

INJURY DATA



TRAFFIC FATALITIES ARE THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG

Traffic fatalities only show the tip of the iceberg.

The 1.35 million annual road deaths worldwide must be seen in the context of 20 to 50 million serious injuries sustained in crashes around the world every year, as estimated by the World Health Organization. The wide margin in this estimate underlines the importance of increased investment in the collection and analysis of data on serious road injuries.

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. This group is significantly over-represented among serious traffic injuries and underrepresented in police statistics - a pattern that is less visible when looking only at fatality data.

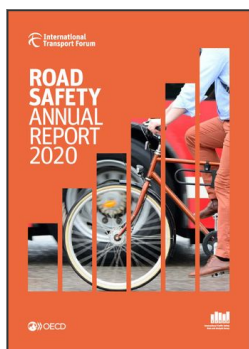
THE DEFINITION OF SERIOUS INJURY VARIES WIDELY

The police data on crashes is known to significantly understate the number and seriousness of crash injuries. This means that official crash statistics also underreport injuries as they are usually based on fact finding at the crash site by police. But the information in police reports is usually inadequate for analysing the nature and consequences of serious injury crashes. Hospital records are much more accurate and reliable. Medical personnel is generally better trained to recognise injuries and accustomed to describing the nature of an injury in a methodological manner. Hospital data should therefore be systematically used to complement any police data on traffic crash injuries.

The definition of “serious injury” varies widely among countries and it has not been possible so far to standardise them.

The same is true with respect to the various methodologies for counting serious injuries. A common definition of a serious injury on the basis of the Abbreviated Injury Scale (AIS) has been proposed by the International Transport Forum’s IRTAD Group. It defines an injury as serious if it is characterised by a maximum AIS score of three or more (MAIS3+). In Europe, the European Commission has started to collect MAIS3+ data from member states of the European Union.

To assess the number of people injured with an MAIS3+ score, most countries rely on software applications which translate the injury severity from the International Classification of Diseases (ICD 9 or 10) into the Abbreviated Injury Scale. However, only very few countries publish MAIS3+ data. Where it is available, these data are included in the online country profiles that complement this report (see www.itf-oecd.org/road-safety-annualreport-2020).



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