



NATIONAL MEDIA RELEASE

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Riding a bike still too risky for many

Despite the widespread introduction of more cyclist-friendly traffic arrangements in major cities, most Australians believe riding a bicycle in traffic continues to be a risky affair.

According to independent research¹ from leading national motor, home and travel insurer AAMI, day-to-day experiences of motorists and cyclists alike are holding back the transformation of Australian cities into the bicycle-rich cityscapes of Asia, and increasingly Europe, where government-sponsored bike sharing schemes and rental stations are now the norm.

Nearly half (44%) of those participating in AAMI's research owned a bicycle and about one-fifth (22%) used their bike to commute. Those who choose not to ride to work cite dangerous traffic as a major deterrent. Almost nine-in-ten (86%) say Australian roads are not safe for cyclists.

"Our research indicates that the interaction between cars and bicycles, particularly in urban areas, continues to be a source of conflict for riders and drivers alike. Many of the responses we received highlight that motorists tend to see cyclists as a nuisance and are not always willing to share the road," said AAMI Corporate Affairs Manager Yves Noldus.

Two-in-three drivers (66%) say they find cyclists hard to see and a similar proportion (65%) qualify them as a road hazard outright. One-in-four (26%) say they have had an accident or a near miss with a cyclist. Criticism of cyclist behaviour is also common, with many (77%) claiming to have seen cyclists break road rules and ride dangerously.

"Despite these attitudes and comments, we are seeing evidence that the larger community supports the more widespread use of bicycles as a mode of transport, particularly as riding to work is often a lifestyle choice in line with our growing awareness of health and environmental factors," Mr Noldus said.

The vast majority of respondents to AAMI's survey (79%) would like to see better facilities for cyclists and there is a strong admission that drivers could do more themselves to make roads safer for cyclists.

"Our findings suggest that the increasingly common sight of bike commuters is gently forcing drivers into accepting the merits of sharing the road safely. The experience in other countries tells us that once a significant number of bikes appear in traffic, motorists adjust their behaviours and learn to anticipate how riders use the road. That will ultimately help reduce the number of accidents between cars and bikes and encourage safer driving overall," Mr Noldus concluded.

Driving near bicycles – Safety tips

- Always remember a bicycle ranks equal to a car as a vehicle
- Keep the same distance to a cyclist as you would to another car
- When using your mirrors don't just look for cars, look for *all* road users, particularly between cars
- Don't forget it is hard for cyclists to make themselves heard or seen
- Take into account the limits of a bicycle's speed, as well as its steering and braking ability
- Respect bike lanes when driving and parking, and be careful when opening car doors
- Remember the average passenger car weighs 1400kg and the average bicycle weighs 10kg, and adjust your driving accordingly

For more information, contact:

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¹ AAMI's research is based on an independent telephone and internet survey of 2523 Australians, conducted by Sweeney Research across all states and territories. Collected data is carefully weighted in line with current ABS population demographics to ensure any extrapolation of results is representative of age, gender and population on a regional, state and national basis.