alcohol or drugs was considered the primary factor. In two crashes, including one which resulted in a pedestrian death, the pedestrian was under the influence. National data for 2013 revealed that alcohol involvement for the driver and/or the pedestrian was reported in 49% of collisions that resulted in a pedestrian fatality².

16 hit-and-run injuries involving pedestrians were reported in 2013, representing 16% of all pedestrian injuries/fatalities in the county. In terms of timing, 31% of collisions in Santa Cruz County occurred at night, 62% during the day, and 7% at either dusk or dawn. Both fatalities occurred at dawn (5:50 and 5:52 a.m.). Nationally, the majority of pedestrian fatalities in 2013 (72%) occurred in the dark².

Conclusions

The National Healthy People 2020 objectives are to reduce pedestrian deaths to 1.5 per 100,000 population and reduce pedestrian injuries to 20.3 per 100,000 on public roads. Both Santa Cruz County and the State of California have had worse injury rates than this since 2002. On the other hand, the 2013 fatality rate for Santa Cruz County was much better, with a 0.7 rate well below the 2020 target.

In 2013, OTS ranked Santa Cruz County 12th out of 55 California counties reporting for pedestrians injured or killed by average population³. Watsonville was among the top ten highest cities for pedestrian injuries and fatalities, ranking 4th out of 102 comparable cities for all pedestrian injuries and fatalities, and 2nd for pedestrian injuries and fatalities in children less than 15 years old. The City of Scotts Valley was ranked 3rd out of 105 comparable cities for all pedestrian injuries and fatalities among those under 15 years of age.

It is important to note these rankings do not quantify the number of people walking, miles walked, or the percentage of pedestrians as a total of all transportation modes, which would be necessary to calculate pedestrian exposure and risk of injury. According to the American Community Survey, 2.8% of workers in the United States walked to work during the five-year period from 2009 to 2013, however 4.3% did so in Santa Cruz County⁴. Also important to note is that the data used in this report was obtained by reviewing pedestrian involved collisions for Santa Cruz County in 2013 as collected and compiled by the CHP in their SWITRS database. It does not include data from medical providers, nor does it allow for self-reporting of incidents.

Continued efforts are needed among traffic safety partners to reduce pedestrian injuries and fatalities through education, enforcement, and improvements in pedestrian-friendly infrastructure in Santa Cruz County. Based on 2013 data, outreach and education needs to be directed at both drivers and pedestrians about safe behavior on and around Santa Cruz County roads, especially among youth. Particular focus should be given to the cities of Watsonville and Santa Cruz, and the unincorporated areas, especially those locations where multiple pedestrian injuries occurred.

References

- 1: California Highway Patrol, Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System. Retrieved 03/12/15 from <http://iswitrs.chp.ca.gov/Reports/jsp/CollisionReports.jsp>
- 2: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. *Traffic Safety Facts 2013 Data*. Retrieved from <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/812124.pdf>
- 3: California Office of Traffic Safety. *2013 OTS Rankings*. Retrieved from http://www.ots.ca.gov/Media_and_Research/Rankings/default.asp
- 4: United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey Reports. Retrieved from http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml

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