

Motorbikes- the facts



UK motorcycle ownership has risen almost 60% over the last 20 years, with more than 1.2 million motorcycles, scooters and mopeds now registered across the country.¹ Highways England promotes motorcycle travel as having major benefits for reducing congestion and improving the quality of air,² despite the fact that motorcyclists are some of our most vulnerable road users – they are disproportionately involved in crashes, and the resulting injuries are often severe. Raising awareness of safe driving behaviour for riders and drivers alike, and therefore limiting the number and severity of motorcycle crashes, is critical to saving lives on UK roads.

Motorcyclists are some of our most vulnerable road users

The speeds motorcycles can travel are equal to those of cars, yet riders do not have equal protection in the event of a crash, such as air bags or side-impact bars, and are therefore exposed to the full force of impact.



More than 18,000 motorcyclists were killed or injured on Britain's roads in 2017,³ and riders account for a quarter of all road crash admissions to trauma centres.⁴ Compared with other vehicles the number of deaths remains disproportionately high, with motorcyclists accounting for 19% of road deaths despite making up less than 1% of traffic.^{5,6} Per billion miles travelled, more than 100 motorcyclists die in collisions every year, compared with only two car drivers.⁷ In 2017, 349 riders were killed and a further 5,592 were seriously injured.⁸ Year on year, more than 90% of motorcyclists who are killed or seriously injured on roads in Britain are male.⁹

Sorry mate, I didn't see you!

Almost four-fifths of motorcycle collisions involve another vehicle.¹⁰ Drivers failing to look properly for bikes is a major part of the problem. Almost seven in 10 crashes involving motorcycles in Europe are caused, at least in part, by other road users failing to see the rider.¹¹ There is evidence to suggest that drivers commonly 'look but fail to see' motorcycles,¹² and all drivers are advised to turn their heads and spend longer looking for approaching bikes before pulling out at junctions, rather than just relying on a sideways glance.

The Dutch reach

People are killed and injured every year by drivers opening their door before checking to see what's coming. A simple technique called the Dutch reach is widely used in the Netherlands. It's even included in the driving test. Instead of using the hand nearest the door to open it, the driver reaches across with their opposite hand. This forces them to turn their head so they can check for traffic before opening the door, and makes them more likely to see a rider approaching.¹³

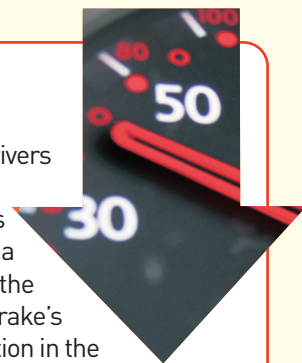


Dangerous roads

The most dangerous roads for motorcyclists are those outside major towns and cities. Two-thirds of all deaths involving motorcyclists happen on rural roads, and on average more than 2,500 riders are killed or seriously injured on these roads every year.¹⁴ Roads in built-up areas are no less of a threat either. There were 3,328 motorcyclists killed or seriously injured on urban roads in 2017, the highest number in the last ten years.¹⁵

Slowing down saves lives

Speed is an important factor in many road deaths.¹⁶ Slowing down gives drivers and riders more time to spot danger and more time to react. It also means they can stop a lot more quickly. Just a 1mph reduction in speed can reduce the risk of fatal injury in a crash by 5%. Brake's Pace for People is calling for a reduction in the default speed limits on urban and rural roads. Find out more at www.brake.org.uk/campaigns.



Defensive riding

Adopting defensive riding techniques can help motorcyclists safeguard themselves against other road users' error and reduce the chances of a collision. Riders are advised to:

- slow down, to give more time to react to danger;
- make themselves visible;
- position themselves on the safest part of the road depending on the circumstances;
- look out over the handlebars and 'read' the road ahead and its traffic;
- check mirrors and other views frequently;
- take a 'lifesaver' or 'shoulder check' glance before carrying out a manoeuvre; and
- try to make eye contact with other drivers.

Reducing speed enables riders to see round bends, stop more easily and enjoy the ride more. Wearing high-visibility clothing can increase their chances of being seen. Find out more about defensive riding at www.bikesafe.co.uk/advice-centre.

Higher risks for young riders

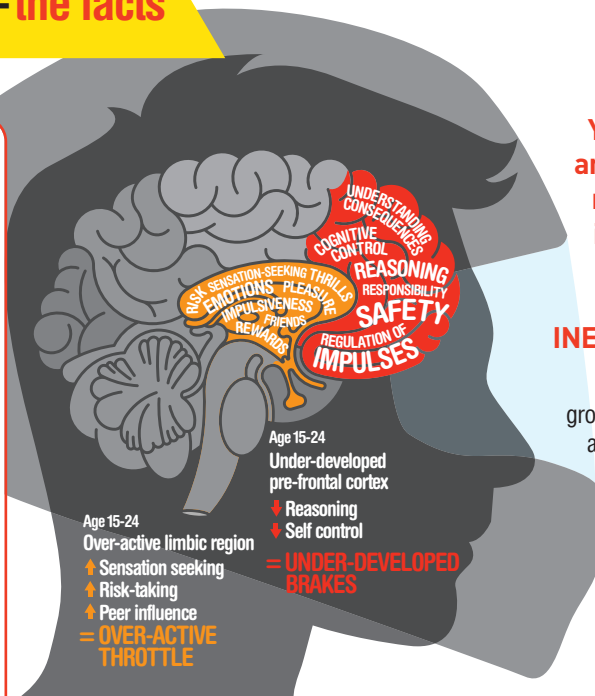
Young, inexperienced riders are more likely to engage in dangerous riding behaviour, and their risk of being involved in a crash while riding is therefore high. Young riders are over-represented in road crash statistics compared with older riders.

In 2017, almost 1,000 riders aged 20–24 were killed or seriously injured on roads in Britain, significantly more than any other age group and the second highest number in the last decade.¹⁷

The high levels of risk associated with young riders result from age and inexperience. Late teens to early twenties is a critical period for the development of areas of the brain that regulate impulsive behaviour, emotional arousal and the ability to anticipate the consequences of behaviour. In riding terms, this can be likened to having an over-active throttle and under-active brakes.

Last year, Highways England, the government company responsible for the country's motorways and A roads, launched a hard-hitting campaign aimed at young riders to highlight the potential cost of riding without wearing protective clothing. Watch their video at youtu.be/UMzVsD7F2l0.

Find out more at www.roadsafetyweek.org.uk



Young riders are at greater risk of being involved in a crash due to AGE and INEXPERIENCE

Your brain stops growing between the ages of 11 and 14, but keeps developing until you are in your mid-20s.

Post-test training

An advanced training course will improve a rider's skills and make them safer on the roads, whatever their age or ability. Brake recommends that all riders undertake post-test training, whether they have just passed their test, are returning to riding after a break, are considering buying a more powerful bike, or just want to become a safer, smoother, more skilful rider.

Employers with staff who ride for work have a responsibility to ensure the safety of all riders and a responsible organisation will arrange advanced training for any riders. One-to-one tuition is preferable, and all courses should include an assessment of riding ability, to help identify areas for improvement.

Biker Down!

Biker Down! is a free first-aid course for bikers. Training comprises three modules: incident scene management, casualty care and the science of being seen. The scheme is run by fire and rescue services across the country and covers what to do if you are first to arrive at the scene of a crash, basic life support, and how riders can make themselves seen, without just covering themselves in luminous yellow from head to toe. Find out more at www.facebook.com/bikerdownuk.



Road conditions

Motorcyclists are at greater risk of being involved in a crash due to poor road conditions than other road users, with the road environment contributing to 12% of motorbike crashes, compared with an overall average of 7% for all vehicles.¹⁸ Motorcyclists are most at risk of being involved in a crash in November – the month of Road Safety Week – with 117 riders killed or seriously injured per billion vehicle miles travelled in 2017, compared with only 94 during the month of June.¹⁹

The winter months are generally the most dangerous time of the year for motorcyclists, with the rate of deaths and serious injuries at its highest from October to December. However, the overall number of riders killed and seriously injured tends to be lower during winter months when fewer riders take to the road. Whatever the time of year, it's essential that drivers and motorcyclists both take longer to look at the roads, leave each other enough room to manoeuvre and consider slowing down.

All the gear? Right idea!

Wearing high-quality helmets and protective clothing is proven to reduce the risk and severity of injuries as a result of collisions. Wearing a helmet is a legal requirement in the UK. Riders who don't wear helmets are 40% more likely to suffer fatal head injuries, and a further 15% are likely to suffer life-changing brain damage.²⁰ It's vital that a helmet fits correctly; if it moves around at all, the level of protection it offers will be reduced.

Protective clothing is just as important. More than a third of motorcyclists admitted to hospital suffer serious injuries to their arms or legs, and one in twenty later die from the injuries they sustained.²¹ Around a fifth of hospital admissions for motorcyclists involve broken lower leg bones. All riders should wear well-fitting protective gear, including jackets, trousers, gloves and boots. Boots should be sturdy and above ankle-height, and should have strong, stitched soles where possible.²²



Brake doesn't recommend that anyone under the age of 16 travels as a passenger on a motorcycle. However, if travel by motorcycle is unavoidable, all riders and passengers should wear the highest standard of correctly fitted protective clothing, including boots, gloves, jacket, trousers and helmet.

New technology helps prevent or reduce the severity of crashes

For the last two years, all new bikes over 125cc have been required to be fitted with anti-lock braking systems (ABS). More advanced technology such as autonomous emergency braking systems (AEBS), which is now mandatory in all new cars manufactured in Europe, is not so widely available. AEBS will have major benefits for casualty reduction and cost efficiency once technical challenges associated with fitting the technology to bikes have been overcome.²³

Other technology that increases safety for riders, and is fitted to some new bikes on the market, includes adaptive cruise control (which uses radar to adjust the bike's speed and keep it at safe distances from other road users).

Find out more at www.roadsafetyweek.org.uk

Many large vehicles are fitted with safety systems to detect and protect vulnerable road users, including blind spot protection systems. Motorcycling gear is also benefitting from advancing technology. The latest helmets are equipped with built-in cameras, speakers and microphones,²⁴ heads-up display units can show information on speed, weather conditions and navigation, and there are even jackets available that contain airbags that inflate in the event of a crash.²⁵



Bike Smart

For Road Safety Week 2018, we are shouting out about the safety of those on two wheels, and encouraging everyone to be Bike Smart. We can all play our part in raising awareness about the importance of protecting those on bikes and this year's campaign focuses on policy-makers being Bike Smart by implementing a safe systems approach, mandating lifesaving technology and prioritising bike-friendly infrastructure; drivers being Bike Smart by looking out for those on two wheels, driving safely and slowly and giving riders plenty of space; and riders being Bike Smart through safe riding behaviours and appropriate training and equipment.

Smart drivers are Bike Smart

Smart drivers are responsible and considerate of other road users, particularly vulnerable road users such as cyclists and motorcyclists. Our short explanation film, infographics and driver advice sheet outline simple but really important measures that all drivers can use to make roads safer for everyone on two wheels.

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