



# It is extremely annoying but I cycle here anyway

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## Background

A minority of cyclists cycles "everywhere" and does not demand separation from motor traffic or even rejects it. What are the relevant attitudes of these cyclists? How do they explain their behaviour? Can this knowledge be used for campaigns to support cycling in mixed traffic?

## Methods

The participants were recruited via ADFC (German bicycle club). There many well informed cyclists who cycle regularly for utility purposes could be expected. We conducted group interviews with 3-5 persons in Bremen, Chemnitz, Dresden, Hamburg, Leipzig, Neu Wulmstorf. Participants were 10 women and 19 men from 23 to 70 years (median 54 years).

## Results

Typical positions extracted from the interviews:

	Preference for cycling in mixed traffic	Preference for separation from car traffic
<b>Own speed</b>	fast / faster than possible on bike infrastructure	slow
<b>Cycling purpose</b>	I want to get from A to B fast.	
<b>Car drivers</b>	Car drivers look on the road. / No reason to assume that someone will hit me intentionally.	Car drivers do not look for cyclists in front of them. Cyclists on the road might be run over.
<b>Space distribution</b>	There are enough roads and there is enough space on the roads, also for cyclists.	There is space provided for cyclists. They should use it.
<b>Speed limit</b>	many: 30 km/h in built up areas adequate	
<b>Blocking traffic</b>	"I do not block traffic. I am traffic."	"On the road I would block traffic."
<b>Interaction with car drivers</b>	Some address drivers more or less friendly and successfully, inform about legal situation	Avoid conflicts with car drivers
<b>Pedestrians</b>	are unpredictable (and have the right to be) / need room / weakest road users	I can reach an agreement with them. / I am no danger for them.
<b>Stress</b>	different stress levels in interactions with car drivers	high stress level in interactions with car drivers
<b>Infrastructure</b>	cycling infrastructure at present (mainly) bad	
<b>Good bike paths</b>	might be useful for insecure cyclists	generally safe for cyclists
<b>Enforcement</b>	necessary: car speed, passing distances, car parking offences	
<b>Number of cyclists</b>	many cyclists on the road help to cycle there	

Preferences do not determine behaviour: Nearly all cyclists cycle in mixed traffic, on bike infrastructure, even on the footpath when it is forbidden - but the frequency differs very much.

Some cyclists consider **cycling in mixed traffic as less demanding and less stressful** than on deficient bike infrastructure. They can cycle faster, interactions with car drivers are more predictable than with pedestrians. Some stressed that they only have few conflicts with drivers because of their speed (25 km/h, 30 km/h).

## Discussion

Many cyclists who like to share the road are very "special": They are well **informed about the legal situation**, they perceive that cycling on the road is a **personal advantage in time and safety**. Many of them see lower speeds in cities and less car traffic as adequate. Some have a "message", and all are **willing to face the conflict with car drivers**, but in different ways. It is unlikely that these attitudes are easy to achieve in the general cyclist population.

**All participants agreed that cities and streets are car friendly and that most (some say all) of the present cycling infrastructure in Germany is deficient.** Many wanted more space for cyclists, but they do not agree where this space should be provided, as a bike path or a bike lane. Persons who prefer cycling in mixed traffic stressed that they (would) use cycling infrastructure if it is good (wide, good surface, linear, no obstacles, good visibility) and has advantages.

Some concerns of the participants might be useful for campaigns to make sharing the road more attractive:

- 1) **Provide information about laws** for cyclists (speed limit on shared use paths) and for car drivers (passing distance).
- 2) **Provide information about risks** for cyclists on the footpath (legally, illegally), on bike paths (turning cars, surface, ...).
- 3) All cyclists agree that **more enforcement is necessary**: car speed, car parking, overtaking distances.
- 4) Try to **reach many cyclists**. The more cycle on the road, the less stressful for the individual.

Intense information campaigns (not one newspaper article) and intense enforcement (at least in the beginning) might help to support infrastructure measures (e.g. sharrows) which are intended to stimulate cycling in mixed traffic.