



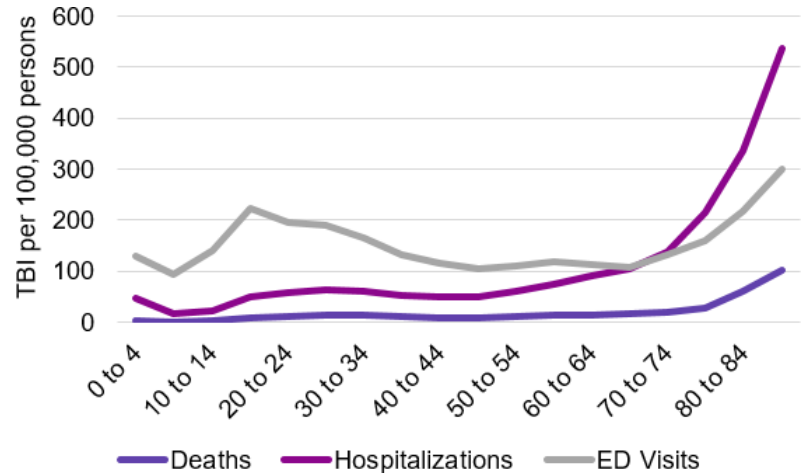
# Injury and Violence Prevention Branch

## Traumatic Brain Injury Among Older Californians, 2020

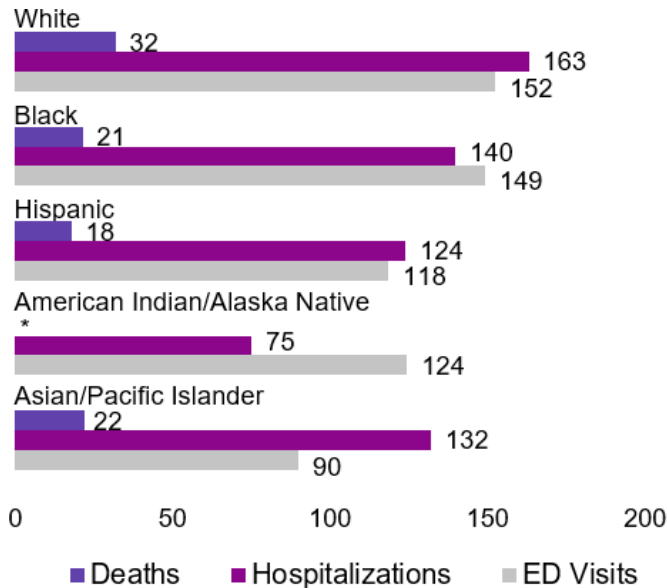
### Background

A traumatic brain injury (TBI) is an injury that disrupts the normal function of the brain. A TBI can adversely affect cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and physical functioning, reducing the quality of life for an individual and burdening families and communities. A TBI can be caused by a bump, blow, jolt, or penetration to the head. The body's aging process puts older adults at greater risk for TBI. Rates of TBI deaths and hospitalizations are greatest among Californian older adults (aged 55 years and older). Among the estimated 11.2 million older adults living in California in 2020, TBI contributed to 2,912 deaths, 17,528 hospitalizations, and 15,708 emergency department (ED) visits. This data brief provides an overview of older adult TBIs in California.

**TBI rates increase for older adults, especially for deaths and more severe injuries that require hospitalization.**

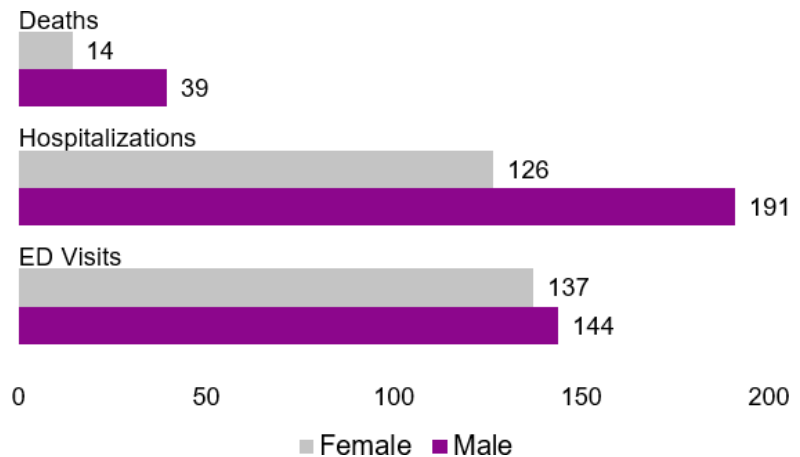


**Older adult Californians who are white have the highest rates (per 100,000) of TBI deaths, hospitalizations, and ED visits.**



\*AI/AN TBI deaths suppressed due to small number of observations.

**Older adult males have higher rates (per 100,000) of TBI deaths and hospitalizations compared to older adult females.**



This data brief is a product of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Injury and Violence Prevention Branch (IVPB). IVPB's mission is to help Californians achieve their full potential by ensuring that everyone has safe places in which to live, work, play, and fully participate in all activities of daily life free of violence or injury.

For more information please contact: [HealthyAging@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:HealthyAging@cdph.ca.gov)

## Leading Causes of TBI in Older Adults

Unintentional falls were the most common cause of TBI deaths, hospitalizations, and ED visits among older Californians in 2020. Additional common causes of death were suicides by firearm and unintentional motor vehicle traffic (MVT) collisions. The most common causes of hospitalizations beyond falls were unintentional MVT collisions and unintentional strikes to the head. These three categories were also the most common causes for ED visits.

## TBI Resources

### Falls Prevention

CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control created the [STEADI \(Stopping Elderly Accidents, Deaths, and Injuries\) toolkit](#) to help health care providers incorporate fall risk assessment and interventions into their practice.

### Suicide Prevention

Everyone can play a role in suicide prevention by learning the warning signs of suicide, finding the words to reach out to a loved one, and knowing where to turn for help. Learn more about suicide prevention at [www.suicideispreventable.org](http://www.suicideispreventable.org).

Additionally, the CDC created the "[Preventing Suicide: A Technical Package of Policy, Programs, and Practices](#)" which represents a core set of evidence-based strategies to prevent suicide.



**Chat:** [SuicidePreventionLifeline.org](http://SuicidePreventionLifeline.org)  
**Talk:** 1-800-273-TALK (8255)  
**En español:** 1-888-628-9454

### Traffic Safety

The UC San Diego Training Research and Education for Driving Safety (TREDS) program collaborates with organizations to offer programs that promote driving safety for the community, with a special focus on older road users. TREDS [Guide for Aging Road Users](#) provides resources for older drivers.

Developed by UC Berkeley's Safe Transportation Research and Education Center (SafeTREC), [The Safe Routes for Older Adults Guide](#) provides communities with information on walking and bicycling safety for older adults.

Deaths	
Causes	Injuries (%)
1. Unintentional Fall	1,609 (55%)
2. Suicide by Firearm	700 (24%)
3. Unintentional MVT	250 (9%)
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Hospitalizations	
Causes	Injuries (%)
1. Unintentional Fall	14,375 (74%)
2. Unintentional MVT	2,207 (11%)
3. Unintentional Strike	509 (3%)
.....	
ED Visits	
Causes	Injuries (%)
1. Unintentional Fall	10,679 (68%)
2. Unintentional Strike	1,568 (10%)
3. Unintentional MVT	1,343 (9%)
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**Source Data:** Deaths identified from the 2020 CDPH California Comprehensive Master Death File; Hospital and ED visits identified from the 2020 California Department of Health Care Access and Information Patient Discharge Data (PDD) and ED data, respectively.  
**TBI Case Definition:** TBI Fatalities and proposed TBI non-fatal hospitalizations and ED visit case definition diagnosis codes from Thomas KE, Johnson RL. State injury indicators report: Instructions for preparing 2020 data. Atlanta (GA): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control; 2022  
**Rates per 100,000 Persons:** Calculated using 2020 population data from California Department of Finance. Demographic Research Unit. Report P-3: Population Projections, California, 2010-2060 (Baseline 2019 Population Projections; Vintage 2020 Release). Sacramento: California. July 2021.