

# TALES OF THE ROAD – 2022



**East Sussex**  
Fire & Rescue Service

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**This is the second time East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service has run our Tales of the Road survey, the first being in 2015. We had planned to re-run it in 2020, however the lockdowns resulting from the Covid pandemic meant a delay.**

Now in 2022, we have been finding out if anything has changed, with the aim of increasing our understanding of some of the experiences of bikers on our roads.

Our survey asked how long people have been riding bikes, whether they have had a near miss or a road traffic collision and what advice bikers would give other road users.

It was promoted via traditional media, social media and on our website [www.esfrs.org](http://www.esfrs.org).

It was open for eight weeks closing at the start of June 2022. We received 89 responses – down on the previous survey which had 121 responses.

It should be noted that this is a snapshot survey which aspires to give a voice to bikers and the findings should be viewed as capturing a moment in time, rather than the results of a long-term scientific research project.

**We asked the following questions:**

1. Demographic information e.g. age and where they lived.
2. How long have you been riding a bike?
3. Did you undergo any specialist or in-depth training before going on the roads?
4. Have you ever been involved in a road traffic collision while on your bike?
5. Have you ever been involved in a near miss on your bike?
6. Which of the following do you think is the biggest problem on the roads?
7. Are there other problems you want to raise awareness of?
8. What advice would you give other road users to help keep bikers safe?

## What we found out....

This report summarises the information we received.

We have grouped these together in seven themes:

- Safety Theme 1 - Cars and other vehicles turning
- Safety Theme 2 - People not looking properly
- Safety Theme 3 - Road users stopping (or not)
- Safety Theme 4 - Road conditions (especially potholes)
- Safety Theme 5 - Give me space
- Safety Theme 6 - Obey the rules of the road!
- Safety Theme 7 – Remember I'm human too!

## What next?

East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service will now use this information to better target our safety campaigns.

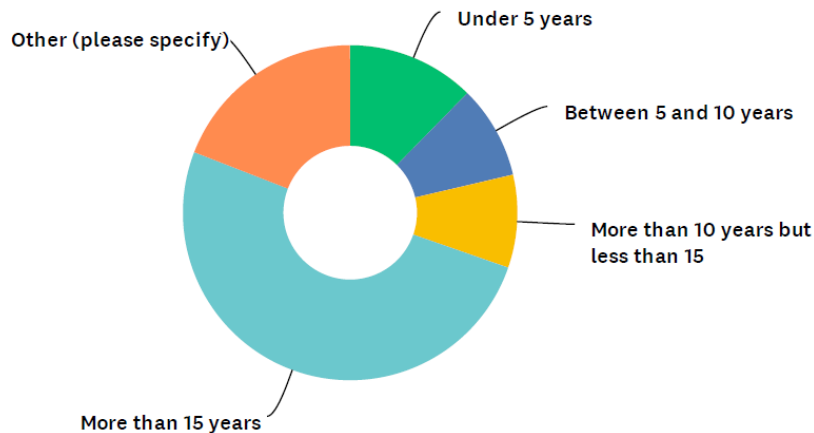
We will also share this with our partners to see what can be done by working together.

If you would like to be involved in this work, please email [communications@esfrs.org](mailto:communications@esfrs.org)



## Q1. How long have you been riding a bike?

More than half of our respondents had been riding for more than 15 years, with those that answered "other" riding for at least 20 years. This reveals an apparent increase in both new bikers and those with more than 15 years experience since our 2015 survey.



## Q2. Did you undergo any specialist or in-depth training before going on the roads?

✓ 42% ✗ 58%

This is a 10% increase in people having additional training compared to our 2015 survey.



## **“Two weeks intensive training for Royal Military Police”**

**“Full week of training involving low speed manoeuvring in a cordoned off car park, to build up confidence with clutch, brake and throttle before venturing out on to the public highway.”**

**“Went on a Police Awareness course when I was 19, latterly have done BikeSafe and ROSPA. Have been a Blood Biker”**

**“CBT after passing L test, I then passed advanced motorcycle test 6 months later. After a 19-year break, I taught myself to ride again, joined two local IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists) groups, did one of their slow riding skills courses, did Biker Down workshop, Bikesafe course and booked on ROSPA slow manoeuvre skills course”**

### **CBT Test**

CBT stands for Compulsory Basic Training which means it's technically not a test but a day of instruction with the end goal of making you safe on a motorcycle on the road. A CBT is a necessary licence for any rider on two wheels.

### **Direct Access Scheme (DAS)**

This is for those people who would like to get a full unrestricted motorbike licence.

### **BikeSafe**

BikeSafe workshops involve an observed ride with a police graded motorcyclist or approved BikeSafe observer. With some local variation, BikeSafe workshops aim to cover: attitude, observation, cornering, overtaking, filtering, junctions, group riding, hazard awareness and the system of motorcycle control.

Find out more: [www.bikesafe.co.uk](http://www.bikesafe.co.uk)

### **Other useful links:**

IAM RoadSmart (previously the Institute of Advanced Motorists) <https://www.iamroadsmart.com/>

The British Motorcyclists Federation [www.bmf.co.uk](http://www.bmf.co.uk)

Auto-Cycle Union approved courses [www.acu.org.uk](http://www.acu.org.uk)

The RAC [www.rac.co.uk](http://www.rac.co.uk)

ROSPA <https://www.rospa.com/>

# More about Biker Down

Made up of 3 modules and lasting 3 hours, Biker Down is designed to help you know what to do if you come across, or even witness, an accident. It's a free course which can make a real difference.

## *Scene management*

How a rider/witness can cope at the scene immediately after the event looking at the individual's Dynamic Risk Assessment and their initial actions to safeguard themselves, other road users and the casualty, and their responsibilities to themselves and the casualty.

## *First Aid*

Instruction from First-Aid Instructors, input on Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), treatment of likely traumas associated with Motorcycling Accidents and Helmet removal technique.

## *The Science Behind Being Seen*

Presentation from an ESFRS/Police Advanced Motorcycle Instructor, on the use of conspicuity aids, the pros and cons, why car drivers don't see bikers and what bikers can do to be seen and input on the phenomenon of Looming, Motion Camouflage and search patterns.

Find out more: <https://www.facebook.com/BikerDownSussex>



### Q3. Have you ever been involved in a road traffic collision while on your bike?

✓ 52% ✗ 48%

More than half of our respondents had been involved in a road traffic collision, with some reporting serious injuries, including one incident which required the air ambulance to be called. This compared to 58% of respondents in our 2015 survey who said they had been involved in a collision.



### Safety Theme 1 - Cars and other vehicles turning

**“Car u-turned into me in slow traffic”**

“Car turned across path on main A road  
- 6 fractures, unconscious, not breathing.”

**“Van pulled out of side turning into my path.”**

**“Car pulled out without looking.”**

**“Car pulled out on me from a side turning.”**

“I have been cut up by a lorry turning across my path. This resulted in my bike being written off, if it had been later in the day, I would've rolled under oncoming traffic rather than down an empty road.”

## Safety Theme 2 - People not looking properly

“Car passenger opened door into me whilst I was filtering between lanes of stationary vehicles.”

“Drivers either thinking I had moved but I hadn't or driver's not seeing me. I wear bright coloured clothing and always ride with my lights on.”

“Being polite, bus driver decided to pull out to do a u-turn without looking in his mirrors and I slammed into the side of the bus spent quite a few weeks in hospital.”

“Hit head on by car. Driver was checking on her baby (on the back seat), so was not looking where she was going - literally!!”

**“Man pulled out of a junction on a busy dual carriageway. He hit one car and was hit by two others including the one directly in front of me. I had nowhere to go and ran into the back of the car in front.”**





## Safety Theme - 3 Road users stopping (or not)

“Car in front had no brake lights so went up the back of the car.”

“I had stopped to give way at a roundabout on a dual carriageway. Unfortunately, the vehicle behind me didn't stop and drove into me, sending me flying over the handlebars onto the roundabout. Fortunately, nobody ran me over, and my protective clothing worked effectively.”

**“Knocked off the bike going around a roundabout, driver didn't stop to give way and hit me.”**

“Hit from behind at a pedestrian crossing.”

“A car didn't stop at a crossroad It was low speed with minor injuries.”



## Safety Theme 4 - Road conditions (especially potholes)

“Pothole on the side of the road, wheel went down, and bike stopped - I carried on moving over the handlebars.”

“Not given enough room and left the road after hitting a defect.”

**“Black ice.”**

## Q4. Have you ever been involved in a near miss on your bike?



The same themes emerged when we asked about near misses, but we had plenty more comments about people not looking properly. In 2015, 82% of respondents said they had experienced a near miss.

*“Many times, a large lorry didn't see me and pulled out in front of me, I always wear reflective vest too. Car drivers in the rain can't see me either.”*

*“Multiple times a week, people do not look out for bikers.”*

**“Numerous cars not paying attention, turning into my path, changing lanes, sudden manoeuvres, pulling out in front of on roundabouts and from minor onto major roads.”**

*“Had vans and cars pull out in front of me without looking from junctions.”*

**“Drivers not looking over their shoulder. They need to learn the importance of the *life saver.*”**

*“Many times, vehicles pulling out of junctions or crossing lanes without seeing me despite hi viz and headlights, bright white helmet etc... ”*

## Safety Theme 5 - Give me space!

We also had a new theme emerge – that of being blocked in, overtaken too closely, or poor parking.

“I regularly am nearly sideswiped on the motorway, cars not checking to their side and moving into my lane.”

“Blocked by cars and being forced out onto the busy road and cars coming up close to me and breaking hard when people just step out in front of me.”

“Van sped and overtook me to turn left down a road - cutting me up.

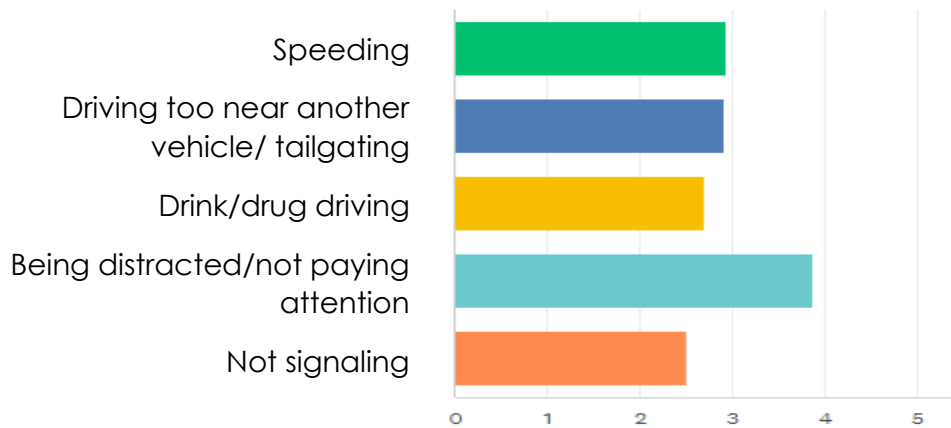
**“Articulated lorries overtaking on blind corners and pulling in when a car comes the other way - while still alongside...”**

“Country lanes, Blind bend car on the opposite side of the road.”

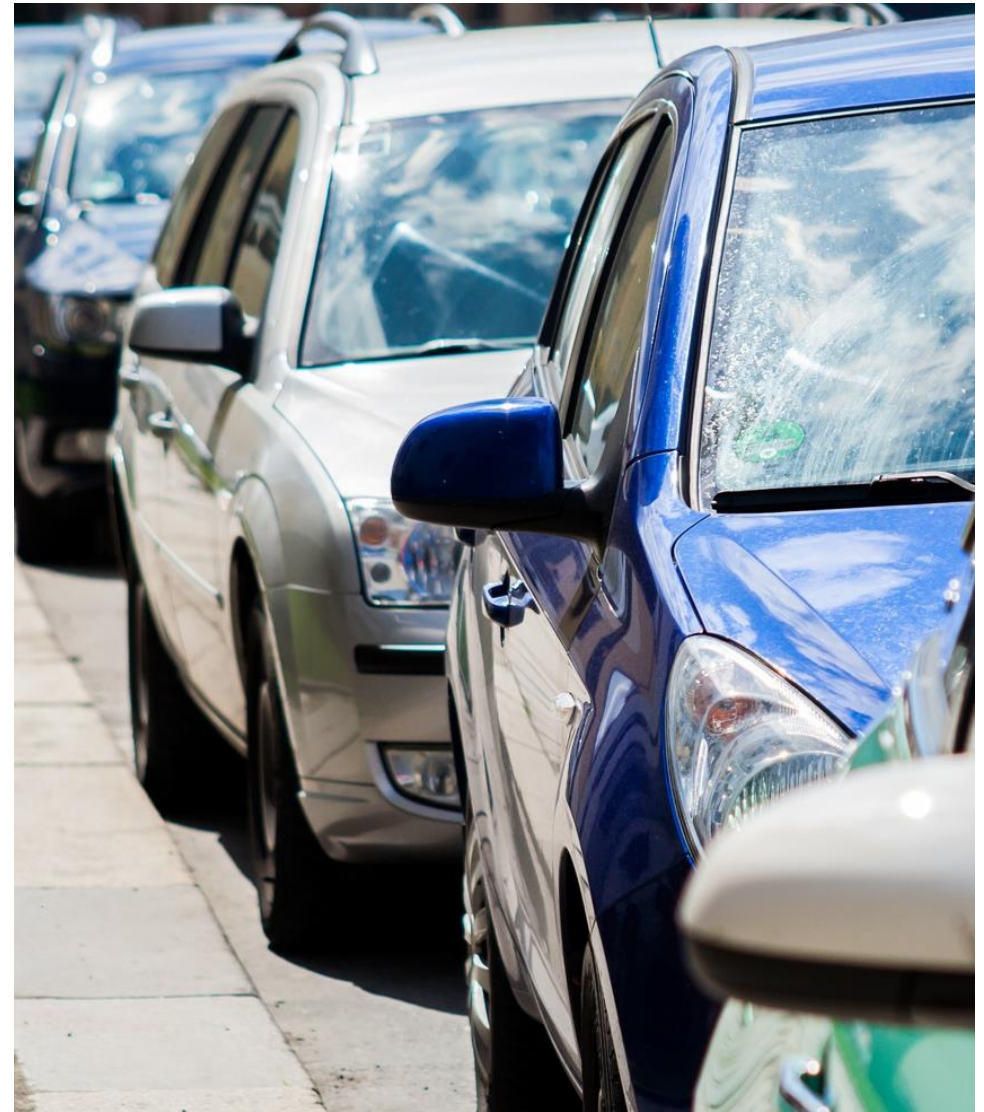


## Q5. Which of the following do you think is the biggest problem on the roads?

Please rank from 1 to 5 with 1 being the biggest problem.



Perhaps unsurprisingly given our respondents experiences, they believe the biggest problem is that people are distracted or not paying attention. Compared to our 2015 survey, speeding has become more of a problem but being distracted was the also top then.



## Q6. Are there other problems of which you want to raise awareness?

Respondents principally raised concerns about our key themes:

- Safety Theme 1 - Cars and other vehicles turning
- Safety Theme 2 - People not looking properly
- Safety Theme 3 - Road users stopping (or not)
- Safety Theme 4 - Road conditions (especially potholes)
- Safety Theme 5 - Give me space!

Two more themes emerged. These are broadly similar to our 2015 survey.

### Safety Theme 6 - Obey the rules of the road!

“Despite the law people still using mobiles while driving also taxi drivers tailgating and boy racers over taking in stupid places.”

“Mobile phone use in all its forms, drink/drug driving.”

“No lights. Disobeying traffic lights.”

“Drivers not aware of motorcycles when the weather is windy or rainy and unaware of the fact that motorcycles are legally allowed to filter.”

“People disobeying the Highway Code or not even knowing or understanding what it means. Car drivers think that only they have the right to use the roads.”

“**People don't seem to understand the dangers of driving so close to the rear wheel of a bike. One touch and it's game over!! Mirrors. People need to use them more.**”

## Safety Theme 7 – Remember I’m human too!

Many of our respondents were worried other road users forgot they were human too!

“People are so safe in their cars what with multiple airbags, driver aids such as ABS, cruise control, etc., and comfortable with heated seats, fabulous sound systems, air-con, etc., that they aren’t aware of other road-users.”

“Increased aggression towards bikers by car drivers.”

“The impatience of car drivers and their excessive speed, lack of awareness and general attitude.”

“**General lack of awareness by drivers of their surroundings. As a motorcyclist I am constantly looking around and in my mirrors to assess possible danger.**”

“Some drivers’ total lack of imagination regarding what may happen if they do ‘x.’”

“**Car drivers who think it's funny to pull out to the white line if you get a chance to pass!**”

“Car drivers have little appreciation for motorcycle needs for a safety bubble. Better driver training is needed to improve driver observation and anticipation. Repeat "Think Bike" media campaigns would be useful.”



“Many motorcycle accidents arise from SMIDSYs, (Sorry Mate, I Didn’t See You) and riders and drivers need education on avoiding them; speed is often less of an issue than “the science of being seen”.

## Q7. What advice would you give other road users to help keep bikers safe?

The majority of our respondents urged people to take that extra bit of time to really look, check what's going on around them and put away mobile phones.

**“We are fathers, mothers, someone's child! Be more aware of what's going on around you not just what's in front of you!”**

“Observation takes a second or two but can save a life. Always check your blind spots.”

“Bikes can be difficult to see, and their speed can be difficult to assess, but they're more noticeable when they cross your field of vision rather than coming towards you. Look for long enough that you can see them moving across your field of vision.”

**“Pay attention! Look where you are going! No - further ahead than that! Don't get annoyed that a biker has gone past you in traffic - take your bike test and avoid the queues too!”**

“Take longer to look. Give bikers space.”

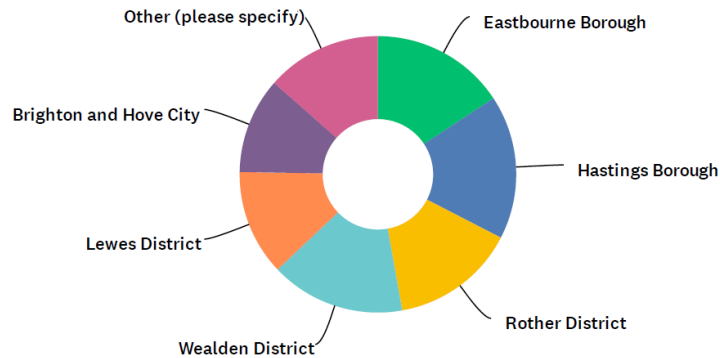
**“Look, look, and look again! Don't just look for a cage on four wheels. Give bikers extra space as the road surface, weather and any number of other things affect the path of our travel.”**

“Just be more aware, we can't stop and break as quickly as a car, so if you think you're "nipping" out in front of us, it causes us to a) have a heart attack and b) brake hard, which can cause instability and another heart attack!”

**“Pay attention. Ear buds out (so you can hear what is around you). Phone off and out of your eyeline (so you are not permanently distracted). Just because you cannot see what is on the other side of the road when you overtake approaching a blind bend does not mean that there is nothing just around the bend!”**

“Think of others. We all have the same human right to be out there on the road.”

## Q8. It would be really helpful to know a bit more about you. Where do you live?



### Other (please specify)

- Bedfordshire
- Germany
- Kent
- Mid Sussex
- Adur
- Haywards Heath
- Greater Manchester and North Wales
- Worcestershire/Gloucestershire
- Lancing/West Sussex

This is a wider geographical spread than the 2015 survey.

## Q9. Age? (Optional)

18-29 – 8 respondents

30-39 – 8 respondents

40-49 – 13 respondents

50-59 – 34 respondents

60-69 – 14 respondents

70+ - 5 respondents

The eldest respondent was 88 and the youngest 19 this time. This is broadly in line with respondents from the 2015 survey, with the exception of the 70+ group.

## Q10. Gender? (Optional)

Male - 60

Female – 19

This is broadly the same gender-split as the 2015 survey.