



**To:** Place  
**From:** Adrian Davis  
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**Subject:** Essential Evidence on a page No.136: Near misses and related incidents among UK cyclists

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Top line: Near misses and other non-injury incidents are widespread in the UK and may have a substantial impact on cycling experience and uptake.

Cyclists have a higher risk of death or serious injury, per mile, than users of motorised modes of transport except motorcycles. Despite higher mode-specific risks, public health researchers argue that this is outweighed by societal health benefits. For an individual this depends on age, gender and back ground injury risk levels: for example, cycling risks in the UK are substantially higher than in countries such as the Netherlands. While it is government policy within UK member countries to support and increase cycling, at a national level cycling levels have barely changed. Perceived risk is a major barrier to uptake and experiencing or even witnessing non-injury incidents may contribute. A US study in the San Francisco Bay Area found 86% of those who cycled at least annually had experienced a near miss, with 20% having been hit.<sup>i</sup> Near misses were more strongly associated than collisions with perceived traffic risk. Earlier research in Oxford, UK, highlighted near misses as a relatively common experience for cyclists.<sup>ii</sup> Hence initial evidence suggests non-injury incidents may both be frequent and contribute to perceived safety, with potential impacts on uptake.

Most recently, a UK study asked participants to complete an online diary.<sup>iii</sup> Participants registered online and nominated a day over a two-week period to record trips and any incidents. Cyclists were asked to record the cycle trips they made, when each started and finished, and distance travelled. They also provided some basic demographic and residential location data. The number of incidents (defined as causing some level of annoyance and/or fear) experienced while cycling on their diary day was recorded. This was left open to enable participants to self-define incidents. To minimise respondent burden, participants were only asked for the details of the first 10 incidents. For each, people were asked for the location, a description, details about other road users' involvement, its effect on them (immediately and any likely impact in the future), and whether and how the incident might have been prevented. The survey produced 1692 completed day diaries, with the number of individual participants slightly lower as several completed two diaries. Around 60% of participants who initially registered fully completed the diary. People were encouraged to complete the diary whether they had no, few, or many incidents; however, possible bias might run both ways.

The headline finding was that, in the UK, near misses seem to be 'everyday' occurrences, with the vast majority of the sample experiencing at least one on their diary day. One in four experienced an incident that they rated as being 'very scary'. Despite government aims to promote cycling, attitudes of other road users towards cyclists remain negative and it is possible that this contributes to a startlingly high perceived risk of near miss incidents.

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<sup>i</sup> Saunders, R. 2015 Perceived traffic risk for cyclists: the impact of near miss and collision experiences, *Accident, Analysis and Prevention*, 75: 26-34.

<sup>ii</sup> Joshi, M., Senior, V, Smith, G. 2001 A diary study of the risk perception of road users. *Health Risk Sociology*, 3(3): 261-279.

<sup>iii</sup> Aldred, R., Crossweller, S. 2015 Investigating the rates and impacts of near misses and related incidents among UK cyclists, *Journal of Transport & Health*,