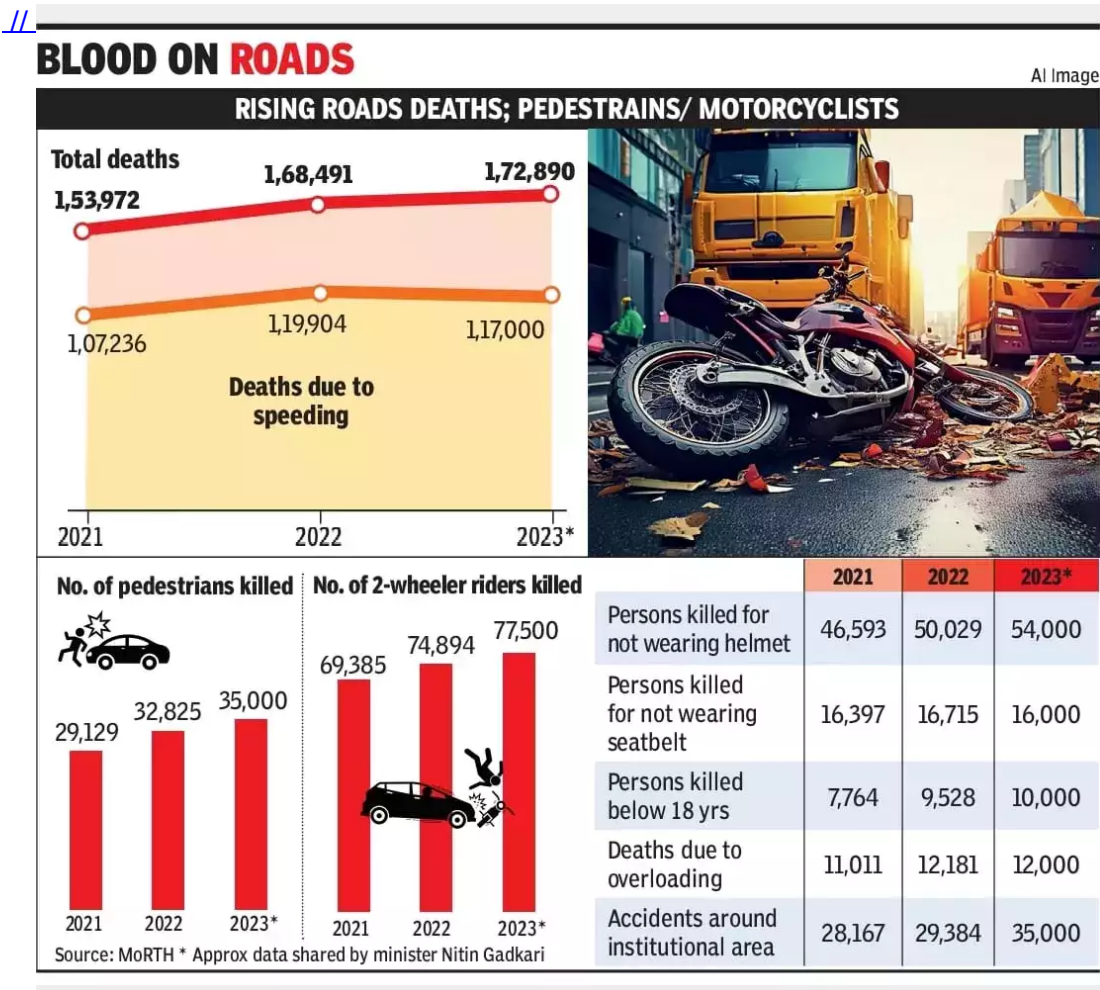# Rising Road Accidents in India

Source: IE

Why in News?

Recently, data from the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has highlighted the severity of India's road safety challenges, showing a rise in road accidents and fatalities despite the **government's commitment to reduce road accident deaths by 50% by 2030**.

What is the Current State of Road Accidents in India?

- **Total Accidents and Fatalities:**
  - India records the **highest number of road accident fatalities globally** with a reported **road death rate of 250 per 10,000 km**, higher than the rates in the United States (57), China (119) and Australia (11).
  - In 2023, India recorded over **4.80 lakh road accidents** which resulted in over **1.72 lakh deaths**, marking a **2.6% increase** compared to 1.68 lakh fatalities in **2022**.
  - In 2023, around **54,000 fatalities** occurred due to two-wheeler riders **not wearing helmets**, 16,000 deaths were linked to **non-use of seat belts**, and 12,000 fatalities were attributed to **vehicle overloading**.
    - Additionally, around 34,000 accidents involved **drivers without valid licenses.**
- **Accident Rate:**
  - The number of **crashes increased by 4.2%** in 2023 as compared to 2022.
  - On average, India experienced 1,317 road crashes and 474 fatalities each day, translating to **55 crashes and 20 fatalities every hour.**
  - The **road crash severity,** measured as fatalities per 100 crashes, **marginally declined from 36.5 in 2022 to 36 in 2023.**
- **Demographic Insights:**
  - In 2023, India saw **10,000 minors and 35,000 pedestrians** killed in road accidents.
  - **Pedestrians** and **two-wheeler users** account for a significant proportion of deaths **44.8%** and **20%**, respectively.
- **Regional Disparities:**
  - **Uttar Pradesh (UP)** has the **highest number of road accident deaths in India**.
    - In 2023, UP saw 44,000 accidents resulting in 23,650 fatalities, including 1,800 minors, 10,000 pedestrians, and two-wheeler users.

- Over-speeding contributed to 8,726 deaths.

BLOOD ON ROADS AI Image

RISING ROADS DEATHS; PEDESTRAINS/ MOTORCYCLISTS

Total deaths

1,53,972 — 1,68,491 — 1,72,890

1,07,236 — 1,19,904 — 1,17,000

Deaths due to speeding

2021 2022 2023*

No. of pedestrians killed

29,129 (2021) 32,825 (2022) 35,000 (2023*)

No. of 2-wheeler riders killed

69,385 (2021) 74,894 (2022) 77,500 (2023*)

Source: MoRTH * Approx data shared by minister Nitin Gadkari

	2021	2022	2023*
Persons killed for not wearing helmet	46,593	50,029	54,000
Persons killed for not wearing seatbelt	16,397	16,715	16,000
Persons killed below 18 yrs	7,764	9,528	10,000
Deaths due to overloading	11,011	12,181	12,000
Accidents around institutional area	28,167	29,384	35,000

What are the Causes for High Road Accidents in India?

- **Human Behavior**: A primary cause of road accidents in India is human error, particularly **reckless driving and over-speeding**
  - **Over-speeding** was responsible for **68.1%** of deaths in 2023.
  - Additionally, **non-compliance with traffic laws** such as **not wearing helmets and seat belts** has led to thousands of fatalities.
- **Infrastructure Deficiencies**: Road design flaws, such as **potholes, lack of proper underpasses, foot overbridges,** and **poorly maintained roads**, significantly contribute to accidents.
- **Lack of a Crash Monitoring System:** The national road safety data systems in India are inadequate for informing public policy. At present, there is **no national database at the crash level** for detecting accidents.
- **Vehicle-Related Issues**: Inadequate safety features in vehicles, such as **substandard engineering and old technology**, also contribute to the high fatality rate.
  - Crash tests conducted by the **Global New Car Assessment Programme (NCAP)** in 2014 showed that several of India's best-selling car models **did not pass the frontal impact crash test** set by the **United Nations (UN).**
- **Lack of Awareness and Enforcement**: Despite interventions, India still faces **significant gaps in enforcing road safety regulations**.
  - Many Indians have limited knowledge about the importance of safety features such as **airbags, anti-lock braking systems,** and the proper use of **seat belts.**
  - Public awareness campaigns, though ongoing, have **not been able to instill a consistent culture of road safety.**

What are the Initiatives For Road Safety in India?

- **Government Initiatives:**
    - **National Road Safety Policy (NRSP), 2010** as per **S Sundar Committee**.
        - Development of a **Road Safety Information Database** and **National Road Safety Council.**
    - **Motor Vehicles Amendment Act, 2019**
    - **The Carriage by Road Act, 2007**
    - **The Control of National Highways (Land and Traffic) Act, 2000**
    - **National Highways Authority of India Act, 1998**
    - **Third High Level Global Conference on Road Safety for Achieving Global Goals 2030**
- **Supreme Court's Intervention:**
    - **The Supreme Court of India** had set up the three-member **Justice K.S. Radhakrishnan** panel on road safety in **April 2014** which recommended the **ban on the sale of alcohol on highways** to restrain drunk driving.
        - It also directed states to **implement laws on wearing helmets**.
    - The SC in 2017, issued a number of **directives** with regard to road safety and included measures like constitution of a **State Road Safety Council, road safety fund,** constitution of a **district road safety committee** and Inclusion of road safety education in the **academic curriculum of schools.**
- **Global Initiatives:**
    - **Brasilia Declaration on Road Safety (2015):** This declaration aims to achieve **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3.6**, which targets a **50% reduction in global deaths and injuries** from road traffic accidents **by 2030.**
        - It was **signed by India in 2015**.
    - **Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030: UN's Second Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030** focuses on **reducing road traffic deaths and injuries by at least 50% by 2030** through a global resolution to improve road safety.
        - The Global Plan aligns with the **Stockholm Declaration,** by emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach to road safety.
    - **Bloomberg Initiative for Global Road Safety (BIGRS) 2020-2025:** This initiative targets **reducing road traffic fatalities and injuries in low- and middle-income countries** and cities by implementing a **range of proven, life-saving measures.**

Sundar Committee Recommendations on Road Safety

The Sundar Committee recommended several key measures to improve road safety in India:

- **National Road Safety & Traffic Management Board:** Creation of an **apex body at the national level** through a Parliamentary Act, comprising **experts from road engineering, automobile engineering, traffic laws**, and **medical care**.
- **State Road Safety & Traffic Management Boards:** Establishment of **similar boards** at the **state and union territory levels** to coordinate with local authorities on road safety and traffic management.
- **National Road Safety Plan:** Development of a **comprehensive plan with targets**, strategies, and actions to reduce accidents and fatalities.
- **Post-Accident Care:** Improvement of trauma management and establishment of a national accident database for data collection and analysis.
- **Funding:** Earmarking **1% of the total cess** proceeds on diesel and petrol for a Road Safety Fund.

Way Forward

- **Safe Driving Techniques:** Adhering to **traffic rules, maintaining safe distances**, and ensuring **regular vehicle maintenance** are vital for road safety. **Defensive driving**, **caution at intersections, and adapting to road conditions** can significantly reduce accidents.

- In **Australia, the three-second rule suggests** keeping a safe distance from the vehicle ahead to allow enough time for a safe stop and prevent rear-end collisions.
- **Raise Awareness and Strict Enforcement:** Comprehensive **public awareness campaigns on road safety**, along with **strict enforcement** of traffic rules, are critical.
  - **Standardized driving licenses, enhanced penalties for violations**, and better public understanding of traffic laws will ensure safer driving practices.
  - This also includes mandatory helmet use, vehicle maintenance, and regular road **safety audits by state governments**, as recommended by the **KS Radhakrishnan panel.**
- **Improvement in Infrastructure:** Upgrading road infrastructure, such as fixing potholes, improving signage, and creating separate lanes for different vehicles, is essential.
  - Vehicles must meet **global safety standards**, like those prescribed by the European Union, including **advanced features like emergency braking systems.**
- **National Database and Technology Integration:** Establishing a **national crash database** for real-time tracking of road accidents and **integrating emerging technologies,** like **AI-driven traffic monitoring**, can enhance data-driven policy-making and enforcement.
- **Prioritize Road Safety Interventions:** A **coordinated approach** across sectors **transport, health, and law enforcement** should prioritize road safety measures.
- **Proactive Role of State Government:** As the **majority of the roads are state, district and rural roads**, state governments must ensure road maintenance, enforce traffic laws, improve safety infrastructure, and provide trauma care to reduce road accidents.

Conclusion

The current state of road accidents in India is alarming, necessitating immediate action from both the government and the public. Adopting a **multi-pronged approach** encompassing the **4E's- Education, Engineering (of roads and vehicles), Enforcement, and Emergency Care** can address the root causes and significantly improve road safety. By prioritizing these measures, India can reduce the high rate of road fatalities and create safer roads for all.

Drishti Mains Question:

Discuss the key factors contributing to road accidents in India and suggest effective measures to improve road safety.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Mains:

Q. NationalUrban Transport Policy emphasises on 'moving people' instead of 'moving vehicles'. Discuss critically the success of the various strategies of the Government in this regard. **(2014)**