

8 Transport Accidents and Casualties:

Notes and Definitions

Road accidents and casualties: 8.1- 8.5

The statistics in these tables refer to personal injury accidents occurring on the public highway (including footways) in which at least one road vehicle or a vehicle in collision with a pedestrian is involved and which become known to the police within 30 days of its occurrence. The vehicle need not be moving and accidents involving stationary vehicles and pedestrians or users are included. One accident may give rise to several casualties. "Damage-only" accidents are not included in this publication.

Very few, if any, fatal accidents do not become known to the police. However, research conducted on behalf of the Department in the 1990s has shown that a significant proportion of non-fatal injury accidents are not reported to the police. In addition some casualties reported to the police are not recorded and the severity of injury tends to be underestimated. The Department is undertaking further research to investigate whether the levels of reporting have changed. The most recent work on levels of reporting was published by the Department in Article 6 of Road Casualties Great Britain: 2007 Annual report, which can be found at:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/accidents/>

Definitions of terms used in the tables:

Accident: Involves personal injury occurring on the public highway (including footways) in which at least one road *vehicle* or a *vehicle* in collision with a *pedestrian* is involved and which becomes known to the police within 30 days of its occurrence. The *vehicle* need not be moving and accidents involving stationary vehicles and pedestrians or users are included. One accident may give rise to several *casualties*. "Damage-only" accidents are not included in this publication.

Adults: Persons aged 16 years and over (except where otherwise stated).

Cars: Includes taxis, estate cars, three and four wheel cars and minibuses except where

otherwise stated. Also includes motor caravans prior to 1999.

Bus or coach: Vehicles equipped to carry 17 or more *passengers* regardless of use.

Casualty: A person *killed* or *injured* in an *accident*. Casualties are sub-divided into *killed*, *seriously injured* and *slightly injured*.

Children: Persons under 16 years of age (except where otherwise stated).

Drivers: Persons in control of *vehicles* other than *pedal cycles*, *motorcycles* and ridden animals (see *riders*). Other occupants of *vehicles* are *passengers*.

Failed breath test: *Drivers* or *riders* tested with a positive result, or who failed or refused to provide a specimen of breath.

Fatal accident: An accident in which at least one person is *killed*.

Goods vehicles: These are divided into two groups according to vehicle weight (see below). They include tankers, tractor units travelling without their semi-trailers, trailers, articulated vehicles and pick-up trucks.

Heavy goods vehicles (HGV): Goods vehicles over 3.5 tonnes maximum permissible gross vehicle weight (gvw).

Light goods vehicles (LGV): Goods vehicles, mainly vans (including car derived vans), not over 3.5 tonnes maximum permissible gross vehicle weight (gvw).

Killed: Human casualties who sustained injuries which caused death less than 30 days (before 1954, about two months) after the *accident*. Confirmed suicides are excluded.

Motorcycles: Mopeds, motor scooters and motor cycles (including motor cycle combinations).

Motorways: "M" roads and "A"(M) roads.

Other roads: All "B", "C" class and unclassified roads, unless otherwise noted.

Other vehicles: Other motor vehicles include ambulances, fire engines, trams, refuse vehicles, road rollers, agricultural vehicles, excavators, mobile cranes, electric scooters and motorised wheelchairs etc. Other non motor vehicles include those drawn by animal, ridden horses, invalid carriages without a motor, street barrows etc.

Passengers: Occupants of *vehicles*, other than the person in control (the *driver* or *rider*). Includes pillion passengers.

Pedal cycles: Includes tandems, tricycles and toy cycles ridden on the carriageway.

Pedal cyclists: *Riders* of *pedal cycles*, including any *passengers*. From 1983 the definition includes a small number of cycles and tricycles with battery assistance with a maximum speed of 15 mph.

Pedestrians: Includes *children* riding toy cycles on the footway, persons pushing bicycles, pushing or pulling other *vehicles* or operating pedestrian controlled vehicles, those leading or herding animals, occupants of prams or wheelchairs, and people who alight safely from vehicles and are subsequently injured.

Riders: Persons in control of *pedal cycles*, *motorcycles* or ridden animals. Other occupants of these *vehicles* are *passengers*.

Rural roads: Major roads and minor roads outside urban areas and having a population of less than 10 thousand.

Severity: Of an accident: the severity of the most severely injured casualty (fatal, serious or slight). Of a casualty: killed, seriously injured or slightly injured.

Serious accident: One in which at least one person is *seriously injured* but no person (other than a confirmed suicide) is *killed*.

Serious injury: an injury for which a person is detained in hospital as an "in-patient", or any of the following injuries whether or not they are detained in hospital: fractures, concussion, internal injuries, crushings, burns (excluding friction burns), severe cuts, severe general shock requiring medical treatment and injuries causing death 30 or more days after the *accident*. An injured *casualty* is recorded as *seriously* or *slightly injured* by the police on the basis of information available within a short time of the *accident*. This generally will not reflect the results of a medical examination, but may be

influenced according to whether the casualty is hospitalised or not.

Slight accident: One in which at least one person is slightly injured but no person is killed or seriously injured.

Slight injury: An injury of a minor character such as a sprain (including neck whiplash injury), bruise or cut which are not judged to be severe, or slight shock requiring roadside attention. This definition includes injuries not requiring medical treatment.

Speed limits: Permanent speed limits applicable to the roadway.

Urban roads: Major and minor roads within an urban area with a population of 10 thousand or more. The definition is based on the 1991 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister definition of urban settlements. The urban areas used for these tables are based on 2001 census data.

Users of a vehicle: All occupants, i.e. *driver* (or *rider*) and *passengers*, including persons injured while boarding or alighting from the *vehicle*.

Motoring offences: 8.6 - 8.7

Breath tests: Section 25 and Schedule 8 of the Transport Act 1981 amended the drinking and driving provisions of the Road Traffic Act 1972. These sections of the Act were renumbered (but otherwise unchanged) in the Road Traffic Act 1988. The police can require a person to take a screening breath test if they have reasonable cause to suspect that the person has been driving or attempting to drive or had been in charge of a vehicle with alcohol in his or her body, or that he or she has committed a moving traffic offence, or that he or she has been involved in an accident. A person failing to provide a breath test without reasonable excuse is guilty of an offence.

For the purposes of evidence in court, breath analysis was introduced in May 1983. The prescribed alcohol limit is 80 milligrams (mg) of alcohol in 100 millilitres (ml) of blood or 107mg per 100ml urine. The equivalent breath alcohol limit is expressed as 35 micrograms of alcohol per 100ml breath. In April 1996 the Association of Chief Police Officers recommended that drivers in all injury accidents should be breath tested.

An evidential breath test is required to be taken at a police station after a positive screening test, or where a screening test was refused or

could not be provided. It may also be required after arrest for impairment or in certain other cases, e.g. where a person arrested for theft of a motor vehicle is suspected of having consumed alcohol.

A suspect will normally be asked to provide two specimens of breath to establish the amount of alcohol in his or her body. The lower result is taken as evidence of the person's breath alcohol concentration. Where the lower result is between 36 and 50 micrograms the suspect may request a blood or urine test. In certain limited circumstances a suspect can be required to provide a specimen of blood or urine instead of breath.

Findings of guilt at all courts: Includes all motoring offences which have resulted in a finding of guilt either after a summary trial at Magistrates' Court or else at the Crown Court. A person appearing in court can be dealt with for more than one offence at that appearance, and in this table the number of offences is counted, not the number of persons appearing at court.

Fixed penalty notices: A large number of motoring offences are dealt with by fixed penalty notices. Under the extended fixed penalty system introduced by the Transport Act 1982, now incorporated in Part III of the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988, the police can issue fixed penalty notices for a wide range of offences. The court can automatically register an unpaid notice as a fine without any court appearance. Offences for which a fixed penalty notice cannot be given include causing death or bodily harm, dangerous driving, driving after consuming alcohol or taking drugs, careless driving, accident offences, unauthorised taking or theft of a motor vehicle, certain driving licence and record keeping offences, and vehicle test offences. When court proceedings are instituted following non-payment of a fixed penalty, the offence may be included twice in the table.

Written warnings: These include cautions given in lieu of prosecutions for offences where there would have been enough evidence to support a prosecution. Informal warnings and advice, whether oral or written, are not included.

Motor insurance (formerly 8.8)

The data previously published in table 8.8 are no longer routinely available. For further information see the Association of British Insurers web site at: www.abi.org.uk or

Standard and Poor's SynThesys Non-Life database of returns.

Railway accidents: 8.8 - 8.10

These tables give the number of train accidents and casualties on all railway undertakings in Great Britain. Railway undertakings are required to report accidents, failures and dangerous occurrences to the Secretary of State for Transport under the regulatory safety legislation. As well as Network Rail and London Transport railways, the tables also cover accidents on Eurotunnel, tram systems and minor railways.

Casualty figures in table 8.8 are shown in the categories below. Casualty figures are subdivided into casualties resulting from:

- Train accidents
- Accidents through movement of railway vehicles (but excluding train accidents) e.g. boarding or alighting from trains, opening or closing carriage doors at stations,
- Accidents on railway premises not connected with movement of railway vehicles e.g. falling on steps at stations, slipping on platforms,
- Injuries and fatalities of trespassers and suicides on railway land.

Table 8.9 is based on passenger casualties owing to train accidents and movement accidents. This is the basis for comparisons with other modes of transport. Under the new Accidents Reporting Regulations (RIDDOR 95) brought into force on 1 April 1996, there is no distinction between major and minor injury to members of the public. All injuries to members of the public are now shown as either minor injuries or killed. The reporting trigger for minor injuries is that the person is taken to hospital for treatment.

Table 8.10 shows the total number of train accidents (collisions, derailments etc) reported irrespective of whether personal injury was involved. The figures include accidents on non-passenger lines and lines closed to normal traffic while engineering work took place.

Due to European regulations on the reporting of rail transport statistics, the rail accidents data now covers calendar years, rather than financial years. As such, there is overlap between the 2002/03 data and the 2003 data, with accidents from 1 January 2003 to 31 March 2003 reported in both. However, each represents 12 full months.