

1. HEALTH STATUS

1.5. Mortality from transport accidents

Worldwide, an estimated 1.3 million people are killed in transport accidents each year, most of which are due to road traffic accidents. Globally, road transport accidents account for 0.5% of deaths among women aged 15-45 but over 10% for men in this age group (Lozano et al., 2012). In OECD countries, 107 000 lives were lost due to transport accidents in 2011. Seventy-four per cent of these fatalities occurred among men. The largest number of road transport accidents occurs among younger age groups with the risk of dying due to a road accident peaking at ages 15-24 (Walls et al., 2012; OECD/ITF, 2013).

The average OECD mortality rate due to transport accidents was 7.7 per 100 000 population in 2011 (Figure 1.5.1). There is great dispersion between countries with transport accidents claiming more than five times as many lives per 100 000 population in Mexico compared to Sweden. Fatalities were in excess of 14 deaths per 100 000 population in Mexico and Chile, and were even higher in other large emerging countries such as Brazil and the Russian Federation. They were lowest in Sweden, the United Kingdom and Denmark with four deaths or less per 100 000 population.

Most fatal traffic injuries occur in passenger vehicles, although other road users also face substantial risks. In Korea, Israel, Japan and Korea, pedestrians account for over one third of all road user fatalities. Motorcyclists account for over 25% of road transport accident deaths in Greece, Italy and France (OECD/ITF, 2013).

Deaths due to transport accidents have decreased in almost all countries over the last few decades. Since 1990, the average OECD mortality rate due to transport accidents has fallen by more than half (Figure 1.5.2). Spain, Estonia and Iceland have slashed their mortality rates by more than 75% over the 20-year period. These gains are even more impressive when considering the increase in the number of vehicle kilometres travelled over this period (OECD/ITF, 2013). Chile is the only country where mortality rates due to transport accidents have increased, and are now at a similar level to countries such as Korea, the United States and Greece. At the start of the 1990s, Chile's mortality rate was comparatively low and its rise in road traffic fatalities may be associated with its rapid economic growth during this period (Nghiem et al., 2013).

Road safety for car occupants has increased greatly over the past decades in many countries through improvements

of road systems, education and prevention campaigns as well as vehicle design. In addition, the adoption of new laws and regulations and the enforcement of these laws to improve compliance with speed limits, seatbelt use and drink-driving rules, have had a major impact on reducing the burden of road transport accidents. More gains can be made if countries can further improve seatbelt use (OECD/ITF, 2013).

Declines in mortality rates for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists were substantially less than those for car occupants. Between 2000 and 2010, fatalities among motorcyclists fell by only 14% across the OECD, with some countries such as the United States, Poland and Finland witnessing significant increases among this class of road users (although there have been reports of recent reductions in deaths from motorcycle accidents in Finland since 2010).

In some countries hard-hit by the economic recession, the downward trend has accelerated after 2008. Preliminary data suggests that the rate of decline between 2009 and 2012 in Greece and Ireland is even greater than the long-term average observed in those countries. One possible explanation for this is that the economic crisis has reduced reliance on motor vehicle use. However, this impact is likely to be short-lived and over the longer term, effective road safety policies will remain the primary contributor to reduced mortality (OECD/ITF, 2011).

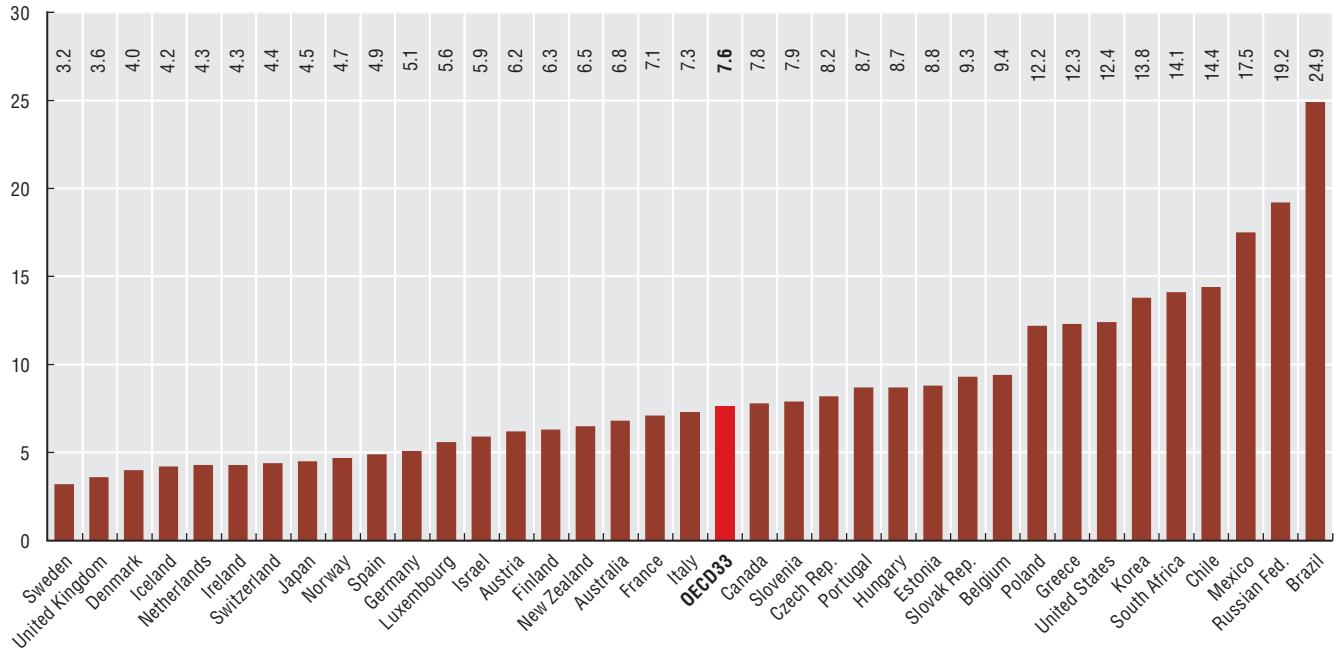
Definition and comparability

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 2010 OECD population to remove variations arising from differences in age structures across countries and over time. The source is the *WHO Mortality Database*.

Deaths from transport accidents are classified to ICD-10 codes V01-V89. Mathers et al. (2005) have provided a general assessment of the coverage, completeness and reliability of data on causes of death.

1.5.1. Transport accident mortality rates, 2011 (or nearest year)

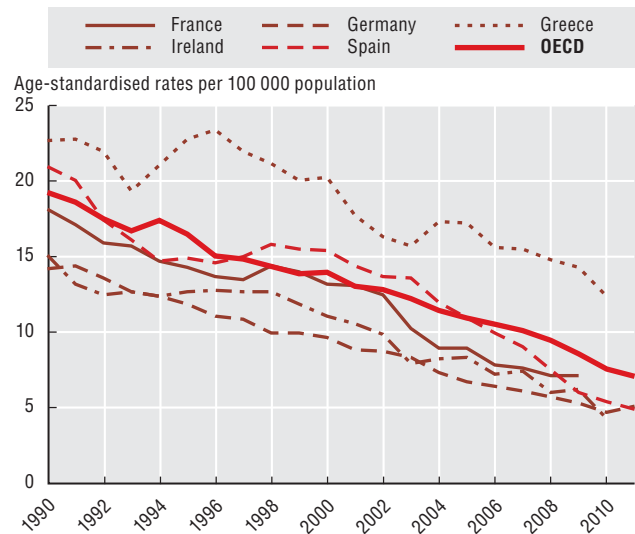
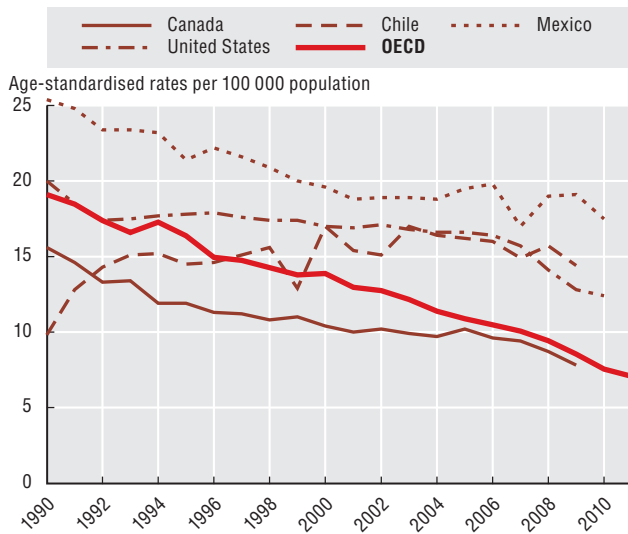
Age-standardised rates per 100 000 population



Source: OECD Health Statistics 2013, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/health-data-en>; and Ministry of Health for New Zealand.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932916173>

1.5.2. Trends in transport accident mortality rates, selected OECD countries, 1990-2011



Source: OECD Health Statistics 2013, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/health-data-en>.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932916192>



From:
Health at a Glance 2013
OECD Indicators

Access the complete publication at:
https://doi.org/10.1787/health_glance-2013-en

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2013), "Mortality from transport accidents", in *Health at a Glance 2013: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1787/health_glance-2013-9-en

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