

GER

ROAD SAFETY IN GERMANY

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1. INTRODUCTION

Following German reunification on 3rd October 1990, the area of the Federal Republic of Germany increased by 44%, the population by 26% and the number of motor vehicles by 17% at that time. The motorway network grew by 21% to 10,677km.

The political changes with the newly gained freedom to travel, rising passenger car ownership and high share of novice drivers particularly affected road safety. A structural break emerged in the former German Democratic Republic where until 1989 – resulting from the comparatively low motorization and other system related factors – the global population-based risk of being fatally injured had been similar to highly motorised European countries with the most favourable accident statistics: Great Britain, Sweden and the Netherlands. With German reunification in 1990, however, the risk values were about twice as high in the new German federal states as in the year before.

2. THE PAST DECADE

In the year 1999 unified Germany ranks 11th in road safety among OECD countries when comparisons are based on the fatalities per 100,000 inhabitants¹ (see Figure 1). The death rate was lowered by 33% from 1991 to

1999. A number of initiatives took place during the last decade that contributed largely to Germany's improved road safety situation.

In the beginning of the 1990s a major concern was motorway safety as in the year of reunification the new federal states [D(O)] accounted for an extremely high rate of 40 killed per 1 billion vehicle kilometres travelled. Enforcement and road infrastructure measures helped improve road safety on the Autobahn. With a death rate of 4.5 per 1 billion vehicle kilometres travelled, motorways have become much safer in unified Germany (see Figure 2). However, the favourable rate achieved in Great Britain sets the target.

Although motorways are always in the focus of attention, rural roads represent the most crucial part of the network. The number of fatalities occurring on national roads outside urban areas was reduced by almost 27%. Ongoing road safety research is focusing on accidents on rural roads involving trees being hit. In 1999, a guide-

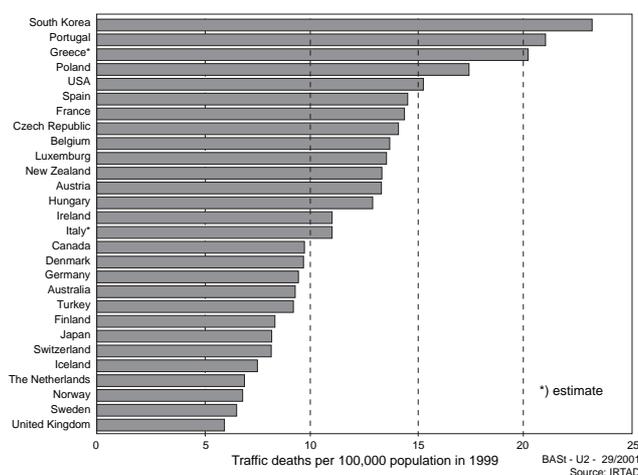


Fig. 1 Traffic deaths per 100,000 population in 1999

¹ The figures have been adjusted to the 30-day-definition for the recording of road fatalities.

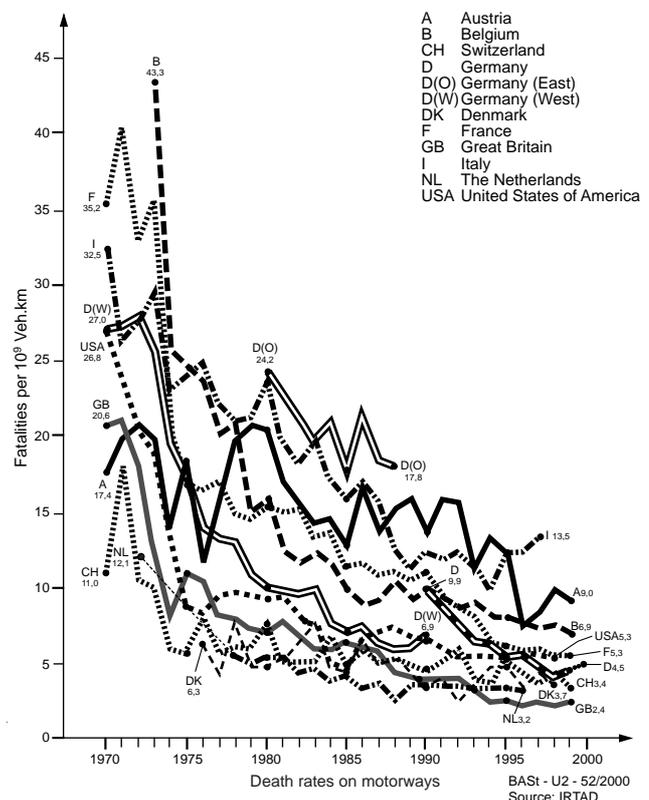


Fig. 2 Death rates on motorways

line was drafted which intends to provide information for the planning and the provision of tree-lined roads.

Young drivers represent the most critical high-risk group. Education and awareness campaigns targeted at these high-risk drivers contributed to reduce the number of killed aged 18 to 24 years by 38% in the period 1991 to 1999.

Drinking and driving is not only a problem among young drivers. From 1st May 1998, the legal limit for blood alcohol concentration was lowered to 50mg/100ml. If a driver in Germany has a BAC of 0.5 or higher, a fine will be imposed and as of 1st April 2001, the driving licence will also be suspended. Since the introduction of the new limit there has been a reduction in drink-drive accidents by 3.4%.

Car fatalities showed a substantial reduction by roughly 32%. However, this road user group still accounts for about 60% of all persons killed. There was a substantial decrease in pedestrian fatalities by almost 50%. The number of pedal cyclist fatalities fell by 28%. There was not such a significant change in the number of motorcyclist fatalities.

Table 1 shows additional road safety indicators for Germany and the percentage changes from 1991 to 1999.

3. THE YEAR 2000

Overall the risk of being involved in a road accident decreased in Germany in 2000 compared to the previous year. Road user fatalities fell by 3.5% to 7,503. This continues the long-term downward trend resulting once again in the lowest number of killed since the beginning of German accident statistics in 1953 (see Figure 3).

Accidents involving personal injury or death decreased by approximately 3%. The number of casualties (injured and fatalities) fell also by 3.2% accounting for 511,577 in the year 2000. However, the reduction in drink-drive accidents was less marked than in the previous year.

Due to the rise in mineral oil prices the traffic kilometrage fell by approximately 0.7% to about 635 billion vehicle kilometres which represents the first reduction since 1994. The overall reduction is mainly due to the decrease by 1.6% in the kilometrage driven by passenger cars. However, motorways accounted for a 1.5% increase in kilometrage. Taking this development into consideration the death rate (road death related to

kilometrage) nevertheless fell by approximately 3% in the year 2000 whereas no improvement was reached on the motorways.

Fatalities occurring on rural roads (excluding motorways) accounted for the highest reduction by 4.5% in the year 2000. Fatalities on urban roads decreased moderately by 2.6% whereas Autobahn fatalities increased very slightly compared to the previous year.

Table 1 Development of road safety in Germany from 1991 to 1999

Traffic and Exposure	1991	1999	%Change
Motor Vehicle Population in 1,000			
Total	43,313	50,609	16.8
- motorcycles and mopeds	3,997	4,902	22.6
- passenger cars (including station wagons)	36,952	42,324	14.5
Network			
Total		626,065	
- autobahns	10,854	11,473	5.7
- national roads outside urban areas		31,859	
Mileage in 1,000,000 vehicle kilometres			
Total	574,200	639,300	11.3
Seat Belt Wearing Rates in %			
- car drivers on autobahns	99	98	-1.0
- car drivers on rural roads	96	94	-2.1
Accidents and Rates			
Injury Accidents			
Total	385,147	395,689	2.7
Fatalities			
Total	11,300	7,772	-31.2
- national roads outside urban areas	2,713	1,985	-26.8
- autobahns	1,552	911	-41.3
- pedestrians	1,918	983	-48.7
- motorcyclists and moped riders	1,235	1,128	-8.7
- passenger car occupants	6,801	4,640	-31.8
- bicyclists	925	662	-28.4
- aged 14 years or younger	511	317	-38.0
- aged 18 to 24 years	2,749	1,694	-38.4
- aged 65 years or older	1,853	1,306	-29.5
Death Rates			
- per 100,000 population	14.2	9.5	-33.2
- per 1 billion vehicle kilometres travelled	19.7	12.2	-38.2

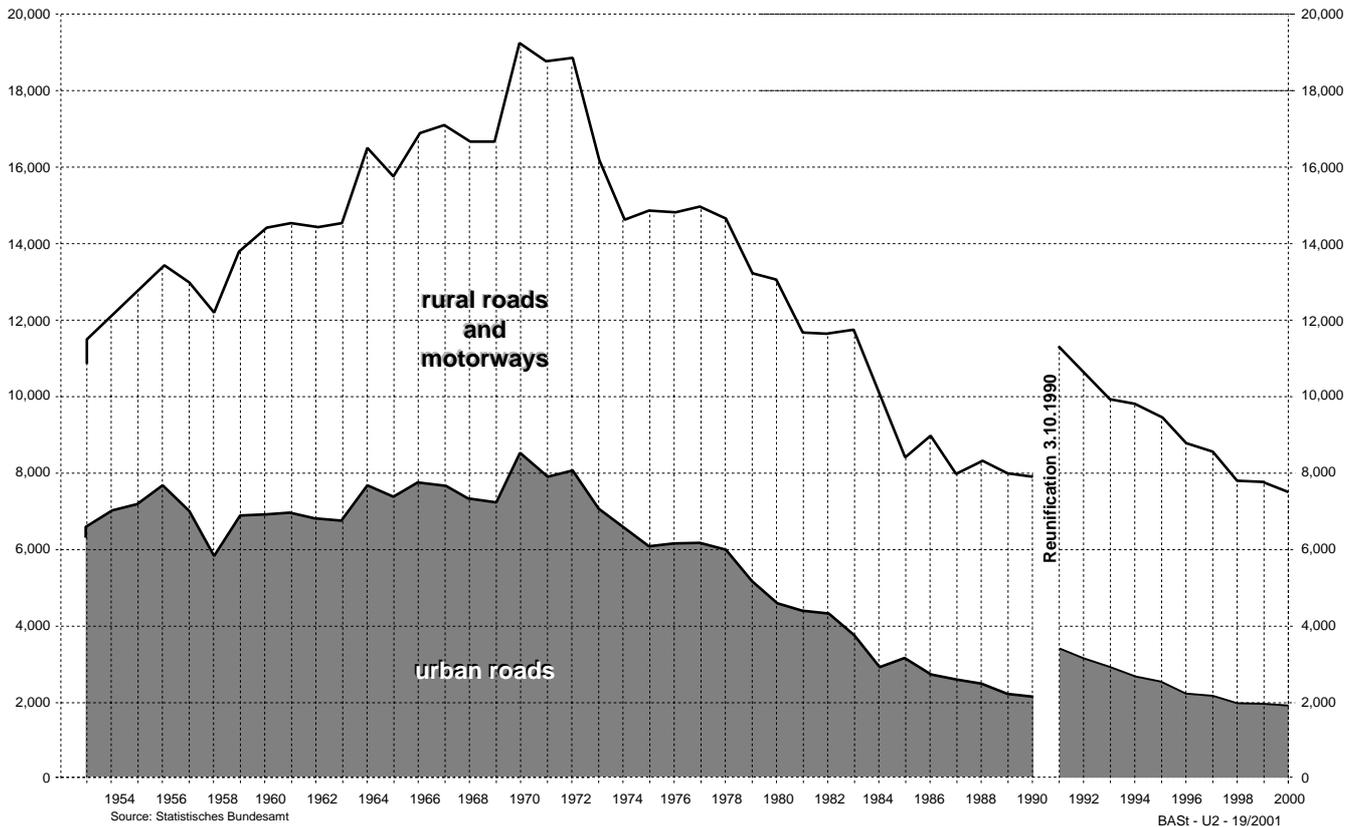


Fig. 3 Road fatalities in Germany

Seat belt wearing rates remained stable in the year 2000 and indicated that 98% of all car drivers buckled up on motorways whereas only 90 and 95% wore seat belts on urban and rural roads respectively.

4. OUTLOOK

On 15th February 2001, the Federal Minister for Transport, Building and Housing released the "Programme for Improved Road Safety" which will be accompanied by an extensive safety campaign. The following priorities are identified:

- Create a better road transport climate;
- Protect vulnerable road users;
- Reduce the accident risk incurred by young drivers;
- Reduce the potential danger involved in heavy goods vehicles transport; and
- Improve road safety on rural roads.

In order to focus on road user behaviour the campaign "Easy going" will be launched to promote fairness and safety. The report "Prevention of Road Accidents" which is released every two years will be the yardstick to rate road safety performance.

5. REFERENCES

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