‘The world is becoming a safer place to live in.’

By [Brady Dennis](http://www.washingtonpost.com/people/brady-dennis) December 4, 2015

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You might not guess it from the constant headlines about war, terrorism and mass shootings, but researchers say the world is actually becoming a less perilous place for many people. New findings published this week detail how the global toll of injuries -- including everything from car crashes to poisonings to natural disasters -- has fallen by nearly a third over the past quarter-century.

Researchers dug into the latest data from the Global Burden of Diseases and Injuries, an effort that began in 1990 and now encompasses information from 188 countries in 21 distinct regions of the world. They wanted to examine whether dozens of types of injuries had become more or less frequent over time and whether fewer people were dying from them.

For 2013, the most recent year for which data are available, the researchers calculated that nearly a billion people worldwide suffered injuries that required medical attention, according to [results published](http://ip.bmj.com/lookup/doi/10.1136/injurypreve-2015-041616) in the journal Injury Prevention. The major causes of death were not surprising: Road-related accidents claimed more lives than any other type of injury, followed by self-harm, falls and interpersonal violence.

Despite those numbers, the researchers found that a measure known as "disability-adjusted life years" -- calculated by adding years of life lost to death and years of life lived with disability -- had fallen by 31 percent between 1990 and 2013. The rate of decline was "significant" for 22 of 26 injury categories. Such decreases, the researchers write, "warrant a general statement that the world is becoming a safer place to live in."

That said, the findings make clear that it isn't necessarily a safer world for everyone, at least not in equal measure. Women in South Asian had high rates of fire-related injuries. Eastern Europe and Central Asia reported high rates of drowning and self-harm, while Latin America recorded high rates of homicide, even in children.

In almost every region, injury rates remained higher in men than in women, with the exception of those 80 years and older, for whom gender differences virtually disappeared. And among people ages 15 to 49, there was an eight-fold difference in road traffic injuries between the high-income Asia Pacific region and poorer areas of western Sub-Saharan Africa.