

New Irish study on how safe cyclists feel

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The findings of the largest survey to date on the perception of safety among cyclists in Dublin have been published by engineering researchers at Trinity College Dublin, University College Cork and University of Hong Kong.

For the purpose of the study, a [questionnaire](#) based survey of 1,954 cyclists was conducted to gain an insight into the different aspects related to the safety experience of cyclists in Dublin. Analysis of the responses revealed that cycling is perceived as an unsafe mode of travel compared to driving even by existing cyclists. Careless and reckless bus/taxi/car driver [attitude](#) has a significantly [negative impact](#) on the safety experience of cyclists. “Campaigns to encourage cyclist-driver cooperation within the network may help combat Dublin’s ‘road rage’,” explained TCD researcher Dr Bidisha Ghosh.

“The use of safety accessories is not necessarily associated with improved safety experience, since the use of these accessories does not help them to overcome the fear of potentially unsafe situations. Mandatory usage of these accessories may be of little or no benefit to the improvement of the perceived safety”, adds Dr Vikram Pakrashi, UCC and a co-author of the research.

The findings show that 74% of the cyclists, who claim to be fully compliant with the rules of the road, are likely to consider cycling as safer than or at least as safe as driving in Dublin, yet the survey has revealed that 87.5% of the participants admit to breaking the rules of the road with regular, confident and experienced cyclists being less

compliant. Increased compliance can be achieved through enforcement as is done for cars in the form of fines and ‘points’ on offenders. However, such enforcement may decrease the attraction of cycling and hence a debate is necessary to reach consensus. Cycling is not envisaged as a major mode of travel either by cyclists, planners or other users of the transportation network. It is important that the design of roads should allow for cycling as a major mode travel, also factoring in variable skills, comfort of cyclists and the possibility of some violation of rules.

Young cyclists rather than older cyclists were identified as more likely to perceive cycling to be less safe than driving. Cyclists prefer less busy and quiet roads, roads with street lights, routes perceived as safe and routes with continuous cycling facilities. The respondent cyclists believed lack of cycling skills and poor bicycle maintenance skills caused accident risks. About 80% of cyclists thought the presence of pedestrians, cycle lanes on footpaths and poor road surface conditions are unsafe to cyclists.

“To make cycling an intrinsic part of Irish mobility, it may be beneficial to introduce [cycling](#) education at the primary school level, increase the awareness amongst drivers through safety initiatives and provide improved infrastructure to attract new cyclists to the network. Incentives like ‘Bike to Work’ scheme, cycle maintenance workshops and community initiatives all contribute to the increase in the regularity and number of the cyclists, which in turn leads to an improved safety experience,” concluded Dr Ghosh.

The study ‘[Perception](#) of safety of [cyclists](#) in Dublin City’ has been published in the journal *Accident Analysis and Prevention*.

Provided by Trinity College Dublin

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