

SHARE THE ROAD Provincial Survey Results - SUMMARY

September 2010

Building on Share the Road's 2009 research, this survey investigated cycling participation by adults and children in Ontario. Although 5% of adults ride daily, many more (25%) ride weekly or monthly.

The research design focused especially on measures to encourage greater participation, and perceptions that motorists and cyclists are 'at odds' on Ontario's roads.

As in the 2009 study, safer roads are at the top of the agenda when it comes to helping and encouraging Ontarians to cycle more. The build out of infrastructure at the local level remains a key focus of concern.

We found that there is deep and wide interest in making cycling safer - among drivers and cyclists alike. Despite some perceptions of a divide between them, drivers and cyclists overwhelmingly endorse the need to 'share the road' and find solutions for safety. In this regard, Ontarians see their local (municipal governments) as key players - and partners - in this project.

Parents are very interested in seeing cycling safety added to school curriculum, and also opportunities to cycle with their children to cultural and natural attractions (cycle tourism).

Support for a 3' passing law in Ontario is high (70%), and higher than a range of other specific safety options posed to respondents including eliminating right-turn-on-red and giving cyclists advance-green privileges.

The method for this study is reviewed at the end of this summary.

Adult Cyclists – Encouraging Ontarians to Cycle More

About 1-in-20 (5%) of Ontarians say they ride a bicycle daily or almost daily. Meanwhile, 70% ride only rarely or do not have regular access to a bicycle (see Table One, below).

However, there is a sizeable minority of 25% of Ontarians who ride a bicycle, but not often or not regularly, include one-in-ten (11%) who say they ride weekly, and 14% that ride monthly.



Table One: Do you ride a bicycle..? (adults, n=1007)

Every day or almost every day	5%
Weekly or almost weekly	11%
Monthly or almost monthly	14%
Rarely or never	36%
I do not currently own or have regular access to a working bicycle	34%

Overall, among adult Ontarians, regular cycling (daily/weekly/monthly) is highest in rural parts of the province (38%) and lowest in urban areas (25%).

Measures that encourage more cycling among adults revolve around safety, infrastructure and modal integration, and tourism/recreational opportunities closer to home::

Table Two: Adult Ontarians

ENCOURAGEMENT MEASURE?	YES	MAYBE
Safer roads and car drivers	54%	21%
More and better bike lanes to where you want to go	47%	23%
More and better bike lanes to cultural or natural spots you would like to visit (festivals, nature trails, etc)	43%	27%
If the places that you want/need to go were closer to home	41%	29%
More opportunities to ride with family	33%	31%
Better/more lockers/racks to make it easier to use my bike in combination with train/bus/public transit	31%	27%

Across all types of cyclists, encouragement is greatest among more frequent riders, and less among those who ride least.

Some other highlights:

- For Ontarians who do not cycle now (two thirds of the population), the number one encouragement by far (at 42%) is safer roads/drivers
- 36% of weekly riders say that receiving instruction on safe cycling would encourage them to cycle more
- Interest in riding more with family is equally strong across all types of cycling frequencies (daily/weekly/monthly).

The most persuasive reasons to cycle more are:

- Health benefits such as reducing obesity/diabetes (61% very persuasive/32% somewhat persuasive)
- Reduced traffic congestion and less pollution (46% very persuasive/39% somewhat persuasive)
- Bicycle-friendly communities are safer for seniors, people with disabilities and children (36% very persuasive/37% somewhat persuasive)



Children as Cyclists

For children (as reported by parents who completed this survey), the picture is encouraging, with more than half of Ontario children riding daily or weekly.

Table Three:

Do/does your child/children ride a bicycle..? (as reported by parents, n=265)

Every day or almost every day	20%
Weekly or almost weekly	32%
Monthly or almost monthly	15%
Rarely or never	14%
Do not currently own/have regular access to a working bicycle	20%

As for encouraging more cycling among children, safety and more/better infrastructure are key, as the table below illustrates. There is also a prominent social dimension in the minds of parents, which may be interpreted as an aspect of the recreation/tourism dimension for parents themselves:



Table Four: Children (as reported by parents)

ENCOURAGEMENT MEASURE?	YES	MAYBE
Safer roads and car drivers	60%	22%
More opportunities to ride with other children	55%	28%
More and better bike lanes to where they want to go	51%	26%
If the places that you want/need to go were closer to home	51%	27%
More opportunities to ride with family	51%	26%
Instruction on safe cycling for children as part of school curriculum	40%	32%
Bike storage at schools	36%	31%

Taking Action

When parents were asked 'who do you feel is mainly responsible for making it easier for children to ride their bikes?' (n=265), we found that most take personal responsibility (55% say 'myself') but fully 30% feel that municipal government is the main player. All other responses were much lower (5% provincial government, 5% schools), indicating a clear preference for a partnership of families and their local government to encourage children's cycling in their community.

Sharing the Roads

About half of Ontarians (51%) report driving a car every day, and a further one-fifth (22%) drive several times each week. Among drivers, cycling is just as common as among the total population. This points to an important fact behind the so-called 'war' between drivers and cyclists - 80% of regular cyclists drive a car at least weekly or more often. *More than half - 54% - of regular cyclists drive every day.*

And a large majority of Ontarians (81%) are aware that

'Cyclists are recognized as vehicles under the Highway Traffic Act. This means they have the same rights as cars and trucks to use the roads, and the same responsibilities for riding in a safe manner.'

So in terms of the context, a supposed 'war' between cyclists and cars does not appear in the offing - Ontarians commonly use both bicycles and cars to get around, and the rights of cyclists are widely acknowledged.

There is some evidence of polarization between cyclists and motorists:



- 71% agree (38% strongly) that 'People driving cars generally obey the rules of the road more often than people riding bicycles'
- 61% agree (25% strongly) that there are unnecessary accidents involving cyclists because 'motorists don't show cyclists enough consideration'

However, it is also notable that consensus is a stronger magnet for opinion on this issue:

- 89% agree (57% strongly) that 'Cyclists and motorists are equally responsible for making roads dangerous and causing accidents involving bikes and cars. Both groups need to take more responsibility for sharing the road.'

It is in this more nuanced context that Ontarians express support for collective action to improve cycling safety for all:

- 71% agree (28% strongly) that 'Schools should teach cycling as part of physical education'
- 70% agree (29% strongly) that 'Safety for drivers and cyclists is not just a matter for individuals - governments need to step up and invest in cycling infrastructure '
- 70% agree (25% strongly) that 'Investing in bike lanes and traffic signals to make cyclist safer does not have to cost very much money because these measures can be implemented by city governments during road construction that is already happening anyway'

Specific Measures

Currently there is discussion of a Private Member's Bill at the Ontario Legislature to require that drivers give at least one-metre (three feet) of clearance for cyclists on all roads in the province. To find out the level of public support for this measure we asked if respondents agree or disagree with it, but we also posed a number of other measures that have been publicly raised, to discover where a 3' passing law ranks, compared to other measures.

Table Five: Agree/Disagree on Measures to Improve Cycling Safety (n=1007)

MEASURE	TOTAL AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
Enact a 3' Passing Law	70%	33%
Provide a 10- or 15-second 'advance green' for cyclists at lighted intersections	54%	21%
No bike lanes on main roads	49%	27%
Reduce speed limits on shared roads	44%	16%
Eliminate 'right-turn-on-red' for cars	37%	14%



Support for a 3' passing law is strongest among women and rural Ontarians.

Methods

This summary refers to a survey conducted online using a province-wide research panel, from September 7th to 9th, 2010.

These data was statistically weighted to ensure that the sample's regional, gender and age composition reflects that of the actual Ontario population according to the 2006 Census.

The data was analyzed using SPSS 12.0.

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