



Road safety in the EU: fatalities in 2021 remain well below pre-pandemic level

Brussels, 28 March 2022

Today the European Commission published preliminary figures on road fatalities for 2021. An estimated 19 800 people were killed in road crashes last year. This was an increase of 1 000 deaths (+5%) on 2020, but still represents almost 3 000 (-13%) fewer fatalities compared to the pre-pandemic period in 2019. The overall target is to halve the number of deaths by 2030. EU-wide, the last decade saw a fall of 36%.

Commissioner for Transport Adina **Vălean** said: *"As traffic levels return to normality, we must ensure that we don't return to pre-pandemic numbers of deaths on our roads. At the EU level we will endeavour through financing, legislation and outreach to help deliver the 'safe system' of safer infrastructure, safer vehicles, safer road use and better post-crash care. But this is a shared responsibility with Member States, the industry and road users. Every death and serious injury on our roads is avoidable."*

Contrasting picture across EU roads

EU-wide, road deaths in 2021 rose by 5% on the previous year, although comparisons with 2020 are strongly influenced by the traffic level patterns in each country during the course of the pandemic. Between 2019 and 2020, the number of road fatalities fell by 17%.

The overall ranking¹ of countries' fatality rates has not changed significantly with the safest roads being found in Sweden (18 deaths per one million inhabitants) while Romania (93/million) reported the highest rate in 2021. The EU average was 44 road deaths per million inhabitants.

Based on preliminary figures, nine Member States (Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Cyprus, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal and Sweden) registered their lowest ever number of road fatalities in 2021.

Comparing with the pre-pandemic year 2019, road deaths in 2021 fell by 13% with the largest decreases of more than 20% occurring in Denmark, Belgium, Portugal, Poland and Lithuania. In contrast, over the last two years Latvia, Slovenia and Finland experienced increases in the number of road fatalities.

Most affected groups

The available data for 2020² give an insight into the type of road users involved in fatal crashes and their locations and shows the gender and age of victims.

Overall, 52% of road traffic fatalities occurred on rural roads, versus 40% in urban areas and 8% on motorways. Car occupants (drivers and passengers) accounted for 43% of all road deaths while pedestrians made up 20%, users of powered-two-wheelers (motorbikes and mopeds) 18% and cyclists 10% of total fatalities.

Within urban areas, the pattern is very different with pedestrians (37%) accounting for the largest share of victims. With users of powered two-wheelers making up 18% and an increasing number of cyclists (14%) being killed, meaning that almost 70% of total fatalities in urban areas are vulnerable road users.

Men accounted for three out of four road deaths (77%). The elderly (65+) accounted for more than a quarter (28%) of all fatalities although proportionally more young people are killed on the roads. While 12% of those killed on EU roads were aged between 18 and 24, this age group represents only 7% out of the EU population. Hence, statistics show that young people are more likely to be involved in a fatal road collision.

Background

The EU has set itself a 50% reduction target for road deaths – and, for the first time, also serious injuries – by 2030. This was set out in the Commission's [Strategic Action Plan on Road Safety](#) and [EU road safety policy framework 2021-2030](#) which also set out road safety plans aiming to reach zero

road deaths by 2050 ('Vision Zero'). This included setting out key performance indicators for safe vehicles, roads and roadsides; safe road use, including safe speed, sober driving, preventing driving while distracted and use of safety belts and protective equipment; and fast and effective post-crash care.

First results for the key performance indicators will be presented at the [EU Road Safety Results Conference](#) on 18 October 2022. This biennial event brings together policymakers, civil society and road safety practitioners to assess the state of play of road safety in the EU and which next steps are needed to achieve 'Vision Zero'.

Road safety has also been a core element of recent EU mobility policy initiatives including the [Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy](#), the Commission proposal for a [revision of the TEN-T regulation and the Urban Mobility Framework](#).

The EU is at the forefront of the [Second Decade of Action for Road Safety, proclaimed by the UN for 2021-2030](#) in August 2020.

For More Information

[2021 road safety statistics: what is behind the figures?](#)

[Commission's road safety work and EU road safety statistics and analysis](#)

Road deaths per million inhabitants – preliminary data for 2021

	Rate per million population % change 2021 in relation to :					
	2019	2020	2021	2020	2019	Av 2017-2019
EU-27	51	42	44	5%	-13%	-15%
Belgium	56	43	43	0%	-23%	-19%
Bulgaria	90	67	81	21%	-11%	-12%
Czechia	58	48	50	3%	-14%	-14%
Denmark	34	28	23	-17%	-32%	-26%
Germany	37	33	31	-6%	-16%	-19%
Estonia	39	44	41	-7%	6%	-1%
Ireland	29	29	27	-6%	-2%	-5%
Greece	64	54	57	5%	-12%	-14%
Spain	37	29	32	10%	-14%	-16%
France	50	39	45	16%	-9%	-11%
Croatia	73	58	72	23%	-2%	-7%
Italy	53	40	48	19%	-10%	-14%
Cyprus	59	54	49	-8%	-15%	-14%
Latvia	69	73	78	6%	11%	6%

Lithuania	67	63	52	-17%	-22%	-20%
Luxembourg	36	42	38	-8%	9%	-13%
Hungary	62	47	56	18%	-10%	-12%
Malta	32	21	17	-18%	-44%	-49%
Netherlands	34	30	28	-4%	-16%	-14%
Austria	47	39	40	4%	-14%	-13%
Poland	77	66	59	-10%	-23%	-22%
Portugal	67	52	50	-3%	-24%	-22%
Romania	96	85	93	8%	-4%	-6%
Slovenia	49	38	54	43%	12%	15%
Slovakia	50	45	47	5%	-4%	-4%
Finland	38	40	40	0%	6%	-3%
Sweden	22	20	18	-6%	-13%	-28%
Switzerland	22	26	23	-12%	7%	-8%
Norway	20	17	16	-5%	-19%	-18%
Iceland	17	22	24	13%	50%	-33%

There was one road fatality in Liechtenstein in 2020 and zero in 2021.

The 2021 figures are based on preliminary data for some countries and may be subject to minor changes when the final data are released in autumn 2022. Data for 2021 are compared with three time-periods: 2020 (the previous year), 2019 (the baseline year for the target of 50% fewer deaths by 2030) and the average of 2017-19 (to take account of fluctuations in small countries). The percentage changes in the table are based on the absolute number of fatalities, not the rate per million inhabitants.

IP/22/2012

Press contacts:

[Adalbert JAHNZ](#) (+ 32 2 295 31 56)

[Anna WARTBERGER](#) (+32 2 298 20 54)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)