



Report no. 2019-T-02-SEN

Pedestrians

Thematic File Road Safety 7



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Summary

Walking is the second most used transport mode after car driving. In Belgium, *walking* is the main transport mode during 14% of the journeys. However, parts of a journey are often made by foot while the main mode of transport is the car or public transport. Compared to some other road users, a pedestrian is much less protected during a collision with another road user. Pedestrians are, per kilometre, on average 8.1 times more likely to get seriously injured or to die in traffic than a car driver.

The number of pedestrians who die after a road accident, shows a decreasing trend in Europe. However, the proportion of pedestrians within the total number of fatal road accidents is rising for a few years. This indicates that other transport modes have become safer than travelling by foot. The Belgian statistics show the same trends: a decrease in pedestrian victims, but since 2005 a stagnation and a rising proportion of these victims in comparison with other transport modes.

Some categories of pedestrians run a higher risk of road accidents than others. Especially, people of 65 years and older get more seriously injured as they are more vulnerable than other categories. Youngsters, aged 12 until 17 years, are more vulnerable in traffic. They are more likely to be involved in a road accident since they act riskier on the road. The older a person is, the more they compensate the extra risks by skills and experience gained over the years.

Notable is that in Belgium almost 80% of all pedestrian accidents, regardless of the seriousness, took place within built-up areas. Pedestrian accidents which occur outside the built-up areas, on the other hand, are more serious. Research has shown that 30% of fatal pedestrian accidents in Belgium happened outside the built-up areas. Furthermore, less pedestrian accidents happen in summer than in winter. This can probably be explained by the fact that there are less daylight hours in the winter than in the summer, which indicates that visibility can have an impact.

The severity of accidents with pedestrians is also linked to the vehicle with which the pedestrian comes into contact. It was calculated that 164 pedestrians died per 1,000 accidents with a truck. For accidents with a car this number is 18. The chance of a pedestrian dying in a road accident with a cyclist is the smallest. There are 1.5 deaths per 1,000 road accidents. Although the risk of dying in a road accident between two pedestrians will be even smaller, this is not concerned as a road accident.

To improve road safety for pedestrians, various measures can be taken. On the level of infrastructure, we can limit exposure between pedestrians and motorised traffic. This can be done by separating different transport modes. At pedestrian crossings, this can be done by splitting the crossing place. For pedestrian traffic in the longitudinal direction, the construction of a (sufficiently wide) sidewalk is recommended. When this is not possible the option of speed reduction must be considered. Good visibility must also be ensured from the point of view of all road users. Furthermore, education, training and awareness must not be underestimated. Pedestrians need to know or should be advised that they are often not that visible and driving instructors must focus on vulnerable road users. Measures can also be taken as far as vehicle technology is concerned. There are systems which can regulate the speed and also help to avoid road accidents. When a road accident is unavoidable, the consequences need to be limited.



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