

# Racial difference in spousal death studied

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A Harvard University study suggests white Americans are far more likely than their black counterparts to die soon after the death of a spouse.

The longitudinal study of 410,272 elderly U.S. couples indicates the "widowhood effect" -- the increased probability of death among new widows and widowers -- is large and enduring among white couples, but undetectable among black couples. That, say researchers, suggests blacks may somehow manage to extend marriage's well-documented health benefits into widowhood.

The study by Harvard sociologists Felix Elwert and Nicholas Christakis is published in the current issue of *American Sociological Review*.

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