

Males hit by vehicles twice as likely to die, study finds

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(Medical Xpress)—Worldwide, more than 1.2 million traffic fatalities occur yearly, and the lives of pedestrians account for a third of those lost. In the United States, pedestrians make up 12 percent of deaths from traffic collisions. According to a newly published study, male pedestrians struck by vehicles are more than twice as likely to die as their female counterparts.

Motao Zhu, M.D., Ph.D., an assistant professor at the West Virginia University School of Public Health and Injury Control Research Center, led a group of researchers in the analysis of U.S. travel and [traffic data](#) from the years 2008 and 2009. Though other studies have shown higher numbers of pedestrian fatalities among men, none had taken other associated factors into consideration.

"Our analysis differed from previous studies as it was the first to examine three main relative contributors to pedestrian death," Dr. Zhu said. "We looked at the amount of daily walking exposure each gender reported, the male and female risk of being involved in a collision while walking and the fatality rates per collision case. No existing research had been this thorough."

The collected data excluded children under the age of five.

According to the U.S. National Household Travel Survey, [males and females](#) walked roughly the same distances each day. A sample of police-reported crash data from the same period showed males to be at a

slightly greater risk of being involved in a vehicle-pedestrian collision.

Another set of data revealed a far more notable difference: of those [pedestrians](#) who were involved in a collision with a vehicle, males were far more likely to die as a result. When all three factors were analyzed collectively, the higher [fatality rate](#) led the researchers to conclude that male [walkers](#) were 2.3 times as likely to die as the result of a vehicular collision.

Continued research will examine factors that contribute to the marked difference in [death rates](#). Zhu explained that the scientific community already has a good idea why fatalities are far more common among male pedestrians.

"Of course, we already know that a vehicle's speed affects the severity of a person's injuries. Alcohol involvement can also play a large role, and not just with drivers. While most people know not to drive while drunk, it's not safe to walk the streets while impaired, either," Zhu said.

"Next, we will look at other factors that make males more likely to suffer fatal collisions. Are they taking more risks, such as crossing or walking along highways or other higher speed roads? There are many other factors to consider."

Zhu noted that lowered speed limits have been associated with decreased pedestrian deaths in some high-risk pedestrian areas. Infrastructural improvements, such as sidewalks, can also play a positive role, as can improved and increased use of public transportation.

The study appears on the website of *Injury Prevention*, an international peer-reviewed journal. The article, titled, "Why more male pedestrians die in vehicle-pedestrian collisions than female pedestrians: a compositional analysis," is now available at

injuryprevention.bmj.com/.

Provided by West Virginia University

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