International Transport Forum

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Uruguay recorded 422 road deaths in 2019, a 20% decrease on 2018. Vulnerable road users represent two thirds of road fatalities. Motorcyclists, in particular, are at high risk and represent 41% of road deaths. The current road safety strategy aims at halving the number of road deaths between 2010 and 2020.[1]

Impact of Covid-19

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Uruguay introduced lockdown measures on 13 March 2020, which affected the movement of people and goods on the road and in turn the exposure to road crashes.

Traffic volume on road tolls decreased by 62% and the number of road deaths by 52% in April 2020, compared with the average for 2017-19, according to preliminary data,

In June 2020, when the government took measures to spur the economy, there was an increase in the circulation of vehicles and people. Table 2 shows data for traffic at road tolls only.

Table 1. Road fatalities by month

	Average 2017-19	2020	% change
January	42	54	28.6
February	36	35	-2.8
March	43	34	-20.9
April	46	22	-52.2
May	37	20	-45.9
June	40	35	-12.5

[1] All data included in this report are those reported by Uruguay's UNASEV (National Road Safety Agency [*Unidad Nacional de Seguridad Vial]*) and have not been validated by IRTAD.

Table 2. Road motor vehicle traffic by month (in vehicle-kilometres [vkm] at road tolls only)

	Average 2017-19	2020	% change
January	3 704 485	3 573 614	-3.5
February	3 029 630	3 133 378	3.4
March	2 672 526	1 650 151	-38.3
April	2 441 791	913 439	-62.6
May	2 061 796	1 645 279	-20.2
June	1 910 022	1 674 228	-12.3

Trends

Uruguay registered an overall **decrease in the number of road deaths in 2019**. According to latest available data, 422 persons lost their lives in traffic crashes in Uruguay in 2019. This represents a 20% decrease on 2018. In 2018, 528 road deaths were reported, a 12.3% increase on the 470 road deaths recorded in 2017.

Country Profile

Population in 2019: 3.5 million

GDP per capita in 2018: USD 16 999

Registered motor vehicles in 2019: 2.5 million (cars 45%; goods vehicles 3%, motorised two-wheelers 52%)

Speed limits: 45 km/h on urban roads; 90 km/h on rural roads

Limits on blood alcohol content (BAC): 0.0 g/l

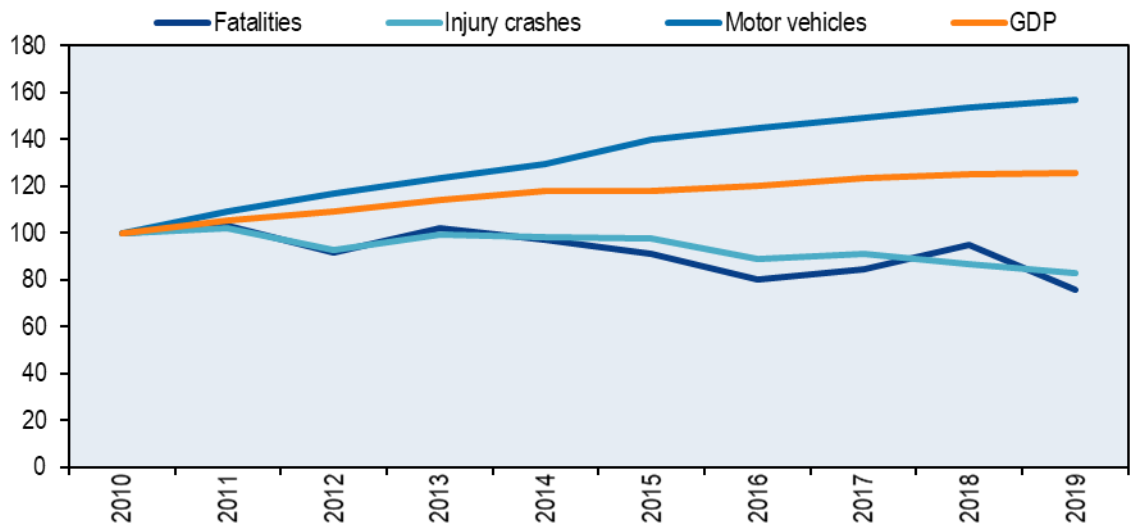
The **long-term trend for road deaths** in Uruguay has been inconsistent. Between 2010 and 2019, the number of annual road fatalities fell by 24%. In 2019, the number of annual road fatalities surpassed the previous 2016 record, when the number of annual road fatalities registered was 446 (a decline of 20% on 2010). Uruguay had made strong progress towards significant road safety improvements.

The number of **traffic deaths per 100 000 inhabitants** in Uruguay fell by 28% between 2010 and 2019. In 2019, 12.0 traffic deaths per 100 000 inhabitants were recorded, compared to 16.6 in 2010. By way of comparison the average mortality rate in the European Union was 5.1 deaths per 100 000 inhabitants in 2019.

Uruguay recorded 1.7 **road fatalities per 10 000 registered vehicles** in 2019. This represents a decrease of 52% compared to the year 2010, when the rate of deaths to registered vehicles stood at 3.4.

Figure 1. Road safety, vehicle stock and GDP trends

Index 2010 = 100

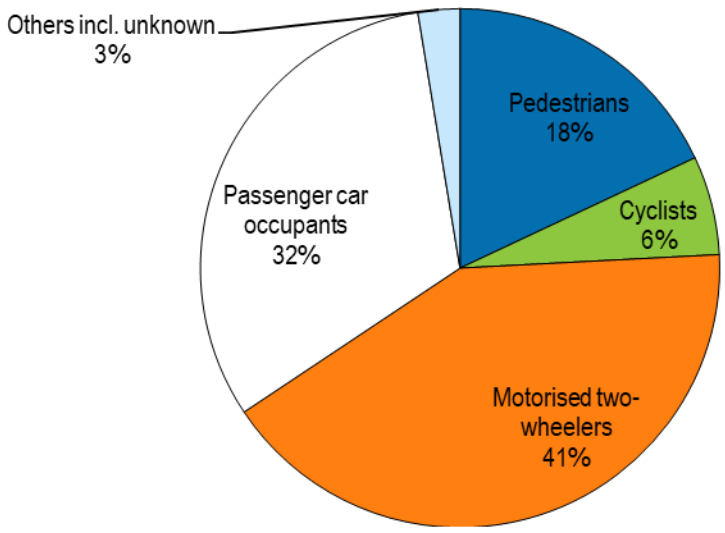


Note: registered vehicles do not include mopeds.

Data for **fatalities by road user groups** shows that riders of motorised two-wheelers are the most affected by road crashes (41% of the total). They were followed by occupants of passenger cars (32%), pedestrians (18%) and cyclists (6%).

Traffic fatalities decreased across all user groups in 2019 on the year prior. The largest decrease in 2019 was registered among motorised two-wheelers, with 26% less fatalities than in 2018. They were followed by passenger car occupants, with 19% less fatalities (134 deaths in 2019), cyclists with 13% less fatalities (26 deaths in 2019) and pedestrians with 11% less fatalities (76 deaths in 2019).

Figure 2. Road fatalities by road user group in percentage of total, 2019



Road deaths by age group in 2019 showed the bulk of the decrease in road fatalities was concentrated among young people. Notably, the age groups 0-14 (-43%), 15-17 (-35%), 18-20 (-60%) and 21-24 (-21.6%) all had a substantial decrease in 2019 when compared to 2018.

Older people are at highest risk in traffic, with mortality rates well above average. The over 75 group suffers road fatalities at rates of 18.5 per 100 000 persons. However, even if the number of road deaths among young people decreased, the 21-24 age group still had a high road fatalities rate of 18.3 in 2019.

Figure 3. Road fatality rates by age group, 2012-19

Deaths per 100 000 inhabitants in a given age group

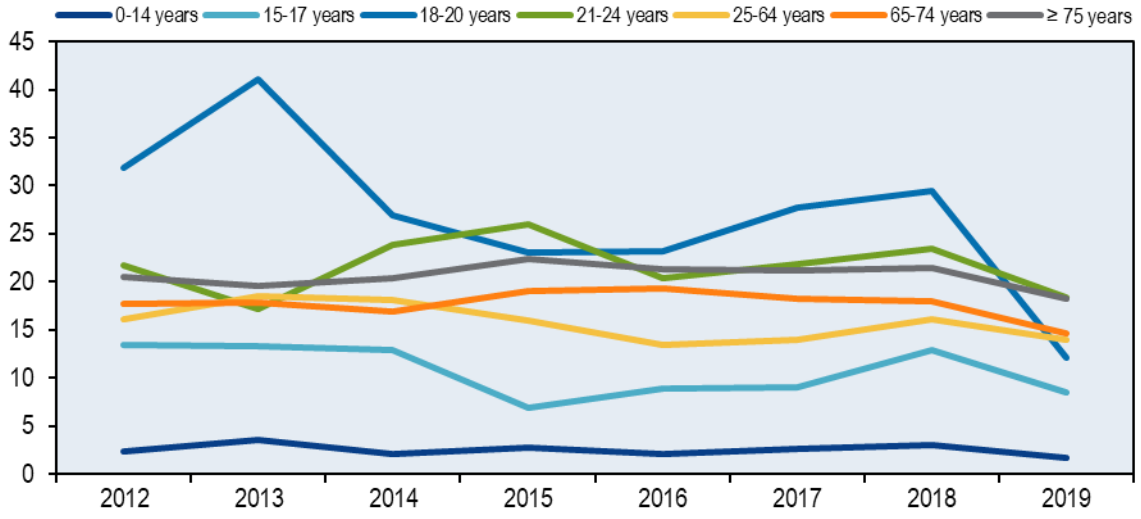
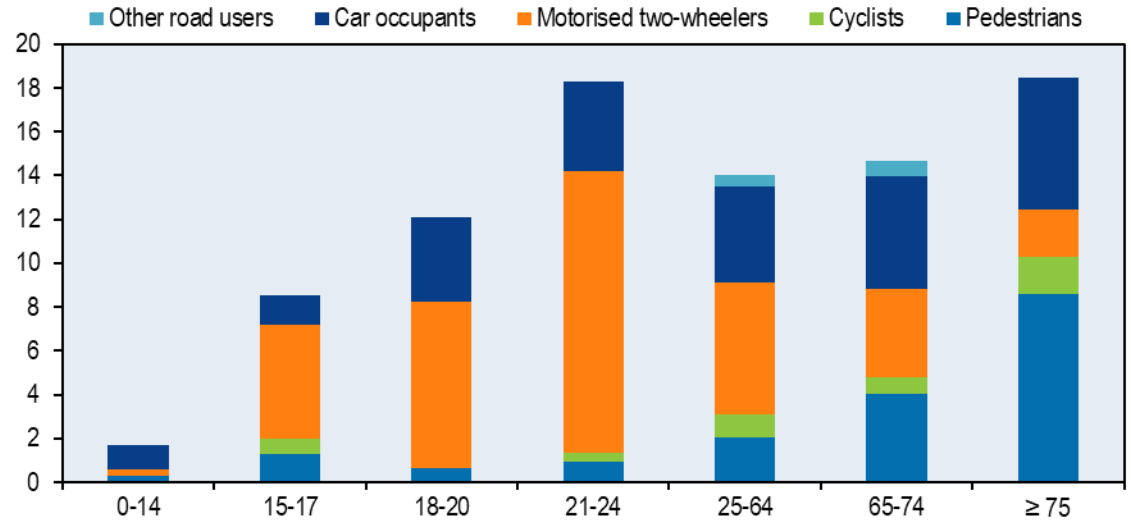


Figure 4. Road fatality rate by age and road user group, 2019

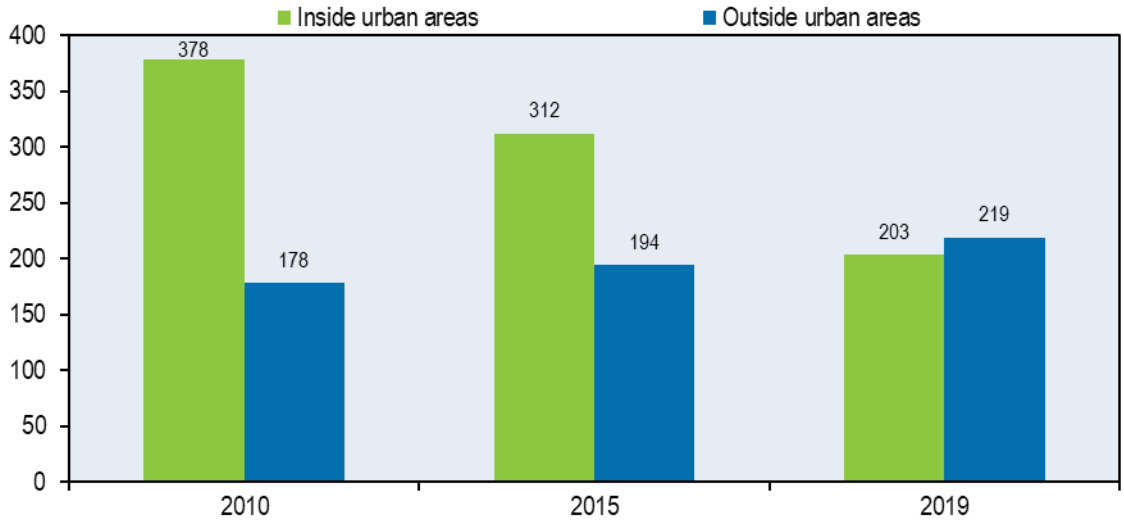
Fatalities per 100 000 inhabitants



In Uruguay, roads are classified as either national routes or city and departmental roads. Based on available data, most fatalities occur on urban and departmental roads.

Analysis of **fatalities by road type** shows that for the most recent year the urban network tends to be safer. In 2019, 48% of deaths occurred on urban roads and 52% outside urban areas. This is in line with historical trends of urban centres being more deadly for road users than the roads around them. This trend is changing, however. Since 2010, fatalities in urban areas have decreased by 46%, but they have increased outside urban areas by 23%.

Figure 5. Road fatalities by road type



Economic costs of road costs

As of yet there is no estimation of the economic costs of road crashes.

Behaviour

The behaviour of road users is an important determinant of a country's road safety performance. **Speeding,** in particular, is one of the main causes of road crashes; however, current crash forms do not allow for identifying crashes where speeding is the main crash factor.

Several initiatives are being undertaken to manage traffic and speed, especially through the adoption of automatic speed control. The Traffic Management Centre, launched in 2016, included as of August 2018 41 speed control points.

The speed limits in Uruguay are summarised in the table below.

Table 3. Passenger car speed limits by road type, 2020

	General speed limit
Urban roads	45 km/h
Rural roads	90 km/h

Driving under the influence of alcohol is another major cause of road crashes in Uruguay, but according to official statistics to a lesser extent than in most other IRTAD countries. Based on 2019 police reports, 7% of all crashes involved a driver under the influence of alcohol.

Since January 2016, there has been a zero tolerance policy for drink driving in Uruguay. The maximum permissible BAC is 0.0 g/l for all drivers. The population is very much aware of the high risk of drinking and driving.

A crash is classified as alcohol-related when any involved driver has a BAC above zero.

An increasing problem for traffic safety is **distraction**, for instance, through the use of mobile phones. However, there is no data on the impact of the use of mobile phones while driving. Since 2013, it is not permitted to drive with a hand-held mobile phone. The use of mobile phones while driving has decreased from 6.2% in 2013 to 3.4% in 2016.

Sea belt wearing has been compulsory in Uruguay since 2007 in both front and rear seats. Children under 12 are not allowed to be seated in the front seat, and a dedicated child restraint system is compulsory for children up to 150 cm and 36 kg.

According to an observational study conducted in 2016 by the National Road Safety Agency, UNASEV, the rate of use of seat belts in the front seats of cars and vans was 63% but only 33% in rear seats. The use of dedicated child restraint systems was at 23% for children under 12. These use rates are still low compared to the best performing countries where the wearing rate is close to 100% even in rear seats. Many lives could be saved if the use of seat belts was increased in Uruguay.

Table 4. Seat belt and helmet wearing rates
Percentages

	2013	2016
Front seats		
General (driver and passenger)	56	63
Driver	62	69
Passenger	56	63
Rear seats		
General	31	33
Children (use of child restraint)	..	23
Helmet		
Riders of motorised two-wheelers	86	93
Passenger of motorised two-wheelers	74	82

In Uruguay, **motorcycle helmets** have been compulsory for all users of motorised two-wheelers since 2007. The helmet-wearing rate of riders of motorised two-wheelers was 91% in 2016 (according to an observational study), 93% for drivers and 82% for passengers.

In 2019, 22% of motorcyclists involved in a traffic crash with injured people did not wear a helmet.

Bicycle helmets are not compulsory.

Road safety management and strategies

There are several **factors of influence on Uruguay's road safety performance**, as captured by the above indicators. The vehicle fleet in Uruguay has been in constant expansion since 2000. In 2019, there were 2.5 million registered motor vehicles, an increase of 157% when compared with 2000. The motorcycle fleet is growing particularly fast. It represented 38% of the fleet in 2000 and 51% in 2019.

The first national traffic and safety law was enacted in 2007. The law focused on general traffic regulations, standards for traffic signs, active and passive safety equipment, the technical conditions of the vehicles, the administrative system to regulate the circulation of vehicles, and the definition of traffic offences and their penalties. As a result, important road safety measures were implemented.

The number of road deaths peaked at 572 in 2011. It then decreased trend until 2019, when it reached its lowest level of 422 – a reduction of 26% over a five-year period.

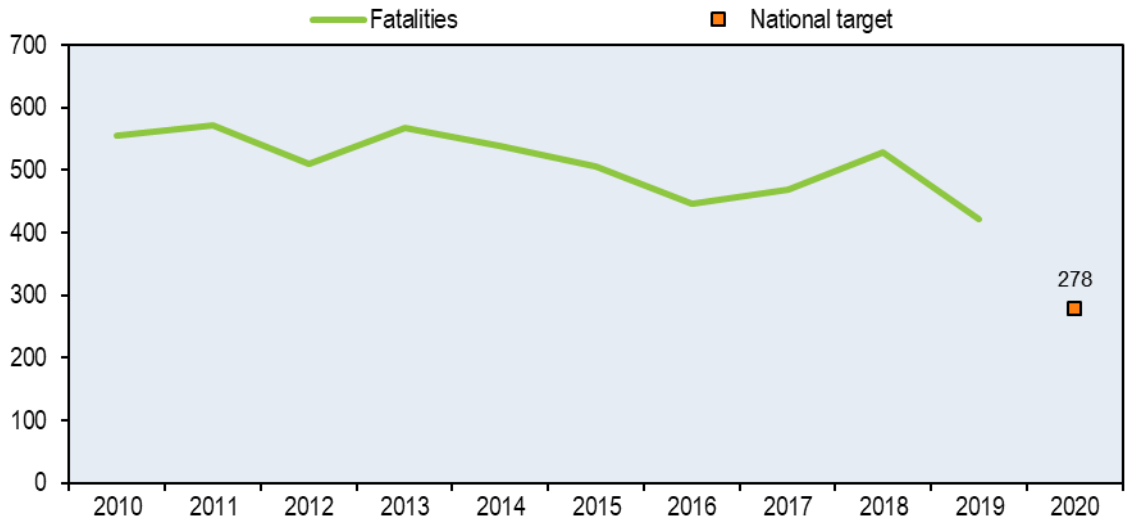
Responsibility for the organisation of road safety in Uruguay lies with UNASEV, together with the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Transport and Public Works, and the Municipal Intendancies. UNASEV was created in 2007 as a state agency exclusively dedicated to road safety. It answers directly to the president. Its mission is to regulate,

implement and monitor road safety activities throughout the country. It is also responsible for the development of the national road safety policy. Its objective is to generate a road safety culture and encourage social responsibility in both the public and private sectors. Uruguay has 19 provinces. In the provinces, road safety is the responsibility of local agencies, which work closely with national agencies. Traffic control is the responsibility of the National Traffic Police for national roads, working in co-ordination with the Municipal Transit Police of each municipality for city and departmental roads.

In 2011, Uruguay adopted a **road safety strategy (2011-19)**, adhering to the United Nations' Decade of Action for Road Safety. It is based on the five pillars of the action plan of the UN Decade of Action: strengthening road safety management, safer infrastructure, safer vehicles, road user behaviour and post-crash care. The 2011-19 strategy includes as a main objective a reduction of 50% in the number of deaths between 2010 and 2020. However, the target will not be met.

Concrete actions to achieve the 2020 target include the mandatory installation of anti-lock braking systems (ABSs) on new motorcycles sold, mandatory electronic stability control (ESC) and mandatory ABSs on cars and vans.

Figure 7. Road fatality trends towards national target



Measures

Several measures to improve road safety management have recently been put in place.

Road safety management: In 2016, the National Traffic Police was created.

In 2019, the third law of traffic and road safety (Law 19.824) was approved. This new law includes a new scale of sanction for traffic rule offences and a new point system to obtain a driving licence.

Speed management: In 2016, the Traffic Management Centre was launched. This includes the implementation of several intelligent transportation systems to manage and monitor traffic in real time in the city of Montevideo. This aims at improving traffic dynamics, new information and communication systems for citizens. The system comprises 170 centralised traffic lights, 160 cameras for vehicle counting, 49 cameras for traffic monitoring, 31 speed and red light control points, four variable messaging panels and 35 wireless sensors for counting.

Road users: In 2016, UNASEV launched an inter-institutional group to regulate motorcycle deliveries. The result of this joint work is reflected in decree N° 119/2017, dated May 2017, which requires compulsory training for workers on motorcycles, including a certificate of professional training by the competent authority.

In 2015, the zero alcohol law was adopted and came into force in January 2016.

In 2019, the new law improved regulations regarding vulnerable users.

Infrastructure: UNASEV is working together with the Ministry of Transport to carry out road safety audits and survey road sections with bad road safety statistics. The audit started in 2017. Since then, approximately 1 200 km of the total of 8 776 km of national roads have been surveyed.

The National Road Directorate has facilitated the development of an investment plan for safer roads. Several important infrastructure improvement projects are being carried out, such as the installation of protective barriers, improved intersections, pedestrian bridges, road markings and vertical mandatory signs.

Vehicles: The anchoring systems Isofix or Latch for new goods vehicles with a weight of 3 500 kg or less have been mandatory as of October 2018.

Since 2017 an import certificate for motorcycle tires has been compulsory.

Since 2015 ABSs, frontal airbags for drivers and passengers, seat belts and head restraints contiguous to the doors have been mandatory on new vehicles.

A final draft of new requirements for vehicles is circulating among private and public stakeholders. The new standards include: three point seat belts and head restraints for all passengers, frontal impact protection and speed limiters (planned for implementation in 2020), electronic stability and seat belt reminders (planned for implementation in 2022), daytime running lights, automatic lights-on systems and side impact bars (planned for 2023), pedestrian safety in goods vehicles with a weight of 2 500 kg or less (planned for 2030).

Post-crash care: The System of Trauma and Emergency (SITREM) was finished in 2018, enabling the medical history of injured people to be digitised according to injuries by vehicle type, gender and age.

Definitions, methodology, data collection

A road fatality is a person who dies immediately or within 30 days as a result of a road crash.

There is currently no definition for a serious or slight injury. The severity of an injury is determined based on primary information collected at the scene of the crash by the medical doctor, who classifies the injury as severe or not severe.

Uruguay does not use the Maximum Abbreviated Injury Scale to classify injuries.

SINATRÁN is the National Traffic Information System; it has been in use since 2011. Information on crash data comes from the Public Security Management System of the Ministry of the Interior and is transmitted to SINATRÁN for analysis. Information covers all injury crashes that have occurred on the national territory since 2011 and is available within 24 hours of the crash (this includes geolocation data).

As mentioned above, SITREM provides more details on the injuries. Unlike police reports, it collects data from the ambulances sent to the scene of a crash.

Resources

Recent research

Observational study on road behaviour in Uruguay in 2016. The UNASEV/OISEVI study conducted by FACTUM monitored the use of seat belts and helmets, as well as distracting factors in urban areas:
http://unasev.gub.uy/inicio/sinatran/estudios_observacion/.

2016 Barometer Survey. This study consists of a national survey on habits, behaviour and perception regarding traffic and its different components in daily life. The execution of the survey and the subsequent processing of data were carried out by the company RADAR.
http://unasev.gub.uy/inicio/sinatran/encuestas_opinion/.

Websites

UNASEV: http://unasev.gub.uy/.

References

UNASEV (2019), *Informe Semestral Preliminar Enero – Junio 2019 Siniestralidad Vial,* https://www.gub.uy/unidad-nacional-seguridad-vial/sites/unidad-nacional-seguridad-vial/files/documentos/noticias/Informe%20Semestral%202019.pdf.

UNASEV (2016), *Estudio de comportamiento observacional en Seguridad Vial en Uruguay 2016*, http://unasev.gub.uy/inicio/sinatran/encuestas_opinion/.

Road safety and traffic data

					2019 % change over	
	2010	2017	2018	2019	*2018*	*2010*
Reported safety data						
Fatalities	556	470	528	422	-20.1%	-24.1%
Injury crashes	23 924	21 775	20 654	19 768	-4.3%	-17.4%
Injured persons hospitalised		3 576	3 198	3 050	-4.6%	..
Deaths per 100,000 population	16.6	13.5	15.1	12.0	-20.4%	-27.7%
Deaths per 10,000 registered vehicles	3.4	2.0	2.1	1.7	-21.7%	-51.6%
Fatalities by road user						
Pedestrians	..	70	85	76	-10.6%	..
Cyclists	..	23	30	26	-13.3%	..
Motorised tw o-w heelers	..	219	237	175	-26.2%	..
Passenger car occupants	..	143	165	134	-18.8%	..
Other road users	..	15	11	11	0.0%	..
Fatalities by age group						
0-14 years	..	19	21	12	-42.9%	..
15-17 years	..	14	20	13	-35.0%	..
18-20 years	..	45	47	19	-59.6%	..
21-24 years	..	47	51	40	-21.6%	..
25-64 years	..	245	285	250	-12.3%	..
65-74 years	..	48	48	40	-16.7%	..
≥ 75 years	..	49	50	43	-14.0%	..
Fatalities by road type						
Urban roads	378	214	281	203	-27.8%	-46.3%
Rural roads	178	256	247	219	-11.3%	23.0%
Traffic data						
Registered vehicles (thousands)	1 616	2 406	2 483	2 535	2.1%	56.9%
Registered vehicles per 1,000 population	482.0	688.7	708.1	720.4	1.7%	49.5%

Note: registered vehicles do not include mopeds.