

# Safety In Numbers



Halving the risks of cycling

# Safety In Numbers

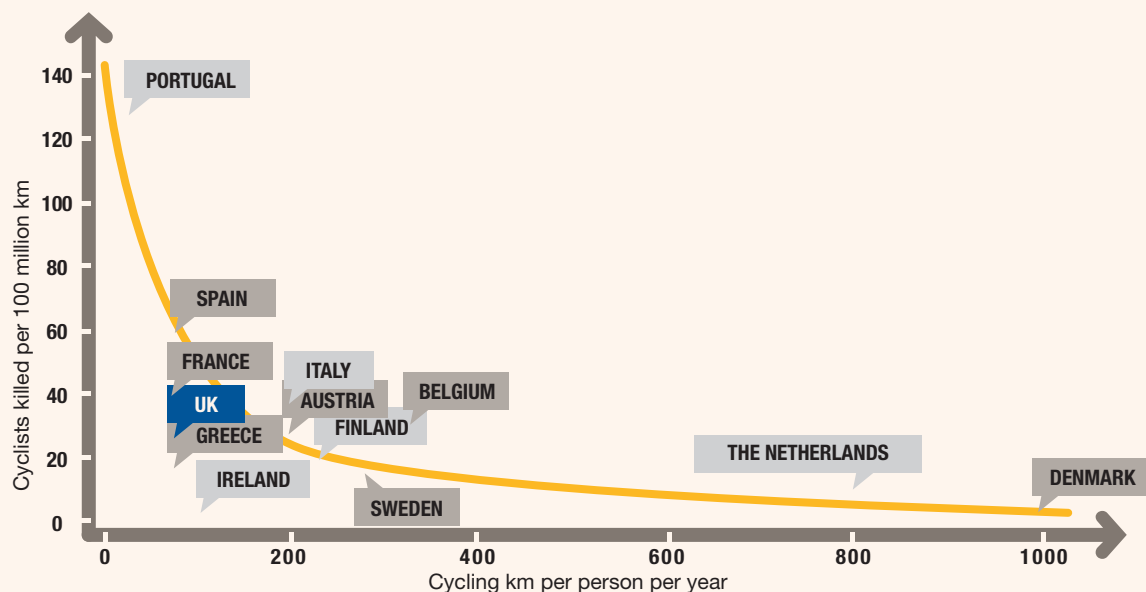


There is good evidence to support the idea that cycling gets safer the more people do it.

Yet despite this, many organisations are reluctant to encourage cycling for fear that this would increase the number of casualties on the roads. This approach fails to recognise the fact that cycling's health benefits greatly outweigh any risks involved – not to mention the benefits to the environment and people's quality of life.

The emphasis must now be on tackling the fears that prevent people from cycling more or not cycling at all. This can be done by: improving driver behaviour, creating more welcoming and cycle-friendly streets and giving people the confidence to cycle more. This will be good not only for our health, but also for streets, communities and the environment.

Countries in Europe with high levels of cycle use tend to be less risky for cyclists. In Denmark, people cycle over 900 kilometres a year and it is a far safer country to cycle in than Portugal, where barely 30 km is covered by each person by bike annually. See the graph below.



# The evidence

Research suggests that a doubling of cycling would lead to a reduction in the risks of cycling by around a third, ie. the increase in cycle use is far higher than the increase in cyclists' casualties.

There are plenty of examples to show that steep increases in cycling can go with **reductions** in cycle casualties.

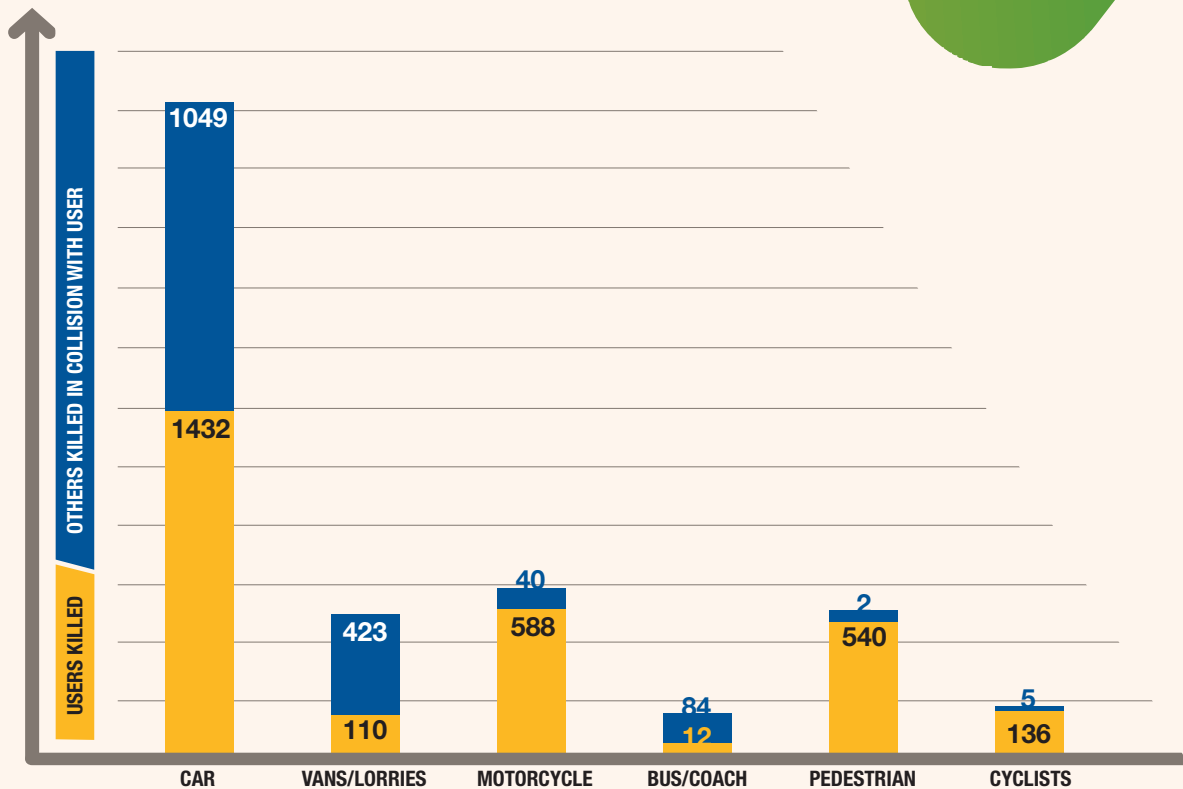
## In the UK:

London has seen a 91% increase in cycling since 2000 and a 33% fall in cycle casualties since 1994-98. This means that cycling in the city is 2.9 times safer than it was previously.

## In Europe:

The Netherlands has witnessed a 45% increase in cycling from 1980-2005 and a 58% decrease in cyclist fatalities.

## 2007 Fatalities



Increasing cycle use is good for the safety of other road users too. For every mile travelled, fewer injuries involve cyclists than motor vehicles. Every cycle trip that is a switch from car use means fewer injuries and deaths to others.

## Reasons why the 'safety in numbers' effect occurs

**1** Drivers grow more aware of cyclists and become better at anticipating their behaviour.

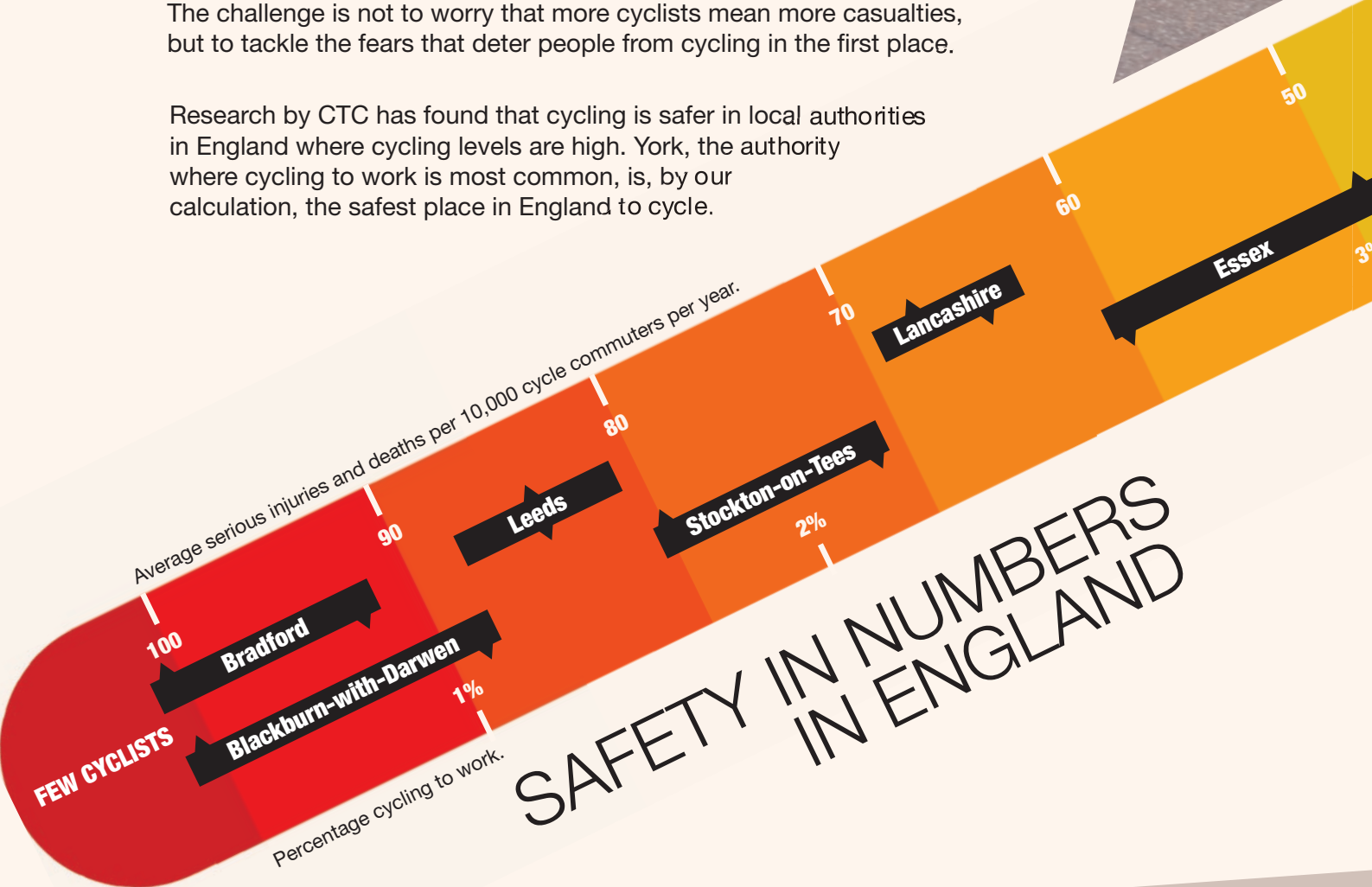
**2** Drivers are also more likely to be cyclists themselves, which means that they are more likely to understand how their driving may affect other road users.

**3** More people cycling leads to greater political will to improve conditions for cyclists.

This means that we can promote cycling without worrying that this will lead to more casualties. It is clear that 'more' and 'safer' cycling are perfectly compatible.

The challenge is not to worry that more cyclists mean more casualties, but to tackle the fears that deter people from cycling in the first place.

Research by CTC has found that cycling is safer in local authorities in England where cycling levels are high. York, the authority where cycling to work is most common, is, by our calculation, the safest place in England to cycle.





## Tackling the fears that prevent more cycling

So why are organisations reluctant to encourage cycling?

Unfortunately, many organisations perceive cycling as dangerous, and perpetuate that perception through their actions. For example, by treating it as a risky activity requiring special clothes and equipment, even well intentioned efforts to promote cycling may actually discourage people by playing on people's fears.

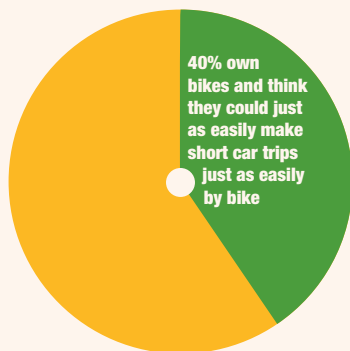
In fact cycling isn't as risky as commonly thought, with just one death every 32 million kilometres – that's over 800 times around the world.

Indeed not cycling is more risky than cycling: cyclists on average live two years longer than non-cyclists and take 15% fewer days off work through illness.

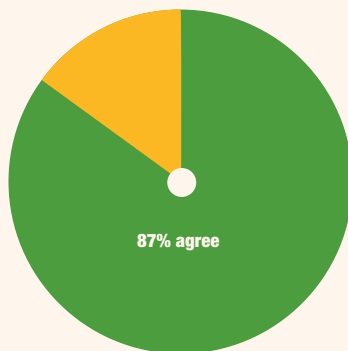


## Few people cycle – but more would like to!

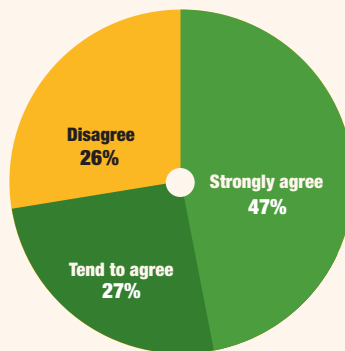
Those who own a bike and want to use it.



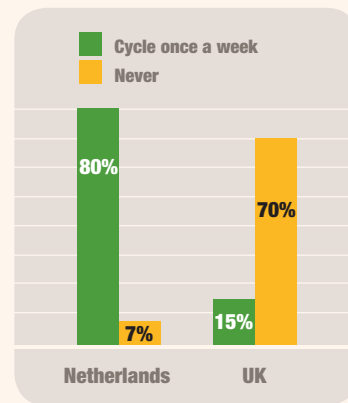
Percentage of people who agree that everyone should be encouraged to cycle for their health



Biggest deterrent to cycling: Fear "The idea of cycling on busy roads frightens me."



Cycling in the Netherlands and UK



It's time for a shift in emphasis towards promoting cycling as a healthy, enjoyable activity. At the same time, we need to tackle the fears which deter people from doing it: encouraging more cyclists onto the roads will make the road network safer for everyone.

## Reducing danger and reducing fear

Bad driving, speed, hostile roads and junctions, and the intimidation presented by certain types of vehicle, especially lorries, all discourage people from cycling.

To get more people cycling, and make cycling safer, the Government and local authorities need to take a wide range of actions, for example:

### 1 Encourage safer driving

Improving driver training, with more emphasis on cyclists' needs.

Improving traffic law and enforcement to make it clear that endangering or intimidating other road users is as unacceptable as drink-driving.

### 2 Improve the road environment and make it more welcoming and safer for cyclists

Make 20 mph the default urban speed limit on most roads and streets. Reduce rural speed limits.

Reduce the risk presented by large vehicles, such as lorries, which account for one in five cyclist deaths.

### 3 Fund schemes that promote cycling positively and improve confidence

Provide good quality cycle training for all ages of children and adults.

Associate cycling with health and fun, not danger, in marketing materials.



Local and national authorities should measure the fear and perception of danger experienced by cyclists: in Copenhagen, the world's foremost cycling city, this key indicator is monitored each year.

Targets for cyclist safety must be based on exposure - that is reductions in casualties per mile or per hour, not based simply on numbers of injuries. CTC is pleased that the Government has adopted our position in A Safer Way, its new Road Safety Strategy.

Getting more people cycling will make the roads safer, make people healthier and reduce the risks of cycling for every one of us. It's up to local authorities and the Government to acknowledge the role of increased cycling in making the roads and streets safer and to pursue policies to make this happen.

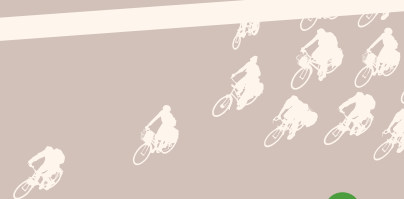


## About CTC

In our 'New Vision for Cycling', CTC sets out the benefits of cycling and describes the measures needed to double cycle use whilst halving the risks of cycling within ten years. [www.ctc.org.uk/newvision](http://www.ctc.org.uk/newvision)

CTC Charitable Trust, CTC's charity arm, works to promote cycling by raising public and political awareness of its health, social and environmental benefits and by working with all communities to help realise those benefits. CTC provides a comprehensive range of services, advice, events and protection for its members.

To find out more, to join or support CTC visit [www.ctc.org.uk](http://www.ctc.org.uk), or phone **0844 736 8451**





working for cycling

# Safety In Numbers

JOIN AND SUPPORT US

Parklands, Railton Road, Guildford, Surrey GU2 9JX / [www.ctc.org.uk](http://www.ctc.org.uk) / 0844 736 8450