



FIRST ALL-FEMALE SYMPHONY. Afghanistan's first — and only — all-female symphony performs in Kabul, Afghanistan. "The formation of the orchestra is aimed at sending a positive message to the community, to send a positive message to the girls, to encourage families and girls to join the music scene of the country," said Ahmad Naser Sarmast, the institute's founder and director. (AP Photo/Rahmat Gul)

First Afghan women's orchestra tries to change attitudes

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as Khpolwak did.

When she joined the school in 2014, she only told her mother and stepfather, not her four brothers and her uncles, because she knew they would disapprove. Her mother and stepfather tried to tell them about the importance of music — without mentioning Adiba — but they weren't convinced.

"If my brothers and uncles had known about me learning or playing music, they 100 percent would have stopped me because they had a very negative view toward music," Adiba said.

Her family's opposition to music was so intense she hesitated to join the

orchestra's trip to Davos. But she ended up going, and as one of the conductors she was widely interviewed in the media there and appeared on television.

When she returned, her uncles were the first to congratulate her. Two of her brothers are still not happy about her involvement with music, but now that she has the support of the rest of the family, she has more courage, and she said she is sure her brothers will eventually come around.

"I changed my family, now it is time for other girls to change their families, because I am sure that slowly all Afghanistan will change," she said.

Pedestrian deaths spiked in 2016, distraction cited

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estimates there were more than 40,200 traffic deaths in 2016. The last time there were more than 40,000 fatalities in a single year was in 2007, just before the economy tanked. There were 41,000 deaths that year.

But pedestrian deaths are sharply outpacing fatalities overall, climbing 25 percent from 2010 to 2015, according to Retting's research. Total traffic deaths increased about six percent over the same period.

"We cannot look at distracted driving solely as an in-vehicle issue," said Kelly Nantel, a spokeswoman for the safety council. "That discounts the impact distraction could have on pedestrians."

On the other hand, "walking is working," she said. "Just as we need drivers to be alert, pedestrians have to be, too."

Another factor in pedestrian deaths is alcohol. Thirty-four percent of pedestrians and 15 percent of drivers involved in fatal crashes were intoxicated at the time, Retting said. But there is no indication that there has been a change in drinking habits that would account for the spike in deaths, he said.

More than twice as many states reported an uptick in

pedestrian fatalities than had decreasing numbers.

The problem is greatest in large-population states that have urban areas where people do a lot of walking. Delaware, Florida, and Arizona had the highest rates of pedestrian deaths relative to their populations, while North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming had the lowest.

The striking increase in pedestrian deaths has grabbed the attention of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), the government panel that investigates accidents and makes safety recommendations. The board held a forum on pedestrian safety last year, and currently has an investigation underway to broadly examine the causes and potential solutions to the problem.

Pedestrians "are our most vulnerable road users," said NTSB member Bella Dinh-Zarr.

People are "more easily distracted than when we didn't have so many easily accessible, essentially, computers in our palms," she said. "We look at that as an increasing risk for pedestrians."

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