

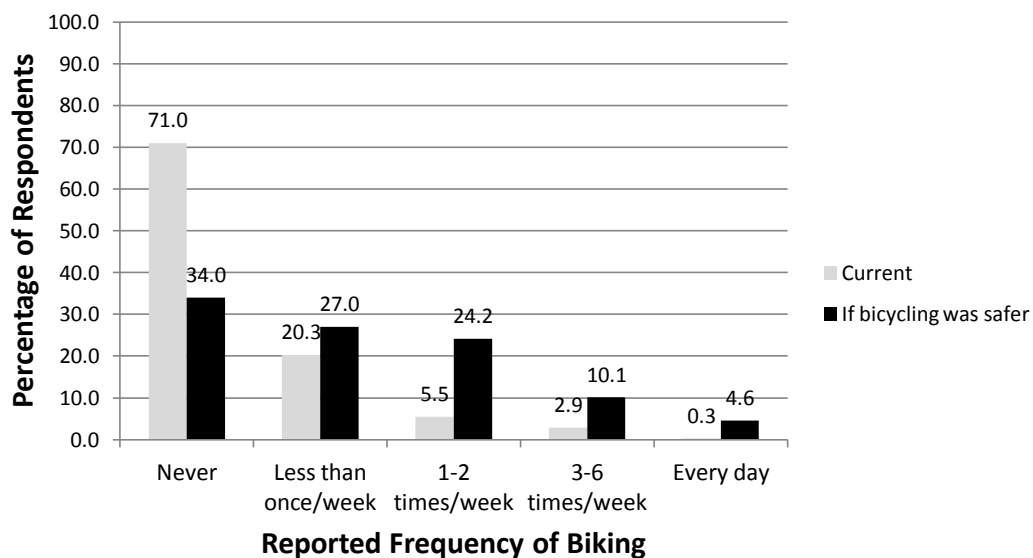
Improving Bicycling Safety Could Encourage More Bicycling



Introduction

When it comes to bicycle riding, the United States has fallen to the back of the pack. With only 1% of trips taken by bicycle, the US ranks close to last internationally. Yet bicycle riding, whether for recreation or transport, can have positive effects on physical health, mental health, and quality of life. Increasing bicycle riding could help the nation meet its physical activity goals and could benefit the environment by reducing car emissions and traffic congestion.

A recent study of bicycle riding found that safety from car traffic was a major factor affecting whether or not people rode their bikes. The study surveyed 1,780 US adults aged 20-65 and asked how often they currently ride their bikes and how often they would ride if they thought it would be safe from cars.



What would happen if safety improved?

- **With improved safety from traffic, the percentage of people who rode a bicycle at least once a week would increase by 30%.**
- Over 70% of participants reported owning a bicycle, yet 60% of those reported they never rode their bicycle.
- With increased perceived safety from cars, 59% of bicycle owners who never rode reported that they would begin to ride their bicycle at least once a week.
- For those participants who didn't own a bicycle, 44% stated that they would begin to ride if they felt safe from cars.

Who would benefit from improved safety from cars?

- The population that currently rides bicycles most frequently consists of young, white, physically fit males living in neighborhoods perceived to be safe for riding.
- The population that would benefit most from improved safety from traffic, however, consists of non-Whites (including Latinos) who live in neighborhoods that are not currently perceived to be safe for bicycle riding.
- Minority participants reported the most significant projected increases in bicycle riding if improvements made their neighborhoods more bike-friendly.
- Major increases in bicycle riding were also projected for participants living in neighborhoods with high street connectivity, such as inner-city areas where a large proportion of residents are racial-ethnic minorities.

Conclusions

Given that racial-ethnic minorities suffer a disproportionately high incidence of chronic disease, this research indicates that improving bicycle safety in racial-ethnic minority neighborhoods, especially those with poor bicycle safety, could have a significant health impact on those most in need. Effective methods to reduce traffic speed include narrowing lanes, traffic circles, and speed humps. Careful targeting of traffic safety interventions in disadvantaged areas could enhance cost-effectiveness and maximize the health impact of bicycle safety interventions.

Reference:

Sallis, J., Conway, T., Dillon, L., Frank, L., Adams, M., Cain, K., & Saelens, B. (2013). Environmental and demographic correlates of bicycling. *Preventive Medicine, 57*, 456-460

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