

# Impact of Covid-19 on road traffic Accidents

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The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a viral disease that has caused an outbreak of respiratory illness. This disease, originally originated in Wuhan, China, has now become a worldwide pandemic. The coronavirus belongs to a family of viruses that may cause various symptoms such as pneumonia, fever, breathing difficulty, and lung infection, etc. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization officially declared COVID-19 as a Pandemic, and said that it is likely to spread across all countries on the globe. In a matter of a few months, the Coronavirus has affected 216 countries across the globe, with 11,125,245 cases worldwide and taking the lives of 528,204 people. Given the spread of the new coronavirus and its impacts on human health, a mass panic and hysteria were created by the people because of the easy contractibility of the virus. The virus is thought to spread from person-to-person, so standard contact precautions are taken for it. To control the numbers and spread of coronavirus, WHO advised strict and immediate interventions to be taken by the governments of all affected countries. These interventions included extending awareness for social distancing, hand washing, sanitizing, use of masks and personal protective equipment for all people. In densely affected areas throughout the world, a strict lockdown, comprising mostly of 14 days, was issued by various governments to control the spread of disease. The goal of social distancing was to prevent contagious people from coming into contact with healthy people in order to "Flatten the Curve" i.e. slowing down the spread of virus that would in turn help to avoid a spike in cases that overwhelms the healthcare system. The rapid spread of the virus, despite taking adequate measurements caused a lot of adverse effects, affecting so many people and the economies of so many countries.

During these difficult times, there is so much negativity all around, that it masks any source of positivity that the coronavirus might have brought. But because of the interventions adapted for the virus, there have been a great amount of reduction in the amount of Road traffic. This has greatly decreased the number injuries and fatalities resulting from road traffic accidents. Road Traffic accidents is the second leading cause of death among people aged 5-29 years, and it is the 11<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death worldwide. An estimated 3247 people are killed every day because of road traffic fatalities, and further between 20 million to 50 million people are injured or disabled per year. The reduction of vehicles on road has immensely helped in lowering Air pollution and cleaning the environment. In many parts of the world, vehicle emissions have become the most dominant source of air pollutants since the past few years. The increasing severity and duration of traffic greatly increase pollutant emissions and to degrade air quality. These emissions contribute to risks of morbidity and mortality for drivers, commuters and individuals living near roadways, as shown by epidemiological studies, evaluations of proposed vehicle emission standards, and environmental impact assessments for specific road projects. Furthermore, these vehicles emit greenhouse gasses, that also contribute to Global warming. In already difficult times, there's no doubt that a reduction in catastrophic events is beneficial to the world. There have been news reports from all over the world, confirming this recent decline in road traffic fatalities. A very important eye opener is that road traffic accidents, albeit important, are not considered as serious and massive by governments or by the people. Strict measurements are hardly ever taken to avoid them from happening, unlike COVID-19 pandemic has.

In accordance to the lockdown being implemented, most people stayed at their homes in order to socially distance themselves, thereby avoiding the use of vehicles. Most people who needed to go out of their homes, used alternate modes of travelling, i.e. walking, jogging and bicycling. A decrease was also observed in people using various forms of public transports, thereby also reducing traffic. These actions resulted in the global community becoming more and more resilient and developing various modes of 'contactless'

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transactions. Ministries of some countries, imposed road closers to maintain the spread of coronavirus. Road closures also resulted in more available space to help people walk and cycle whilst social distancing. Practicing these things would not only help the environment by tackling climate change and air pollution, but also benefit an individual's health as regularly exercising can have immense health benefits, and help the entire community by reducing the amount of road traffic accidents.

This pandemic has given a lot of valuable lessons for communities to learn and improve themselves. We must come out of this pandemic not only stronger, but with better values. These benefits that the pandemic has provided must be continued afterwards as well. Road traffic accidents is one of the most concerning global health concerns. A large population of people succumb to its fatality every year, which can easily be prevented by following safer road practices. Avoiding vehicles and using modes of travel like walking, jogging, cycling, can result in so many fortunate events. By reducing the road traffic created by vehicles, the number of accidents is bound to be decreased. Furthermore, this would greatly reduce the burden of Air pollution and Global warming. Using these alternate modes of commute will result in a cleaner environment, favorable to the planet and its inhabitants. This could be implemented by governments by keeping separate lanes for cyclers, and create footpaths for the pedestrians. Public transport should also be improved and made more accessible, to provide an

alternate to people using their own vehicles and reducing the burden of traffic and its complications. Exercising by cycling, jogging or walking, can have many health advantages, a few being that it reduces the risk of developing diabetes, hypertension, coronary heart disease, obesity and so many others. The lifestyle changes that are adapted by people during this pandemic, must be applied in the aftermath with more zeal and passion, for a better future for everyone.

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