

FRANCE¹

- Capital: Paris
- 64.8 million inhabitants
- 600 vehicles / 1 000 inhabitants
- 3 992 road fatalities in 2010
- 6.4 deaths / 100 000 inhabitants

1. Short term trends

General comments and trends for 2010

Despite a 1.9% increase in traffic, there was an important safety improvement in the year 2010 in comparison with 2009, with a reduction by 6.6% in the number of fatalities, by 7.0% in the number of injury crashes and by 7.1% in the number of people injured.

While 2009 results were mitigated, mainly due to the bad results for motorised two wheelers, there was in 2010 a significant decrease (-19.8 %) in the mortality of PTWs, while the mortality of other road users decreased only by 1.5%. With the recovery of heavy goods vehicles traffic (+3.7%), fatal crashes involving HGVs increased by 20%.

Provisional data for 2011

Provisional data for 2011 show a slight decrease in the number in the number of fatalities (-0.55%) compared to 2010. While the beginning of the year 2011 was not very good, a marked decrease in mortality has been observed since May.

On a year-over-year basis, fatalities reached their lowest level since 1945 in December 2011.

Table 1. **Reported road fatalities, injury crashes and rates 1970-2010**

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2009	2010	2010% change over		
							2009	2000	1970
Fatalities	16 445	13 499	11 215	8 170	4 273	3 992	-6.6%	-51.1	-75.7%
Injury crashes	235 109	248 469	162 573	121 223	72 315	67 288	-7.0%	-44.5%	-71.4%
Rates									
Deaths / 100 000 population	32.55	25.4	19.82	12.9	6.84	6.36	-7.0%	-51%	-80%
Deaths / billion veh-km	90.36	44	25.72	15.13	7.75	7.11	-8.3%	-53%	-92%

1. Source: IRTAD, ONISR, SETRA. Data presented here only concern the Metropolitan regions of France.

2. Long term trends

Change in the number of fatalities and injury crashes

Between 1970 and 2010, the number of fatalities decreased by 76% and the number of injury crashes by 71%. In the same period, the number of vehicles tripled. In recent years (2000-2010), the decrease in the number of fatalities has been sustained (-51%).

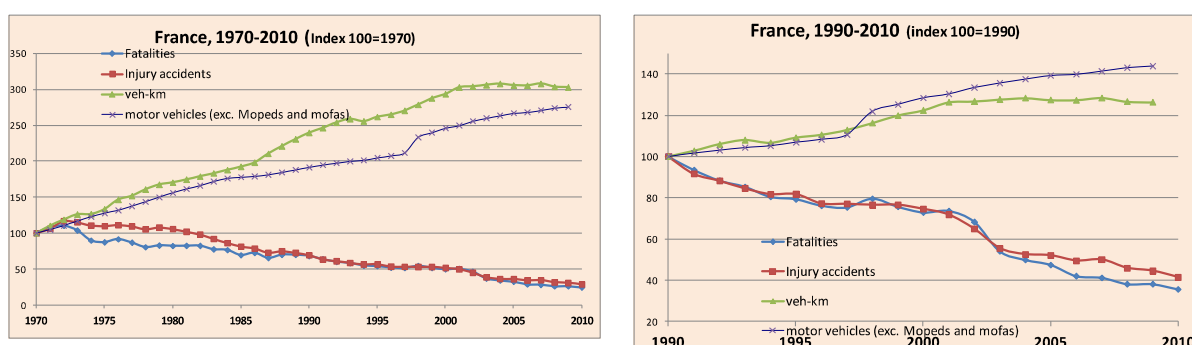
A significant change was introduced in July 2002, when President Chirac announced that road safety was among the priorities of his mandate. Since then, a determined road safety policy has been developed, with effective measures regarding speed management, drink-driving and seat-belt use, the strengthening of the demerit point system, etc.

After near stagnation during 2009, the downward trend continued in 2010.

Risk and rates

Between 1970 and 2010 the mortality rate, expressed in terms of deaths per 100 000 population, was divided by nearly a factor of 5, and the fatality risk (expressed in deaths per distance travelled) by a factor of 12.

Figure 1. **Reported road fatalities, injury crashes, motorised vehicles and vehicle-kilometres 1970-2010**



Economic costs of traffic crashes

Traffic crashes represent a very significant cost for society, estimated around EUR 23 billion, i.e. 1.3% of GDP.

Costs (EUR billion)	2010	2009	% change
Fatalities	5.04	5.36	-6.7
Hospitalised people	4.15	4.52	-8
Slight injuries	0.30	0.31	-3.2
Property/damage costs	13.88	13.51	-2.7
Total	23.37	23.70	-1.4

3. National road safety strategies and targets

On February 18, 2010, the Inter-departmental Committee for Road Safety (chaired by the Prime Minister) determined 14 new measures under six main objectives:

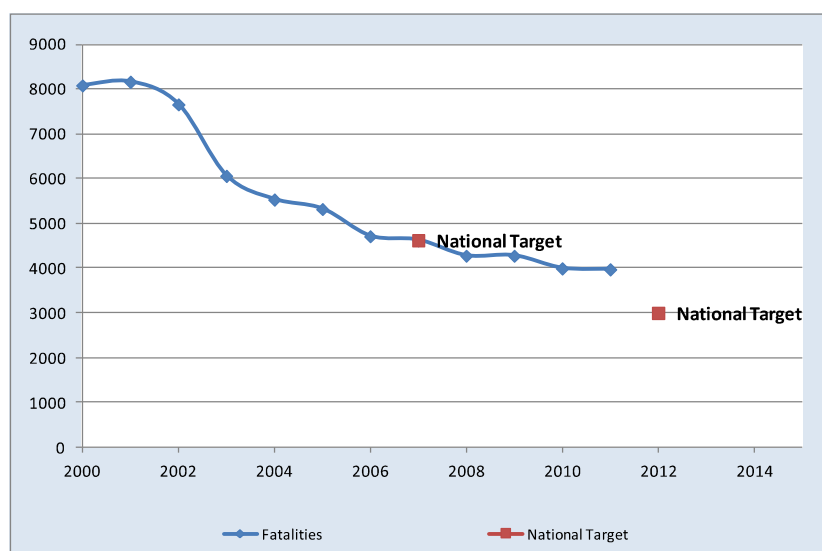
1. Fighting driving on alcohol and drugs;
2. Dissuading the exceeding of speed limits;
3. More severe punishments for major road offences;
4. Increasing the safety of motorised 2-wheelers;
5. Increasing awareness of future drivers;
6. Preventing occupational road risks.

Details of the measures are reported in the section “Measures” below.

Targets

In 2007, President Sarkozy set a national target for reducing the number of road fatalities to 3 000 by 2012. This corresponds to a reduction of 35% over the 2007 level; that is, an average annual reduction of 8.3%. There are no quantitative subtargets.

Figure 2. Trends towards national target*



* Provisional data for 2011.

4. Recent safety measures (2010-2011)

Impaired driving

- Equipping police and gendarmerie units with 5 000 electronic breathalysers to augment roadside alcohol tests;
- Raising roadside drug tests to 10 000 a year;
- Charging the cost of drug tests to the offenders instead of tax-payers;
- Making breathalysers available in bars.

Speed management

- Signposting large, automated speed-control sections, instead of individual radar locations;
- Installing 100 control devices on mean speed throughout large sections (control section).

Enforcement of major traffic offences

- Immediate clamping of vehicles involved in a major road offence;
- Sentencing to three years in jail and a 5 000 EUR fine in cases of failure to report an accident.

Safety of powered two-wheelers

- Ensuring moped power-restraining devices are fully respected;
- Imposing compulsory moped anti-derestriction checks every two years;
- Compulsory prior training before driving all light motorcycles;
- Promoting new roadside fittings and signposts, less aggressive to motorised two-wheelers.

Future drivers

- Organising road safety events in high schools.

Preventing occupational road risks

- Developing occupational road safety plans.

5. Crash trends

Road users

Since 1990, all road users have benefited significantly from the progress in road safety, although the reduction in motorcyclist fatalities was two times less than for other users.

In 2010, unlike previous years, results were much better for moped and motorcyclist riders, who respectively saw their mortality rates reduced by 17% and 21%.

Table 3. **Reported fatalities by road user group
1990, 2000, 2009 and 2010**

									2010 % change over		
	1990		2000*		2009		2010		2009	2000	1990
Bicyclists	437	4%	273	3%	162	4%	147	4%	-9.3%	-46.2%	-66.4%
Mopeds	716	6%	461	6%	299	7%	248	6%	-17.1%	-46.2%	-65.4%
Motorcycles	1 031	9%	947	12%	888	21%	704	18%	-20.7%	-25.7%	-31.7%
Car occupants	6 862	61%	5 351	65%	2 160	51%	2 117	53%	-2.0%	-60.4%	-69.1%
Pedestrians	1 534	14%	848	10%	496	12%	485	12%	-2.2%	-42.8%	-68.4%
Others	635	6%	365	4%	268	6%	291	7%	+8.6%	-20.3%	-54.2%
Total	11 215	100%	8 170	100%	4 273	100%	3 992	100%	-6.6%	-51.1%	-64.4%

The relative risk of being killed in a traffic crash varies greatly among road users. Motorised two-wheelers continue to be the group most at risk. In 2010, they represented around 2% of motorised traffic but 28% of fatalities. The risk of being killed is 20 times higher for motorised two-wheelers than for a car occupant (see Table 4).

Table 4. **Relative fatality risk by road user group
2010**

	Reported fatalities	Deaths per billion veh-km (or passenger-km)
Passenger car occupants	2 117	5.3
Mopeds	248	109.5
Motorcycles	704	103.9
Heavy truck occupants	65	2.7

Age

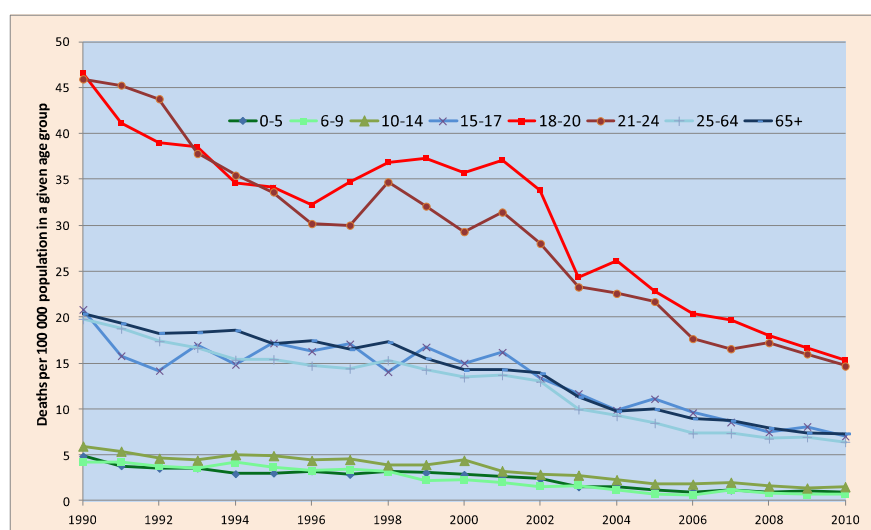
Since 1990, the reduction in fatalities has benefited all age groups, but the most impressive reduction concerned the youngest groups – 0-5, 6-9 and 10-14 years – for which fatalities respectively decreased by 80%, 72% and 74%. The oldest age group (75+) has had the smallest improvement, but this needs to be seen in the context of an important demographic evolution and a growing share of seniors in the population.

Young people are overrepresented in road fatalities. In 2010, the 18-24 age group represented 8.8% of the population but 20.8% of road fatalities. The 18-20 group continues to be the one most at risk, with a rate of 17 deaths per 100 000 population of the same age, while the rate for the general population is 6.4 (see Figure 3).

Table 5. **Reported fatalities by age group
1990, 2000, 2009, 2010**

	1990	2000	2009	2010	2010% change over		
					2009	2000	1990
0-5	220	124	49	45	-8.1%	-63.7%	-79.5%
6-9	132	68	21	27	+14.3%	-61.3%	-71.9%
10-14	222	171	52	58	+11.5%	-66.1%	-73.9%
15-17	534	350	189	161	-14.8%	-46.0%	-70.0%
18-20	1 224	857	403	370	-8.1%	-56.8%	-69.7%
21-24	1 566	869	498	461	-7.4%	-47.0%	-70.6%
25-64	5 684	4 157	2 265	2 105	-7.1%	-46.0%	-63.0%
>65	1 603	1 342	796	764	-4.0%	-41.0%	-52.0%
Total	11 215	8 079	4 273	3 992	-6.6%	-47.0%	-54.0%

Figure 3. **Reported death rate by age band
(Fatalities per 100 000 population in a given group, 1990-2010)**

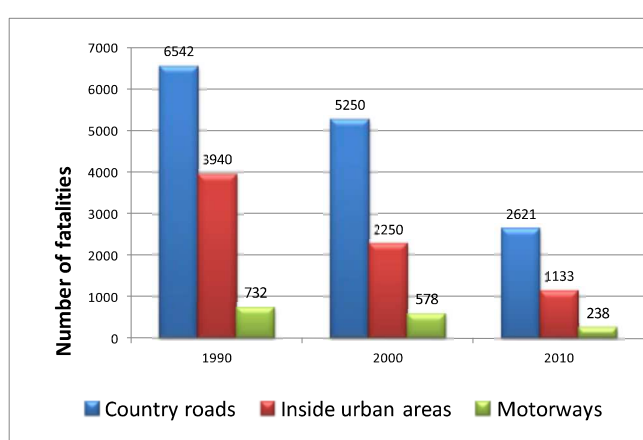


Road type

France has a very large road network (1 million kilometres), of which 80% is rural (not including interurban motorways). When fatalities per billion vehicle-km travelled are broken down by type of road, the risk on country roads is shown to be very high. Motorways are the safest network, since they absorb 25% of the traffic and account for 6% of fatalities.

In 2010, 72% of fatalities occurred on rural roads, 22% on urban roads and 6% on motorways.

Figure 4. **Reported fatalities by road type 1990, 2000 and 2010**



6. Recent trends in road user behaviour

Impaired driving

The maximum permissible blood alcohol content is 0.5 g/l and 0.2 g/l for bus drivers.

Drink-driving is now the primary cause of death in France (mainly due to the fact that speed-related crashes have diminished). In 2010, 30.8% of fatal crashes involved a driver with a blood alcohol content above the maximum permissible level, and 963 persons were killed in these crashes.

Speed

In 2003, speed enforcement was significantly strengthened with the introduction of automatic speed cameras.

Between 2002 and 2010, the average speed decreased by 10% and the rate of speed violation decreased from 60% in 2002 to 33% in 2010. It is estimated that this contributed toward saving 11 000 lives between 2003 and 2010.

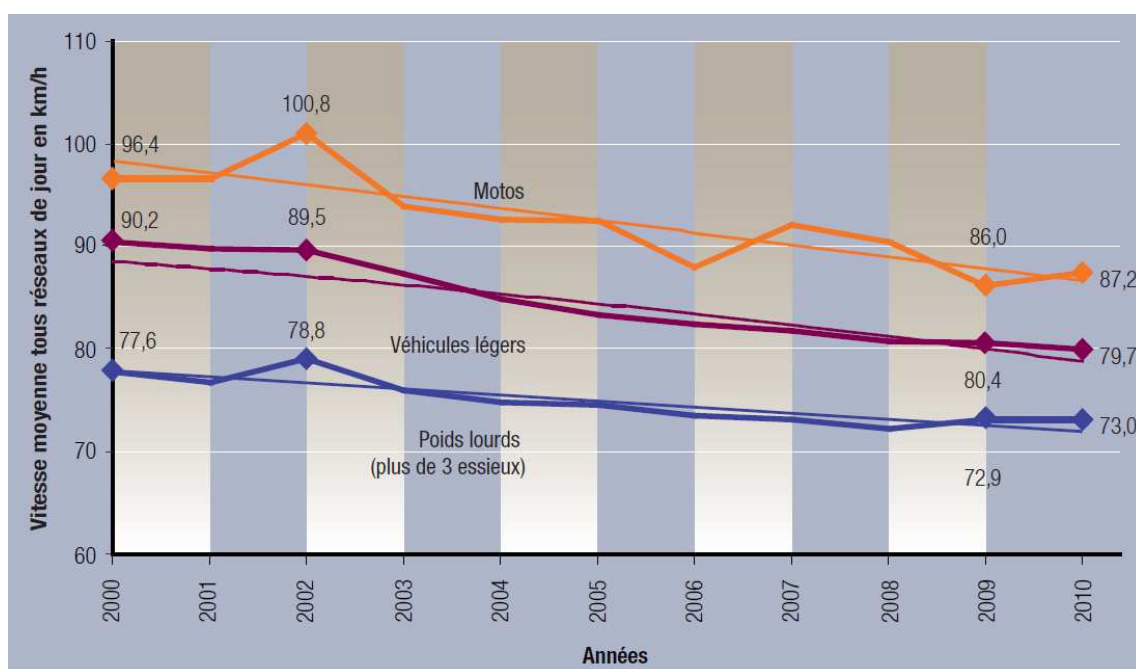
In 2009, the decrease in average speed by passenger cars continued. It is estimated that the average speed decreased by 0.6 km/h, contributing to the saving of 130 lives.

Nevertheless, 760 lives could have been saved in 2009 if speed limits had been strictly respected.

In 2010, around 10% of car drivers and 25% of motorcyclists were driving 10 km/h or more above the speed limit (this share was, respectively, 40% and 50% in 2000).

Less than 0.1% of drivers are 50 km/h above the legal limit.

Change in the average speed of passenger cars, motorcycles and trucks, 2000-2010



Source: ONISR.

Seat belts and helmets

Seat-belt wearing is compulsory in front seats since 1973 and in rear seats since 1990. The seat-belt wearing rate is among the highest in OECD countries; however, there is still room for improvement, especially for the rear seats.

In 2010, the wearing rate was 97.8% in front seats (a slight improvement compared to 2009) and 84.7% for rear seats (a slight deterioration compared to the previous year.).

22% of vehicle occupants killed did not wear a seatbelt when the crash occurred and it is estimated that 341 lives could have been saved in 2010.

Table 6. **Seat-belt use by car occupants**

	2005	2010
Front seats		
General	97.1%	97.8%
Urban areas	94.2%	95.5%
Rural areas	98.3%	98.9%
Rear seats		
General	76.9%	85.2%
Urban areas	75.7%	78.3%
Rural areas	77.8%	88.7%

Helmet use is mandatory for motorcyclists (including mopeds). It is not compulsory for cyclists. The data available (site soundings) show an almost 100% usage rate, however, the quality of the helmet and its correct buckling are very variable from one user to another, from one situation to another, etc.

Distracted driving – the use of mobile phones

It is forbidden to drive with a hand-held mobile phone. The use of hands-free mobile phones is tolerated. In 2010 it was estimated that at any time, 2% of car drivers and 3.9% of truck drivers were using a hand-held phone while driving.

A study was undertaken in 2010-2011 to better understand the impact of the use of mobile phones on driving attention in France. The main results are:

- Phoning monopolises the attention of the driver, which increases crash risks. The level of distraction is nearly the same with a hand-held or hands-free device;
- Phoning disturbs the driving task;
- Phoning multiplies by three the crash risk. In 2010, it was estimated that one out of 10 injury crashes was linked to the use of mobile phones while driving.
- Those who drive while using their phones are not aware of the danger.
- The applications of smart phones (SMS, surfing the internet, etc.) are an increasing source of danger.

7. Useful websites and references

National Road Safety Observatory Road safety 2010	www.securite-routiere.gouv.fr www.securite-routiere.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/Bilan_annee_2010_DSCR-O_cle081c12.pdf
SETRA, Technical Department for Transport, Roads and Bridges	www.setra.equipement.gouv.fr/English-presentation.html
IFSTTAR – Transport and Safety Research Institute	www.ifsttar.fr
CERTU	www.certu.fr