Have Walking and Cycling Become Safer? Recent Evidence from High-Income Countries, with a Focus on the United States and Germany

Objectives. To examine changes in pedestrian and cyclist fatalities per capita (1990-2014) and per kilometer (2000-2010) in selected high-income countries; and changes in fatalities and serious injuries per km by age group in the USA and Germany (2001-2009).

Methods. We estimated 5-year annual averages of per-capita fatalities relative to the 1990-1994 base period. To control for exposure, fatalities and serious injuries were divided by km of walking or cycling per year for those countries with comparable data.

Results. Most countries have reduced pedestrian and cyclist fatality rates per capita and per kilometer. The available data on serious injuries, however, show smaller declines or even increases in rates per kilometer. Moreover, there are large differences by age group in both fatality and serious injury rates per kilometer, with seniors having the highest rates. The USA has much higher fatality and serious injury rates per km than the other countries examined, and has made the least progress in reducing per capita fatality rates from 1990-2014.

Conclusions. The USA must greatly improve conditions for walking and cycling. All countries should focus safety programs on seniors and children, who are the most vulnerable pedestrians and cyclists.


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