



- 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 all that 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?
09	Cyclists don't pay road tay, so have no right to complain about the roads or drivers, or to take

- **Q9** Cyclists don't pay **road tax**, so have no right to complain about the roads or drivers, or to take up road-space, do 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 otherwise one researcher reckoned that the health benefits are on average nine times greater than the risks associated with driving a car.²
- 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 younger³ and their life expectancy is two years above the average.⁴
- Keeping active like this 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.⁵
 - 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).⁶
- On average, over 2011-15, one cyclist was killed on Britain's roads for every 29 million miles travelled by cycle.⁷ This equates to around one cyclist for every 1,000 (plus) 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.8
- Generally speaking, you are about as unlikely to be killed in a mile of cycling as in a mile of walking (although in both 2014 and 2015, pedestrians fared rather worse).⁹
- You are more likely to be injured in an hour of gardening than in an hour of cycling.¹⁰
- Given the right conditions, the more people who cycle, the safer it is likely to become, i.e. the 'safety in numbers' effect.¹¹ 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.



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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 suggests 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 2011 to 2015, about 1.7% of all trip stages were made by cycle, but cyclists accounted for over 6% of reported road fatalities and about 14.5% of serious injuries.^{16,17}
 - In 2013, the police concluded that in crashes involving at least one cyclist and other vehicles, cyclists were less likely to have contributed than the other party 50% compared to only 27%.¹⁸
 - In 2015, out of the 14,964 reported incidents involving cars and cycles, no car occupant died. In contrast, 99.6% of the cyclists in these collisions were injured in some way, but only 1.4% of car occupants. Forty-four of the cyclists hurt were killed.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. In Great Britain:
 - In 2015, 279 pedestrians died in collisions with vehicles in urban areas on the highway. Two (0.7%) were hit by cycles, neither of them on the pavement or verge.²⁰
 - Mile-for-mile in urban areas (exc. motorways), from 2011-15, motor vehicles were more likely than a cycle to seriously injure a pedestrian, and over twice as likely to kill them.²¹
 - Most collisions between cycles and pedestrians don't happen on the pavement/verge, but in the roadway, where it's legal to cycle. From 2005-15, less than a fifth of the 32 pedestrian fatalities and just over a quarter of the reported 820 serious pedestrian injuries that involved a cycle happened on the pavement/verge. (*Note*: it isn't possible to tell from these figures, which come from the Department for Transport, who was at fault or, for those on the pavement, whether it 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 offer '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:	And what about all that red light jumping? ?
Answer:	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 2015 (GB), the police decided that, out of the 12,714 cyclists involved in incidents where 'contributory factors' were assigned to one or more of the vehicles involved, 178 of them had 'Disobeyed automatic traffic signal', i.e. just over 1% - about the same percentage as it was for cars.²²
- In London (2001-05), three cyclists and seven motor vehicle occupants were killed *when a* motorist jumped a red light.
- 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.²³
- 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.²⁴ 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.²⁵
- 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.



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    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 ...
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- 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 in Britain 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.²⁶
- 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.
- 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.



Cycling UK CAMPAIGNS BRIEFING 10 Common Questions about Cycling

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).
- At the moment, VED revenue goes into general taxation and doesn't specifically pay for the roads. The cost is based on fuel type and CO2 emissions, so it is essentially a tax on the amount of pollution a car emits. Cycles, of course, don't produce any CO2, so are exempt.
- This situation, however, is going to change. From April 2017, motorists will pay a flat standard rate (£140) for all cars except those emitting 0 grams of CO2 per kilometre. Also, from 2020, VED revenue for new cars will go into a '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' argument, even though c80% of cyclists are drivers, and most will go on paying for the roads through VED for their cars.
- Currently, however, most money for roads comes from general council tax and income tax, which most adult cyclists 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, 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.



Q10:	210: 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 2015 (England): 27
 - On average, each individual made about 174 trips between 1-2 miles. They drove/were driven for around 58% of them. For most people, this distance isn't far to walk and it would only take a few minutes to cycle.
 - About 66% of all trips of all lengths were under five miles; 33% were walked, 2.3% 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.
 - $\circ~$ A quarter of households don't have access to a car anyway.
 - $\circ~$ There were lots of bikes about around 43% of people had access to one.
- 41% of people who responded to the 2014 *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.²⁸
- 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 the latest figures from Sport England's *Active People Survey*, cycling is the third most popular once-a-week sport, attracting around 2.4 million people, pipping football to the post (2.3 million swimming came top at 3 million).²⁹
- 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.³⁰
- Cycling's already flourishing in London, Britain's biggest city. The congestion charge, public hire bikes and other incentives have unlocked much suppressed demand. The number of daily average journey stages made by cycle there went up to 0.65 million in 2014, a leap of 71% from 2004.³¹ What's more, there's around 4.3 million 'potentially cyclable' trips made by 'mechanised modes' there on an average day.³² Other cities and towns, especially if they've received Government funding for cycling, also set workable and inspiring models, e.g. those participating in the Cycling Towns and Cities programme, which proved that investing in cycling is excellent value for money and makes a real difference to cycling levels (around 5-10% a year, typically).³³
- With local and national government backing, political will and professional and voluntary enterprise, there's no reason why cycling shouldn't enjoy an enduring revival, as the parliamentary report, Get Britain Cycling, says: www.cyclinguk.org/sites/default/files/get_britain_cycling.pdf

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.

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

⁸ 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 = 19,575 reported injuries (all severities) to cyclists per year (DfT GB *Reported Road Casualties* annual report, Table RAS30001 (link above)).



Cycling UK CAMPAIGNS BRIEFING

10 Common Questions about Cycling

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