

## Deadliest for Walkers: Male Drivers, Left Turns

By [MICHAEL M. GRYNBAUM](#)

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It has never been easy to safely navigate the streets of New York, where today automobiles zip inches away from smart phone-carrying pedestrians and the footrace across an intersection seems like a human version of the arcade game Frogger.

### [Pedestrian Safety Report](#)



Chester Higgins Jr./The New York Times

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg at a news conference on traffic safety Monday on Northern Boulevard in Queens.



Kirsten Luce for The New York Times

Left turns, like this one near Times Square, are especially dangerous, a new study demonstrates.

But a [report released Monday by the city's transportation planners](#) offers unusual insights into the precarious life on the city's streets, pinpointing where, when and why pedestrian accidents have most often occurred.

The study confirms some of the century-old assumptions about transportation in the country's biggest city, yet it undercuts others.

Taxis, it turns out, are not a careering menace: cabs, along with buses and trucks, accounted for far fewer pedestrian accidents in Manhattan than did private automobiles. Jaywalkers were involved in fewer collisions than their law-abiding counterparts who waited for the "walk" sign, though they were likelier to be killed or seriously hurt by the collision.

And in 80 percent of city accidents that resulted in a pedestrian's death or serious injury, a male driver was behind the wheel. (Fifty-seven percent of New York City vehicles are registered to men.)

The study, which the city's Transportation Department described as the most ambitious of its kind by an American city, examined more than 7,000 crashes that occurred in New York City from 2002 to 2006 and that resulted in the death or serious injury of at least one pedestrian.

Equal parts safety manual and urban portrait, the report offers a revealing look at the boroughs, avenues and times of day that were most hazardous to pedestrians and drivers alike.

"This is the Rosetta Stone for safety on the streets of New York," said [Janette Sadik-Khan](#), the transportation commissioner.

The findings could also become a tool for the [Bloomberg administration](#) to extend its re-engineering of the city's street grid, which it says saves lives. Those changes, which have angered many drivers, include barring vehicles from major avenues and replacing hundreds of parking spaces with bicycle lanes and walkways.

The city says it is already planning a series of street changes based on data in the report.

Dozens of parking spaces will be removed next year from a major Manhattan avenue — officials would not say which one — in an experiment intended to make it easier for drivers turning left and pedestrians crossing at an intersection to see each other.

The city will also install countdown clocks at 1,500 intersections to inform pedestrians of the number of seconds remaining until the traffic light changes.

Transportation officials say they are planning a media campaign to educate New Yorkers about safe driving practices — including a reminder that the standard speed limit for the city's streets is 30 miles an hour, a fact that Ms. Sadik-Khan, in an informal poll of her friends, discovered that almost nobody knew.

The study found that 43 percent of pedestrians killed in Manhattan did not live in that borough, and that Brooklyn had the most pedestrians killed or seriously hurt and Staten Island the fewest — both in raw numbers and per capita.

Pedestrians would be well advised to favor sidewalks to the right of moving traffic — left-hand turns were three times as likely to cause a deadly crash as right-hand turns — and to stay particularly alert at intersections, where three-quarters of the crashes occurred.

In Manhattan, about 16 percent of pedestrian crashes that led to death or serious injury involved a taxi or livery cab. Taxis account for only 2 percent of vehicles registered in the city, but at some times of day, they can make up nearly half of Manhattan's traffic, according to some estimates — challenging the widely held perception of cabbies as the scourges of city streets.

Throughout the city, 79 percent of the serious crashes involved private passenger cars; 13 percent involved taxis or livery cabs; 4 percent involved trucks; and 3 percent involved buses.

Driver inattention, rather than intoxication, was the most common cause of the accidents, cited as a contributing factor in 36 percent.

November and December were the most dangerous months for pedestrians, the report found, citing a combination of holiday crowds and earlier sunsets. New Year's Day brings calm, with the crash rate falling sharply in January and February.

About 40 percent of pedestrian crashes in New York occurred between 3 p.m. and 9 p.m., the study found; nationally, most crashes occur overnight. Still, collisions in New York that take place in the early morning were more likely to result in a death rather than an injury.

Over all, New York's roadways have become markedly safer in the past decade, with pedestrian deaths down about 20 percent since 2001.

The city recorded 256 traffic fatalities last year, which officials described as the lowest number since 1910, the earliest year that the records were kept. New York is now far safer to travel within than most other American cities, with half the per-capita fatality rate of Atlanta, Detroit or Los Angeles. But New York still trails world capitals like Berlin, London, Paris and Tokyo in pedestrian safety.

"One crash is one crash too many," said Ms. Sadik-Khan, who said that Monday's report would help her department "solve the riddle of why people are dying, and where they are dying, in the city."

Ms. Sadik-Khan and Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg spoke at Northern Boulevard and 108th Street in northern Queens, where a pedestrian countdown signal had been installed over the weekend.

Yet some pedestrians seemed oblivious to its presence. Laura Bautista, 58, a home attendant, ran across Northern Boulevard carrying two grocery bags, a purse and a bouquet — the light turning red before she made it fully across.

"Sometimes you have to run it," she said. "I'm late because I have to take care of my grandchildren. I normally pay attention to the lights, but today I had to run."

Rebecca White contributed reporting.

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