

Introduction

This Factsheet summarises findings on levels of cycling and public attitudes to cycling. The results cover Great Britain and are based on data from the [National Travel Survey \(NTS\)](#) unless otherwise stated. Some results from the October 2002 [ONS Omnibus Survey](#) and the [British Social Attitudes Survey \(BSAS\)](#) are also presented. The NTS covers adults and children of all ages; the Omnibus Survey adults aged 16 and over and the BSAS adults aged 18 and over. Data are for 2005 unless stated otherwise.

NTS technical note:

A trip is a one way course of travel having a single main purpose. Cycling trips are those where cycling is the main mode in terms of distance. Distance travelled figures include cycling made as part of any trip.

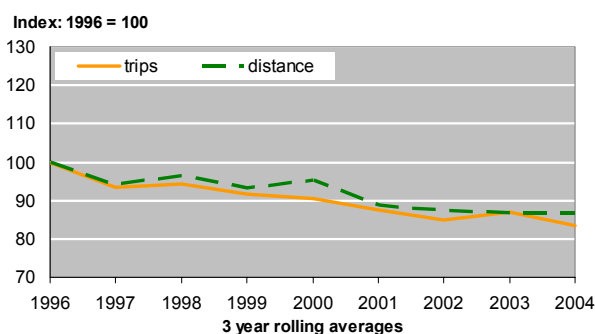
Cycling figures are relatively volatile due to the small number of trips made.

Levels of cycling

Cycling accounts for a small proportion of trips and has been declining in recent years.

- Cycling accounts for 1% of all trips and 2% of trips of less than 2 miles.
- The average resident makes 14 cycle trips per year and travels a distance of 36 miles.
- The average length of a cycle trip is 2.4 miles.
- The average number of trips by bicycle fell by just over a fifth (22%) between 1995/97 and 2005, from 18 to 14 trips per person per year.
- Over the same period, the average distance travelled by bicycle fell by 16%, from 43 to 36 miles per person per year.

Chart 1: Trends in number of cycle trips and distance cycled per person per year: 1996-2004



- When asked how often they ride a bike, 15% say at least once a week, and a further 8% say at least once a month. Over two thirds (69%) of people say they cycle less than once a year or never.

Although cycling is relatively rare, among those who do cycle it is a key mode of transport.

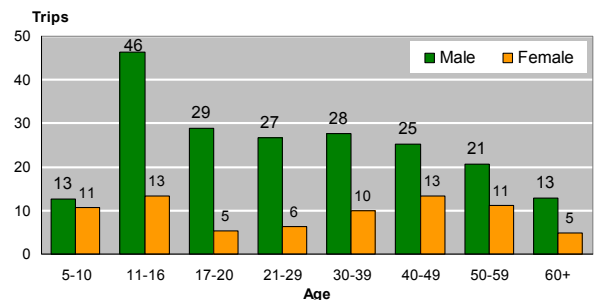
- Cyclists¹ on average make 5 trips a week by bicycle and travel 13 miles in a week. Cycling accounts for a fifth (22%) of all trips by cyclists.

¹ defined as NTS respondents who made at least one trip by bicycle during their travel week

Who cycles the most?

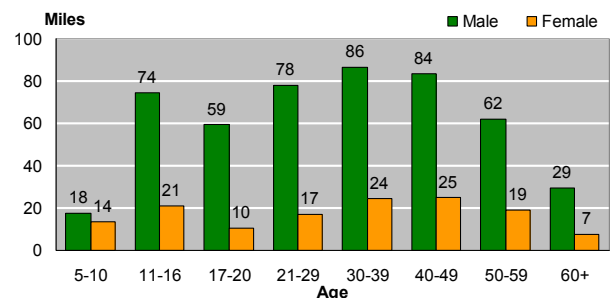
- Across all age groups males make more cycle trips on average than females. This difference is greatest among people aged 17-20, with men in this age group making more than five times as many cycling trips as women (Chart 2).

Chart 2: Cycle trips per person per year, by sex and age: 2002-2005



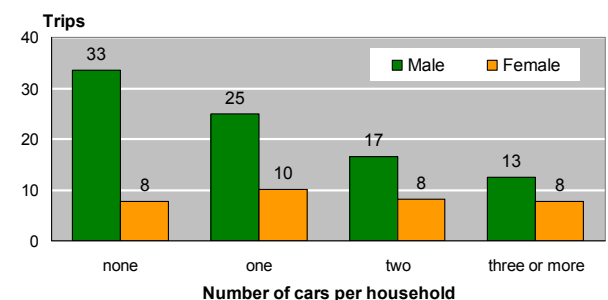
- Cycling trip rates are highest among boys aged 11-16 years. However, men aged 30-49 travel the greatest distance by bicycle (Chart 3).

Chart 3: Distance travelled by bicycle per person per year, by sex and age: 2002-2005



- Among males, trip rates by bicycle decrease as household car ownership increases whereas among females, there is no correlation between car ownership and cycling (Chart 4).

Chart 4: Cycle trips, by car ownership: 2002-2005



- People living in households with lower levels of income make, on average, fewer bicycle trips and travel shorter distances by bicycle than those in higher income households. On average people in the highest income quintile cycle 49 miles per person per year compared with 29 miles among people in the lowest income quintile.

- This contrasts with the pattern for walking, which is a more important form of transport for lower income households than higher income households.

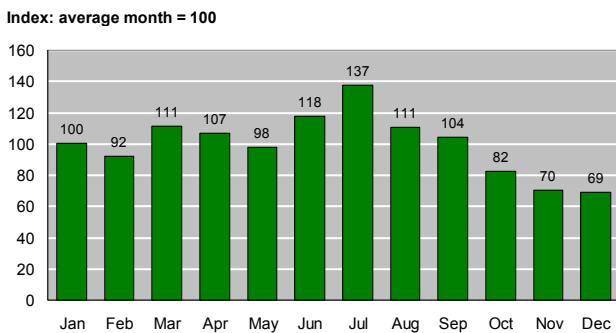
Why do people cycle?

- The main reasons for making a cycling trip are leisure or social purposes (38% of cycling trips) and commuting (30% of cycling trips).
- However, overall only 3% of commuting trips are made mainly by bicycle.
- 2% of trips to and from school by secondary school children (aged 11-16) and 1% by primary school children (aged 5-10) are by bicycle.

Cycle use by time of year

- Not surprisingly, cycling is most popular in Summer, with bicycle trip rates peaking in July.

Chart 5: Cycle trips, by month 2002-2005



Perceptions of cycling as a form of transport

- One in six (16%) adults agree that cycling is an important form of transport for them personally. Almost four-fifths (79%) disagree with this (Omnibus).
- Those who cycle frequently are more likely to consider this to be an important form of transport. 79% of those cycling at least once a week agree 'cycling is an important form of transport for me', compared with 8% of those who cycle less often.

Attitudes to cycling

People generally have a positive view of cycling although many are deterred by safety concerns.

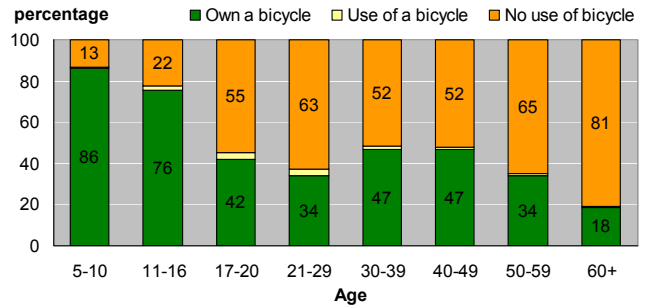
- The majority of adults agree that everyone should be encouraged to cycle to help their health (87%), help the environment (79%) and to ease congestion (73%) (Omnibus).
- However, many adults are concerned about the safety of cycling. Almost half (47%) strongly agree that 'the idea of cycling on busy roads frightens me', with a further 27% tending to agree with this. Women are more likely to express concerns about safety (85%) than men (61%) (Omnibus).

Potential for increasing cycling

Many people have access to a bicycle and many trips currently made by car are within reasonable cycling distance.

- 43% of people aged 5 and over own a bicycle and a further 1% have use of a bicycle. Bicycle ownership is much higher among children than adults (Chart 6).

Chart 6: Bicycle ownership by age: 2005



- Over two thirds (68%) of all trips and over half (58%) of car trips are under 5 miles, approximately a half hour cycle ride.
- 37% of adults agree that 'Many of the short journeys I now make by car I could just as easily cycle, if I had a bike' (BSAS).
- Around 3 in 10 car users say they would reduce their car use 'if there were more cycle tracks away from roads' (31%), 'if there were more cycle lanes on roads' (27%) or 'better parking facilities for cycles' (30%) (Omnibus).
- Around a quarter of car users say they would cycle more 'if congestion charging was introduced' (26%), 'if it was more expensive to park' (23%) and 'if it was difficult to park [a car]' (26%).
- Car users who already cycle frequently are more likely to agree such measures would reduce their car use.

Priority measures for cyclists

There is public support for taking measures to improve conditions for cyclists.

- Just over two-thirds (68%) of respondents agree that 'cyclists should be given more priority', while only 11% felt that 'cycle lanes on roads simply reduce space' (Omnibus).

Further information

Since 2002, NTS fieldwork has been conducted by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen).

The main results from the National Travel Survey are published at: www.dft.gov.uk/transtat along with details of the NTS methodology and articles based on Omnibus Survey modules.

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