

Injuries from transport accidents – most of which are due to road traffic – are a major public health problem in the European Union, causing the premature deaths of some 40 000 people every year. In addition to these deaths, more than 1.5 million people are estimated to be so seriously injured as to require hospital admission each year (OECD/ITF, 2011a). Around 4 000-5 000 transport accident deaths occurred in each of France, Germany, Italy and Poland in 2010.

Mortality from road accidents is the leading cause of death among children and young people, and especially young men, in many countries. Most fatal traffic injuries occur in passenger vehicles, although the fatality risk for motor cycles and scooters is highest among all modes of transport.

The direct and indirect financial costs of transport accidents are substantial; one estimate put these at up to 3% of gross national product annually in highly-motorised countries (WHO, 2009a).

Death rates were the highest in Romania, Greece and Lithuania in 2010, all in excess of 12 deaths per 100 000 population (Figure 1.6.1). They were the lowest in Malta, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom, at less than four deaths per 100 000 population, much lower than the EU average of 7.7. A four-fold difference exists between the countries with the lowest and highest rates.

In all EU member states, death rates from transport accidents are much higher for males than for females, with disparities ranging from three times higher in Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands, to around five times higher in Cyprus and Greece. On average, around four times as many males than females die in transport accidents (Figure 1.6.1).

Much transport accident injury and mortality is preventable. Road security has increased greatly over the past decades in many countries through improvements of road systems, education and prevention campaigns, the adoption of new laws and regulations and the enforcement of these laws through more traffic controls. As a result, death rates due to transport accidents have been more

than halved across the European Union since 1995 (Figures 1.6.2 and 1.6.3). Estonia and Luxembourg have seen the largest declines at 71% since 1995, with most of the fall in Estonia occurring in the mid-1990s. Reductions in Ireland, Portugal and Slovenia and a number of other countries are more than 60% since 1995, although vehicle kilometers travelled have increased substantially in the same period (OECD/ITF, 2011a). Death rates have also declined in Belgium, Greece and Bulgaria, but at a slower pace, and therefore remain well above the EU average.

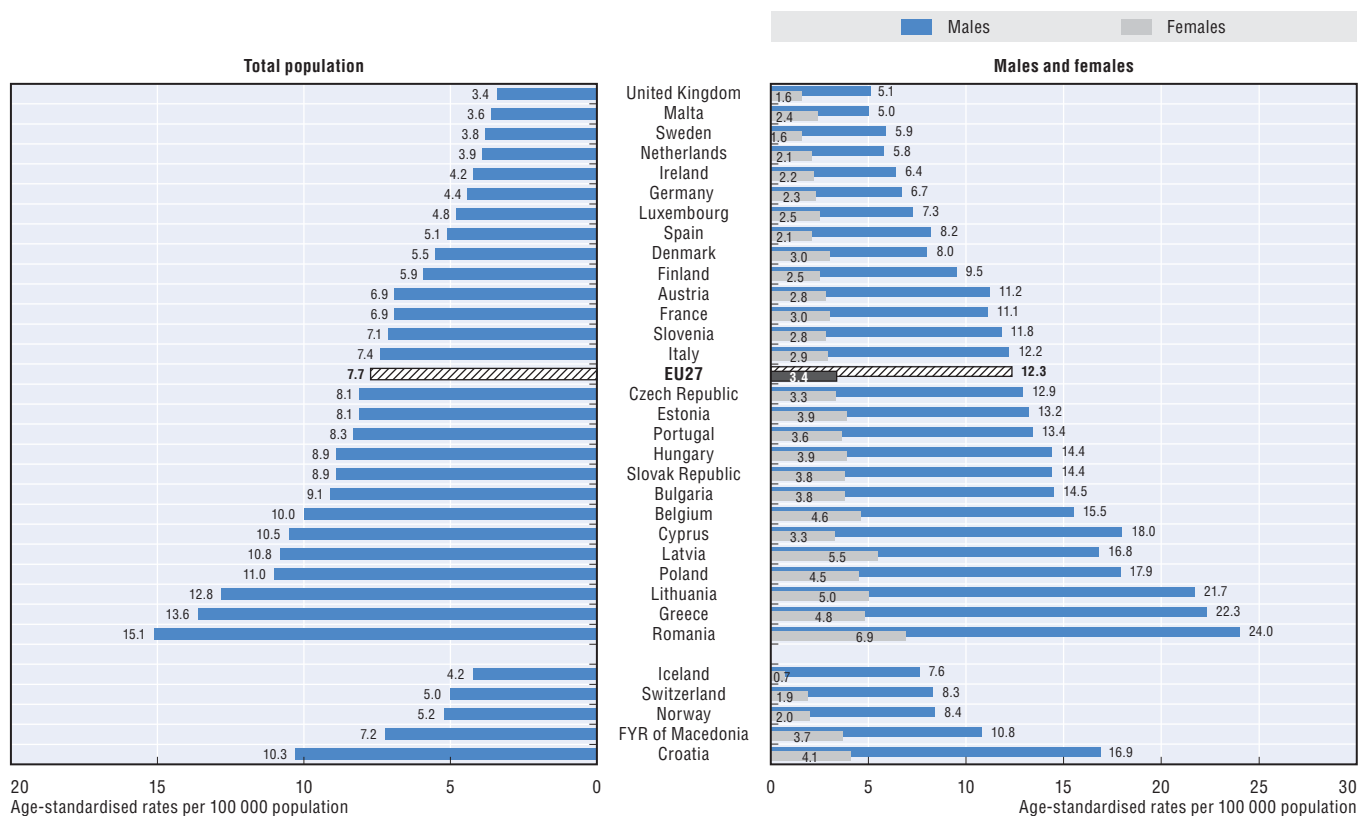
The effects of the economic crisis may have a favourable outcome on transport accident mortality. Many countries had a slight decrease or stagnation in traffic volumes since 2008, accompanied by a much more significant reduction in fatalities. However, in the long-term, effective road safety policies are the main contributor to reduced mortality (OECD/ITF, 2011b).

Definition and comparability

Mortality rates are based on numbers of deaths registered in a country in a year divided by the size of the corresponding population. The rates have been directly age-standardised to the WHO European standard population to remove variations arising from differences in age structures across countries and over time. The source is the *Eurostat Statistics Database*.

Deaths from transport accidents are classified to ICD-10 Codes V01-V99. The majority of deaths from transport accidents are due to road traffic accidents. Mortality rates from transport accidents in Luxembourg are biased upward because of the large volume of traffic in transit, resulting in a significant proportion of *non-residents* killed. Mathers *et al.* (2005) have provided a general assessment of the coverage, completeness and reliability of data on causes of death.

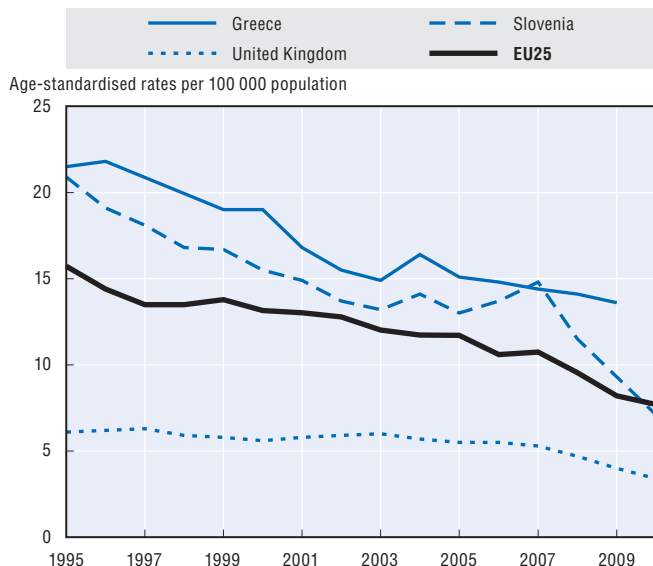
1.6.1. Transport accident mortality rates, 2010 (or nearest year)



Source: Eurostat Statistics Database. Data are age-standardised to the WHO European standard population.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932703202>

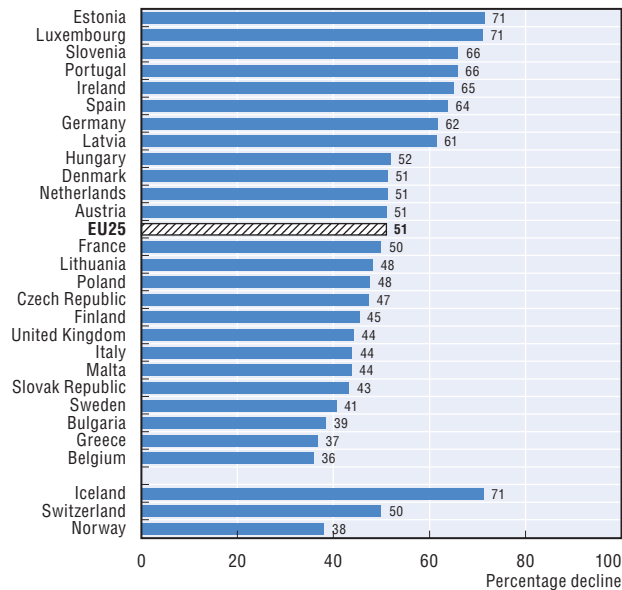
1.6.2. Trends in transport accident mortality rates, selected EU member states, 1995-2010



Source: Eurostat Statistics Database. Data are age-standardised to the WHO European standard population.

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1.6.3. Decline in transport accident mortality rates, 1995-2010 (or nearest year)



Source: Eurostat Statistics Database. Data are age-standardised to the WHO European standard population.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932703240>