

# The Inequality of Who Gets Hit by Cars

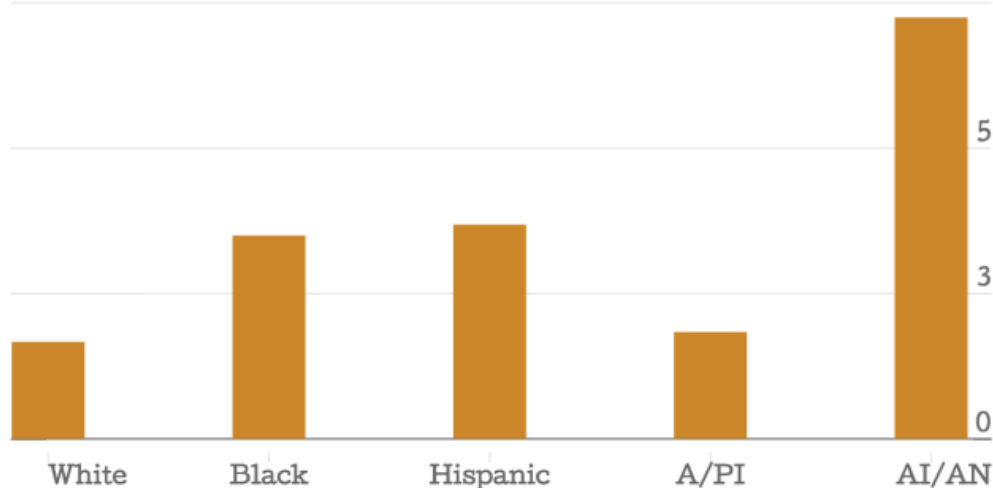
OCTOBER 19, 2015



While the number of Americans dying in car crashes has decreased steadily since 2003, the number of those cases in which pedestrians were killed by cars was at a five-year high in the latest data. In 2012, 14 percent of all people [killed in traffic accidents](#) were not in cars, but were walking, running, jogging, hiking, sitting or lying down.

The traffic deaths aren't distributed equally though. Native Americans, Hispanics and [blacks](#) are much more likely to die as pedestrians in traffic accidents than whites or Asian-Americans, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

## Traffic-Related Pedestrian Annual Death Rate

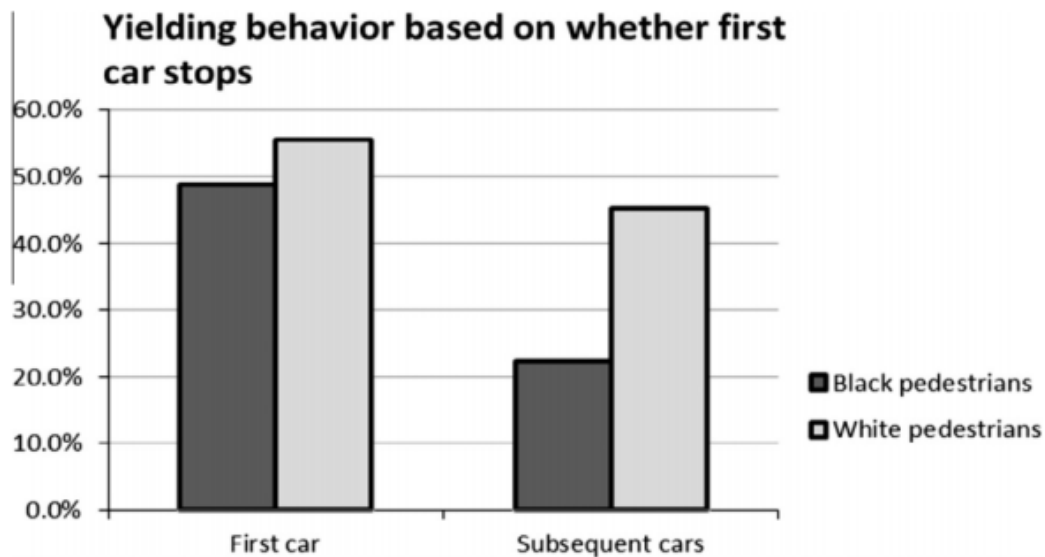


Lindsey Cook for USN&WR; Source: CDC; Age-adjusted rate per 100,000 of population

Minorities may be more likely to live in urban areas where they would be crossing busy intersections more frequently. And alcohol use may play a role as well. But [racial bias](#) among drivers could also be part of the reason for these differences.

[In a recent study](#), researchers dressed three white men and three black men in identical clothes, and had them walk the same way and exhibit the same mannerisms. Each participant approached the crosswalk at a busy two-lane, one-way street in downtown Portland while researchers timed how long it took for cars to stop for the pedestrians.

When a black man was waiting at the crosswalk, drivers were less likely to stop. On average, the black participants waited 32 percent longer and had twice as many cars pass them by. The difference became more pronounced after the first car passed. Researchers speculated that seeing another car in front of them pass without stopping made other drivers feel that stopping wasn't as necessary.



**Fig. 1.** Yielding behavior by pedestrian race depending on whether first car stops.

In addition to cars being less likely to stop, which could create more accidents, the researchers also posited that it would make minorities less likely to use the crosswalk because of past negative experiences, which would lead to more risky behavior at crosswalks such as crossing without a signal or not at a crosswalk.