

Developing nations ride a motorcycle boom

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Credit: Zoutedrop on Flickr.

Asia's rapidly developing economies should prepare for a full-throttle increase in motorcycle numbers as average incomes increase, a new study from The Australian National University has found.

Using data from 153 countries, researchers Dr Paul Burke and Dr Shuhei Nishitatenno found the number of motorcycles per capita increases until average incomes reach around \$8,000 per person per year. The number then declines as incomes rise higher.

The research has implications for road safety in developing countries, where [motorcycle](#) use remains a relatively risky form of transport. Around 300,000 motorcyclists are killed around the world each year, with the death rate higher in developing countries.

"Our research suggests that many low-income countries should plan for a sharp increase in motorcycle use over coming years," said Dr Burke, from the ANU Crawford School of Public Policy.

"The uptake of motorcycles is likely to be largest in densely-populated countries, where two-wheeled travel is particularly popular. They are more affordable than private cars. In crowded cities they are also often more convenient."

Dr Burke said the study found it was crucial for policy makers to pay close attention to motorcycle safety and to alternative and safer forms of transport, such as urban light rail.

"In some Asian developing countries, motorcyclist deaths account for more than half of all road-related deaths. Our analysis finds strong evidence that riding a motorcycle tends to be more dangerous than driving a four-wheeled vehicle," he added.

Dr Burke and Dr Nishitateno's study also found higher rates of road deaths in [countries](#) with a higher than average adult alcohol consumption.

Their research has been published in the *Journal of Transport Geography*.

More information: Shuhei Nishitateno, Paul J. Burke, "The motorcycle Kuznets curve," *Journal of Transport Geography*, Volume 36, April 2014, Pages 116-123, ISSN 0966-6923,

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