



Mind the gap

Cycling in the UK has a huge gender gap, with women riding half as much as men. Four cycling advocates examine why – and suggest how we can redress this

Sophie Gordon Cycling UK Campaigns Manager

THERE'S A LONG way to go before cycling is seen as a 'normal' mode of transport in the UK – especially by women, who cycle half as often as men. If you look at countries where more people cycle, it's around a 50:50 split. So what are we doing wrong?

I've heard a lot of different perspectives on that over the past few months, and the biggest factor that keeps coming up is the perception that it's unsafe. We know that, overall, cycling is a safe, convenient, healthy way to get around. Yet it doesn't always feel like that.

Cycling UK's recent YouGov research found that 58% of women believe their cycle journeys are limited by safety concerns and a lack of suitable infrastructure. The thought of

sharing roads with large vehicles and of having to negotiate busy junctions and roundabouts can feel off-putting for many people, but it's especially significant for women.

As one woman I spoke to said: "For me it's a combination of lack of confidence and poor infrastructure. The safe cycle routes near me are not joined up, and are crucially missing at the most congested areas of road."

Another noted that, for many women, there is also the concern about harassment or abusive behaviour, particularly after dark. She said: "At different times in my life, I've had to really think about the route I've taken to cycle, especially during the winter months when it's dark. It's so important that, when routes are designed, they take into account the issues women face when it comes to safety."

When London Cycling Campaign audited routes in the capital, it found a quarter of them 'socially unsafe' after