

# Risky Behaviors

# 2

## Key Unit

### THE CONTEXT

Road traffic injuries are the number one cause of death for young people worldwide.

- ▶ THE IMAGE
- ▶ Risky Behaviors
- ▶ Factors associated with risky behavior
- ▶ Activities



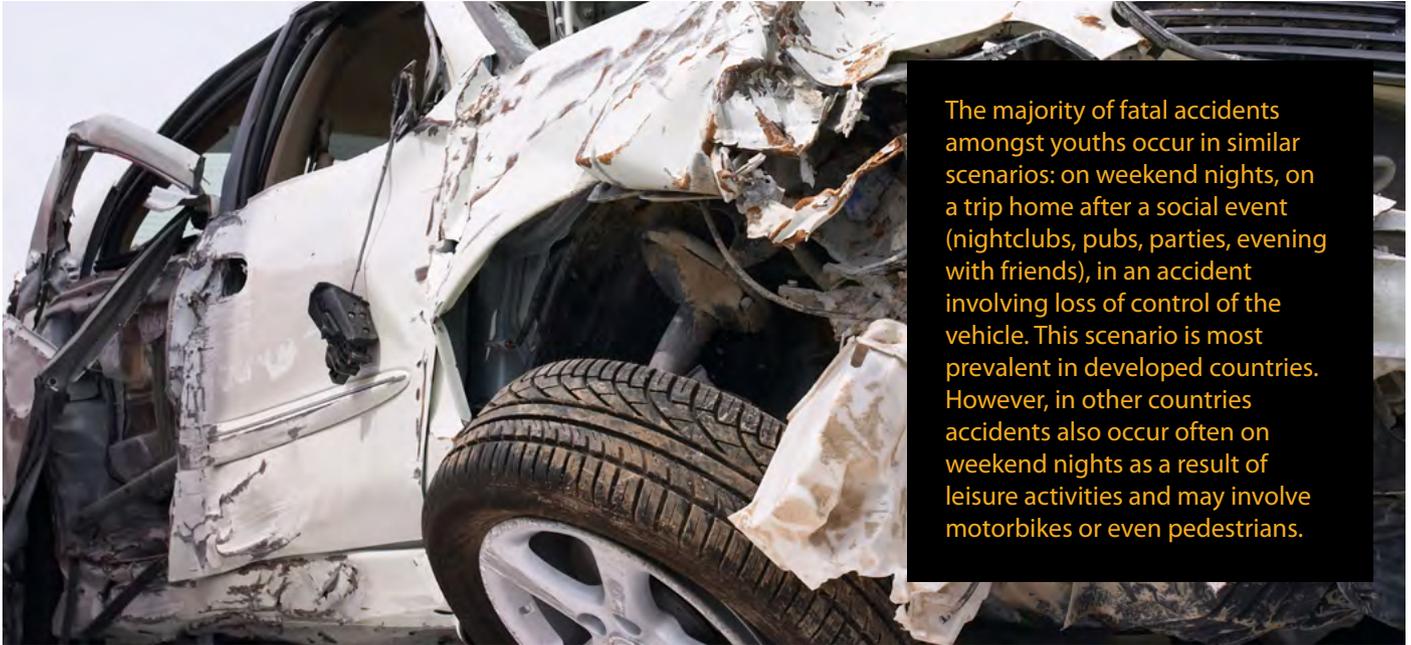
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## THE IMAGE

### “Saturday night Party”



John, Jimi, Paul and Sarah had been good friends since primary school. One Saturday afternoon they decided to go to a nightclub later that night, 30km outside the city. John was the only one with a license and he agreed to drive. The nightclub lived up to expectations and they drank and danced all night long. When it was time came go home, Sarah was apprehensive of getting in the car seeing that John was drunk, but not wanting to walk home she got in. At 5am, on an empty road, drunk, laughing and joking about the night's antics, John put his car to the limits. Driving at 170kph, the bend ahead was sharper than John had anticipated which made him swerve into an oncoming car owned by Susan, a 32 year old nurse and mother of two on her way to work. The car skidded and spun into the barrier and John and Paul both suffered severe whiplash and bodily bruising, Jimi and Sarah died on impact. Susan's car was sent into a spin and somersaulted across the road. Smashing into another car and eventually ending 10 meters down the slope she died 5 minutes before the ambulance arrived.

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# Risky Behaviors

**1** Youths have a higher level of risk for motor vehicle accidents around the globe.

**2** Specifically, boys are more at risk of being involved in a traffic accident than girls, demonstrating riskier behavior patterns.

**3** Six major risk factors are typically associated with motor vehicle accidents and can occur in various combinations: 1) speeding, 2) non-attachment of the seat belt or not wearing a helmet on a motorcycle, 3) alcohol and/or illicit drugs 4) fatigue, 5) overcrowding of the vehicle and 6) driver distraction.

**4** Young people behavior shouldn't be stigmatized. They are not an obstacle but rather an opportunity for prevention. Risky behaviors are not a fatality. When road safety in their community improves, the accident rate of young people improves as much as other age groups.

## Factors associated with risky behavior

### Excessive speed

Excessive speed, especially when traveling at night, is often, if not always, a cause for motor vehicle accidents and always increases the severity of injuries. Excessive speed is involved in one of every two fatal accidents. Reducing speed could lead to a notable decrease in the number of deaths on the roads. According to the ONISR (National Observatory for Road Safety in France) a reduction of 1 km per hour in average speed produces a decrease of 4% in the probability of an accident occurring.

### Not respecting safety measures

Not wearing seat belts in the rear passenger seat aggravates the severity of injuries in all accidents. In the same way, not wearing helmets notably increases the risk of suffering serious injuries on a bicycle or motorcycle.

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## Alcohol consumption

In most countries, alcohol has been detected as a contributing factor of approximately 30% of fatal road accidents amongst youth and adults<sup>1</sup>. This is a growing concern, as alcohol consumption in adolescence is becoming commonplace in most countries. Moreover, more young people are adopting habits of binge drinking: drinking heavily and quickly in the evenings on weekends.

## Other drugs

Illegal drugs found at the scene of accidents are mainly cannabis (reported in 15% of road fatalities of young people)<sup>2</sup>. This is a specific factor of accidents amongst young people as the use of cannabis decreases significantly after the age of 25. In addition, a major risk is produced by combining alcohol / cannabis consumption, due to combined effects of the two substances. Cannabis use is now also understood thanks to epidemiological studies. There is a sharp increase and a normalization of the contemporary use of this product, and in some countries, its regular use is more common than regular use of alcohol.

## Fatigue

Fatigue is less well known statistically as it is not illegal to be tired and this factor is very hard to detect or confirm as a causing factor in crashes. We can assume that it plays a very important role at the end of the night among young people, due to sleep deprivation.

## Overcrowding of vehicles

Overcrowding of vehicles occurs because not all young people have permits to drive or have a car, or because they prefer to stay in groups. Overcrowding also occurs in trucks, buses and sometimes even two-wheelers. This implies more victims when an accident occurs. In addition, drivers in overcrowded vehicles are more susceptible to distraction.

<sup>1</sup>ONISR- National Observatory for Road Safety in France

<sup>2</sup>SAM Study, 2005

## Risky behavior associated with two-wheeled vehicles

Two-wheel accidents are very common among young people; they occur due to two main processes:

- Infractions and stunt riding, which are related to age
- Errors due to inexperience and insufficient training, particularly the problems of understanding the difference between two wheels and four wheels. In this sense the “I did not see” and “I did not understand what he wanted,” can be explained by the differences in acceleration, maneuverability and trajectory between 2 and 4 wheels.

## From parent to child

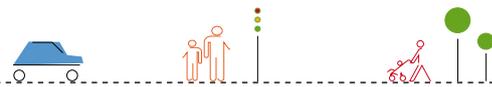
It is important to note that there is an intergenerational reproduction of risks, infractions and accidents: from the “observation post” in the back seat, children tend to learn from, and reproduce the parental behaviors (omissions, errors, offenses) through social modeling, imitation and identification.

## Risky behaviors amongst younger children

Among younger children (those who don't yet drive cars) risky behaviors are associated with pedestrian mobility and cycling. Contrary to stereotypes, the vast majority of pedestrian accidents do not occur in the vicinity of schools but in the last crossings close to home. The main risk factor is the selection of sites to cross: either it is random, or the child chooses a site which is very dangerous to cross (due to lack of mutual visibility between the pedestrian and the driver because of obstacles such as parked vehicles).

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## YOUR ideas

### ■ Brief

Create a self-assessment questionnaire on risk behavior, the questionnaire is to be created by the students and then completed by each one. It can then be completed by other members of the community.

### ■ Materials

Pen, paper.

### ■ Steps

The questionnaire is to be completed by the students and then should be completed by their peers, families or teachers. The following is a series of questions that can help the students devise their own; it can orientate them to the important themes that need to be addressed.



- What risky behaviors are associated with road safety?
- Do I sometimes behave in a risky way? How?
- What does it mean to take a risk? ¿What does it mean to be responsible?
- How do my behaviors during the day and night affect my safety?
- How does the choice of transport affect my safety?
- What safety equipment exists for each type of vehicle?
- How does the use of alcohol or drugs affect driving?
- Have I felt peer pressure before? When?
- Have I pressured friends to do something risky? How?
- How does gender, age and personality affect driver behavior and road safety?

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## YOUR initiatives

### ■ Objectives

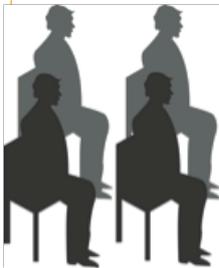
To understand risky behaviors and peer pressure through role play

### ■ Steps

Have students develop two role plays based on the following scenario.

Claudia, John, Yasmin and Michael are planning a night out in a night club 40 km from where they live. Only John can drive and there is no public transport that goes there.

Get students to explore two different outcomes, one where they end up in hospital and another safely at home. They should present their two role plays to the rest of the class, side by side.



1. Students are broken into groups of 4.
2. They are told the scenario of the role play.
3. They assign each other a character.
4. They write down ideas about the two possible endings.
5. They practice acting out the first scenes.
6. The scene design should be based on the four characters, seated on four chairs as if in a car.
7. Write down necessary dialog.

The role play can be filmed using a mobile or video camera and then published on YouTube or performed for other students in the school.

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## YOUR ideas

### Objectives

To debate about speed and braking distances

### Materials

- Pen, paper, board, projector, computer

### Steps

- Write the words road safety on the board and write “driving fast is fun”. Ask students if they agree or disagree with this statement and why.

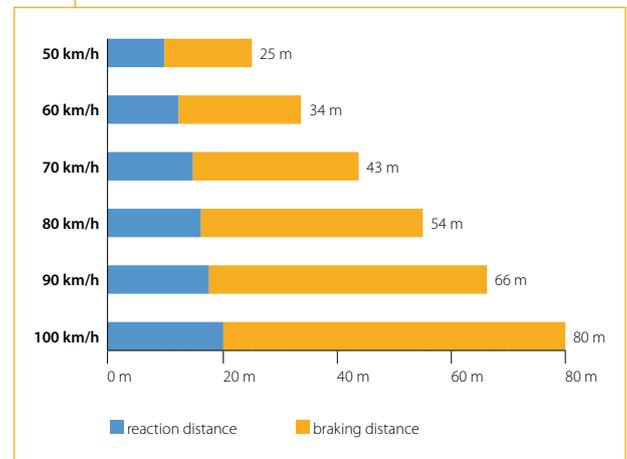
Then write or project these statistics on the board:

- Speed is a major factor in teen crash fatalities.
- Teens have the reaction time of a 70-year-old when distracted while driving.
- In 2008, 37 percent of fatal crashes with 15 to 20-year-old males at the wheel involved speeding.
- In 2008, 88 percent of speeding-related fatalities occurred on roads that were not interstate highways.
- Among crashes attributed to a critical teen driver error, 21 percent of serious teen driver crashes were due to driving too fast for road conditions.

Have students debate these statistics, discussing:

- Were they surprised about them or not?
- Have they ever been in a speeding car?
- How long does it take a car travelling at 100 km/h in dry conditions to stop?

Project the following graph on the board and ask students if they are surprised by the statistics.



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## YOUR initiatives

### ■ Objectives

To create a speed awareness campaign through a wiki

### ■ Materials

Pen, paper, computer, internet, Wikispaces.

<http://www.wikispaces.com/>



### ■ Steps

Students must prepare a speed awareness campaign to be published on a wiki and made available to everyone on the web.

1. Put students into groups of four.
2. Students familiarize themselves with Wikispaces by creating an account and discovering its capabilities.
3. Using pens and paper they jot down their ideas on what content should be created and published, using text, photos, videos, etc.
4. Decide on a slogan for the campaign
5. Decide how to organize the content, using different pages in order for it to be more impacting, etc.
6. Write the written content on a word processor.
7. Have the other members of the group correct each other's texts.
8. Choose relevant photographs and videos to represent the text.
9. Decide on the relevant design for the wiki.
10. Publish the content on the wiki.

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## Risky behaviors amongst youth

THINK! Education is a UK program created to raise awareness of road safety for children and young people. It includes easy-to-use resources for teachers, parents and young people.

Information about risky behaviors amongst youth can be found at

- <http://www.dft.gov.uk/think/education/secondary/>



The following website is designed for smaller children (6-11 years old). Research found that children in this age range need to understand the reasons for always using good road safety behavior. The campaign uses animated characters that are vulnerable to the real consequences of not following good road use. The key message is 'you need to use good road safety behavior or you could come to real harm'. The campaign also demonstrates the correct road safety behaviors.

- <http://talesoftheroad.direct.gov.uk/>

## The effects of alcohol

This site aims to provide young people with the facts about alcohol, and increase awareness of the effects of drinking alcohol among minors.

It has been adapted for the UK by Alcohol in Moderation, together with a team of education experts, teachers and young people, and is now maintained by the Alcohol Education Trust (see background for more information).

- <http://talkaboutalcohol.com/>



Understand the BAC (Blood Alcohol Content) through simulations such as

- <http://simu-alcool.com/mps/alcool.php>  
(in French)

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