

Road Safety Facts in the Region of the Americas, 2013

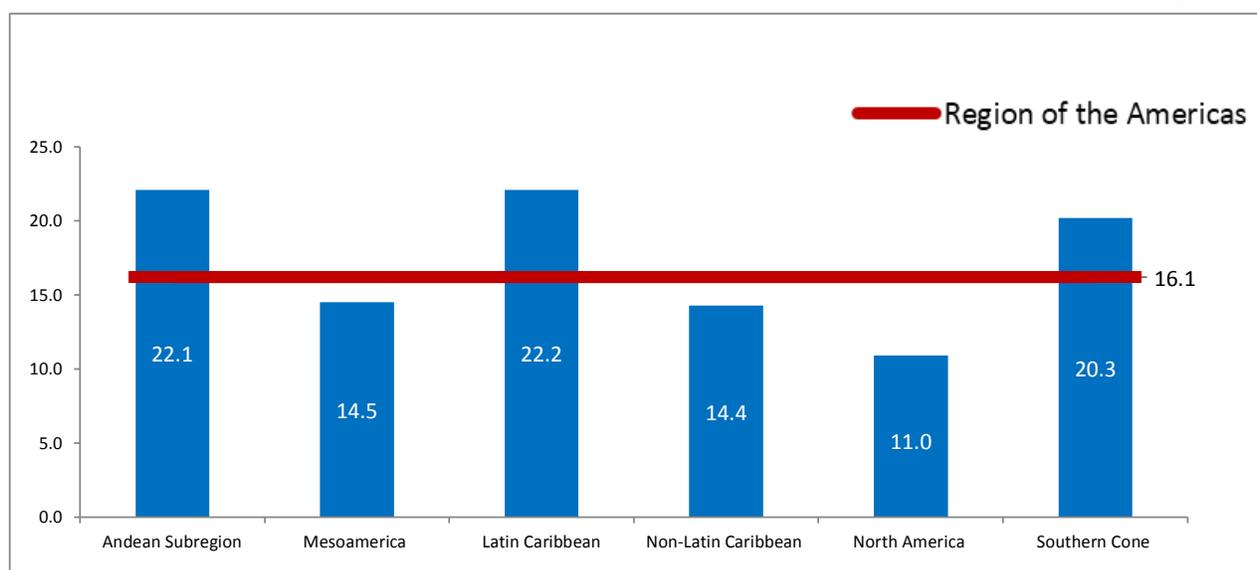
In the Region of the Americas, road traffic injuries are the leading cause of death in children aged 5–14 and the second leading cause in the group aged 15–44. Traffic injuries caused more than 142,000 deaths throughout the Region in 2007 (1). In response to this critical problem, the Pan American Health Organization in 2011 announced a Plan of Action on Road Safety with guidelines for Member States (2). The plan will help countries of the Americas meet the goals of the global Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020, proclaimed by the United Nations in 2010 with a view to stabilizing and reducing global road traffic deaths (3).

This fact sheet presents updated information on road safety in the Region of the Americas based on the World Health Organization's *Global Status Report on Road Safety 2013* (4). Thirty-two of 36 Member States participated in the study, covering 98.5% of the Region's population (see Figure 1 for a list of participating countries). Data were collected at country level. In each country, individuals from various sectors were asked to complete a questionnaire and then discuss the information at a consensus meeting to agree on data that best represent the country's road safety status. Estimated mortality rates were adjusted for comparability based on models, taking into account data quality of surveys carried out around the world.

KEY FACTS

- Road traffic injuries caused an estimated 149,992 deaths in the Region of the Americas in 2010.
- The average death rate for the Region from road traffic injuries was 16.1 per 100,000 population.
- Among subregions, the average road traffic death rate per 100,000 population ranges from 11.0 in North America to 22.2 in the Latin Caribbean.
- Pedestrians, motorcyclists, and bicyclists are the primary victims of road traffic fatalities in all the subregions except North America, where car occupants are the main victims.
- In the Region of the Americas, vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, motorcyclists, and bicyclists account for 23%, 15%, and 3% of road traffic deaths respectively.
- Deaths among riders of two- and three- wheeled vehicles are 44.2% of the total in Latin Caribbean, 22.6% in the Southern Cone, and 14.8% in the non-Latin Caribbean.
- Men run greater risk of dying from road traffic injuries than women.
- In Latin Caribbean countries, 46.7% of the vehicle fleet consists of two- and three -wheeled motor vehicles. These motor vehicles are also common in the Andean subregion (31.2%) and the Southern Cone (20.7%).
- Fleets of vehicles and road traffic deaths are not correlated.
- Twenty-one of 32 countries have comprehensive legislation on seatbelt use.
- Five, 14, 15, and 19 countries have comprehensive legislation on speed, drink-driving, helmet use, and child restraint use, respectively.
- Twenty-seven countries have lead agencies on road safety, 22 have national or subnational strategies, and 12 have annual budget devoted to a national strategy on road safety.

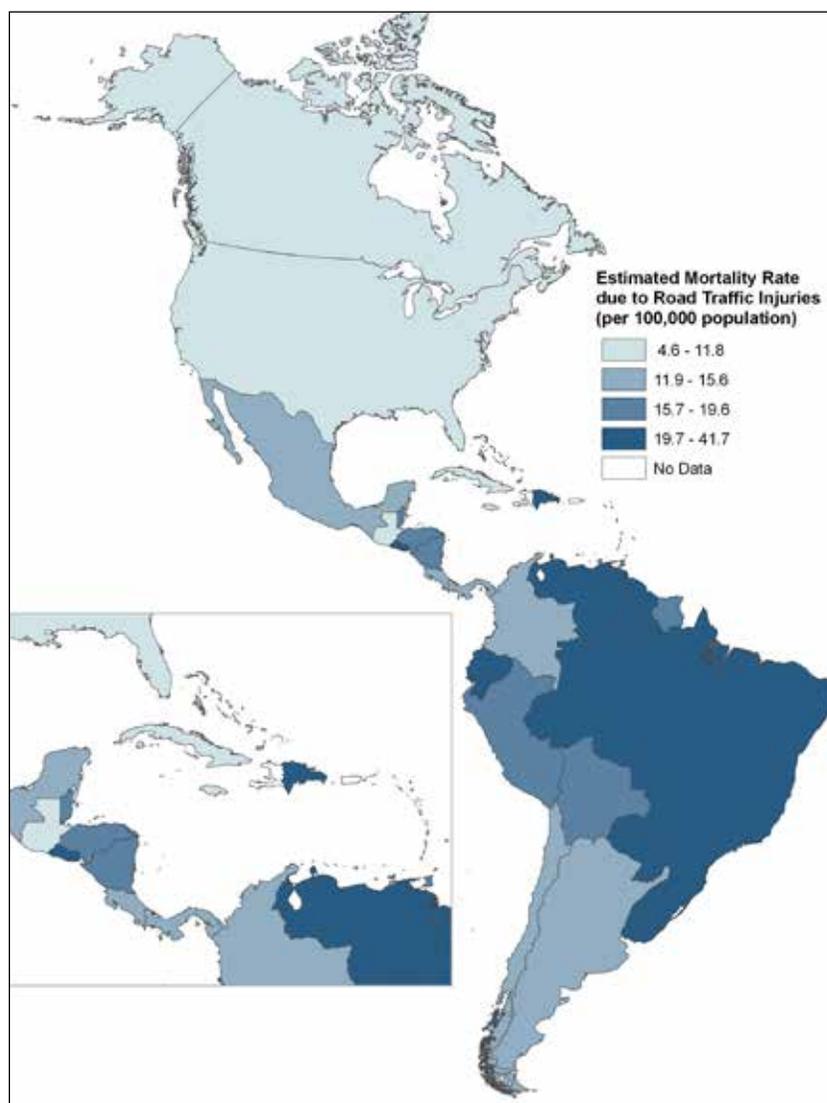
Figure 1. Road traffic death rates per 100,000 population in the Region of the Americas, by subregion, 2010



Source: Global Status Report on Road Safety 2013

Note: Participating countries by subregion: **North America:** Canada, United States; **Latin Caribbean:** Cuba, Dominican Republic. **Non-Latin Caribbean:** Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago. **Southern Cone:** Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay. **Mesoamerica:** Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama. **Andean South Region:** Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela. Mortality rate of Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, Haiti, and Puerto Rico from the World Health Organization database.

Figure 2. Estimated road traffic death rates per 100,000 population in the Americas, by country, 2010



ESTIMATED MORTALITY RATES DUE TO ROAD TRAFFIC INJURIES VARY AMONG SUBREGIONS AND COUNTRIES

There were an estimated 149,992 road traffic deaths in the Region of the Americas in 2010. The average death rate for the Region from road traffic injuries was 16.1 per 100,000 population. However, there are large disparities between subregions, with average rates ranging from 11.0 to 22.2 (Figure 1). At country level, the estimated rates ranged from 4.6 to 41.7 (Figure 2).

RATES OF VEHICLE OWNERSHIP AND TYPES OF VEHICLES VARY AMONG SUBREGIONS AND COUNTRIES

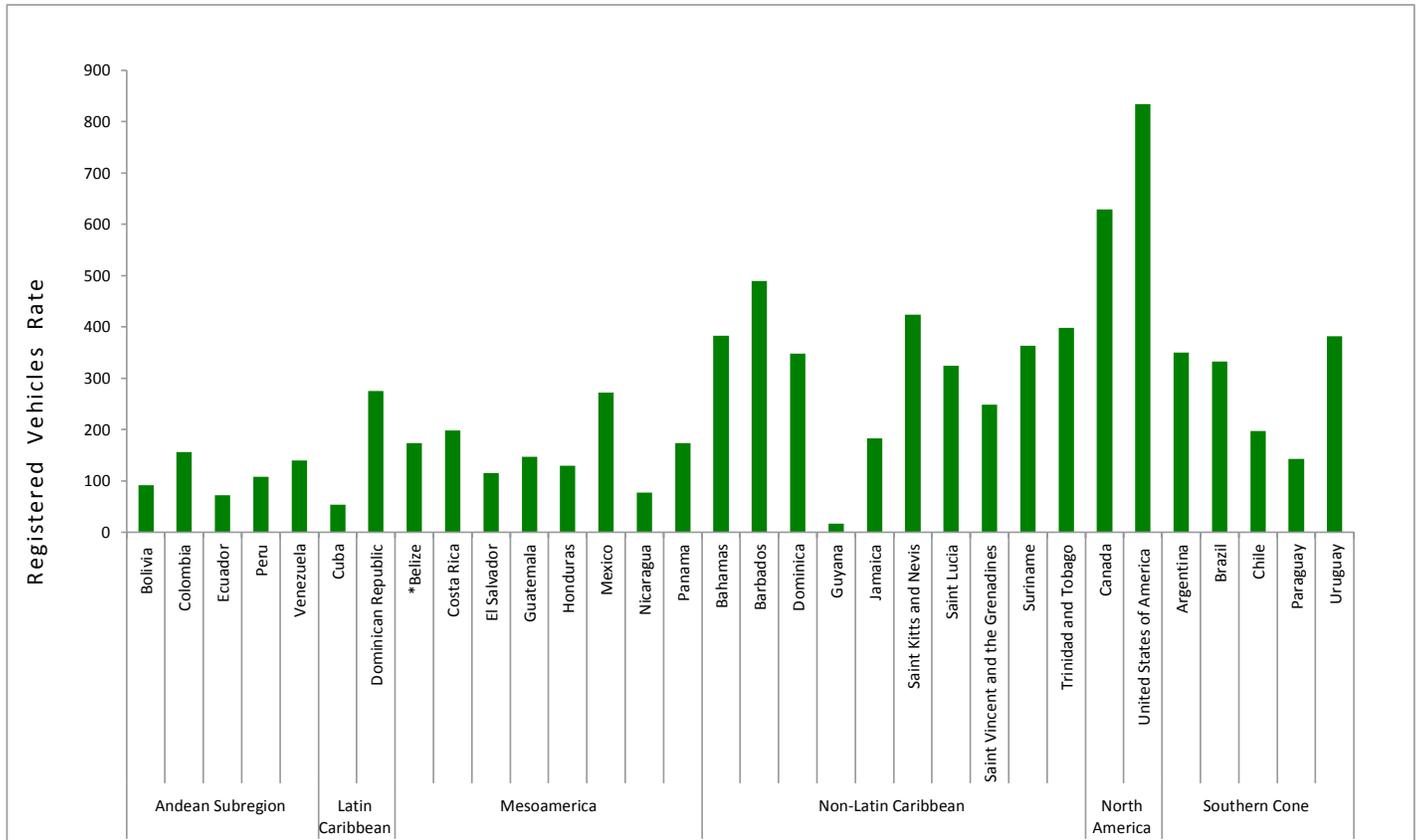
The North American subregion has the highest number of registered motor vehicles per 1,000 population: 629 in Canada and 834 in the United States. The Andean subregion has the lowest (Figure 3).

There are important differences between the subregions with regard to vehicle fleets. Four-wheeled vehicles, mainly cars and other light vehicles, predominate in the high-income countries of North America, accounting for more than 90% of the fleet. However they make up just over a third of motor vehicles in the Latin Caribbean countries, where nearly half the fleet consists of two- and three-wheeled motor vehicles such as motorcycles. Two- and three-wheelers are also common in the Andean Subregion and the Southern Cone (Figure 4).

VEHICLE SAFETY STANDARDS ARE UNEVEN AMONG COUNTRIES

Ten countries in the Region have standards for front and rear seatbelts on new cars manufactured or assembled in the country; 23 have standards for new imported cars. For used imported cars, 20 countries have standards for front and rear seatbelts. Less than a quarter of the countries have standards for either antilock brakes, electronic stability control, or airbags for all reported types of cars. Twelve countries have adopted some type of international or regional vehicle safety standards for cars.

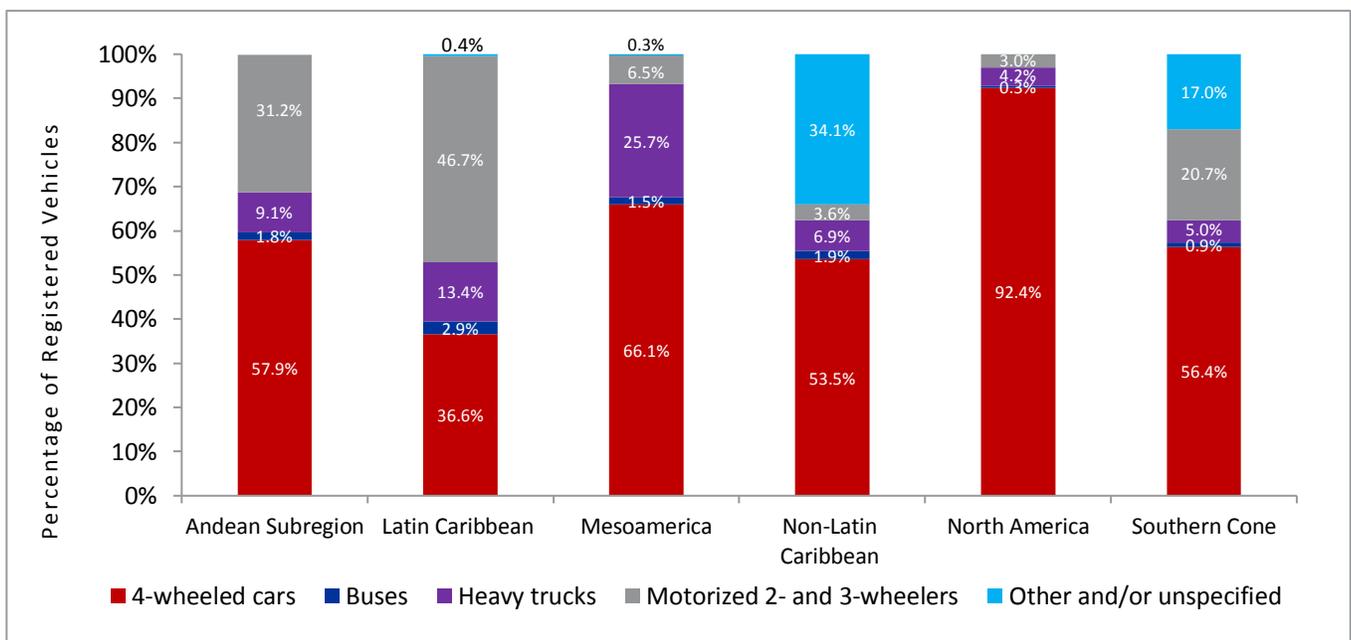
Figure 3. Registered motor vehicles per 1,000 population in the Region of the Americas, by country, 2010



Source: Global Status Report on Road Safety 2013

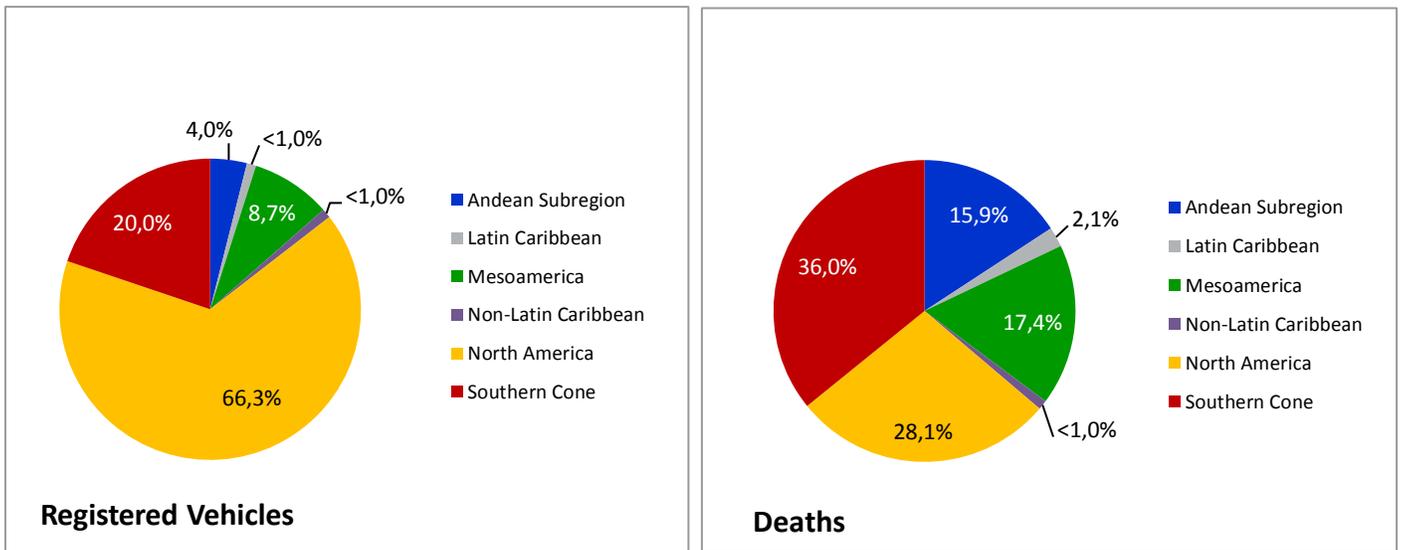
*Belize data obtained from PAHO, Informe sobre el estado de la seguridad vial en la Región de las Américas, 2009.

Figure 4. Types of registered vehicles in the Region of the Americas, by subregion, 2010



Source: Global Status Report on Road Safety 2013

Figure 5. Shares of registered vehicles compared with shares of road traffic deaths in the Region of the Americas, by subregion, 2010



Source: Global Status Report on Road Safety 2013

SHARES OF VEHICLES AND ROAD TRAFFIC DEATHS ARE NOT CORRELATED

Among the subregions, there is no consistent correlation between road traffic deaths and registered vehicles as shares of the regional total. North America has approximately 66% of the vehicles in the Region of the Americas and 28% of the road traffic deaths. On the other hand, the Southern Cone has about 20% of the vehicles and 36% of the road traffic deaths (Figure 5).

PEDESTRIANS, MOTORCYCLISTS, AND BICYCLISTS ARE MOST AT RISK

Vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, motorcyclists, and bicyclists are at highest risk in most subregions. In the Region of the Americas, these groups account for 23%, 15%, and 3% of road traffic deaths, respectively. The Mesoamerica subregion has

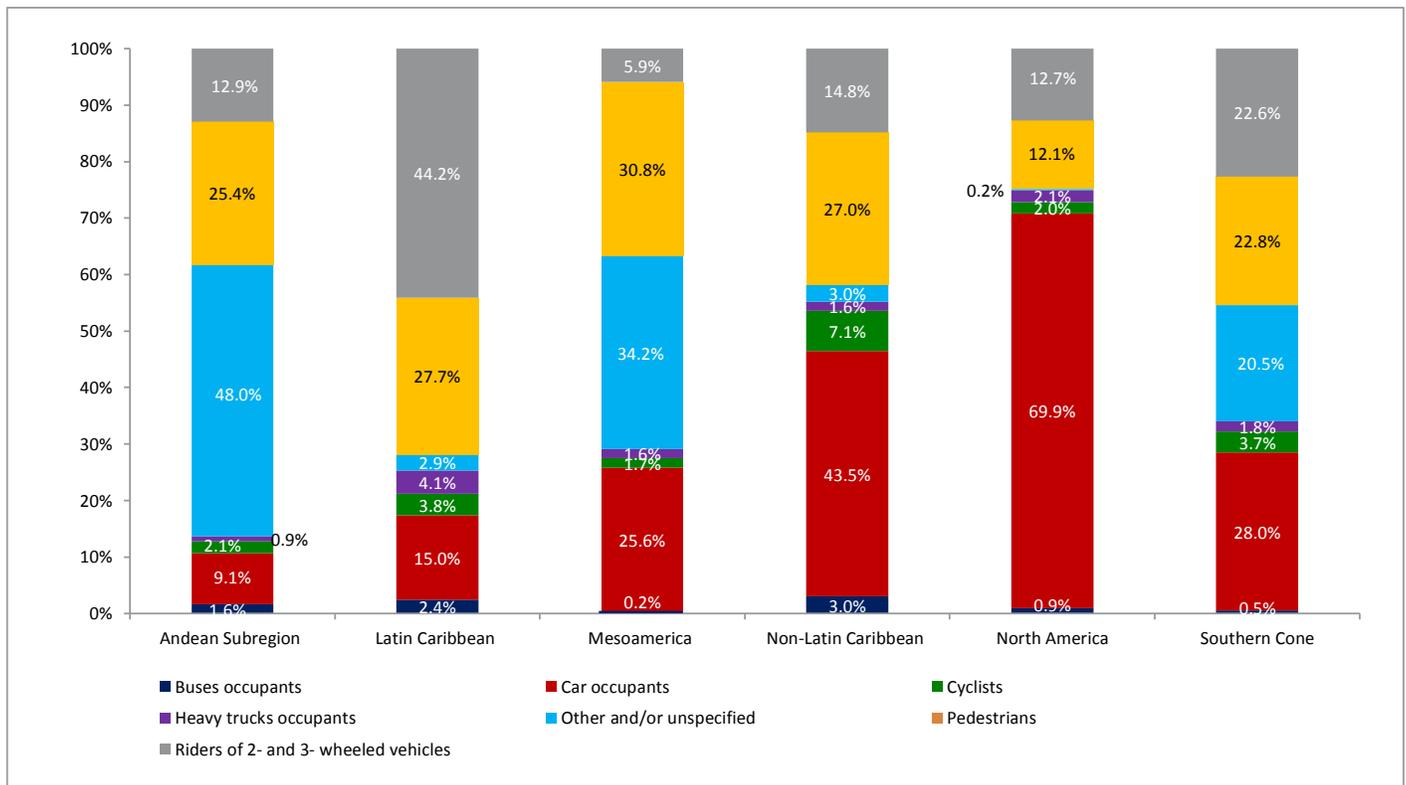
the highest share of pedestrian deaths, 30.8%. Deaths among riders of two- and three-wheeled vehicles are 44.2% of the total in the Latin Caribbean, 22.6% in the Southern Cone, and 14.8% in the non-Latin Caribbean.

On the other hand, car occupants account for an overwhelming share of road traffic deaths in North America, 69.9%. Car occupants are also the largest share in the non-Latin Caribbean countries (43.5%) and Southern Cone (28.0%), but by much smaller margins.

Data on road traffic deaths by type of road user remain scarce in at least in two subregions, Mesoamerica and the Andean Subregion, where there is a high percentage in the category of "other and/or unspecified" (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Proportion of reported road traffic deaths in the Region of the Americas, by type of road user and subregion, 2010



Source: Global Status Report on Road Safety 2013

MEN ARE AT HIGHER RISK THAN WOMEN

On average, males are four times more likely than females to die from road traffic injuries. Road traffic casualties are more prevalent among men than among women in all subregions of the Americas, a pattern that has remained steady in recent years. Men account for 69.6% of road traffic deaths in North America, 82.9% in Latin Caribbean countries, 80.8% in non-Latin Caribbean countries, 81.2% in the Southern Cone, 79.0% in Mesoamerica, and 79.8% in the Andean Subregion.

LEAD AGENCY AND STRATEGY FOR ROAD SAFETY IN THE REGION OF THE AMERICAS

In the Americas, 27 countries have a government agency that takes the lead on road safety, and 22 have one or more national or subnational strategies for road safety. Twelve countries reported an annual budget devoted to a national strategy, with per capita spending in US dollars ranging from less than a cent to more than \$10.

COUNTRIES SHOULD ENACT COMPREHENSIVE LAWS TO ADDRESS RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Throughout the Region, many countries have national or subnational legislation covering risk factors (excessive speed and drink-driving) as well as protective factors (use of motorcycle helmets, car seatbelts, and child restraints). However, not every country has comprehensive laws addressing these factors (Table 1).

In general, countries are doing a better job regulating protective factors than risk factors. Two-thirds of the countries have comprehensive laws on seatbelt use. About half of the countries have comprehensive laws on drink-driving, helmet use, and child restraint use. Only 5 of the 32 have laws on speed limits.

Table 1. Number of countries with comprehensive legislation on road safety in the Region of the Americas, 2010

Definition of Comprehensive Legislation	Andean Subregion (n=5)	Latin Caribbean (n=2)	Mesoamerica (n=8)	Non-Latin Caribbean (n=10)	North America (n=2)	Southern Cone (n=5)	Total number of countries (n=32)
Speed							
A national speed limit law with urban speed limits of ≤50 km/h and the ability of local authorities to reduce speed limits where appropriate.	1	1	2	-	-	1	5
Drink-driving							
A national drink-driving law based on Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC, and where the BAC limit for the general population is ≤0.05 g/dl).	3	2	4	1	-	4	14
Helmet use							
A national motorcycle helmet law that covers all riders, on all roads and all engine types, and requires an international or national helmet standard	2	1	1	6	1	4	15
Seatbelt use							
A national seat-belt law that applies to all private car occupants (front and rear seats).	4	1	4	6	1*	5	21
Child restraint							
A national child restraint law	3	1	4	7	-	4	19

Source: Global Status Report on Road Safety 2013

*Canada's seatbelt laws are subnational but comprehensive across all provinces.

COUNTRIES SHOULD SUPPORT WALKING, CYCLING, AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Countries can improve safety by enacting policies and building infrastructure to promote walking and bicycling as alternatives to car travel, to support investment in public transportation, and to protect vulnerable road users, such as by separating pedestrians and bicyclists from motor vehicle traffic.

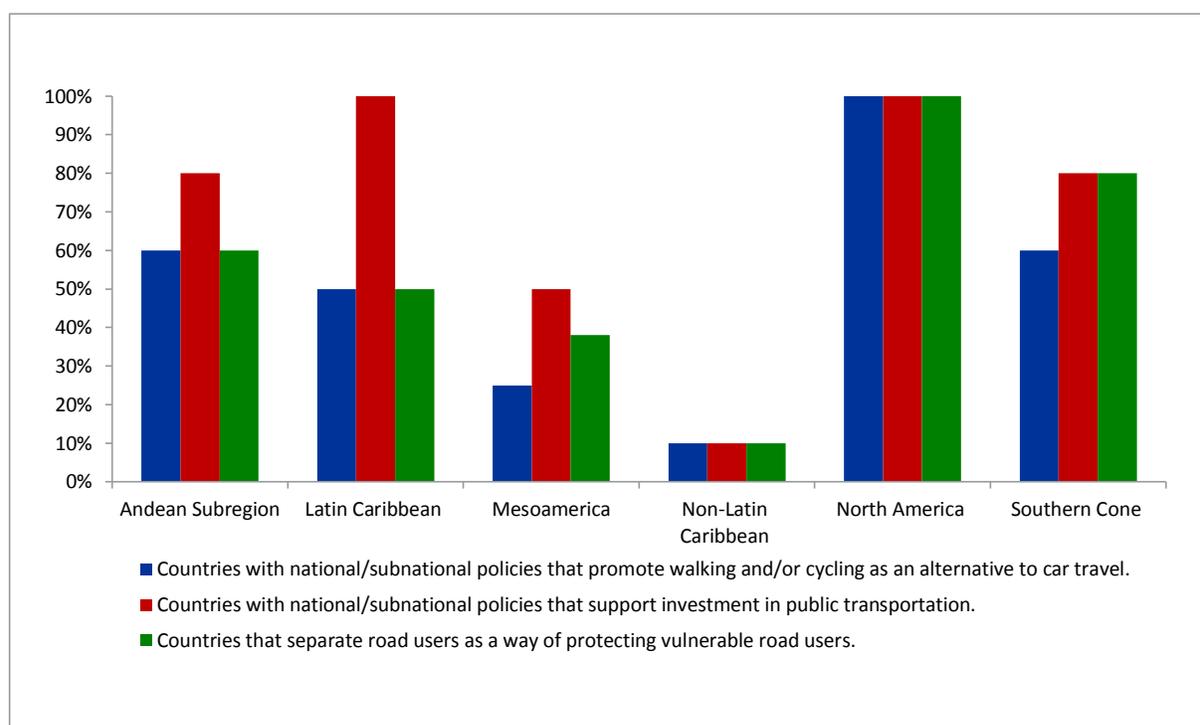
In the Region of the Americas:

- Twelve countries have policies that promote walking or cycling, of which 7 have subnational policies.
- Seventeen countries have policies that promote public transportation, of which 5 have subnational policies.
- Fourteen countries have policies to protect vulnerable road users, of which 8 have subnational policies.
- Among the subregions, North America has the highest frequency of the cited policies, while only 10% of countries in the non-Latin Caribbean have such policies (Figure 7).



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Figure 7. Policies that encourage walking, bicycling, support investment in public transportation, and separate road users in the Region of the Americas, by subregion, 2010



Source: Global Status Report on Road Safety 2013

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KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

To reduce deaths and injuries due to road traffic, countries should:

- Set up national advisory committees or lead agencies for road safety, providing them the necessary authority and resources to promote road safety measures.
- Promote the development of policies and infrastructure conducive to safe transit for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists, and motorcyclists on urban roads and highways.
- Reduce the contribution of risk factors (speed and alcohol consumption) to road traffic injuries and increase the use of protective equipment (helmets, seatbelts, and child restraints) by implementing and strictly enforcing comprehensive laws on risk and protective factors.
- Improve mass transit policies by emphasizing the principles of safety, equity, and accessibility.
- Develop and/or strengthen surveillance systems to improve the quality of data on groups and areas at greater risk for road traffic injuries.
- Promote enhanced technical safety requirements for new vehicles, including motorcycles. Prohibit the circulation of vehicles that do not meet safety requirements.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Organize and integrate prehospital care services for victims of road traffic injuries and improve access to these services, as well as to rehabilitation.
- Support a multisectoral approach to advocacy for road traffic injury prevention.
- Understand the economic and social costs of preventing road traffic injuries, as well as the costs of caring for road traffic injury victims.

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