



Children and Road Safety

Third United Nations Global Road Safety Week in the Eastern Mediterranean

4–10 May 2015

Introduction

The third UN Global Road Safety Week, 4–10 May 2015, was requested by the United Nations General Assembly in 2014 in resolution A/68/L.40 on improving global road safety. The theme of the Week is “Children and road safety”, with the aim of drawing attention to the issue of protection of children on the roads and strengthening efforts to this end.

The UN Global Road Safety Week provides a unique opportunity to advocate for improved safety on the roads and to renew commitment and efforts at all levels, in order to help save thousands of lives. A milestone event organized within the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020, the week contributes to achievement of the global decade goal of saving 5 million lives across the world.

Facts from the Eastern Mediterranean Region

Of the 186 300 annual global road traffic deaths among children, 26 623 (about 14%) occur in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Males account for 66.8% of these deaths. Road traffic injury ranks among the top regional causes of death for children and young people over the age of 5 years. A child is someone under the age of 18 years as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Contrary to the global trend, road traffic injuries and related deaths among children pose a serious problem for all countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, regardless of their level of income.

Why are children so vulnerable to traffic?

- Children have small stature and limited physical, cognitive and social development.
- It can be difficult for children to see surrounding traffic and for drivers and others to see them.
- If involved in a road traffic crash, children’s softer heads make them more susceptible to serious head injury than adults.
- Younger children may have difficulties interpreting various sights and sounds, which may impact on their judgment regarding the proximity, speed and direction of moving vehicles.
- Younger children may be impulsive, and their short attention spans mean that they struggle to cope with more than one challenge at a time.
- As children grow into adolescents, they become especially prone to take risks, compromising their safety on the road.

Regional variation in road traffic death rates (per 100 000 population) of children under 18 years of age, worldwide, 2012

Africa		Americas		Eastern Mediterranean		Europe		South-East Asia	Western Pacific		World	
HIC	LMIC	HIC	LMIC	HIC	LMIC	HIC	LMIC	LMIC	HIC	LMIC	HIC	LMIC
6.3	15.6	3.9	6.9	8.5	11.2	2.9	5.6	6.9	2.0	5.7	3.4	9.1

LMIC: low- and middle income countries; HIC: high-income countries

Source: World Health Organization, Global Health Estimates, 2014



World Health Organization

Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean

The Region ranks 2nd highest after the African Region in terms of road traffic death rate among children (11.2 per 100 000 population) in low-and middle-income countries. High-income countries in the Region have the highest road traffic death rate among children compared with countries of similar income across the world. At 8.5 per 100 000 population, the rate is more than double the global rate for high-income countries.

Despite the availability of some data, there are many challenges with regard to data quality and reliability, and under-reporting is widespread.

Effective interventions exist to improve the safety of children on the roads, through a comprehensive safe system approach. The Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 highlights what needs to be done. Additional actions specifically focusing on children can also improve their safety on the roads.

10 strategies for keeping children safe on the road

1. Controlling speed
2. Reducing drinking and driving
3. Using helmets for bicyclists and motorcyclists
4. Restraining children in vehicles
5. Improving children's ability to see and be seen
6. Enhancing road infrastructure
7. Adapting vehicle design
8. Reducing risks for young drivers
9. Providing appropriate care for injured children
10. Supervising children around roads



Source: Ten strategies for keeping children safe on the road. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2015.

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WHO-EM/HLP/89/E