

EQUILIBRIUM & SUSTAINABILITY

‘Risky behaviors,’ urban design drive surging injuries from electric bikes, scooters

BY SAUL ELBEIN - 07/23/24 10:10 AM ET

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FILE – A delivery worker rides a motorized bicycle, July 25, 2023, in New York. On Monday, Nov. 13, New York City officials said that retailers and food delivery companies must do more to halt the proliferation of unsafe e-bike and e-scooter batteries after a fire blamed on an electric scooter’s lithium ion battery killed three people over the weekend. (AP Photo/Seth Wenig, File)

The rising use of small electric vehicles such as e-bikes and scooters is driving a dramatic increase in injuries, a new study has found.

Between 2017 and 2022, injuries of riders on e-bikes rose thirtyfold, and riders of scooters increased by a factor of seven, according to [a study in JAMA Open](#).

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That study bills itself as the first inquiry into injuries from “micromobility” solutions, whose use has increased by a factor even greater than the number of injuries.

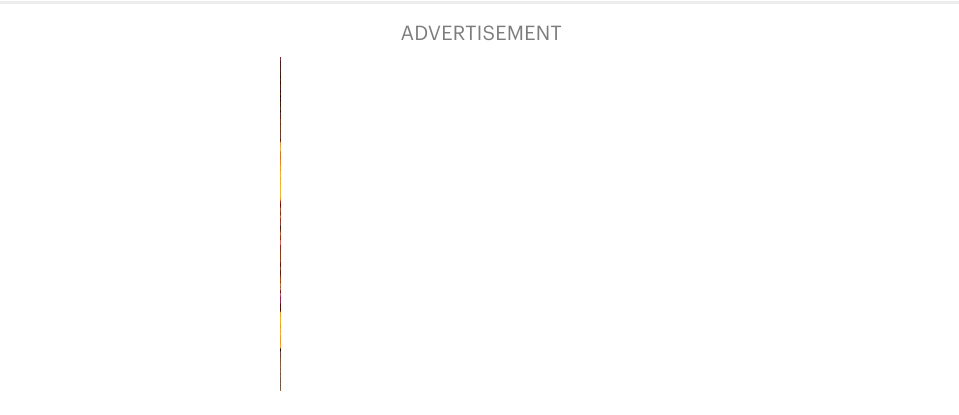
In a sense, the injuries are one reflection of a positive trend: The use of e-bikes and scooters increased by 50 times between 2017 and 2022. The small vehicles offer a potent set of advantages: They are fast — with speeds up to 28 mph — relatively low-cost and easy to access through integrations with common rideshare platforms such as Lyft.



The electric assist also makes them more convenient for older riders, the study noted.

But the study suggests this ease of access also means that people treat e-bikes and e-scooters more casually than they would more conventional forms of transit.

Riders of e-bikes and scooters tended to be older and were more likely than users of conventional devices to ride while intoxicated or without a helmet, researchers found.



The median injured e-biker was 39, while the average age of injury for a conventional cyclist was 30.

For scooters, where the nonpowered varieties are largely used by children, the disparity was even more stark: The average injured e-scooter rider was 30 years old, compared to 11 for the average injured rider of a manual scooter.

These injuries are not entirely the fault of riders, researchers noted. With American downtowns historically oriented around cars, the built environment often makes it difficult to use bikes and scooters safely.

Do you ride e-bikes?

- ☐ Yes, frequently
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ No, never
- ☐ Other / No opinion

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And because these devices are so new, they don't benefit from the same culture of riding that helps keep cyclists safe, a [2022 study found](#).

"E-Scooters are not necessarily more dangerous than bicycles, but they are often perceived as such, possibly because of their unfamiliarity and the behavior of their riders," said Marco Dozza of Sweden's Chalmers University of Technology, a lead author of that 2022 paper.

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