

ROAD SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT 2018

THE NETHERLANDS

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The Netherlands recorded 613 road fatalities in 2017, representing a 2.5% decrease when compared to 2016. The mortality rate was 3.6 deaths per 100 000 population. People over 75 years are the most at risk in traffic, with a mortality rate three times higher than that of the general population. Road safety policy in the Netherlands is guided by a philosophy of sustainable road safety. The current Road Safety Strategic Plan covers the period 2008-20 and includes as a main target a maximum of 500 road deaths by 2020. In 2017, the development of a new Strategic Plan for the period 2020-30 started.

Note: Statistics in the Netherlands distinguish between *reported* and *actual* (or real) numbers of casualties. The former category covers casualties reported by the police. Actual numbers are higher, as they take into account data available from sources such as court files and death certificates. This report uses the real number of fatalities unless there is a specific reference to the “reported” numbers

Trends

The Netherlands registered an overall small **decrease in the number of road deaths in 2017**. According to the latest available data, 613 persons lost their lives in traffic crashes in the Netherlands in 2017. This represents a 2.5% decline on 2016. In 2016, 629 road deaths were reported, a 1.3% increase on 2015.

The **longer-term trend for road deaths** in the Netherlands has been on the downward. Between 2000 and 2017, the number of annual road fatalities fell by 47%. However, the reduction in the number of road casualties significantly slowed down in the most recent years, as the number of road deaths only fell by 4% during the 2010-16 period.

The number of **traffic deaths per 100 000 inhabitants** in the Netherlands has fallen by 51% between 2000 and 2017. In 2017, 3.6 traffic deaths per 100 000 inhabitants were recorded, compared to 7.3 in 2000.

Country Profile

Population in 2017: 17.1 million

GDP per capita in 2016: USD 45 775

Cost of road crashes: 2% of GDP (2015)

Road network in 2016: 139 124 kilometres (motorways 4%)

Registered motor vehicles in 2017: 10.4 million (cars 79%; goods vehicles 10%, motorcycles 6%)

Volume of traffic : +5.1% between 2000 and 2016

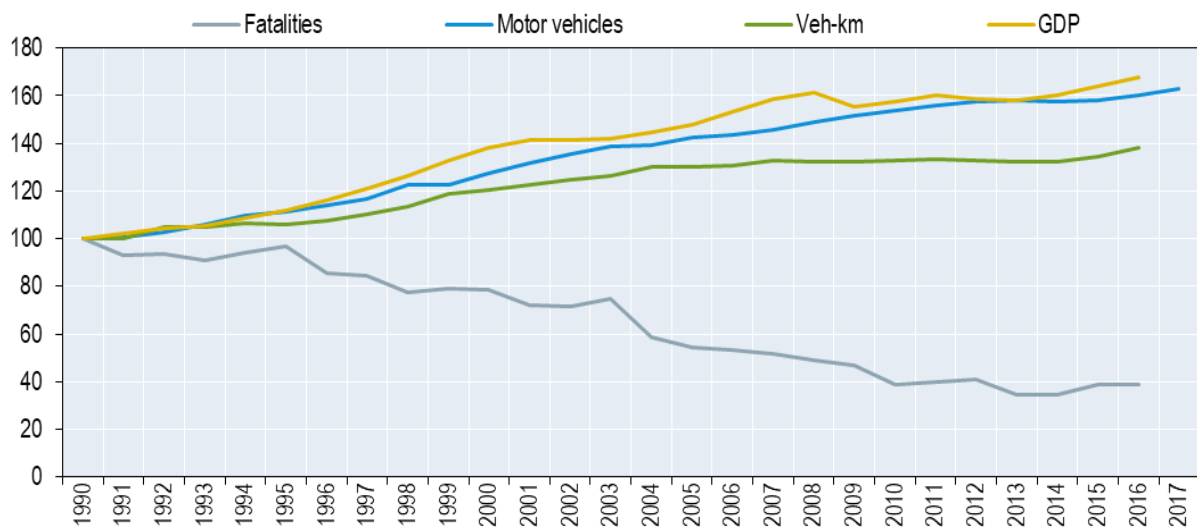
Speed limits: urban roads 30/50 km/h, rural roads 60/80 km/h, motorways 100/130 km/h

Limits on Blood Alcohol Content: 0.5 g/l (including cyclists), novice drivers (first five years) 0.2 g/l

The fatality risk, measured as **traffic deaths per billion vehicle-kilometres** (vkm) driven, has also significantly reduced. In 2016 this metric stood at 4.7, 49% lower than in 2000. However in the period 2010-16, the fatality risk only decreased by 7%.

The Netherlands recorded 0.6 **road fatalities per 10 000 registered vehicles** in 2017. This represents a decrease of 59% compared to the year 2000, when the rate of deaths to registered vehicles stood at 1.4. In the 2010-17 period, the rate of deaths to registered vehicles decreased by 10%.

Figure 1. Road safety, traffic, vehicles stock and GDP trends –reported data
Index 1990 = 100

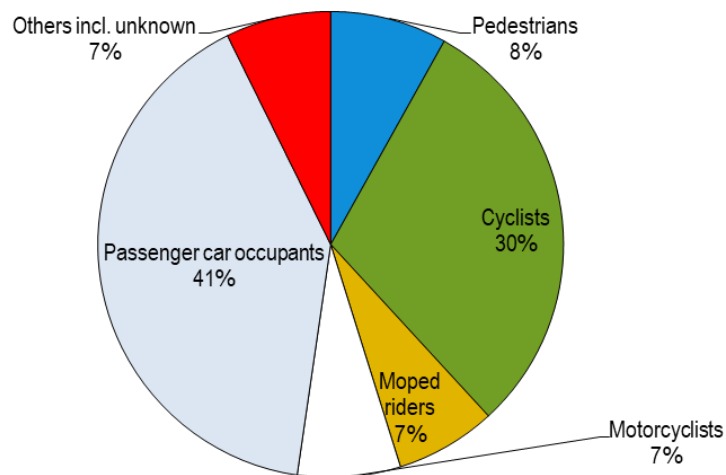


The picture for **fatalities by road user groups** shows that in 2016 occupants of passenger cars and vans accounted for the largest share of road deaths with 40% of the total. They were followed by cyclists (30%), pedestrians (8%) and motorcyclists (7%).

The largest decrease in 2016 was registered among pedestrians with 10.5% fewer deaths compared to 2015. They were followed by motorcyclists who saw their road deaths decreased by 4.3% in 2016 compared to 2015. In 2016 road deaths among occupants of passenger cars and cyclists increased respectively by 7.6% and 2.2% compared to 2015.

The long-term shows that traffic in the Netherlands has become safer for all road user groups. The strongest decline was registered among occupants of passenger cars, with a decrease of 57% between 2000 and 2016. The user group who has benefitted least are cyclists, who registered a decrease of only 19% between 2000 and 2016.

Figure 2. Road fatalities by road user group in percentage of total, 2016 – actual number



Road deaths by age group in 2016 showed a decrease in road deaths among people aged 0-14 (6 fewer deaths compared to 2015), 15-17 (5 fewer deaths), 18-20 (12 fewer deaths) and 25-64 (3 fewer deaths). The number of road deaths increased for the other age groups, with the largest increase for the 21-24 (from 32 deaths in 2015 to 45 in 2016). Since 2000, the number of road deaths declined for all age groups except for people above the age of 75, who saw their road deaths increased by 29% between 2000 and 2016.

Historically, young people represent a high-risk group in road safety. However, in the Netherlands in 2016 the age group the most at risk in traffic was the 75 and over with a mortality rate of 14.3 deaths per 100 000 inhabitants, i.e. more than three times those of the general population.

Figure 3. Road fatality rates by age group – actual data
Deaths per 100 000 population in a given age group, 1996-2016

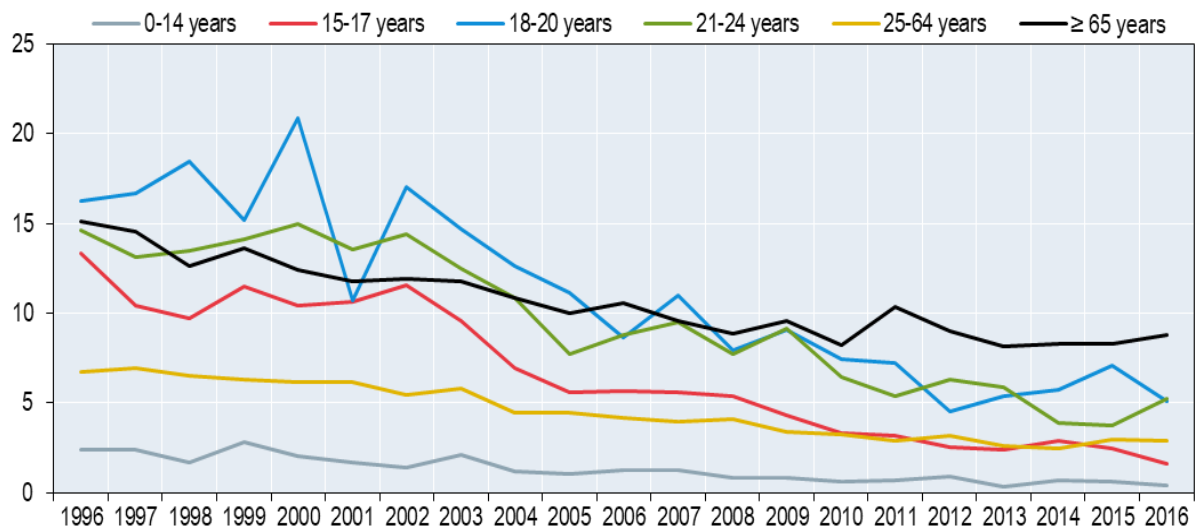
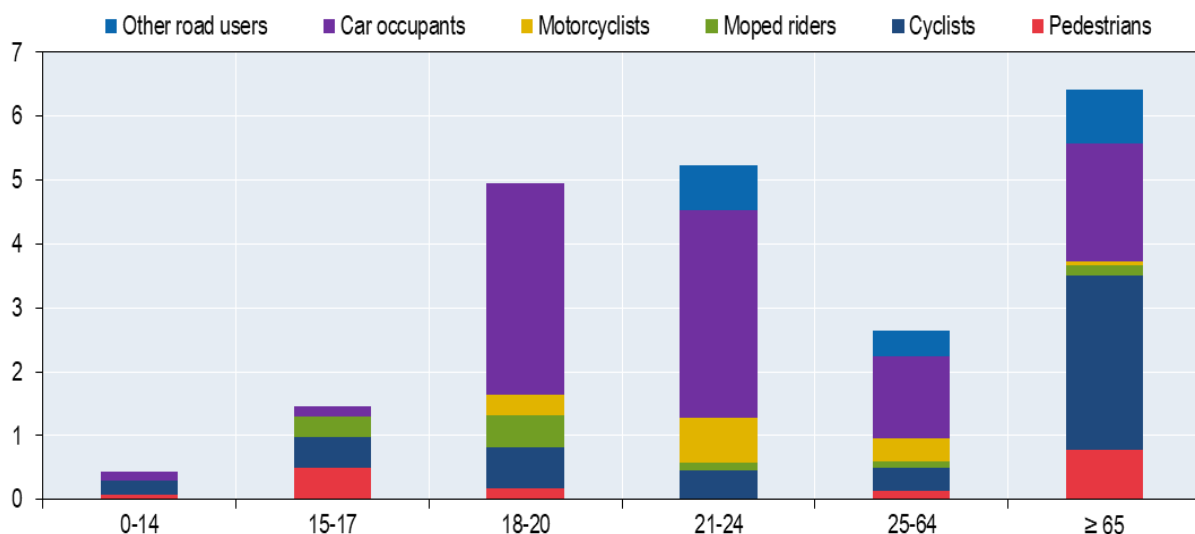


Figure 4. Road fatality rate by age and road user group – reported data
Fatalities per 100 000 population, 2016



Fatality data are essential to understand road safety issues, but hardly sufficient. Information on **serious injuries from crashes** is also critically important. Yet injury data are much more difficult to obtain, validate and - where available - compare. In 2016, an estimated 21 400 people were seriously injured in traffic in the Netherlands, a slightly higher number than the 21 300 serious injuries in 2015. This means that the number of serious road injuries has now reached the highest level since 1993, the first year for which the number of serious road injuries was assessed in the Netherlands. Nearly two thirds of the serious road injuries are cyclists, a majority of whom are injured in crashes not involving a motor vehicle. In proportion to the total population, relatively

many serious road injuries occur among youths (15-19 year-olds) and among road users aged 45 and older (SWOV, 2017a).

Economic costs of road crashes

Traffic crashes represent a significant cost for society, estimated in 2015 at around EUR 14 billion, equivalent to 2% of the Dutch GDP (SWOV, 2017b). Medical costs, production loss, loss of quality of life (based on a willingness-to-pay method), property damage, settlement costs and congestion costs have been included in the estimate.

Table 1. Costs of road crashes, 2015

	Unit cost [EUR]	Total [EUR]
Fatalities	2.9 million	1.8 billion
Serious injuries (MAIS2+)	310 000	6.3 billion
Slight injuries		1.9 billion
Property damage costs		3.9 billion
Total		14 billion
Total as % of GDP		2.0%

Behaviour

The table below summarises the main speed limits in the Netherlands. (For an explanation on road categorisations see *Advancing Sustainable Safety* at www.sustainablesafety.nl).

Table 2. Passenger car speed limits by road type, 2018

	General speed limit
Urban access roads	30 km/h
Urban distributor roads	50 km/h
Rural access roads	60 km/h
Rural distributor roads	80 km/h
Through-roads	100 km/h
Motorways	130 km/h

The behaviour of road users is an important determinant of a country's road safety performance. **Driving under the influence of alcohol** is a major cause of road crashes in the Netherlands, as in most IRTAD countries. Until 2006, the maximum authorised blood alcohol content (BAC) was 0.5 g/l for all drivers of motor vehicles, but in 2006 a lower limit of 0.2 g/l was applied for novice drivers during their first five years. For cyclists the legal limit is also 0.5 g/l.

Alcohol-related fatalities are defined according to the SafetyNet definition: any death occurring within 30 days as a result of a fatal crash in which any active participant was found with a blood alcohol level above the legal limit.

In 2015 driving under the influence of alcohol accounted for approximately 75 to 140 (12% to 23%) of road deaths in the Netherlands. About two-thirds of all severe alcohol crashes are caused by a relatively small group of heavy alcohol offenders (offenders with a blood alcohol content of 1.3 g/l or higher). The social costs due to this group are estimated between EUR 0.8 to 1.8 billion per year. Drink driving on weekend nights decreased from 2.9% in 2006 to 1.4% in 2017. The percentage of alcohol offenders decreased from 1.7% in 2015 to 1.4% in 2017. The percentage of heavy alcohol offenders showed a decrease from 0.3% in 2015 to 0.1% in 2017 (I&O Research, 2018).

Research conducted in 2007-09 shows that in the Netherlands 3.4% of drivers participate in traffic **under the influence of drugs and/or medicines**. The exact number of road traffic casualties due to drug use in traffic is unknown, also because Dutch legislation prohibits post mortem drug testing. A hospital study conducted in 2007-09 indicates that approximately 10% of the seriously injured drivers tested positive for drugs (SWOV, 2015). Since 1 July 2017, legal limits for drug use in traffic have been operational in the Netherlands.

Holding a **phone while driving** has been illegal in the Netherlands since April 2002. Additional legislation relevant to distracted driving is applicable in cases where behaviour that explicitly endangers road safety is directly observed. In 2017, 74 561 Dutch drivers were fined for hand-held phone use (there were around 100 000 in 2011). The fine for held-held phone use while driving was EUR 230.

An observational study conducted in November-December 2016, commissioned by the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment found that between 7% and 8% of drivers use hand-held mobile phones or hand-held smartphones while driving (Broeks and Bijlsma-Boxum, 2017).

Two Dutch studies conducted in 2008-09 found that phone use preceded and possibly played a part in 3-4% of bicycle injury crashes. Furthermore, phone use just before a crash was mentioned nearly as frequently (4.3%) as listening to music (4.8%). As cyclists much more frequently listen to music than use a phone, this indicates that phone use (calls and texting) is a higher risk factor for bicycle crashes than music (SWOV, 2017c). An observational study conducted in April 2016 showed that 4% of cyclists text and 3% call while cycling (Broeks and Zengerink, 2016).

According to an online survey in 2017, over one third of 554 Dutch cyclists reported to use a mobile phone while cycling. For cyclists up to 34 over half used the mobile phone while cycling. Seven out of ten respondents think mobile phone use while cycling is an urgent problem to solve. They find mobile phone use while cycling unacceptable and dangerous, and they also report to have experienced directly dangerous situations. About 75% of respondents would support a ban on handheld phone use while cycling (SAMR, 2017).

A 2015 survey on **fatigue** among more than 1 500 Dutch car drivers suggests that driver fatigue is considered a widespread problem. Nearly half of Dutch drivers reported that sleepiness negatively affected their driving performance, 60% said they continued to drive after starting to feel sleepy and 10% continued to driving even when the drive took more than one hour. Almost one-quarter took no break when they started to feel sleepy. One in ten Dutch drivers said that they were aware of an increased driving risk from their sleepiness.

Seat belt use has been compulsory in front seats since 1975 and in rear seats since 1992. At the last national seat belt measurement in the Netherlands in 2010, the rate of seat belt use was above 95% in front and rear seats in passenger cars. For vans (87%) and trucks, the wearing rate was lower.

Helmet wearing has been compulsory on motorcycle since 1972 and on mopeds (up to 50 cc, maximum speed 45 km/h) since 1975. A helmet is not compulsory on light mopeds (up to 50 cc, maximum speed 25 km/h) and bicycle. The moped category constitutes a major road safety problem, as these are regularly modified to much higher speeds.

Road safety management and strategies

There are several **factors of influence on Netherlands' road safety performance** as captured by the above indicators. Since 1973 the annual number of road deaths has gradually declined. However, the reduction has significantly slowed down in the recent years.

Weijermars et al. (2014a) studied the major road safety developments in the Netherlands in the period 2000-12. On the favourable side, the number of actual fatalities in the period 2000-13 decreased from 1 166 to 570. However, the number of cyclist fatalities did not decrease significantly (Schepers et al., 2016) and the number of fatalities among senior citizens decreased at a lower rate than for the other age categories. In addition, the number of those seriously injured has increased. The number of casualties in crashes in which no motorised vehicles were involved more than doubled between 2000 and 2011.

The traffic system changed considerably from 2000 to 2012. The design of the underlying road network improved and enforcement for risk-increasing behaviour (speeding, drink driving, failing to use seat belts and helmets) was intensified between 2000 and 2010 but decreased after 2010. The European New Car Assessment Programme (Euro NCAP) for passenger cars played a major role in stimulating the production of safer vehicles. Passive vehicle safety systems such as airbags and seat belts played an important role in reducing injuries, and active safety systems, car bonnets and exterior airbags help protect pedestrians and cyclists in case of a crash. Improvements in the medical care, including more regionalisation, mobile medical teams and air ambulances, have further

contributed to the decrease in fatalities. The national road safety policy emphasis has shifted to vulnerable road users (Weijermars et al., 2014b).

Responsibility for the organisation of road safety in the Netherlands lies with the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, Directorate General Mobility – Roads and Traffic Safety section. It is responsible for:

- co-ordination of intergovernmental working processes and road safety decision making at the level of central government and co-ordination of national mass media campaigns. Regional and local governments have their own authority over their roads and the safety of their infrastructure. The ministry is responsible for road safety policy and together with decentralised governments they set policy targets;
- periodic review of legislation, rules and standards against best practice; recommendations for improvement; monitoring and evaluation; establishing and supporting data systems used to monitor road safety;
- compilation and dissemination of national statistics, co-operating with the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, Statistics Netherlands and SWOV.

Road safety policy in the Netherlands is guided by a philosophy of sustainable road safety, based on several key concepts, including that the human being is the reference standard and prevention is preferable to a curative approach. The policy follows five safety principles: road functionality; homogeneity of mass and speed and direction; physical and social tolerance; recognition and predictability of roads and behaviour; and state of awareness.

In 2008, the **Road Safety Strategic Plan 2008-20 (SPV)** was developed by the then Ministry of Transport and received support in Parliament. The SPV is based on three cornerstones: co-operation, an integral approach and sustainable safety. In 2012, the strategic plan was revised following its four-yearly evolution conducted by SWOV. The Policy Stimulus Road Safety Initiative contains extra-measures aimed at road safety improvement for cyclists, older road users, infrastructure, and road users in general.

On 18 April 2017 a broad cooperation between 32 organisations called on the House of Representatives and the new government to make road safety a national priority. The parties elaborated a road safety manifesto. In the manifesto, the organisations expressed ambitions and proposed to opt for safer traffic and fewer casualties. The upcoming government will get to work with the recommendations of the manifesto "Road safety: a national priority".

In 2017, the Ministry started the development of a new Strategic Plan for the period 2020-30. Regional and local governments and other key stakeholders involved in road safety will participate in the process.

The current targets in the SPV for 2020 are a maximum of 500 road fatalities and a maximum of 10 600 MAIS2+ road injuries. In 2015 SWOV predicted that if ongoing

developments and efforts continued, the target for 2020 with respect to fatalities seemed feasible (Weijermars et al., 2015). However, without additional safety measures it would be near impossible to achieve the target for serious road injuries. In view of the observed increase in road fatalities since 2015, it is now very much doubted whether the maximum of 500 fatalities in 2020 can be achieved.

Figure 5. Trends in road fatalities towards national target

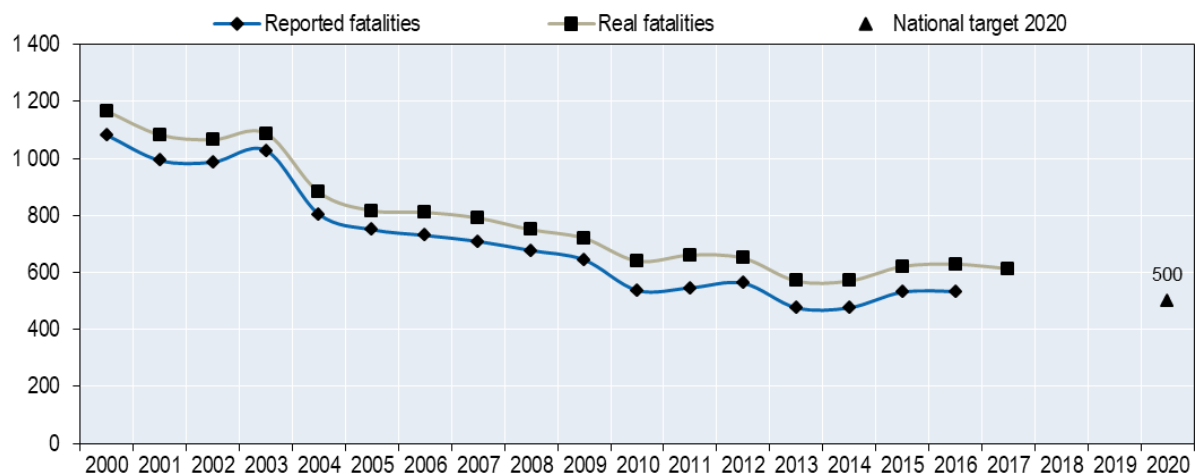
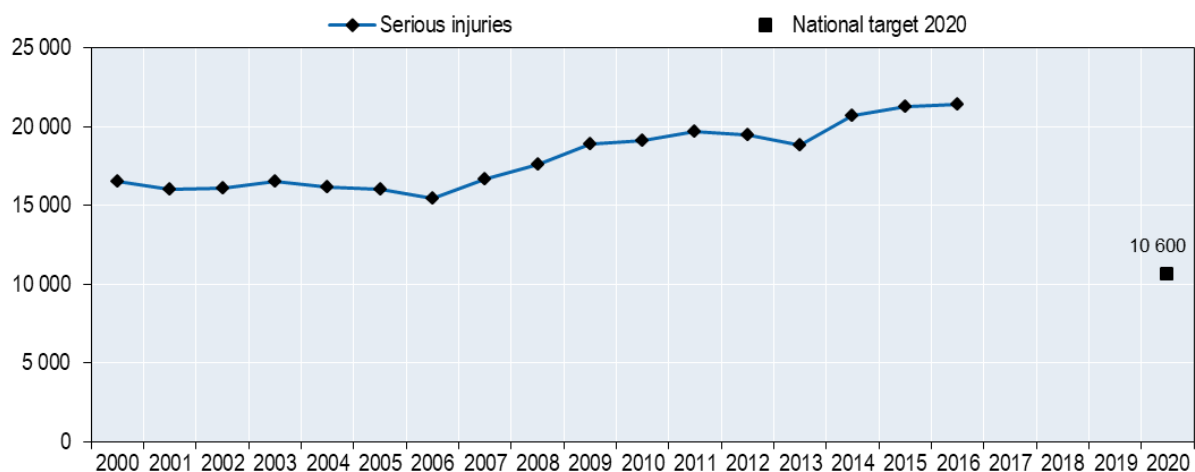


Figure 6. Trends in seriously injured towards national target



Measures

Road users

Since 1 July 2017, legal limits for drug use in traffic have been operational in the Netherlands. The new legislation is based on behaviour-related limits for the use of a single drug (single use) and zero limits for combination use. Behaviour-related limits are limits above which psychoactive substances affect the ability to drive. Enforcement of the

legal limits for drug use in traffic should particularly focus on the groups with the highest risk, such as the users of combinations of drugs and the young male drivers.

In October 2017 the experiment 2toDrive became permanent. Young drivers are provided with more and more varied driving experience before being allowed to drive independently. Driving lessons can start at the age of 16.5 and the driving test can be taken at the age of 17. If the test is passed, driving is only allowed when supervised by an experienced driver.

To meet the new European requirements (2016/1106/EU), the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management has adjusted the regulations concerning fitness to drive for certain medical conditions: narcolepsy, idiopathic hypersomnia, diabetes mellitus and heart and vascular diseases. The medical requirements have been clarified and partly eased without any negative consequences for road safety.

In September 2017, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, in cooperation with several social and commercial actors, has initiated the covenant "Safe use of smart functions in traffic". Over 50 stakeholders, among which manufacturers, insurers, car lease companies, transport companies, and employers, have signed the covenant and committed themselves to undertake further action.

Vehicles

On 1 June 2017 the Minister of Infrastructure and Water Management presented again a proposal for the introduction of licencing agricultural vehicles. The first proposal was rejected by the Dutch Parliament in 2016.

Roads

In 2017 a new Road Safety Framework has been introduced for construction and maintenance projects for the national road network. The new framework specifies how the General Directorate for Public Works and Water Management guarantees road safety on national roads including the connecting links with the lower road network. The framework applies to all projects phases from construction to management and maintenance, to all contract forms and to all actors who work on these roads.

Definitions, methodology, data collection

Road fatality: a person who died immediately or within 30 days of a road crash, as a result of an injury sustained in that crash.

Seriously injured: a person admitted to hospital after a road crash for an injury with a Maximum Abbreviated Injury Scale score of two or more (MAIS2+).

Slightly injured: a person not admitted or admitted to hospital for an injury with a Maximum Abbreviated Injury Scale score of one (MAIS1).

In the Netherlands, Statistics Netherlands (CBS) works together with the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management (*Rijkswaterstaat*) to match police-reported fatalities with other records including court files and death certificates to determine the actual number of road traffic fatalities. Both the police-reported number and the actual number have been published annually since 1996. This report uses the actual number of fatalities, unless there is a specific reference to “reported” numbers. In 2017, the percentage of police reported fatalities was 87% of the actual number.

Police reporting of road crashes does not meet the requirements of the Dutch Institute for Road Safety Research (SWOV) and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management. A national information system for the police implemented in 2009 led to lower data quality and a smaller number of reported crashes. New procedures are intended to improve the police data in quality and quantity. So far, however, only the number of reported crashes (injury and property damage) has increased since 2014, with the quality of the characteristics reported lagging behind.

Research on serious traffic injuries shows that the number of police-reported hospitalised casualties is not a good indicator for Serious Injuries due to miscoding of injury severity, underreporting and bias. SWOV matches the Dutch police data to hospital discharge records and the MAIS score is attributed based on the ICD-derived AIS scores of patients whose injuries were coded in ICD9cm. The estimated actual number of serious injuries is now based on the data from both police and hospital databases, and the definition of a serious injury is based on the MAIS score, not the police report. Based on this method, the Netherlands is also able to report on MAIS2 or MAIS3+ injuries.

Ambulance data are being made available for traffic safety research (years 2009-14). There are different reporting systems and external causes are not always recorded. Although this data source is of unknown quality, its usefulness regarding information on accident location is being considered.

In March 2016, a smartphone app was launched, enabling road crash reporting by individuals, supported and (partly) verified by police or an insurance company. Crashes can also be reported via the online tool, www.mobielschademelden.nl. This source is as yet of unknown quality and quantity. Hopes are that serious crashes with bicycles and without motor vehicles involved can be reported with this app. Currently, less than 5% of these crashes are reported by the police, whereas they comprise more than half of all serious road injuries in the Netherlands.

With the GDPR coming into force since May 25th 2018, data transfer between the police and the Ministry, data collection and further distribution of crash data will be redesigned. It is possible that some driver characteristics will not be allowed as this is criminal information. Although crash data do not contain personal information, it is possible that from the information available persons can be recognised. Aggregate data do not seem affected by this.

Resources

Recent research

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Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management: <https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-infrastructure-and-water-management>

Statistics Netherlands: <https://www.cbs.nl/>

Cycling Embassy: <https://www.dutchcycling.nl/>

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Road safety and traffic data

						2016 % change over				
	1990	2000	2010	2015	2016	2015	2010	2000	1990	2017
Reported safety data										
Fatalities	..	1 166	640	621	629	1.3%	-1.7%	-46.1%	..	613
Injured persons with score MAIS3+	..	5 220	5 700	7 800	..	..	..	..	..	..
Deaths per 100 000 population	..	7.3	3.9	3.7	3.7	0.8%	-4.1%	-49.6%	..	3.6
Deaths per 10 000 registered vehicles	..	1.4	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.0%	-5.8%	-57.0%	..	0.6
Deaths per billion vehicle kilometres	..	9.2	5.1	4.8	4.7	-1.4%	-6.8%	-48.7%	..	..
Fatalities by road user										
Pedestrians	..	114	72	57	51	-10.5%	-29.2%	-55.3%	..	..
Cyclists	..	233	162	185	189	2.2%	16.7%	-18.9%	..	..
Moped riders	..	104	43	45	44	-2.2%	2.3%	-57.7%	..	..
Motorcyclists	..	95	63	47	45	-4.3%	-28.6%	-52.6%	..	..
Passenger car occupants	..	593	268	236	254	7.6%	-5.2%	-57.2%	..	..
Other road users	..	27	32	51	46	-9.8%	43.8%	70.4%	..	..
Fatalities by age group										
0-14 years	..	59	18	18	12	-33.3%	-33.3%	-79.7%	..	..
15-17 years	..	57	20	15	10	-33.3%	-50.0%	-82.5%	..	..
18-20 years	..	119	46	43	31	-27.9%	-32.6%	-73.9%	..	..
21-24 years	..	115	52	32	45	40.6%	-13.5%	-60.9%	..	..
25-64 years	..	548	295	263	260	-1.1%	-11.9%	-52.6%	..	..
65-74 years	..	123	64	81	84	3.7%	31.3%	-31.7%	..	..
≥ 75 years	..	145	145	169	187	10.7%	29.0%	29.0%	..	..
Traffic data										
Registered vehicles (thousands)	6 399	8 174	9 839	10 133	10 264	1.3%	4.3%	25.6%	60.4%	10 411
Vehicle kilometres (millions)	96 355	116 299	127 928	129 597	133 093	2.7%	4.0%	14.4%	38.1%	..
Registered vehicles per 1 000 population	430.0	515.3	593.6	599.5	604.5	0.8%	1.8%	17.3%	40.6%	609.3