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**Press Release**  
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## Road Safety Improved in 2008

After a slowdown in the pace of improvement in road safety in 2007, road fatalities in most countries for which data are available show a large reduction in 2008 compared to the previous year (see [Table 1](#) and [Figure 1](#)). A number of countries recorded further sharp decreases in road fatalities in the first quarter of 2009 (see [Table 2](#)).

This reflects both improved road safety interventions in many countries and the economic downturn, which has depressed traffic volumes in some countries.

Comprehensive analysis of 2008 crash data will not be complete for some time. It is therefore too soon to draw firm conclusions on the effectiveness of recent legislative changes and more focused enforcement strategies that have targeted high-risk driving behaviour in some countries.

Trends over a somewhat longer timeframe are more relevant to policy analysis. [Table 1](#) and [Figure 2](#) show developments decade by decade since 1970. It can be seen that the average annual reduction in road deaths from 2000 to 2008 is already larger than in any previous decade for most countries. This suggests that improved road safety policies are bearing fruit.

Clearly the economic downturn has had a significant short term impact on traffic volume in some countries but the relative importance of traffic volume and policy interventions in reducing fatalities can not yet be disentangled with certainty. Figures from the [International Transport Forum](#) for six countries provide information on fatalities per vehicle-kilometre travelled (see [Table 3](#)). This shows improvement in 2008 and indicates the significance of factors other than traffic volume in reducing fatalities, including policy interventions.

Reliable data and analysis is the key to understanding these impacts and the IRTAD Group will hold its fourth Conference on 16-17 September 2009 in Seoul, for leading experts to discuss data collection and analysis for the purpose of target setting and performance monitoring. Registration is now open at [www.irtadkorea.org](http://www.irtadkorea.org).

Although all countries have succeeded in reducing the number of road deaths since 2000, wide disparities in performance exist between different countries. To help compare performance and facilitate exchange of information the following documents are available on the web:

- For cross-country comparisons and a range of risk indicators see <http://internationaltransportforum.org/irtad/datasets.html>.
- For reports on key road safety issues see <http://internationaltransportforum.org/irtad/documents.html>

For further information on IRTAD see:  
<http://www.internationaltransportforum.org/irtad/index.html> or contact:

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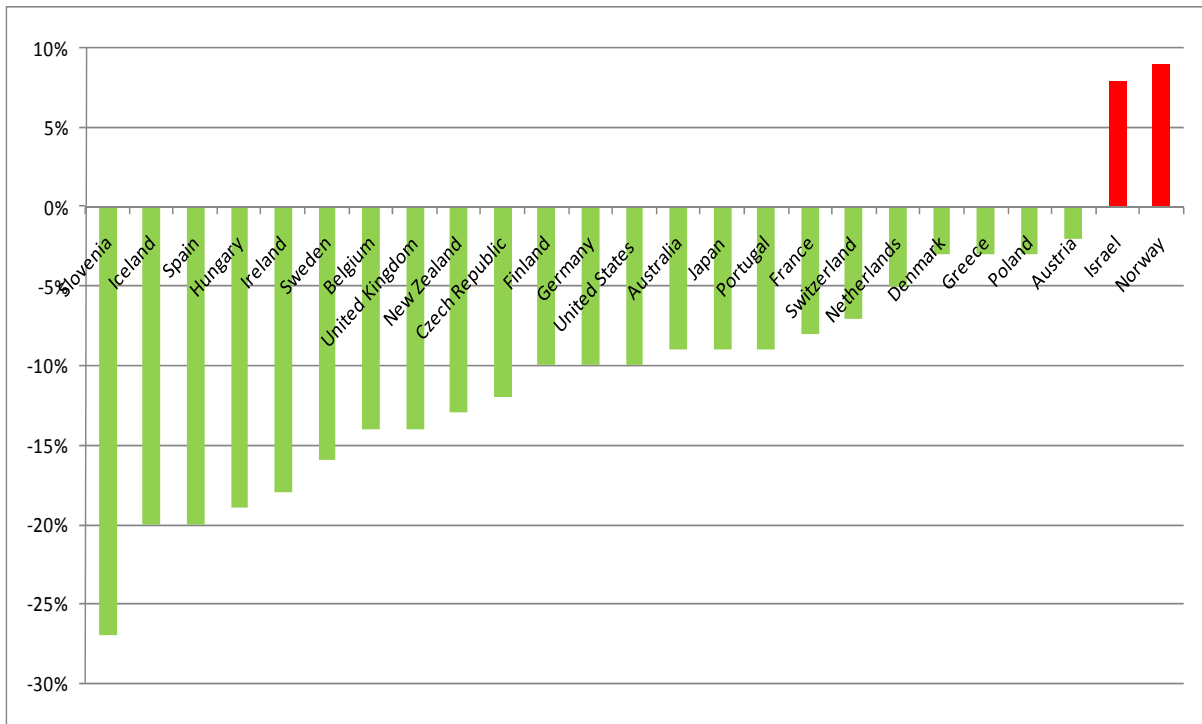
**Table 1. Road safety development**

Road Fatalities <sup>1)</sup>							
Recent data				Long-term trends – Average annual variation			
Country	2008	2007	Evolution 2008-2007	2000-2008 <sup>5</sup>	1990-2000	1980-1990	1970-1980
Australia	1,466	1,603	-8.5%	-2.6%	-2.5%	-3.3%	-1.5%
Austria	679	691	-1.7%	-4.4%	-4.6%	-2.5%	-2.5%
Belgium <sup>3)</sup>	922	1,067	-13.6%	-5.7%	-2.9%	-1.9%	-2.4%
Canada <sup>2)</sup>	-	2,754		-0.9%	-3.0%	-3.2%	0.7%
Czech Republic	1,076	1,222	-11.9%	-4.0%	1.4%	0.2%	-4.4%
Denmark <sup>3)</sup>	392	406	-3.4%	-2.9%	-2.4%	-0.8%	-5.4%
Finland	344	380	-9.5%	-1.7%	-4.8%	1.7%	-6.3%
France	4,275	4,620	-7.5%	-7.6%	-3.2%	-1.8%	-2.0%
Germany	4,477	4,949	-9.5%	-6.3%	-3.8%	-3.0%	-3.6%
Greece <sup>3)</sup>	1,559	1,612	-3.0%	-3.3%	-0.1%	3.6%	2.8%
Hungary	996	1,232	-19.2%	-2.3%	-6.8%	4.1%	0.0%
Iceland	12	15	-20.0%	-11.5%	2.9%	-0.4%	2.3%
Ireland	279	338	-17.5%	-4.8%	-1.4%	-1.6%	0.4%
Israel	412	382	7.9%	-1.6%	0.8%	-0.2%	-2.0%
Italy	-	5,131		-4.5%	-0.1%	-2.5%	-1.8%
Japan	6,023	6,639	-9.3%	-6.6%	-3.3%	2.5%	-6.3%
Korea	-	6,166		-7.0%	-3.2%	8.2%	6.2%
Luxembourg	-	43		-7.8%	0.7%	-3.2%	-2.9%
Netherlands	677	709	-4.5%	-5.7%	-2.4%	-3.7%	-4.6%
New Zealand	366	421	-13.1%	-2.9%	-4.5%	2.0%	-0.9%
Norway	255	233	9.4%	-3.6%	0.3%	-0.9%	-4.3%
Poland	5,437	5,583	-2.6%	-1.8%	-1.5%	2.0%	5.7%
Portugal <sup>3)4)</sup>	776	854	-9.1%	-8.8%	-3.5%	0.3%	4.8%
Slovenia	214	293	-27.0%	-4.7%	-4.9%	-0.8%	-1.0%
Spain	3,102	3,823	-18.9%	-7.5%	-4.4%	3.3%	1.8%
Sweden	397	471	-15.7%	-4.9%	-2.6%	-0.9%	-0.3%
Switzerland <sup>3)</sup>	357	384	-7.0%	-6.1%	-4.4%	-2.6%	-3.0%
United Kingdom	2645	3059	-13.5%	-3.7%	-4.0%	-1.3%	-2.3%
United States	37,261	41,259	-9.7%	-1.5%	-0.6%	-1.3%	0.3%

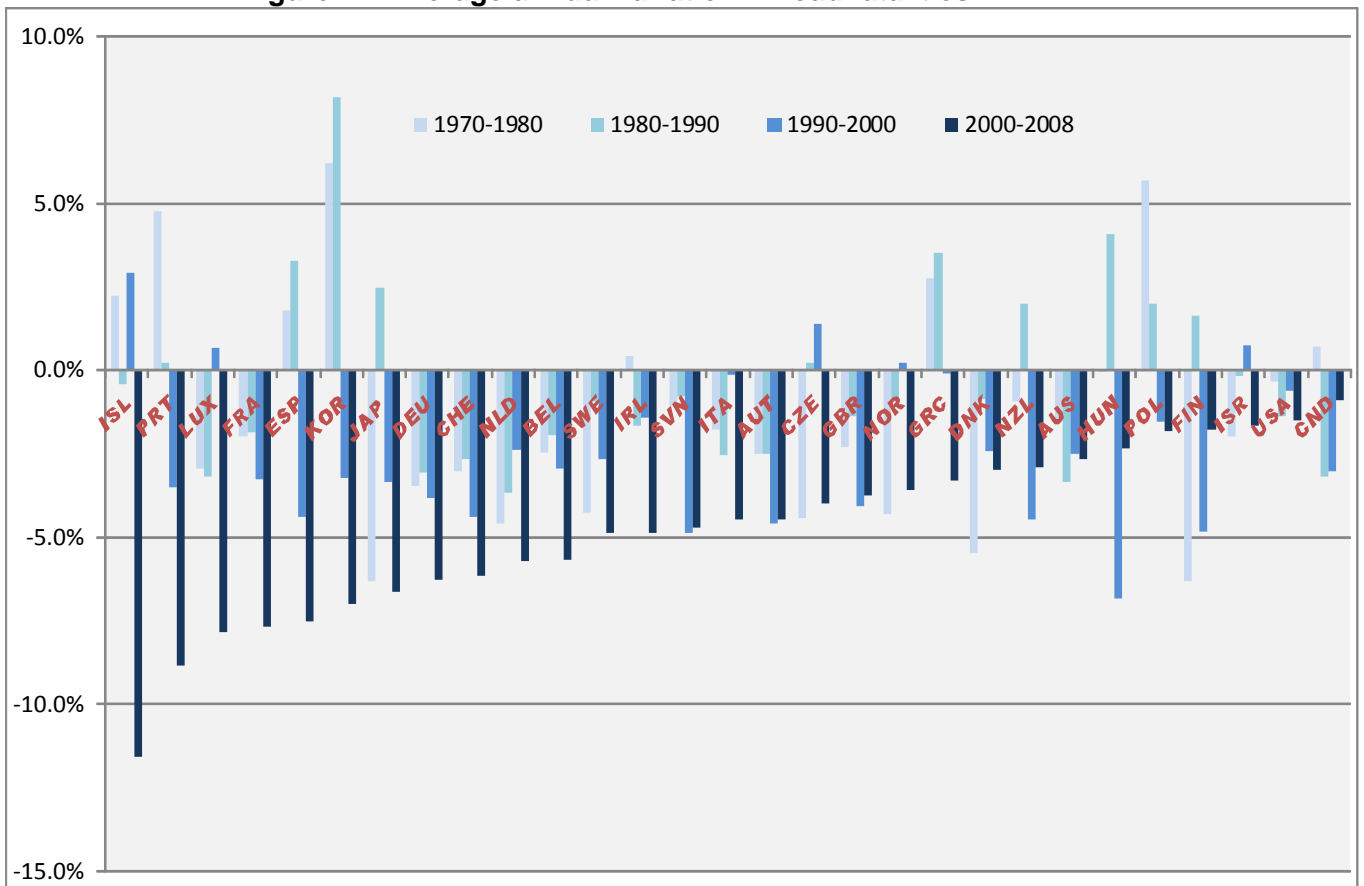
Source: IRTAD, see [www.irtad.net](http://www.irtad.net)

1. Police-recorded fatalities. Death within 30 days unless otherwise indicated.
2. Provisional data for 2007.
3. Provisional data for 2008.
4. Death within 24 hours for 2007 and 2008.
5. Variation 2000-2007 for Canada, Italy, Korea, Luxembourg and Portugal.

**Figure 1- Short-term development  
 Road fatalities – 2008 in comparison to 2007**



**Figure 2 – Average annual variation in road fatalities**



**Table 2 – Road fatalities**  
**1st Quarter 2009 – 1st Quarter 2008**  
*provisional data*

	1st Quarter 2009	1st Quarter 2008	Variation 2009-08
Sweden	54	83	-34.9%
Israel	69	106	-34.9%
Poland	861	1228	-29.9%
Denmark	74	98	-24.5%
Ireland	58	76	-23.7%
Finland	54	66	-18.2%
Germany	811	977	-17.0%
Czech Rep	186	206	-9.7%
Hungary	170	188	-9.6%
United States	7689	8451	-9.0%
Austria	124	136	-8.8%
Japan	1315	1348	-2.4%
New Zealand	107	108	-0.9%
Iceland	4	4	0.0%
Greece	315	308	2.3%
Australia	380	352	8.0%

**Table 3 – Evolution in distance travelled and fatality rates**

	Distance travelled <sup>1</sup> (million veh-km)			Fatality rate Fatalities / billion veh-km		
	2008	2007	Evolution 2008-2007	2008	2007	Evolution 2008-2007
Czech Republic	55322	53 624	3.2%	19.4	22.8	-15%
Finland	52 980	53 250	-0.5%	6.5	7.1	-9%
Hungary	43 247	41 419	4.4%	23.0	29.7	-23%
Switzerland	63845	61 208	4.3%	5.6 <sup>2</sup>	6.3	-11%
United Kingdom	507 400	513 000	-1.1%	5.0	5.7	-13%
United States	4 665 201	4 831 722	-3.4%	8.0	8.5	-6%

<sup>1</sup> Source: ITF

<sup>2</sup> Provisional data