

**Title:** DIFFICULTIES OF OLDER CYCLISTS AND THEIR COMPENSATION

**Presenting Author:** Carmen Hagemester

**Authors:** C. Hagemester 1;A. Tegen-Klebingat 1;L. Venz 1;

Affiliation

1. Department of Psychology, Dresden University of Technology, Germany,

**Abstract:**

Cycling is fun, cycling keeps fit, cycling is cheap, but what happens when cyclists become older and less strong, less motile, see and hear worse than before? How do cyclists cope with these difficulties in such a way that they still can use their bike? Does the compensation impair or improve their safety?

Thirty cyclists were interviewed (in the three groups 60 to 69 years of age, 70 to 79 years, and older); they lived in the city of Dresden or in towns with good public transport or in rural areas with insufficient public transport in flat areas of Saxony. In in-depth-interviews they were asked for their cycling habits and how they deal with different situations in traffic.

They reported for physical and sensory problems which impair them when cycling and how they cope with them. Most interviewees use their bike for errands, visiting friends and the like, two thirds also use it for cycling tours.

Most participants avoid weather conditions like rain and snow. Most do not cycle in the dark simply because they usually are at home when it is dark. Many cyclists tend to avoid dense traffic and like to cycle on cycle paths. The opinion towards cycling on the footpath is divided: Some cyclists feel safer away from passing cars, others see the danger at intersections and gateways where car drivers do not expect them and the fact that they might be a nuisance for pedestrians. Two thirds do sometimes cycle on the footpath when it is not allowed, some use cycle paths in the wrong direction; some run red lights, some cycle in the wrong direction in one-way streets.

When a gradient is too steep the interviewees get off the bike and push it. Four persons reported that they have more difficulties cycling straight ahead than before; two of them have also problems with their balance when walking or hiking. Some persons reported that they have difficulties to move as they would like to do. Some feel impaired when they have to look over their shoulder for traffic, others have problems to get on or off their bike and use "ladies' bikes". Still others experience cycling as easier than walking, especially when they are not as fit as usual. Those persons taking medicine said that the medicine does not affect their ability to participate in traffic.

All interviewees wear glasses but some only need them for reading. Some have troubles with their glasses when they cycle in the rain because of drops or mist. Others have problems with their varifocal lenses when cycling. Two thirds reported difficulties when cycling in the dark, two thirds reported difficulties with glare. Some interviewees reported problems with hearing but not all of them feel that they affect them in traffic. Some cyclists feel less secure because of their hearing problems and compensate for them by always looking over their shoulder properly.

Technical equipment which might make cycling easier for older cyclists is not very common; this holds for electric support, tricycles, rear mirrors and so on.

**Jerusalem, Israel, May 30-June 2, 2010**

Those cyclists whom we interviewed generally have good health and feel relatively little impaired. They can continue to cycle as they are able to compensate for their difficulties. Just as older car drivers older cyclists are more choosy concerning the conditions under which they cycle, which they see as a privilege for those having more time. The opinions of older cyclists what is safe to do in traffic are divided just as they are in younger cyclists as well. Technical adaptation of bikes is not very popular.

At present we are constructing a questionnaire covering the above mentioned topics. This questionnaire will be completed by 210 older cyclists.