

Notes on UNHCR’s work on road safety

For the Seventh United Nations Partnership Meeting for Road Safety
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Transport is an essential part of fulfilling the mandate of UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, to protect the people with and for whom UNHCR works. Despite successful interventions in some countries to reduce the risk of traffic crashes to more than 50 per cent, the rate of crashes with casualties in other countries has increased. Consequently, the overall rate of traffic crashes with casualties within UNHCR operations has remained stable (see Figure 1), indicating the need for combining global and regional approaches with local interventions. Some of these interventions are: Global traffic crash root cause analysis, banning bull bars on vehicles, and in-car Artificial Intelligence (AI) powered technologies.

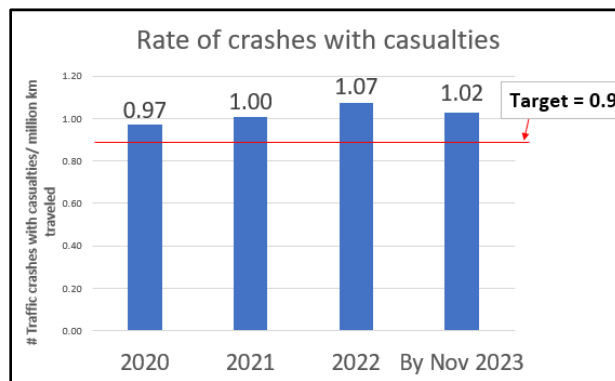


Figure 1 Source: UNHCR Road Safety Unit

Conducting analysis to understand the root cause of traffic crashes globally

UNHCR entered into a frame agreement with the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to conduct road traffic crash root cause analysis. Every traffic crash that produces severe damage to vehicles, injuries or fatalities is being investigated to improve our understanding of the causes of traffic crashes and to identify countermeasures for reducing the risk of crashes. A report with the findings is produced for every individual case, and an annual report is conducted to indicate patterns, draw conclusions, and recommend preventive measures that can be applied at the global, regional, or local level.

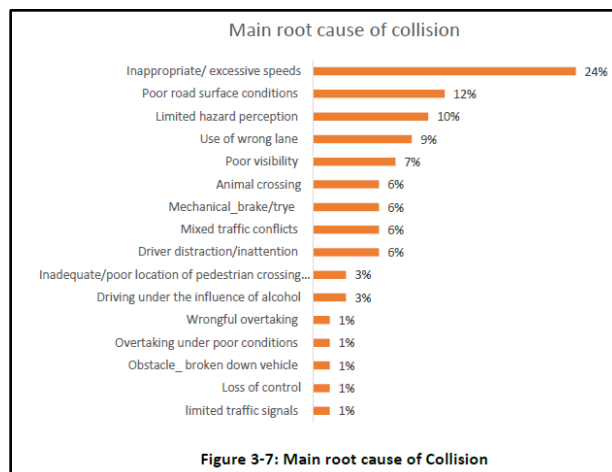


Figure 3-7: Main root cause of Collision
Figure 2 Source: TRL, 2023. UNHCR collision investigation: Annual Report (2022 cases)

Overall, the main risk factor for traffic crashes within UNHCR operations is inappropriate or excessive speeds, accounting for 24 per cent of all the cases, followed by poor road conditions and limited hazard perception (see Figure 2). While UNHCR has little control over the characteristics of the road environment, UNHCR has started strengthening its controls over speed-related problems, which includes better monitoring practices over both UNHCR and partner organizations, drivers, as well as the reduction of travelling speeds in some areas. In addition to these, hazard perception is now included in training sessions for drivers.

Banning bull bars on vehicles

Another important finding of the 2022 annual report is that bull bars were found to contribute to the severity of traffic crashes in at least 47 per cent of the fatal traffic crashes. Considering that 70 per cent of the traffic crashes with casualties within UNHCR operations involve vulnerable road users, UNHCR's Global Fleet management (GFM) decided to ban the provision of bull bars to operations, so priority is given to the protection of vulnerable road users over the vehicle's integrity.



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The photo on the left shows a UNHCR vehicle equipped with bull bars that was involved in a vehicle-to-pedestrian collision. The vehicle was not damaged, yet the pedestrian suffered a fatal injury. The photo on the right shows a UNHCR vehicle without bull bars that was also involved in a vehicle-to-pedestrian collision. In this case, the vehicle has visible damage, but the pedestrian survived the collision.

Using AI-powered technologies

In 2024, UNHCR will pilot in-car AI-powered technologies in two countries looking to improve controls over risk factors. The system integrates two cameras, one camera recording the front of the vehicle, and the other one recording the driver. This technology makes it possible to identify and record data as well as to send alerts to drivers when they are distracted, showing signs of fatigue, speeding, driving too close to other vehicles, and leaving lanes inadvertently. Besides, it allows keeping evidence of dangerous situations in the road and collecting information on harsh driving behaviours. This information then allows UNHCR to conduct better controls over speeding events and other types of risk factors.