

Executive summary

Road traffic injury is a global public health problem. It disproportionately affects low- and middle-income countries and certain population groups such as young males. There has been a greater awareness among national and international policy-makers of the public health impact of these injuries and thus an interest in strengthening their prevention and control. In 2004, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank published the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*, which identified interventions and strategies that could be employed at the local, national and international levels in order to reduce the burden of road traffic injuries. Based on that report, the current publication describes the status of road safety in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region's Member countries. Based on structured interviews of representatives from various sectors involved in road safety, the report aims to identify road safety indicators, gaps in road safety systems and the key priorities for intervention at the national level among Member countries.

The key findings of the report are:

- the Eastern Mediterranean Region has one of the highest road traffic fatality rates in the world
- these injuries tend to affect younger, productive members of society
- only 40% of the countries of the Region have urban speed limits consistent with recommendations of the *World report on road traffic injury prevention* (50 km/h or less)
- only 30% of countries have national laws mandating seatbelt use by all car occupants
- only 10% of countries have child safety restraint laws
- only 20% of countries have a law for mandatory motorcycle helmet use and a defined standard for the type of helmet to be used
- 19 of the 20 countries studied have a law against drinking alcohol and driving, and 40% have a system of random breath testing or police check points for enforcement of this law





- only 40% of the countries have a lead agency for road safety with a separate funding allocated for the agency's activities
- about half of the countries (11 of 20) have national policies encouraging investment in public transportation
- based on the data presented in the report, the Region was found to have one of the highest level of underreporting of road traffic injuries in the world
- only 50% of countries use the standard definition of road mortality thus making comparisons across countries difficult
- most countries identified a universal access number for pre-hospital trauma care systems.
- the countries of the Region need to ensure that vehicles on the road are safe through ensuring checks at the vehicle manufacturing sites and at the time of import in the country as well as implementation of vehicle inspection laws
- safe road design through safety audits at all levels needs to be ensured
- the trauma care system both pre-hospital and at the hospital level needs to be studied further.

This report sets forth the following critical recommendations:

- the countries of the Region need to establish and strengthen lead agencies and manage their performance through target setting
- the countries of the Region need to encourage safe, healthy and environment-friendly transport choices such as walking, cycling and a larger dependence on public transport
- the countries of the Region need to implement the five most effective interventions that are likely to have the largest impact on the burden of injuries: control of speed, enforcement of seatbelt laws, promotion of child restraint use in cars, enforcement of standard motorcycle helmet use and establishment of the true burden of alcohol in road traffic crashes