

Safe for Whom?

Transportation Safety in the Context of Planning and Infrastructure Inequities

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November 16, 2020

Lesson 1: Transportation inequities
mean
people experience streets differently

A High Death Rate for Hispanic Pedestrians in the South

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS DEC. 4, 2005

Bike Safety a Critical Lesson in Latino Community

Posted

PUBLIC SAFETY & JUSTICE

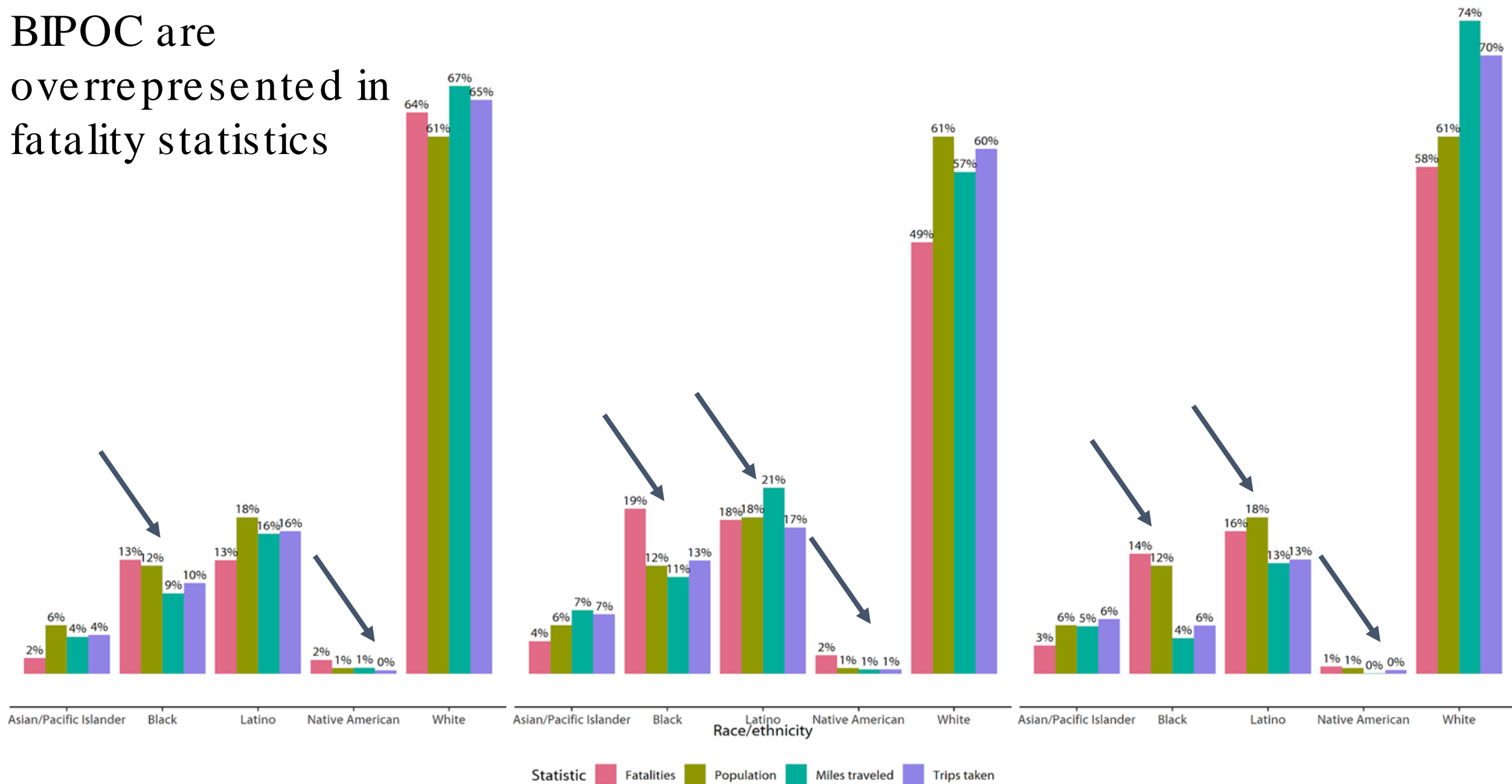
Pedestrians Dying at Disproportionate Rates in America's Poorer Neighborhoods

Many cities have made pedestrian safety a priority, but their efforts rarely focus on poorer areas, which have approximately double the fatality rates of wealthier communities.

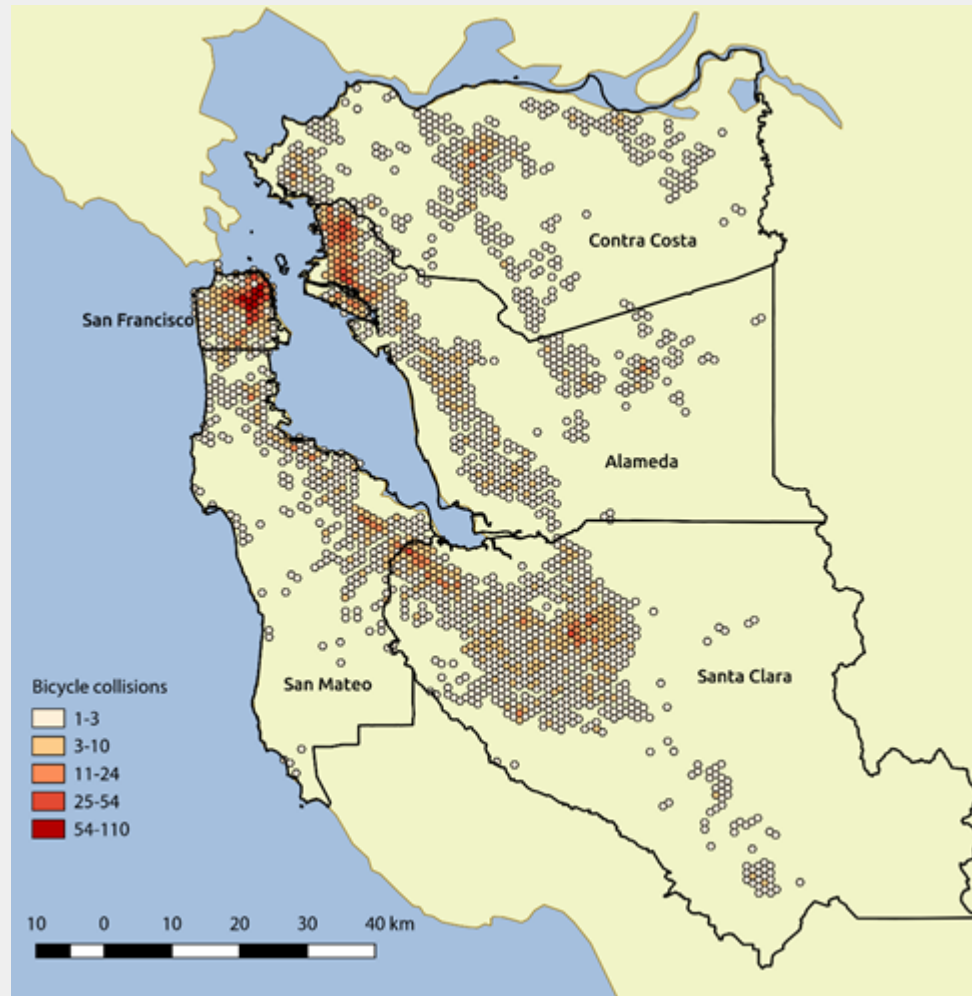
BY MIKE MACIAG | AUGUST 2014



BIPOC are
overrepresented in
fatality statistics



Black and Latino cyclists face greater risks for crashes



In a study of 7,088 bicycle crashes:

- Black cyclists faced disproportionate risk of crashes
- Reasons for crashes varied by demographic group
- **Lower traffic or bike infrastructure didn't help POC**

Barajas, Jesus M. "Not All Crashes Are Created Equal: Associations between the Built Environment and Disparities in Bicycle Collisions." *Journal of Transport and Land Use* 11, no. 1 (2018): 865–82. <https://doi.org/10.5198/jtlu.2018.1145>.

Identity and neighborhood are crucial factors in understanding safe travel behavior



Photo: David Butow/Cycling Magazine

- Peers, family, and CBOs influence cycling among immigrants
- Cycling may be taboo or not fit the integration narrative
- Gentrification + cycling is a thorny issue

Barajas, Jesus M. "Supplemental Infrastructure: How Community Networks and Immigrant Identity Influence Cycling." *Transportation* 47 (2020): 1251–1274.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11116-018-9955-7>.

Lesson 2:

Safe doesn't always mean
safe

Black cyclists face particular barriers, have particular responses to threats

Common barriers

- Crime/personal security
- Inadequate infrastructure
- Racial profiling



Image: New Jersey Bicycle and Pedestrian Resource Center

Brown, Charles, et al. *Understanding Barriers to Bicycle Access & Use in Black and Hispanic Communities in New Jersey* 2016; Schneider, Robert J., et al. "Can a Twelve-Week Intervention Reduce Barriers to Bicycling among Overweight Adults in Low-Income Latino and Black Communities?" *Transportation Research Part F* 56 (2018): 99–112.

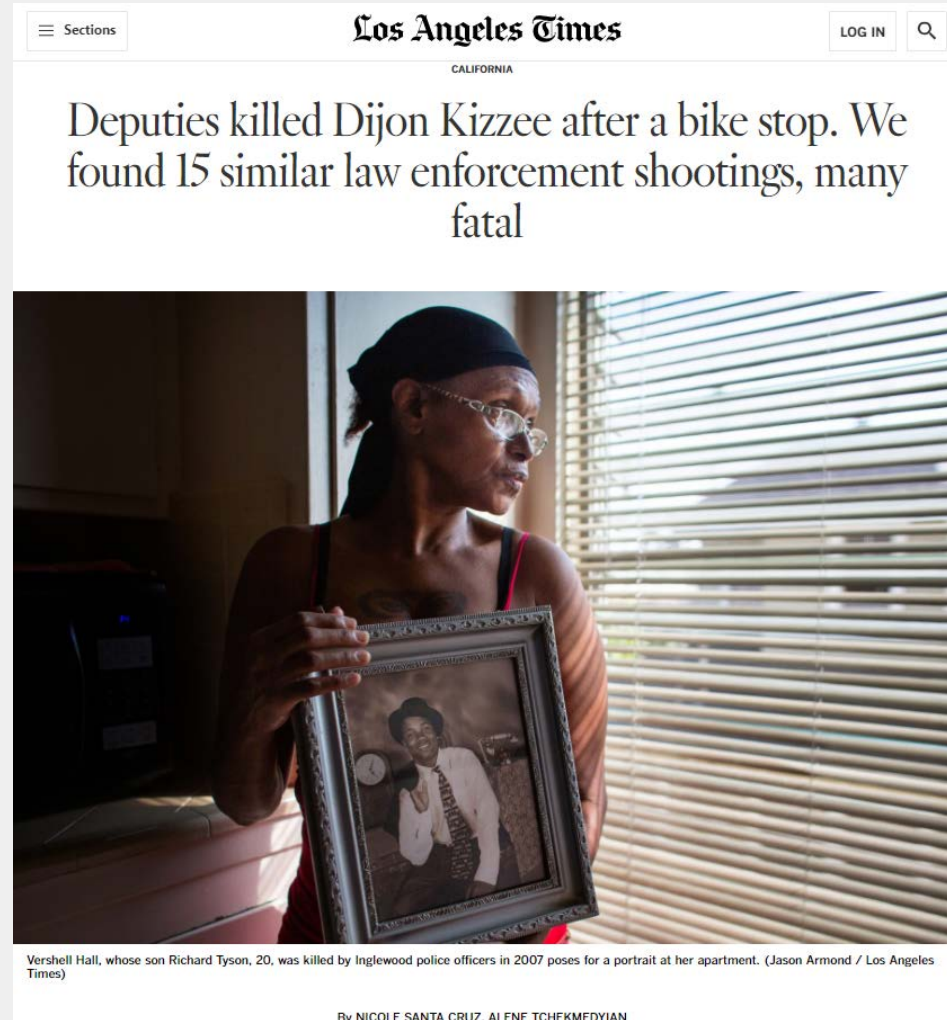
Black cyclists in high-poverty neighborhoods prefer visible, not necessarily quiet streets



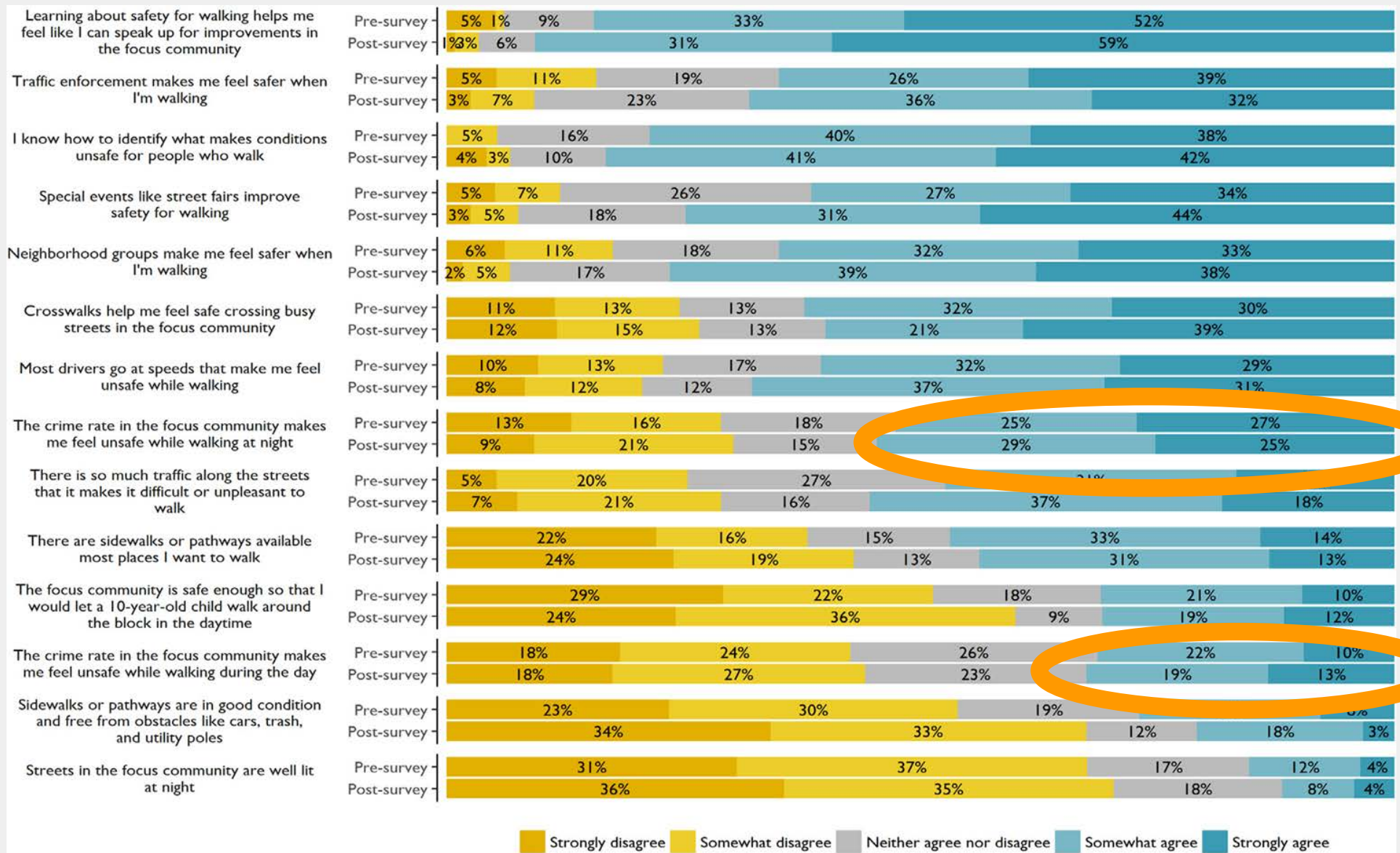
Photo: Anne Lusk/The Conversation

Lusk, Anne C., Walter C. Willett, Vivien Morris, Christopher Byner, and Yanping Li. "Bicycle Facilities Safest from Crime and Crashes: Perceptions of Residents Familiar with Higher Crime/Lower Income Neighborhoods in Boston." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 16, no. 3 (2019): 484.

Recent events highlight the dangers of police enforcement to Black cyclists



Crime is a key barrier to walking too



Barajas, Jesus M., Kate M. Beck, Jill F. Cooper, Ana Lopez, and Amanda Reynosa. "How Effective Are Community Pedestrian Safety Training Workshops? Short-Term Findings from a Program in California." *Journal of Transport & Health* 12 (2019): 183–94.

Lesson 3: Infrastructure inequities compound other inequities

Police engagement is a central component of Chicago's VZ plan



Citywide Policies and Goals

The Vision Zero Action plan sets five citywide policies and four goals for achieving Vision Zero in Chicago:

Citywide Policies

- Approach death and serious injury from traffic crashes as a public health issue.
- Design streets so that speeds are safe for all users of the roadway.
- Lead by example on vehicle safety equipment and driver training.
- Police traffic laws fairly, focusing on education and the dangerous driving behaviors that cause most severe crashes.
- Commit to investing resources equitably.

Goals

- Invest equitably in communities that are most affected by severe traffic crashes.
- Work to change behaviors and perceptions to build a citywide culture of safety.
- Make streets safer for all users.
- Encourage and implement policies, training, and technologies that create safer vehicles and professional drivers.

GOAL 2: A CULTURE OF SAFETY

Police Engagement and Vision Zero

While enforcement is an important and effective tool to prevent dangerous driving behaviors, Chicago will work in partnership with communities and residents to ensure that all traffic safety interventions are fair, focused appropriately, and support the goals outlined in Vision Zero.

The City is committed to Vision Zero police engagement that will:

- Make every traffic safety interaction an educational opportunity, providing information about safe behaviors to people driving, walking, and biking.
- Involve leaders and residents in defining traffic safety within their community.
- Be supported by data and focused on dangerous driving behaviors.

Action

Work with the Chicago Police Department and the Cook County Courts to expand opportunities for traffic safety education.

Impact

As a part of Vision Zero's commitment to emphasizing education over fines, the City will work to ensure that officers provide information about Traffic Safety School options, which may lower the long-term costs of receiving traffic citations, and work with the County to ensure effective programs exist for limiting the cost burden for low-income residents.

Vision Zero Chicago Action Plan, 2017-2019

“Illegal” behaviors are rational responses to planning deficiencies

- Cyclists generally prefer off-street, separated infrastructure
- But cyclists ride on sidewalks along high-traffic roads when no other infrastructure
- Everyone (using all modes) has broken a traffic rule



Image: New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition

Is policing the right safety intervention?

Sidewalk riding is generally riskier than riding most other places

- 1.8 to 16 times the risk of riding on road
- Comparisons mixed: more dangerous riding against traffic, as dangerous as riding on mixed-used paths with pedestrians



Image: Alta Planning & Design

Is policing the right safety intervention?

(Traffic) policing is disparate, racist, and unjust

- Data from 20 million vehicle stops showed pervasive racial disparities
- In Chicago, bicycle citations issued twice as often in Black neighborhoods compared to others (56% of tickets in 2018)
- Discretionary stops (like bike ticketing) drive the racial bias in traffic enforcement; traffic injury responses and traffic safety violations do not

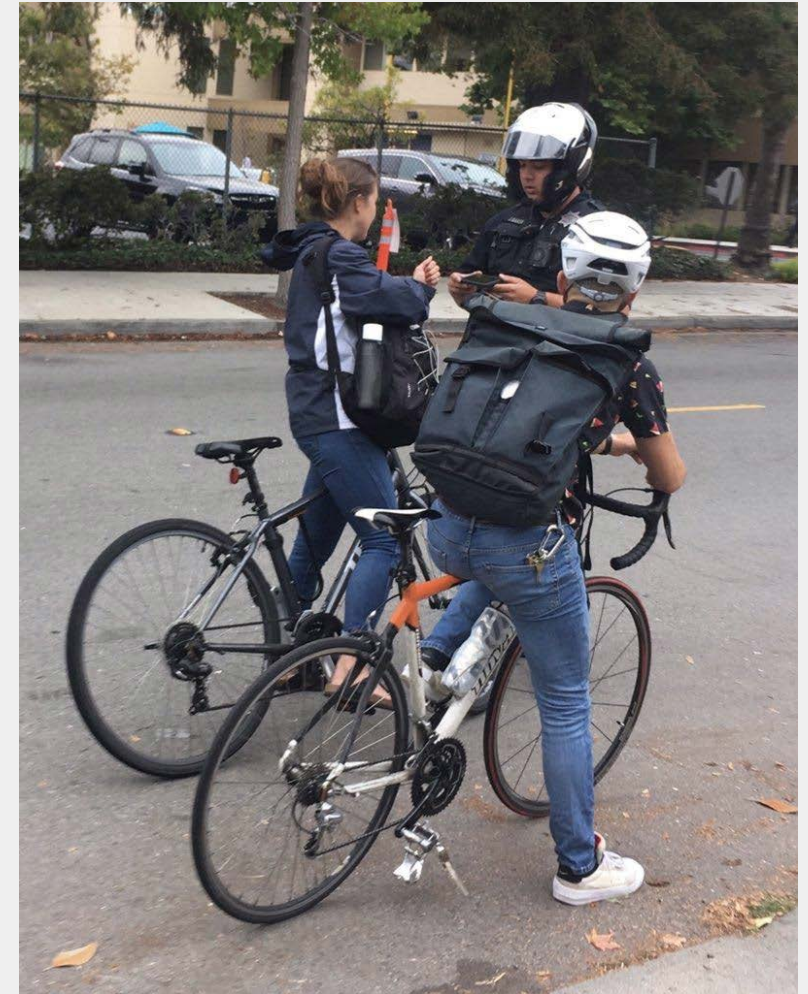


Image: Walk Bike Berkeley

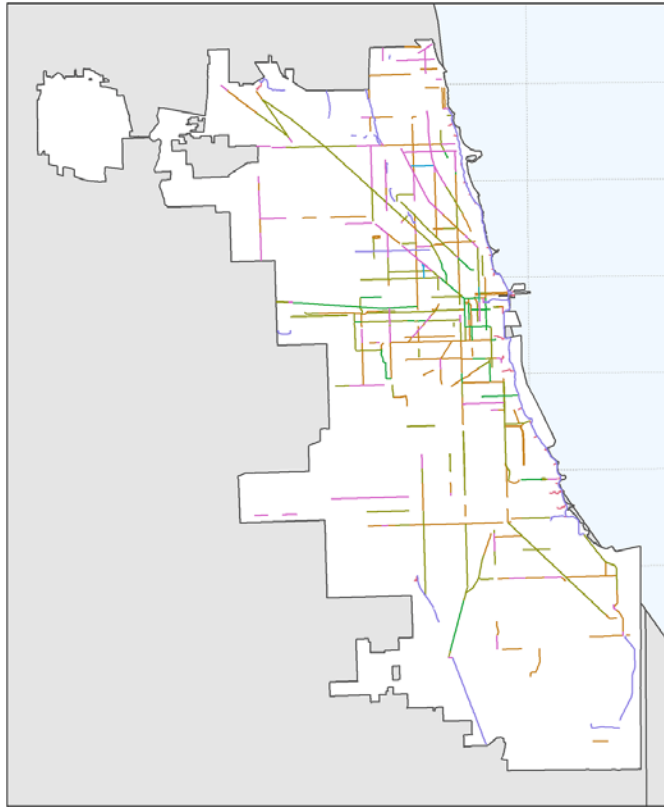
Research goal

To what extent is planning complicit in the overpolicing of Black and Brown communities (using cycling as a case study)?



Image: Noam Galai/Getty Images via the Conversation

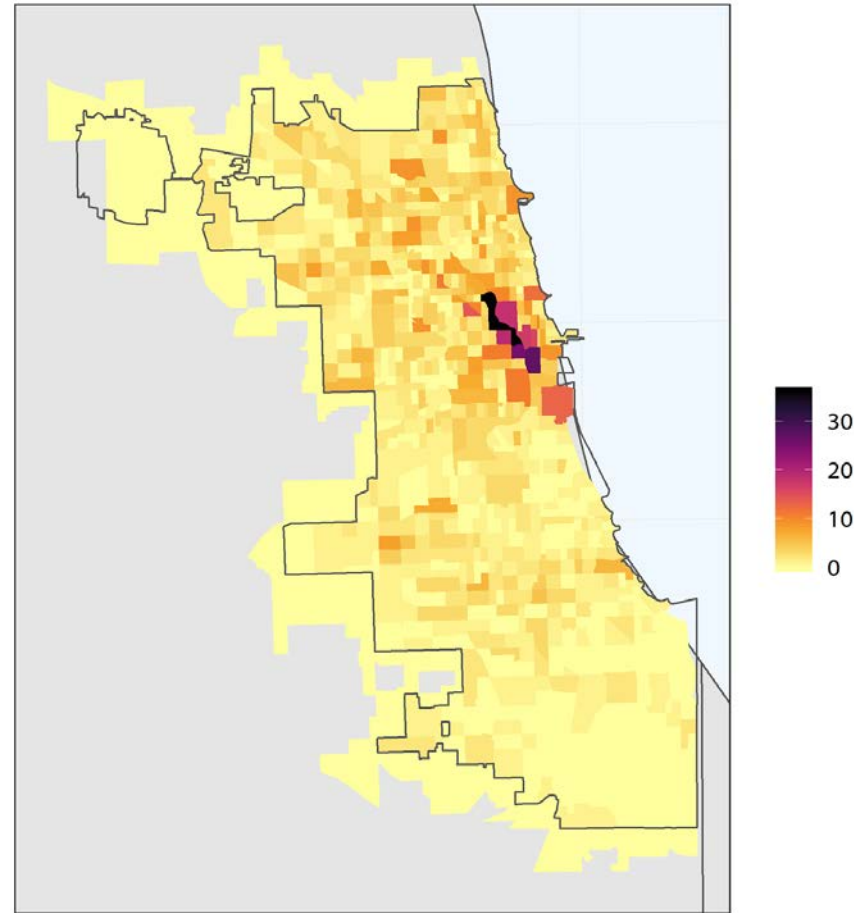
Chicago bikeways



- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| ■ ACCESS PATH | ■ BIKE LANE | ■ BUFFERED BIKE LANE |
| ■ CYCLE TRACK | ■ GREEN WAVE | ■ NEIGHBORHOOD GREENWAY |
| ■ OFF-STREET TRAIL | ■ SHARED-LANE | |

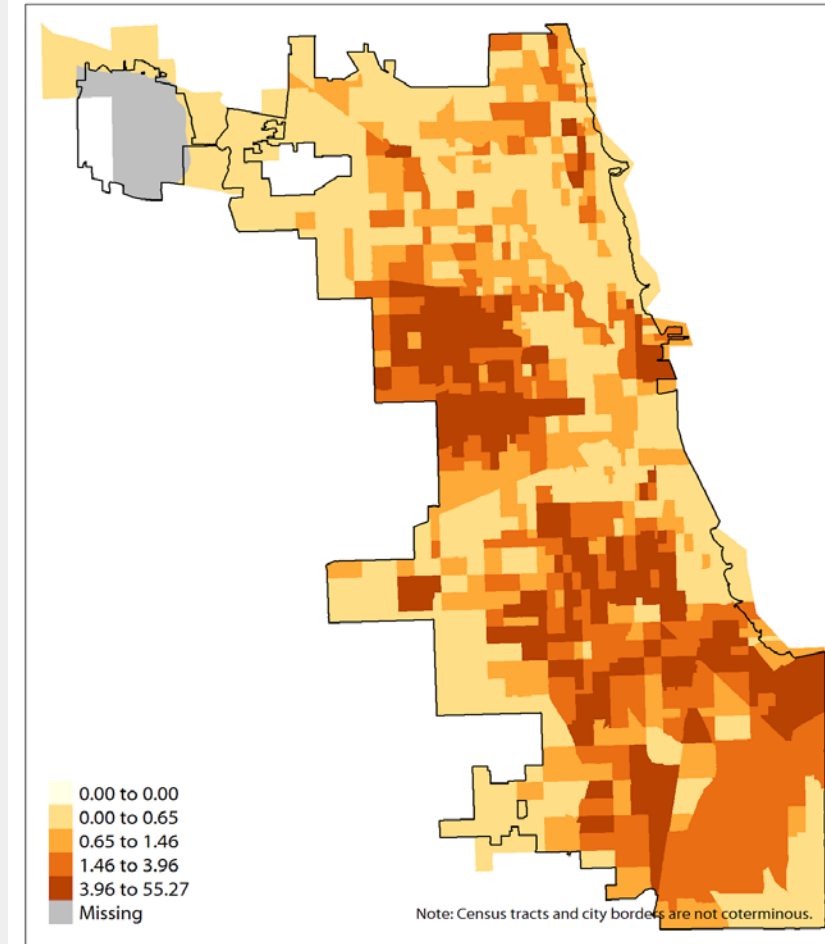
Source: City of Chicago

Bike injury crashes in Chicago



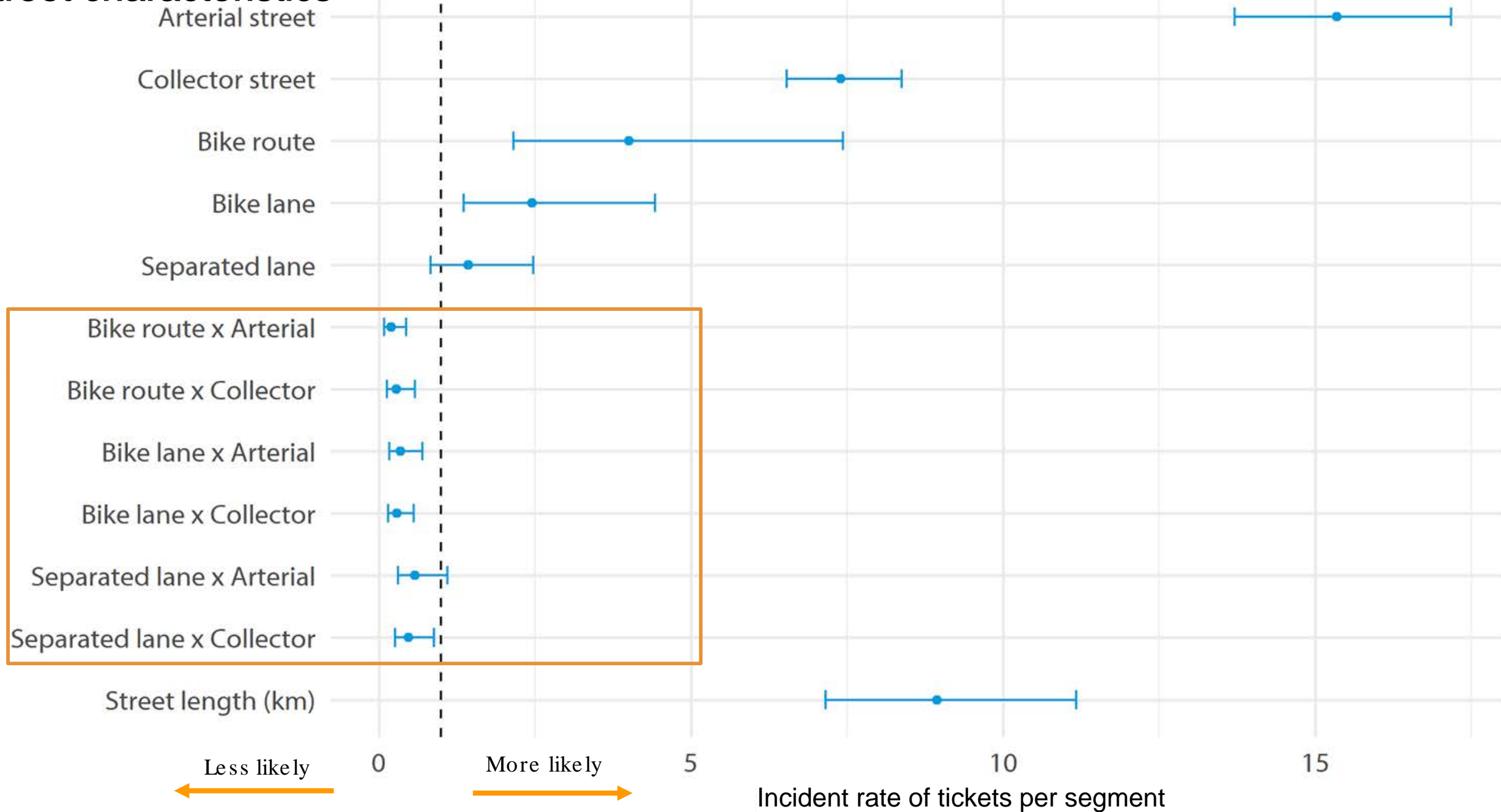
Source: City of Chicago

Citations per 1,000 residents
2017-2019



Street characteristics

Variable



Takeaway: Clear associations between infrastructure, disadvantage, and policing

- Greatest incidence of tickets in Black neighborhoods
- Bike infrastructure on major streets lowered ticket incidence
 - But disproportionately absent from Black/Latino neighborhoods
 - Sidewalk riding likely an adaptation to unsafe streets
- Safety not linked to enforcement
 - Instead linked to crime prevention strategies (CPD quote)

What can planners and policymakers do?

- Reconsider the role of enforcement in traffic safety
- Invest in infrastructure
 - Lack of infrastructure compounds inequities
 - But work in close collaboration with community members
- Be attentive to the intersections of identity and mobility
 - Needs differ across groups
 - Sometimes efforts fail to count the differences

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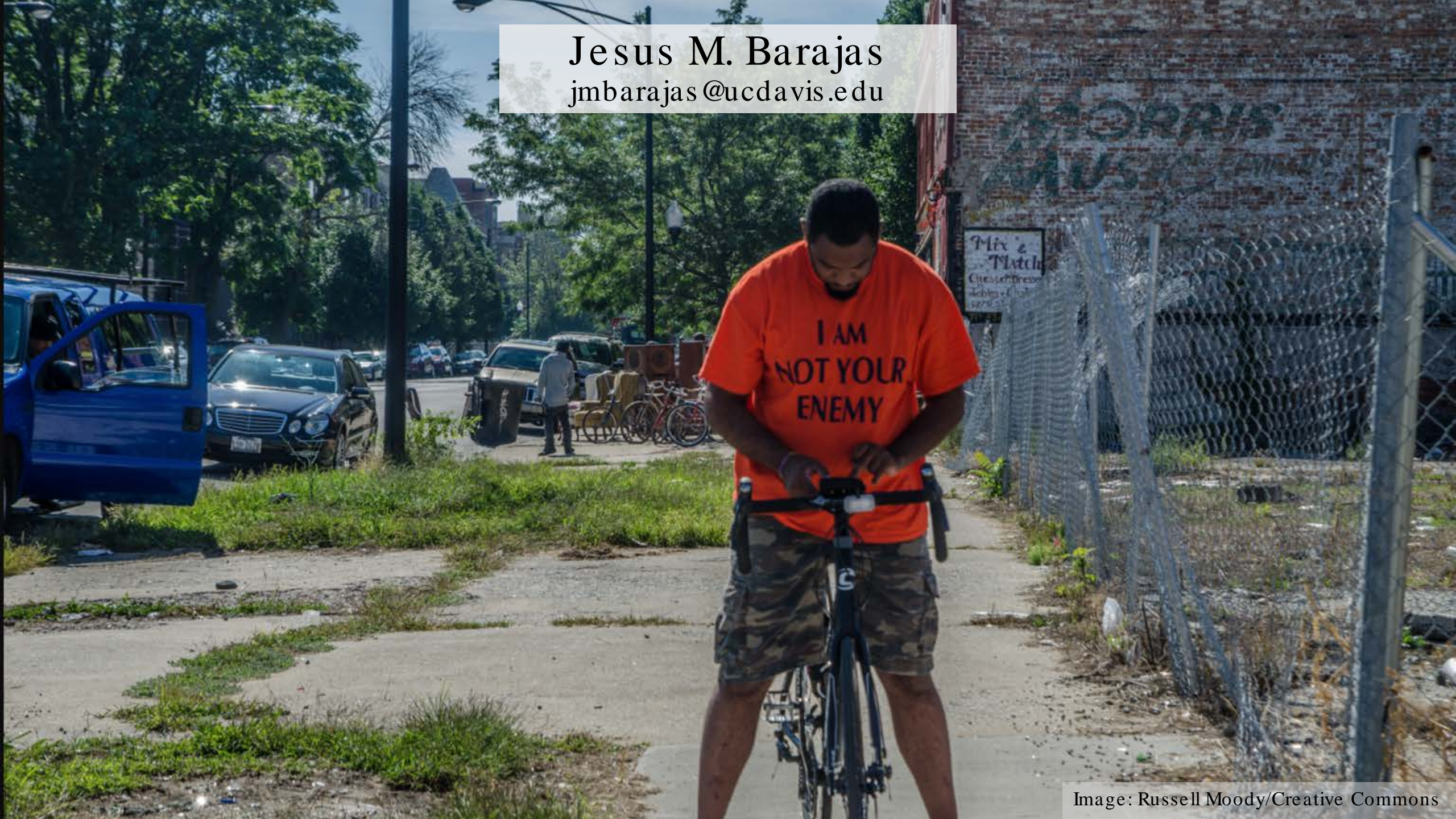


Image: Russell Moody/Creative Commons