

**Authors Note:**

My prospective audience is people in the automotive industry that make decisions about new cars. I'm trying to show them the effects that new larger cars have had on pedestrian safety. In this article I am trying to show the dangerous trend that new cars are following and trying to convince people to buy smaller, more pedestrian friendly cars.

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# Pedestrian Safety in the Age of Growing Vehicle Sizes

By Tristan Barnes



Image source: <https://www.reliance-foundry.com/blog/hit-by-a-car>

In recent years, the trend towards larger vehicles such as SUVs and pickup trucks has raised questions about pedestrian safety. According to the IIHS, “pickups, SUVs and vans with a hood height greater than 40 inches are about 45 percent more likely to cause fatalities in pedestrian crashes than cars and other vehicles with a hood height of 30 inches or less and a sloping profile”. I believe that the increasing size of new cars is unnecessary, as smaller vehicles are perfectly fine for most tasks that people are using their SUVs and trucks for. The trend towards larger cars not only impacts pedestrian safety but also leads to higher fuel consumption and increased emissions.

The average car in America in 2013 was 14'7" long and in 2023 was 16'5" long, an increase of 12.58% in just the past ten years.

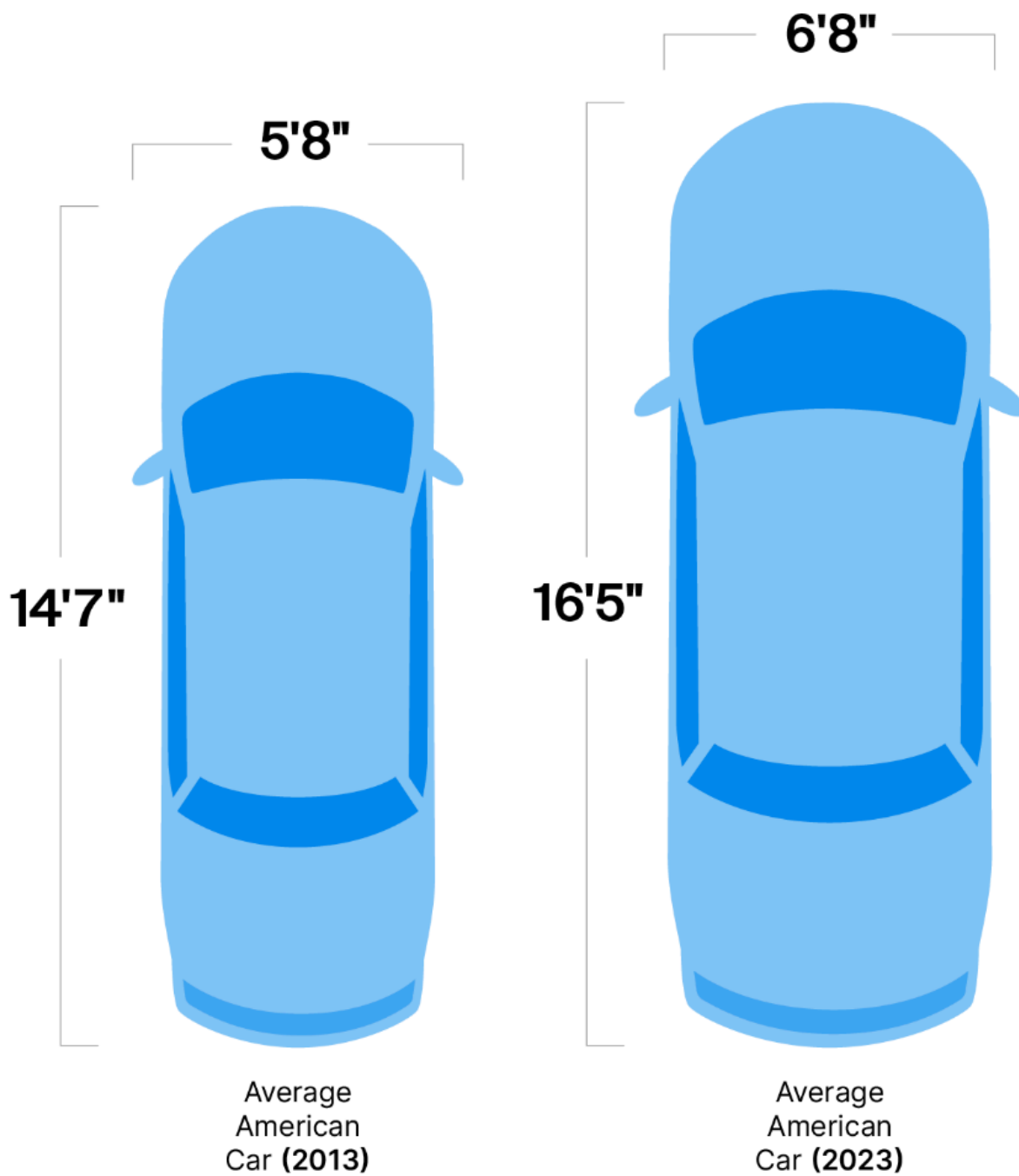
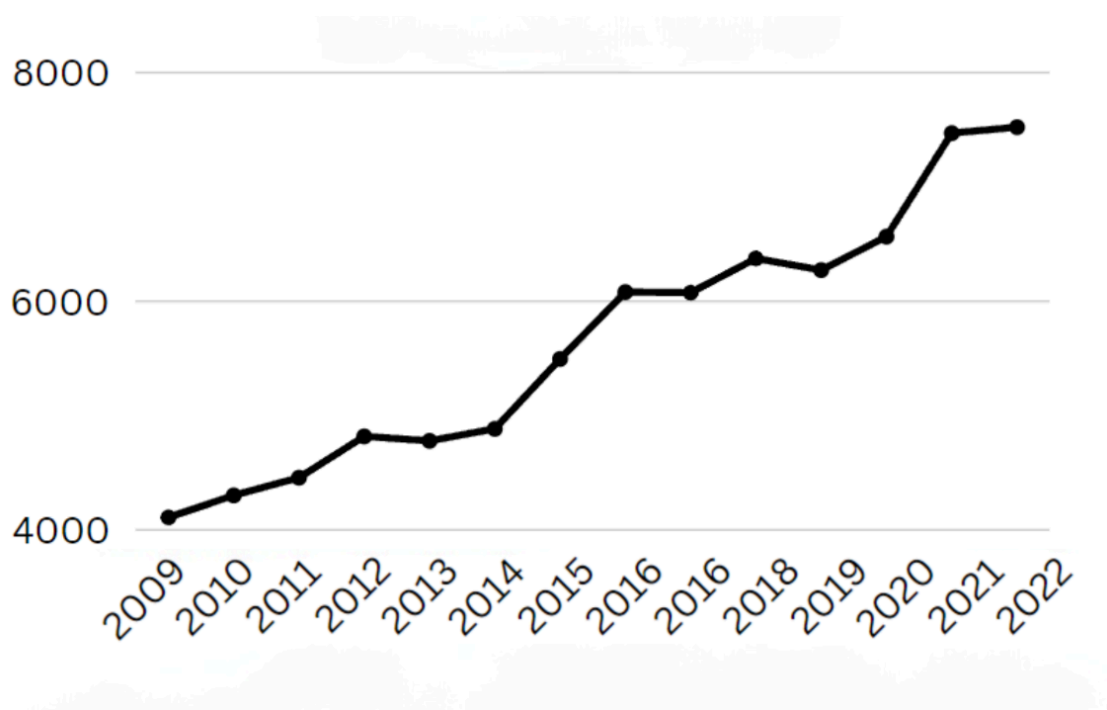


Image Source: <https://finn.com/en-US/campaign/supersized>

This change in size can be reflected in the number of fatal pedestrian accidents.



Since 2009, the number of pedestrian deaths per year has nearly doubled.

In the UK, they have started coming up with different methods of restricting large cars from entering certain areas. One example of this is width restrictions as shown below.



Source: <https://www.defender2.net/forum/post948758.html>

These width restrictions could be a good way for the US to implement a way to promote smaller, more pedestrian friendly cars in more densely populated areas. While some people may see this as a restriction of their freedom, its main purpose is to promote safety, similar to how some people in the 80's saw DUI laws as restricting their freedoms.

Some of the added benefits of small cars apart from pedestrian safety are their affordability, cheaper running costs, easy parking, and better fuel efficiency. Most people with big trucks don't actually need a truck for most of the tasks they use their car for. In a study by Axios, 63% of pickup truck drivers stated that they "Rarely/Never" use their truck for towing/hauling. 87% of the people that responded to the survey stated that they "Frequently" use their car for shopping and errands. This goes to show that many Americans seem to buy trucks because they like having a large car but do not actually use their large cars/trucks for their intended purpose. Most everyday tasks that people use their cars for can be completed with a smaller car.

Apart from SUVs and trucks being more dangerous for pedestrians due to the size and height of their front ends, they also have reduced visibility of pedestrians, especially children.



Source: <https://ssti.us/2022/04/04/drivers-of-pickups-and-suvs-more-likely-to-strike-pedestrians-while-turning/>

As larger vehicles increasingly dominate the new car market and our roads, we must address the increased risk that they pose to pedestrians through policy changes targeting the size of new cars and height of their hoods. The US should consider implementing stricter safety measures for vehicle design focusing on pedestrian safety and improving driver visibility. Additionally, implementing regulations on sizes and weights of cars in densely populated urban areas can deter the use of oversized cars and increase pedestrian safety. By prioritizing safety in the development of new cars, we can help to create a place where people and cars can coexist more safely.

Sources:

IIHS Quote:

<https://www.iihs.org/news/detail/vehicles-with-higher-more-vertical-front-ends-pose-greater-risk-to-pedestrians>

Pedestrian deaths by year:

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/e/2PACX-1vRqGgodKkWkSLY3iSiP\\_js0zovJxnW8MEIvdcr6wfT2KF\\_FhoOO2MGklMo4VZCuODAy2gd6S1\\_2Mev6/pubhtml#](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/e/2PACX-1vRqGgodKkWkSLY3iSiP_js0zovJxnW8MEIvdcr6wfT2KF_FhoOO2MGklMo4VZCuODAy2gd6S1_2Mev6/pubhtml#)

Vehicle Sizes

<https://www.finn.com/en-US/campaign/supersized>

Car Dimensions

<https://www.auto-data.net>

Axios Truck Study:

<https://www.axios.com/ford-pickup-trucks-history>