



# UNDERVALUED LIVES — THE COST OF UNSAFE CARS

DRIVERS IN LATIN AMERICA NEED SAFETY  
STANDARDS, NOT DOUBLE STANDARDS

# THE STORY...

Motor manufacturing giants are selling cars in Latin America with minimal or no safety features.

These vehicles could not be sold in the US, Europe, Japan or Australia, where car safety regulation is tighter and manufacturers provide better car safety information.

Car models with the lowest safety ratings dominate rankings for best-selling cars in Latin America.

Five of the 10 top-selling cars in Mexico and Brazil are so unsafe that they score only zero or one star in Latin America car crash test ratings, out of a total of five stars.

Road deaths in Latin America stand at 17 per 100,000 people. In high-income countries the figure is 8.7 per 100,000 people.

Manufacturers are choosing to only comply with existing weak national regulations for Latin American markets, even though they comply with stronger United Nations vehicle safety standards in cars made for other regions.

Showrooms are providing sparse and inaccurate information about car safety features: claiming, for example, that a large boot or trunk will make a car more crashworthy.

A new United Nations resolution calls on governments to ensure that all new motor vehicles *“meet applicable minimum regulations for occupant and other road users’ protection, with seat belts, air bags and active safety systems fitted as standard”*. This would require manufacturers to stop producing such unsafe cars.

This briefing is drawn from Consumer International’s report *‘Safer Cars for Latin America’*, available at [www.consumersinternational.org](http://www.consumersinternational.org)

*Car crash images courtesy of Latin NCAP*

# A SHOCKING INJUSTICE

There is a shocking global injustice in car safety standards. It is not acceptable that a leading car manufacturer in Mexico produces one version of a car to the highest safety standards for export to the United States or Europe, and produces another without any of those safety features for sale locally.

But that is exactly what is happening, at a time when the United Nations is calling on all countries to ensure basic car safety features are fitted as standard.

## Lives are being lost.

Ninety percent of road traffic deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries where car manufacturers continue to sell unsafe cars – not because they are not capable of making safe cars, but because they are not bound to do so by law. Car safety regulations are absent or weak in Latin American countries. So people are buying and driving cars which could not be sold in well-regulated countries like the US, Japan or Australia, or in Europe.

Consumers International, the world federation of consumer groups, is supporting the international campaign for urgent improvements to vehicle safety to help reduce the toll of 1.25 million people who die on the roads each year. With our members in Latin America, we have been working alongside global and Latin new car assessment programmes to push for improved car safety regulation.

As part of this work, we have conducted research into some of the largest markets for car sales in Latin America. Focusing on Brazil, Mexico, Peru, Chile and Argentina, we have identified the manufacturers of cars which are threatening the lives of drivers, their families and children, to unnecessary and unacceptable risks. And we have calculated how many unsafe cars they are selling.

Some of our findings are disturbing. But our members intend to use this data as we continue to campaign for improved car safety in Latin America. Together we can save lives through safer cars.



Amanda Long, Director General, Consumers International

*Consumers International (CI) is the world federation of consumer organisations working together to champion consumer rights. With more than 240 member organisations in 120 countries, we are building a powerful international movement to help protect and empower consumers everywhere.*

# DEATHS IN A RAPIDLY GROWING MARKET

Latin America is a rapidly growing market for new cars. But it is dominated by vehicles which would be banned elsewhere because national safety regulations are weak.

Latin America's share in global car registrations and sales has increased by 165% since 2005. Brazil and Mexico have established themselves as leading car producing countries, alongside China, India, Russia, Thailand and long-standing producers such as the EU, Japan, South Korea and the USA. Peru is the most rapidly growing market, where the annual growth of cars on the road is 9.3%.

Unfortunately, increasing car sales have come at a cost. Brazil and Mexico are the biggest markets for car sales in the region, the biggest car producers and have the highest numbers of cars on the road. They also have the most traffic fatalities.

The Latin America road traffic death rate stands in stark contrast to that in countries with high car safety standards. Data from the World Health Organisation shows that road deaths for high-income countries stand at 8.7 per 100,000 people, while in Latin America the figure is 17 deaths per 100,000 individuals. WHO predicts that the death rate in Latin America will rise to 24 per 100,000 unless urgent action is taken.

High income countries have adopted United Nations vehicle safety regulations ensuring crash worthiness, crash avoidance and pedestrian protection in all new vehicles. However, these UN regulations are not yet adopted in Latin American countries.

**Argentina** had 5,619 traffic fatalities in 2015

It has adopted 0 out of 7 UN safety regulations (Argentina has adopted national equivalents covering three of the UNECE regulations but they are not as rigorous)

**13.6 deaths per 100,000**

**Brazil** had 46,935 traffic fatalities in 2015

It has adopted 0 out of 7 UN regulations (Brazil has adopted national equivalents covering five of the UNECE regulations but they are not as rigorous)

**23.4 deaths per 100,000**

**Chile** had 2,179 traffic fatalities in 2015

It has adopted 0 out of 7 UN regulations

**12.4 deaths per 100,000**

**Mexico** had 15,062 traffic fatalities in 2015

It has adopted 0 out of 7 UN regulations

**12.3 deaths per 100,000**

**Peru** had 4,234 traffic fatalities in 2015

It has adopted 0 out of 7 UN regulations

**13.9 deaths per 100,000**

# CARS WITHOUT STARS

Around the world, new car assessment programmes (NCAPs) carry out crash tests on new cars and allocate a rating that demonstrates safety performance. They use a star rating: five stars is the highest safety score, while zero stars is the lowest. Zero and one star cars leave driver and passengers with little chance of survival in a crash at average speeds.

Latin NCAP, has tested more than 70 car models since 2010. It has found that many vehicles sold in the region perform very poorly in crash tests.

Models awarded zero or one stars in Latin NCAP testing between 2010 and 2015		★
Chery IQ no Airbag	(manufactured in China)	0
Fiat New Palio no Airbag	(manufactured in Argentina)	0
Fiat Novo Uno Evo no Airbag	(manufactured in Brazil)	1
Fiat Palio Elx 1.4 no Airbag	(manufactured in Argentina/Brazil)	1
Ford Ka Fly Viral no Airbag	(manufactured in Brazil)	1
Geely CK 1 1.3 no Airbag	(manufactured in China)	0
GM/Chevrolet Agile no Airbag	(manufactured in Mexico)	0
GM/Chevrolet Aveo no Airbag	(manufactured in Mexico)	0
GM/Chevrolet Celta no Airbag	(manufactured in Brazil)	1
GM/Chevrolet Corsa Classic no Airbag	(manufactured in Argentina)	1
GM/Chevrolet Sail no Airbag	(manufactured in China)	0
GM/Chevrolet Spark no Airbag	(manufactured in South Korea)	0
Hyundai Grand I10 no Airbag	(manufactured in India)	0
JAC J3 Double Airbag	(manufactured in China)	1
Lifan 320 no Airbag	(manufactured in China)	0
Nissan Tiida Sedan no Airbag	(manufactured in Mexico)	0
Nissan Tsuru / Sentra B13 no Airbag	(manufactured in Mexico)	0
Peugeot 207 Compact 5P 1.4 no Airbag	(manufactured in Argentina/Brazil)	1
Renault Clio Mio no Airbag	(manufactured in Argentina)	0
Renault Sandero no Airbag	(manufactured in Argentina)	1
Suzuki Alto K10 no Airbag	(manufactured in India)	0
Volkswagen Gol Trend 1.6 no Airbag	(manufactured in Brazil)	1

In April 2016, Latin NCAP testing resulted in a further zero star safety rating – for the GM/Chevrolet Sail.

All of the 22 models rated zero or one star by Latin NCAP lack airbags, apart from the JAC J3. Even with airbags added, the cars would be unlikely to meet UN vehicle safety regulations and could not be sold in the US, Europe, Australia or Japan.



# HOW DANGEROUS ARE ZERO STAR CARS?

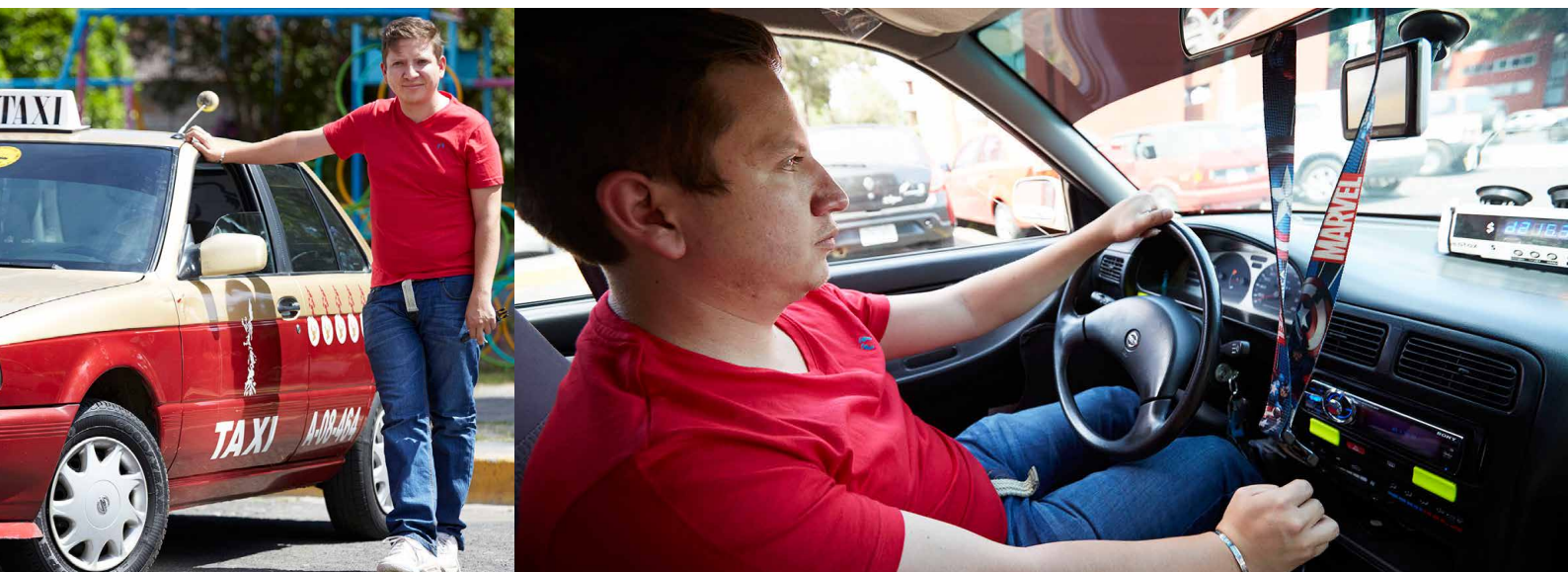
The Nissan Tsuru is the best-selling car in Mexico and is commonly used as a taxi. It has a zero star rating from Latin NCAP crash tests, meaning the driver is provided with poor levels of protection.

Latin NCAP and the Mexican consumer organisation El Poder Del Consumidor examined crash data involving the Nissan Tsuru in Mexico. Their findings, published in April 2016, were shocking. Between 2007 and 2012, an average of 684 people died each year in crashes involving the Nissan Tsuru.

That is a total of over 4,100 deaths in one country in just six years, in just one of the zero star cars on the road.

Car owners in Mexico, when interviewed, all talked about their lack of awareness about safety features in the cars they had bought. Some assumed that all cars would be safe, and questioned why there is a difference between cars sold in different countries.

Gabriel Sánchez Calderón, 29, a taxi driver from Mexico City, was shocked to watch film of crash tests destroying a Nissan Tsuru in a 60km per hour collision. His taxi fleet consists of eight Nissan Tsurus, one GM/Chevrolet Aveo and a Nissan Tiida. *"We know they do not have airbags,"* he said, *"but seeing it crash is alarming. Maybe I didn't research as much as was necessary."*



# UNSAFE CARS ARE TOP SELLERS

Consumers International research has examined how widely the 22 car models which achieved the lowest safety ratings from Latin NCAP (a zero or one star) are being sold in Latin America.

We examined car manufacturers' catalogues to see whether these models are still being marketed, and analysed best-selling car lists to see how popular they are. Manufacturers now offer airbags fitted as standard in some of these models. However until the airbag model is tested by Latin NCAP, it is not possible to say how well these cars would perform in a crash test, and therefore how many stars they would receive.

We discovered that car models with zero or one star safety ratings dominate the top ten best-selling rankings in Latin American markets.

In 2015, car models that were rated zero or one star account for:



5 of the 10 top-selling cars in Mexico and Brazil

4 of the 10 top-selling cars in Argentina

3 of the 10 top-selling cars in Chile

In 2015 the most popular zero or one star cars were:



Argentina	GM/Chevrolet Corsa Classic	133,176 sold 2012-2015
Brazil	Volkswagen Gol	814,124 sold 2012-2015
Chile	GM/Chevrolet Sail	55,475 sold 2012-2015
Mexico	GM/Chevrolet Aveo	240,611 sold 2012-2015

# UNSAFE CARS ARE TOP SELLERS

Between 2012 and 2015



- Fiat sold at least 1.3 million one star cars in Brazil and Argentina
- Volkswagen sold at least 941,311 one star cars in Brazil and Argentina
- GM/Chevrolet sold at least 725,787 one star rated cars in Brazil and Argentina

Across the Latin American countries in this study, GM/Chevrolet has sold more than 725,787 zero rated cars – none of which would pass UN safety regulations.

Our study shows that, even though manufacturers know these vehicles have very low safety standards, they are choosing to comply with existing weak national regulations rather than UN vehicle safety standards.

## Our other main findings:

Manufacturers are selling zero and one star cars without airbags in Chile, Argentina, Peru and Mexico – even though occupants would stand little chance of surviving a 64km per hour crash.

In Peru, no less than ten models with zero or one star ratings are available as new models. In Chile, nine zero or one star models are on the market.

Zero and one star car models are more widely available in countries with lower levels of regulation – for example, Chile and Peru.

There are fewer cars with zero or one star ratings in Argentina and Brazil. This is likely to be the result of mandatory regulations on the use of double airbags and ABS systems, introduced in 2014.





# CONFUSION FOR CONSUMERS

Latin American consumers are not getting clear and accurate information about the safety of cars they are considering buying.

In March 2016, as part of a qualitative survey Consumers International member organisations in Peru, Chile, Argentina and Mexico sent representatives posing as shoppers to ask dealerships about safety features of economy car models.

## They found that:

- Only two of the 12 dealerships visited provided information about the safety features of car models without prompting.
- In four cases, dealerships could not provide even a basic level of information on safety when asked.
- In two cases, sales persons openly admitted that car models were not safe.
- In six cases, car sales persons provided misleading or inaccurate information about safety features: three separate salespersons assured consumers that their models met unspecified safety “certifications” or “requirements” when asked about Latin NCAP ratings.

## This limited exercise suggests:

- Safety issues are not viewed as a critical issue for consumers when deciding to purchase a car because awareness is low and there has been little consumer education.
- A significant number of salespersons provide misleading or inaccurate information about safety features.
- There is low awareness of Latin NCAP ratings and what they mean.

This qualitative survey indicates consumers face a significant challenge when trying to determine the level of safety offered by cars.

Consumers International challenges the car industry to provide transparent data about the safety specifications of new cars, allowing consumers to make choices based on reliable and clear information.



# SAFETY IS CHEAP

It does not cost much to bring a car in line with basic United Nations safety regulations. For a typical small car to pass the UN frontal crash test (Regulation 94) it would require the addition of an airbag and strengthened body work. Global NCAP have estimated that it would cost \$200 (USD) to add two airbags and strengthened body work.

Cost of airbag + strengthened body work	\$200 (USD)
Cost of one airbag	\$50 (USD)
Cost of electronic stability control (ESC)	\$50 (USD)
Cost of ABS with ESC	\$75 - \$100 (USD)



# WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

On 15 April 2016, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on *“Improving global road safety”* which represents the UN’s strongest ever commitment to road safety.

## The resolution:

*“Invites Member States that have not already done so to consider adopting policies and measures to implement United Nations vehicle safety regulations or equivalent national standards to ensure that all new motor vehicles meet applicable minimum regulations for occupant and other road users’ protection, with seat belts, air bags and active safety systems fitted as standard.”*

Consumers International is calling on:

## Latin American governments

- to immediately commit to signing up to front and side impact crash testing for all new car models by the end of 2016 (UNECE Regulations 94 and 95),
- to adopt the UN regulations on vehicle safety in line with the road map set down by Latin NCAP,
- to work in partnership with consumer organisations to conduct public awareness campaigns on the importance of vehicle safety.

## Manufacturers

- to stop selling zero star cars across Latin America,
- to accept their responsibility to consumers and voluntarily apply the standards in the UN regulations on vehicle safety,
- to publish accurate data on car sales without airbags across Latin America as a baseline for eradicating this practice,
- to be transparent about car model specifications and safety features.

## Consumer organisations

to work with consumers to improve knowledge and awareness of what makes a safe car, including through Latin NCAP rankings, and to pressure government and manufacturers to regulate the market more effectively.



STOP THE CRASH  
PARTNERSHIP



EL PODER DEL CONSUMIDOR



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