

Safety, frustration and cooperation when cyclists interact with other road users

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Keywords: Traffic interaction, cyclists, motorists, pedestrians, attitudes, e-scooters

Vulnerable road users have a higher risk of injury than motorists, and Norway's policy goal of increasing walking and cycling might therefore conflict with the goal of reducing injuries and deaths in traffic. To counteract this, it becomes increasingly important to improve traffic interactions between road user groups. The current survey examines how motorists, cyclists and pedestrians view each other, as well as their interactions with professional drivers and e-scooter riders.

Methods:

Respondents (N = 3713) were recruited to a web-survey from nine urban areas in Norway and were classified as either cyclists (n = 931), motorists (n = 1840) or pedestrians (n = 942) depending on frequency of travel mode use. Items included measures of perceived safety and frustration when interacting with other road user groups. In addition, respondents rated how problematic certain behaviours are to them, how often they experience uncomfortable situations and how often they do different types of (un)cooperative behaviours. We also included some questions related to knowledge of traffic rules.

Results:

Cyclists generally report feeling more unsafe and more frustrated than motorists and pedestrians in traffic interactions, and feel most unsafe around large motor vehicles. Pedestrians, on the other hand, feel most unsafe when interacting with cyclists and e-scooter riders.

Most cyclists (60% of women, 55% of men) report that they always or often keep behind trucks or buses when waiting in intersections, though almost a fifth of male cyclists say they never or rarely do so.

While motorists and pedestrians have similar perceptions of how problematic different behaviours are for each other, there is a mismatch between cyclists' and both motorists' and pedestrians' perceptions of how problematic certain behaviours are. This mismatch exists both for behaviours done by cyclists that impact motorists or pedestrians, and for behaviours done by motorists and pedestrians that impact cyclists. Cyclists rate that motorists' overtaking too close and not checking their blind spots when turning are the most problematic situations. Pedestrians report both cyclists and e-scooter riders suddenly overtaking them as most problematic, followed by sharing the pavement with e-scooter riders and that cyclists don't stop for them at zebra crossings.

Questions about right of way revealed that about half of the respondents are uncertain about yielding rules between cyclists and motorists. Additionally, many are uncertain about which rules apply to e-scooters.

While e-scooter riders are perceived negatively by all respondents, cyclists have more positive attitudes toward them than both motorists and pedestrians. Motorists and pedestrians raise similar complaints toward cyclists and e-scooter riders and have a tendency to attribute interaction issues to personal failings of the cyclists/e-scooter riders, such as being "egotistical" or "ruthless".

Conclusions:

While most people view the interaction in traffic as relatively unproblematic, there's a lack of understanding between cyclists and other road users that might result in increased conflicts. These findings illustrate a need for education, both in terms of traffic rules and the experiences of different road user groups.