

Irish Cycling Campaign Factsheet

The Benefits of Cycling



Cycling brings proven and massive benefits to society. Governments everywhere are investing in cycling. Here are seven reasons why the Irish government should urgently seek to develop a strong cycling culture.

1. **Super-efficient Transport:** Cycling is, by far, the most energy efficient form of transport.
2. **Health:** cycling, as an activity, is about as safe as driving but unlike driving, it also combats obesity, diabetes, heart-attacks, strokes and absenteeism from work. Consequently the health benefit-to-risk ratios for cycling are excellent, estimated to be between 9:1 and 77:1.
3. **Cycling enhances personal mobility and reduces traffic congestion:** too many motor-powered-vehicles (MPVs) are bad for cities. Ireland is the EU's 3rd most car-dependent country. Cycling can help because it is a flexible, point-to-point transport mode and it is quicker to travel by bicycle in urban areas over distances up to 5-6km. Bicycles occupy about one sixth of the road space of a car and even less for parking.
4. **Financial Benefits:** The National Cycling Policy Framework (2009) estimated that for every €100million invested in cycling in Ireland, a staggering return of €400million could be obtained. Cycling is exactly the kind of investment needed during a recession. Key financial gains include reduced expenditure on health, on cars, on traffic congestion (estimated by the EU to cost 1.5% of GDP, a figure exceeding €2billion/yr in Ireland), and increased tourism revenue. In Scotland, a country of comparable size to Ireland, it was estimated that if 40% of car trips were shifted to bicycles, they would benefit by £4billion/year.
5. **Environmental benefits:** pollution through cycling is negligible. This benefits health while helping Ireland comply with EU air quality regulations and targets for reducing Greenhouse Gas emissions. By contrast, MPV pollutants contaminate the air, waterways and roadside habitats while relentless road traffic noise attacks quality of life, especially sleep.
6. **Quality of life:** cycling contributes to a better quality of life. Cycling towns are cleaner, healthier, quieter, safer and more livable. Cycling *in* the environment, as opposed to driving *through* it, improves feelings of well-being and strengthens a sense of community.
7. **Saving lives:** in 2009, 238 people were killed and 9742 were seriously injured on Irish roads. The suffering of bereaved families is the human price of over-dependence on MPVs. The financial cost to the taxpayer was €974 million. By reducing MPV traffic and creating a calmer road environment, a cycling revolution would yield the ultimate benefit, the saving of lives.