

# Poor suffer disproportionately from road crashes: study

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The poor are disproportionately victims of road crashes, with the number of deaths set to nearly double in two decades, according to the first global assessment of road safety released on Monday.

The World Health Organization study found that almost half of the estimated 1.27 million people who die each year in road accidents are pedestrians, motorcyclists and cyclists, and said not enough was being done to ensure their safety.

"More than 90 percent of the world's road deaths occur in low-income and middle-income countries, while these countries only have 48 percent of the world's vehicles," said Dr. Etienne Krug, director of WHO's Department of Violence and [Injury Prevention](#) and Disability.

Persons from poor economic settings are disproportionately affected by the 20-50 million road traffic injuries per year, even in high-income countries, the study found.

Impoverished countries are less likely to require all passengers in a car to use seat belts, 38 percent compared with 57 percent for all countries, the study noted.

The Eastern Mediterranean and African regions had the highest death rates, while the lowest rates were among high-income countries, such as the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Although road traffic death rates have stabilised or declined in many high-income countries in recent decades, the study found in most regions road deaths are increasing.

If present trends continue, road deaths could nearly double to 2.4 million per year by 2030, it estimated.

With road injuries a top-three killer of people aged five to 44 years, costing an estimated 518 billion dollars in losses annually and knocking up to three percent off economic output, the WHO study said all countries needed to redouble their road safety efforts.

"Even the top performers globally are often stagnating and still have considerable room for improvement in achieving a truly safe road transport system," said Krug.

Moreover, the study found many basic [safety measures](#) had yet to be widely implemented.

For instance only 40 percent of countries have helmet laws that cover both the motorcycle drivers and passengers, and less than half use the recommended blood alcohol concentration limit of 0.05 grams per decilitre to reduce drink driving.

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