Information for the media

Road traffic injury remains a significant public health problem in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Data from WHO’s *Global status report on road safety 2018* reveal that the Region accounts for almost 9% of the world’s estimated road traffic deaths, despite having just 5% of the world’s vehicles. Around 120 000 people are killed and an additional 340 000 are injured on the Region’s roads every year. The Eastern Mediterranean Region has the third highest death rate due to road traffic injury among WHO regions. The 2018 report also reveals that road traffic injury is a major concern for all countries of the Region, regardless of their income level.

The problem

Worldwide, road traffic injuries kill approximately 1.35 million people every year, including around 120 000 in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Although progress has been made in areas such as road safety management and the adoption of needed laws much remains to be done. Although laws are in place, they are not comprehensive in most countries and enforcement needs to be strengthened. Greater attention needs to be paid to vulnerable road users (pedestrians, motorcyclists and cyclists). While existing data systems clearly show the extent of the problem, policies to address and guarantee the safety of road users need to be strengthened.
Young people are hardest hit by road traffic injuries... Let’s save them

10 key facts

• In 2016, the Eastern Mediterranean Region accounted for almost 9% of the world’s estimated road traffic deaths. The Region has the third highest road traffic fatality rate in the world, at 18 deaths per 100,000 population, after the African and South-East Asia regions.

• Middle-income countries account for over 80% of road traffic deaths in the Region. High-income countries, unlike the global trend, have an overall road traffic death rate that is higher than their less affluent neighbours. This regional death rate is three times the average rate of high-income countries globally.

• Males account for over 80% of road traffic deaths in the Region.

• In the Region, around 67% of reported road traffic deaths occur among those under the age of 45. Road traffic injuries are among the three leading causes of death among adolescents (10–19 years old).

• More than half of road traffic injuries in the Region (51%) occur among vulnerable road users. The highest toll is among pedestrians, followed by motorcyclists and cyclists.

• Legislation on key risk factors is available in the majority of countries, but most laws are not comprehensive. This, together with inadequate enforcement, limits the effectiveness of legislation.

• Although all countries have post-crash care systems, these need to be further strengthened in the Region.

• Seventeen countries in the Region have a lead agency overseeing road safety efforts and 14 of those countries have a national strategy for road safety, with measurable targets in some countries.

• Eighteen countries in the Region report carrying out full or partial road safety audits for new roads; 12 countries report doing safety assessments on existing roads.

• None of the countries of the Region apply all eight United Nations priority vehicle safety standards.
Distribution of road traffic deaths by road user type, Eastern Mediterranean Region, 2016

Distribution of reported road traffic deaths by age group in 10 countries, Eastern Mediterranean Region, 2016
**Improvement is possible**

In the past three years, 48 middle- and high-income countries worldwide have successfully reduced the number of deaths on their roads by adopting effective interventions. These proven interventions are simple and within the reach of every country in the Region, regardless of income level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk factor addressed by law</th>
<th>Definition of comprehensive law</th>
<th>Number of countries with comprehensive laws in the Region</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speed</td>
<td>A national speed limit law with urban speed limits of $\leq 50$ km/h and the ability of local authorities to reduce speed limits where appropriate.</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drink-driving</td>
<td>A national drink-driving law based on blood alcohol concentration (BAC), where the BAC limit is $\leq 0.05$ g/dl for the general population and $\leq 0.02$ g/dl for novice drivers.</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Motorcycle helmet non-use</td>
<td>A national motorcycle helmet law that covers all riders, on all roads and for all engine types, requires the helmet to be properly fastened, and which refers to a particular helmet standard.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seat-belt non-use</td>
<td>A national seat-belt law that applies to all private car occupants (front and rear seats).</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child car restraint non-use</td>
<td>Presence of a national child restraint law that requires children to use a child restraint at least until 10 years of age or 135 cm in height, restricts children under a certain age or height from sitting in front seat, and which refers to a particular child restraint standard.</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
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## Actions needed

| Leadership and institutional management | • Establish and/or strengthen a lead agency with the authority and adequate resources to coordinate all road safety activities among multiple stakeholders.  
• Develop and/or update multisectoral, data-driven road safety strategies with measurable targets and indicators. |
| Safer roads and sustainable transport | • Invest in safer road infrastructure and design for all road users with special attention to vulnerable users.  
• Review existing speed limits to ensure they are appropriate for different road functions.  
• Raise public awareness of the impacts of speeding, in combination with appropriate enforcement.  
• Develop policies that promote a shift to safer modes of transport, such as walking and cycling, while also providing safer spaces for such modes on the road.  
• Invest in safe and affordable public transport and encourage its use. |
| Legislation and enforcement of traffic laws | • Establish/update/enact laws that meet best practice criteria on the five key behavioural risk factors: speed, drink-driving and non-use of motorcycle helmets, seatbelts and child restraints; and address emerging risk factors such as mobile use and drug-driving.  
• Establish and/or enact appropriate incentives and penalties that ensure compliance with road safety laws.  
• Adopt effective enforcement strategies that use new technologies and automated enforcement tools which have proven to be successful in reducing speed. |
| Safer vehicles | • Adopt the United Nations vehicle safety standards to protect all road users.  
• Establish mechanisms for the periodic assessment of vehicles in order to ensure that all new and in-use vehicles comply with basic vehicle safety regulations.  
• Provide consumer information on vehicle safety through new car assessment programmes that are independent of vehicle manufacturers. |
| Post-crash care | • Designate a lead government agency with the authority to set system-wide standards and to coordinate pre-hospital and hospital-based emergency care for the injured as well as access to rehabilitation services.  
• Develop organized, integrated and timely pre-hospital and facility-based emergency response and care systems.  
• Develop laws that protect bystanders who provide help to the injured (Good Samaritan laws). |
| Data | • Adopt the WHO-recommended standard definition of road traffic death (occurring within 30 days of a crash for police data) and for road traffic injury classification (by age, sex and type of road user).  
• Establish/strengthen data systems such as emergency room-based surveillance; civil registration and vital statistics; and trauma registries.  
• Include non-fatal injuries and the proportion of victims sustaining permanent disability in reported data.  
• Improve data linkages between multiple sectors and data sources such as police data and health facility records.  
• Improve data collection on intermediate indicators such as speed surveys, helmet/seat-belt observational studies, etc.  
• Conduct research on the economic cost of road traffic crashes, deaths and injuries.  
• Establish policies that ensure effective crash investigation and equitable access to information for survivors and their families. |