

Key messages

1 Road traffic injuries are a pressing global health and development concern.

Nearly 1.3 million people worldwide die as a result of road traffic collisions every year, making road traffic injuries the tenth leading cause of death globally. Over 90% of road traffic deaths and injuries occur in low-income and middle-income countries. Globally, road traffic crashes have become the leading cause of death for young people aged 15-29 years. Nearly half of those dying on the world's roads are pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists. Millions more people are injured and often remain disabled for life. In addition to the grief and suffering they cause, road traffic crashes result in considerable economic losses to victims, their families, and nations as a whole, costing most countries 1–3% of their gross national product. This figure can reach as high as 5% for some countries.

2 Road traffic injuries can be prevented.

There is irrefutable evidence about what works to prevent road traffic deaths and injuries. Countries which have made the greatest gains in road safety have done so by involving all relevant sectors of society. Comprehensive legislation and enforcement around key factors such as drinking and driving, speeding and wearing seat-belts and helmets; safe roads and vehicles; and an effective emergency care system are key ingredients to success. Still, there are improvements to be made in every country of the world in order to avoid these tragic deaths and injuries.

3 The Decade of Action for Road Safety is an opportunity to save millions of lives.

The Decade provides a framework to countries and communities to increase action to save lives on the world's roads. The United Nations Road Safety Collaboration has developed through a broad consultation process the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety as a guide to Member States and their partners on actions to consider. The categories or “pillars” of activities in the Global Plan are: building road safety management capacity; improving the safety of road infrastructure and broader transport networks; further developing the safety of vehicles; enhancing the behaviour of road users; and improving emergency and other post-crash services. Governments, international agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector and other stakeholders are invited to make use of this Global Plan to define the set of actions they will undertake during the Decade.