# How do we measure Harm in Transport?

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| The title question seems straightforward enough but, upon further reflection, there are some challenging issues in how we measure the level (or change in level) of harm in our land transport system. These issues may influence how we measure and manage our safety goals such as Road to Zero.  A traditional measure of harm in road safety is to count the number of deaths and injuries suffered in road crashes across the various transport modes. Waka Kotahi’s Crash Analysis System (CAS) has typically been the main source of capturing this. The potential for this data to be under-reported has long been well known but, even then, it overlooks many other examples of casualties within the transport environment. The growing number of new “transport devices” (skateboards, scooters, etc) in our user mix also create definition problems within this dataset.  Recent investigations looking at the safety of people walking, biking, motorcycling and using other transport devices in Auckland identified from hospital data that considerably many more people are suffering serious injuries on roads and paths from incidents not involving other vehicles. Research looking into the cost of road crashes nationally found similarly large social costs from non-motorised user incidents. These findings have interesting implications for funding of maintenance of paths, vegetation and kerb-crossings, where many “slip, trip, fall” events occur.  While there is a (not surprising) focus on reducing deaths and injuries on our transport network, reduction targets for these can be at odds with other targets to increase numbers using low-use modes like walking and cycling. If considerable increases in active modes result in corresponding gains in personal health, does that counter the likelihood that there may also be some additional road deaths?  This paper explores these issues and others, using recent studies and examples, and suggests some possible ways forward. |