One hundred and sixty-nine, the number of people who have died on our roads this year. But I think the most important thing to know about road deaths in Ireland is that they have decreased from about six hundred people per year in the late nineteen seventies to over one hundred and sixty in 2015 and 2016.

This is a **phenomenal** decrease by ANY standard. However, there are still nearly one-hundred and seventy people dying needlessly on our roads every year. They leave behind many grieving relatives and friends. Therefore, it is still a problem that deserves our attention and we must do **all** that is possible to bring these figures down even further…..

The factors that contribute to road deaths have remained stubbornly constant in that time and I will examine now, and, ask what can we as individuals do to address these. I will also ask what can the state do?

The first of these factors is speeding.

Speeding on Irish roads is the BIGGEST contributor to road deaths among all of the other factors. Twenty-nine percent of road deaths from 2008 to 2012 were caused by speeding.

Most of those killed were males under thirty-four years of age and most of these accidents were single vehicle collisions.

Like speeding alcohol consumption and driving is still a **significant** issue in Irish road accidents. In the same period that is 2008 to 2012 alcohol contributed to twenty-nine percent of deaths on the roads. Again most of those who died in these accidents were males under thirty four years of age. Half of those killed during this time had consumed four times the legal level of alcohol. In the case of motorcyclists ninety-six were killed in this period but a shocking level of ninety one percent of these were over the legal limit.

In a Red C Poll on drink-driving conducted in June 2016 for Newstalk and the Pat Kenny show. One in four had been passengers in a car with a drive who had drink taken. More than seventy percent of this number also said that they had difficulty in assessing whether they were over the limit or not the morning after.

The RSA labelled this attitude towards alcohol a ‘chronic’ problem that remains unsolved despite the efforts to address it.

The third issue which continues to contribute to Irish road deaths is the non-wearing of seatbelts. In 2015 this was a factor in thirty percent of road deaths. Studies conducted in Sweden and the USA show that the wearing of seatbelts can halve the risk of death or injury.

Earlier this year the Safety Officer of Donegal County Council reported that young drivers in Donegal were deliberately installing extra clips in their cars to prevent the alarm that sounds when the driver fails to buckle up. The reason was that apparently they felt that the seatbelt was too **uncomfortable.** This story comes from a county that experienced the single worst road accident in the history of the state in 2010 where eight people died in a single accident.

Pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists are known as ‘vulnerable road users’ because their risk of injury is higher. Between 2012 and 2014 deaths among pedestrians were up forty-five percent. Deaths among cyclists doubled during the same period. Motorcyclists have a risk of being killed in a traffic accident that is twenty four times higher than it is for a car passenger.

All of these categories are competing for a space on overcrowded urban roads and narrow, badly maintained rural ones. A collision is three times more likely to occur on a rural national road than on o a motorway despite the volume of traffic on the motorways.

For cyclists who are more numerous by the day the risk of death or injury is ever present but is more evident in large cities like Dublin. Heavy goods vehicles are a particular hazard. As their visibility is limited. For 2016, ten cyclists have been killed to date which is already one more than in 2015.

Responsibility for road safety must be seen by us as a shared activity- as individuals and communities we have our role and then the state has its role as an institution.

The state has a key role in promoting road safety for the good of its citizens. It does this through the enactment of appropriate laws to regulate traffic and provide for road safety.