

Make walking and cycling safe

The 8th United Nations Global Road Safety Week in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

12–18 May 2025

Road traffic injuries are a leading cause of death and disability globally and in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region. The Region has the second-highest road traffic death rate in the world with 125 781 deaths every year, more than a third of them among pedestrians and cyclists (1).

UN Road Safety Week 2025 aims to promote and facilitate a shift to walking and cycling – healthy, green, sustainable and economically advantageous modes of transport that also contribute to many Sustainable Development Goals (2). The UN General Assembly mandated WHO and UN regional commissions to host periodic UN Global Road Safety Weeks to help raise awareness about road safety issues and stimulate responses. In Resolution 76/255 of 15 March 2022, the General Assembly called for the integration of the bicycle into public transportation systems for sustainable development (3).

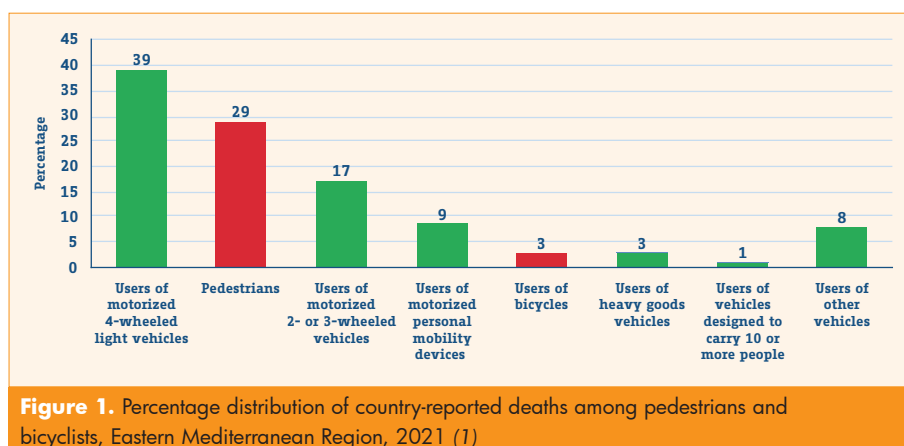
Walking and cycling provide significant physical and mental health benefits. They contribute to the prevention and management of noncommunicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer and diabetes and help to enhance mental and brain health. They can also help prevent and manage substance use and limit relapse. Among children and adolescents, they encourage healthy growth and muscle development and improve motor and cognitive development (4). Walking is the most popular form of exercise among older adults. It can strengthen muscles, reduce the risks of heart disease, stroke, diabetes and osteoporosis, improve balance and lower the likelihood of falling (5). Furthermore, many of the health benefits of physical activity, including walking and cycling, for children, adolescents and adults also apply to those living with disabilities (6). And safe walking and cycling also contribute to urban transport systems that reduce road traffic injuries and other threats, including air and noise pollution (7).

Regional situation

The Eastern Mediterranean Region accounts for 11% of all road traffic fatalities worldwide. In 2021, pedestrian and bicyclists' deaths accounted for more than a third of regional road traffic deaths (Figure 1). The Eastern Mediterranean Region ranks second among WHO regions in the

Messages of the 8th UN Global Road Safety Week

- Safe walking and cycling can help make people healthier, societies more equitable, and cities sustainable and walkable for all, including the elderly and persons with disabilities.
- Pedestrians and cyclists account for more than 30% of all road traffic deaths.
- Effective, evidence-based measures are needed to make walking and cycling safe.
- Walking and cycling are integral to the multimodal transport systems advocated in the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021–2030
- Policies to promote and support walking and cycling are cost-effective.



proportion of pedestrian deaths out of all road traffic deaths; and while bicyclists' deaths form only 3% of reported fatalities in the Region, underreporting and issues of data quality and reliability mean the real figure may well be higher.

Interventions made to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety in the Region

- **Eleven countries** have safe crossings for pedestrians and cyclists
- **Seven countries** separate pedestrians and cyclists from vehicular traffic
- **Three countries** of the 13 countries that have a national road safety strategy have targets for promoting walking as an alternative to car travel
- **Two countries** apply insurance regulations to bicycles
- **Five countries** have dedicated cycle lanes that form 7% of their total paved kilometres (km)

Proposed actions (8)

- **Multimodal transport and land-use planning:** Discourage the use of private vehicles in high-density urban areas by providing accessible, safe and easy-to-use alternatives such as walking, cycling, buses and trams. Provide intermodal connectivity between transit and bike share schemes at major transit stops.
- **Safer road infrastructure:** Set a performance target for each type of road user with clear measurable metrics for road safety inspections.
- **Safer road use:** Implement physical separation of road users, including protected bicycle lanes and pedestrian-only zones.
- **Speed management:** In urban areas where there is a typical, predictable mix of road users, establish a maximum speed limit of 30 km/hour, unless strong evidence exists to support higher limits.
- **Adapting technologies:** Vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-infrastructure communications can contribute to the safety of pedestrians and cyclists.
- **Walking and pedestrian-friendly interventions:** Expand green areas and parks and establish walkways.
- **Equitable and inclusive walking and cycling for all:** Ensure the design and implementation of walking and cycling interventions are age- and gender-sensitive and take into account the needs of persons with disabilities.

References

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