

# BIKE *life*

Summary Report 2017

The UK's biggest assessment of cycling in seven major cities

Belfast

Birmingham

Bristol

Cardiff

Edinburgh

Greater Manchester

Newcastle



# Forward motion

Our vision for cycling in cities across the UK

Cycling levels in the UK peaked in 1949, when 15 billion miles were travelled by bike, equivalent to 37% of all traffic.

People riding bikes played a crucial role in our past and will play an important role in our future. Cycling will shape how we get about in our towns and cities. It's good for our health, for air quality, for the local economy, and for making our streets more liveable. Critically bikes are up to five times more efficient at moving people than cars. Cities are space limited, populations are increasing and too many cars cause traffic jams. Bikes will rise again.

Bike Life 2017 shows people living in seven major UK cities understand this. Three times as many people would invest in more space for walking, cycling or public transport to keep their city moving than invest in more space for cars. Furthermore over two-thirds of residents we talked to think more cycling would make their city a better place to live and work.

Bike Life in 2017 shows progress is being made. Since 2015 we have witnessed new and better cycle infrastructure schemes, an increasing coverage of areas with 20 mph speed limits and a range of supporting programmes to get people on their bikes. This has led to over 123 million trips taking place across our seven cities in the past year producing considerable economic, health and

environmental benefits for everyone detailed in this report.

However we still have a long way to go. Only 30% of residents think cycling safety in their city is currently good, or just 21% when it comes to the safety of children riding a bike. People want more investment in safe, dedicated space for cycling in a network that gets them from door to door for everyday trips like work, education or shopping.

64% of people told us they would find protected roadside cycle lanes very useful to help them cycle more. And 78% of residents surveyed would still support more protected cycle lanes even when this could mean less space for vehicles.

It's time for us all work together to realise the role that cycling and walking can play in our cities. We know the answers, the public is supportive and we have seen cities like London, Seville and Oslo implement changes quickly with great results.

National and local governments must work together to invest and deliver segregated space for bikes and unlock the potential for cycling in every UK city.

**Xavier Brice**  
Chief Executive  
Sustrans

# Introducing Bike Life

Sustrans, the charity making it easier to walk and cycle, is collaborating with seven cities in the UK – Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Greater Manchester and Newcastle – to report on progress towards making cycling an attractive and everyday means of travel.



Bike Life is inspired by the Copenhagen Bicycle Account, and is an assessment of city cycling development including infrastructure, travel behaviour, satisfaction, the impact of cycling, and new initiatives.

This is the summary report for all seven Bike Life cities in 2017. The information in this report comes from local cycling data, modelling and a representative survey of over 1,100 residents in each city conducted by ICM\*.

In order to give people in each city equal voice in this summary report, we have not weighted survey results by city size when producing averages.

More details can be found at [www.sustrans.org.uk/bikelife](http://www.sustrans.org.uk/bikelife).

Our thanks to people across the seven cities who took part in the survey and who told us their stories in this report.

## There are substantial benefits from people cycling

- 123 million trips** by bike in our seven cities in the past year
- Saving the NHS £8 million annually**, equivalent to the average salary of **343 nurses**
- Bicycles take up to **111,564 cars** off our roads each day, equal to a **333-mile tailback**
- £281 million total economic benefit annually to the seven cities** from people riding bikes for transport and leisure annually

## There is huge potential for more people to ride bikes...

- 6%** of residents **usually travel to and from work by bicycle**
- 28%** of people live within **125m of a cycle route**
- 53%** would like to **start riding a bike, or could ride their bike more**
- 30%** think **cycling safety is good**

## ...and public support to make that happen

Residents in the seven cities think investing in more street space for cycling and walking or buses is the best way to keep the city moving, improve people's health and reduce air pollution.

- 69%** say their city would be a **better place to live and work** if more people cycled
- 75%** of people would like to see **more money spent** on cycling
- 64%** of people would find **protected roadside cycle lanes very useful** to help them cycle more
- 78%** of residents **support building more protected roadside cycle lanes**, even when this could mean **less space** for other road traffic



# Substantial benefits

From people cycling



## Trips

121 million in 2015

**123 million trips**

are made by bike in the cities in total each year



Equal to cycling **44 times** around the world every day



## Congestion

Bicycles take up to **111,564** cars off the cities' roads each day.

If these cars were all in a traffic jam it would tail back **333 miles** a distance greater than driving from Cardiff to Newcastle.



## Health

Cycling averts serious long term health conditions saving the NHS in our cities

**£8 million each year**



This is equivalent to the average salaries of

**343 nurses**



## Economic benefit

People riding bikes contributes

**£281 million**

to the cities annually in economic benefit in total



### Dr Vicci Owen-Smith, Greater Manchester

I'm passionate about the difference cycling could make to our health. We have to get people out of cars.

If everyone did 30 minutes of exercise five times a week almost every single chronic disease would be reduced by 40%. If this was a pill we'd call it a wonder drug.

I've started to use the Wilmslow Road corridor route. The segregated lane is definitely better and feels safer. I'd like to see a network of segregated cycle routes and a 20mph speed limit throughout the city region.



### Alina Goldberg, Newcastle

I like biking. It's great early in the morning when the sun is coming up, and I enjoy the sensation of being on the bike and breathing in the fresh air. If I get my half hour of exercise I feel happier and in shape.

Cycling is cheap, it's super healthy, and it's great for my kids to see that this is a good way to move about.

I'm quite nervous cycling in traffic and go on the side streets where it's quieter. The segregated route on John Dobson Street is great and it would be good to have more like that.



### Colin Neill, Belfast

I am the CEO at Hospitality Ulster which represents the hospitality industry in Northern Ireland. I think we are a bit behind when it comes to cycling in Northern Ireland. We need more segregated cycle lanes.

There are still people who haven't realised the value of cyclists as a segment to cater for - every cycling club will stop for coffee or something to eat.

There are huge opportunities for business from more people riding bikes.



# Huge potential

For more people riding bikes



Progress is being made

20

from 425 miles in 2015 **441 miles** of cycle routes physically separated from vehicles in five cities<sup>1</sup>

**28%** ↑ from 27% in 2015 of people on average live within 125 metres of a cycle route in five cities<sup>1</sup>

**49%** ↑ from 40% in 2015 of streets on average across five of our cities have a 20mph speed limit<sup>2</sup>



Huge potential exists

**61%** of people don't cycle at all

**6%** of respondents usually travel to and from work by bicycle



**53%** would like to start riding a bike or could ride their bike more

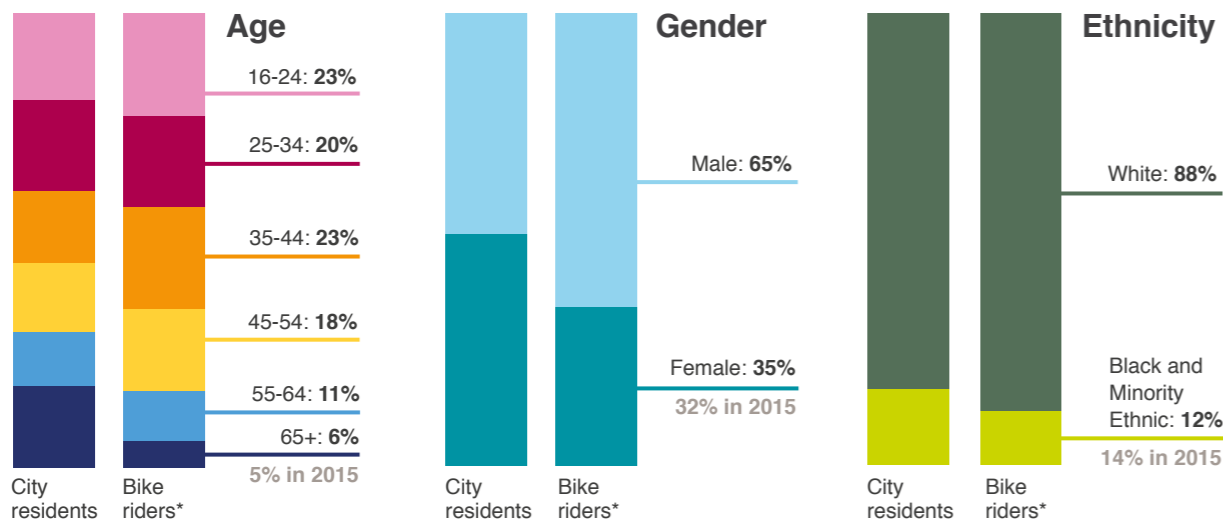
**30%** of people think cycling safety in their city is good and only **21%** think safety of children's cycling is good



**77%** think safety needs to be improved for cycling in their city



In the seven cities, women, black and minority ethnic communities as well as over 65s are under-represented when it comes to riding a bike<sup>3</sup>.



\* Ridden a bike in the past four weeks when the survey was conducted in May – July 2017.

## Tom Forster, Edinburgh

I'm a confident cyclist but I can see how someone less confident would be intimidated by the traffic.

The new Leith Walk cycle route is superb! If more could be done throughout the city like this it would be great. Cycling always seems to be an afterthought, why can't it be integrated into planning?

The good thing about Edinburgh is that while there's more to be done, there's a market for it here. Lots of people are cycling.



## Caroline Bannister, Bristol

Two members of our team are keen cyclists. They came to me with the idea of trialling the use of electric bikes to make home visits to stroke patients recently discharged from hospital. Through their loan scheme, Bristol City Council was able to provide us with five electric bikes to trial.

The bikes proved to be such a success - every member of our team is now using them and the journey times are proving to be the same or less than by car.

It's better for the environment and it's saving the hospital time and money.



## Shaun Henry, Belfast

I'm fortunate that the majority of my journey to work is off-road or on segregated cycle routes. I'm very aware that this is not the case across Belfast.

In other European cities, cycling is an integral part of moving around the city – it's nothing special. Our challenge is to see cycling as a normal mode of transport in Belfast.

The majority of cyclists are car drivers too. There is a tendency to look at the city through the eyes of a car driver. We have to look at the city differently - from a cyclist's perspective.



1. Newcastle and Greater Manchester not included in this calculation due to not having comparable data for 2015.  
2. Belfast and Birmingham not included in this calculation due to not having comparable data for 2015.  
3. For age and gender, the division of city residents uses 2015 estimates. For ethnicity, it uses the 2011 census.



# Public support

For dedicated space



Keeping cities moving

**73%**

of residents think investing in more space for walking and cycling or buses is the best way to keep their city moving rather than more space for cars



**69%**

think more cycling would make their city a better place to live and work



**75%**

of people would like to see more money spent on cycling in their city



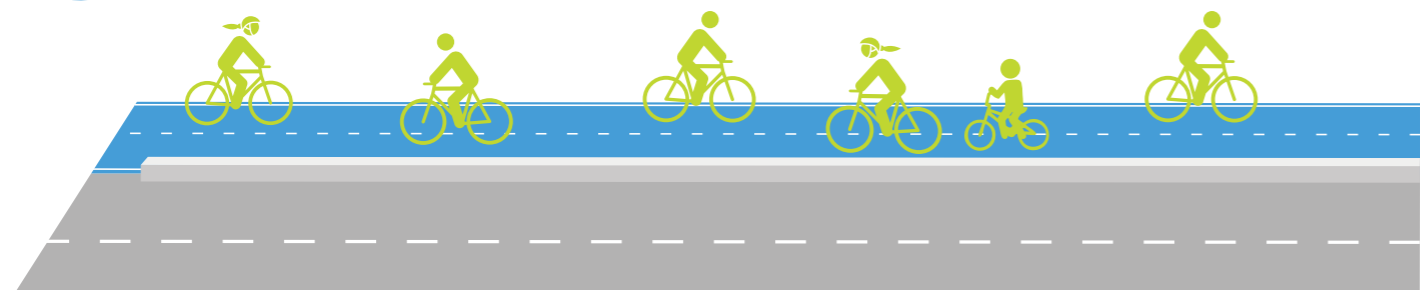
Segregated space for cycling

**64%**

of residents would cycle more if more roadside cycle routes were created, physically separated from traffic

**78%**

of people support building more protected roadside cycle lanes, even when this could mean less space for other road traffic, including **74%** of residents who do not ride a bike



## Steve Castle, Cardiff

Cycling could be better by being more inclusive – everybody should be able to ride, not just those like me who have become less sensitive to the dangers.

I want to be treated as an equal to other forms of transport on the road. At the same time I am well aware that if it wasn't for the traffic-free Cardiff Bay Barrage and Taff Trail I never would have started in the first place.

Maybe in a generation or so, when we have dedicated space for people riding bicycles, we'll look back and wonder why so few chose to cycle. I hope so.



## Marcia Bell, Birmingham

I received one of the 4,000 bikes given away by Birmingham City Council. This spurred me on to riding to work, helping form a community cycling club and to become a ride leader.

The roads in Birmingham are very busy so it can be very daunting if you are not a confident cyclist. I know that the Council is making efforts to improve the cyclists' lot but I do think there needs to be more dedicated cycle lanes especially on the major roads that link to the city centre.

With better provision I would cycle more and I am sure I am not alone on that front.



## Verity Leigh, Edinburgh

Edinburgh has a very compact city centre, making cycling the most efficient way to get around.

We have some really good initiatives in the city, like the network of off-road paths and the 20mph limits. However, there should be investment in on-road dedicated cycle lanes, protected from motor traffic, that get people to where they want to go directly and efficiently.

Cycling has to be the way forward for Edinburgh - it's a city which wasn't designed for cars.



## Notes on terminology and methodology

The attitudinal survey was conducted May to July 2017.

Due to the rounding up or down of individual figures, the percentages on charts may not total 100% exactly.

Survey results have been tested for change between 2015 and 2017. The level of significance has been set at 0.01 but these should be seen to be indicative only, as they have not been corrected for multiple comparisons.

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Sustrans is the charity making it easier for people to walk and cycle.

We connect people and places, create liveable neighbourhoods, transform the school run and deliver a happier, healthier commute. Join us on our journey. [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)

Sustrans is a registered charity in the UK No. 326550 (England and Wales) SCO39263 (Scotland)

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