



## IHPE Position Statement: Road Safety

### Key Information

- There were an estimated **1.19 million** road traffic deaths globally in 2021. Road crashes are the leading killer of children and young people aged 5 to 29 years. More than half of fatalities are among pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists.
- People in low-income countries continue to face the highest risk of death per population.
- Road traffic injuries impose an enormous economic cost on individuals, families and societies.
- In most countries road safety is not given the priority it deserves. There is often a lack of leadership, funding, and other resources. However, there is substantial theory and robust research evidence indicating the considerable progress that could be made in road safety.
- The UN General Assembly Resolution 74/299 declared a Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030, with the target to reduce road traffic deaths and injuries by at least 50% during that period.
- The Global Plan (WHO 2021) calls on governments and stakeholders to prioritise and implement an integrated **Safe System Approach** to road safety. This positions road safety as a key driver of sustainable development.
- Some of the key behaviours contributing to road injury and death are speeding, drink-driving, drug use, distracted driving, driver fatigue, and non-use of child restraints, safety belts, and helmets.
- In some countries, for example Sweden, Netherlands and Australia, there has been tremendous success in road safety.
- Some charities, for example Bloomberg Philanthropies and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), have worked in partnership with a wide range of organisations and have had considerable success in reducing road crashes. But much more could be achieved if more governments developed national plans and provided adequate funding.
- The healthiest and cleanest modes of transport are often most neglected: walking, cycling and public transport. Safe, well-designed infrastructure in

cities leads to an uptake in active travel and a decrease in injury and associated harms.

- Recent introduction of e-bikes and e-scooters in urban areas has added challenges to ensuring safety on roads and in homes. However, we do encourage cycling, whether on conventional or electric bikes, as this can provide a wide range of health and environmental benefits.
- Post-crash care and survival is very time-sensitive; small delays can make the difference between life and death. Moreover, many low and middle income countries (LMICs) do not have ambulances and/or trained staff.
- Good national data and monitoring of road safety across the whole system is critical to success. Quantitative and qualitative information needs to be used and this should include positive health indicators.
- Mobility systems based on safety will have a holistically beneficial impact on our health, our environment, and on reducing the social and economic toll taken by road crash tragedies.

## **Statement**

1. Political will must match the scale and urgency of this public health crisis as well as the potential for improvement. Governments need a paradigm shift in commitment, investment, leadership and action.
2. Road safety plans must be a priority for governments, with cross-sector impact linking key areas of health, active travel, collision prevention, communities and the environment. National governments should adopt road safety plans that include national targets for reducing road deaths and serious injuries.
3. Multimodal transport and land-use planning are important starting points for implementing a Safe System. Multimodal commutes can be facilitated by providing parking for bicycles and cars at bus stops and train stations.
4. Governments need to invest more in public transport systems that facilitate safe and efficient movement of individuals and families. Buses, trams and trains carry more people compared to cars and are usually more affordable.
5. Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) should be part of national road safety plans to support young drivers through their transition to independent driving.
6. Those involved in global road safety advocacy should emphasise the need for new research on road safety interventions, especially those that target issues specific to LMICs.
7. Vehicles should be designed with standards to ensure both the safety of those inside and outside of them. Further research will be needed for new types of vehicles.
8. Vehicle safety regulations should be adopted including technologies such as automatic emergency braking and intelligent speed assistance. Automatic

headlights and automatic breaking systems are also very important for motorised two-wheelers.

9. National campaigns are needed to support positive behaviours. This will include tackling speeding, drink-driving, drug use, distracted driving, driver fatigue, and non-use of child restraints, safety belts, and helmets. It is important that these are an integral part of a Safe Systems Approach and not isolated campaigns.
10. Accurate data is crucial to improving road safety. Countries need to establish systems that produce robust information on deaths and injuries. Collisions should be carefully investigated so that lessons can be learnt to prevent future tragedies.
11. Positive health indicators, including use of public transport, active travel initiatives and other reduced pollution alternatives should be used for monitoring and evaluation, and motivating engagement of the public.

## Resources

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