

INJURY DATA

EXISTING POLICE CRASH DATA SIGNIFICANTLY UNDERSTATE CRASH INJURIES

Traffic fatalities only show the tip of the iceberg. The number of road deaths is not a sufficient indicator for road safety. The global total of 1.35 million annual road deaths must be seen in the context of an estimated 20 to 50 million serious injuries sustained in crashes around the world every year, according to the 2018 WHO Global Status Report on Road Safety. The wide margin of the estimate suggests the importance of increased investment in the collection and analysis of data on serious road injury.

Existing police crash data significantly understate crash injuries. Information on injuries is usually compiled from police records of crashes. These tend to underreport injuries, and therefore so do

official crash statistics. In most cases, this makes the information in police reports inadequate for the purpose of analysing the nature and consequences of serious injury crashes. Hospital records are more accurate and should be used to complement any police data. This is standard practice in only very few countries, for example Israel, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden. Most IRTAD countries are working on improving the collection of injury data, however. Hospital data often lack information on the circumstances of the crash, the environment, and the road user category. Because the definition of what constitutes a serious injury as well as methodologies for counting them vary widely among countries,

international comparisons of serious injury crashes are not reliable. For these reasons, this report, comparative in nature, does not present injury data. Serious injury data are available for those countries that collect them in the online country profiles that complement this report.

A common definition of serious injuries is urgently needed. This will improve data collection and enable comparisons. A common definition on the basis of the Abbreviated Injury Scale (AIS) has been proposed by the IRTAD Group. It defines a serious injury as one with a Maximum AIS score of 3 or more (MAIS 3+). The IRTAD Group also encourages its members to set up mechanisms for a combined

analysis of police and hospital data. The European Commission has started collecting MAIS3+ data from EU Member States. To assess the number of people injured with a MAIS score of 3 or above, most countries use software to translate injury severity from the International Classification of Diseases (ICD 9 or 10) into an Abbreviated Injury Scale (AIS).

The number of serious injuries from road crashes is decreasing at a much slower pace than the number of fatalities. Many survivors of severe crashes do not recover completely and often face a grave reduction of their quality of life. Crash injuries also reduce productivity

and, ultimately, a nation's economic performance. The socio-economic costs of road crashes for the European Union are estimated at well above EUR 500 billion or at 3% of the EU's GDP. Most of these costs are related to fatal and serious injuries³.

Serious injury crashes may follow different patterns than fatal crashes. They may therefore require different countermeasures. This is the case specifically for serious injury crashes in urban areas involving vulnerable road users that are significantly over-represented among all serious traffic injuries and underrepresented in police statistics - a pattern that is less visible when looking only at fatality data⁴.

3. Wijnen, W. et al., (2017), Crash cost estimates for European countries, Deliverable 3.2 of the H2020 project SafetyCube.

4. Weijermars, W. (2017), Risk Factors Related to MAIS3+ Casualties, European Road Safety Decision Support System, developed by the H2020 project SafetyCube.



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