

More than 200,000 road deaths a year in China: WHO

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More than 200,000 people are killed on China's notoriously dangerous roads every year, the World Health Organisation said Wednesday—at least four times official government statistics.

Writing in the government-published China Daily newspaper, the WHO's representative in the country Bernhard Schwartlaender said the estimated deaths were "entirely preventable".

"In China, over 10,000 children under 15 years of age die each year as a result of injuries sustained in a road crash," he added. "Many more are severely injured."

The WHO's 2013 global status report on road safety estimated Chinese road deaths at 275,983 in 2010.

Government data for road deaths in China are shrouded in secrecy, like many statistics in the country, and the WHO figures are strikingly higher than official pronouncements.

The most recent figures available from the ministry of transport, cited by a vice-minister at a forum, said 60,000 people were killed on the roads in 2012—less than a quarter of the estimate in the WHO document.

China's National Bureau of Statistics said in February that last year road traffic deaths ran at a rate of 2.22 people per 10,000 vehicles.

It said separately that there were a total of 154.47 million vehicles available for civilian use in the period.

Those figures imply at least 34,292 road deaths in 2014—less than an eighth of the WHO estimate.

Fatal road accidents are a serious problem in China, where traffic regulations are often flouted.

The country's frequently overcrowded long-distance buses are prone to accidents, with individual incidents regularly causing dozens of deaths.

In July last year, 43 people died when a van carrying inflammable liquid hit a bus on a motorway in central China.

In August, a tour bus plunged into a valley in Tibet after hitting two vehicles, leaving 44 people dead and 11 injured.

Swartlaender said China was making "some progress" with [road safety](#) laws but added: "It is not enough to adopt laws. They must also be properly and rigorously enforced."

According to the WHO report, China's estimated traffic-related death rate of 20.5 per 100,000 people was in line with the 20.1 average for middle-income countries, but higher than the 8.7 seen in high-income nations.

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