

**East Sussex**  
Fire & Rescue Service

The results of our survey aimed to understand some of the experiences of bikers on our roads



**The Tales of the Road Survey aimed to help East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service understand some of the experiences of bikers on our roads.**

Launched to coincide with Bexhill Motofest on Sunday 26 July 2015, it aimed to capture some of the stories from the perspective of the biker. It asks 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 closed on 2 September 2015, having received 121 responses.

It should be noted that this is a snap shot 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?



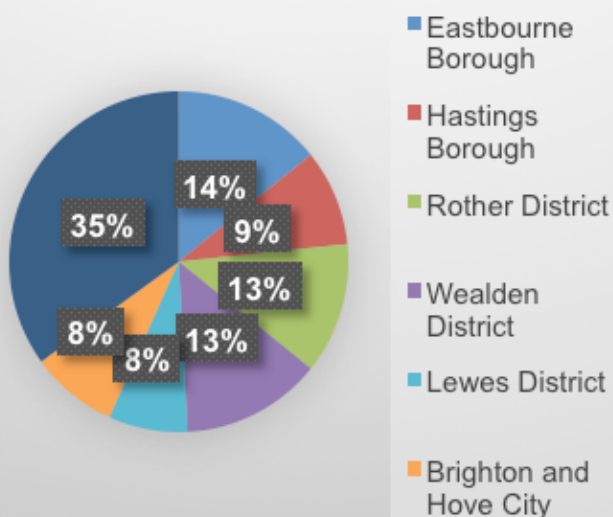
# The answers

## 1. Demographic information e.g. age and where they lived.

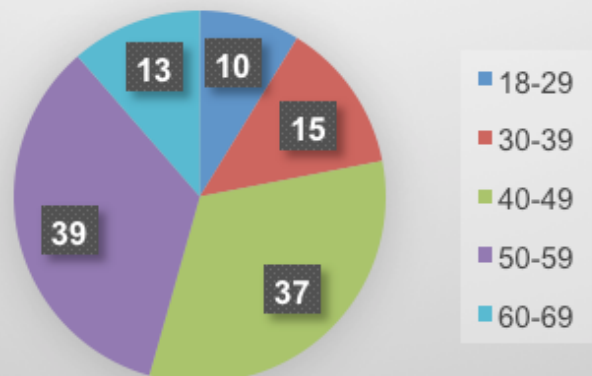
These questions were optional. 21 respondents were female; 89 were male. The remainder gave no reply.

The eldest respondent was 69 years old and the youngest was 21 years old.

### Where do you live?

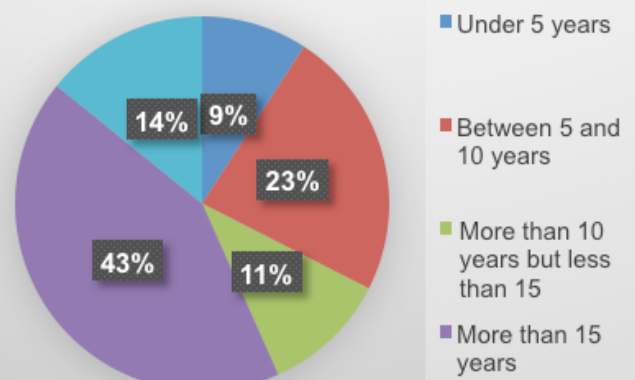


### Age of respondents



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

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

Nearly two thirds (68%) of those who answered this question had not had any specialist or in depth training.

Of the 32% which had, several had completed courses from:

Institute of Advanced Motorists [www.iam.org.uk](http://www.iam.org.uk)

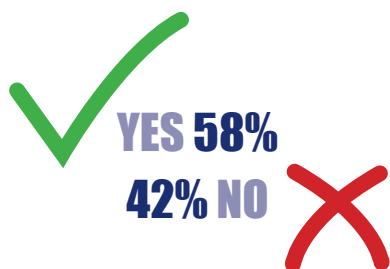
Bikesafe [www.bikesafe.co.uk](http://www.bikesafe.co.uk)

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)

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



Key points:

Respondents reported a wide variety of incidents, including motorists failing to see them and pulling out in front of them or doing U-turns in the road. This is sometimes referred to as a SMIDSY – Sorry Mate I Didn't See You.

Other issues mentioned include weather conditions, a deer and road conditions e.g. pot holes. Some had experienced more than one incident. A small number of respondents admitted they had a role to play in what happened.

Unfortunately a number of the riders reported suffering injuries – some serious.



“ An oncoming driver turned right. I had seen him and changed down in case I needed to stop, decided he'd seen me (big twin headlights & fluorescent hi-viz) but he hadn't. He pulled across in front of me. I almost stopped but I hit the car at slow speed and fell off. ”

“ A car pulled out of pub - broken ankle; lost control on bend - two broken legs; car parked over brow of hill - damaged bike and bruises various other minor 'offs'. ”

“ A cyclist fainted in front of me while I was just going to overtake which made me swerve out of the way and lose control. ”

“ Classic SMIDSY. Car driver emerged from side turning having locked eyes with me and came into me as I accelerated past the junction having noted that I'd been seen. Collision occurred when I was doing around 40mph in a 60mph limit. ”

“ I had somebody drive up the back of me after I had slowed down because I thought a dog was going to run in front of me. The car driver admitted afterwards that they wasn't paying attention. I was not injured. ”

“ A wheel fell off a car travelling in opposite direction and struck my bike. ”

“ Almost every time I go out, mostly at roundabouts and junctions, cars just do not see bikes. Sometimes it’s because bikes are going faster than the car driver estimates, especially on roundabouts. ”

“ A car was indicating right at traffic light cross roads, then changed mind and turned left! Learnt a lesson that day! ”

“ Almost every single day at the same place. Drivers look for a split second then pull out. I have my lights on and a hi viz yet I am still invisible. ”

“ A car pulled out of side road in front of me, only looked my way once she’d pulled out, fortunately she accelerated out of my way as I swerved round rear of her car! ”

“ All avoided so far by being observant, drivers generally lacking observation skills or concentration issues (e.g. mobile phone use!) ”

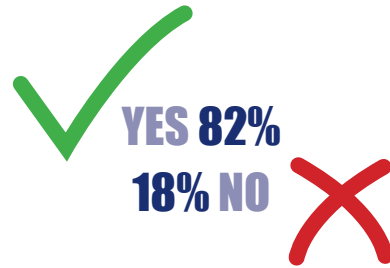
“ Riding through the traffic in Brighton at rush hour I have had numerous near misses. Mainly involving car drivers not using their mirrors or pedestrians walking out in front of me. ”

“ I’m lucky if I get through a long rideout without one, hence very defensive riding skills. ”

“ Hit some debris in the road on one occasion that had been obscured by the car in front & nearly ran up the back of a car that was turning right up a side road with neither indicators nor brake lights working on another. ”

“ Car driver pulled out of a junction without looking properly. Had to brake hard (even though only travelling about 20mph anyway) and the loose surface of the road made the back wheel lock up and almost dump me onto the ground. ”

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



Key points:

One in four respondents said they had experienced at least one near miss on their bike.

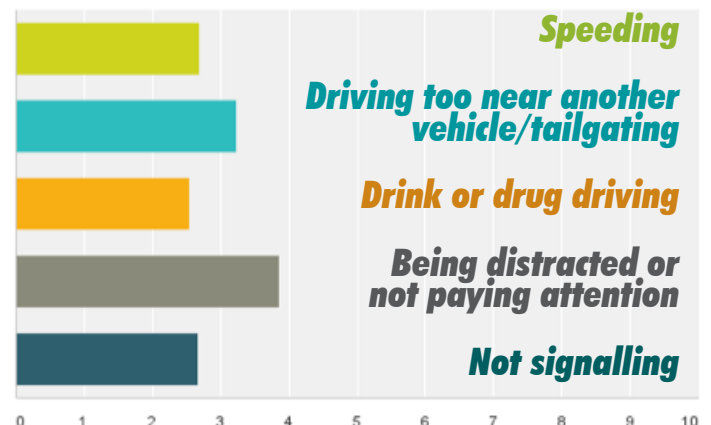
Cars pulling out from junctions or while changing lanes was cited as one of the main reasons.

Driver distraction also appears to be a theme with smoking and mobile phone use mentioned.

The majority felt they were just not being seen by the other road users.

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

Asked to rate 1-5 with 1 being the biggest problem:





# Tales of the road...

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

“ Mobile phone use. Ban them for 5 years and crush the car. ”

“ Speed does not kill. Bad drivers kill. If speed killed then every racer, pilot, train driver etc. would die the first time they went over 70mph. Complete lie. ”

“ Many car drivers do not use their mirrors. They do not see us when we are behind them or coming alongside them. Some deliberately move to the centre of the road so you cannot pass them. A lot of drivers pull out from side roads without looking properly. I see too many people still using their phones. ”

“ I used to love riding at night now it's a complete nightmare with headlights that are so bright you are completely blinded. ”

“ I sometimes feel drivers don't understand bikes need a lot more stopping distance in the wet. I use several big roundabouts on the commute and often worry about cars being too close behind on a slippery surface as I'm slowing down. ”

“ Overtaking is a problem, bikes often overtake in places where car drivers would not, before overtaking indicate and try to make sure that the car in front has seen you. Do not filter if the traffic is moving faster than 40MPH. ”

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

**LOOK MORE CAREFULLY**

**USE LIGHTS AND INDICATORS CORRECTLY**

**STAY CALM WHILE DRIVING**

**DON'T GET DISTRACTED - EATING/CHATTING/USING PHONES ETC**

**WEAR PROTECTIVE GEAR**

**DON'T TAILGATE BIKERS**



# Advice...

Use your signals, even if you think there are no other road users. Also, think about when you use your windscreen washer as a following biker will have his vision obscured.

Please keep an eye out for us riders. You do not need to make phone calls or update your Facebook/Twitter while you're behind the wheel. You are in a steel cage and we are not, so in an accident we WILL be the one that comes out worse.

*If a bike comes up behind concentrate on whatever you're doing rather than driving your car into the gutter, when it is safe to pass a biker will make the choice when to overtake.*

Always expect someone will pull out on you. Expect the worst at junctions etc. Always assume they haven't seen you!

Look for them. Quite a lot are annoying. Sitting in the middle of the road and overtaking all the time. But a lot of us do stick to the speed limit and want to keep to it. Remember 2 wheels are less sturdy than 4 when going round roundabouts in dry and in wet so don't tailgate.

Be prepared, don't assume that they are flashing you to pull out. Most bikers have daytime headlights that look like they're flashing when going over a bump. Give a biker room, not all bikers are good at riding.

*Train their mind to look for what is happening on the road, not for gaps that they can go into.*

Pay attention to what you're supposed to be doing rather than the radio/satnav, doing your hair, gabbling passengers etc. Consider turning down in car entertainment if you can't see well at a junction... you may hear an approaching vehicle before you can see it.

Take advanced instruction and learn to be more aware of potential hazards and everything happening around you on the road.

Look twice, give us space, think about what they can't see as much as what they can.

Look. Check your mirrors. Pay attention to what is around you not just in your comfort zone. If you see a bike in your side-mirror watch them more than you would to see what they are doing. And check at junctions that there isn't a bike coming down the road.





## Advice...

“ Remember that all road users deserve respect, whether their journey is a necessity or just for pleasure. ”

“ Wear bright colours always have your dipped beam on and always be aware of others as they are unpredictable. ”

“ Use your eyes and appreciate that bikes have a better view of the road plus the ability to manoeuvre differently to a car and that yes, filtering is a legal phase, don't try and knock me off for doing it. ”

“ Give ALL other road users space and that would mean that bikers have an equal chance of being seen no longer hidden behind a bus or HGV or van driver. ”

“ Open your eyes, slow down and take an extra moment to look properly before you manoeuvre, it could just save yours or someone else's life - nothing is that important that you can risk killing another road user by poor planning of your actions - think about the devastation in the lives left behind. ”

“ The best way to get rid of many bad drivers off our roads is for compulsory periodic retesting of all drivers. It'll get rid of those who've never had an eye test and hopefully old bad driving practices. ”

“ Always double check before pulling out. Bikes are easily obscured and can move quickly. ”

“ THINK BIKE!!! I do a double/triple shoulder check before taking many of my actions due to limitations of my helmet view however I would be hard pressed to recall a time I witnessed a car driver have a good look around. ”

