



- Are you ever put on the spot by someone who's not very sympathetic to cycling?
- Do they tell you that cycling's far too dangerous to contemplate, and they can't believe that more cyclists don't wear helmets and hi-viz?
- Do they accuse cyclists of causing havoc, riding on pavements, upsetting pedestrians and jumping red lights?
- Do they say cyclists should stop slowing down traffic and remove themselves and their machines from the road forthwith? Either that, or pay 'road tax', be registered and licenced?
- And do they say that cycling's on the way out and there's no point in trying to get people on their bikes anymore?

Want to know how to answer? Please read on ...

THE QUESTIONS

| Q1 | Cycling's dangerous , isn't it? |
|----|---|
| Q2 | Wouldn't wearing a helmet make cycling safer? Shouldn't it be compulsory? |
| Q3 | Cyclists should all be wearing hi-viz, shouldn't they? |
| Q4 | Cyclists cause havoc on the roads, don't they? |
| Q5 | Cyclists are always knocking people down by cycling illegally on the pavement , aren't they? |
| Q6 | And what about red-light jumping?? |
| Q7 | Why don't cyclists stop slowing down traffic and stick to where they belong - i.e. on cycle paths/tracks off the road? |
| Q8 | Cyclists should have compulsory training, number plates & insurance, shouldn't they? |
| Q9 | Cyclists don't pay road tax , so have no right to complain about the roads or drivers, or to take up road-space, have they?! |

Q10 You'll never get large numbers of people cycling, will you?





THE ANSWERS

Q1:Cycling's dangerous, isn't it?Answer:No, it's not a particularly hazardous activity at all, and you're much more likely
to benefit from cycling than not ...

- One of the most famous statistics about the benefits and risks of cycling comes from a 1990s' calculation suggesting that the health paybacks of cycling outweigh its risks by around twenty to one.¹ More recent studies have also found that you're much more likely to profit from cycling than not: one researcher reckoned that the health benefits are on average nine times greater than the risks associated with driving a car.²
- On average, from 2012-16, one cyclist was killed on Britain's roads for every 30 million miles travelled by cycle overall.³ This equates to around one cyclist for every 1,200 times cycled round the world.
- The general risk of injury of any severity whilst cycling is just 0.05 per 1,000 hours of cycling.⁴
- Generally speaking, you are about as unlikely to be killed in a mile of cycling as in a mile of walking. In fact, in 2014, 2015 and 2016, more pedestrians were killed per billion miles than cyclists.⁵
- You are more likely to be injured in an hour of gardening than in an hour of cycling.⁶
- Given the right conditions, the more people who cycle, the safer it is likely to become, i.e. the 'safety in numbers' effect.⁷ One reason for this may be that drivers grow more used to seeing cyclists about, interacting with them and sharing the space safely. They may also be more likely to cycle, and thus more understanding about cyclists' needs.
- Cycling is one of the least time-consuming and most cost-effective ways to weave exercise into your daily routine because it gets you somewhere work, shops, schools, etc., and there are no gym fees!
- Cycling is certainly a good way of trimming up. How many calories it uses depends on your age, weight etc., but on average it burns around five calories a minute.
- People who cycle regularly in mid-adulthood typically enjoy a level of fitness equivalent to someone 10 years younger⁸ and their life expectancy is two years above the average.⁹
- Keeping active does wonders for public health and the national economy too:
 - Physically active people reduce their risk of developing a range of serious conditions that are costly to treat, including coronary heart disease, stroke and type II diabetes.¹⁰
 - NHS costs attributable to being overweight and obesity could double to £10 billion per year by 2050, if nothing is done to tackle it; and the wider costs to society and business could reach £49.9 billion per year (2007 prices).¹¹





Q2:Wouldn't wearing a helmet make cycling safer? Shouldn't it be
made compulsory?Answer:No, it wouldn't and it shouldn't ...

- Standards for cycle helmets mean that they have to cater for an impact velocity of 20 km/h (12.5 mph).¹² This is the sort of impact that cyclists may experience if, for example, they fall off a stationary bike, something that children learning to ride might do. Helmets may also protect your head if you're scraped by branches when out on the trails. They are not, however, designed to withstand the sort of impact a cyclist could suffer if they are hit by a speeding car.
- Laws in other countries that ban people from cycling without a helmet have reduced the number of cyclists. This undermines the health and environmental benefits of cycling and the 'safety in numbers' effect (see *Q1*).
- Several reports (including four papers in peer-reviewed medical journals) have found no link between changes in helmet wearing rates and cyclists' safety. There are even cases where safety seems to have worsened as helmet wearing increased.
- There are better ways to make conditions safer for cycling, e.g. tackling bad driving (one of the biggest threats); widespread 20 mph speed limits in towns and villages; high quality road infrastructure; and good cycle training to give adults and children the skills and confidence they need to ride safely on the road.



| Q3: | Cyclists should all be wearing hi-viz , shouldn't they? |
|---------|--|
| Answer: | No, not really |

- If wearing a fluorescent yellow jacket helps people feel safer when they're cycling and more willing to do it, then that's a good thing.
- It is, though, hard to prove whether hi-viz makes a significant impact on cyclists' safety, and there is
 very little evidence to support the argument that it does. Research suggests that hi-viz may help
 drivers spot cyclists more readily but, it seems, spotting is one thing and driving safely around
 them another.¹³ One academic study, for example, found that whether a cyclist is wearing hi-viz or
 not makes very little difference to how closely motorists overtake them.¹⁴
- On the other hand, research does suggest that *retroreflective* accessories designed to make you more conspicuous in the dark especially ankle straps that move when you pedal are probably worth the investment.¹⁵





| Q4: | Cyclists cause havoc on the roads, don't they? |
|---------|--|
| Answer: | No, they don't. Let's get the dangers that cyclists pose to other road |
| | users in perspective |

- Although cycling is not as dangerous as many people think (see Q1), cyclists suffer more injuries per mile than people in cars. Moreover (and hardly surprisingly), cyclists are much more likely to be hurt in a collision with a motor vehicle than the driver or passenger. Contrary to popular belief, however, they are less likely to be at fault.
 - From 2012-2016, cycling accounted for only 1% of distance travelled,¹⁶ but cyclists represented 6% of reported fatalities and 14% of serious injuries.¹⁷
 - In 2016, out of the 14,668 collisions involving a car and cycle, no car occupant died. In contrast, 99.7% of the cyclists in these collisions were injured in some way, but only 1.3% of car occupants. Fifty cyclists were killed.¹⁸
 - Cycles, along with buses/coaches, tend to be the vehicle-type least likely to have 'contributory factors' (CFs) attributed them by the police who attend collision scenes.¹⁹



- Q5: Cyclists are always cycling illegally on the pavement and harming pedestrians, aren't they?
 Answer: No, they're not. Cycling UK doesn't condone illegal, dangerous or inconsiderate cycling, but it's important to put this issue into perspective. Also, a good cure for problem behaviour is to understand why it happens and find a way of solving whatever proves to be causing it ...
- Motor vehicles are a much bigger threat to pedestrians than cycles, even in urban areas where they
 are most likely to mix. In fact, it is very rare for a cyclist to kill a pedestrian anywhere, in the road or
 away from it. From 2007 to 2016 (GB), in any location (i.e. road or footway, urban and rural):²⁰
 - Motor vehicles (i.e. car, motorbike, bus, van, HGV etc.) were involved in 99.4% of collisions in which a pedestrian died, and 98.5% of collisions in which a pedestrian was seriously injured;
 - Cycles were involved on average in about three pedestrian fatalities a year, and 82 reported serious injuries - or c.0.6% of pedestrian fatalities overall, and 1.5% of reported serious injuries.
- Mile for mile, pedestrians are more likely to be killed by a motor vehicle than cycle. From 2012-2016 (GB):
 - For every one billion vehicle miles ridden overall, cycles were involved in 1.4 pedestrian fatalities;
 - For every one billion miles they drove, cars were involved in 1.9 pedestrian fatalities;
 - Motor vehicles in total (i.e. car, motorbike, bus, van, HGV etc.) were involved in 2.4 pedestrian fatalities.²¹
- Very few pedestrians are hurt by cycles on the pavement/verge. From 2007-2016 (GB):
 - Cycles were involved in 0.4 pedestrian fatalities on the footway/verge on average a year, and about 19 serious pedestrian injuries. No pedestrians were hit and killed by a cycle on the footway/verge in 2007, 2009, 2011-2013, in 2015 or 2016.²² (*Note*: it isn't possible to tell from these figures who was at fault or whether the footway had been converted to 'shared use').





- Effective ways of minimising conflict between cyclists and pedestrians include:
 - Making conditions on the road both feel and be as safe as possible for cycling, e.g. by reducing motor traffic volume and speed, engineering a cycle-friendly road layout, restricting HGVs and requiring their cabs to be designed with 'direct vision' so that drivers can see outside as easily as bus drivers can.
 - Making 'Bikeability' training available to adults and children to give them the confidence and skills they need to cycle on the road itself. In fact, cyclists caught riding on the pavement could be given the option of training instead of a fine. (It is illegal for any bike of any size to cycle on a pavement that hasn't been converted into 'shared use').
 - The proliferation of 'shared use' is confusing. Sometimes it's legal to cycle on the pavement, and sometimes it isn't - and sometimes it's hard to tell the difference. Engineers and law-enforcers should take this on board.



Q6: Answer:

And what about red light jumping??

As for Q5, Cycling UK doesn't condone illegal, dangerous or inconsiderate cycling, but it's important to put this issue into perspective.

- Why do some cyclists jump red lights? It's because they sometimes feel safer moving into open space at signalised junctions rather than waiting for the following traffic to accelerate into that junction when the lights turn green.
- In 2016 (GB), 11,783 cycles were involved in incidents in which a police officer at the scene assigned one or more 'contributory factors' (CFs) to at least one of the parties. Officers assigned 138 CFs for disobeying an automatic traffic signal to the cycle, i.e. to just over 1% of them about the same percentage as it was for cars.²³
- From 2007 to 2016 (GB): no pedestrians were killed by red light jumping cyclists, while around five a year (50 in total) were killed by red light jumping car/bus/coach/taxi/vans/HGV drivers and motorcyclists.²⁴
- Also from 2007 to 2016 (GB), for pedestrians hit by red light jumping vehicles, just 7.6% of those slightly injured, and 5.4% of those seriously injured, involved cycles. The other 92%-95% involved motor vehicles.²⁵
- Engineers and designers need to make sure that all junctions are cycle-friendly, so that no cyclist feels that they have to choose between disobeying the law and keeping safe. One relatively new approach is to install signals that allow cyclists to set off at different times to the rest of the traffic.





Q7:Shouldn't cyclists stop slowing down traffic and stick to where they belong - i.e.
cycle paths/tracks off the road?Answer:Cyclists have the legal right to ride on the road, they shouldn't be automatically
lumped with pedestrians and there are some poor cycle 'facilities' that cause
more problems than they solve ...

- Since the late 19th century, bicycles have enjoyed the legal status of 'carriages', so they have the right to use the carriageway. In 1896, they were legally confirmed as a 'vehicles' too.²⁶
- When it comes to 'traffic', cyclists are not a separate entity. They are a legitimate part of the mix, so to accuse them of 'slowing' progress when they are acting responsibly and legally is unfair.
- Cycling is around four to five times faster than walking, which is why cycling is, in general, better suited to sharing space with motor vehicles than with pedestrians.
- The *Highway Code* (rule 61) states that cyclists do not have to use cycle facilities if they don't want to. This is the Code's exact wording under *Cycle Routes and Other Facilities:*

"Use cycle routes, advanced stop lines, cycle boxes and toucan crossings unless at the time it is unsafe to do so. Use of these facilities is not compulsory and will depend on your experience and skills, but they can make your journey safer."

Cycling UK believes that it's crucial to maintain a cyclist's right to use his/her discretion about whether or not to use a cycle path along by the road, or a lane marked on the road.

- Why do we think this? The problem is that, although some cycle paths/lanes are an example to all engineers and help make cycling a good (or better) experience, other 'facilities' may be uncomfortable, too narrow, inconvenient, indirect, badly maintained and not as hazard-free as they might at first appear:
 - In urban areas, there may be more junctions along shared-use pavements than on the roadway itself, e.g. side roads where cyclists don't have priority, driveways, returns to the road itself etc.
 - Junctions are risky places: around three-quarters of incidents involving cycles happen at or near them.²⁷ Negotiating them can be complex and something that children and novices - i.e. exactly the type of cyclists who may prefer to avoid the carriageway - might find difficult.
 - \circ $\,$ Turning drivers may not be looking out for cyclists using an off-road path.
 - Councils often fail to maintain off-road cycle routes to high standards. Surface defects, uncut vegetation, debris etc. can make them very uncomfortable to use or, worse, extremely hazardous.

All this is why Cycling UK campaigns for high quality, properly considered provision for cyclists, both on and off the road.

 Routes that cyclists can use through green spaces like parks, by rivers and canals, or along old railway lines often complement the road network well, as do properly designed paths parallel to dual carriageways and fast inter-urban roads. High streets closed off to motor vehicles but open to cycling (maybe with time restrictions, if necessary) are also welcome. However, expecting pedestrians and cyclists to share space on narrow pavements in tight urban situations isn't quite the same. Also, people with sight problems are often understandably worried about 'shared use' in these situations.







- As long as they are wide enough (ideally 2.00m, 1.5m minimum), cycle lanes can help protect cyclists between junctions and may encourage people to cycle more.
- However, very narrow lanes (and there are all too many of them): a) direct cyclists into the gutter, over drain covers etc. and make them less visible to drivers; and b) encourage drivers to overtake cyclists far too closely because it makes it look as if the cycle lane is the only space they need, as research shows.²⁸
- Staying in a cycle lane may also mean, once again, that you may be worse off at junctions. Badly thought-out lanes may take cyclists out of a driver's field of attention and/or make it harder to see what's coming out of a side road, and to avoid being cut up.

Again, this is why Cycling UK campaigns for high quality, properly considered provision for cyclists, both on and off the road.



Q8: Cyclists ought to have compulsory training, number plates and insurance, shouldn't they? That'll stop them riding dangerously and illegally - or make sure they pay for it if they do. Answer: No, this wouldn't help ...

- In countries famed for their high levels of cycle use, cyclists aren't tested, licenced/registered etc., as far as we know. Prime examples of this are the Netherlands and Denmark, where 27% and 17% of trips are cycled, respectively.
- A variety of regulatory systems have been introduced in other countries or in cities elsewhere, but subsequently abolished (e.g. in Toronto and Switzerland); either that, or their main aim was or is to tackle bike theft through registration (e.g. in Japan), rather than irresponsible riding behaviour.
- In Britain, the administrative cost of making training, registration and insurance compulsory for cyclists would be as large as it already is for drivers and cars, and a huge burden to the tax-payer. There are, after all, about as many cyclists and cycles as there are drivers and motor vehicles.
- In 2006, the Department for Transport said that it thought the costs of establishing a registration scheme would outweigh any benefits, so decided against the idea.²⁹
- On a practical level, cycles change owners very frequently and are more likely to belong to children than to adults (unlike motor vehicles). Keeping them and their bikes registered would be a nightmare for all involved.
- The bureaucracy of registration/licensing could put newcomers or occasional cyclists off cycling. The same goes for making cycle training compulsory (encouraging training is a good thing, though, of course and it's a cost-effective investment).
- There's no evidence that registration would provide any safety benefits. Having to display number plates doesn't stop large numbers of motorists from driving illegally and dangerously and, as mentioned in Qs 4-6, cyclists cause negligible harm to other road users anyway.

7



- It is not possible to register either bicycles or cyclists under the *Vehicle Excise and Registration Act* 1994 because it only provides for 'mechanically propelled vehicles'. In order to introduce registration, therefore, the law would have to be changed. This would be a convoluted and lengthy process that simply wouldn't be worth the bother.
- While Cycling UK doesn't believe that 3rd party insurance should be compulsory, we do encourage it and provide £10m cover for all our members.



Q9: Cyclists don't pay road tax, so have no right to complain about the roads or drivers, or to take up road-space, have they?! Answer: That's not true! Cyclists do pay their way - probably more than their fair share if they don't drive - and there's no such thing as 'road tax' anyway!

- Nobody pays 'road tax' any more. Thanks largely to Winston Churchill, it was abolished in the 1930s for fear that it would make drivers think that they 'owned the road'. What motorists currently pay is Vehicle Excise Duty (VED), a tax based on either engine size or fuel type and CO2 emissions, depending on when the vehicle was registered.
- From 2020, however, the revenue from new cars will go into a 'National Roads Fund' to invest in the strategic road network. Cycling UK is worried that this could breathe more life into the 'drivers own the roads' / 'cyclists should pay their share' argument even though c80% of cyclists are drivers and pay VED anyway.
- Currently, however, most money for roads comes from general council tax and income tax, which most adult cyclists also pay. This means that even if they don't drive, tax-paying cyclists are contributing to a whole network of extremely costly roads that they're not allowed to use personally, i.e. motorways. They're also paying as much as any other tax-payer towards maintenance, despite the fact that cycling does very little damage to road surfaces. What's more, cyclists suffer disproportionately from the wear and tear caused by motor vehicles.



8



| Q10: | You'll never get large numbers of people to cycle, will you? |
|---------|--|
| Answer: | Don't be defeatist! Cycling has huge potential! It's fun, good exercise, |
| | inexpensive, low carbon |

The potential to get Britain cycling is already here:

- In England: ³⁰
 - On average, each individual makes about 175 trips between 1-2 miles a year. In 2016, they drove/were driven for around 59% of them. For most people, this distance isn't far to walk and it would only take a few minutes to cycle.
 - About two thirds of all trips of all lengths are under five miles. In 2016, 37% were walked, 1.8% cycled and almost all of the rest driven or travelled by public transport. Again, there is huge potential for more cycling for trips of this length.
 - A quarter of households don't have access to a car anyway.
 - $\circ~$ There are lots of bikes about around 42% of people have access to one.
- Around two-fifths of people who responded to the 2016 British Social Attitudes Survey said they
 could just as easily cycle many of the journeys of less than two miles they now travel by car, if they
 had a bike.³¹
- Cycling is good exercise (see Q1) and it's easier and cheaper to incorporate into the daily routine than going to the gym because it doubles up as a way of transporting yourself around.
- According to Sport England, cycling is the third most popular once-a-week sport for people aged 16+, attracting over two million people, just pipping football to the post (swimming came top at c2.6 million, just above athletics at c.2.3 million).³²
- There's no reason why, with the right decisions, GB couldn't match the levels of cycle use seen in other European countries, e.g. 27% of trips in Holland, 18% in Denmark and 10% in Germany and Sweden.³³
- Cycling's already flourishing in London, Britain's biggest city. The congestion charge, public hire bikes and other incentives have unlocked much suppressed demand. In 2016, there were 730,000 cycle journey stages there on an average day, an 8.8% increase on 2015. This follows a 3.5% increase in the previous year, with an overall 75% increase in cycle stages since 2005, and an increase of 154% increase since 2000.³⁴
- Other cities and towns, especially if they've received Government funding for cycling, also set workable and inspiring models. In the six Cycling Demonstration Towns (2008-2011), for example, there was an overall increase of 29% in cycling trips. ³⁵

We hope the answers above help you champion the cause of cycling.

If you'd like to look further into any of the subjects we've covered here (along with many others that we haven't), have a look at Cycling UK's series of Campaigns Briefings. They offer headline messages, key facts, Cycling UK's formal view and pages of useful background information. www.cyclinguk.org/campaignsbriefings.



Cycling UK CAMPAIGNS BRIEFING

10 Common Questions about Cycling

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www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/about/statistics (Road traffic stats, Table TRA0402, Road accidents and safety stats, Table RAS30001)

⁴ Calculation based on: average time spent cycling per person per year = 6 hours (DfT *National Travel Survey*, Table NTS0310, link above). GB population estimates (<u>www.ons.gov.uk</u>); average number of reported cyclist injuries per year = 19,397 reported injuries (all severities) to cyclists per year (DfT GB *Reported Road Casualties* annual report, Table RAS30001 (link above)). ⁵ DfT, *Reported Road Casualties Great Britain* annual reports. Table RAS30070. Pedestrians killed per billion miles walked: 39 (2014), 35 (2015), 35 (2016); cyclists killed per billion miles cycled: 35 (2014), 31 (2015), 30 (2016). <u>www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-accidents-and-safety-statistics</u>

⁶ Powell KE, Heath GW, Kresnow MJ, Sacks JJ, Branche CM. *Injury rates from walking, gardening, weightlifting, outdoor bicycling, & aerobics*

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¹⁰ See CTC's briefing on cycling and health for more. <u>www.cyclinguk.org/campaigning/views-and-briefings/health-and-cycling</u> ¹¹ Foresight: *Tackling Obesities: Future Choices*. 2007.

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¹² For more on cycle helmet standards, see article by Brian Walker, in CTC's 'Cycle' magazine, June/July 2005. www.cyclehelmets.org/papers/c2023.pdf

¹³ A review on the evidence on hi-viz (i.e. fluorescent / retroreflective materials) found that it made a difference to drivers' ability to detect and recognise pedestrians (and presumably cyclists), but it was impossible to tell by how much, and there is no evidence to show whether it makes them safer or not. Kwan I, Mapstone J. *Interventions for increasing pedestrian and cyclist visibility for the prevention of death and injuries*. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2006, Issue 4. Art. No.: CD003438. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD003438.pub2. http://www2.cochrane.org/reviews/en/ab003438.html. A similar lack of detectable

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<u>http://eprints.qut.edu.au/38338/</u> p56; and Miller P, *The use of conspicuity aids by cyclists and the risk of crashes involving other road users: a population based case-control study.* 2012. <u>http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/12855/</u>).

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¹⁶ DfT. Road Traffic Estimates in Great Britain: 2016. April 2017. Tables TRA101 & TRA0402. (Link above).

¹⁷ DfT. Reported Road Casualties Great Britain (RRCGB): 2016. September 2017. Table RAS30010.

https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-accidents-and-safety-statistics. DfT defines "serious injury" as: "An injury for which a person is detained in hospital as an "in-patient", or any of the following injuries whether or not they are detained in hospital: fractures, concussion, internal injuries, crushings, burns (excluding friction burns), severe cuts, severe general shock requiring medical treatment and injuries causing death 30 or more days after the accident."

¹⁸ DfT. Reported Road Casualties Great Britain: 2016. Sept 2017. Table RAS40004. (Link above).

¹⁹ Dft. Reported Road Casualties Great Britain: 2016. September 2017. Table RAS50005. (Link above).

Note: i. CFs are recorded by police officers at the scene of a reported road traffic incident, rather than the result of subsequent forensic investigation. It is not always easy for an officer to identify exactly what happened, however, and what contributed to it. CFs, therefore, should be treated with some caution. ii. Officers can attribute more than one contributory factor to one or more parties involved in a collision.

²⁰ Casualties: *Reported Road Casualties Great Britain* annual reports, Tables 23c 2007-09 & RAS 40004, 2010-16. (DfT, 2017) www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-accidents-and-safety-statistics/

10



Cycling UK CAMPAIGNS BRIEFING **10** Common Questions about Cycling

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²⁴ Answer to Freedom of Information requests made to DfT by Cycling UK (then CTC) on 7/12/2015 & 9/11/2017 (browse requests and search 'pedestrians' & date. https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/

²⁵ Answer to Freedom of Information requests made to DfT by Cycling UK (then CTC) on 7/12/2015 & 9/11/2017 (browse requests and search 'pedestrians' & date. https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/

²⁶ In the case of a 'furiously' riding pavement cyclist in 1878 (Taylor v Godwin), judges ruled on appeal that a pedal cycle was a 'carriage' (and thus shouldn't use the footway under the 1835 Highways Act). Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1888 also confirmed this status and, later in 1896, a judgement in consequence of the case of Ellis v Nott-Bower defined a bicycle as a 'vehicle'.

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