



More than 270 000 pedestrians lose their lives on the world's roads each year accounting for 22% of the total 1.24 million road traffic deaths. Ahead of the [Second United Nations Global Road Safety Week](#) (6-12 May),

[WHO](#)

is calling on governments to take concrete actions to improve the safety of pedestrians.

“The Week offers an opportunity to highlight the myriad challenges that pedestrians face around the world each and every day,” said WHO Assistant Director-General of Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health, Oleg Chestnov.

“We are all pedestrians, and Governments should put in place measures to better protect all of us. This will not only save lives, but create the conditions needed to make walking safe. When roads are safe, people will walk more, and this in turn will improve health and protect the environment,” he said, echoing the theme of Road Safety Week, “Make Walking Safe.”

Pedestrians are among the most vulnerable road users. Studies indicate that males, both children and adults, make up a high proportion of pedestrian deaths and injuries. In developed countries, older pedestrians are more at risk, while in low-income and middle-income countries, children and young adults are often affected. Children and adults with disabilities suffer higher rates of injury as pedestrians compared to their non-disabled peers.

“More than 5,000 pedestrians are killed on the world’s roads each week. This is because their needs have been neglected for decades, often in favour of motorized transport,” said the WHO Director of the Department of Violence and Injury Prevention and Disability, Etienne Krug. “We need to rethink the way we organize our transport systems to make walking safe and save pedestrian lives.”

There are many steps which can be taken to protect pedestrians on the roads. The newly released *Pedestrian safety: a road safety manual for decision-makers and practitioners*, produced by WHO and partners, promotes a focus on combined enforcement, engineering and education measures, which include among others:

- adopting and enforcing new and existing laws to reduce speeding, curb drinking and driving, decrease mobile phone use and other forms of distracted driving;
- putting in place infrastructure which separates pedestrians from other traffic (sidewalks, raised crosswalks, overpasses, underpasses, refuge islands and raised medians), lowers vehicle speeds (speed bumps, rumble strips and chicanes) and improves roadway lighting;
- creating pedestrian zones in city centres by restricting vehicular access;
- improving mass transit route design;
- developing and enforcing vehicle design standards for pedestrian protection, including soft vehicle fronts;
- organizing and/or further enhancing trauma care systems to guarantee the prompt treatment of those with life-threatening injuries.

WHO's work contributes to achieve the goal of to the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020. Launched in May 2011 by Governments across the world, the Decade of Action aims to save 5 million lives and seeks to build road safety management capacity in countries, improve the safety of roads and vehicles, enhance the behaviour of all road users and strengthen post-crash care.

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