PRESS RELEASE

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Road injuries cost Singapore nearly 9,700 healthy years in 2023, global study finds

Road injuries remained the second-leading cause of death among people aged 15 to 29 in Singapore in 2023, and the third-leading cause of injury-related death nationally.

Singapore, 20 August 2026 — Road injuries cost Singapore an estimated 9,680 years of healthy life in 2023 through premature death and disability, according to a new global study led by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), in collaboration with the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore (NUS Medicine).

Of the 9,680 years of healthy life lost, 4,786 years of life lost are through early deaths and the remaining 4,894 years are lived with disability following road injuries. For each road-injury death, researchers estimate how many years of life were lost by comparing the person's age at death with a standard life expectancy. A death at a younger age therefore contributes more years of life lost than a death later in life. For people who survive, researchers estimate how long they live with the effects of their injuries and how seriously those injuries affect their health. More severe or lasting injuries, such as brain or spinal injuries, contribute more years lived with disability. Published in *The Lancet Public Health*, the study provides the most up-to-date and comparable assessment of road injuries worldwide, covering 204 countries and territories from 1990 to 2023.

After accounting for changes in the population's age, Singapore's road-injury rate fell by 54.8%, and the road-injury death rate declined by 82.3% between 1990 and 2023. However, road injuries remained the second-leading cause of death among people aged 15 to 29 in Singapore in 2023. They were also the third-leading cause of injury-related death nationally.

"Road injuries are not unavoidable consequences of travel," said Associate Professor Marie Ng, co-author of the study and Director of the NUS-IHME Global Burden of Disease Research Centre at NUS Medicine. "Singapore's long-term decline shows that progress is possible. However, nearly 9,700 healthy years lost in a single year is a reminder that the impact remains substantial. Roads, vehicles, laws, emergency services, and health systems must continue working together so that human mistakes do not result in death or lifelong disability."

Motor-vehicle occupants and cyclists were the most commonly injured road users in Singapore, while motorcyclists accounted for the most road deaths. Minor injuries made up

43.3% of non-fatal cases, followed by fractures at 35.9%. Fractures accounted for more than 40% of injuries among both pedestrians and motorcyclists. The study also found that cyclist injuries now make up the largest share of road-injury cases in high-income Asia-Pacific settings such as Singapore and Japan, highlighting how road-safety measures must adapt as transport habits change.

A major global health problem

Globally, road injuries caused an estimated 50.9 million injuries and 1.34 million deaths in 2023, resulting in 75.3 million years of healthy life lost through premature death or disability. Road injuries were the leading cause of death among males aged 10 to 39 worldwide. Among males aged 20 to 24, they accounted for around one in five deaths.

Motorcyclists faced a particularly high risk. Although they made up 13.2% of road-injury cases globally, they accounted for 23.8% of road deaths and had the highest proportion of head injuries among all road-user groups. Although road-injury and death rates have fallen globally since 1990, progress has been deeply unequal. Low-income countries recorded about 44 road-injury deaths per 100,000 people in 2023, which is nearly six times the rate in high-income countries. More than 90% of road deaths occurred in low- and middle-income countries. These differences show how safer roads and vehicles, effective enforcement, and timely access to emergency and trauma care can determine whether someone survives a crash.

Preventing deaths and serious injuries

The researchers said road safety should not focus only on individual behaviour. Drivers, riders, cyclists, and pedestrians can all make mistakes, but transport systems can be designed to prevent those mistakes from becoming fatal. Effective measures include managing speeds, building safer junctions and crossings, enforcing helmet and seatbelt use, preventing drink- and drug-driving, improving vehicle safety, and providing faster care after crashes. For Singapore, priorities include designing roads that better protect motorcyclists, cyclists, pedestrians, and older people; improving road-injury data to identify high-risk locations and groups; maintaining consistent enforcement; and ensuring rapid emergency response, trauma care, and rehabilitation.

While the study did not assess the effects of individual policies, previous studies have shown that the greatest progress is achieved when enforcement is combined with safer infrastructure, appropriate vehicle safety standards, public education, and effective post-crash care. Globally, the researchers called for sustained investment to support the United Nations' target of halving road deaths and injuries by 2030. The World Bank estimates that at least US$200 billion in additional investment will be required to meet this goal.

For media enquiries, please contact:
Shaun YEE
Senior Executive, Communications
Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine,
National University of Singapore
DID: +65 9012 1928
Email: shaun.yee@nus.edu.sg

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Through a dynamic and future-oriented five-year curriculum that is inter-disciplinary and inter-professional in nature, our students undergo a holistic learning experience that exposes them to multiple facets of healthcare and prepares them to become visionary leaders and compassionate doctors and nurses of tomorrow. Since the School's founding in 1905, more than 12,0000 graduates have passed through our doors.

In our pursuit of health for all, our strategic research programmes focus in innovative, cutting-edge biomedical research with collaborators around the world to deliver high impact solutions to benefit human lives.

The School is the oldest institution of higher learning in the National University Health System. It is one of the leading medical schools in Asia and ranks among the best in the world (Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2026 by subject and the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings by Subject 2026).

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