

The Role of Cultural Diversity in the Management of Road Safety

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There is an extensive valuable body of research on cultural determinants of road safety performance largely focused on cultural aspects of road user behavior. This presentation explores a much less often considered aspect of culture: its influence on not only road user behavior but also the management of road safety. There are various examples relating to culture and road safety management.

(i) Cultural background shape campaigns, laws, legislation, and enforcement. For example, many countries in the Americas have followed the model of the United States in articulating particular rights as part of the constitution. This may prevent effective random breath testing for alcohol and drugs which is legally possible and a powerful deterrent in other countries.

(ii) Particular mindsets and cultures facilitate a rigorously scientific, evidence-based approach. This approach assists with more robust management of road safety, which is often limited by common-sense decision making instead of evidence. This could change the choice of interventions as well as the priority and rapidity of implementation, including experimental trials, by measurable indicators.

(iii) Cultural values influence the extent of funding of road safety and the adoption of a safe system approach to road safety, which is based on the ethical imperative that no fatalities and serious injuries are acceptable. A victim-blaming approach to road safety remains widely adopted in most developing countries, for example, where there are no national speed limit laws.

The Global Road Safety Facility has been examining country and regional differences in the management of road safety by focusing on broad trends for a better understanding of challenges and improvements. It is worth exploring various examples by which road safety management challenges appear to be different from one country to another, even in similar income countries.