Students, bicycles and cycling

Survey research into student experiences of and attitudes towards cycling

June 2017
Research summary
An online survey with higher education students, delivered in June 2017, received 2042 responses revealing that...

Respondents are most likely to say they walk to their place of study (31%) and drive to their place of work (24%). 6% cycle to university and the same proportion (6%) cycle to work.

The 3 most important factors for choosing how they travel to university are: how long it takes to complete the journey, cost and convenience. The same reasons are important when choosing ways of travelling to work.

Of those who use a bike to get around at university, commuting to and from university or work are the journeys most frequently undertaken by bike.

Over half (56%) say they have not ridden a bike in the last 12 months. A further quarter have only done so a few times in the last year. 7% say they cycle 4 or more days a week.

Of those who use a bike to get around at university, 1 in 3 say they cycled more this academic year than they have done previously, the same proportion say they plan to cycle more next academic year. However, 1 in 4 have cycled less this year.

1 in 3 respondents say they have access to a bike, even if they don’t currently use it.

Main reasons for cycling are getting/keeping fit, saving money and because it’s better for the environment. These same factors would personally motivate respondents to cycle.

General reasons given for not cycling are concerns about road safety and traffic, having too much too carry and the weather. These are also factors that influence respondents the most in terms of their personal cycling behaviour.

Respondents express concern about their safety when cycling, with 82% saying that cyclists are vulnerable to other road users and 64% saying that traffic makes them afraid of cycling.

Having safer places to leave their bikes, shower and locker facilities and promoting campaigns to encourage cycling would help students to cycle/cycle more. Having dedicated cycle lanes and offering a bike rental scheme would also encourage more cycling.

Respondents suggest there is room for improvement in terms of support for cycling at their university, however they also show a lack of awareness over what is available e.g. 45% don’t know if cycle training is offered.
Research objectives and methodology
Research objectives and methodology

**Objective:**
The survey was designed to gather insight from students in higher education into their attitudes towards cycling, and their cycling behaviours.

**Methodology:**
The survey was advertised online via the NUS Extra student database to students studying in higher education, and promoted as a survey about what they do in their spare time.

The survey took approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. A prize draw of £150 or one of four £25 runner up prizes was offered to incentivise completion.

A final sample of 2042 responses was achieved.
The respondents
The respondents

**LEVEL OF STUDY**
- Higher Education: 66%
- Masters/PHD: 25%
- Further Education: 3%
- Other: 5%
- Apprenticeship: 0.24%

**AGE**
- 16-18: 5%
- 19-20: 14%
- 21-22: 7%
- 23-24: 7%
- 25-26: 8%
- 27-30: 9%
- 31-35: 5%
- 36-40: 5%
- 41-45: 5%
- 46-50: 5%
- 51-60: 4%
- 61-70: 1%
- 71+: 3%

**GENDER IDENTITY**
- Woman: 59%
- Man: 40%
- Not given: 1%

**NATIONALITY**
- UK: 85%
- EU: 6%
- Non-EU: 7%
- Prefer not to say: 1.3%
The respondents

**SUBJECT**

- Social studies: 11%
- Business & administrative studies: 9%
- Creative arts & design: 8%
- Education: 7%
- Subjects allied to medicine: 6%
- Biological sciences: 6%
- Engineering and Technology: 6%
- Medicine & Dentistry: 6%
- Maths & Computer Sciences: 6%
- Physical sciences: 5%
- Historical & Philosophical studies: 4%
- Law: 3%
- Languages: 3%
- Written arts: 3%
- Architecture, building and planning: 1%
- Mass communications and documentation: 1%
- Veterinary science: 1%
- Agriculture and related subjects: 0%
- Other: 12%

**SPARE TIME**

- Other volunteering opportunity: 22%
- None of these – I have never volunteered: 21%
- Sports club or team: 15%
- Club or group that helps my local community: 11%
- Art, drama, dance or music club / group: 10%
- Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme: 8%
- Scouts, Guides or other youth group: 7%
- National Citizen Service: 3%
- Club or group that helps the environment: 3%
- Army Cadet Force or Corps: 2%

F1. And which of the below most closely matches with your course subject?
[Base: 2036 Balance: No response]

F2. What volunteering activities, if any, have you ever taken part in?
[Base: 2033 Balance: No response]
Findings in detail
Respondents are most likely to say they walk to their place of study (31%) and drive to their place of work (24%). 6% cycle to university and the same proportion (6%) cycle to work.

- **Walk** (31%): The most common mode of transport for both full-time students and PhD students.
- **Bus**: 13% (usual place of study), 18% (place where you work).
- **Drive a car**: 16% (usual place of study), 24% (place where you work).
- **Train**: 10% (usual place of study), 6% (place where you work).
- **Cycle**: 6% (usual place of study), 6% (place where you work).
- **Underground/Metro/Tram/Light railway**: 5% (usual place of study), 6% (place where you work).
- **Get a lift in a car with someone from household**: 3% (usual place of study), 4% (place where you work).
- **Taxi/minicab**: 2% (usual place of study), 3% (place where you work).
- **Get a lift in a car with someone outside household**: 2% (usual place of study), 2% (place where you work).
- **Other**: 1% (usual place of study), 1% (place where you work).
- **Motorcycle/moped/scooter**: 1% (usual place of study), 1% (place where you work).
- **Not applicable, I do not work during term time**: 17% (usual place of study).

**B1. Thinking about where you live during term time at university...how do you usually get from where you live to...?**

Base: 1879 (usual place of study) and 1347 (the place where you work) Balance: No response
The 3 most important factors for choosing how they travel to university are: how long it takes to complete the journey, cost and convenience. The same reasons are important when choosing ways of travelling to work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Usual place of study</th>
<th>The place where you work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time taken to complete the journey</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost / price</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility / freedom</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habit</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How my friends are travelling</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fits my style</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PhD students are most likely to rate time taken to get to university to be important.
Over half (56%) say they have not ridden a bike in the last 12 months. A further quarter have only done so a few times in the last year. 7% say they cycle 4 or more days a week.

C1: Approximately how often have you ridden a bike in the last 12 months?
[Base: 2039 Balance: No response]

Women students are most likely to say they haven’t ridden a bike in the last year.
1 in 3 respondents say they have access to a bike, even if they don’t currently use it. Of those who cycle whilst at college, 4 in 10 do so for pleasure or exercise.

32% have access to a bicycle whilst at university

Students who are men or PhD students are most likely to have access to a bike

60% do not have access to a bicycle whilst at university

8% Didn’t know

C2: When you’re at university, do you have access to a bicycle, even if you don’t currently use it?
[Base: 2037 Balance: No response]

C3: What types of journey do you make by bicycle while you’re at university?
[Base: 650 Balance: Do not have access to a bicycle/don’t know]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Journey</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For pleasure</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For exercise</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commuting to / from university</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these – I don’t currently use the bike I have at university</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social / recreational</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commuting to / from work</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping trip</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal business (e.g. going to the doctors, bank etc)</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting friends / relatives</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday / day trip</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of those who use a bike to get around at university, commuting to and from university (20% do this 5 or more days a week) or work (9% do this 5 or more days a week) are the journeys most frequently undertaken by bike.

C4: You said you use your bike to get around at university. Please tell us how often you typically cycle to complete these journeys.

[Base: c.340 Balance: No response / Do not use a bike at university]
Of those who use a bike at university, around 1 in 3 say they cycle more this academic year than they have done previously, the same proportion say they plan to cycle more next academic year. However, 1 in 4 cycle less this year.

**Reasons for cycling more include...**

- **Health and fitness**
  - "I want to exercise and practice a healthier lifestyle"

- **Change in location**
  - "Live closer to uni so more realistic to use than bus like last year"

- **Increased convenience**
  - "More convenient form of travel for where I’ll be living"

**Reasons for cycling less include...**

- **Journey time**
  - "My uni work timetable increased so couldn’t spare the hour’s commute by bike"

- **Safety concerns**
  - "It is too dangerous on the roads to cycle"

- **Change in location**
  - "Live closer to university compared to last year"

C5: Thinking about how much you’ve used your bicycle this academic year (2016-17), how does this compare with how often you cycled during the previous academic year? [Base: 650 Balance: No response / Those who don’t use a bike at university]

C6: And thinking about next academic year, how often do you think you’ll be cycling compared to this academic year? [Base: 645 Balance: No response / Those who don’t use a bike at university]
Respondents express concern about their safety when cycling, with 82% saying that cyclists are vulnerable to other road users (agree or strongly agree) and 64% saying that traffic makes them afraid of cycling (agree or strongly agree). On the other hand, respondents recognise the convenience offered by cycling (72% agree or strongly agree) and almost half say there are good facilities for cycling at their university (48% agree or strongly agree).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cyclists are vulnerable to other road users</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic makes me afraid of cycling</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycling is a convenient way of getting around</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are good facilities for cycling at my university</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I see lots of other students cycling while I’m at university</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycling is not for people like me</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident cycling on the roads</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and signs make it easy to find you way around when cycling</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My friends at university cycle to get around</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycling is a safe way of getting around</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
General reasons given for not cycling are concerns about road safety and traffic, having too much too carry and the weather. These are also factors that influence respondents the most in terms of their personal cycling behaviour.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Personal influences on not cycling / cycling more</th>
<th>General barriers to cycling / cycling more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concern about road safety</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many things to carry</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much traffic / traffic too fast</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The weather</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drivers attitudes towards cyclists</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bike broken / don’t own a bike</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easier / quicker to go by car</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern about my cycling ability</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of cycle routes</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of time / too busy</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer to use public transport</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poorly maintained road surfaces</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Women students are most concerned about road safety, having too many things to carry, too much traffic, drivers attitudes and their cycling ability.

D2: Please tell us which of the following reasons for not cycling or not cycling more and tell me which apply to you?
[Base: 2023 Balance: No response]
D3: And which of these influence you most?
General reasons identified for cycling are getting/keeping fit, saving money and because it’s better for the environment. These same factors would encourage respondents to cycle more.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Personal motivations for cycling</th>
<th>General reasons for cycling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting / keeping fit</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saving money</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s better for the environment</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saves time / it’s quicker than others</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t have a car</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There’s improved cycling infrastructure (e.g. cycle lanes) now</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family / friends cycle</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing to take part in a cycling event</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety has improved</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspired by famous cyclists</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There’s less traffic now</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**D4: Which of the following would you say are reasons for cycling?**

- [Base: 2027 Balance: No response]

**D5: And which of these would encourage you personally to cycle the most?**

- [Base: 2028 Balance: No response]

- Women respondents more likely to say they cycle to get / keep fit
- Women respondents more likely to say they cycle to help the environment
- Respondents who are men are more likely to cycle due to convenience

- Personal motivations for cycling
- General reasons for cycling
Respondents suggest there is room for improvement in terms of support for cycling at their university, however they also show a lack of awareness over what is available e.g. 45% don’t know if cycle training is offered. Between a quarter and a third say shower facilities, lack of cycle hire and information about cycling in the area are poor. Secure cycle parking facilities are, however, considered to be good for 4 in 10.

**E1: How would you rate the following facilities or initiatives that help people to cycle at your university?**

Having safer places to leave their bikes, shower and locker facilities and promoting campaigns to encourage cycling are suggested as facilities or initiatives that would help students to cycle more. Having dedicated cycle lanes and offering a bike rental scheme are also suggested as possible ways to encourage more cycling.

**Safer cycle parking/storage (25%)**


**Promotions and campaigns (24%)**

- Promote awareness of the benefits to the environment and the little financial cost

**Facilities e.g. showers/lockers (17%)**

- More lockers/shower areas, improved infrastructure-CYCLE LANES
- More information about cycling and how it is beneficial - increase motivation to cycle. More signs/directions around the university for students. More cycle lanes.

**Dedicated cycle lanes/routes (15%)**

- We have a cycle hire scheme but it is not advertised. No idea how to access the secure bike storage and there aren't any showers.
- Make it part of the introduction to the university. Include visible cycle lanes along the boulevards. Secure bike parking outside buildings. Gifts for cyclists

**Bike rental schemes (11%)**

- Rent bikes, information on bikes, encourage cycling

E2: What suggestions do you have for facilities or initiatives at your university that would help people to cycle more?

Please contact Rachel Drayson – Insight manager (Sustainability) for further information about this research at rachel.drayson@nus.org.uk