

We're not against helmets

Some people feel more comfortable cycling with a helmet.

We're against claims that:

- portray cycling as far more dangerous than it is;
- portray bicycle helmets as offering far more protection than they do.



Cycling is a safe, fun and healthy activity whether you wear a helmet or not.



ECF Position on Helmets:

Cyclists typically live longer and healthier lives; serious head injuries are rare and the evidence in favour of helmet wearing and helmet laws is weak. The main effect of helmet laws has not been to improve cyclists' safety but to discourage cycling, undermining its health and other benefits.

We therefore call upon authorities to:

- focus on well-established measures to promote cycling and cyclists' well-being;
- recognise that the benefits of cycling far outweigh the risks;
- refrain from promoting or enforcing helmet wearing without sound evidence that this would be beneficial and cost-effective compared to other safety initiatives.

This brochure is the work of the ECF Helmet Working Group. Learn more about the group's work at www.ecf.com/3500_1 or by emailing Ceri Woolsgrove at c.woolsgrove@ecf.com.

Representatives of ECF member organizations are invited to join this group. Learn how your organization can become an ECF member at: www.ecf.com.

**Ask me
why I cycle
without a
helmet**

Curious?

Read this brochure and question helmet propaganda.

Want an easy way to help?

Wear a button and bring truth to the helmet discussion.

Want to help even more?

Take part in the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) Helmet Working Group.



Helmet laws and shock-horror promotions discourage bicycling:

Claim: "Cycle helmets prevent 85% of head injuries and 88% of brain injuries" (Thompson '89).*

Response: This study, quoted since 1989, has never been proven in the real world. Increased helmet use has been linked to sharp reductions in cycle use but never to detectable improvement in cyclists' safety.

Claim: "Children and adults should wear a bicycle helmet every time they ride a bicycle" (NHTSA 2007).*

Response: Cyclists suffer fewer head injuries than drivers or pedestrians (ONISR 2005)* so, if we follow this claim, drivers and pedestrians should also wear helmets all the time.

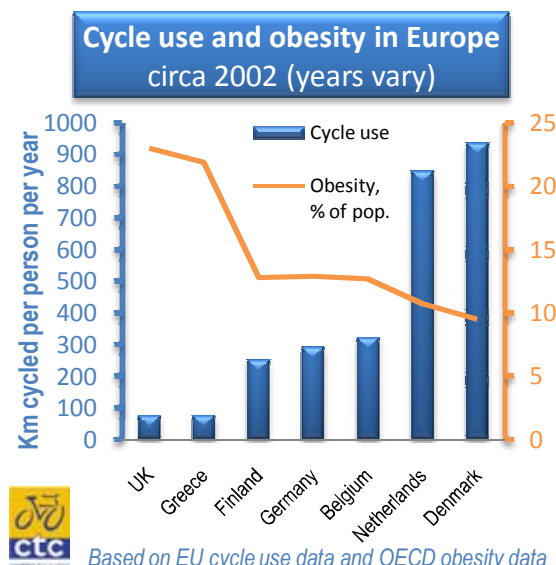
Claim: "Cycling without a helmet is suicidal."

Response 1: Helmets do not prevent crashes, only safer streets and good education for drivers and bicyclists prevent crashes.

Response 2: Helmet laws and propaganda create a "blame the victim" reaction which government and insurance officials use to avoid providing for bicyclists.



Cycling is a healthy activity whose benefits far outweigh the risks



A study in Copenhagen (Andersen 2000)* found that people who cycle regularly have a 29% lower annual mortality rate than non-cyclists.

An adult who cycles regularly will typically have a level of fitness equivalent to being 10 years younger (Tuxworth 1986)*; and a life-expectancy 2 years above the average.

The health benefits of cycling outweigh the risks involved by a factor of 20:1, thanks to added years (Hillman 1993).*

A 2003 Department of Transport study of deaths in Britain in 2003 compared 114 cyclist deaths to 30,000 deaths from obesity and 42,000 deaths from heart disease.

Reductions in cycling caused by helmet laws and promotions lead to a significant net reduction in public health (deJong 2011).*

The public health benefits of cycling outweigh its risks by up to 77:1

(Rojas-Rueda D et al 2011).*

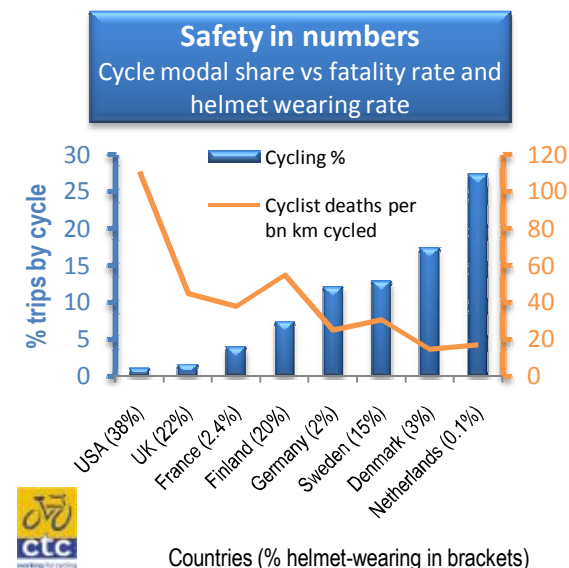
Bicycle helmets do little to improve safety. The best way to improve cyclists' safety is to promote cycling!

The risk of cycling is small – amounting to one cyclist death per 33 million km of cycling. It would take the average cyclist 21,000 years to cycle this distance (Cavill & Davis 2007).*

Unlike motorcycle helmets, cycle helmets are lightweight, soft and break on impact (Walker 2005)* making them useless after initial impact and useless in most crashes serious enough to cause a fatal head injury. Cycle helmets have also been shown to cause rotational brain injury in some crashes (St. Clair & Chinn 2007).*

Increases in helmet-wearing (e.g. in places like Australia and New Zealand, which banned cycling without helmets) have not been linked to improved safety, only reduction in cycle use (Robinson 2006).*

Cycling gets safer with more cyclists. Where helmets are common, bicycling is rare and crashes are prevalent. By reducing cycle use, helmet laws increase the risk to cyclists (Jacobsen 2003).*



*Find a detailed list of references and further resources at www.ecf.com/3500_1.