

## Definition of a road traffic death by WHO and the health sector (Feb 2025)

The most widely cited definition of a road traffic fatality is: **“Any person killed immediately or dying within 30 days as a result of an injury accident, excluding suicides”** (International Transport Forum et al., 2019). This 30-day period is considered significant and has been a focus of standardization efforts, particularly in Europe. For example, countries that do not use the 30-day threshold apply conversion coefficients to enable comparisons based on this standard (International Transport Forum and UNECE, 2019). Despite its widespread use, there is no consensus on how to interpret the time interval between the injury event and death.

From the perspective of the **World Health Organization (WHO)** and the health sector, the interpretation of a road traffic fatality is determined by how health personnel record or code such events in medical records. These records follow the framework of the **International Classification of Diseases (ICD)** (World Health Organization, 1994). According to the ICD-10, road traffic deaths are defined as **“fatalities caused by injuries sustained in traffic accidents involving one or more moving vehicles on public roadways. These deaths may occur immediately or later as a direct result of the injuries from the accident.”** Unlike the 30-day definition, ICD-10 does not specify an upper time limit for road traffic deaths.

As a result, health personnel may document fatalities that occur beyond the 30-day timeframe, based on the detailed classifications provided in ICD-10. The classification system uses specific codes depending on the type of vehicle, the role of the injured person, and the circumstances of the incident. Relevant codes for road traffic deaths include:

- **V01–V09:** Pedestrians injured in transport accidents
- **V10–V19:** Cyclists injured in transport accidents
- **V20–V29:** Motorcycle riders injured in transport accidents
- **V30–V39:** Occupants of three-wheeled motor vehicles injured in transport accidents
- **V40–V49:** Car occupants injured in transport accidents
- **V50–V59:** Occupants of pick-up trucks or vans injured in transport accidents
- **V60–V69:** Occupants of heavy transport vehicles injured in transport accidents
- **V70–V79:** Bus occupants injured in transport accidents
- **V80–V89:** Other land transport accidents (e.g., involving animal-drawn vehicles or streetcars)

## References

- International Transport Forum, United Nations, Manuals and Guidelines, & Eurostat (2019). *Glossary for Transport Statistics*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- World Health Organization (1994). *International Classification of Diseases (Tenth Revision)*. Geneva: World Health Organization.