

Pedestrian crashes in the Northern Territory

Key messages

- People who use walking as their primary transport, and who occupy and reside in public spaces are at greatest risk of pedestrian crashes. We see this across Australia and the world.
- Visibility is a major factor in the severity of pedestrian crashes in the NT. Compared to daylight, the odds of a fatal crash occurring are 10.90 times higher at dawn/dusk and 10.99 times higher on dark roads without streetlights.
- Speed limits are important for crash outcomes. The odds of a pedestrian crash resulting in a fatality on NT roads increases by 3.3% for every 1km/h increase in designated road speed.
- Almost one in five (19%) pedestrian crashes were a hit and run.
- Looking at the hotspots where pedestrian crashes happen, many of these are locations with high foot traffic, where people have to cross busy, high-speed roads to access shops or bus-stops, and which feature alcohol and grocery outlets.
- Pedestrian crashes were 65 times more likely to end in fatality and three times more likely to end in severe injury when alcohol was involved (for either the pedestrian and/or driver). Reducing drink driving and keeping people safe from high-speed roads while they are intoxicated is a priority for reducing pedestrian injury and deaths.
- There are many complex health and social factors that lead to people being on or near roads and at risk of pedestrian crashes. These factors include inequitable access to transport, housing, accommodation, services, and healthcare. Addressing the social, cultural and economic determinants of health and wellbeing will improve road safety for all Territorians.

Background and context

In the Northern Territory pedestrian crashes account for 23.1% of road fatalities compared to 13.7% nationally.

Details of the research

This study uses ten years of pedestrian crashes records and hospital admissions, alongside interviews with people with professional and lived experience of pedestrian crashes or exposure to pedestrian crash risk factors, to understand why pedestrian crashes happen in the NT and how they might be prevented. This study was funded by the Northern Territory Motor Accident Compensation Commission (MACC).

Implications of the research

Pedestrian injuries and deaths often occur in a perfect storm of factors involving road conditions (i.e. poor visibility, high speed limits), factors related to the driver (i.e. alcohol or drug use, post-crash behaviour) and factors related to the pedestrian (presence on or near roads, physical and mental health, alcohol and drug use). Reducing or removing one factor may prevent a crash or reduce the severity of outcome if it does occur. We recommend the following actions will be most likely to have the greatest impact, some at low or no cost.

Recommendations

1. Reduce speed limits in areas of high pedestrian traffic
2. Ensure (quality) street lighting in areas of high pedestrian traffic

3. Expand the enforcement of drink driving in populated areas, supported by emotive public persuasion campaigns
4. Expand access to and availability of harm reduction services (i.e. Sobering Up Shelter beds)
5. Quality outreach and wraparound care including cultural, alcohol and other drugs, social and emotional wellbeing, primary care
6. Work with the Liquor Commission regarding concerns about outlets overserving
7. Consider provision of safe spaces for people to consume alcohol
8. Ensure there are appropriate crossings available to access shops and transport
9. Support local councils and communities to identify appropriate and feasible options to reduce transport disadvantage
10. Expand access to safe and appropriate accommodation in towns

About us

Menzies is one of Australia's leading medical research institutes dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and a leader in global and tropical research into life-threatening illnesses. The Alcohol and Drugs research program aims to undertake high-quality, impactful research that benefits Territorians. We partner with national and international researchers as well as Alcohol and other Drug services, Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations and not-for-profit agencies from across the Territory and Australia more broadly.

Contact

For further information, please contact Dr Sarah Clifford, Research Fellow:

sarah.clifford@menzies.edu.au