

Road safety factsheet:

Sustainable development goals

January 2024

On January 1 2016, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development officially came into force. These goals had been adopted by world leaders in September 2015 at a UN summit.

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals act as a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. There are 17 goals, all of which are interconnected. The aim is that all 17 goals are achieved by 2030.

While the Sustainable Development Goals are not legally binding, governments are expected to take ownership and establish national frameworks for the achievement of the 17 goals. Countries have the primary responsibility for follow-up and review of the progress made in implementing the goals.

Goal three focuses on good health and wellbeing. The rationale behind this is that ensuring healthy lives and promoting good wellbeing for all at all ages is essential to sustainable development.

While most of the Sustainable Development Goal targets are set for 2030, the target relating to road safety was set for 2020.

3.6 – By 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents.

The indicator for this measure is rates (deaths per 100,000 population), but the target is set for the absolute number of road deaths.

Road safety in the UK

In 2022, there were 1,711 reported road deaths, similar to the level seen since 2010. There were 28,031 people seriously injured and a total of 135,480 reported casualties of all severities¹. This figure is 12 per cent lower than in 2019.

¹ DfT (2023) 'Reported road casualties in Great Britain: Numbers and rates; table RAS0201'

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/reported-road-accidents-vehicles-and-casualties-tables-for-great-britain>: Accessed January 2024

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However, since 2010, the number of fatal and serious injuries on Great Britain's roads has not decreased significantly. The trend in the number of fatalities has been broadly flat since 2010. Previously, and particularly between 2006 and 2010, the general trend was for fatalities to fall. Since that point, most of the year-on-year changes are either explained by one-off causes or natural variation. The number of fatalities in 2022 (1,711) was 2 per cent less compared to 1,752 fatalities in 2019. The number of serious injuries has fallen 3 per cent since 2019.

UK road safety 2004-2022

 Table 1: Number of casualties by severity, 2004-2022, Great Britain²

Year	Killed	Seriously injured	Slightly injured	All casualties
2004	3,221	45,870	231,749	280,840
2005	3,201	42,977	224,839	271,017
2006	3,172	41,682	213,550	258,404
2007	2,946	40,129	204,705	247,780
2008	2,538	37,408	190,959	230,950
2009	2,222	35,775	184,149	222,146
2010	1,850	32,956	173,842	208,648
2011	1,901	33,487	168,562	203,950
2012	1,754	33,056	160,913	195,723
2013	1,713	31,219	150,738	183,760
2014	1,775	32,986	159,716	194,477
2015	1,730	31,598	152,861	186,189
2016	1,792	30,397	149,195	181,384
2017	1,793	29,326	139,874	170,993
2018	1,784	29,796	129,017	160,597
2019	1,752	28,796	122,610	153,158
2020*	1,460	22,436	91,688	115,584
2021*	1,558	25,577	101,074	128,209
2022	1,711	28,031	105,738	135,480

*Reductions in casualty statistics are likely affected by Covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions

UK road safety and Sustainable Development Goals

As table one shows, road deaths and injuries have fallen significantly since 2004, although the decreases seen in earlier years have levelled out, particularly in the last ten years. Road deaths have fallen 47 per cent since 2004, but only by 4.5 percent since 2016, when the UN Sustainable Development Goals were introduced.

² DfT (2023) 'Reported road casualties in Great Britain: Historical trends; table

RAS0102' <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/reported-road-accidents-vehicles-and-casualties-tables-for-great-britain>: Accessed January 2024

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Road related casualties of all severities have followed a similar trend, falling 52 per cent since 2004, but just 25 per cent since 2016.

Table 2 outlines the number of casualties per 100,000. As expected, this has followed a similar pattern to the absolute number of road casualties, with larger reductions in earlier years:

- There was a 59 per cent decrease in road deaths per 100,000 for the period 2004-2022, but only a 20 per cent decrease since 2016.
- For all casualties the percentage decrease is similar, with a 52 per cent decrease 2004-2022 and a 21 per cent decrease for 2016-2022.

Table two: Number of casualties per 100,000 population, 2004-2022, Great Britain

Year	Estimated population ³	Killed	Seriously injured	Slightly injured	All casualties
2004	59,950,400	5.37	77	387	469
2005	60,413,300	5.30	71	372	449
2006	60,827,100	5.22	69	351	425
2007	61,319,100	4.8	65	334	404
2008	61,823,800	4.11	61	309	374
2009	62,260,500	3.57	58	296	357
2010	62,759,500	2.95	53	277	333
2011	63,285,100	3.00	53	266	322
2012	63,705,000	2.75	52	253	307
2013	64,105,700	2.67	49	235	287
2014	64,596,800	2.75	51	247	301
2015	65,110,000	2.66	49	235	286
2016	65,648,100	2.73	46	227	276
2017	66,040,200	2.71	44	212	259
2018	66,435,600	2.69	45	194	242
2019	66,796,800	2.62	43	184	229
2020*	67,081,000	2.18	34	137	172
2021*	67,026,300	2.32	38	151	191
2022	67,508,936	2.53	42	157	201

³ Office for National Statistics (2022) United Kingdom population, mid-year estimate, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/timeseries/ukpop/pop>: Accessed January 2024

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International progress

Global road deaths disproportionately impact low- and middle-income countries, with 92 per cent of fatalities occurring in these regions, despite accounting for only 60 per cent of the world's vehicles⁴. The rapid motorisation in these countries, coupled with insufficient investment in road safety strategies and land use planning⁵, contributes to this disparity. Regional variations exist in both the absolute number of road traffic injuries and mortality rates.

 Table 3: Estimated total global road deaths and rate per 100,000 population⁶

	Rate per 100,000 population				
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2019
Northern Africa and Western Asia	24.3 (male) 9.3 (female) 16.9 (total)	24.7 (male) 9.3 (female) 17.1 (total)	25.5 (male) 9.3 (female) 17.6 (total)	25.5 (male) 9.4 (female) 17.7 (total)	24.7 (male) 9 (female) 17.1 (total)
Central and Southern Asia	23.5 (male) 8.6 (female) 16.3 (total)	25.2 (male) 8.3 (female) 17 (total)	26.3 (male) 8 (female) 17.4 (total)	23.1 (male) 7.6 (female) 15.6 (total)	22.9 (male) 7.6 (female) 15.5 (total)
Eastern and South-East Asia	29.2 (male) 11.3 (female) 20.4 (total)	28.9 (male) 9.8 (female) 19.5 (total)	28.2 (male) 9.3 (female) 18.9 (total)	25.7 (male) 8.4 (female) 17.2 (total)	24.9 (male) 8.2 (female) 16.6 (total)
Europe and North America	23.3 (male) 8.3 (female) 15.6 (total)	22.6 (male) 7.8 (female) 15 (total)	16 (male) 5.6 (female) 10.6 (total)	14.3 (male) 4.9 (female) 9.5 (total)	12.7 (male) 4.7 (female) 8.6 (total)
Sub-Saharan Africa	41.6 (male) 18.8 (female) 30.1 (total)	40.2 (male) 17.9 (female) 29 (total)	38.8 (male) 16.7 (female) 27.7 (total)	37.9 (male) 15.9 (female) 26.9 (total)	38.8 (male) 16.1 (female) 27.5 (total)
Australia and New Zealand	14.5 (male) 6.1 (female) 10.3 (total)	12.7 (male) 4.7 (female) 8.6 (total)	10.2 (male) 3.8 (female) 7 (total)	8 (male) 3.2 (female) 5.6 (total)	8.2 (male) 3.2 (female) 5.7 (total)
Latin America and the Caribbean	28.1 (male) 7.4 (female) 17.6 (total)	29.5 (male) 7.7 (female) 18.4 (total)	30.9 (male) 7.7 (female) 19.1 (total)	29.9 (male) 7 (female) 18.3 (total)	28.2 (male) 6.7 (female) 17.3 (total)
World total	27.6 (male) 10.4 (female) 19 (total)	28 (male) 9.8 (female) 18.9 (total)	27.1 (male) 9.1 (female) 18.1 (total)	25.2 (male) 8.6 (female) 17 (total)	24.8 (male) 8.5 (female) 24.8 (total)
Total road deaths	1,183,492	1,234,026	1,240,000	1,250,000	1,350,000.00

⁴ World Health Organisation (2023) Road traffic injuries, Factsheets, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/road-traffic-injuries>: Accessed January 2024

⁵ United Nations (2018) UN Statistics Wiki, E-handbook on SDG indicators, Goal 3, Indicator 3.6.1, <https://unstats.un.org/wiki/display/SDGHandbook/Indicator+3.6.1>: Accessed January 2024

⁶ United Nations (undated) Department of Economy and Social Affairs, SDB Indicators Database, Indicator 3.6.1, Series : Death rate due to road traffic injuries, by sex (per 100,000 population), <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/database>: Accessed January 2024

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(estimated)					
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The UN progress chart for Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) from 2023 indicates fair progress towards the reduction in the number of road deaths, but acceleration is needed⁷. While certain UN regions show positive advancements, others, such as Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa, have stagnated, and North Africa has regressed in both the rate per 100,000 and total number of deaths. This stagnation and the increase in deaths in these regions have led to a global rise in deaths and injuries. Current trends project road traffic injuries becoming the seventh leading cause of death by 2030, exacerbating the disparity between high- and low-income countries⁸.

Although significant progress has been made globally in improving the health of millions of people, increasing life expectancy, reducing maternal and child mortality and fighting against leading communicable diseases, road traffic injuries top the list as the leading cause of death for individuals aged five to 29. Additionally, 20 to 50 million people suffer non-fatal injuries, often resulting in disabilities⁴.

The economic impact of road traffic crashes is substantial, estimated to cost most countries three per cent of their gross domestic product. Addressing these challenges is crucial to achieving sustainable progress in global road safety⁴.

⁷ United Nations (2023) Sustainable Development Goals, Progress Chart 2023, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/progress-chart/Progress-Chart-2023.pdf>: Accessed January 2024