

TRENDS

15 IRTAD COUNTRIES REACHED THEIR LOWEST NUMBER OF ROAD DEATHS IN 2017

The years 2017 and 2018 have been encouraging for road safety in the majority of IRTAD countries. This is welcome as progress since 2013 had generally slowed. The average annual reduction was much greater between 2010 and 2013 than during the period 2013-17, despite encouraging results in 2017 and 2018.

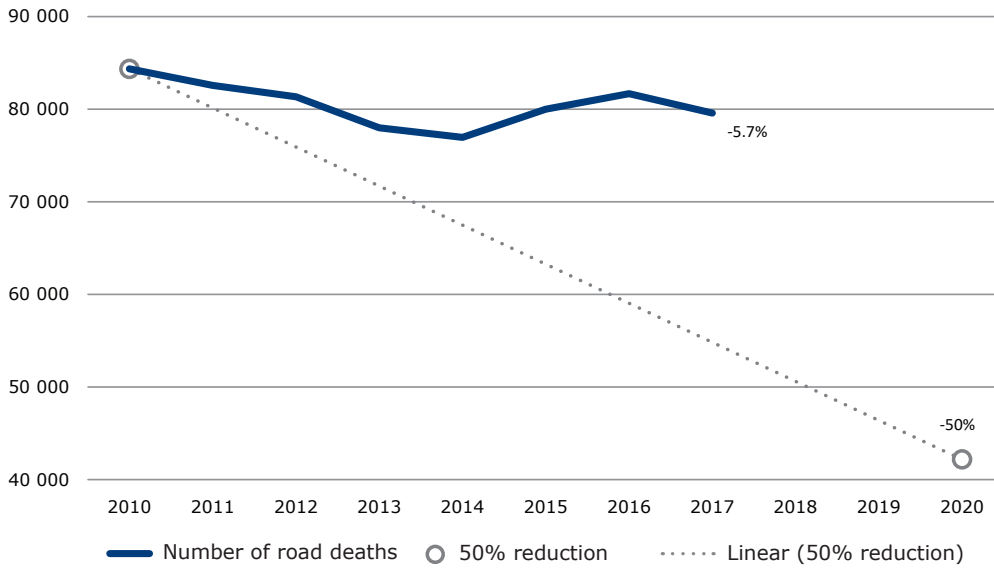
The number of road deaths declined in the majority of countries in 2018, according to preliminary data. Among the 26 countries with provisional or final data available for 2018, the number of road deaths decreased or stabilised in 16

countries, while it increased in 10 countries. In particular, the number of road deaths increased by 28% in Sweden, by 14% in the Czech Republic and by 11% in the Netherlands. On average, the number of road deaths decreased by 1.7% in IRTAD Member countries in 2018 when compared to 2017. This is all the more encouraging as the year 2017 had already seen fatality reductions in several countries.

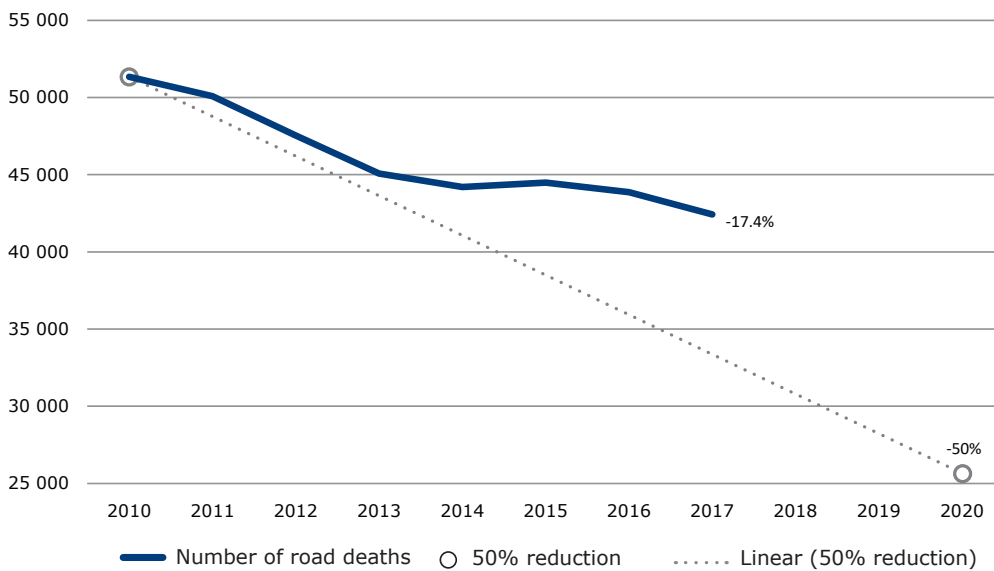
Road safety improved in most IRTAD countries in 2017, based on final data. The number of road deaths decreased in 27 out of the 33

Figure 1. Aggregate evolution in the number of road deaths in IRTAD countries, 2010-17

a. Number of road deaths - aggregated data for 33 countries



b. Number of road deaths - aggregated data for 32 countries (excluding the US)



Data for Argentina in 2016 are an estimate.

countries with validated data. Overall the number of road deaths decreased by 2.6% from 81 669 road deaths in 2016 to 79 554 road deaths in 2017 across the 33 countries. Information from countries with non-validated data suggests a similar downward trend.

Fifteen countries registered the lowest number of road deaths in 2017 since the start of systematic record-keeping. These countries are Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Slovenia and Sweden. The countries that recorded the largest decrease in 2017 were Luxembourg, Norway and Slovenia with a reduction of more than 20%. However, the number of road deaths increased in six countries (Spain, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Switzerland, and New Zealand). This is the fourth consecutive year that New Zealand and Spain have experienced increases.

Traffic fatalities were down by 5.7% in 2017 compared to 2010. It is important to recognise the degree to which the United States, as the most populous IRTAD member, heavily influences the data. If the United States is excluded, the average reduction in road deaths is 17.4%.

Progress in reducing road fatalities has been slow since 2013. From 2010-13, the overall average annual reduction in the number of road deaths in IRTAD countries was 2.6%. The period 2013-17, by contrast, saw an average annual increase of 0.5%. In some countries,

this reverse trend is particularly marked. New Zealand for example benefited from an average 12.3% annual reduction in the number of road deaths in the period 2010-13, but faced an average 10.6% increase in the period 2013-17.

Large disparities between countries' longer-term road safety development lie behind the average figures.

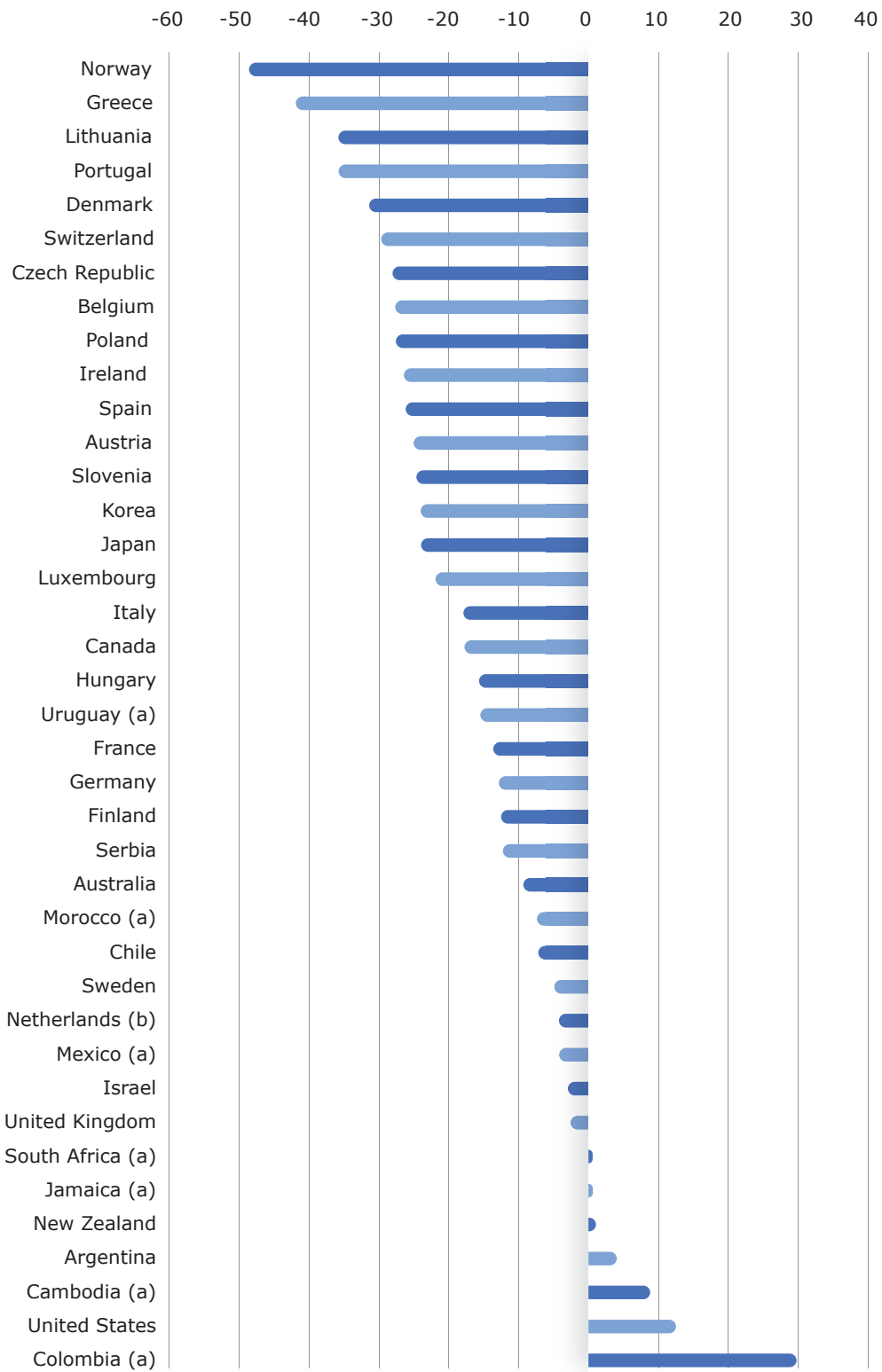
Benchmarked against 2010 data, the number of traffic deaths fell in 29 out of 33 countries in IRTAD member countries in 2017 (see Figure 2). The strongest reductions were achieved by Norway and Greece. Norway nearly halved its number of road deaths from 208 to 107 in the period 2010-17. Greece reduced the number of traffic fatalities from 1258 to 731, a drop of 42%.

The success of Norway is particularly remarkable, as the country's roads were already among the safest in the world. An additional group of three countries (Portugal, Lithuania and Denmark) saw a reduction in fatalities of over 30%. Four countries registered an increase in the number of road deaths in the period 2010-17: the United States (+12.5%), Argentina (+4%) and New Zealand (+1.1%). Iceland recorded eight more road fatalities.

Since 2000 most IRTAD countries achieved a significant reduction in the number of road deaths, even if this was achieved mostly from 2000-13. Twenty countries out of 32 with consistent data achieved a reduction of traffic deaths by 50% or more during the 2000-13 period.

PROGRESS IN REDUCING ROAD FATALITIES HAS BEEN SLOW SINCE 2013

Figure 2. **Percentage change in the number of road deaths, 2010-17**



Data for Iceland are not shown because the observations are too low to have meaningful percentage changes.
 (a) Data as provided by the countries and not validated by IRTAD.
 (b) Real data (actual numbers instead of reported numbers by the police).

Figure 3. Percentage change in the number of road deaths, 2000-13 vs. 2013-17

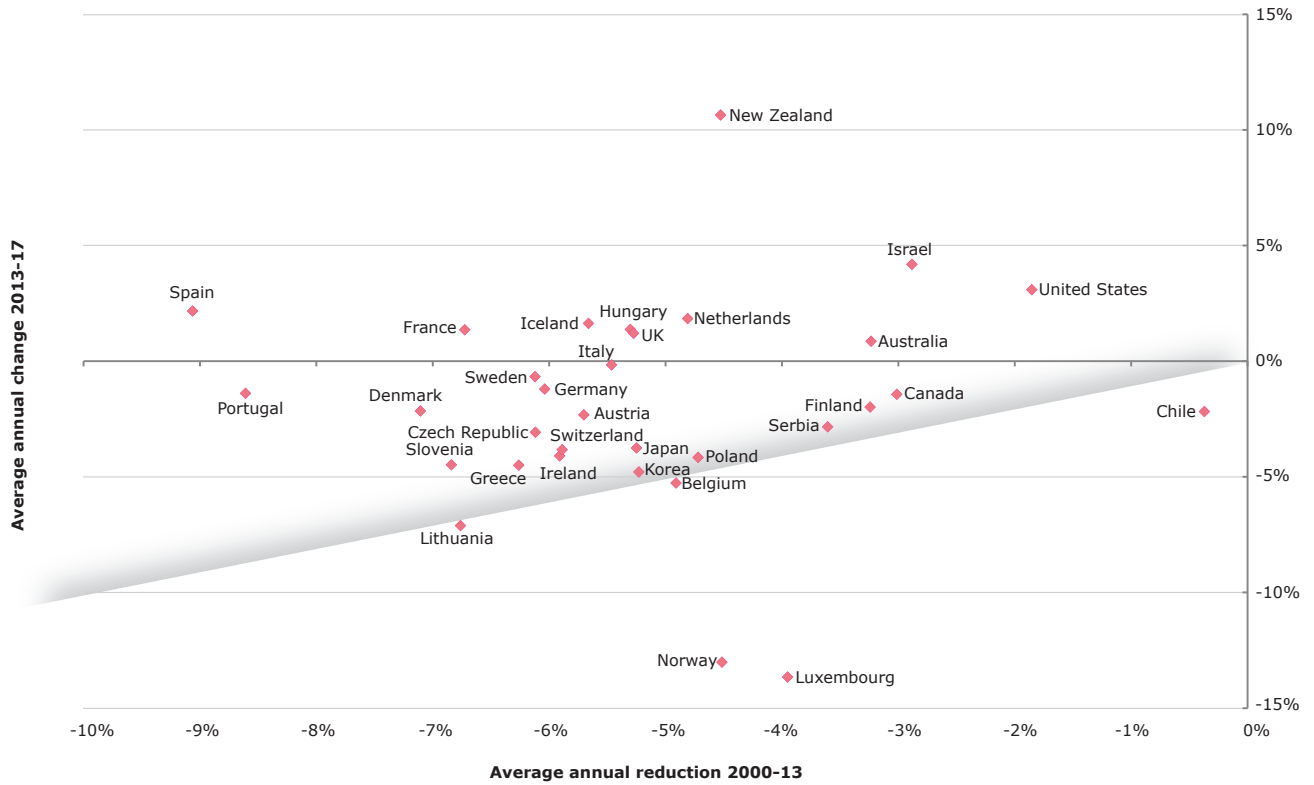


Figure 3 positions countries based on the progress made between 2000 and 2013 (X axis) and between 2013 and 2017 (Y axis). Three groups of countries can be distinguished, based on the progress made in 2000-13.

Six countries recorded an annual average reduction in the number of road deaths of 6.5% or more: France, Lithuania, Slovenia, Denmark, Portugal and Spain. Seven countries recorded an annual average reduction in the number

of road deaths of less than 4%: Chile, the United States, Israel, Canada, Australia, Finland and Serbia.

All other countries recorded an annual average reduction in the number of road deaths of between 4% and 6.5%.

A comparison between the two periods 2000-13 and 2013-17 shows that, only five countries performed better after 2013 (below the line in Figure 3): Lithuania, Belgium and Chile improved slightly, Norway and

Luxemburg significantly. Ten countries saw increases in the number of road deaths in 2013-17. Some of these had recorded strong reductions in the previous period. Further analysis is needed to understand why progress has slowed down, in particular in countries having a relatively good performance up to 2013.

The long-term trend is positive, yet far from sufficient to achieve international road safety objectives. The 50% reduction target for road deaths by 2020 set out by the international community in the context of the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety and in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) remains out of reach on current trends. To achieve a 50% reduction between 2010 and 2020, a reduction by at least 38% by 2017 (i.e. an annual average reduction of 6.7%) would have been needed. Only two countries, Norway and Greece, have achieved this.

Most of IRTAD's validated data concern high-income countries. Yet indicative numbers are available from low- and middle-income IRTAD observer countries. These suggest that in some of those countries the number of road deaths has increased between 2010 and 2017.

Fully 90% of global road deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries. Generally, the road safety situation in these countries and regions is much less well understood than the situation in IRTAD member countries. It is likely that road deaths in these regions are underreported, as reflected by the estimates provided by the Global Status Report on Road Safety published by the World Health Organization (WHO).

A number of overarching factors help to contextualise

recent trends in road safety performance in addition to factors at work at the national level.

1. Speeding and drink driving remain two key factors in fatal crashes.

There is no standard methodology to assess the role of drink driving or excessive and inappropriate speed in the occurrence of road crashes. Yet all countries report that speeding contributes between 15% and 35% of fatal road crashes. Similarly, driving under the influence of alcohol contributes to between 10% and 30% of fatal crashes in most countries.

2. Economic factors have an impact on road safety performance. The years following the 2008 financial crisis were associated with a decrease in the number of road deaths. Conversely, the economic recovery from 2013 onwards was accompanied by a significant increase in the number of road deaths as motorised travel picked up again.

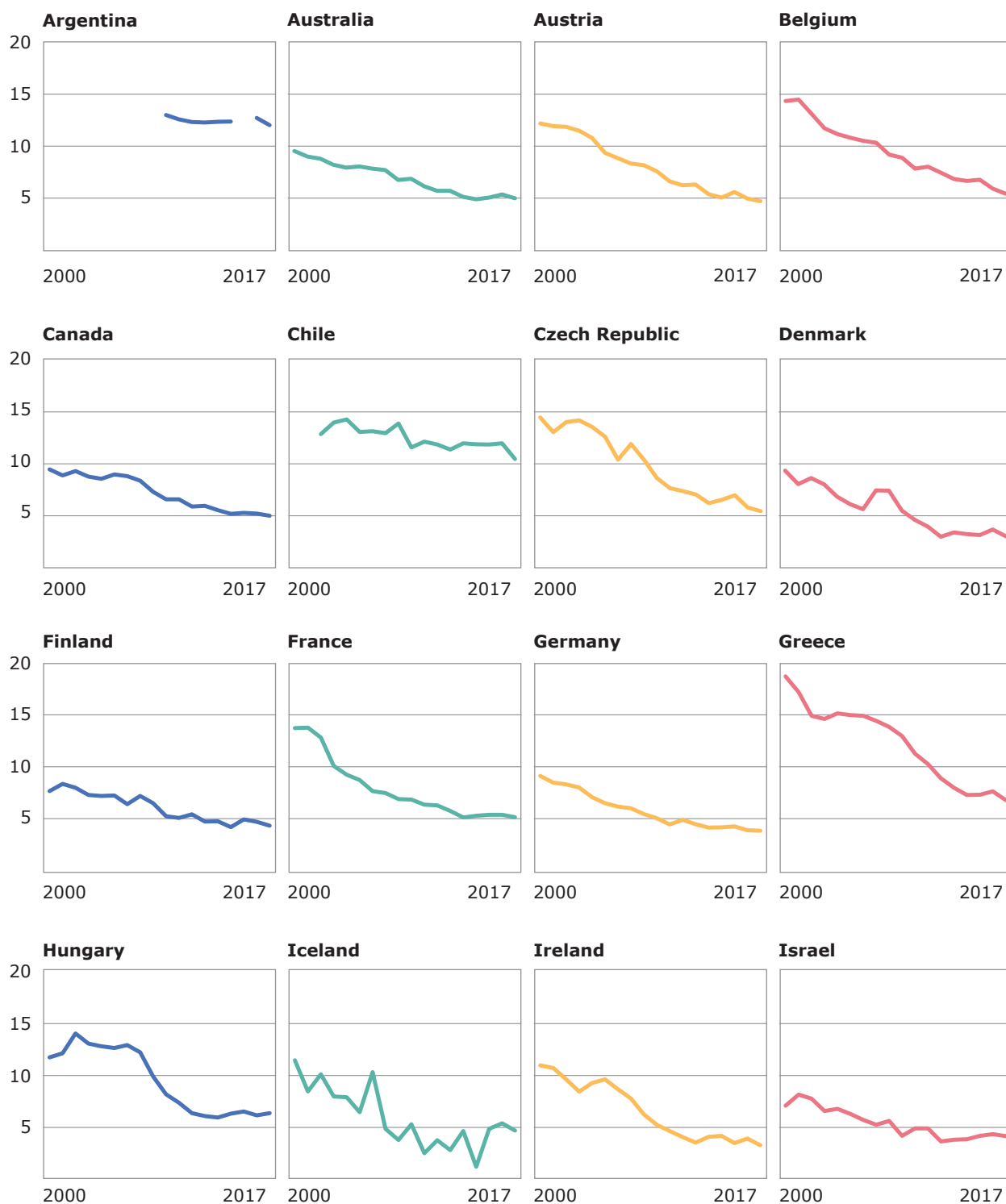
3. The popularity of cycling is increasing. Countries that collect data on cycling have registered a strong increase in the number of kilometres cycled over recent years. A sharp increase in the use of e-bikes has also been recorded. This development is associated with significantly higher numbers of fatal cycling crashes in several countries. Data are also needed on the impact of new mobility forms, for instance electric scooters, on road safety.

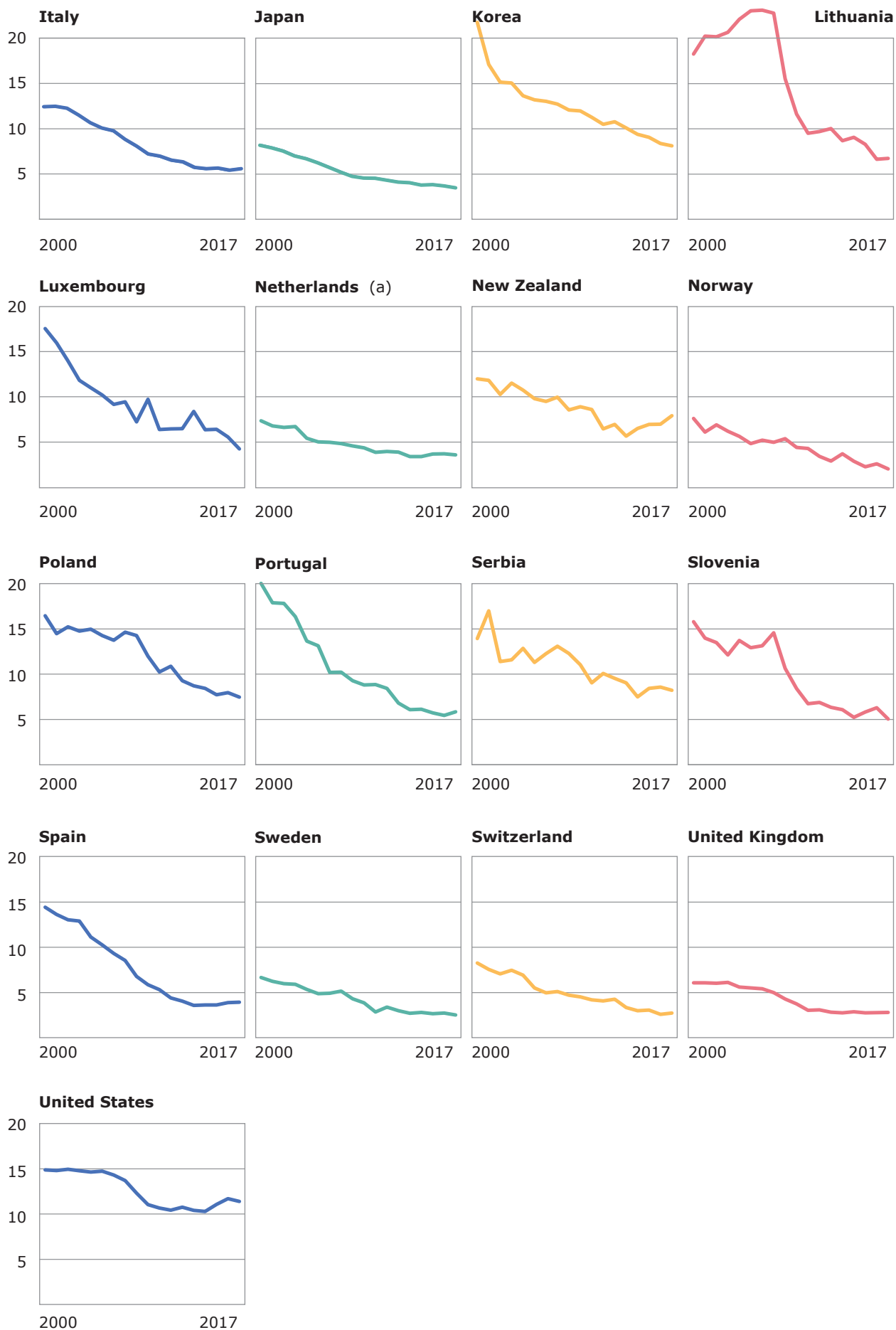
4. Enforcement of traffic laws has been reduced.

Several countries report a lower intensity of enforcement measures. In some cases, this is due to a shift in police force priorities. Less strict enforcement of traffic laws is likely to encourage dangerous driving behaviour, notably speeding and drink driving, ultimately leading to more crashes and traffic deaths.

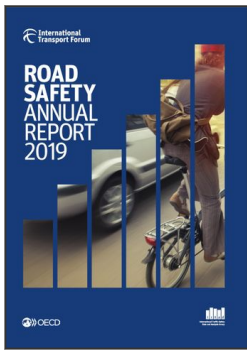
5. An encouraging reduction in the number of young people killed. All countries with validated data have observed a reduction in the number of young people aged 18-24 killed in traffic. This can be explained by several factors: the success of road safety education and training policies, the trend in some countries for young people to start driving at a later age when their risk in traffic is lower, and the use of safer travel modes.

Figure 4. Evolution of road fatalities per 100 000 inhabitants, 2000-17





(a) Real data (Actual numbers instead of reported numbers by the police).



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