LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

ROAD SAFETY PROFILE

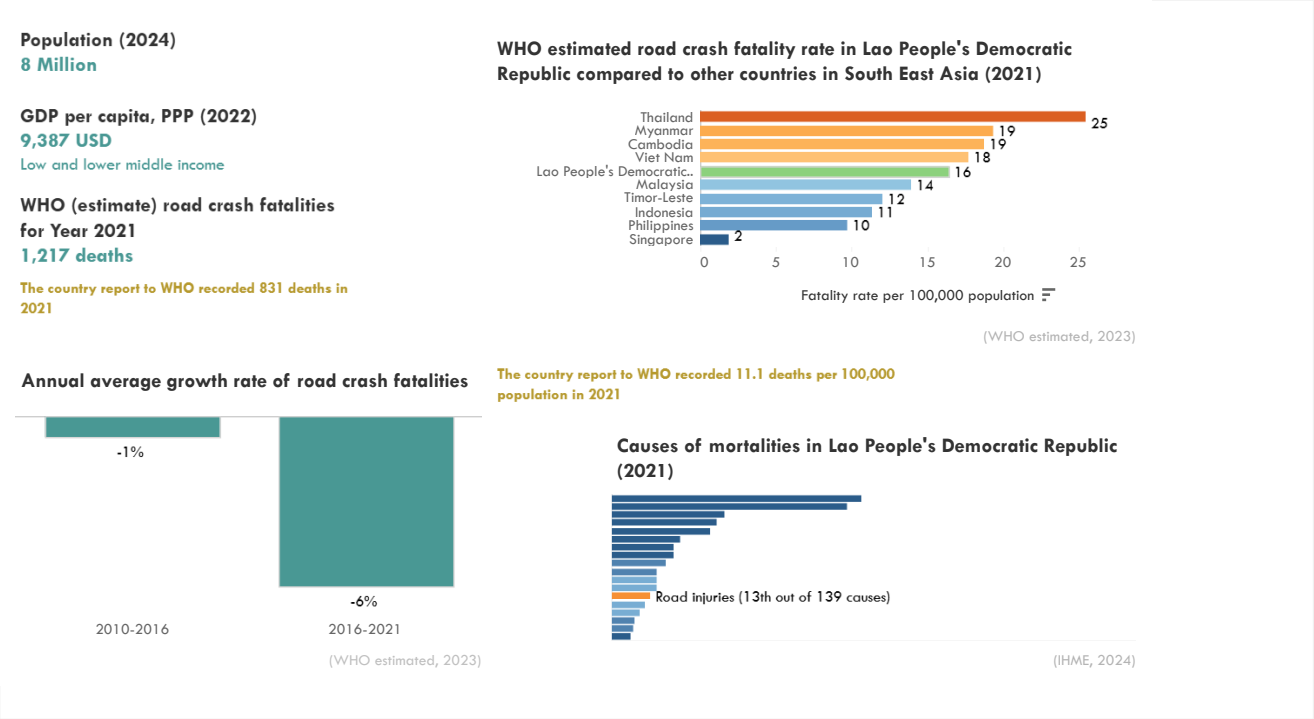
Supported by:

The ATO road safety profiles offer insights into the road safety in 37 Asia-Pacific countries by utilizing road safety related data from various sources and policy information extracted from a range of documents.

These road safety profiles were developed by the Asian Transport Observatory in collaboration with the Asia Pacific Road Safety Observatory (APRSO) and the International Road Federation (IRF). This September 2025 edition updates the February 2025 release—prepared for the Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety in Marrakech—to inform discussions at the Asia-Pacific Regional Road Safety Conference in Manila.

Country Summary

Road safety in Lao PDR presents a complex challenge. While progress has been made in reducing road traffic fatalities, the country still faces a higher burden of road crashes than regional averages. For the year 2021, WHO estimated 1,000 people lost their lives due to road crashes in Lao PDR, representing 2.2% of all deaths. This narrative explores the current status of road safety in Lao PDR, examining data discrepancies, disaggregated data insights, economic costs, and the policy landscape.



A notable discrepancy exists in reported road crash fatality numbers. While country statistics reported approximately 12.6 fatalities per 100,000 population in 2022, the Global Burden of Disease estimated about 14.9 fatalities per 100,000 population in 2021. Meanwhile WHO estimates 16.4 per 100,000 population. This difference highlights the challenges in accurately capturing and reporting road crash data, which can hinder effective road safety interventions.

Road crash fatality rate, by source

WHO (estimate) for Year 2021
16.4 per 100,000 population

WHO (country-report) for Year 2021
11.1 per 100,000 population

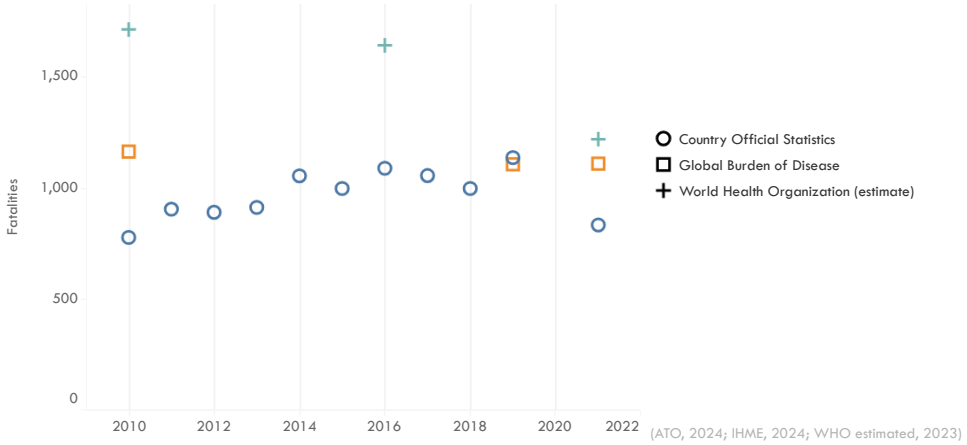
Country official statistics for Year 2022
12.6 per 100,000 population

GBD estimate for Year 2021
14.9 per 100,000 population

Every 2 hours, someone dies in a road crash in Lao People's Democratic Republic

(WHO estimated, 2023)

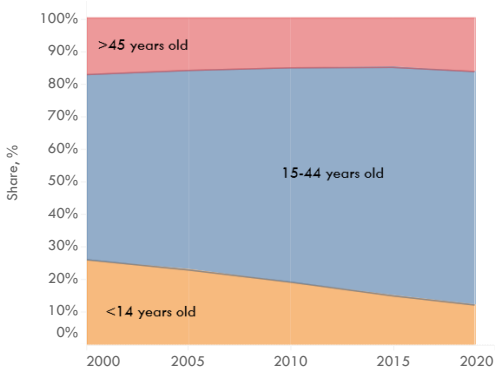
Road crash fatalities, by source



(ATO, 2024; IHME, 2024; WHO estimated, 2023)

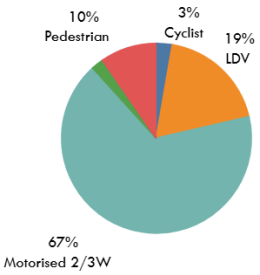
Analyzing disaggregated data reveals crucial insights into the demographics of road crash victims. Between 2010 and 2021, the share of female fatalities decreased slightly from 28% to 26%. While this is a positive trend, it's essential to understand the factors contributing to female road crash involvement. The combined share of fatalities among minors (<14 years) and seniors (>65 years) changed marginally from 26% to 25% between 2015 and 2019. Pedestrians and bicyclists constitute 13% of total fatalities in 2021, a significantly lower proportion than the Asia-Pacific average of 31%. This could indicate a potential underreporting of pedestrian and cyclist casualties or a need for more focused interventions for these vulnerable road users.

Road crash fatalities, share by age group



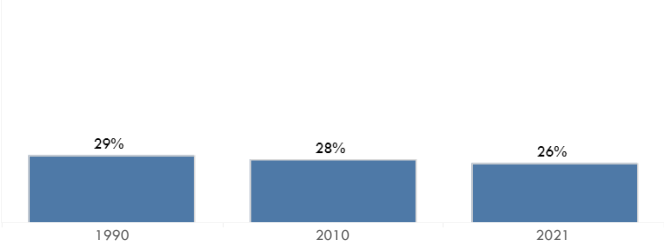
(IHME, 2021)

Road crash fatalities, share by road user



(Country report to WHO, 2023)

Share of female road crash fatalities



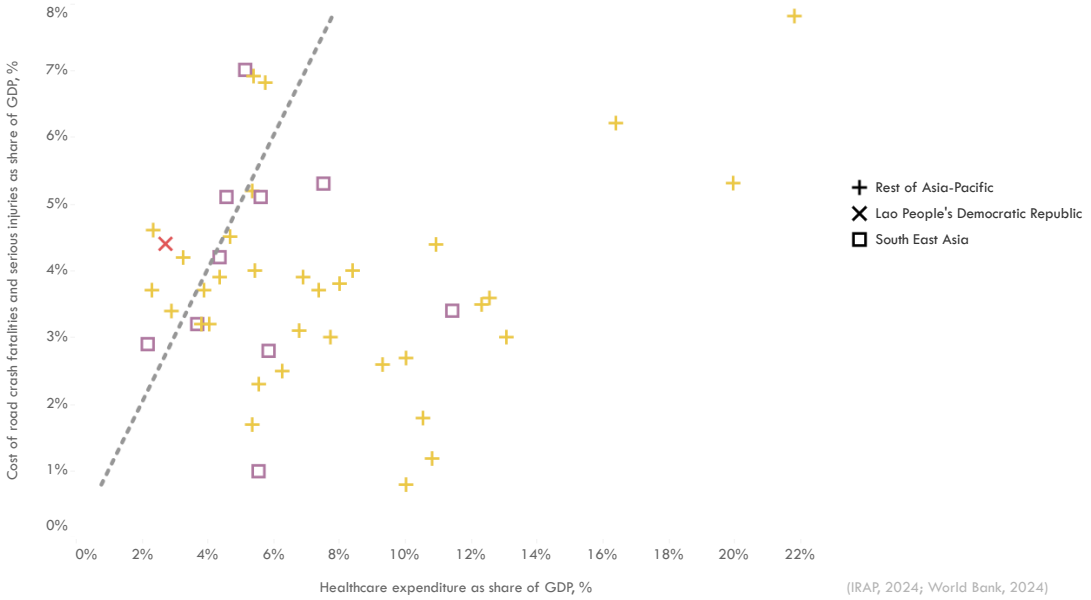
The country report to WHO indicates that women made up 23% of total road crashes deaths in 2021

(IHME, 2024)

Road crashes impose a substantial economic burden on Lao PDR. In 2021, the estimated cost of fatalities and serious injuries reached approximately 822 million USD, equivalent to 4% of the country's GDP. This surpasses the healthcare expenditure of 2.7% of GDP in the same year, highlighting the significant strain road crashes place on the economy.

Cost of road crash fatalities and serious injuries (2021)
822 Million USD

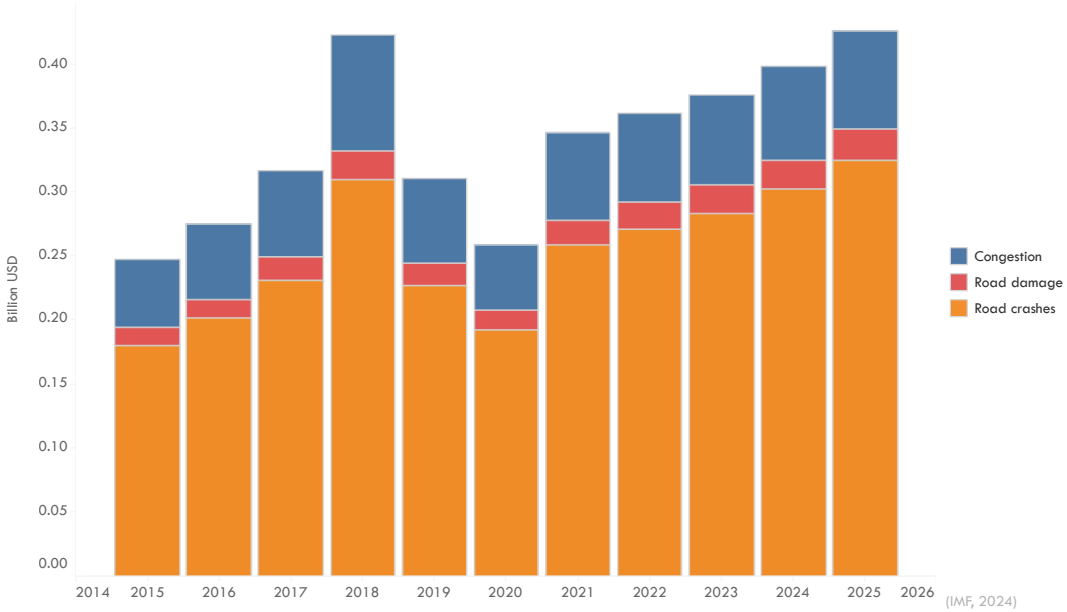
Cost of road crash fatalities and serious injuries vs. country healthcare expenditure as share of GDP (2021)



(IRAP, 2024; World Bank, 2024)

Furthermore, road crashes account for 74% of the implicit costs associated with fossil fuel subsidies in transport. Investing in road safety is a humanitarian imperative and an economically sound decision. IRAP estimates that an annual investment of 124 million USD (0.7% of GDP) could save around 400 lives annually.

External costs to the society due to fossil fuel subsidies in transport



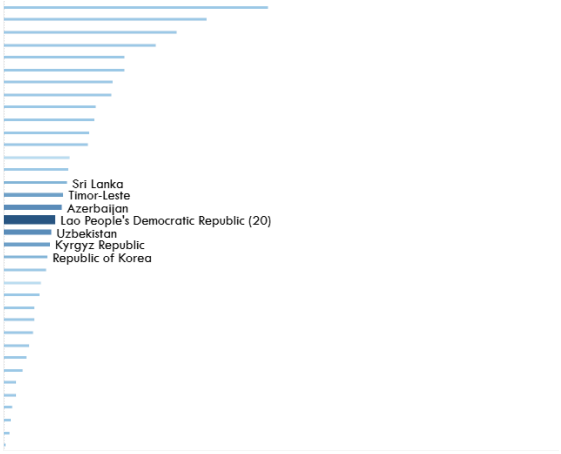
(IMF, 2024)

The quality of road infrastructure plays a critical role in road safety. In Lao PDR, only 33% of roads have a 3-star or better rating for vehicle occupants, and a mere 5% achieve this rating for motorcyclists. This gap underscores the need for infrastructure improvements to protect vulnerable road users. Lao PDR has a road fatality rate of 22 per thousand kilometers of road.

Road availability (2021)
8.1 kilometers per thousand population

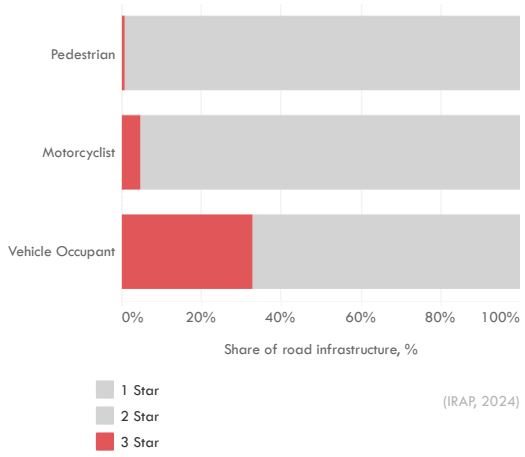
Length of road assessed by IRAP (as of 2024)
145.0 kilometers

Road crash fatalities per thousand kilometers (2021)



(WHO estimated, 2023; Nirandjan, et al., 2022)

Share of road infrastructure with 3-star or better safety rating, by road user category (2024)

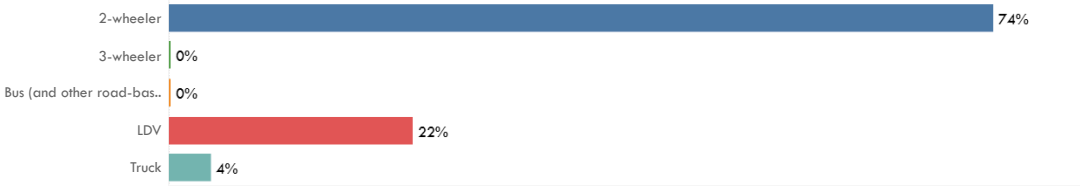


(IRAP, 2024)

The country's motorization rate has increased, reaching 424.3 vehicles per thousand population by 2022. Two-wheelers make up the majority (74%) of the vehicle fleet, followed by light-duty vehicles (22%). This vehicle composition and limited road infrastructure quality present unique road safety challenges.

Motorization rate (2022)
424 vehicles per thousand population

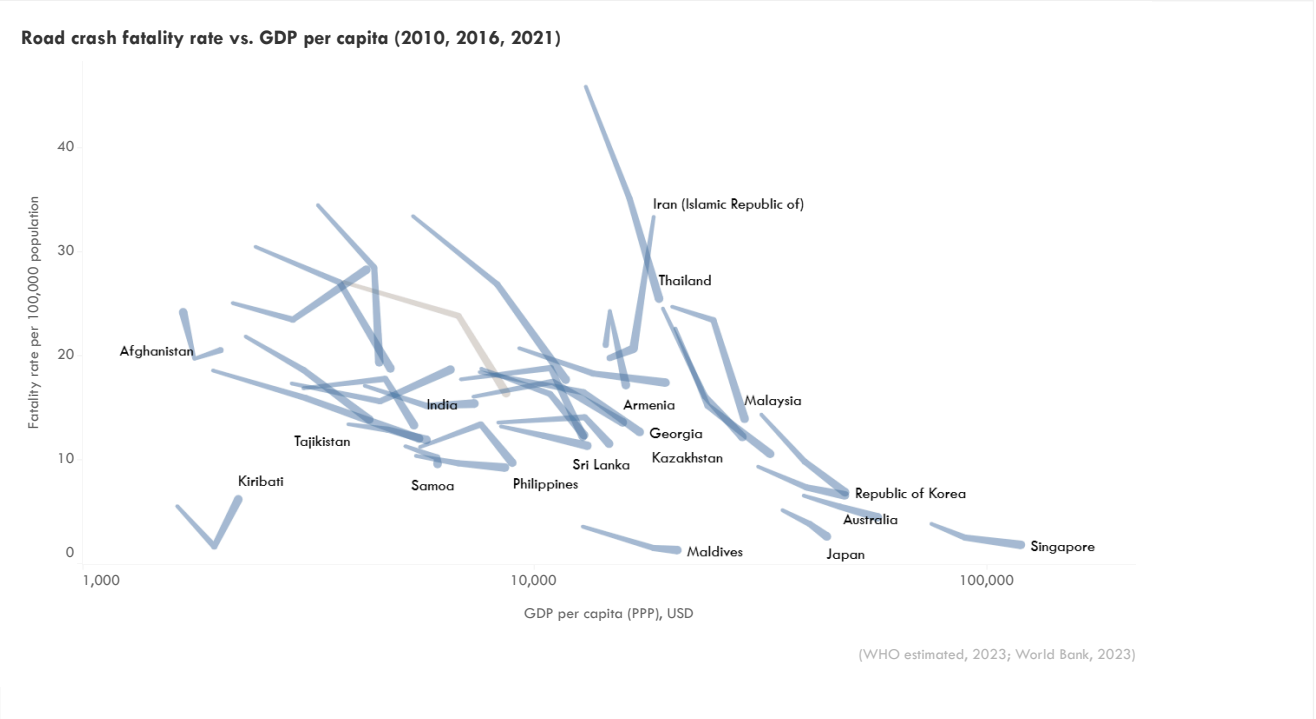
Vehicle share by type (2022)



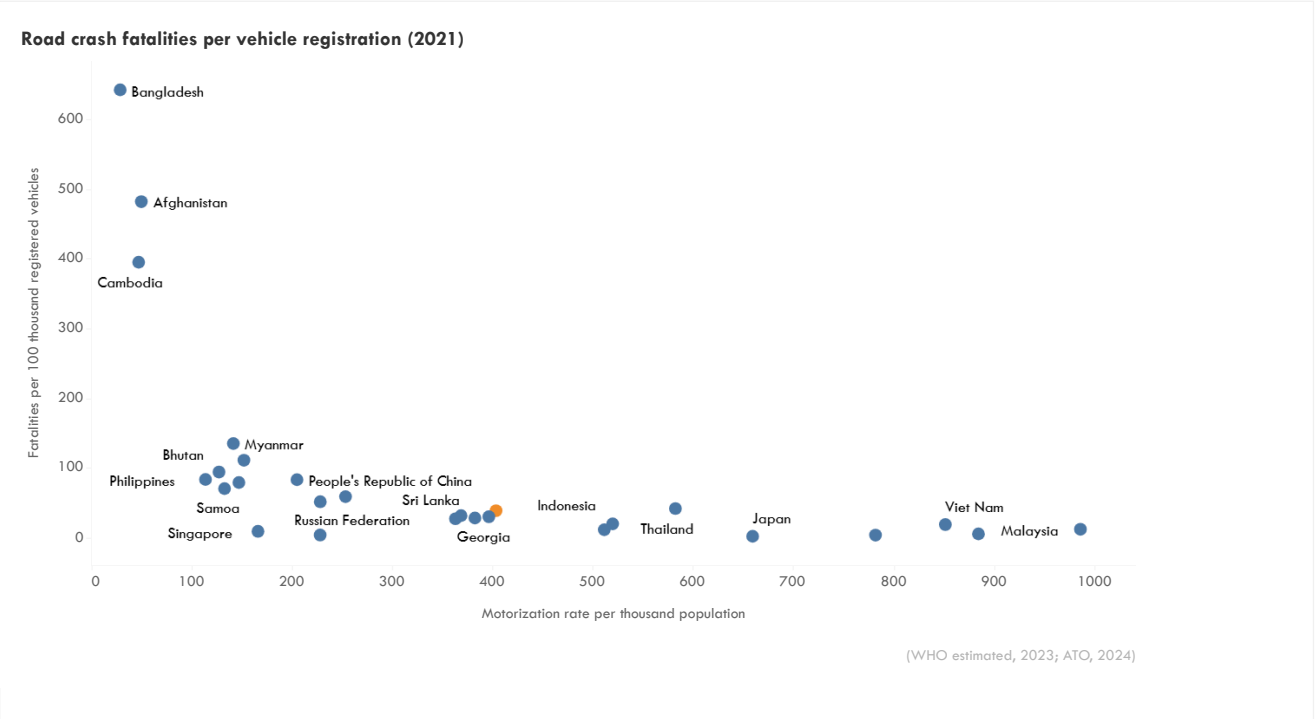
(ATO, 2024)

Benchmarking

This translates to a fatality rate of 16.4 per 100,000 population. Lao PDR has made progress in reducing road fatalities with a rate of improvement of -5.8% annually between 2016 and 2021. Although this decreased from 27.0 fatalities per 100,000 population in 2010, it still surpasses the Asia-Pacific average of 15.2 and the Southeast Asia average of 14.4 for the same year.

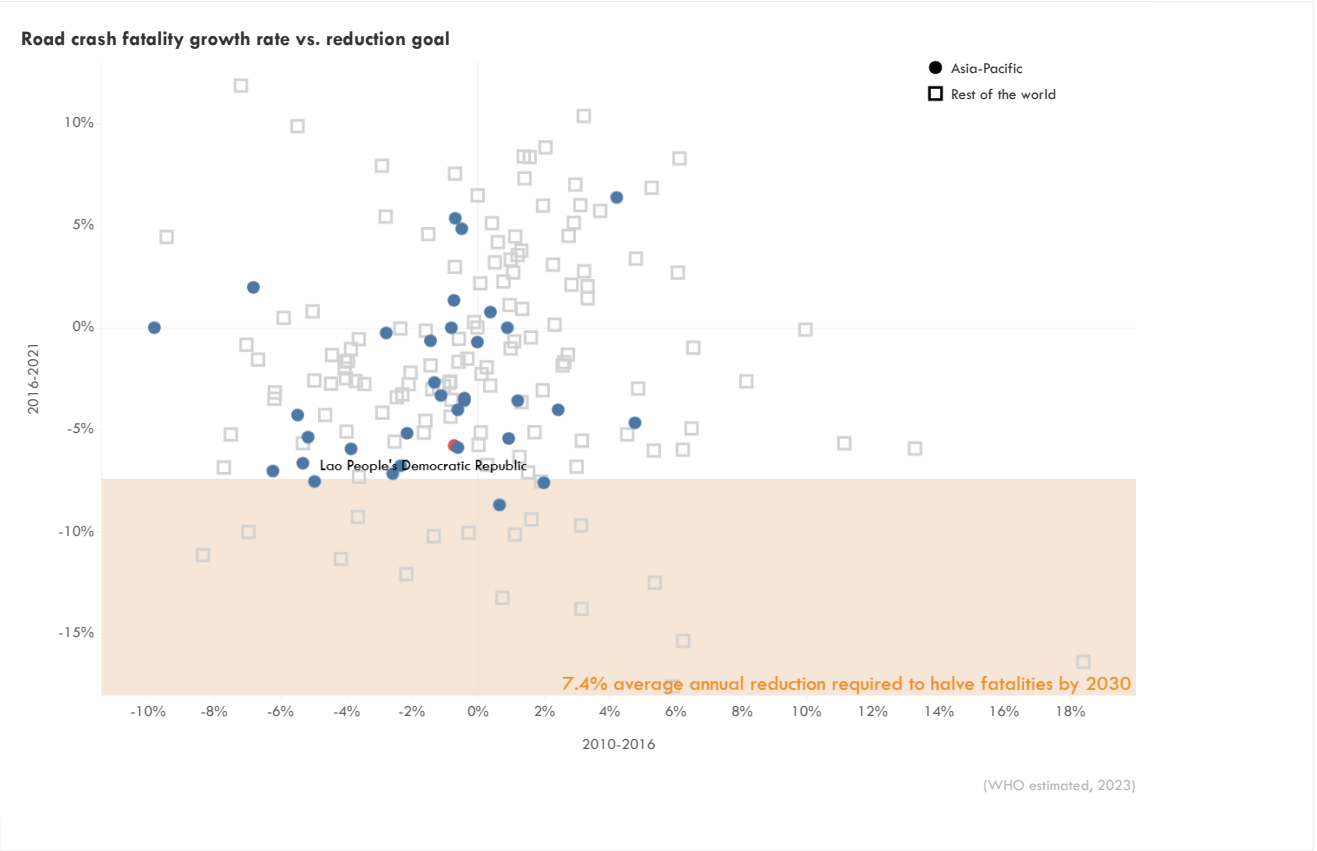


Lao People's Democratic Republic had about 41 fatalities per 100 thousand registered vehicles.



Can Asia meet the 2030 target of halving fatalities?

- **Urgent action needed to reduce road fatalities** The Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030 aims to cut road fatalities in half by 2030. An annual reduction of at least 7.4% is necessary to achieve this.
- **Asia-Pacific region falling behind** Despite reaching a peak in road crash fatalities, the Asia-Pacific region is not on track to meet the 2030 goal. The average annual reduction in deaths between 2016 and 2021 was only 0.6%, far below the required rate.
- **Varying progress across Asia** Using the 2016-2021 road crash fatality growth rate as a basis for estimates until 2030:
  - Only 3 Asian countries are projected to achieve the 50% reduction target by 2030.
  - 18 Asian countries are expected to reduce fatalities by at least 25%.
  - Worryingly, 7 Asian countries will continue to increase road fatalities, moving further away from the target.
- In Lao People's Democratic Republic, road crash fatalities decreased by approximately -5.8% per year between 2016 and 2021. However, this is not enough to reach the 2030 target to halve the fatalities by 2030



Policy Landscape

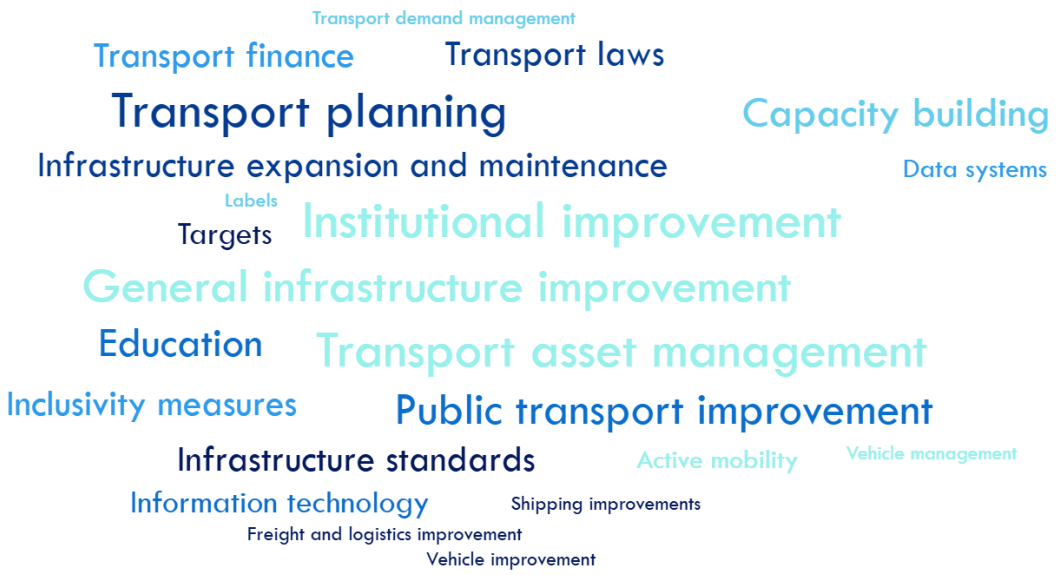
The country aims to reduce deaths and serious injuries by 70% by 2035, necessitating accelerated efforts and more effective interventions. Lao PDR has committed to improving road safety through various policy initiatives. The National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 and the 2021-2025 Action Plan provide a framework for addressing road safety challenges. Furthermore, targets have been set for road safety audits, infrastructure improvements, enforcement of traffic regulations (helmet use, seatbelt use, child restraints), and vehicle labeling. Other relevant policy documents include the National Socio-Economic Development Plans, the Lao PDR GCF Country Programme, and urban development and transport asset management assessments. Effective implementation and enforcement of these policies are crucial for achieving tangible improvements in road safety.

Targets to reduce road crash fatalities or injuries	Target year	Document	Year published
By 2035, the road safety vision of Lao PDR is to reduce the rate of deaths and serious injuries to 70% in 2035	2035	2021-2030 National Road Safety Strategy and 2021-2025 Action Plan	2021

Measure type	Other targets with indirect benefits to road safety	Target year	Document	Year published
Audits/ star rating for existing roads for road safety	Safety classification of the International Safety Assessment Agency (iRAP) for the ASEAN highway network = At least 3 stars Traveling on major roads in the city requires a safety rating of three stars or higher = 75%	2025	2021-2030 National Road Safety Strategy and 2021-2025 Action Plan	2021
General transport asset management	Build, upgrade, rehabilitate and maintain 2,800 km of land transport infrastructure, including roads, bridges and express ways as part of the network along the economic corridors connecting the countries in the region in accordance with ASEAN technical standards.	2025	9TH FIVE-YEAR NATIONAL SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2021-2025)	2021
Road infrastructure expansion	Build, upgrade, rehabilitate and maintain 2,800 km of land transport infrastructure, including roads, bridges and express ways as part of the network along the economic corridors connecting the countries in the region in accordance with ASEAN technical standards.	2025	9TH FIVE-YEAR NATIONAL SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2021-2025)	2021

Road-side checks on helmet-wearing, seatbelt-wearing, and child restraint systems-use	The driver uses excessive speed = >25% decrease Car drivers use seat belts properly = at least 95% Motorcyclists wear helmets properly = at least 95% Detected drivers drinking alcohol more than the amount prescribed by law = <0.1%	2025	2021-2030 National Road Safety Strategy and 2021-2025 Action Plan	2021
Target - Transport activity	Increase the volume of passenger transport in the transport connectivity network with countries in the region, via all modes of transport: road by 7% per year, waterways by 5%, airways by 12%, railway by 3-5%; Increase freight volume in the transport connectivity network with countries in the region, via all modes of transport: road by 7% per year, waterways by 5%, airways by 12%, railway by 3-5%	2025	9TH FIVE-YEAR NATIONAL SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2021-2025)	2021
Technical standards for road infrastructure	Build, upgrade, rehabilitate and maintain 2,800 km of land transport infrastructure, including roads, bridges and express ways as part of the network along the economic corridors connecting the countries in the region in accordance with ASEAN technical standards.	2025	9TH FIVE-YEAR NATIONAL SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2021-2025)	2021
Vehicle labelling	New vehicles must meet UN safety standards at least 7 out of 8 priorities = 87,5%	2025	2021-2030 National Road Safety Strategy and 2021-2025 Action Plan	2021

Policy measures with indirect benefit to road safety



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