

Data at the International Transport Forum: Exploring Transport Statistics

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International Transport Forum at the OECD

ITF's Role and Data Significance

The International Transport Forum (ITF) at the OECD is an intergovernmental organisation with a global mandate covering all modes of transport. It has 66 member countries and continues to expand its global reach. The ITF acts as a global transport policy think tank and platform for policy dialogue, providing policy analysis and research to help member countries achieve their transport goals.

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The ITF promotes transport policies that improve people's quality of life. It aims to raise public awareness of transport policy and promote a deeper understanding of the role of transport in social inclusion, environmental sustainability and economic growth. The ITF is committed to delivering comprehensive and accessible research, generating evidence through data analysis, providing valuable policy insights and promoting transport-led growth on a global scale.

Transport data and statistics are the backbone of sound policy-making. Collecting transport

data and providing statistics for evidence-based policy advice is a core activity of the ITF. The ITF databases are one of the few sources of international transport statistics covering all modes of transport. The ITF's unique data provide a global and multi-modal perspective on transport trends. The data collected contribute to a wide range of ITF research policy areas, particularly accessibility, decarbonisation, safety, connectivity and digitalisation.

Navigating Through Diverse Data Sources

The ITF collects data from its member countries' transport ministries, national statistical offices and research institutes. Ensuring data quality and comparability is essential to the ITF's statistical work. The ITF Statistics Team ensures that data meets international standards for collection and processing so that transport performance can be compared and benchmarked across ITF member countries. To ensure that data provided by different countries are comparable, the ITF, Eurostat and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) have published the "Illustrated Glossary for Transport Statistics". The current 5th edition contains 744 definitions that provide a reference point for transport data and statistics.

ITF's Data Collection Methodology

The ITF publishes five core databases on a regular basis, supplemented by additional datasets on an ad hoc basis. These datasets are collected through a combination of planned surveys and spontaneous questionnaires distributed to transport ministries and statistical institutes. The surveys are well structured, clearly explaining indicators and definitions to promote response

consistency. This rigorous methodology not only ensures accurate and consistent data collection but also promotes meaningful analysis and facilitates benchmarking between countries. These databases include information on transport networks, freight and passenger transport demand, and road safety.

The first is based on the annual survey *“Trends in the transport sector”*. Data for each year are published on 31 October of the following year (i.e. data for 2023 will be published on 31 October 2024). For most countries, the time series starts in 1970. The database consists of four parts.

- 1) Freight transport: These data show how much freight is transported by rail, road, inland waterways and pipelines, measured in tonne-kilometres. It also includes figures for rail and maritime container transport, measured in TEUs and tonnes, and coastal shipping, measured in tonne-kilometres.
- 2) Passenger transport: These data show passenger transport by rail and road, measured in passenger-kilometres, split between cars and buses/coaches where possible.
- 3) Road safety: This includes data on the number of deaths, injuries and accidents.
- 4) Inland transport infrastructure: Infrastructure data include the length of railways, roads and inland waterways,

as well as electrified railways and motorways where available.

The second database is based on the annual *“Investment in Transport Infrastructure”* survey. Data are published on 31 March each year with a two-year lag (i.e. data for 2022 will be published on 31 March 2024). The time series for most countries starts in 1995, and the database includes information on investment and maintenance expenditure on transport infrastructure such as railways, roads, inland waterways, ports and airports. For a few countries, it also includes data on the capital value of their transport infrastructure.

The third database is compiled from the *“Quarterly Transport Statistics”* survey. Data are collected four times a year, starting on 1 March and published at the end of the same month with a delay of three months. For example, data for the fourth quarter of 2023 will be published on 31 March 2024. For most countries, the time series starts in 1994. The database is divided into three sections.

- 1) Rail transport data includes information on both freight and passenger transport. This information is split between national and international transport and is expressed in tonne-kilometres and passenger-kilometres, respectively.



- 2) Road transport data include information on freight transport, measured in tonne-kilometres and also split between national and international transport. In addition, road transport data are presented in vehicle-kilometres, first registrations of new passenger cars and lorries, tonnes of fuel supplied to the road transport sector and road deaths.
- 3) Inland waterways data include information on freight transport, expressed in tonne-kilometres and split between national and international transport.

The ITF also collects and publishes supplementary databases on an ad-hoc basis. These databases are compiled from spontaneous questionnaires distributed to member countries, tailored to meet specific needs and contribute to case-specific policy analysis

The fourth database, “*Transport Performance Indicators*”, uses a combination of datasets, including publicly available information from other organisations, to produce around 90 transport performance indicators. These indicators are published on 15 November each year and typically cover the period from 1994 onwards. The performance indicators cover seven different dimensions of transport, including infrastructure, measurement, equipment, traffic, safety, economy and energy.

The last is the road safety database. The International Traffic Safety Data and Analysis Group (IRTAD) is a permanent working group on road safety that has a road safety database containing crash and exposure data for 35 countries, called the “*IRTAD database*”. This database contains data on the number of road deaths by age, gender, road user, type of road and month. It also includes data on the number

of injured, seriously injured, and MAIS3+ injured by age and road user, as well as injury crashes by road type. The database also contains exposure data such as the number of registered vehicles, population, motor vehicle traffic, and safety performance indicators such as seat belt and helmet use. The exposure data are essential for calculating indicators that ensure comparability between countries. The time series for most countries in the database begin in 1970. All data in the database are validated and provided in a common format according to definitions developed and agreed upon by the IRTAD group.

The ITF also collects and publishes supplementary databases on an ad-hoc basis. These databases are compiled from spontaneous questionnaires distributed to member countries, tailored to meet specific needs and contribute to case-specific policy analysis. The most important of these databases provides data on the findings of the ITF Transport Outlook. This biennial flagship publication of the ITF examines the impact of various policies on global transport demand and carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions up to 2050. The analysis covers passenger and freight transport across all modes.

Utilisation of ITF Data in Publications

With the exception of the IRTAD database, all data are publicly available on the *OECD Statistical Portal*. The IRTAD database is accessible only to members of the group, but extracts can be sent on request. These databases form the basis of several ITF publications. Firstly, the ITF publishes four Statistics Briefs each year on *transport infrastructure spending, key transport statistics, global trade* and the *latest trends in freight and passenger transport*. Road safety data also forms the basis of the *Annual Road Safety Report* and *Country Profiles*. The Transport Performance Indicators are used to calculate transport indices that compare countries across six dimensions in the *Transport Data Dashboard*. The dashboard allows the indicators to be visualised over time and across countries. Finally, ITF freight and passenger data are used to fine-tune the transport models developed for the ITF Transport Outlook. ●