

Road Safety Country Profile



COUNTRY FACTS

Area:	242 500 km²
Inhabitants:	59 554 000 (2003)
Road Network:	417 140 km (2003)
Passenger Car Ratio:	538 per 1 000 inhabitants (2003)

There are two separate road safety strategies in the UK: The programme “Tomorrow's Roads – Safer for Everyone” covers Great Britain (i.e. England, Scotland and Wales), whilst there is a separate strategy for Northern Ireland. Please note that some of the following statistics apply to the UK, whilst others only apply to Great Britain.

In 2000, the Prime Minister launched the Road Safety Strategy “Tomorrow's Roads – Safer for Everyone”, which set out the Government's framework for improving road safety in Great Britain. By 2010, compared with the baseline average for 1994-98, the aim is to achieve:

- a 40 % reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured (KSI) in road accidents
- a 50 % reduction in the number of children killed or seriously injured (child KSI) in road accidents
- a 10 % reduction in the slight casualty rate, expressed as the number of people slightly injured per 100 million vehicle kilometres.

In 2004, the government published the first three-year review of the strategy for Great Britain, which evaluated the effectiveness and the likelihood of delivering the 2010 targets. The review reports that the overall number of people killed or seriously injured on Britain's roads in 2002 was 17 % lower than in 1998. The same figure for children shows a reduction of 33 % compared with the 1994-1998 average. The review confirms that the 2010 targets remain appropriate and that the country is on the right track, but it also proves that the strategy must develop continuously in response to developments in casualty figures and new ideas and technology in order to achieve these goals.

In Great Britain in 2003, 3 508 people were killed in road accidents and 33 707 people were assessed as seriously injured.^[1] This is 22 % below the baseline level – almost halfway to the 40 % target set for 2010. In 2003, 171 children were killed in road accidents and 3 929 were seriously injured. This is 40 % below the baseline – over three quarters of the way to the 50 % target set for 2010. For slight injuries, the reported rate in 2003 was 17 % below the baseline, but it is possible that this is partly due to a drop in reporting of less serious accidents and casualties.

The Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy 2002-2012 was published in 2002. The long-term targets are a 33 % reduction in KSI's and a 50 % reduction in child KSI's by 2012. The vision of the strategy is “safe road use for the whole community”.

[1] *Details of the Department's principal road safety targets.* June 2004. Department for Transport.

Table 1. Annual development in injury accidents, injuries and fatalities in United Kingdom, 1991-2004. Please note that only the number of fatalities is comparable to similar statistics for the other Member States due to differences in data collection procedures for the number of accidents and injuries.

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Accidents *	242 060	239 754	235 492	241 037	237 336	243 286	247 479	246 410	242 610	242 117	236 461	234 247	220 079	213 043
Injuries	316 929	317 638	313 278	323 646	318 647	329 413	336 758	321 791	316 887	316 874	317 306	305 958	297 274	286 979
Fatalities **	4 753	4 379	3 957	3 807	3 765	3 740	3 743	3 581	3 564	3 580	3 598	3 581	3 658	3 368
per million inhabitants	82	76	68	65	64	64	64	61	60	60	60	60	62	56

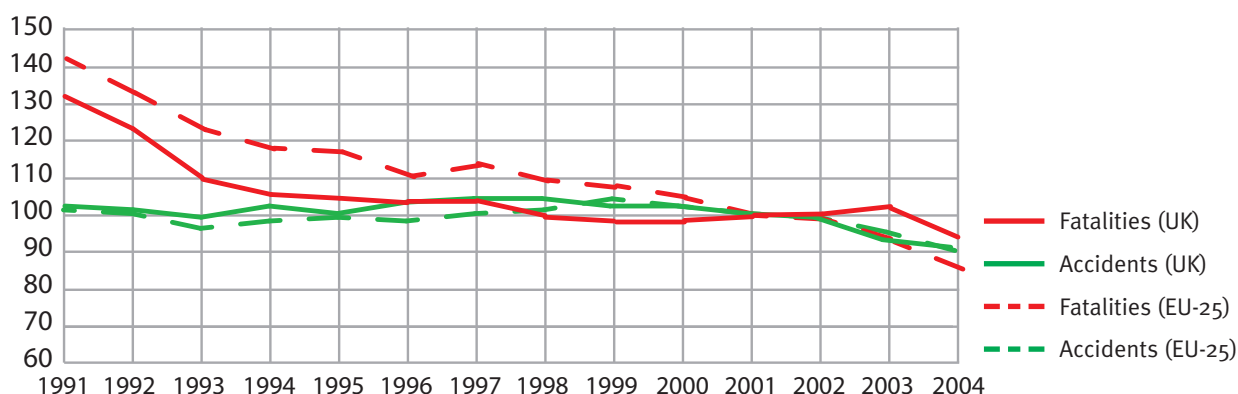
* Accidents with injuries

** Death within 30 days of accident

Source: CARE project data (see also: http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/care/index_en.htm)

As shown in Table 1, the number of accidents in the UK in 2004 has decreased by 10 % compared to 1994, while the number of fatalities fell by 11 % in the same period.

Figure 1. Annual developments (year 2001 = 100) in fatalities and accidents on national and EU-25 level.



Source: CARE project data (see also: http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/care/index_en.htm)

Country organisation, responsibilities and resources

The national road safety policy is the responsibility of the **Department for Transport (DfT)**. The Road Safety Strategy that came into force in 2000 sets the national framework for policies up to 2010. Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure safety on the roads for which they have responsibility. Targets are set at the national level, and local authorities set their own targets, consistent with the national targets, in their Local Transport Plans. Programmes are funded by national and local taxes. The DfT is also responsible for the evaluation of the road safety programme. Routine monitoring is carried out annually, and formal programme reviews are planned to be carried out every three years. General monitoring indicators are the number of crashes and casualties by severity and by road user group, drink-driving, use of seatbelts, use of cycle helmets, speed, road user attitudes surveys, and other ad hoc surveys. Other indicators that are monitored are: traffic volume by vehicle type, travel patterns, modal split, vehicle registrations, driving test volumes and pass rates. Cost-benefit studies of the various measures are an integral part of programme evaluation. In-depth analyses are made on a sample of all road accidents (approximately 2 000).

Policies on issues such as drink-driving, speed limits, driver training and testing are set nationally. Local authorities are responsible for local safety engineering schemes and road safety education, in accordance with national regulations and best practice guidance.

The **Highways Agency** is responsible for operating, maintaining and improving the strategic road network in England on behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport. The agency plays a major role in delivering the Government's Ten Year Plan for Transport. The Highways Agency is gradually moving away from road building to a more network management role. The existing network is optimised by means of a comprehensive traffic monitoring system.

The **Scottish Executive**, the **Welsh Assembly** and the **Northern Ireland Assembly** have devolved power and responsibility for the strategic road network. In Northern Ireland the Roads Service is the sole road authority.

The **Road Safety Advisory Panel (RSAP)** was set up in 2000 to help the government take forward the Road Safety Strategy and to review progress. Chaired by the Road Safety Minister, the panel has members representing some of the main stakeholder bodies.

The **Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA)** provides a range of licensing, testing and enforcement services, with the aim of improving the roadworthiness standards of vehicles, ensuring the compliance of operators and drivers with road traffic legislation, and supporting the independent Traffic Commissioners.

The **Driving Standards Agency (DSA)** is responsible for testing drivers, motorcyclists and driving instructors through the theory test and practical driving test, maintaining the registers of approved driving instructors (ADIs) and heavy goods vehicle instructors and supervising training for learner motorcyclists. The DSA has over 400 practical driving test centres across Great Britain.

The **Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)** is responsible for vehicle taxation and registration, number plates and registration marks and issuing of driving licences.

The **Vehicle Certification Agency (VCA)** is the UK approval authority for the type approval of new road vehicles, agricultural tractors and off-road vehicles.

The **Police** are responsible for enforcement.

The DfT Road Safety Division spend around £10 million every year funding pilot projects in partnership with local authorities, £14 million on the THINK! campaign and £5 million on road safety research.

Local Councils in England spend about £90 million per year on safety engineering schemes and £21 million on education, training and publicity.

In Northern Ireland the **Department of the Environment** (DoE) has the overall lead in implementing the road safety strategy.

Transport policies

A comprehensive Road Safety Bill was introduced to the House of Commons on 30 November 2004, containing a draft of measures designed to help achieve the road safety targets and improve safety on Britain's roads. The bill completed all stages in the House of Commons, but has not begun its passage through the House of Lords. Due to the announcement of a General Election on 5 May 2005, the Road Safety Bill will not reach the statute book.

Legislation banning the use of mobile phone whilst driving other than in association with a hands-free kit was introduced in Northern Ireland on 1 February 2004

Road safety action plans

In 2000, the road safety strategy for Great Britain entitled: "Tomorrow's Roads – Safer for Everyone" was published jointly by the UK Government, the Scottish Executive and the National Assembly for Wales. The strategy outlines casualty reduction targets for 2010 with particular emphasis on child casualties. This road safety programme contains many specific recommendations, but is not intended to be a rigid blueprint. The strategy and targets are reviewed every three years by a Road Safety Advisory Panel.

The road safety programme is very comprehensive, covering ten priority themes, with a host of specific measures, together with an implementation timetable. The themes, measures and timing are presented above with results from the first review.

A Child Safety Action Plan was published in 2002. It presents a range of on-going projects and research that will contribute to delivering the 2010 targets set in the road safety strategy "Tomorrow's Roads – Safer for Everyone".

The Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy 2002-2012 was published in 2002. The strategy contained 161 action measures grouped into the following six strategic objectives: ^[2]

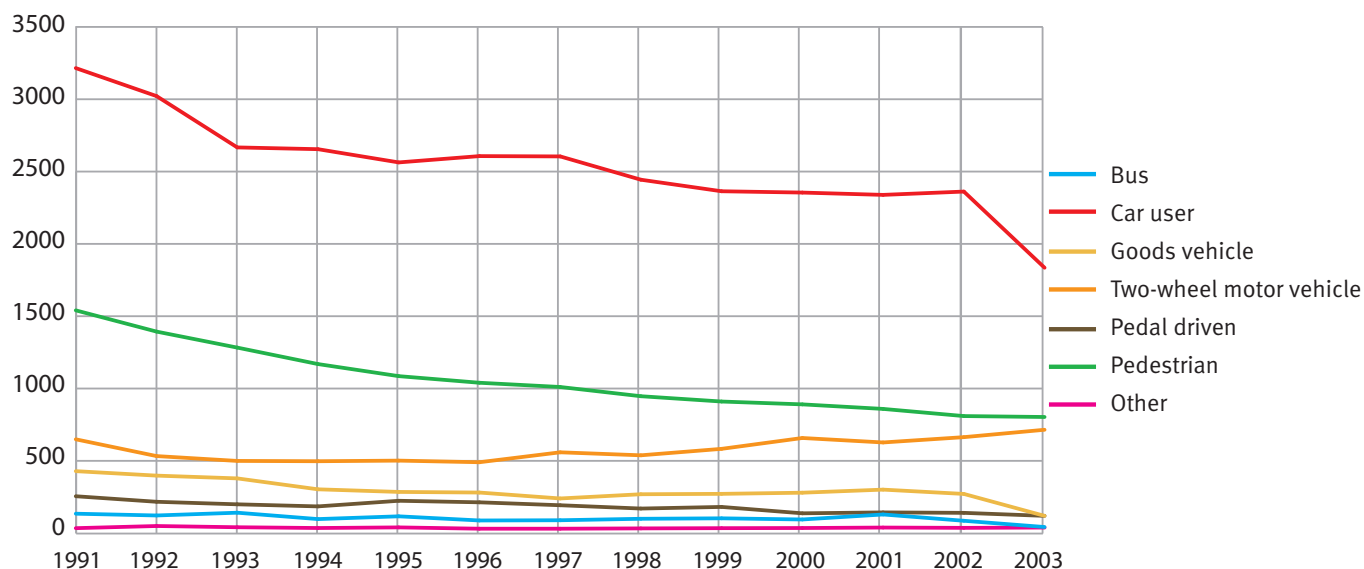
- safer children
- improved safety for pedestrians and other vulnerable road users
- improved driver training, testing and licensing
- improved driver behaviour
- safer roads infrastructure
- safer vehicles

Topics

In Great Britain the road safety work is organised by ten priority themes, whereas in Northern Ireland it is organised under six strategic objectives. The two strategies cover similar issues though the work in Great Britain is more extensive. Two of Great Britain's main themes – ‘better enforcement’ and ‘promoting safer road use’ – are not mentioned specifically in the overall objectives of the Northern Irish programme. Instead in Northern Ireland they are covered within the objective concerning ‘better driver behaviour’.

The descriptions in the following sections are mainly based on the road safety work in Great Britain. However, in many cases they are also valid for Northern Ireland, although in a smaller scale. For some topics the measures in Northern Ireland merit particular mention.

Figure 2. Fatalities by class of road users.



Source: CARE project data (see also: http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/care/index_en.htm)

[2] Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy 2002-2012. Annual Report 2003. Department of the Environment.

Safer drivers – training and testing. Better driving skills and better driving behaviour would make an enormous difference to reducing the number of road casualties. The following measures are introduced:

- instil the right attitudes towards road safety and safe driving in young people
- guide learner drivers to take a more structured approach to learning, to prepare them for their driving career, not just to pass a test
- raise the standard of tuition offered by driving instructors
- improve the driving test in the light of better understanding of what needs to be examined and effective ways to do it
- focus on the immediate post-test period for novice drivers
- enhance the status of advanced motoring qualifications
- address the needs of professional drivers
- improve safety benefits for all categories of motor vehicle.

Some of the measures which have been carried through and will be put into force during coming years are:

- improvement of the driving theory test: A new syllabus and a new vehicle safety element were introduced into the practical test in 2003. A hazard perception test has been added to the driving theory test in both Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- new and more demanding special exercises will be added to the practical motorcycle test in 2008
- continue publicity to warn drivers of the dangers of using any type of mobile phone while driving.

Safer drivers – alcohol, drugs and drowsiness: Estimates for 2002 suggest that 6 % of all road casualties and 16 % of all road deaths in Great Britain occurred when someone was driving under the influence of alcohol (over the legal limit). The provisional estimate of people killed in drink-driving accidents in 2003 is 560, which is 15 % of all fatalities. The following measures are proposed:

- introduce new measures to further reduce drink-driving
- develop more effective ways to tackle drug-driving
- carry out research to improve understanding of drug-driving
- strengthen and enforce laws on driving time for lorry, bus and coach drivers
- make people aware of how much tiredness contributes to road accidents and advise drivers and employers how to avoid the risks.

Some of the measures which have been carried through are:

- Since 2000, legislation has been made to improve effectiveness of Police enforcement powers to carry out roadside breath testing of drivers. The Police Reform Act 2002 gives the Police the power to obtain evidential blood samples from unconscious suspects at hospitals and require them, on regaining consciousness, to agree to their analysis
- A national 'Don't Drive Tired' campaign was started in 2000 and included leaflets, posters, TV and radio advertising, motorway variable signs and signs on the back of trucks
- In Northern Ireland an anti drink-driving campaign was launched in 2003.

The 2004 review points out the following trends on drink-driving: The estimated number of drink-driving related accidents and casualties has increased steadily, and was the highest for ten years in 2002. There is clear evidence that drink-driving is increasing amongst younger age groups. Research has shown that at a blood alcohol concentration of 80 mg, which is the UK prescribed limit, a driver is five times more likely to be involved in a crash. Statistics show a steady decline in the number of breath tests administered by the police in England and Wales since 1998. Meanwhile, the percentage of tests that have proved positive over this period has risen from 13 %, back to the early 1990's level of 16 %. In 2002, the total number of breath tests in Great Britain was 764 000.

Safer speeds. Research has shown that excessive and inappropriate speed is a major contributory factor in about one third of all fatalities in Great Britain. In Northern Ireland it is the principal contributory factor in approximately a quarter of all collisions that result in death or serious injury. This is far more than any other single contributor to casualties on the roads. The following measures are taken:

- widely publicise the risks of speeding and reasons for speed limits
- develop a national framework for determining appropriate vehicle speeds on all roads, and ensure that measures are available to achieve them
- research a number of speed management problems to gain the necessary information to develop and test new policies
- take into account environmental, economic and social effects of policies when assessing their ability to reduce accidents.

Commitments already made are (amongst others):

- establishing the policy that 30 mph should be the norm for villages in the United Kingdom, supported by traffic-calming measures where appropriate
- securing type approval for and issuing guidance promoting wider use of speed activated signs, which are triggered when they detect a vehicle exceeding the speed limit, flashing up a warning to make drivers and riders aware of the limit and/or any hazard ahead
- improvements and clarifications to speed limit and speed camera signing through publication of revised Traffic Signs Regulation and General Directions 2002 in January 2003
- 45 police authorities in England, Scotland and Wales are engaged in safety camera partnerships
- In Northern Ireland a pilot safety camera scheme was introduced in 2003 together with an extensive speed awareness campaign.

In Great Britain the road safety benefits of camera enforcement show that there has been a 35 % reduction of people killed or seriously injured (KSI) at camera sites, compared to the long-term trend, and that the average speed at all camera sites fell by 10 % or 3.7 mph. In Northern Ireland a 27 % reduction in the KSI's has been estimated on roads where safety cameras have been used.

Further measures with the potential to deliver noticeable improvements between now and 2010 include:

- revised guidance on setting local speed limits on all roads, including the associated speed management assessment framework
- subject to legislation, introduction of a two-tier fixed penalty for speeding, whereby those exceeding limits by a wide margin receive tougher penalties.

Promoting safer road use. Based on the achievements of publicity campaigns in the past, the strategy is to target those areas where there is a need to change attitudes and behaviour. The motor manufacturing and retail industry should be a natural and powerful ally in promoting road safety generally because they have a shared interest in promoting safety by, for example, producing safer vehicles.

Progress so far includes the re-launch of the long-running road safety umbrella campaign 'THINK!' in 2000, which covers several themes. The five main themes, however, deal with drink-driving, speed, seatbelt use, children and motorcyclists. The campaign encourages all road users to think about safety more. The web site provides details of the latest campaigns, general road safety advice and downloads of THINK!-leaflets, fact sheets and posters. The Department for Transport has also built partnerships with private sector companies, encouraging them to reinforce road safety messages to their customers and employees.

Vehicles

Safer vehicles. Improvements in vehicle safety have contributed significantly to reducing road deaths and injuries, and will continue to do so. The strategy is to further improve vehicle safety by encouraging:

- improvements which protect car occupants in the event of an accident
- improvements which protect other road users
- better information for consumers, helping them to choose safer vehicles (The Department for Transport is a partner in the EuroNCAP).
- better standards for vehicle maintenance
- renewed emphasis on new vehicle safety inspections by manufacturers and dealers.

The progress on this theme so far in the UK includes, for example, a number of European Directives that have come into force since the strategy was launched. Great Britain also continues to be actively involved in the development of vehicle design and the pursuit of research to find new approaches to vehicle safety, for instance via the EuroNCAP. Further progress expected by 2010 includes, for example, voluntary agreements with car manufacturers to fit anti-lock brake systems to all new cars and car derived vans, advanced side-impact protection and better frontal impact protection through vehicle compatibility. During 2003, functional annual testing of speed limiters on buses and goods vehicles was introduced in Northern Ireland.

The DfT is funding a research project in which 20 vehicles equipped with ISA (Intelligent Speed Adaptation) are moved between different cities in Great Britain and tested by private and commercial drivers.

Road infrastructure improvement

Safer infrastructure. The emphasis is on making the best use of the existing highway network, giving priority to the locations with the worst safety records (black spots), congestion and environmental records. Some of the “better” local authorities have worked through the list of black spots, and are now broadening the approach to include “black sections”. In England, there is a new role here for the Highways Agency, as well as new responsibilities and funding for local authorities. Key elements of the approach in England include:

- recognition that good road engineering reduces the risk of accidents
- on national roads, a strategy focused on better maintenance and a targeted, seven-year programme of road improvements
- on local roads, the introduction of longer-term, more coordinated local planning and improvements for pedestrians and cyclists, as well as motor traffic through local transport plans.

The devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales are taking a similar approach. The following specific measures are proposed:

- ensure that safety continues to be a main objective in designing, building, operating and maintaining trunk and local roads
- ensure that safety continues to be part of the planning framework for main and local routes
- publish guidance on engineering for safer roads, based on sound research and experiments
- use local transport plans to promote safer neighbourhoods
- monitor progress on local efforts to reduce casualties.

Several research projects concerning best practices for traffic engineering have been carried out and some are still on-going in Great Britain. Examples of local road safety funding and investment:

Between 2002 and 2003, nearly £115 million was invested by local authorities in England in road safety engineering schemes, including 20 mph zones, traffic calming measures and improved pedestrian and cyclist facilities.

In Scotland and Wales, nearly £100 million will be used for safety related infrastructure improvements between 2000 and 2006.

In Northern Ireland a road safety plan was produced by the Roads Service. The plan sets out in detail how the Roads Service proposes to make a contribution to the casualty reduction targets of the strategy.

The UK takes part in the EuroRAP initiative of mapping the strategic road network.

Other topics

VULNERABLE USERS

Safer for children. Road traffic accidents are the leading cause of accidental injury amongst children and young people. The action plan of 2000 advocates road safety education targeting the parents of babies and young children – through advising primary school age children – through child pedestrian training schemes for older children and teenagers – and by providing these groups with road safety information.

The Neighbourhood Road Safety Initiative (NRSI) has been set up to find fresh and innovative ways to reduce road casualties, particularly child casualties. The NRSI tries to encourage lead officers from each district to liaise with each other in sharing best practices, both at a strategic and grassroots level. The NRSI central team is responsible for launching regional campaigns and events to raise awareness of road safety issues that affect their neighbourhoods.

The 2004 review reports that the fatality rate among child pedestrians has improved from 1.21 per 100 000 children in 1997 to 0.9 in 2000, and has been reduced further to 0.7 in 2002. There is, however, room for further improvement in the UK.

In addition to child pedestrian training, measures with the potential to deliver noticeable reductions in child casualty figures between now and 2010 include:

- Implementation of the EU Directive on pedestrian protection. When implemented, it will require new car models to have safer car fronts, which reduce the impact on pedestrians and cyclists in the event of an accident
- A 2003 EU Directive on safety belts in vehicles, which will be transposed into domestic legislation before 2006, requires that children under 3 years old who travel in a vehicle must use a child restraint device
- Travel plans for 10 000 schools in 2006 and the intention for all schools to have travel plans by the end of the decade
- In Northern Ireland a child car safety campaign was launched in 2003 with the main theme being the need to ensure that children are appropriately restrained when travelling in cars.

Safety for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. UK policy is to encourage walking and cycling. Local authorities must set out how, in their traffic layouts and urban design, they plan to encourage more people to walk and cycle instead of driving, and what safety measures they propose to support this. There are approximately 3 million horse riders in the UK, constituting an especially vulnerable group to inconsiderate motorised road users. The strategy is both to improve conditions for vulnerable road users and to encourage them to protect themselves. The plan is to:

- help drivers become more aware of their responsibilities towards all vulnerable road users through better training and testing
- develop cycle training courses for adults
- develop schemes to promote the use of cycle helmets
- support training schemes for horse riders
- improve victim support systems.

The review reports that the fatality rates among pedal cyclists and pedestrians in 2002 were 40 % and 24 % lower respectively than the 1994-1998 average. Some of the measures that have been carried out include:

- Monitoring and developing home zones. Home zones are residential areas where the streets are shared between residents and motorists. They aim to improve the quality of life in residential streets by creating places that people – especially children, families and teenagers – can use for a wide range of activities, instead of just being thoroughfares for motor traffic. The Government encourages local authorities to develop home zones as a model for their residential streets.
- In 2001, the Cyclist Tourist Club (CTC) was funded to lead a group of road safety experts and cycling experts in identifying best practices for providing cycle training for adults and teenagers, and to make material available to highway authorities and other relevant agencies. This led to the development of a national standard for adult and teenage cyclist training. A similar expert group is now working to produce a new national standard for child cyclist training.
- The work will continue to promote the wearing of bicycle helmets, although some people believe that making helmets compulsory discourages cycling. Emphasis will be put on teenage boys, for whom the latest surveys show that the wearing rate has fallen from 16 % to 12 %.

Safer motorcycling. Motorcyclists represent a large proportion of road casualties in relation to their numbers. The aim is to influence the casualty figures through better training and testing for both riders and drivers, and through better engineering, construction and design, which will help to make motorcycling safer than it is now. The strategy is to:

- improve training and testing for all learner motorcyclists
- publish advice for people returning to motorcycling after a break, and people riding as part of their work
- ensure the quality of instruction
- help drivers become more aware of how vulnerable motorcyclists are through training and testing
- promote improvements in engineering and technical standards which could better protect motorcyclists; and to work in an advisory group with representatives of interested organisations, to look at issues of concern.

The review reports that the fatality rate among motorcyclists in 2002 was 12 % lower than the 1994-1998 average. Despite the improvement in the fatality rate, motorcyclists accounted for 18 % of fatalities in 2002, and statistics show that motorcyclists are 30 times more likely to be killed than car users and 4 times more likely to be killed than cyclists.

The progress so far is for example the Government's establishment of the Advisory Group on Motorcycling, which will help inform policies on motorcycling and develop a national motorcycling strategy. Steps have also been taken to improve rider training and testing. A package of measures improving moped and motorcycle training, testing and licensing arrangements was implemented in February 2001. European-wide changes to improve rider safety by setting more demanding standards for the practical test will come into force from 2008. In Northern Ireland a motorcyclist safety campaign was launched in 2003.

ENFORCEMENT

Better enforcement. Law enforcement is an essential part of reducing road casualties, and the police have a central role in improving road safety. The UK's aim is to maximise the contribution that road traffic law can make to reducing road casualties. This comprises:

- more effective road traffic law enforcement
- better public understanding of and respect for road traffic law
- more appropriate penalties, proportionate to the seriousness of offences
- more emphasis on education and retraining
- maximum use of new technology.

The government announced the outcome and its preferred policy options in the Report on the Review of Road Traffic Penalties in July 2002. This included for example an increase in the maximum penalty for 'causing death' offences from 10 to 14 years' imprisonment, raising the maximum penalty for dangerous driving from 2 to 5 years and mandatory re-testing for anyone disqualified 2 years or more.

Some of the measures that have been carried out on enforcement are:

- In 2005 The Department for Transport, Home Office (HO) and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) issued a joint statement on Roads Policing Strategy (strategy for road police work).
- Within the Policing Performance Assessment Framework (PPAF) a new statutory performance indicator – number of persons killed and seriously injured in road traffic collisions (per vehicle km) – has been initiated. The first report is due in autumn 2005.

Information

Contacts

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- Department for Transport, Richard Campbell, Higher Statistical Officer, Road Accident Statistics Branch, Statistics: Roads Division
- Department for Transport, Andy Rhind, Head of Strategy and Delivery Branch, Road Safety Division

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- Think Road Safety: <http://www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk>

[3] LARSOA is a national road safety organisation that represents Road Safety Officers employed in local government across the UK. This site comprises the definitive road safety news service for the UK's road safety professionals and others with an interest in the subject.

[4] RoadSafe is a road safety partnership of leading companies in the motor and transport industries in Britain, the Government and road safety professionals. It aims to reduce deaths and injuries caused by road accidents and promote safer driving.