

1 Article

2 **Infrastructural and Human Factors affecting Safety** 3 **Outcomes of Cyclists**

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18 **Abstract:** The increasing number of registered road crashes involving cyclists during the last
19 decade, and the high proportion of road crashes resulting in severe injuries and fatalities among
20 cyclists constitutes a global issue for community health, urban development, and sustainability.
21 Nowadays, the incidence of many risk factors for road crashes of cyclists remains largely
22 unexplained. Given the importance of this issue, the present study has been conducted with
23 the aim of determining relationships between infrastructural, human factors and safety
24 outcomes of cyclists. **Objectives:** This study aimed, first, to examine the relationship between
25 key infrastructural and human factors present in cycling, bicycle-user characteristics, and their
26 self-reported experience with road crashes. And second, to determine whether a set of key
27 infrastructural and human factors may predict their self-reported road crashes. **Methods:** For
28 this cross-sectional study, a total of 1064 cyclists (38.8% women, 61.2% men; $M = 32.8$ years of
29 age) from 20 different countries across Europe, South America and North America, participated
30 in an online survey composed of four sections: demographic data and cycling-related factors,
31 human factors, perceptions on infrastructural factors, and road crashes suffered. **Results:** The
32 results of this study showed significant associations between human factors, infrastructural
33 conditions and self-reported road crashes. Also, a logistic regression model found that self-
34 reported road crashes of cyclists could be predicted through variables such as age, riding
35 intensity, risky behaviors, and problematic user/infrastructure interactions. **Conclusions:** The
36 results of this study suggest that self-reported road crashes of cyclists are influenced by features
37 related to the user and their interaction with infrastructural characteristics of the road.

38 **Keywords:** Cyclists; Bicycle Users; Risky Behaviors; Human Factors; Infrastructure; Self-
39 Reported Road Crashes; Road Safety.

41 1. Introduction

42 Road crashes have been a substantial concern for public health agencies (government, public
43 entities, healthcare system, etc.) and society for the last half century. However, despite the bicycle
44 being older than every motorized vehicle as a transport mode, the problem of cyclists' injuries or
45 fatalities as a result of road crashes has been accentuated as a public health problem during the
46 last few years [1]. Consequently, the amount of evidence available for explaining, predicting and
47 preventing road crashes involving cyclists is relatively scarce, especially in developing countries

48 where bicycle usage has exponentially increased [2]. On the other hand, although high-income
49 countries have a broader and longer tradition of using bicycles [3,4], the mechanisms by which
50 human and infrastructural factors act on crash causation are not completely understood.

51 Considering that, especially in cities, the number of bicycle users, their average daily
52 journeys and distances traveled have been constantly growing, and the need for analyzing the
53 factors that affect cyclists' crash rates is increasingly relevant [5,6]. For instance, in the case of
54 Spain, in the period 2008-2013, 25 439 cyclists were involved in crashes resulting in injuries or
55 fatalities [7,8]. Furthermore, only in 2015, from the total of 59 148 road crashes involving injuries
56 or fatalities, 3.85% (2 277) of them involved cyclists, leaving as a result 48 dead cyclists -47 men,
57 and 1 woman- [9]. As for the zones in which crashes occur, urban centers have a higher
58 percentage of crashes (70.7%) and injury or fatality victims (67.4%), compared to country roads,
59 which report 29.3% of crashes, and 32.6% of victims. Moreover, 47.2% of severe injuries of cyclists
60 occur on conventional urban roads [7].

61 Although the overall rates of road crashes (especially involving motorized vehicles) have
62 been decreasing in the last 40 years, the number of cyclist injuries and fatalities as a result of road
63 crashes has been systematically increasing [10]. The reasons for this increase are worth
64 researching and should not be disregarded. In addition, the subsequent health and financial costs
65 of road crashes involving cyclists are considerably elevated [11], especially considering two facts:
66 first, compared to crashes suffered by motor vehicle-users, cyclists have a greater physical
67 vulnerability, even when they were properly using passive-safety elements [12,13]; and second,
68 in most countries cyclists do not need to have crash insurance [14], and often their medical care
69 is subsidized by public healthcare systems [11].

70 Bicycle-using is widely promoted as a cheap, environmentally responsible and alternative
71 transport mode to conventional motorized vehicles [15], and this has resulted -in many cases- in
72 a disproportionate and sometimes disorganized growth of bicycle users. This situation has
73 implied a significant increase in the need for studies seeking to explore different road system
74 factors associated to road crashes suffered by cyclists, including infrastructure [12,16], and rider
75 behavior [17]. In this sense, one factor with a greater attributed influence on traffic injuries
76 suffered by cyclists is risky cyclist behavior [18]. It is estimated that 40% of the crashes suffered
77 by cyclists are preceded by one or more risky cyclist behaviors, especially traffic violations or
78 distracted riding [17]. Furthermore, risky behavior on the road may be influenced by several
79 variables, such as problematic interactions with other road users, infrastructure problems, and
80 the lack of a cycling culture among the population [19-23].

81 Nevertheless, research linking risky cyclist behavior with road crashes is scarce [24,25],
82 compared to the number of empirical studies explaining traffic crashes involving motorized
83 vehicle drivers. Generally, this limits our capacity to design evidence-based cyclist injury
84 prevention programs [26-28]. In this regard, it is necessary to identify human and infrastructural
85 factors influencing cyclist safety outcomes to support road safety [29-31].

86 1.1 Objectives

87 The objectives of this study focus on first, the relationship between key infrastructural and
88 risk-related human factors present in cycling, characteristics of cyclists, and their crash rates. And
89 second, whether infrastructural and human factors on the road are associated with traffic crash
90 rates reported by cyclists, through a predictive model for explaining traffic safety outcomes.

91 2. Methods and materials

92 2.1 Sample

93 Participants in this study were bicycle users ($n = 1064$) of 20 different countries from Europe,
94 South America, and North America, comprised of 413 women (38.8%), and 651 men (61.2%), with
95 an average of $M = 32.83$ ($SD = 12.63$) years of age. The mean time participants used a bicycle per

96 week was $M = 6.71$ ($SD = 6.34$) hours, i.e., $M = 0.96$ hours or 57.6 minutes per day. The average
97 length for each bicycle journey was $M = 47.60$ ($SD = 42.68$) minutes, or $M = 0.80$ hours.

98 2.2. Study Design and Procedure

99 For this cross-sectional study, participants completed an online questionnaire. A cross-
100 sectional design was selected to maximize sample size in a narrow timeframe of data collection.
101 Participants were informed that their responses would be anonymous and only used for research
102 purposes. The importance of answering honestly to all questions was emphasized, as well as the
103 non-existence of wrong or right answers. Participants were required to indicate their voluntary
104 informed consent before proceeding with the questionnaire. Surveys were fully completed by n
105 = 1064 cyclists, with a 42.6% response rate from approximately 2500 questionnaires that were
106 initially delivered.

107 2.3 Description of the questionnaire

108 The questionnaire was written in Spanish, and consisted of various sections: Its initial part
109 addressed individual/demographic variables, such as age, gender, and city of residence, and
110 cycling-related factors, such as the frequency, length and habits associated to bicycle-using.

111 The second part examined participants' self-reported risky behaviors on the road using the
112 Cyclist Behavior Questionnaire (CBQ) [26], which is specifically designed for measuring high-
113 risk riding behaviors (errors and violations) among bicycle users. This Likert scale is composed
114 of 44 items, distributed in three factors: *Violations* (V), consisting of 16 items, *Errors* (E), composed
115 by 16 items, and *Positive Behaviors* (PB), consisting of 12 items. A global score of "Risk Behaviors"
116 was built through the summing of Errors and Violations reported by respondents. The entire
117 questionnaire used a frequency-based response scale of 5 levels: 0 = never, 1 = hardly ever, 2 =
118 sometimes, 3 = frequently, 4 = almost always.

119 The third part of the survey measured participants' perceptions about infrastructural
120 conditions and other road users. Firstly, a set of Likert-type items was used to measure the
121 following factors in a scale from 0 (none existing) to 4 (highly present in their habitual cycling
122 experience): the avoidance of cycling under adverse weather conditions, signaling and
123 infrastructure problems on roads frequented by participants, density of traffic and complexity of
124 urban roads, perceived respect for priority at intersections, and overcrowding of bicycle use in
125 their cities/towns of residence. Secondly, a set of dichotomous items (Yes/No) addressed potential
126 negative interactions participants recently experienced in terms of: problematic interactions with
127 other road users, problematic interactions with obstacles on the road, and the perception of
128 environmental overstimulation through visual elements present on their circulation roads.

129 Finally, the fourth part of the questionnaire consisted of a series of questions related to
130 participants' road crash rates (regardless of severity) suffered over a period of five years (e.g. *how*
131 *many crashes have you suffered when cycling in the last 5 years?*).

132 2.4 Ethics

133 This study was granted ethics clearance by the Research Ethics Committee for Social Science
134 in Health of the University Research Institute on Traffic and Road Safety at the University of
135 Valencia. This study was deemed in accordance with the ethical principles of the Declaration of
136 Helsinki. The study used an informed consent statement containing ethical principles, data
137 treatment details, explaining the objective of the study, the mean duration of the survey, the
138 personal data treatment, and the voluntary nature of the study, which was presented to
139 participants before undertaking the questionnaire. The informed consent statement also advised
140 that identifying data would not be used as participation was anonymous.

141

142 2.5 Statistical Analysis (Data Processing)

143 Basic descriptive analyses were performed in order to obtain raw and standardized scores
144 for study variables. Further, descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) and Pearson's
145 (bivariate) correlational analysis were performed to obtain, respectively, basic study factors and
146 associations between study variables. The association between independent study variables and
147 self-reported road crash rates of cyclists (dependent variable) was tested using logistic regression
148 (Logit), using a significance parameter of $p < .05$. All statistical analyses were performed using
149 ©IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences), version 23.0.

150 3. Results

151 *Descriptive statistics and study variable scores*

152 The mean of self-reported cycling crashes suffered in the last 5 years was $M = 0.65$ ($SD = 0.98$).
153 Regarding risky behaviour, the mean for self-reported risky behaviors when cycling (scale 0-4)
154 was $M = 1.26$ ($SD = 0.73$), and avoidance of cycling under adverse weather conditions (scale 0-4)
155 was $M = 2.75$ ($SD = 1.25$). The mean score obtained for perceived signaling and infrastructure
156 problems of roads frequented by participants (scale 0-4) was $M = 3.44$ ($SD = 0.80$). Perceived
157 density of traffic and complexity of urban roads (scale 0-4) had a mean value of $M = 3.38$ ($SD =$
158 0.91). The perceived respect for priority at intersections (scale 0-4) scored a mean of $M = 1.29$ (SD
159 $= 1.17$). In addition, the perceived overcrowding of bicycle use in city/town of residence (scale 0-
160 4) presented a mean value of $M = 2.27$ ($SD = 1.14$), as shown in Table 1.

161 Regarding categorical (dichotomous) indicators, 83.6% of cyclists reported frequent
162 problematic interactions with other road users. Furthermore, 84% of participants had problematic
163 interactions with obstacles on the road. On the other hand, only 34.7% of respondents reported
164 perceiving environmental overstimulation through billboards or visual elements on the road.

165 *Correlation analysis*

166 The bivariate (Pearson) correlation analysis (see Table 1), allowed identification of
167 significant associations between infrastructural and human demographic factors, and traffic
168 safety outcomes. Specifically, age was negatively and significantly related to average hours riding
169 per week, self-reported risky behaviors on the road, and self-reported road crashes suffered in
170 the previous five years. On the other hand, age was positively correlated with avoidance,
171 perceived overcrowding of bicycle use, and environmental overstimulation. Regarding risky
172 behaviors, significant associations were found for perceived complexity of urban roads [-],
173 perceived respect for priority in crossings [-], avoidance [-], and for self-reported road crash rates
174 [+]. Self-reported road crash rates were also associated with intensity [+], overcrowding of bicycle
175 use [+], avoidance [+], and perceived respect for priority in crossings by other road users [-].

176 **Table 1.** Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations between study variables.

Continuous Variables		Mean	SD	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1	Age of Users	32.83	12.630	-.177**	-.274**	-.040	.176**	.102**	-.222**	.161**	.024	.048	.171**	-.197**	-.190**
2	Hours Riding per Week	6.71	6.341	1	.206**	.058	-.097**	-.033	.107**	-.199**	-.024	-.040	-.090**	.286**	.228**
3	Own Risky Behaviors	1.26	0.734		1	.038	-.170**	-.115**	.049	-.247**	.033	.018	.044	.341**	.306**
4	Signalizing and Infrastructure Problems	3.44	0.801			1	.203**	-.169**	-.028	.053	.102**	.115**	.026	.035	.040
5	Traffic Density and Complexity of Urban Roads	3.38	.913				1	.042	-.050	.155**	.026	.093**	.087**	-.012	-.023
6	Respect for Priority at Intersections	1.29	1.172					1	.182**	.047	-.086**	-.069*	.053	-.066*	-.087**
7	Overcrowding of Bicycle Use in City/Town of Residence	2.27	1.249						1	.008	.021	-.022	-.004	.133**	.128**
8	Avoidance (Weather Conditions)	2.75	1.136							1	.000	.047	.103**	-.211**	-.170**
Categorical Variables (0/1)		Frequency	Percent												
9	Problematic Interactions with other Road Users	890	83.6%								1	.471**	.135**	.007	.054
10	Problematic Interactions with Obstacles in the Road	893	84.0%									1	.130**	-.017	-.018
11	Environmental Overstimulation (Billboards)	695	34.7%										1	-.053	-.046
Self-reported road crashes		Mean/Frequency	SD/Percent												
12	Self-reported road crashes (5 Years)	0.65	0.983											1	.794**
13	Self-reported road crashes (Yes/No)	425	39.9%												1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

178 *Logistic Regression (Logit)*

179 The significant model, conducted through a stepwise regression (forward) technique, was fitted
 180 using variables contained in Table 2 showing its Beta coefficients, significance level and Confidence
 181 Intervals (CI) at 95%. The final model (contained at the fifth step) had an overall accuracy percentage
 182 of 66.7%, explained 19.5% of the variance between subjects (with a Nagelkerke's R-square coefficient
 183 of $R^2=0.195$), and showed a -2 Log likelihood coefficient of 1282.77 after 3 iterations, with a level of
 184 significance of $p < .001$.

185 Some of the variables contained in the model decreases the Odds Ratio (OR) of belonging to
 186 Group 1 (i.e. to have suffered at least one self-reported road crash in the last five years during bicycle
 187 riding). These variables are: the age of cyclists, where an increase in one year of age decreases the OR
 188 by 1.3% [$Exp(B)=0.978$, $CI_{Exp(B)}=0.975, 0.999$], the respect for the priority of cyclists at intersections, for
 189 each additional year of age decreases the OR by 12.9% [$Exp(B)=0.879$, $CI_{Exp(B)}=0.778, 0.993$], and the
 190 avoidance of riding under adverse weather conditions, for every additional year of age explains a
 191 subsequent decreasing of OR by 19.4% [$Exp(B)=0.823$, $CI_{Exp(B)}=0.727, 0.933$].

192 On the other hand, there is a set of included variables increasing the OR: the number of weekly
 193 riding hours, whereby each additional hour increased the OR by 5.5% [$Exp(B)=1.056$, $CI_{Exp(B)}=1.031,$
 194 1.083], the overcrowding of cycling in city/town of residence, signifying an increase in the OR of 21.1%
 195 [$Exp(B)=1.235$, $CI_{Exp(B)}=1.098, 1.389$], the level of traffic density and complexity which increased the OR
 196 by 16.2% [$Exp(B)=1.176$, $CI_{Exp(B)}=1.007, 1.375$], and finally, the self-reported risky behaviors when
 197 cycling, increasing the OR by 71.3% [$Exp(B)=2.041$, $CI_{Exp(B)}=1.647, 2.529$]. Figure 1 represents the
 198 observed groups and probabilistic predictions based on the variables contained in the model.

199 **Table 2.** Logistic Regression (Logit) Model. Dependent variable: Self-reported road crash suffered
 200 along the last 5 years (Dichotomous, with 1=probability of success).

Step	Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for Exp(B)	
								Lower	Upper
Step 1 ^a	Age of Users	-.018	.006	8.927	1	.003	.982	.971	.994
	Hours Riding per Week	.061	.013	23.905	1	.000	1.063	1.037	1.090
	Own Risky Behaviors	.733	.105	48.366	1	.000	2.082	1.693	2.560
	Constant	-1.165	.277	17.762	1	.000	.312		
Step 2 ^b	Age of Users	-.014	.006	5.544	1	.019	.986	.974	.998
	Hours Riding per Week	.059	.013	21.898	1	.000	1.061	1.035	1.087
	Own Risky Behaviors	.743	.106	49.064	1	.000	2.102	1.707	2.588
	Overcrowding of Bicycle Use in City/Town of Residence	.175	.058	9.082	1	.003	1.191	1.063	1.334
Step 3 ^c	Constant	-1.678	.327	26.299	1	.000	.187		
	Age of Users	-.013	.006	4.646	1	.031	.987	.975	.999
	Hours Riding per Week	.054	.013	18.375	1	.000	1.056	1.030	1.082
	Own Risky Behaviors	.695	.107	41.905	1	.000	2.003	1.623	2.472
	Overcrowding of Bicycle Use in City/Town of Residence	.185	.058	10.050	1	.002	1.203	1.073	1.349
	Avoidance	-.180	.063	8.148	1	.004	.835	.738	.945
Constant	-1.157	.373	9.628	1	.002	.314			

202 *Figure 1.* Observed groups (*Logit*) and probabilistic predictions, corresponding to 1's=Positive cases,
203 and 0's=Negative cases.

204 4. Discussion and Conclusions

205 The results of this study support the existence of a relationship between infrastructure
206 characteristics, human factors, and negative road safety outcomes reported by the international
207 sample of cyclists participating in this research.

208 Regarding our first objective, it is worth mentioning that the observed directionality of
209 associations between human factors and infrastructure variables, resulted consistently with other
210 studies previously performed with samples of cyclists [4,32], and diverse groups of road users,
211 especially drivers with high exposure to diverse road risks [33,34]. Specifically, it is worth remarking
212 on the associations reported between age of cyclists and road crash rates in the last 5 years which
213 were in accordance with other empirical sources [35,36], i.e. cyclists with less age tend to accumulate
214 higher crash rates (regardless of severity) when riding compared with those with a higher age/riding
215 experience. Furthermore, age was also correlated with risk-related perceptions (linked to
216 infrastructural and interactional factors) and risky behaviors on the road. This finding further
217 supports that not only young drivers are at elevated risk [37-39], but also young cyclists tend to
218 present a higher crash risk when riding [40,41]. In addition, intentions, attitudes and perceptions of
219 users have also been correlated to the age, experience and other human factors of cyclists and may
220 play a crucial role for the design of cyclist-related policies [42]. Finally, behavioral factors such as
221 avoidance and problematic interaction with environmental elements of the road correlated with
222 cyclists' age and hours spent cycling per week.

223 As for our second objective, this study identified the impact of human and infrastructure-related
224 factors on self-reported road crashes suffered by cyclists, i.e., those reporting road crashes when
225 cycling during the previous five years. In this regard, demographic factors of cyclists were shown to
226 have a substantial influence on safety records, the perceived complexity of urban roads for cycling,
227 traffic density, the respect given for the priority of certain road users, and the overcrowding of cycling
228 in their city/town of residence. All significant variables related to infrastructure were shown to have
229 an increasing effect on cyclists' self-reported involvement in a road crash while riding. Accordingly,
230 the existing literature has shown how transportation infrastructure plays a key role on road safety
231 [43]. For instance, Reynolds et al. [44] stated that improvements in transportation infrastructure may
232 enhance the prevention of crashes and injuries, and a successive promotion of a safety culture,
233 inclusive for all road users. More research and system-wide efforts are necessary to address the urban
234 policy failures in safely integrating cyclists in the transport system.

235 Human factors, personal characteristics and risky riding behaviors, significantly predicted self-
236 reported road crashes. Whilst age and exposure to cycling are sufficiently documented as variables
237 linked to cyclists' crash risk [6,15,19], much is unknown regarding the nature of cyclists' risk-taking
238 behavior. In this sense, investigations targeting the full spectrum of cyclists' risky behaviors and
239 predictors of cyclists' risky behaviors are likely to support the development of countermeasures (i.e.
240 public policy and road design) [45].

241 It is important to remember that cyclists' safety is a complex issue. Previous studies have
242 reported that integration of cyclists into the transport system has been complicated by poor
243 infrastructure, insufficient legal protections and enforcement, lack of evidence-based road safety
244 education, low empathy from other road users, and a lack of perceived risk by cyclists [29,46]. In
245 addition, scholarly literature has described the dominance of motor transport [47], often as an urgent
246 policy issue as the main barrier to create a safe space for cyclists. Unfortunately, the lack of action to
247 safely integrate cyclists into the transport system prevents society from earning the long-term benefits
248 of cycling to the environment, public health, and sustainability.

249 One of the main lessons from this study is that cyclists' safety must be approached as a complex
250 problem that requires a multi-faceted systems approach. This means that multiple actors at different

251 levels of the transport system should cooperate and coordinate its effort [48]. As mentioned by [49],
252 a systems-based approach to safety should consider equipment and surroundings (such as the bicycle
253 and infrastructure), actor activities (including behavior of other road users), operational management
254 (such as riding training), local government (including parents of young riders), regulatory bodies
255 (such as police), and government policy (such as infrastructure standards), in the development of
256 countermeasures.

257 5. Limitations of the Study

258 Although sample size was considerably large, and statistical parameters were overall accurately
259 and positively tested, some potential biasing sources and facts related to the data collection and
260 analysis should be mentioned. First, being an international study, the specific conditions governing
261 traffic dynamics of cyclists belonging to different countries may substantially vary [50,51],
262 considering relevant factors such as the aforementioned status of road safety education [46], absence
263 of legislation and normative regulations for cyclists [52], the use of helmets and reflecting accessories
264 [18], infrastructure-related issues [44]. Furthermore, this research only uses self-reported risky
265 cyclists' behavior while, in reality, they could also engage in protective behaviors such as self-
266 regulation.

267 This research used self-reported road crash data, but not police or hospital crash data [53].
268 Although these self-reports might suffer from inaccuracies, it is important to remember that crash
269 and injury data do not necessarily register all the information necessary to explore the complexity of
270 cyclists' safety. Self-reported data are a cost-effective road safety tool typically used when archived
271 data is not accessible [54]. In this sense, and depending on the attributed complexity of each study,
272 cyclists' road risk estimation methods may require the implementation of different research methods
273 in future research.

274 Finally, it is worth addressing the high rate of underreported road crashes, not only in
275 institutional records, but also for the case of self-reporting-based studies. Regarding the first, a
276 substantial part of registered traffic crashes involving cyclists, especially those not implying major
277 material losses or injuries, may not be reported [55]. As for the later, a potentially large part of their
278 road crashes suffered may be not reported by cyclists [56], highlighting the lack of a standardized
279 and/or well-known definition of the concept among participants.

280 6. Practical Applications

281 This study, based on self-reported cyclist data, provides a useful conceptualization of the impact
282 of human and infrastructural issues that may influence the road safety outcomes of cyclists. In this
283 sense, policy makers and practitioners could consider the reported data as a useful empirical
284 framework for the building of applied interventions aimed at addressing risk factors explaining road
285 crashes. Also, the authors consider that this work represents a useful experience for the statistical
286 approach to the public health problem of traffic injuries among cyclists, suggesting new questions
287 about how to strengthen a sustainable and responsible promotion of alternative transport modes.

288 **Supplementary Materials:** The following are available online at www.mdpi.com/link: **Table 1:** Descriptive
289 statistics and bivariate correlations between study variables, **Table 2:** Logistic Regression (Logit) Model.
290 Dependent variable: Self-reported road crash suffered along the last 5 years (Dichotomous, with 1=probability
291 of success), and **Figure 1:** Observed groups (*Logit*) and probabilistic predictions, corresponding to 1's=Positive
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