

# WHO's health report card confirms India's massive non communicable disease burden

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Diseases of the heart and of the lung remain the bane of India's disease burden, being the top two causes of the deaths, respectively as shown by the recently released WHO World Health Statistics Report, 2016. Ischemic heart Disease (IHD) killed 1215400 people in 2012, 12.4 per cent of total deaths. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), a chronic lung disease killed 1061900 people, 10.8 per cent total deaths.

The data comes as no surprise, only yet another confirmation of India's overwhelming non communicable disease burden.

In the data studied from 2000 to 2012, the 'ranks' of these two conditions had not changed, among India's top ten causes of deaths, pointing to the long term prevalence of NCDs. What has gone up in the studied period were deaths by stroke, killing 9 percent people overall, 881700 in absolute numbers.

In broader groups, NCDs again contributed to maximum deaths among men and women; deaths by cardiovascular disease and diabetes together having gone up for both from 2000 to 2012.

Worryingly though, what also went up were deaths by self harm and deaths by road accidents. Though eight and tenth on the list respectively the numbers are high enough for concern. Though data here has been studied up till 2012, a recent report by The Lancet said that suicide was now the leading cause of death among adolescents.

India is hardly alone in its battle against NCDs, as IHD, COPD and strokes have remained top killers globally, according to the WHO data. It also showed that "road traffic injuries claimed about 3400 lives each day in 2012, about three-quarters of whom were men and boys."

In India, the lack of road safety kills 1.5 lakh a year, causing 3 per cent economic loss to India's GDP. This contributes to 10 percent of the "global crisis", says a statement put out by Save Life Foundation, that looked specifically at the road accident data in the report.

Across the world, 1.25 million people died in 2013 from road accidents. The Foundation's statement called out the systemic issues in India's road laws and "missing safety standards for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists and even children."

India's estimated road death rate (per 100000 population) for 2013 was 16.6. Among its neighbours, Pakistan's was 14.2, Sri Lanka 17.4, Bangladesh 13.6, China 18.8.

The United States of America had a rate of 10.6. The safest roads, according to the study are in Canada, Australia, and across the European Union.

Maximum deaths, 90 per cent, occur in Low to Middle Income Countries (LMIC), which have 84 per cent of the world's population and 54 per cent registered vehicles. The causes, it reasons are "poor or poorly implemented regulations, inadequate road and vehicle quality, a higher proportion of vulnerable road users and increasing vehicle numbers."

India has to meet its Sustainable Development Goals target of 50 per cent reduction in current level of deaths and injuries from road traffic crashes by 2020. However, the foundation said, the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, is too outdated to account for the rapid increase in vehicles on roads, a phenomenon seen across developing countries. In the 27-year period since its enactment, deaths caused due to road crashes have increased by 300 per cent.