

# Cycling survey 2015



**Cycling is an important transport option now, and for the future. Cycling has a key role to play in helping to tackle Perth's growing traffic congestion and improving the health and wellbeing of our cities and towns. Understanding the barriers to cycling in Western Australia (WA), and the needs and expectations of existing and potential cyclists (and other road users), will be of vital importance to identifying priority actions to increase cycling participation across WA.**

The number of people in WA choosing to cycle has increased significantly over recent years, and they are doing so for a variety of reasons (for example on health, social and environmental grounds).

According to the 2013 Austroads National Cycling Participation Survey, 405,000 Western Australians cycle each week. Fixed counters on Perth's Principal Shared Paths (PSPs) also clocked 4 million trips in the 2013 financial year - up almost 30 per cent since 2010/11.

Despite the increasing popularity of cycling, concerns about safety and

the availability and quality of infrastructure impact negatively on people's perceptions of cycling as a safe and convenient transport option.

Sadly, in 2014, eight cyclists were fatally injured on WA roads, an increase from six fatalities in 2013. RAC's inaugural Cycling Survey, undertaken in 2011, also highlighted that safety concerns (such as a fear of sharing the roads with motorists) were deterring people from cycling more often (91 per cent of respondents who identified a barrier to cycling gave this as a reason). In addition, Perth's cycle network was rated as average or below by 57 per cent of respondents.

The RAC 2015 Cycling Survey, the subject of this paper, was launched

in January 2015 to capture a current picture of cycling in WA. It provides insight into the views and experiences of existing cyclists and non-cyclists, as well as the barriers deterring people from cycling more often. Respondents also had an opportunity to voice their opinions on what they feel the Government's priorities should be for increasing cycling participation.

A total of 5,657 responses were received from both RAC members and non-members. Of those who cycle, 90 per cent predominantly cycle in metropolitan Perth and 10 per cent in regional WA. This overwhelming response highlights that people want to be part of the discussion about cycling in our State.



**For the better**

# Existing cycling behaviours

The 2015 Cycling Survey has revealed that one in two survey respondents cycle at least weekly for a range of reasons, with exercise and fun continuing to be amongst the main ones. Fear of sharing the roads with motor vehicles remains the most frequently given reason for not cycling more often and lack of cycle routes is also a barrier.

Generally speaking, survey respondents appear to be regular cyclists, with 52 per cent cycling at least weekly (29 per cent cycle more than 4 days a week and 23 per cent 1 to 3 days a week). However, one in four respondents never cycle<sup>1</sup>.

The most commonly cited reasons for cycling were for exercise (82 per cent), for leisure / fun (67 per cent) and to get to work / studies (40 per cent)<sup>2</sup>. Exercise (93 per cent), leisure / fun (72 per cent) and to get to work / studies (55 per cent) were also the main reasons reported in the 2011 survey.

When it comes to where people are cycling / the infrastructure they are using, shared paths appear to be the

most commonly used (on average, respondents spend almost half of their time cycling on shared paths), followed by sharing the road with vehicles. This is likely both a product of their reason for cycling and the relative availability of off-road cycling infrastructure compared to on-road infrastructure such as cycle lanes. The latter is reinforced by the fact that, of those who cycle on the road (sharing with other vehicles), the overwhelming majority (87 per cent) said they do so because there are no alternatives (e.g. no shared paths, cycle lanes).

When asked what, if anything, stops them from cycling more often, fear of

sharing the roads with motorists (which was one of a number of reasons for 43 per cent of respondents, and the main reason for 29 per cent) and lack of bike routes (31 per cent and 11 per cent respectively) emerged as the top two reasons.

*“I ride because I love it, but I’m fearful every time I ride on the roads.”*

*“Roads in WA are not cyclist friendly.”*

The ‘other’ reasons given included safety concerns, health issues, weather and the current helmet laws.

Figure 1 » Reasons for cycling

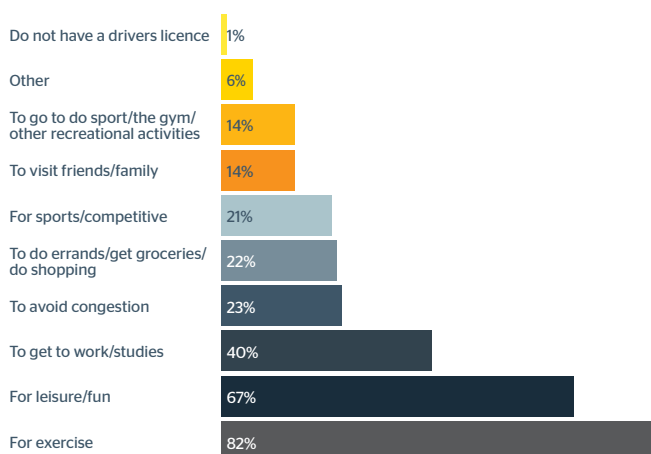
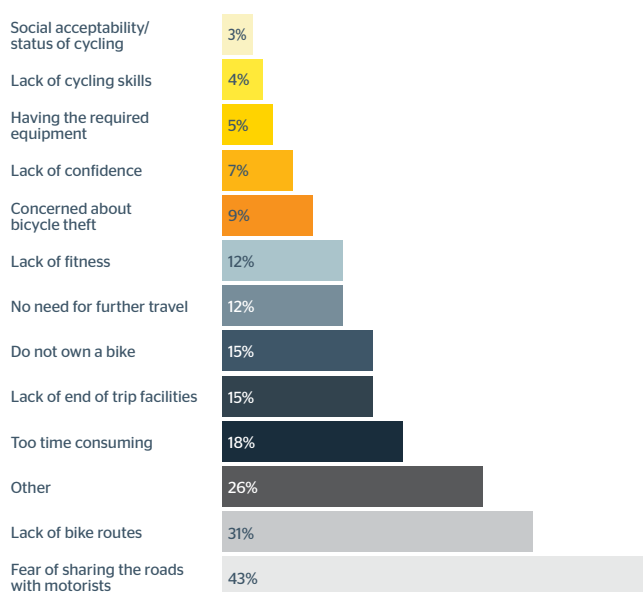


Figure 2 » Main barriers to cycling more often



<sup>1</sup>These respondents were only asked questions about what, if anything, stops them from cycling more often and what they think the Government’s priorities should be to encourage more people to cycle.  
<sup>2</sup>Multiple responses were permitted.

# Satisfaction with existing infrastructure

When it comes to satisfaction with existing cycling infrastructure, respondents are most satisfied with the provision for off-road cycling (such as cycle paths and shared paths) and they generally feel safer using them. Unsurprisingly, most respondents do not feel as safe cycling in areas where there is a lack of provision for cyclists and they are required to share the road with other vehicles.

Almost one in two respondents are moderately or extremely dissatisfied (46 per cent) with existing on-road cycling infrastructure, which may be associated with the lack of opportunity to use such facilities. In regards to off-road cycling infrastructure overall satisfaction is higher, with only 20 per cent of respondents moderately or extremely dissatisfied with the existing provision (while 41 per cent are moderately or extremely satisfied).

*“The shared path network is very good but we could always do with more.”*

*“There are good cycleways and PSPs but often no safe access on or off them....”*

When it comes safety, a majority of cyclists (79 per cent) feel moderately or extremely safe when using shared paths compared to only 13 per cent when sharing the road with vehicles

(with one in two respondents feeling moderately or extremely unsafe). Where on-road cycling infrastructure in the form of cycle lanes is available for use, perceived safety increases substantially (with the proportion of respondents feeling moderately or extremely safe increasing to 36 per cent).

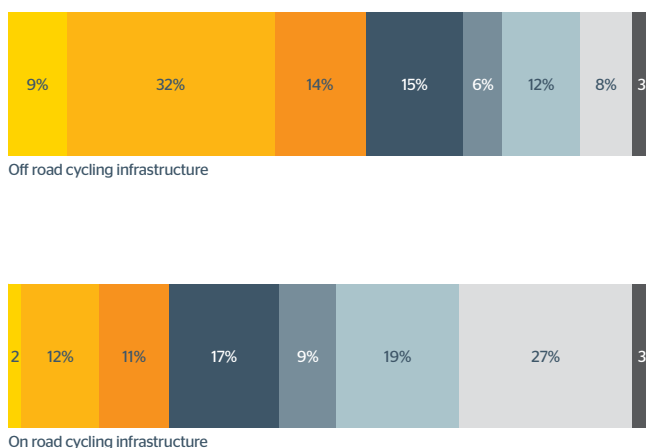
It is evident from the survey that feelings about safety influence respondent's decisions about the routes they use, with almost one in two respondents saying they travel further to take advantage of safer routes always or most of the time.

Common issues frequently encountered by those cycling on roads are vehicles not providing enough space while overtaking at intersections / roundabouts and poorly designed cycle lanes such as lanes terminating at unsafe locations (38 per cent of respondents encounter both of these issues always or most of the time).

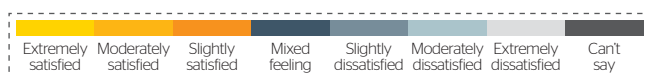
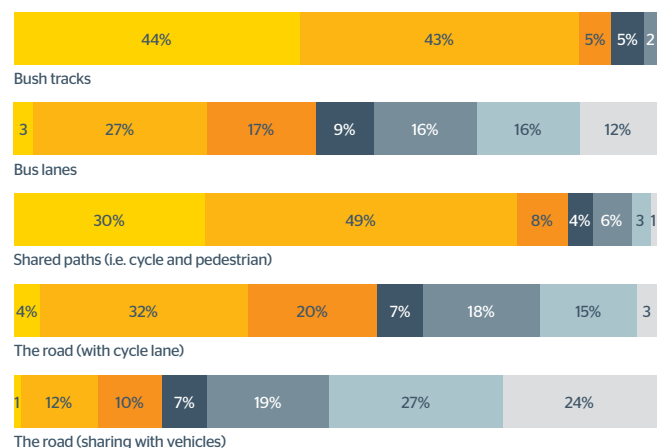
When cycling on shared paths, the most common issues encountered are maintenance issues (22 per cent of respondents encounter such issues always or most of the time) and issues associated with interactions with other cyclists and pedestrians. The latter includes not being provided with sufficient width while overtaking in the face of oncoming cyclists / pedestrians (22 per cent), large groups of pedestrians blocking the path (19 per cent) and other cyclists travelling too fast (18 per cent). Almost two thirds of respondents said they use their bell to warn pedestrians when approaching, and 43 per cent also give verbal warnings, always or most of time. This would help to minimise the potential for conflicts.

*“Shared paths are not good for commuting or fast riding due to slower moving pedestrians.”*

**Figure 3 » Satisfaction with on-road and off-road cycling infrastructure**



**Figure 4 » Feelings of safety while riding on different types of infrastructure**



# Looking forward

The 2015 Cycling Survey highlights the importance of building on, and improving, the on and off-road cycle networks, with a majority of respondents nominating these in their top three priorities for the State Government.

Respondents were asked to provide their views on the areas they believe the State Government should place priority on to help encourage more people to cycle. It is apparent that cycling infrastructure is viewed by respondents as by far the most important, with 71 per cent nominating on-road infrastructure as a top three priority and 64 per cent nominating off-road infrastructure. Legislative changes featured in the top three for around a third of respondents but this is significantly lower than the proportion of respondents prioritising infrastructure.

'Other' priority areas suggested by respondents included:

- > training cyclists on road rules and sharing the road;
- > driver awareness training;
- > greater enforcement of road rules;
- > having a licensing system for cyclists;

- > requiring cyclists to have insurance; and
- > better integration with public transport (e.g. on-board storage).

*“Cycling will only increase if we provide adequate cycleways that families can also use. This in turn teaches the next generation of workers that cycling to work is a viable option...”*

Interestingly, the order of priorities for respondents who predominantly cycle in metropolitan Perth and regional WA are generally very similar, with the top two areas for both being on-road infrastructure (74 per cent and 66 per cent respectively) and off-road infrastructure (64 per cent and 62 per cent respectively). For those in regional WA, the introduction of mandatory minimum safe passing distances ranked

third (34 per cent), just above legislative changes around liability (32 per cent), with the reverse for metropolitan Perth.

While not high priorities for either metropolitan Perth or regional WA, the most notable differences in the ranking of priorities is around training and workplace End-of-Trip (EoT) facilities:

- > those cycling in regional areas ranked training for cyclists higher than those cycling in metropolitan Perth (ranked 6th highest priority compared to 9th for Perth); and
- > those who predominantly cycle in Perth ranked incentives to encourage employers to retrofit their workplace EoT facilities higher (ranked 6th compared to 8th for regional WA).

*“Education that it isn’t cyclist vs car or vice versa... It’s just about getting home safe to all our loved ones.”*

**Table 1 » Priority areas to encourage more people to cycle<sup>3</sup>**

Build on / improve the on-road cycle network (e.g. cycle lanes, reallocation of road space for cyclists)	<b>71%</b>
Build on / improve the off-road cycle network (e.g. shared paths)	<b>64%</b>
Introduce legislative changes to make motorists liable for damages and injuries in crashes with cyclists	<b>33%</b>
Introduce legislative changes to mandate a minimum distance for vehicles to pass cyclists	<b>31%</b>
Activities to promote and market cycling as both a viable and safe mode of transport and recreational activity	<b>21%</b>
Build / improve public end of trip facilities in Perth CBD / activity centres / at stations	<b>16%</b>
Fund and deliver comprehensive cyclist training program(s)	<b>16%</b>
Other	<b>15%</b>
Provide incentives / grants to encourage employers to retrofit their workplace end of trip facilities	<b>14%</b>
Don't know	<b>1%</b>

<sup>3</sup>Based on the number of respondents nominating the area as one of their top three priorities.