Road Users Behaviour Monitoring in Estonia

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Abstract:
Rapid increases in motorization have raised concerns regarding accidents and fatalities internationally. Even nations experiencing declining numbers of fatalities, such as Estonia, have made it a major public policy goal to decrease fatalities. Traffic fatalities declined from 491 in 1991 to 204 in 2000 in Estonia. Nonetheless, the Federal Government is intent on another 50% decrease by 2010.

This paper studies two steps necessary to achieve this decrease, (1) understanding the perceptions of road-use behavior and (2) field observations of driving and pedestrian practices. In May and June 2001 655 subjects were surveyed to assess their perceptions of road-use behavior. Drunken driving, lack of seat-belt use in the rear seat and speeding on rural roads were all perceived to be problems. Generational differences accounted for the greatest differences in perception. The young gave higher scores on most road-use activities, suggesting that better driver education may be needed. The number of fatalities and field observation indicates that treatment of pedestrians is an area in need of attention, especially since the perception is that it is not a major problem. Pedestrians accounted for 39% of the motor-vehicle related fatalities in Estonia in 2000. And 70% of drivers were observed to be in violation of the law requiring them to yield to pedestrians. Pedestrians themselves are not without blame, with 26% of pedestrians observed to be in violation at signalized crossings. Finally, speeding continues to be a perceived and observed problem.