Eastern Partnership
ROAD SAFETY OBSERVATORY

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EASTERN PARTNERSHIP ROAD SAFETY IN DATA

UNDERSTANDING URBAN - RURAL ROAD SAFETY DISPARITIES IN ARMENIA AND MOLDOVA: WHERE CRASHES HAPPEN?

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DISCLAIMER

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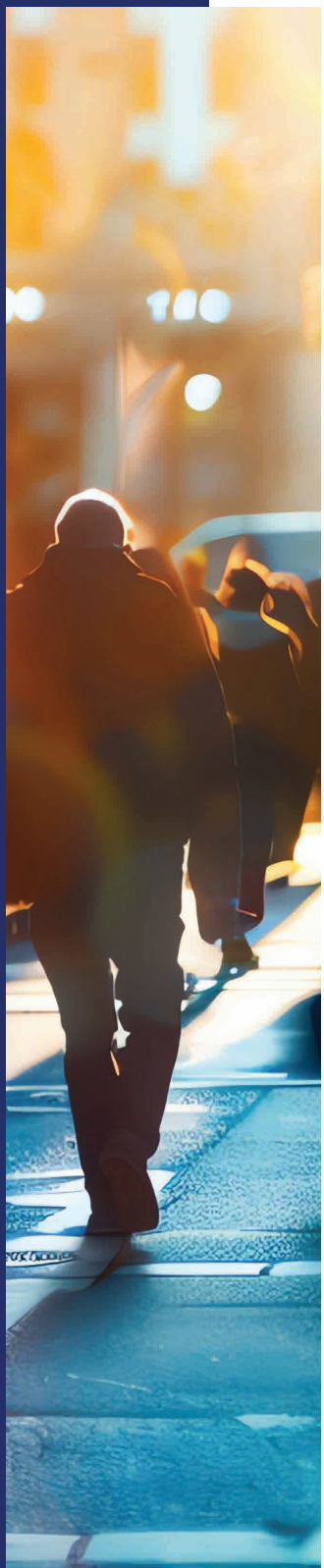
INTRODUCTION



The Eastern Partnership Road Safety Observatory (EaP RSO) continues to promote evidence-based decision making through systematic analysis of crash data across the region. This report examines the spatial dimension of road safety, comparing crash frequency and severity between urban and other (rural and inter-urban) areas in Armenia and Moldova during 2021-2023. The analysis explores how crash location influences fatality and injury outcomes and highlights key territorial differences relevant for policy design.

URBAN AND OTHER AREA CRASH PATTERNS IN MOLDOVA

The distribution of road crash outcomes in Moldova demonstrates a stable but unequal pattern between crash frequency and severity. Over 2021-2023, road crashes were almost evenly divided between urban and other areas: 51% in urban areas and 49% in other areas in 2021, and 50% each in 2022 and 2023. This stability indicates that crash risk is widely spread and not concentrated in one specific area.

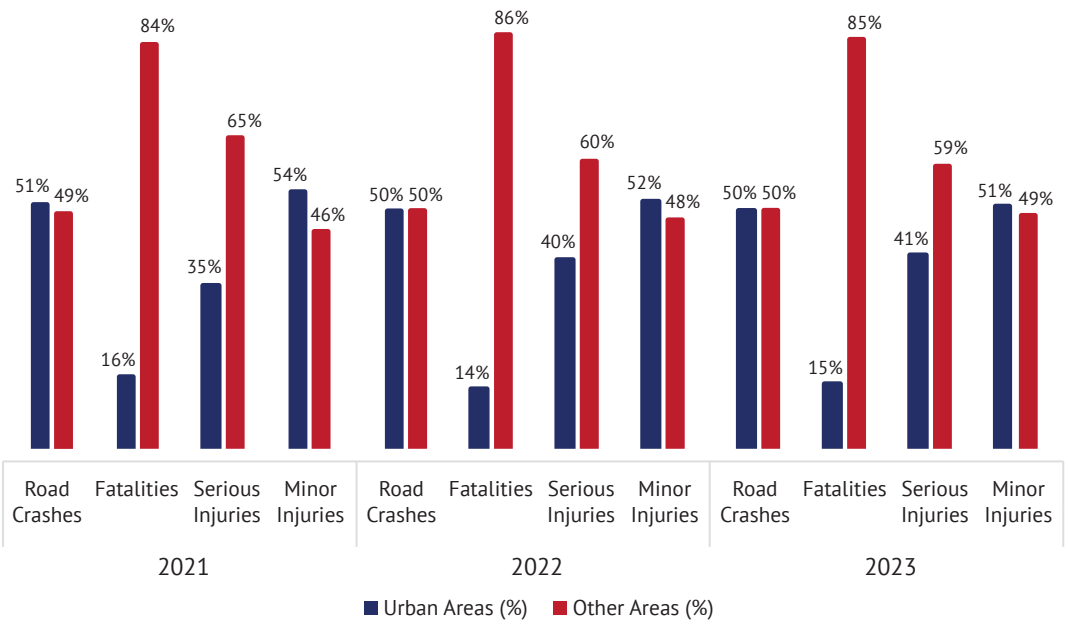
When looking at outcomes, however, the differences are striking. Fatalities were overwhelmingly higher in other areas 84% in 2021, 86% in 2022, and 85% in 2023, revealing that crashes in rural and inter-urban zones remain far more severe. The continued imbalance points to enduring structural factors, including excessive travel speeds, insufficient enforcement, and limited emergency response capacity in non-urban areas.

Serious injuries also occur more often in other areas, though the gap is slightly narrower. In 2021, 65% of serious injuries were recorded outside cities, falling to 60% in 2022 and 59% in 2023. The share of serious injuries in urban areas has therefore increased modestly from 35% to 41%, hinting at rising exposure to higher-risk situations in congested or poorly regulated urban spaces. Minor injuries were more evenly distributed, though still showing a slight urban predominance (54% in 2021, 52% in 2022, and 51% in 2023) consistent with frequent but low-severity collisions typical of city traffic.

Overall, Moldova's data reveal an important contrast: while crashes occur almost equally in both settings, rural and inter-urban areas remain the main source of fatal and severe outcomes.

[1] Data for the remaining EaP countries are not available.

Graph 1. Distribution of Road Crash Fatalities and Injuries in Urban and Other Areas, Moldova (2021-2023)



Source: Road Safety Country Profile, World Bank 2024

URBAN AND OTHER AREA CRASH PATTERNS IN ARMENIA

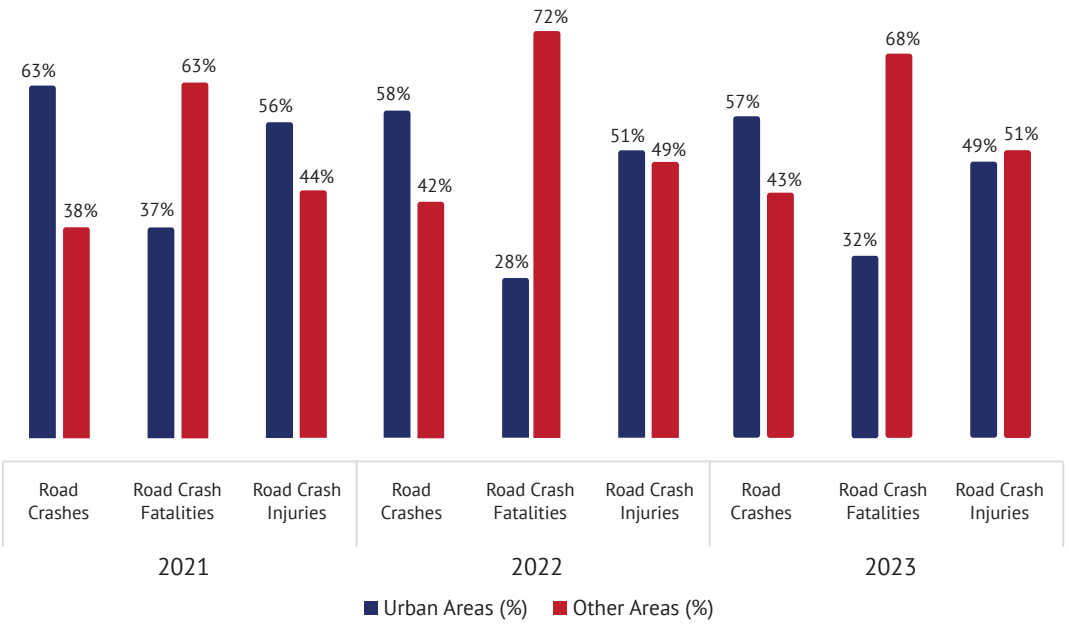
In Armenia, the territorial distribution of road crashes shows a somewhat different balance compared to Moldova. Urban areas dominate the overall crash profile, accounting for 57-63% of total road crashes during 2021-2023. In 2021, 62.5% of crashes occurred in urban areas compared to 37.5% in other areas. This gap narrowed over time, with urban shares declining to 58% in 2022 and 56.8% in 2023, while crashes in other areas rose to 42% and 43.2%, respectively. This concentration reflects the growing vehicle fleet, population density, and increased mobility in Yerevan and other regional centers.

However, fatal outcomes remain disproportionately concentrated in non-urban areas, where 63-72% of all road crash fatalities occurred. In 2021, 62.8% of road-crash deaths occurred outside cities, rising to 71.7% in 2022 before slightly declining to 67.7% in 2023. The urban share dropped from 37.2% to 28.3%, recovering modestly to 32.3% in 2023. The persistence of these patterns highlights vulnerabilities in Armenia's inter-city corridors and secondary road network. This confirms that non-urban crashes remain substantially more lethal due to higher speed limits and longer emergency response times.

The injury distribution presents a more balanced picture. Urban areas accounted for 49-58% of total injuries, indicating that while most crashes occur in cities, the probability of fatal or critical injury is lower there than on inter-urban routes. Urban crashes are generally of lower severity, often involving pedestrians or low-speed collisions in congested traffic conditions.

Overall, Armenia's road safety data indicate that urban areas experience a higher frequency of crashes but lower fatality risks, while rural and inter-urban areas face fewer crashes but higher severity levels. The gradual increase in rural injuries suggests expanding traffic exposure outside cities. These trends call for differentiated policy responses, enhancing enforcement and speed management on rural highways, and improving pedestrian protection, intersection design, and congestion management in growing urban centers.

Graph 2. Distribution of Road Crash Fatalities and Injuries in Urban and Other Areas, Armenia (2021-2023)



Source: Road Safety Country Profile, World Bank 2024

CONCLUSION

Both Moldova and Armenia show a similar pattern: road crashes are mainly concentrated in urban areas, while fatalities occur predominantly outside of urban areas. However, the scale of this imbalance varies between the two countries. In Moldova, the contrast between urban and other areas remains consistently pronounced over 2021-2023, underscoring the need for continued, focused action to improve safety beyond city boundaries. In Armenia, the urban share of crashes has gradually declined, while the difference in fatality rates between urban and other areas has narrowed, highlighting the importance of adapting road safety efforts to evolving spatial dynamics.

Overall, the findings reaffirm that geographical context shapes road safety outcomes and calls for tailored, location-specific policies.

ABOUT THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP ROAD SAFETY OBSERVATORY

The Eastern Partnership Road Safety Observatory (EaP RSO) is a joint initiative of the five Eastern Partnership countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine – with the common goal of reducing road casualties by 50% by 2030. Our mission is to contribute to reducing road casualties through improving the quality of systematic and consolidated data collection, management and analysis on road traffic deaths and serious injuries in line with best EU and international practices and capacity building of national counterparts in improved data practices and application to policy development. At its core, the EaP RSO operates as more than just a data repository – it functions as a comprehensive platform that fosters the sharing of good practices, facilitates evidence-based policy development, and promotes regional coordination in road safety management.

The observatory focuses on five key components: Road Safety Data, Knowledge, Resources, Tools, and Network development, working to standardise data collection based on CADaS and MiniCADaS protocols while building capacity across all partner countries. Through targeted training programmes, technical assistance, and stakeholder engagement involving government agencies, civil society organisations, and vulnerable road user groups, the EaP RSO creates a solid foundation for evidence-based road safety interventions that will ultimately save lives and reduce the devastating economic and social costs of road traffic crashes across the Eastern Partnership region.

The Technical Secretariat of the observatory is hosted by Georgia and is led by ISET Policy Institute (ISET-PI) and Eastern Alliance for Safe and Sustainable Transport (EASST) consortium. Our work is funded by the EU through the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) and supported by the World Bank technical assistance.

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