

Burden of road injuries more than halved in Australasia since 1990

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The global toll taken by injuries on daily life has fallen by almost a third in the past quarter of a century, with the largest declines seen in road injuries in Australasia and Western Europe, reveals research published online today in the journal *Injury Prevention*.

As part of the Global Burden of Diseases and Injuries, and Risk Factors (GBD) study, researchers found that while the world may be a safer place than a few decades ago, in 2013 almost a billion people (973 million) sustained injuries that required medical attention or treatment, accounting for 10% of the global toll of disease.

Despite a dramatic decrease in road injuries, which more than halved in Australasia since 1990, car crashes still accounted for the majority (29%) of the injury burden, followed by self-harm, which includes suicide (17.6%); falls (11.6%); and violence (8.5%).

Professor Louisa Degenhardt from the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre at UNSW is a member of an international consortium of researchers working on the GBD project led by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington, United States.

Professor Degenhardt said the burden of injuries, measured by years of life lost to death, and years of life lived with a disability has decreased significantly over the last three decades.

“Despite the overall decrease, we found some notable variations, especially among different regions,” said Professor Degenhardt.

Injury burden among under-15 year olds was lowest in Western Europe and highest in central Sub-Saharan Africa.

Among 15 to 49 year olds, the peak age category for road traffic injuries, there was an eightfold difference in rates between high income Asia Pacific and western Sub-Saharan Africa, while rates were 70% higher in North America than in Western Europe, Australasia and Asia Pacific.

“The injury burden remains high in some parts of the world, however looking at the results globally we can say that overall world is becoming a safer place to live in,” said Professor Degenhardt.

For the research full paper, visit <http://injuryprevention.bmj.com/content/early/2015/10/20/injuryprev-2015-041616.full>.

Media contacts:

Marion Downey

Communications Manager, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre

P: (02) 9385 0180 | 0401 713 850 | m.downey@unsw.edu.au

Alexandra Dore

Communications Officer, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre

P: (02) 9385 0124 | 0432 894 776 | alexandra.dore@unsw.edu.au