

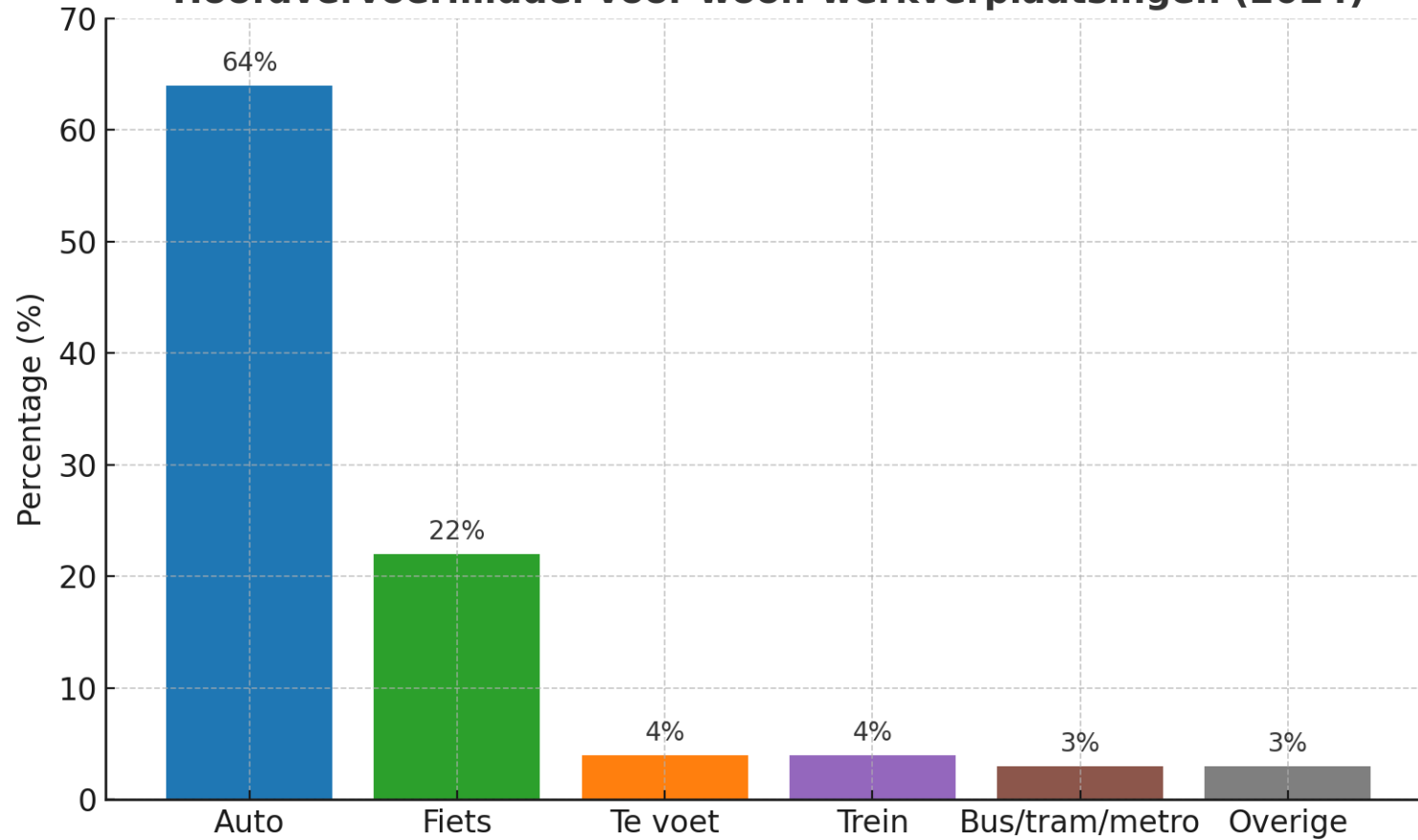
How commuting shapes our health: the power of active mobility

Joyce David | Chair of Cycling | Ghent University



1 hr per day is spent on... commuting

Hoofdvervoermiddel voor woon-werkverplaatsingen (2024)



The hidden cost of sitting still

- Sedentary commuting linked to ↑ obesity, ↑ cardiovascular disease
- Physical inactivity: 4th leading risk factor for premature death
- Daily inactivity compounds over years



- Longer commutes: ↑ stress, anxiety, burnout
- Unpredictability: ↓ sense of control
- Active commuting linked to ↓ depression





Active commuting as preventive medicine: healthier bodies & stronger minds

- Cycling as a regular moderate-intensity exercise
- Improves VO_2 max, vascular function, metabolic health
- Reduces all cause mortality by ~40% vs. passive commuting
- Impacting mental health, wellbeing, energy and productivity levels



The health gap

Mode	Physical Health	Mental Health	Daily Energy/Productivity
Car/Bus 🚗	❌ ↑ obesity, ↑ heart risk	😞 ↑ stress, ↓ mood	⚠️ ↓ focus, ↑ fatigue
Bike 🚲	✅ ↓ chronic disease	😊 ↓ stress, ↑ wellbeing	📈 ↑ energy, ↑ productivity
Walk 🚶	✅ ↑ cardiovascular fitness	😊 ↑ mood, ↑ cognition	📈 ↑ engagement

Sources: Saunders et al.
(2013); Gatersleben & Uzzel
(2007)



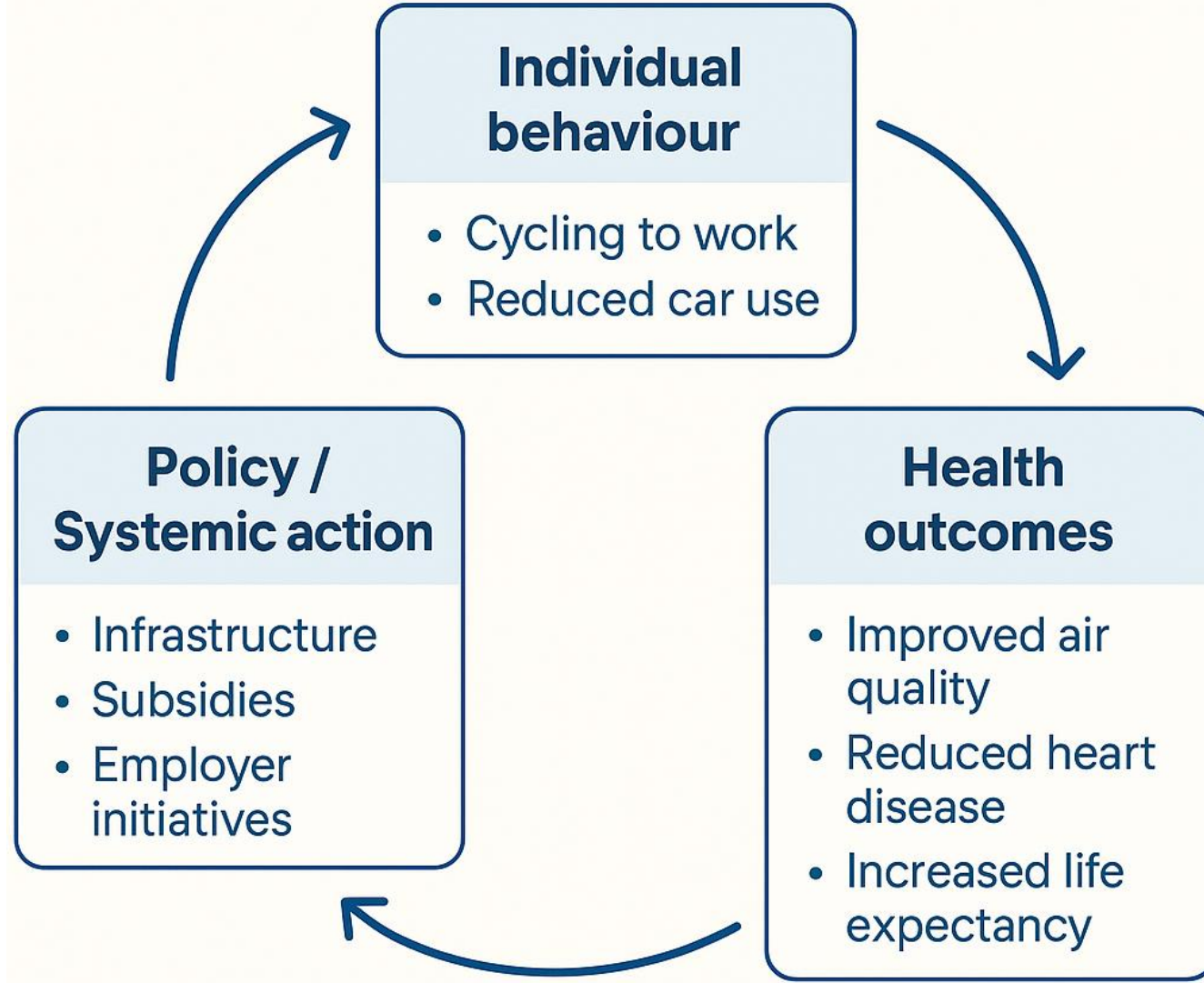
... less sick days,
better cognitive
performance,
job satisfaction,
more creativity &
engagement



Why don't we cycle all? (yet)







Key takeaways...

- Your commute is a health decision, cycling is preventive medicine
- Cycling help people feel and perform better
- Environments also shape our choices
- Individual & collective action reinforce each other





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