

New research: Up to 540,000 lives could be saved worldwide by targeting speed and other main areas

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Bike on road. Credit: Niklas Jeromin

A new series published in *The Lancet* today highlights the growing problem of road traffic injuries and lays out some opportunities for preventing injuries and saving lives. The series comes at the same time as the United Nations General Assembly launches a high-level meeting on global road safety June 30-July 1 in New York. The series offers a comprehensive analysis of this rising public health threat.

An estimated 1.35 million people lose their lives and more than 50 million are injured or disabled as a result of road traffic injuries every year. "The [death toll](#) from traffic injuries around the world is far too high," Adnan Hyder, professor of global health at the George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health, said. "Despite a United Nations goal to reduce this heavy burden, people everywhere continue to be at great risk of [injury](#) and death unless current road traffic strategies are changed to put protections in place."

Hyder, who is Senior Associate Dean for Research and also the Director of the Center on Commercial Determinants of Health at the GW Milken Institute School of Public Health, serves as the lead author of an analytic commentary and is the senior author on two other papers published as part of the three-part series. The analytic commentary reviews events that occurred from 1999 to the present and describes ten challenges that provide an opportunity to make faster progress on road safety.

Two other papers in the series address the issue of road safety around the world. In the first, Junaid Razzak at the Weill Cornell Medical Center, Hyder and their colleagues looked at trauma care for road injuries. They found that approximately 200,000 lives per year could be saved with improved trauma systems in low and [middle income countries](#).

In the second paper, Hyder, Nino Paichadze from GW, Andres Vecino-Ortiz at the Johns Hopkins University and their colleagues studied four road safety risk factors—speed, drunk driving, helmet and seatbelt use.

They found that full implementation of already proven road safety interventions targeting those four main areas could save up to 540,000 lives around the world.

In the United States, a total of about 43,000 lives could be saved by focusing on those four road safety areas, including more than 22,000 lives saved by restricting speed and more than 5100 with interventions on drunk driving. Another 14,000 and 2400 lives could be saved with better use of seatbelts and helmets, respectively.

In the analytic commentary, Hyder and his colleagues outline some of the pitfalls that must be overcome to make the roadways safer. They point out that road safety involves many sectors, including health, transportation and other areas; and suggest addressing commercial determinants of road safety. To address [road safety](#) the roles of each sector must be clear and one sector should take the lead on developing a strategy, Hyder said.

Finally, the authors recommend reframing [road safety](#) so that the issue resonates with the public and [political leaders](#). At the same time, there must be the political will to put enough resources toward this problem to address it, Hyder said.

The Lancet Road Safety 2022 series, which includes all three papers and an editorial will be published June 29, 2022 and can be accessed [here](#).

Provided by George Washington University

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