



We are not against helmets

Some people feel more comfortable cycling with a helmet, but we are *not* in favour of making it mandatory for adults

We are against claims that:

- Portray cycling as more hazardous than it is
- Portray bicycle helmets as offering more head protection than they do
- Suggest that the evidence in favour of helmet wearing is incontrovertible when it isn't

Cycling is a safe, fun and healthy activity whether you wear a helmet or not; it's as normal as walking and we don't ask pedestrians to wear helmets

Helmets do not prevent collisions

The Cyclist.ie position on helmets

Cyclists typically live longer and healthier lives; serious brain injuries are rare and the research evidence in favour of helmet wearing and a helmet law is weak; the main effect of helmet laws has *not* been to improve cyclists' safety but instead, to discourage cycling, undermining its health and other benefits and so losing the safety-in-numbers effect.

We therefore call upon authorities to:

- Focus on well-established measures to promote cycling and cyclists' well-being
- Concentrate on measures to avoid collisions between cyclists and vehicles
- Recognise that the benefits of cycling far outweigh the risks
- Refrain from promoting or enforcing helmet wearing for adults without sound evidence that this would be beneficial and cost-effective compared to other safety initiatives

Helmet laws and shock-horror claims discourage cycling

Claim *Cycle helmets prevent 85% of head injuries and 88% of brain injuries* ¹

This study, quoted since 1989, has never been proven in the real world; increased helmet use has been linked to sharp reductions in cycle use but never to detectable improvement in cyclists' safety

Claim *Children and adults should wear a bicycle helmet every time they ride a bicycle* ²

Cyclists suffer fewer head injuries than drivers or pedestrians so, if we follow this claim, drivers and pedestrians should also wear helmets all the time ³

Claim *Cycling without a helmet is suicidal*

Helmets don't prevent crashes; only safer roads and good traffic education for drivers and cyclists do that

Helmet laws and propaganda create a blame-the-victim culture which government and insurance officials use to avoid providing for cyclists

Interested?

Read this brochure and question the pro-helmet, mandatory-use literature

Want to help?

Take part in Cyclist.ie, or your local campaign

Cycling is a healthy activity whose benefits far outweigh the risks

- A study in Copenhagen found that people who cycle regularly have a 29% lower annual mortality rate than non-cyclists⁴
- An adult who cycles regularly will typically have a level of fitness equivalent to being 10 years younger and a life-expectancy 2 years above the average⁵
- The health benefits of cycling outweigh the risks involved by a factor of from 9:1 to 77:1, thanks to Cycling added years⁶
- A 2003 Department of Transport study of deaths in Britain in 2003 compared 114 cyclist deaths to 30,000 deaths from obesity and 42,000 deaths from heart disease⁷

The best way to improve cyclists' safety is to promote cycling, not to mandate cycle helmets

- The risk of cycling is small – amounting to one cyclist death per 33 million km of cycling; it would take the average cyclist 21,000 years to cycle this distance⁸
- Unlike motorcycle helmets, cycle helmets are lightweight, soft and may break on impact making them useless after initial impact and useless in most vehicle crashes serious enough to cause a fatal head injury⁹
- Cycle helmets have also been shown to cause rotational brain injury in some collisions¹⁰
- Research on the longer-term outcomes for cyclist safety in countries which have introduced compulsory helmet-wearing, such as Australia and New Zealand, has produced conflicting results^{11 12}
- There were also indications of reduced cycling in both countries which is damaging to cyclist safety
- Cycling gets safer with more cyclists so by reducing cycle use; helmet laws also reduce the safety-in-numbers or critical-mass effect
- Many public bike rental schemes exist across Europe and no helmets are provided; despite this the safety record for Dublin Bikes is very good
- In Ireland the proportion of females who cycle to work is low; if helmet wearing becomes mandatory then the nuisance of helmet-hair will ensure that even fewer females will cycle

Child cyclists and helmet-wearing

Cyclist.ie prefers to leave it to parents to decide if children should wear helmets, bearing in mind that many cycling injuries involving children happen while off-road, in gardens and driveways etc.

References

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