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39 deaths per day: New study says Thailand's roads 2nd-deadliest in the world

By **Kyle Lawrence Mullin** Oct 21, 2015 3:36PM UTC

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A Thai police officer takes photograph of the charred wreckage of a passenger van that crashed in Chanthaburi province last year, killing eight people and injuring 13 more. Pic: AP.

Thailand's roads remain among the most dangerous in the world according to a World Health Organization report, which found that the Southeast Asian nation is second only to war-torn Libya in terms of per capita road fatalities.

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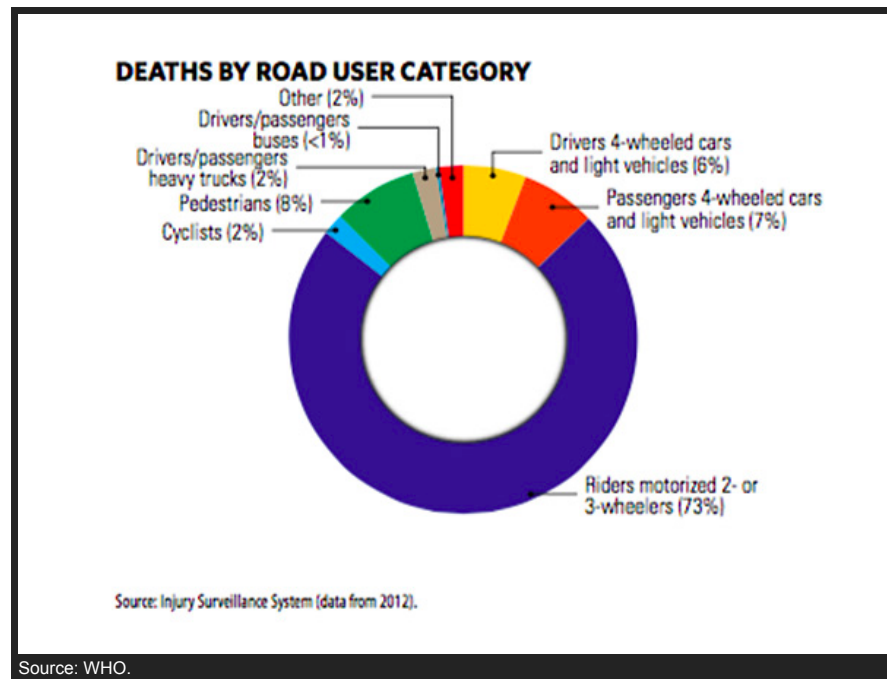
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The UN health agency's 'Global status report on road safety 2015' study, found that 14,059 people died on Thailand's roads in 2012 – a rate of 36 people per 100,000 and an average of almost 39 fatalities per day. This places Thailand in the company of Iran (32.1 per 100,000), Togo (31.1) and nine African nations that fell between 30 to 35 deaths per 100,000 people.

However, compared to its ASEAN neighbors, Thailand's road fatality rate remains woefully high. In Malaysia, the estimated fatality rate per 100,000 was 24, compared to 17.4 in Cambodia, 15.3 in Indonesia and just 3.6 in Singapore.

What is more, Thailand's actual road fatality rate may be even worse than reported, thanks to skewed reporting by the nation's Public Health Ministry whose figures only include fatalities at the scene of accidents. Traffic-related deaths which occur later in hospital are not included in official figures.

The WHO named lax seat-belt laws and road construction safety audits among the primary sources of the issue. It also highlighted the subpar enforcement of what laws and regulations are in place. The primary victims of these accidents riders on motorcycles or motorised three-wheelers, who comprise 73 percent of the fatalities. Poor enforcement of the requirement for motorcyclists to wear helmets and drunk driving laws were also identified as key contributors to the high fatality rate. Twenty-six percent of all road deaths can be attributed to alcohol, the WHO said.



The report, which covered 180 nations, found that “the highest road traffic fatality rates” occur “in low-income countries”.

“Decision makers need to rethink transport policies... the lack of policies aimed at vulnerable road users is killing our people and harming our cities,” Etienne Krug, head of WHO's disability, violence and injury prevention unit, told the media.

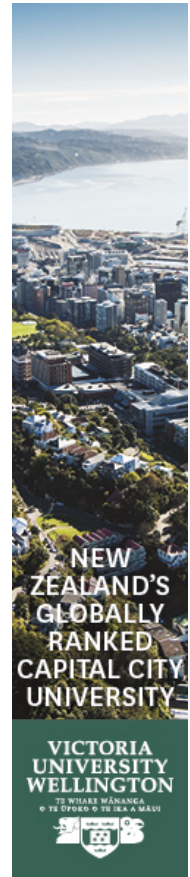
The WHO figures back up the results of a study University of Michigan's Transportation Research Institute, which **also found** Thailand's roads to be the second most dangerous in the world. That study, based primarily on the WHO's 2008 figures, estimated 44 deaths per 100,000 people, indicating a notable improvement in fatality rates in Thailand.

Indeed, anecdotal evidence in Thailand suggests more rigorous enforcement of traffic laws on the part of police, especially drunk driving in provincial areas. Even so, enforcement remains extremely lax by Western standards.

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