

# Expert calls for strong, sustainable action to make world roadways safer

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According to the latest World Health Organization (WHO) report on road safety, more than 1.3 million people die on the world's roadways

each year—and millions more are injured or disabled. Yet despite the huge cost to families from New York to Mumbai, that death toll has not changed much in the last decade.

A commentary published today in *The Lancet Public Health* says that these reports, while extremely valuable, have not brought about the needed change, and it is time to start holding policymakers accountable for making roads safer.

"More than a million people are dying from traffic crashes on roadways around the world—and that [death](#) toll has not declined since 2009," said Adnan Hyder, MD, MPH, Ph.D., senior associate dean for research and professor of global [health](#) at the George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health (Milken Institute SPH), who authored the commentary. "While we see bright spots where road injuries have been reduced, the widespread change needed to prevent these deaths across the world has not happened so far."

Hyder goes on to say that the new 2018 Global Status Report on Road Safety serves as a [valuable tool](#) for monitoring the risks, outcomes and progress related to [road safety](#) but such measurements alone do not bring down the [death toll](#).

### **What needs to happen?**

First, Hyder says that governments must commit to reducing traffic deaths by delegating both authority and financial resources to make roadways safer.

Second, WHO and partners must support a truly multi-sectoral approach to road [safety](#) and make it a priority not only for health and transportation officials but also for those in the environment, justice, education and economic sectors.

Third, WHO needs to provide support, operational assistance and implementation guidance so that member countries can actually put in place effective interventions on the ground to make roads safer.

Fourth, WHO and partners must help develop the relatively weak non-governmental sector around this issue. Expansion of non-governmental organizations that take an interest in road safety will help promote social and political change on a broad scale, he says.

Finally, the commentary says WHO and partners must acknowledge threats to road safety, including those posed by industry. For example, Hyder says the alcohol industry "openly engages and promotes action that at best have little or no evidence of impact." He calls on the United Nations to adopt a policy of non-engagement with industries where there is such potential for conflict of interest.

"Safe roads are of critical importance for people around the world," Hyder said. "Accepting our lack of progress is the first step to developing a strong and sustainable set of actions for changing the status quo on global [road](#) safety."

The commentary, "Measurement is Not Enough for Global Road Safety: Implementation is the Key," was published Dec. 7 in *The Lancet Public Health*.

**More information:** Adnan A Hyder. Measurement is not enough for global road safety: implementation is key, *The Lancet Public Health* (2018). [DOI: 10.1016/S2468-2667\(18\)30262-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667(18)30262-7)

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