

9

Safety

Safety is about freedom from harm – whether that harm comes in the form of crime, conflict, violence, terrorism, accidents or natural disasters. Across OECD countries, the homicide rate has fallen by one-third since 2010, to just over 2 per 100 000 people. 71% of people in OECD countries report feeling safe when walking alone at night, up from 67% in 2010-12. Among the 31 OECD countries with available data, road deaths have fallen by over 20%, on average since 2010. While 79% of men feel safe when walking alone at night, only 62% of women do. Nevertheless, the gap between men and women has narrowed since 2006-12. The middle-aged and tertiary-educated tend to feel safer, on average, than groups of other ages and education. Men are at higher risk of homicide than women in all but four OECD countries.

Figure 9.1. Safety snapshot: current levels, and direction of change since 2010



Note: The snapshot depicts data for 2018, or the latest available year, for each indicator. The colour of the circle indicates the direction of change, relative to 2010, or the closest available year: improvement is shown in blue, deterioration in orange and no clear or consistent change in grey, and insufficient time series to determine trends in white. For each indicator, the OECD country with the lowest (on the left) and highest (on the right) well-being level are labelled, along with the OECD average. For full details of the methodology, see the Reader's Guide.

Source: *OECD Health Status* (database), http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=HEALTH_STAT; *Gallup World Poll* (database), <https://gallup.com/analytics/232838/world-poll.aspx> and *International Traffic Safety Data and Analysis Group* (IRTAD) database, <https://itf.oecd.org/irtad-road-safety-database>.

Homicides

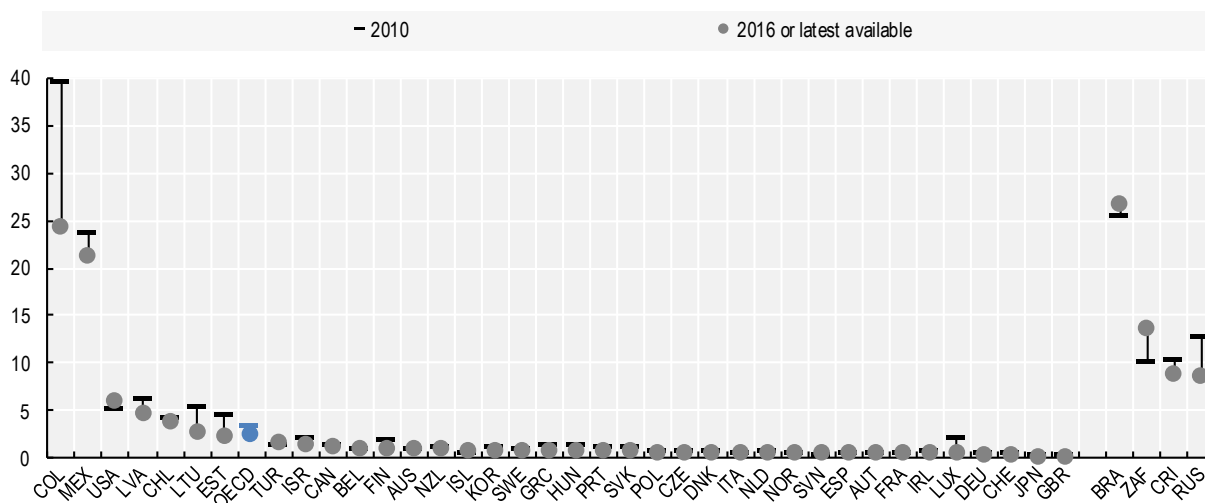
In nearly two-thirds of OECD countries, the homicide rate is below 1 per 100 000 population (Figure 9.2). However, the rate is more than three times higher than this in the United States and more than 20 times higher in Mexico and Colombia. Since 2010, the homicide rate has fallen by at least 33% in more than one-third of OECD countries, and the OECD average has fallen by around one-third. Nevertheless, rates have risen by more than 15% in the United States and Turkey, as well as (from a relatively low base) in Iceland and Slovenia.

Feelings of safety when walking alone at night

More than 85% of people in Finland, Switzerland, Iceland, Slovenia and Norway feel safe when walking alone at night where they live, but fewer than 50% do in Chile, Colombia and Mexico (Figure 9.3). The share of people in OECD countries who feel safe has increased by 4 percentage points, on average, since 2010, up from 67% to 71%. The largest improvements occurred in Lithuania (up by 20 percentage points) the Czech Republic and Portugal (15 points), Estonia (13) and the Slovak Republic (11). Nevertheless, feelings of safety have fallen in Mexico (-7 percentage points), Germany (-6), Chile (-5) and Sweden (-3).

Figure 9.2. The OECD average homicide rate has fallen by around one-third since 2010

Age-standardised rate per 100 000 population



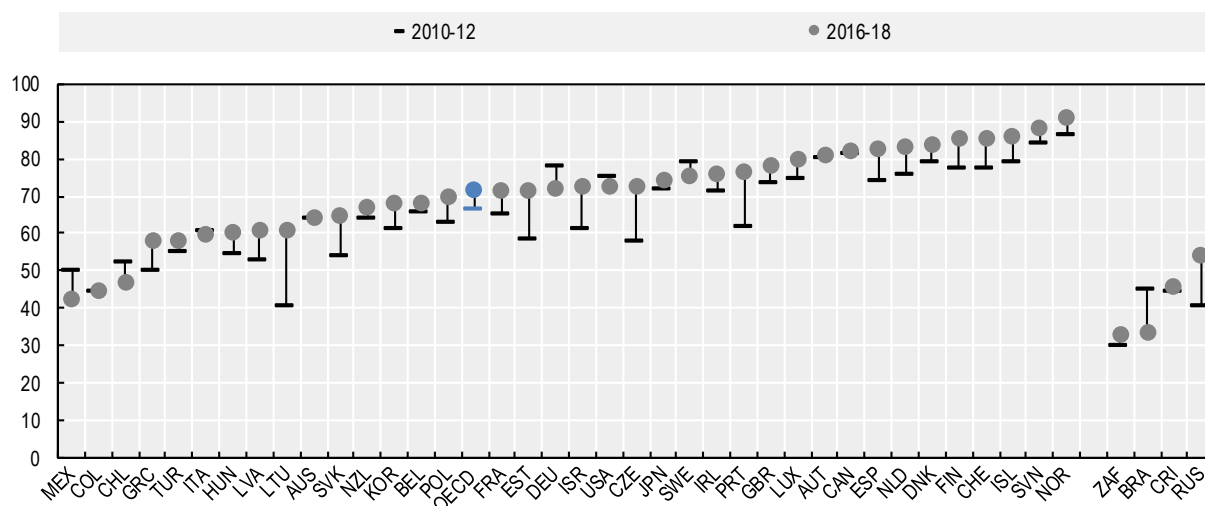
Note: The latest available year is 2017 for Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Iceland and Lithuania; 2015 for Canada, Colombia, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Slovenia and South Africa; 2014 for New Zealand, the Slovak Republic, Costa Rica and the Russian Federation; and 2016 for all other countries.

Source: OECD Health Status: Causes of Mortality (database), http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=HEALTH_STAT.

StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888934081891>

Figure 9.3. The share of people who feel safe has increased since 2010-12 in more than half of OECD countries

Share of people declaring that they feel safe when walking alone at night in the city or area where they live, percentage



Source: Gallup World Poll (database), <https://gallup.com/analytics/232838/world-poll.aspx>.

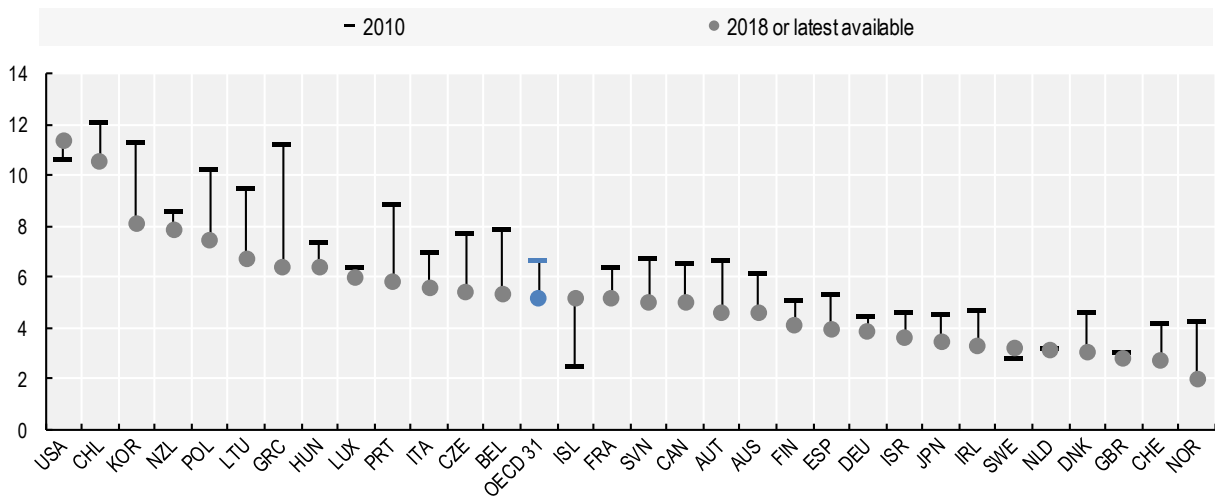
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Road deaths

Road deaths are lowest in Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom at fewer than 3 per 100 000 population (Figure 9.4). By contrast, deaths are between 3 and 4 times higher in Korea, Chile and the United States. The United Nations General Assembly declared 2011-2020 as a “Decade of Action for Road Safety” (WHO, 2010^[1]), in an effort to focus countries’ efforts towards meeting the road accident target of the 2030 Agenda (Target 3.6, to halve global road deaths by 2020) (OECD, 2019^[2]). Among the 31 OECD countries with available data, road deaths have fallen by over 20%, on average, since 2010. Five countries (Norway, Greece, Switzerland, Portugal and Denmark) have reduced road deaths by over one-third. Despite these improvements, progress to date is still far from sufficient to meet Target 3.6.

Figure 9.4. Road deaths have fallen since 2010 in most OECD countries

Rate per 100 000 population



Note: The latest available year is 2017 for all countries, except for Australia, Austria, Belgium, Chile, Finland, Greece, Iceland, Luxembourg, Sweden and Switzerland, where the latest year is 2018. The OECD average excludes Colombia, Estonia, Latvia, Mexico, the Slovak Republic and Turkey, due to a lack of available data.

Source: *International Traffic Safety Data and Analysis Group (IRTAD) database*, <https://itf-oecd.org/irtad-road-safety-database>.

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Safety inequalities: gaps between population groups

Gender gaps are high across most Safety indicators

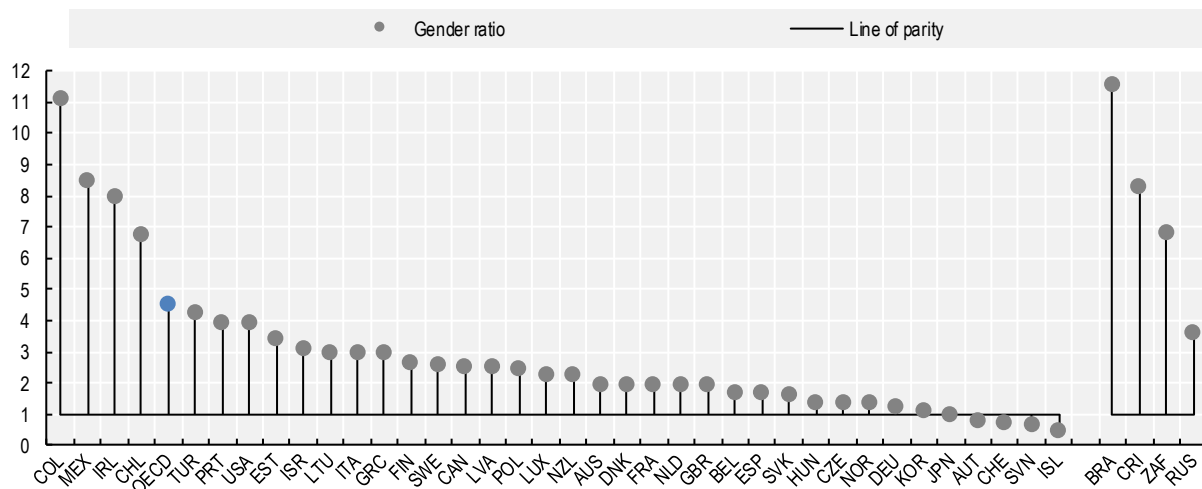
In all but four OECD countries, men are much more likely to be victims of homicide than women: the OECD average homicide rate for men is 4 deaths per 100 000 population, compared to 0.9 women (Figure 9.5). Nevertheless, in Iceland, Slovenia, Switzerland and Austria, women are either equally or more likely than men to be homicide victims.

Men feel safer than women when walking alone at night in all OECD countries. The gap is particularly high in Australia and New Zealand, where around 80% of men report feeling safe, while only around 50% of women do. Despite this, existing evidence suggests that the gender gap in feelings of safety narrowed slightly between 2006-12 and 2013-18 in several OECD countries (Figure 9.6), and notably in France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain and the Slovak Republic. In two cases, this was because overall feelings of

safety improved among both genders, but especially so for women (Spain, Slovak Republic), while in others it was due to a combination of strong improvements for women coupled with slight declines for men (France, United Kingdom, Italy).

Figure 9.5. With few exceptions, homicide rates are higher for men than for women

Gender ratios for homicide rates, 2017 or the latest available year



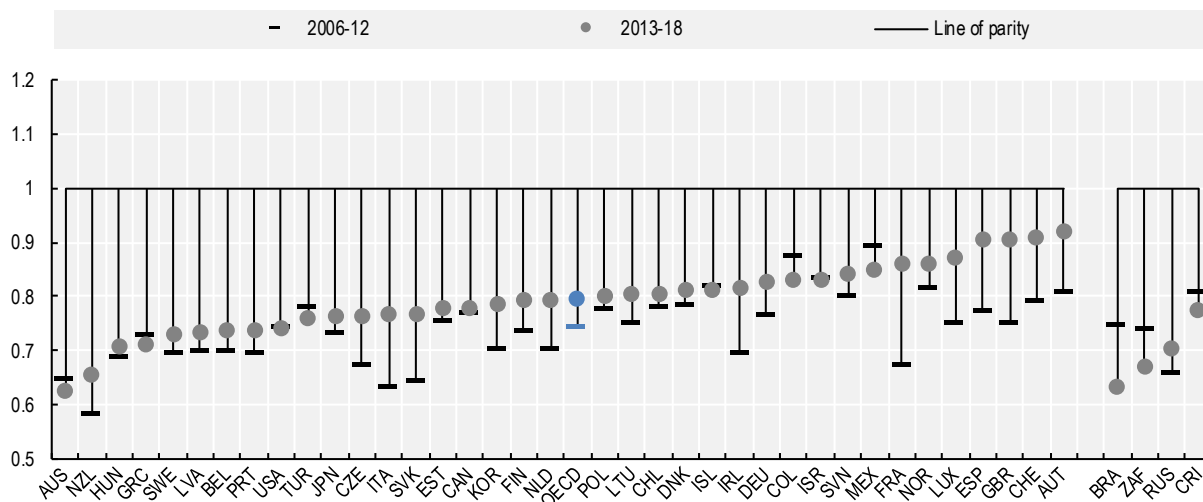
Note: Gender ratios are calculated by dividing the homicide rate for men by the homicide rate for women. Thus, values above 1.0 indicate higher relative homicide rates for men, and those below 1.0 higher relative homicide rates for women. Data refer to 2017 for Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Iceland and Lithuania; to 2015 for Canada, Colombia, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Brazil and South Africa; to 2014 for New Zealand, the Slovak Republic, Costa Rica and the Russian Federation; and to 2016 for all other countries.

Source: OECD Health Status: Causes of Mortality (database), http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=HEALTH_STAT.

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Figure 9.6. The large gender gap in feelings of safety has narrowed slightly since 2006-12

Gender ratios for people who feel safe walking alone at night in the area where they live



Note: Gender ratios are calculated by dividing the share of women who feel safe walking alone at night, by the share of men who feel safe. Thus, values above 1.0 indicate higher relative feelings of safety for women, and those below 1.0 lower relative feelings of safety among women.

Source: Gallup World Poll (database), <https://gallup.com/analytics/232838/world-poll.aspx>.

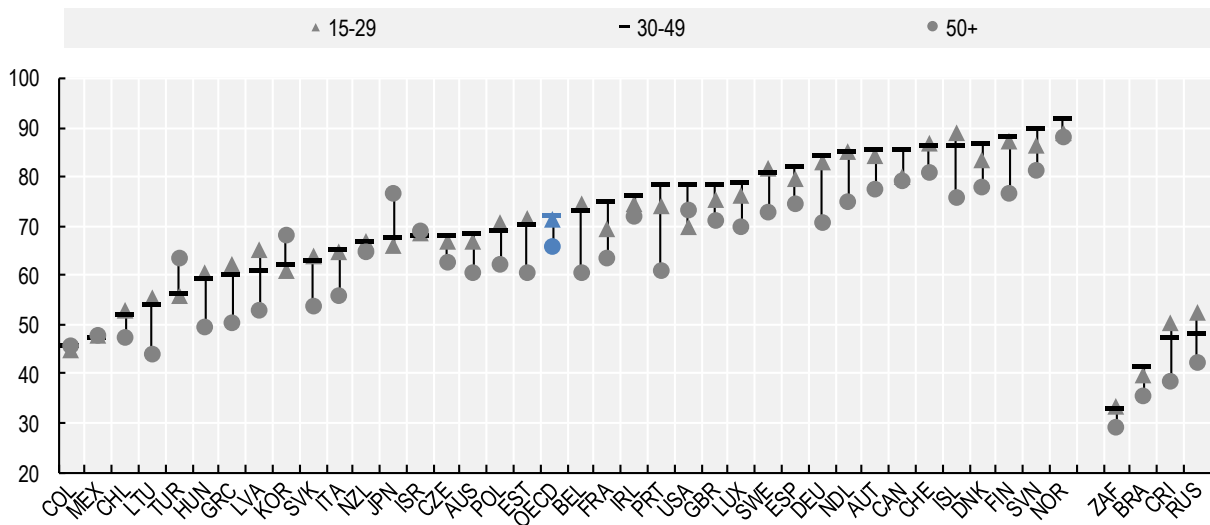
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The middle-aged and tertiary educated are more likely to feel safe when walking alone at night

People aged 30-49 generally report higher feelings of safety than both young adults and those aged 50 and over (Figure 9.7). Exceptions include Japan, Korea and Turkey, where older people (aged 50 and over) feel safer than all other age groups; and Latvia, Iceland, Costa Rica and the Russian Federation, where people aged 15-29 report slightly higher feelings of safety than the 30-49 age group.

Figure 9.7. People aged 50 and over feel less safe when walking alone at night than other age groups

Share of people declaring that they feel safe when walking alone at night in the city or area where they live, by age, percentage, 2010-18 pooled data



Source: Gallup World Poll (database), <https://gallup.com/analytics/232838/world-poll.aspx>.

StatLink  <https://doi.org/10.1787/888934081986>

Feelings of safety also vary by education level: on average in OECD countries, 64% people with only a primary education, 69% of those with a secondary education, and 73% of those with a tertiary degree said they felt safe walking alone at night during the years 2010 to 2018.

Box 9.1. Measurement and the statistical agenda ahead

Safety is about freedom from harm, whether that harm comes in the form of crime, conflict, violence, terrorism, oppression, accidents or natural disasters. An ideal set of Safety indicators would inform about the various crimes and offenses experienced by individuals, including crimes against property (e.g. car theft, burglary); contact crimes (e.g. assault, mugging, domestic violence); and non-conventional crimes (e.g. hate crimes, emotional abuse, corruption, money-laundering, terrorism). Cybercrime and incidents of privacy breaches and consumer fraud online present new forms of criminal activities associated with the digital transformation (OECD, 2019^[3]). Other threats to people's safety include traffic accidents, natural disasters and conflicts such as wars. People's freedom to express personal, political and social objectives without fear is another element of personal safety. However, the disparity in data sources and in approaches used in different countries' criminal legislation complicates the task of creating a consistent and internationally comparable definition of a variety of criminal acts. The present chapter therefore considers three key aspects of Safety where internationally comparable data are available (Table 9.1).

Table 9.1. Safety indicators considered in this chapter

	Average	Vertical inequality (gap between top and bottom of the distribution)	Horizontal inequality (difference between groups, by gender, age, education)	Deprivation
Homicides	Deaths due to assault, rate per 100 000 population	n/a	By gender	n/a
Feeling safe	Share of people declaring that they feel safe when walking alone at night in the city or area where they live	n/a	By gender, age and education	Share of people not feeling safe when walking alone at night in the city or area where they live
Road deaths	Rate per 100 000 population	n/a	By age	n/a

Homicides: Cause-of-death statistics come from civil registration systems, compiled by national authorities and collated by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Only medically certified causes of death are included. The data shown here are available in the OECD Causes of Mortality Database.

Feelings of safety: This indicator is based on the survey question: “Do you feel safe walking alone at night in the city or area where you live?” The data shown here reflect the share of all respondents who replied “yes” to this question, averaged over a three-year period. Data are sourced from the Gallup World Poll, which samples around 1 000 people per country, each year. For country averages, data are pooled over all available years for a three-year period (e.g. 2016-18) to improve the accuracy of the estimates; for reporting inequalities, data are pooled over a longer time period (e.g. 2010-18). The sample is ex ante designed to be nationally representative of the population aged 15 and over (including rural areas); the sample data are weighted to the population using weights supplied by Gallup (OECD, 2017^[4]).

Road deaths: A road fatality is any person killed immediately or dying within 30 days because of a road accident, excluding suicides. Data shown here are sourced from the *International Road Traffic and Accident Database* (IRTAD). All data is collected directly from relevant national data providers in IRTAD participating countries. It is provided in a common format, based on definitions developed and agreed by the IRTAD Group. Access is via the OECD statistics portal (ITF/OECD, 2019^[5]).

Correlations among Safety indicators

There are strong correlations between the objective and subjective measures of Safety included in this chapter: in countries with higher rates of homicide, there are more road deaths, and people feel less safe when walking alone at night (Table 9.2).

Table 9.2. Objective and subjective measures of Safety are strongly correlated

Bivariate correlation coefficients among the Safety indicators

	Homicides	Feelings of safety	Road deaths
Homicides			
Feelings of safety	-0.75*** (41)		
Road deaths	0.75*** (31)	-0.60*** (31)	

Note: The table shows the bivariate Pearson's correlation coefficient; values in parentheses refer to the number of observations (countries). * Indicates that correlations are significant at the $p < 0.10$ level, ** that they are significant at the $p < 0.05$ level, and *** at the $p < 0.01$ level.

The statistical agenda ahead

The homicide rate is often considered to be a key indicator of violent crime, but it represents the “tip of the iceberg”. It should be complemented by data from police registers and crime victimisation surveys to cover a wider range of experiences – including crimes against property (e.g. theft, burglary), contact crimes (e.g. assault, mugging) and non-conventional crimes (e.g. hate crimes, fraud). Nevertheless, the cross-country comparability of both official registers and survey data remains limited, and no central repository of international data currently exists.

Feelings of safety can affect people's well-being and their behaviour. However, one of the limits of the current indicator, sourced from the Gallup World Poll, is the relatively narrow scope (feelings of safety when walking alone at night). There is also no indication of the types of threats that people might fear. This can be particularly constraining from the view of identifying potential policy levers. This indicator is therefore considered as a placeholder until better quality and more harmonised data become available from official sources.

Domestic violence is an important aspect of safety highlighted in both the Sustainable Development Goals (Target 5.2.1 refers to women and girls subject to intimate partner violence) and national well-being frameworks (Australia, Italy, Israel, New Zealand). However, existing data often come from specialised surveys that are conducted infrequently and focus mainly on women (rather than on the entire population) (UN DESA, 2019^[6]). National surveys that have contributed to a better understanding of domestic violence include Canada's General Social Survey on Victimization (conducted every 5 years), the Encuesta Nacional de Victimización y Percepción sobre Seguridad Pública (ENVIPE) in Mexico and the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) in the United Kingdom.

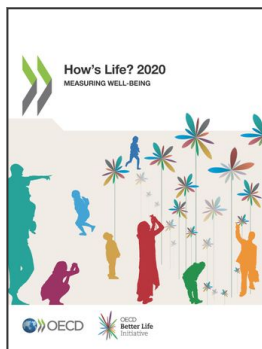
The scope of the road safety indicator could be improved by extending it to (non-fatal) road injuries. In developing countries, the institutional capacity to monitor road deaths and crash data in general is still lacking. Deaths from conflict is also an important omission from the current data set.

The ongoing digital transformation also implies risks for people's safety. In the absence of effective regulatory, legal and ethical frameworks, Internet users and organisations can be exposed to substantial economic, social, emotional and even physical risks. Measuring cybersecurity risks is challenging, however, as online criminal activity may go unnoticed by internet users, and no centralised reporting mechanism for small-scale online security incidents currently exists. Self-reports of cybercrime remain

the most practical technique at present, though corrections may also be necessary for different rates of Internet use across population groups and OECD countries (since higher prevalence of these incidents may simply imply higher exposure to them) (OECD, 2019^[3]). Greater effort is therefore needed to develop a more general, and more objective, measure of cybersecurity risks.

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