

Press Release

Findings from the DEKRA Road Safety Report 2025



How rules can reduce accident numbers

- ▶ Successful regulation of speed, alcohol, seat belts, and helmets
- ▶ Stricter penalties for traffic violations are having an effect
- ▶ Road safety efforts must not be a short-term activity

It is no coincidence that the number of traffic fatalities has been decreasing in many countries for decades. In addition to advances in vehicle technology and emergency services, as well as infrastructure measures, legal regulations have also contributed to this positive development. Regulations on issues such as seat belts, speed, drink-driving, compulsory helmets on motorcycles and the use of mobile phones while driving are having an effect. The DEKRA Road Safety Report 2025, "The Changing Face of Mobility", shows which measures have been particularly effective in specific countries.

The development of road safety in numerous countries impressively demonstrates that decisive political action can save lives. "The framework conditions differ from state to state. But one thing is clear: targeted reforms, technical innovations, and consistently enforced rules lead to measurable success wherever they are pursued in the long term," says DEKRA accident researcher Markus Egelhaaf. An international comparison in the DEKRA Road Safety Report 2025 shows which measures have been particularly effective and how countries have made their roads safer step by step.

Major progress in numerous European countries

Germany, for example, was an early adopter of binding rules and technical standards. As early as 1956, the introduction of aptitude assessments – known from 1960 onwards as medical-psychological examinations – created a tool that made it possible to check the driving aptitude of risk groups. Decisive steps followed in the 1970s: Speed limits on rural roads, a blood alcohol limit which was new at the time, and the requirement to wear seat belts and helmets significantly improved safety. Later measures such as the mandatory use of child restraint systems, the zero blood alcohol limit and provisional driver's licenses for new drivers provided further impetus. This

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combination of prevention, regulation, and technical equipment led to a long-term decline in the number of accidents.

France has been pursuing a coordinated road safety strategy since 1972, within the framework of which a separate interministerial committee was established. Speed limits on highways, mandatory helmet use, and an expanded seat belt requirement contributed significantly to the decline in the number of victims. The lowering of the alcohol limit and, later, the ban on using cell phones without hands-free devices proved particularly effective. With the reduction of the speed limit on two-lane rural roads in 2018, France set another example for greater safety.

Sweden is regarded worldwide as a pioneer in road safety issues – not least because of its “Vision Zero” approach. “The comprehensive mix of strictly enforced alcohol regulation, clearly structured speed limits and mandatory protective equipment, as well as investments in infrastructure and research, formed the basis for an impressive reduction in the number of accidents,” emphasizes the DEKRA accident researcher. The obligation to wear a helmet, and the ban on using cell phones while driving illustrate Sweden's consistent approach to systematically minimizing risks.

Spain has made great progress, especially since the 1990s. In addition to legal measures such as mandatory seat belt use, mandatory helmet use, and lowering the blood alcohol limit, the country has increasingly focused on monitoring and sanctions – for example, through speed checks and the points-based driving license introduced in 2006. Investments in safer roads, the expansion of roundabouts, and better lighting concepts have also contributed to a noticeable decline in traffic fatalities. In the 2010s, measures to promote pedestrian and cyclist safety were added.

Strict regulations also in Japan, Australia, and the US

In Japan, it was also a combination of long-term strategy and consistent implementation that led to improvements in road safety. The country presented a comprehensive concept as early as 1970 with the Traffic Safety Policies Basic Act. Strict alcohol controls, modern traffic light systems with countdown displays, and a seat belt requirement that has been expanded over decades have led to greater safety on the roads. Tighter rules on the use of mobile phones and e-scooters, as well as stricter penalties for traffic violations, have reinforced the trend.

Australia, on the other hand, relies heavily on technical standards and consistent monitoring of road traffic. Since the 1970s, new vehicles have been required to be equipped with seat belts, supplemented by mandatory helmets for two-wheeled vehicle riders, random alcohol tests, and the widespread use of radar and red-light cameras. At the same time, the country has invested in road safety measures such as

rumble strips at the edge of the road and wider hard shoulders. The bicycle helmet requirement, which has been steadily expanded since the 1990s, rounded off the safety concept.

The United States presents a heterogeneous picture, as legislation is largely the responsibility of individual states. Nevertheless, clear patterns can be identified: The nationwide zero-tolerance rules on alcohol for young drivers, the widespread bans on cell phone use while driving, and the regulations on child restraint systems have proven to be extremely effective. In particular, the introduction of so-called “primary seat belt laws”, which allow the police to sanction violations directly, has led to a significant decline in the number of victims in many states. Nevertheless, there is still room for improvement: the heterogeneous legal situation, inadequate infrastructure, especially for pedestrians and cyclists, and sometimes lax enforcement mean that the US continues to have a high level of road traffic risk in international comparison and has seen a significant increase in the number of fatalities in recent years.

Regardless of all regulatory measures, DEKRA expert Markus Egelhaaf is clear: “Road safety efforts must never be a short-term activity but can only ever be successful as a permanent process.” In his view, the most important thing is the well-coordinated interaction of technical, organizational, and infrastructural measures to prevent accidents and mitigate their consequences – embedded in a holistic approach that takes all road users into account.

Further background information on this topic, as well as many other aspects of “The Changing Face of Mobility”, can be found in the DEKRA Road Safety Report 2025. It is available at www.dekra-roadsafety.com.

About DEKRA

For 100 years, DEKRA has been a trusted name in safety. Founded in 1925 with the original goal of improving road safety through vehicle inspections, DEKRA has grown to become the world's largest independent, non-listed expert organization in the field of testing, inspection, and certification. Today, as a global partner, the company supports its customers with comprehensive services and solutions to drive safety and sustainability forward—fully aligned with DEKRA's anniversary motto, "Securing the Future." In 2024, DEKRA generated revenue of 4.3 billion euros. Around 48,000 employees are providing qualified and independent expert services in approximately 60 countries across five continents. DEKRA holds a Platinum rating from EcoVadis, placing it among the top 1% of the world's most sustainable companies.