

Group effort generates more cycling interest

December 23 2013, by Kerry Faulkner



Individuals were asked about their perceived ability to cycle under a variety of conditions; when tired, when they had social or work commitments or family support. Credit: Ben Lawson

Improving an individual's self-belief and social support are the most useful strategies to promote the uptake of cycling in Australia, according to a study of Perth residents.

In comparison, the neighbourhood [environment](#) plays little part in people taking up [cycling](#) for recreation or transport.

The findings are part of the RESIDE study, a five-year project by UWA's School of Population Health aimed at evaluating the impact that urban design has on walking, cycling, use of public transport and sense of community.

The overarching RESIDE study followed 1800 Perth people in 74 new housing developments, collecting data before they moved house and after.

VicHealth Centre for Community Wellbeing expert Dr Hannah Badland says the investigation of people's uptake of cycling for recreation and for transport is an extension of the RESIDE project.

Dr Badland says the ultimate aim of the RESIDE project is to guide future urban policy and neighbourhood development to create more supportive cycling environments.

In the meantime, the cycling study results shows there is an urgent need for decision makers in health, environment and transport to understand how to design interventions to encourage people to start cycling.

"Cycling has a range of health, environment and transport benefits, yet levels of cycling are extremely low in Australia," Dr Badland says.

"Public health models recognise that there are multiple levels – individual, social and physical environments where interventions need to occur and the RESIDE dataset allow us the capture these and relate them to the uptake of cycling."

The [findings](#) are reported in Elsevier; Socio-ecological predictors to the uptake of cycling for recreation and transport in adults: Results from the RESIDE study.

The individual, social and environmental factors were evaluated in the study which surveyed 909 people before and after they moved to the new neighbourhoods.

Individuals were asked about their perceived ability to cycle under a

variety of conditions; when tired, when they had social or work commitments or family support.

In addition, they evaluated neighbourhood variables like interesting features in the neighbourhood, greenery, busy roads and the number of cul-de-sacs.

The study found improving self efficacy and [social support](#) appear to be the most useful strategies for promoting the uptake of cycling while the neighbourhood environment had little influence on cycling uptake for recreation and no impact for transport.

However Dr Badland says the transport finding may be explained by built environment features along the commute route or end destination having a more significant role than the built environment of the local neighbourhood.

Provided by Science Network WA

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