

SHARE THE ROAD Provincial Survey Results - SUMMARY

June 2011

Building on Share the Road's 2009 and 2010 public opinion research, this June 2011 survey of 1,020 Ontarians investigated participation and support for cycling. The research design focused especially on measures to encourage greater participation, issues related to cycling infrastructure, and the roles of different levels of government when it comes to supporting cycling as a choice for Ontarians.

Whereas 28% of adults in Ontario cycle regularly (daily/weekly/monthly), a majority (53%) would prefer to cycle more often. As in previous studies, safer roads are at the top of the agenda when it comes to helping and encouraging Ontarians to cycle more. An overwhelming majority (93%) endorse the need to 'share the road' and find solutions to improve safety for cyclists and motorists alike.

The building of cycling infrastructure at the local level remains a key focus of concern, as it was in 2010. **A strong majority agreed that 'more and better' cycling infrastructure -- including the addition of curbed and separate bike lanes, paved shoulders and bike-only traffic signals -- would enhance cycling safety and encourage more people to ride their bikes.**

Ontarians endorsed increased provincial funding to support the development of cycling infrastructure. A portion of current spending on roads should be earmarked to 'meet the needs of cyclists, not only motorists.' **A majority of respondents agreed that the benefits of having more people cycling 'far outweigh' the costs of building better cycling infrastructure.**

Ontarians view support for cycling as the shared responsibility of the provincial government and municipal governments. As the public consensus regarding benefits and the pent-up demand for safe cycling opportunities grows, both levels of government -- but particularly the provincial government -- are likely to face increasing pressure to plan and fund robust cycling infrastructure in Ontario.

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

Participation in Cycling



About 5% of Ontarians say they ride a bicycle daily or almost daily and an additional 23% report riding weekly or monthly. However, there is a sizeable minority of Ontarians (72%) who rarely or never ride a bicycle.

Table One: Do you ride a bicycle..? (Adults, n=1020)

	2010	2011
Every day or almost every day	5%	5%
Weekly or almost weekly	11%	12%
Monthly or almost monthly	14%	11%
Rarely/never/don't own a bike	70%	72%

Among adult Ontarians, regular cycling (daily/weekly/monthly) is lowest in the north (21%) southwest (25%) and 416 area code (27%) regions of the province, and highest in 905 (32%), eastern Ontario (30%) and Hamilton-Niagara (29%) regions.

Seventy percent of Ontarians drive a car every day, 11% drive weekly, 2% drive monthly and 17% drive rarely or never.

Among drivers, cycling is just as common as among the total population, underlining an important fact behind the so-called 'war' between drivers and cyclists - 85% of regular cyclists drive a car at least weekly or more often. A strong majority - 70% - of regular cyclists drive every day.

A majority of Ontarians (53%) indicated that they would prefer to cycle more often. Groups that expressed the strongest interest in cycling more often include regular cyclists (69%), individuals aged 18-34 (67%), those aged 35 to 49 (58%) and those living in the 905 region (58%).

Participating in Cycling Safety Programs

Our 2009 and 2010 research findings indicated that safety concerns may be a significant barrier to cycling and increased safety is likely to encourage greater participation.

Asked if they would be likely to take advantage of a free cycling safety course if it were offered in their community, 29% of survey respondents indicated they would be likely to do so.

Interest in participating in free cycling safety courses is highest among those who cycle regularly (40%), individuals who do not drive a car (40%), and those in the 18-34 age group (40%). Residents of the 416 and 905 areas codes are most likely to participate in free cycling safety courses (33% of respondents from both regions).



Among the subset of 28% of survey respondents who indicated positive interest, 21% reported that participating in a free cycling safety course in their community would encourage them to ride a bike 'a lot more' and 45% indicated that a safety course would encourage them to bicycle 'a bit more.'

Increased Cycling Infrastructure

Research in 2009 and 2010 (and 2011?) demonstrated that Ontarians - cyclists and drivers- view increased cycling as a good thing for everyone, yielding a range of benefits including lower health care costs, better quality of life, safer streets and communities, less traffic congestion, and reduced air pollution/carbon emissions.

This year's survey explored the extent to which this popular 'share the road' perspective translates to support for specific measures and increased government funding to develop cycling infrastructure.

Support for enhanced cycling infrastructure is very strong with 84% agreeing (46% strongly) that curbed and separate bike lanes 'would be safer for everyone, including motorists and pedestrians'. On a similar theme, 75% agreed (33% strongly) that 'more people would ride bikes if there was a better cycling infrastructure.'

Reinforcing the findings of the 2010 research, which identified health benefits as one of the most persuasive reasons to support increased cycling, **69% of respondents in this year's survey agreed (27% strongly) that the health benefits of increased cycling and resulting reductions in health care costs was a good reason for the provincial government to invest in cycling infrastructure.**

Enhanced cycling infrastructure is perceived as a matter of balancing the rights of cyclists and motorists. **Sixty-seven percent agreed (25% strongly) that a portion of the money currently being spent on roads should be earmarked to meet the needs of cyclists.** And when asked to compare benefits and costs, 57% agreed (18% strongly) that the benefits of having more people cycling 'far outweigh' the costs of building more cycling infrastructure.

Table Two: Measures to Develop Cycling Infrastructure

Agree/Disagree	Agree	Disagree
The roads would be safer for everyone, including motorists and pedestrians if there were more curbed and separated bike lanes (Q10k)	84%	16%



More people would ride bikes if there was better cycling infrastructure ...curbed lanes, paved shoulders and bike-only traffic signals (Q10g)	75%	25%
People who bike regularly are healthier and put less strain on the health care system...the provincial government should invest in cycling infrastructure, so people could leave their cars at home (Q10d)	69%	31%
Cyclist pay taxes and have the right to use the roads just as car drivers do... the province... should earmark spending to meet the needs of cyclists (Q10c)	67%	33%
Where I live cyclists need more bike lanes or paved shoulders (Q10a)	65%	35%
The benefits of having more people cycling far outweigh the costs of building more and better infrastructure (Q10h)	57%	43%

Support for Government Action

Asked which levels of government are responsible for encouraging and supporting increased cycling in Ontario just 4% identified the issue as primarily a provincial responsibility and 18% viewed it as primarily a municipal responsibility, whereas **54% view support for increased safe cycling opportunities as the joint responsibility of both levels of government.** Just 16% viewed neither level of government as having responsibility for enhancing safe cycling opportunities.

Methods

This summary is based on that was fielded online using a province-wide research panel, from June 20th to 22th, 2011. The 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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