



# ClaimStat Alert

Office of the New York City Comptroller

**Scott M. Stringer**



BUREAU OF POLICY & RESEARCH AND BUREAU OF LAW AND ADJUSTMENT

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## **Protecting Pedestrians: The City's Fleet and Vision Zero**

New York is a city of pedestrians. With the lowest rate of car ownership in the United States, subway ridership at its highest level since 1950, and tourism continuing to rise, millions of pedestrians are using our streets and sidewalks every day. As a result, they frequently compete for precious space with cars, trucks, and bicycles, often with deadly consequences. As of October 16, 2014, 200 New Yorkers had been killed in auto accidents this year, including 101 pedestrians.<sup>1</sup>

While most injuries and fatalities on our streets involve private vehicles, our City fleet—the largest in the nation, with over 28,000 vehicles and over 85,000 authorized drivers—is not immune from these tragedies.<sup>2</sup>

This ClaimStat Alert analyzes pedestrian personal injury claims filed against the City of New York from FY 2007-FY 2014. Some of the key findings are as follows:

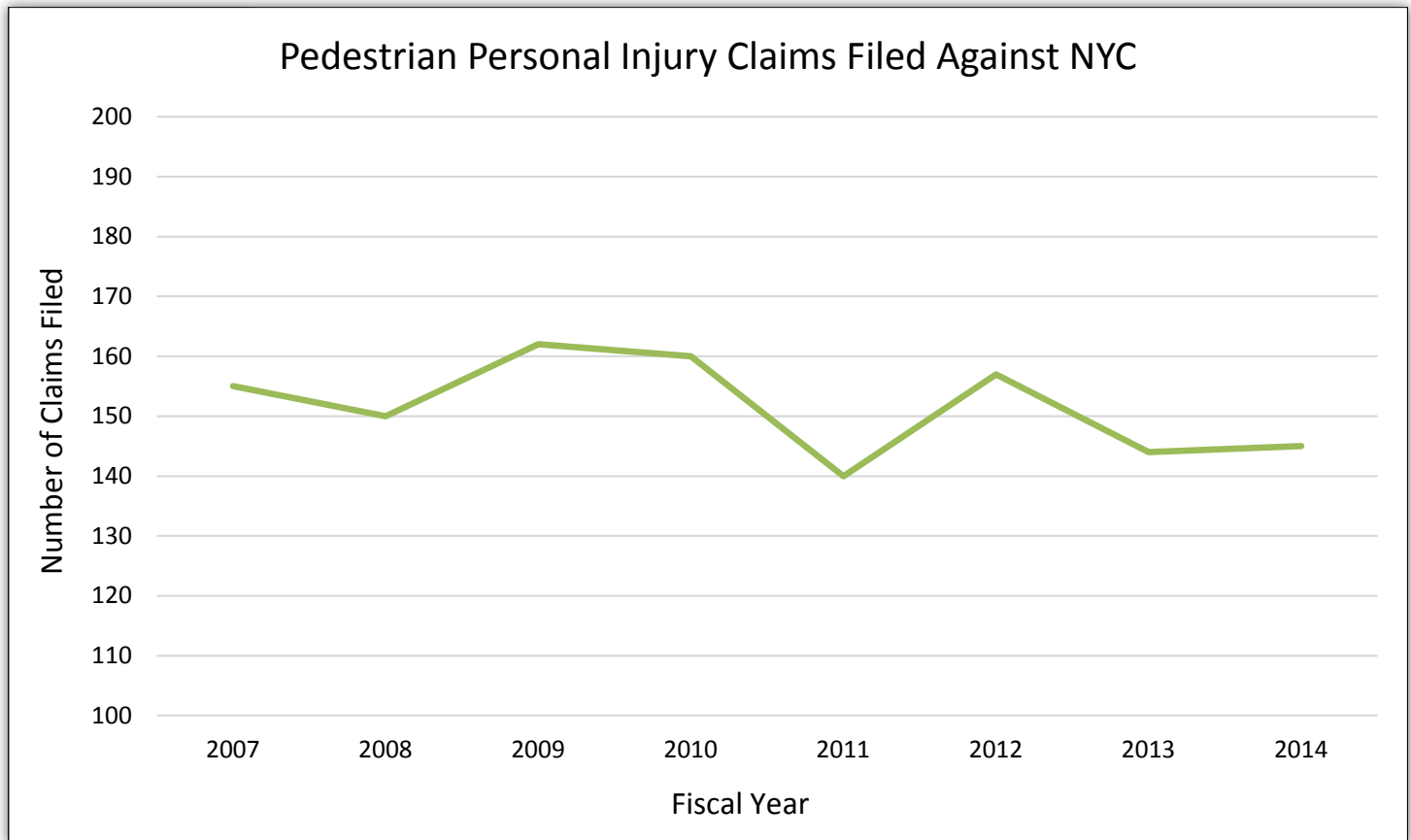
- There were 1,213 pedestrian personal injury claims filed, including 22 pedestrian fatalities.
- In addition to the human cost associated with these claims, taxpayers pay millions of dollars a year in settlements and judgments for personal injury claims by pedestrians—a total of \$88,134,915 over the same time period.
- While the total number of claims has been flat over the last eight years, the number of claims at certain agencies, including the Departments of Sanitation and Education, were higher in FY 2014 than at any time in the past eight years.
- The highest number of claims occur in pedestrian-heavy districts, such as Midtown Manhattan. However, no neighborhood in New York City is immune from harm.
- Claim filers range in age from 0 to 93.

City agencies have a responsibility to make their fleets as safe as possible, for workers and pedestrians alike, in line with the City's Vision Zero initiative. To its credit, NYC Fleet—the entity within the Department of Citywide Administrative Services tasked with issuing rules governing fleet operations, supporting agencies with vehicle training, and publishing the official New York City Driver Handbook<sup>3</sup>—announced earlier this year that it would advance a series of reforms in line with Vision Zero.<sup>4</sup> These include completing the implementation of the CRASH collision tracking system to allow the City to analyze crashes across City agencies; installing “CANceiver” technology that will provide agencies with data on vehicle speeds, seat belt use, braking, and other critical information; expanding State Defensive Driver Training programs; and exploring the use of safety devices, such as back-up cameras and rear-wheel side guards.

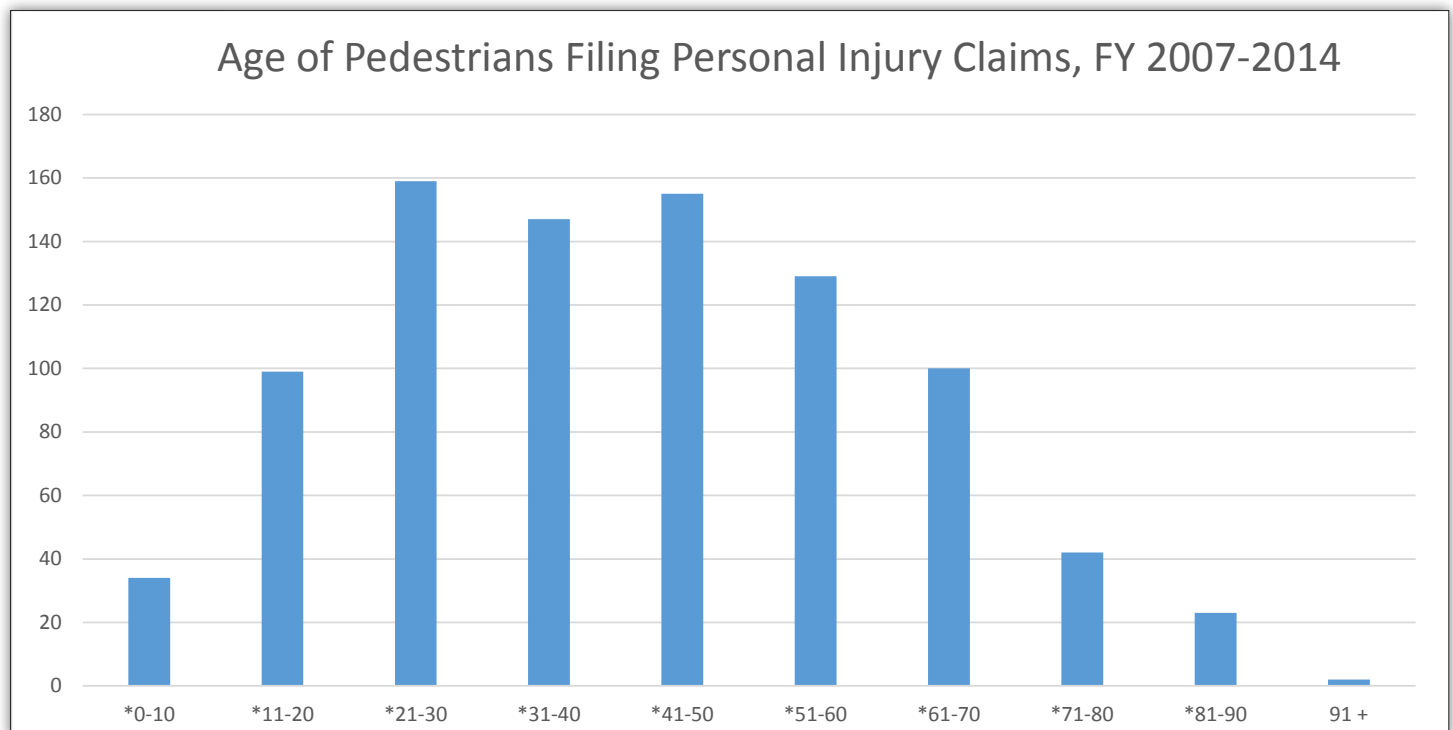
As the City prepares to institute a 25 m.p.h. speed limit on Nov. 7, the data from this ClaimStat Alert should provide City agencies and NYC Fleet with yet another tool to examine trends and work together to make our streets safer for all users.



The number of pedestrian personal injury claims filed against the City has remained fairly steady over the past eight years, as shown in the following chart.



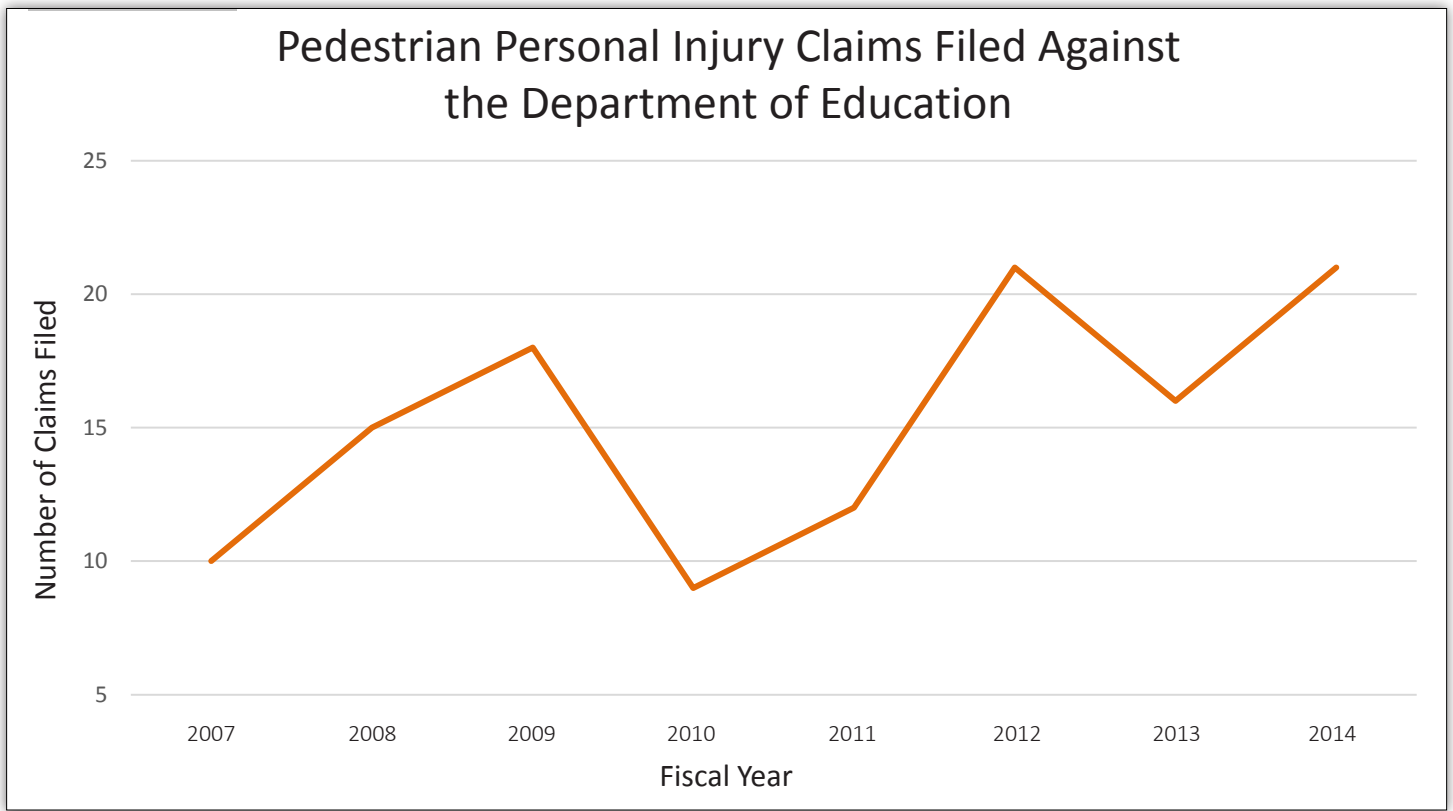
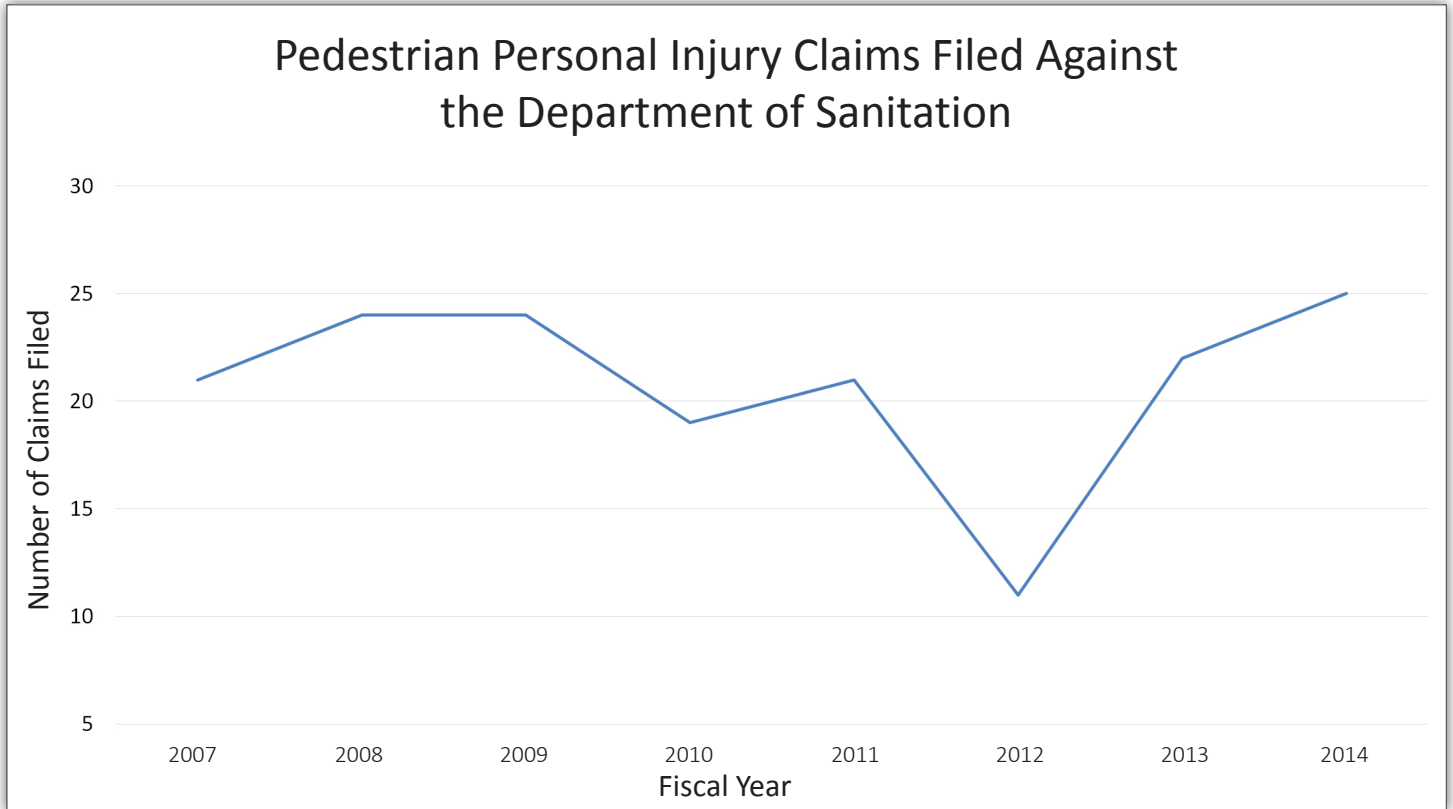
These claims affect New Yorkers of all ages across all five boroughs. Claim filers range in age from 0 to 93, with the average age of a filer being 42.<sup>5</sup>





While the overall trend line for pedestrian personal injury claims is flat across City agencies, when we dig deeper, certain trends emerge, including a recent uptick in the number of claims against the Departments of Sanitation and Education as well as “hot spots” in Midtown Manhattan, East Harlem, and elsewhere.

As shown in the following graphs the Department of Sanitation and the Department of Education faced more claims in FY 2014 than at any time over the past eight years.

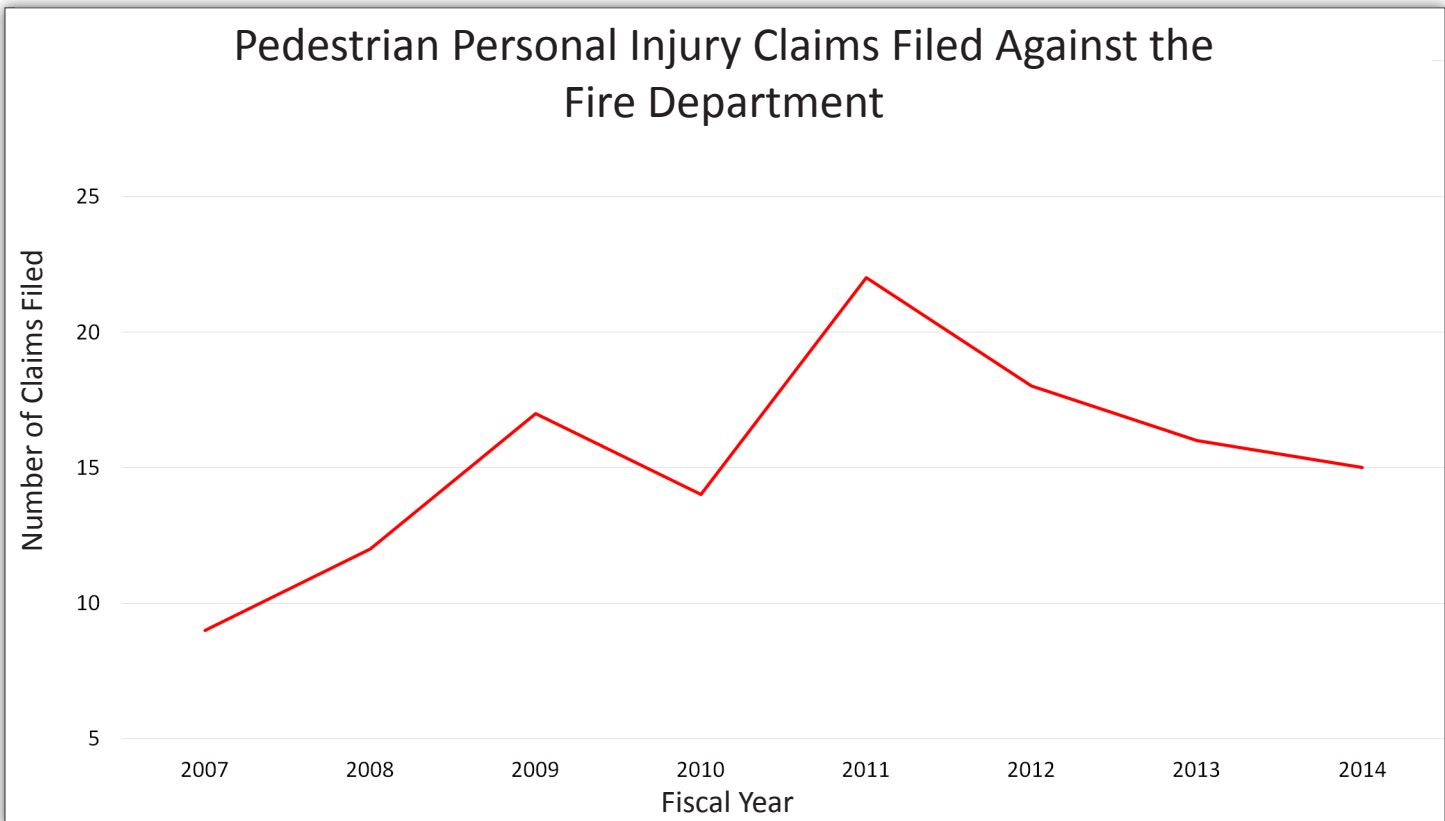




Given the size of its fleet, it is unsurprising that the Police Department continues to be the source of more pedestrian-related personal injury claims than any other agency. However, the trend line for NYPD has been generally positive since FY 2010.



With the exception of a spike in FY 2011, claims against the Fire Department have remained fairly steady since FY 2009.

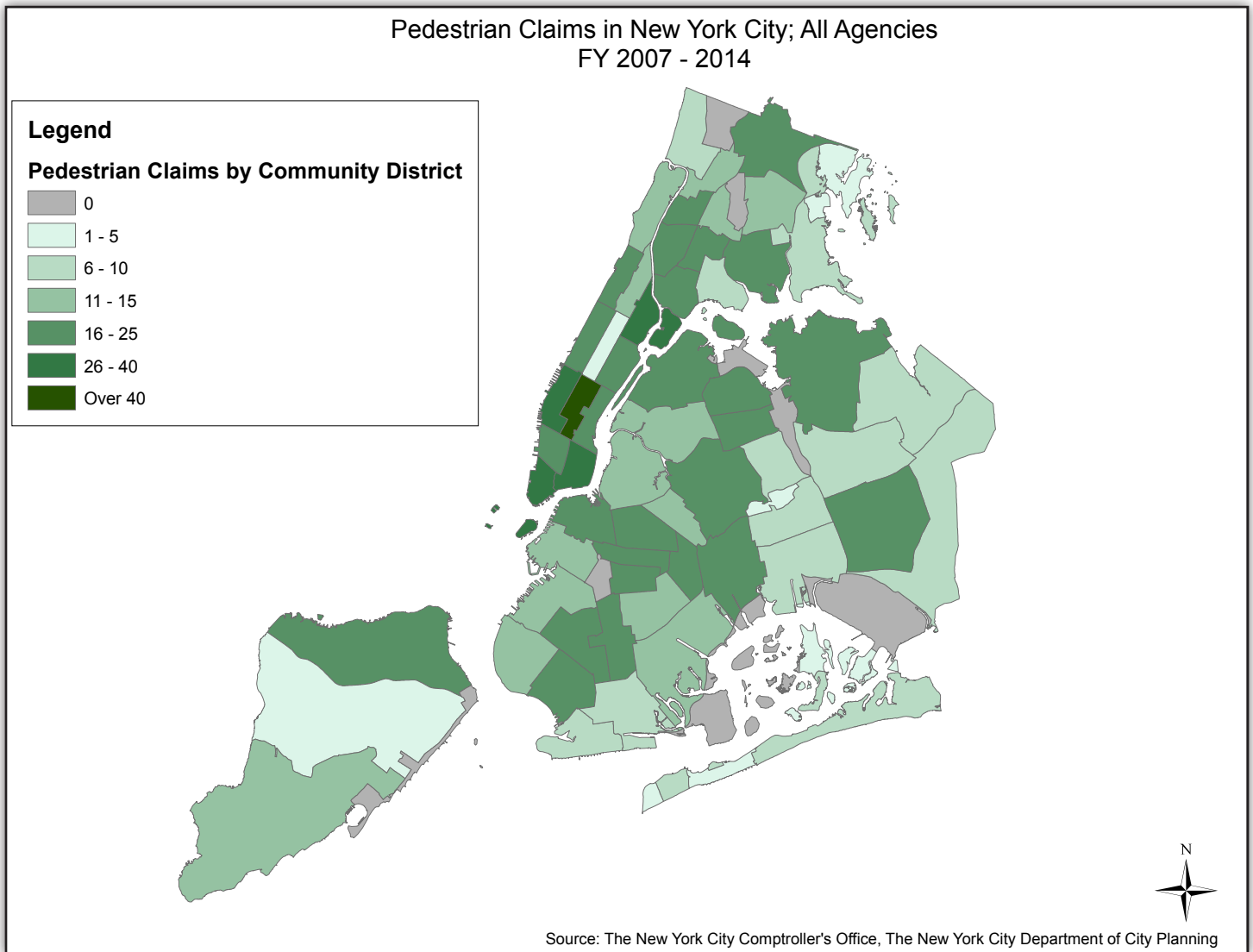




While safety devices and training will invariably be different for a police car, ladder truck, and sanitation vehicle, agencies should seek out solutions both within their departments and through cross-agency collaboration to ensure that best practices are followed throughout the City fleet.

In addition to breaking down claims by agency, this ClaimStat Alert provides an interactive, online mapping tool that allows agency personnel and the public to find more information about individual claims on an agency-by-agency and block-by-block basis.

As shown in the map below, pedestrian personal injury claims occur throughout the five boroughs, with significantly more claims emanating from community districts with higher concentrations of pedestrians, such as Midtown Manhattan (Community District 5).



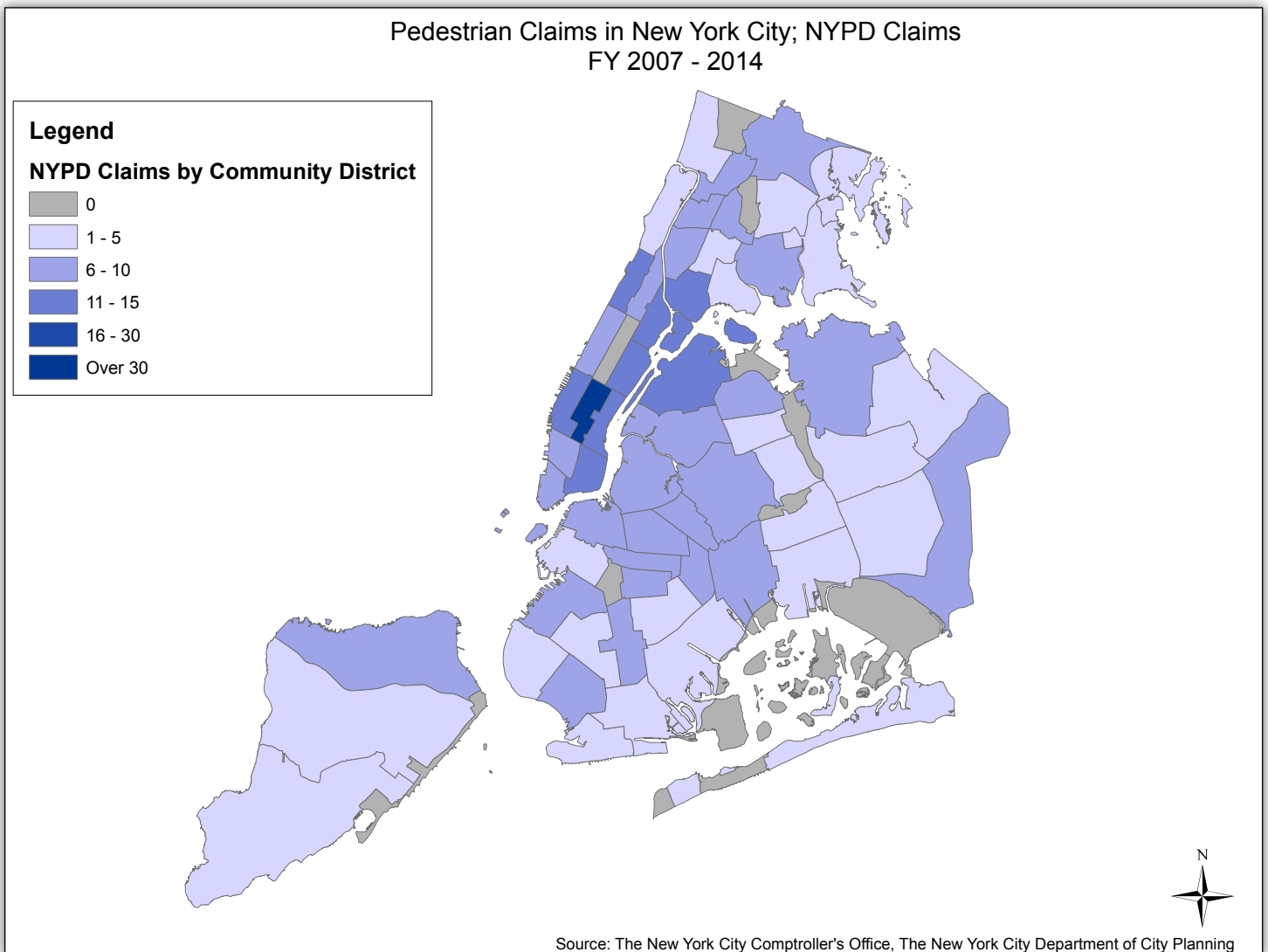


The following chart provides a breakdown of claims and settlement/judgment costs by borough from FY 07-14. The appendix includes data for each Community District.<sup>6</sup>

|               | # of Claims Filed, FY 07-14 | Value of Settlements/Judgments (\$) |
|---------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Bronx         | 220                         | 18.7 million                        |
| Brooklyn      | 337                         | 29.1 million                        |
| Manhattan     | 378                         | 27.0 million                        |
| Queens        | 214                         | 12.5 million                        |
| Staten Island | 39                          | 0.7 million                         |

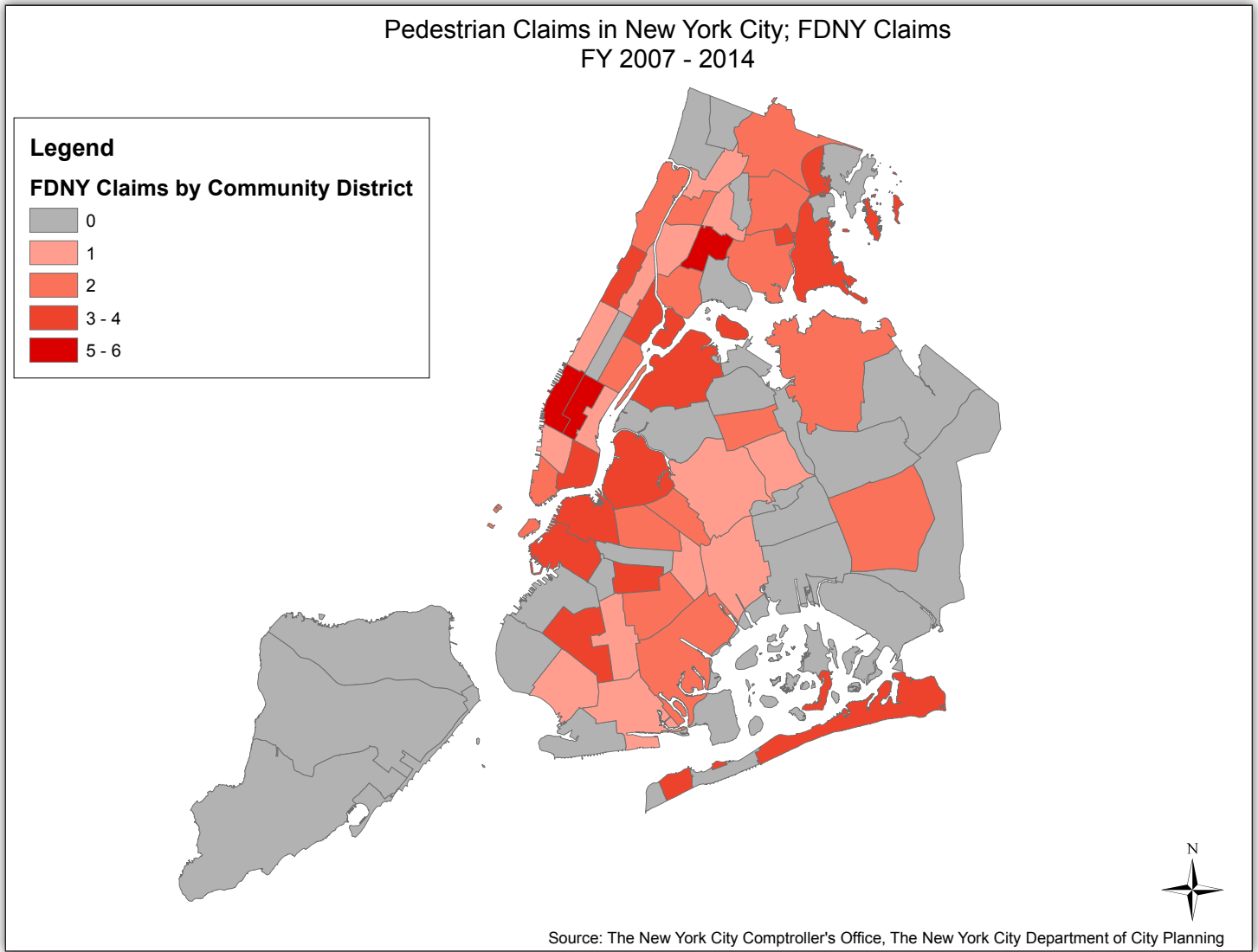
This data, and the [interactive online map](#) that pinpoints claims to the block level, could be used by the Department of Transportation to examine potentially problematic “hot spots” that would benefit from additional traffic calming measures.

In addition, an agency-by-agency breakdown of where claims occur is also useful. For instance, while the NYPD map is similar in most respects to the agency-wide map above, the FDNY map shows hot-spots in several neighborhoods outside Manhattan, including the Rockaways (Queens Community District 15) and the Melrose/Morrisania neighborhoods of the Bronx (Bronx Community District 3).





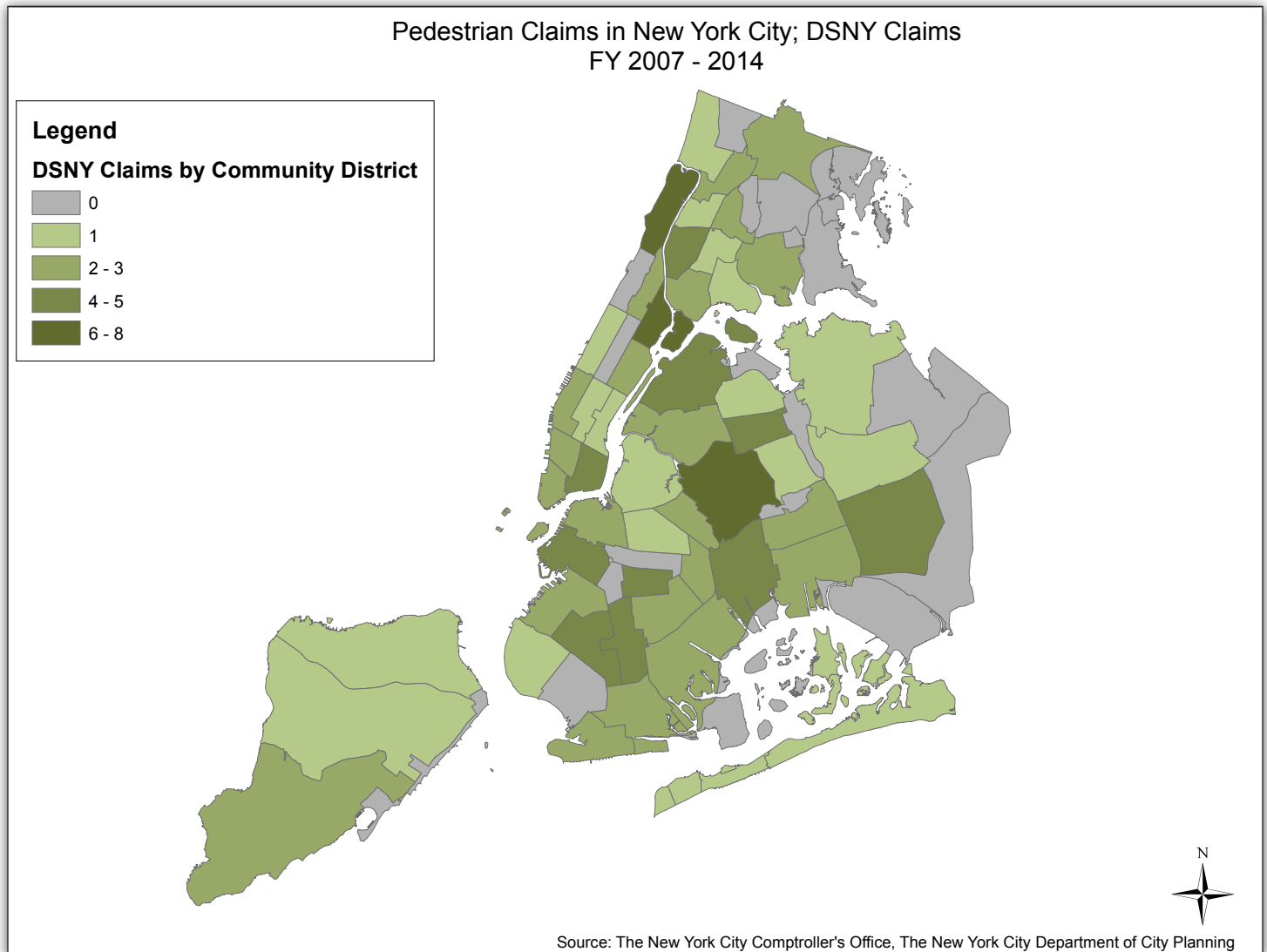
At the same time, there has not been a single pedestrian personal injury claim filed against the FDNY on all of Staten Island over the past eight fiscal years. The FDNY should explore what, if anything, fire companies on Staten Island and other areas with few or no claims are doing to protect pedestrians and determine how best practices can be shared in firehouses throughout the five boroughs.



Likewise, as shown on the following pages, mapping claims against the Departments of Sanitation and Education show certain notable trends.



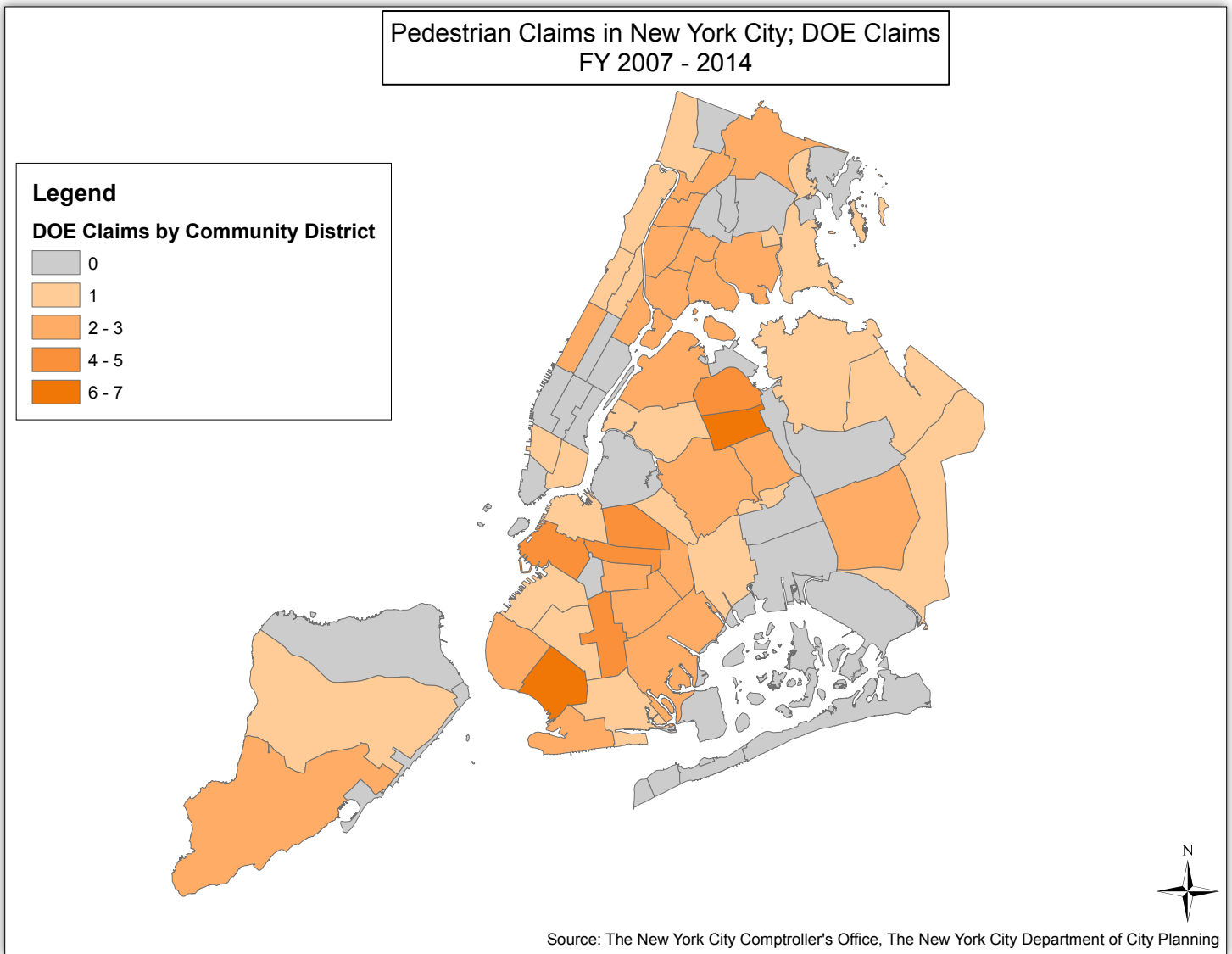
Sanitation “hot spots” include Community Districts 11 and 12 in Manhattan (East Harlem, Inwood, Washington Heights) and Community District 5 in Queens (Maspeth, Glendale, Middle Village, Ridgewood).







The Department of Education map differs significantly from the others, possibly due to the fact that school buses are used much more frequently outside of the Manhattan Core. The Community Districts with the highest number of claims against the DOE include Community District 11 in Brooklyn and Community District 4 in Queens (Corona, Elmhurst, Lefrak City).



ClaimStat is designed to save taxpayer money and improve services across all City agencies by taking a data-driven approach to the thousands of claims filed annually against the City of New York.

City agencies should work with the Comptroller's Office to advance the cause of Vision Zero by sharply reducing the number of pedestrian personal injury claims filed against the City over the next decade.

**APPENDIX**

| CD Number | CD Name                               | Pedestrian Claims |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 101       | Manhattan Community Board 1           | 33                |
| 102       | Manhattan Community Board 2           | 20                |
| 103       | Manhattan Community Board 3           | 33                |
| 104       | Manhattan Community Board 4           | 27                |
| 105       | Manhattan Community Board 5           | 50                |
| 106       | Manhattan Community Board 6           | 24                |
| 107       | Manhattan Community Board 7           | 15                |
| 108       | Manhattan Community Board 8           | 23                |
| 109       | Manhattan Community Board 9           | 18                |
| 110       | Manhattan Community Board 10          | 15                |
| 111       | Manhattan Community Board 11          | 34                |
| 112       | Manhattan Community Board 12          | 15                |
| 164       | Joint Interest Area - Central Park    | 2                 |
| 201       | Bronx Community Board 1               | 21                |
| 202       | Bronx Community Board 2               | 5                 |
| 203       | Bronx Community Board 3               | 17                |
| 204       | Bronx Community Board 4               | 18                |
| 205       | Bronx Community Board 5               | 15                |
| 206       | Bronx Community Board 6               | 15                |
| 207       | Bronx Community Board 7               | 15                |
| 208       | Bronx Community Board 8               | 8                 |
| 209       | Bronx Community Board 9               | 17                |
| 210       | Bronx Community Board 10              | 8                 |
| 211       | Bronx Community Board 11              | 8                 |
| 212       | Bronx Community Board 12              | 17                |
| 228       | Joint Interest Area - Pelham Bay Park | 2                 |
| 301       | Brooklyn Community Board 1            | 12                |
| 302       | Brooklyn Community Board 2            | 22                |
| 303       | Brooklyn Community Board 3            | 19                |
| 304       | Brooklyn Community Board 4            | 13                |
| 305       | Brooklyn Community Board 5            | 20                |
| 306       | Brooklyn Community Board 6            | 13                |
| 307       | Brooklyn Community Board 7            | 11                |
| 308       | Brooklyn Community Board 8            | 17                |
| 309       | Brooklyn Community Board 9            | 19                |
| 310       | Brooklyn Community Board 10           | 11                |
| 311       | Brooklyn Community Board 11           | 16                |
| 312       | Brooklyn Community Board 12           | 17                |
| 313       | Brooklyn Community Board 13           | 8                 |
| 314       | Brooklyn Community Board 14           | 21                |
| 315       | Brooklyn Community Board 15           | 9                 |
| 316       | Brooklyn Community Board 16           | 18                |
| 317       | Brooklyn Community Board 17           | 14                |
| 318       | Brooklyn Community Board 18           | 11                |



| CD Number | CD Name   | Pedestrian Claims |
|-----------|---|-------------------|
| 401       | Queens Community Board 1                                | 24                |
| 402       | Queens Community Board 2                                | 15                |
| 403       | Queens Community Board 3                                | 16                |
| 404       | Queens Community Board 4                                | 23                |
| 405       | Queens Community Board 5                                | 19                |
| 406       | Queens Community Board 6                                | 9                 |
| 407       | Queens Community Board 7                                | 18                |
| 408       | Queens Community Board 8                                | 7                 |
| 409       | Queens Community Board 9                                | 5                 |
| 410       | Queens Community Board 10                               | 6                 |
| 411       | Queens Community Board 11                               | 6                 |
| 412       | Queens Community Board 12                               | 18                |
| 413       | Queens Community Board 13                               | 8                 |
| 414       | Queens Community Board 14                               | 7                 |
| 482       | Joint Interest Area - Forest Park                       | 1                 |
| 484       | Joint Interest Area - Queens Gateway National Rec. Area | 1                 |
| 501       | Staten Island Community Board 1                         | 18                |
| 502       | Staten Island Community Board 2                         | 5                 |
| 503       | Staten Island Community Board 3                         | 10                |

## Endnotes

1. <http://project.wnyc.org/traffic-deaths/>.
2. [http://www.nyc.gov/html/ops/downloads/pdf/fleet\\_report.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/ops/downloads/pdf/fleet_report.pdf); While the Police Department (8,686 vehicles) and Department of Sanitation (5,782 vehicles) together make up nearly 50 percent of the City fleet, a wide array of agencies deploy cars and trucks throughout the five boroughs on a daily basis.
3. [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcas/downloads/pdf/fleet/city\\_vehicle\\_driver\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcas/downloads/pdf/fleet/city_vehicle_driver_handbook.pdf); The Handbook was most recently updated in February 2014.
4. [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcas/downloads/pdf/fleet/nyc\\_fleet\\_newsletter\\_02\\_21\\_2014.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcas/downloads/pdf/fleet/nyc_fleet_newsletter_02_21_2014.pdf).
5. 890 of the 1213 claims in the dataset included age data.
6. 962 of the 1213 total claims were mappable and are included in the appendix. The other 262 claims have either missing or incorrect claim occurrence data that precludes a pinpointing of their location.



**NEW YORK CITY COMPTROLLER**  
**SCOTT M. STRINGER**

MUNICIPAL BUILDING • 1 CENTRE STREET, 5TH FLOOR • NEW YORK, NY 10007  
PHONE (212) 669-3500 FAX (212) 669-8878  
WWW.COMPTROLLER.NYC.GOV

