

# facts

## World report on road traffic injury prevention - Main messages

The *World report on road traffic injury prevention*, the first report on the subject developed jointly by WHO and the World Bank, presents the current knowledge about road traffic injuries and what can be done to address the problem.

### Road traffic injuries are a huge public health and development problem

- Road traffic crashes kill 1.2 million people a year or an average of 3242 people every day.
- Road traffic crashes injure or disable between 20 million and 50 million people a year.
- Road traffic crashes rank as the 11th leading cause of death and account for 2.1% of all deaths globally.

### The majority of road traffic injuries affect people in low-income and middle-income countries, especially young males and vulnerable road users

- 90% of road traffic deaths occur in low-income and middle-income countries.
- Countries in the WHO Western Pacific Region and the WHO South-East Asia Region account for more than half of all road traffic deaths in the world.

- More than half of all road traffic deaths occur among young adults between 15 and 44 years of age.
- 73% of all road traffic fatalities are male.
- In low-income and middle-income countries, the most vulnerable road users are pedestrians, cyclists, users of motorised two-wheelers and passengers on public transport.

### Without appropriate action, the problem will only worsen

Road traffic injuries are predicted to become the third largest contributor to the global burden of disease by 2020.

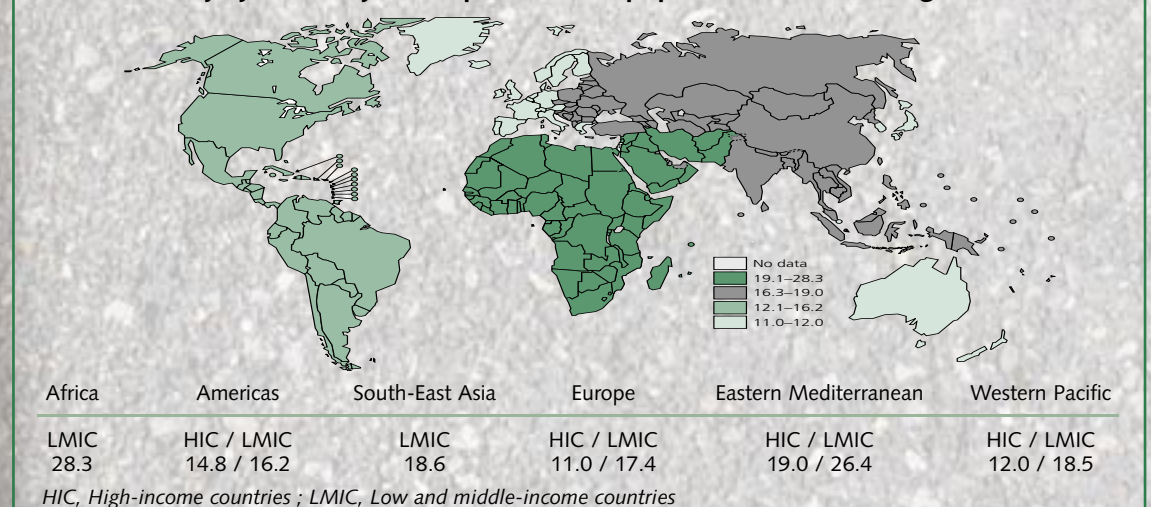
Road traffic deaths are predicted to increase by 83% in low-income and middle-income countries, and to decrease by 27% in high-income countries. These figures amount to a predicted global increase of 67% by 2020.

### The costs of road traffic injuries are enormous

It is estimated that every year, road traffic crashes cost:

- US\$518 billion globally;
- US\$65 billion in low-income and middle-income countries, exceeding the total amount received in development assistance;

Road traffic injury mortality rates (per 100 000 population) in WHO regions, 2002



Source : WHO Global Burden of Disease project, 2002, version 1





- between 1% and 1.5 % of gross national product in low-income and middle-income countries;
- 2% of gross national product in high-income countries;
- Road traffic injuries put significant strain on health care budgets.

For everyone killed, injured or disabled by a road traffic crash there are countless others deeply affected. Many families are driven into poverty by the cost of prolonged medical care, the loss of a family breadwinner or the extra funds needed to care for people with disabilities. Road crash survivors, their families, friends and other caregivers often suffer adverse social, physical and psychological effects.

### Road traffic crashes can be prevented

Road traffic crashes are predictable and can be prevented. Many countries have shown sharp reductions in the number of crashes and casualties by taking action including:

- setting, raising awareness of and enforcing laws governing speed limits, alcohol impairment, use of seat-belts, child restraints and crash helmets;
- formulating and implementing transport and land-use policies that promote fewer, shorter and safer trips; encouraging the use of safer modes of travel, such as public transport; and incorporating injury prevention measures into traffic management and road design;
- making vehicles more protective for occupants, pedestrians and cyclists, and more visible using daytime running lights, high-mounted brake lights, reflective materials on cycles, carts, rickshaws and other non-motorized forms of transport.

### Role of the public health sector

While the health sector is only one of many bodies involved in road safety, it has an important role to play, particularly in:

- systematically collecting data through surveillance and surveys;
- researching the causes of road traffic crashes and injuries;
- exploring ways of preventing and reducing the severity of injuries;
- helping to implement road safety interventions;
- working to persuade policy-makers and decision-makers to address the major issue of injuries in general;

- translating effective, science-based information into policies and practices;
- promoting capacity-building in all these areas.

Improved road traffic injury prevention is important to the public health sector as it would result in fewer hospital admissions and a reduced severity of injuries. An important public health gain would be achieved if more people could choose to walk or cycle instead of driving, without fearing for their safety.

### Road safety should be addressed using a 'systems approach'

Making a road traffic system less hazardous requires understanding the system as a whole, understanding the interaction between its elements – vehicles, roads, road users and their physical, social and economic environments – and identifying where there is potential for intervention. This systems approach moves away from focusing solely on the behaviour of the individual and addresses road safety holistically.

### Road safety is a multisectoral responsibility

Road safety is a shared responsibility. Reducing risk in the world's road traffic systems requires commitment and informed decision-making by government, industry, nongovernmental organizations and international agencies. It also requires participation by people from many different disciplines, such as road engineers, motor vehicle designers, law enforcement officers, health professionals and community groups.

Recommendations from the *World report on road traffic injury prevention* on how policy-makers can improve road safety:

- Identify a lead agency in government to guide the national road traffic safety effort.
- Assess the problem, policies, institutional settings and capacity relating to road traffic injury.
- Prepare a national road safety strategy and plan of action.
- Allocate financial and human resources to address the problem.
- Implement specific actions to prevent road traffic crashes, minimize injuries and their consequences, and evaluate the impact of these actions.
- Support the development of national capacity and international cooperation.