

New study asks why some motorists are more aggressive to cyclists

September 1 2015, by David Stacey



New research by a scientist at The University of Western Australia contradicts a commonly held view that non cyclist car drivers are more aggressive towards bike riders than motorists who are also cyclists.

UWA Research Fellow Dr Laura Fruhen conducted the study while working in the UK and found that [cyclists](#) and non-cyclists didn't differ when it came to behaviour towards cyclists.

"We found both that motorists' attitudes towards cyclists and their perceptions of others' aggressive behaviour towards cyclists influenced how often they reported engaging in aggressive behaviour towards those on bikes," Dr Fruhen said.

"In non-cyclists the perception of how others behave towards cyclists had a stronger link to their [aggressive behaviour](#) than in those motorists who cycled themselves, suggesting they are taking their cues from what they think is common behaviour."

A sample of 276 motorists completed an online questionnaire about their attitudes towards cyclists and the frequency with which they engaged in aggressive driving behaviour, as part of the research project conducted with Professor Rhona Flin, from the UK's University of Aberdeen.

It focused on minor forms of aggression towards cyclists, such as cutting them off and sounding the horn, as well as verbally attacking those on bikes.

"With the interaction between motorists and bike riders being one of the main causes of cycle incidents we wanted to understand more about what shapes [motorists'](#) behaviour towards cyclists and whether the fact that they rode themselves had any bearing," Dr Fruhen said.

She said she hoped the findings could help campaigns to improve cyclist and motorist interaction on the roads, making them safer to use for cyclists.

"In the absence of cycling infrastructure separating them, both these groups will have to work on sharing the roads. It is about being considerate from both sides," she said.

"Drivers may see cyclists as annoying because they slow them down but they should remember that each cyclist they encounter is also just another person trying to get from A to B.

"One cyclist actually means one less car, less congestion and less pollution, which are increasingly important issues in our growing and

more densely populated cities."

Provided by University of Western Australia

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