

# Crash data shows cyclists with no helmets more likely to ride drunk

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Riders who do not wear helmets are more likely to disobey traffic rules or ride with a blood alcohol level above 0.05, the study found. Credit: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mindcaster-ezzolicious>

Cyclists who ride without helmets are more likely to take risks while riding, like disobeying traffic controls or cycling while drunk, a new study of road accident data has found.

The study, conducted by academics at the University of NSW and published in the journal [Accident Analysis and Prevention](#), examined NSW hospital and police records on 6745 cyclists involved in a motor vehicle collision between 2001 and 2009.

It found that wearing a helmet reduced the risk of head injury by up to 74%.

While 75.4% of the riders in the data set studied wore helmets, only about about half of those less than 19 years old wore helmets, the study found.

Non-helmeted cyclists were almost three times as likely to have disobeyed [traffic controls](#) as helmeted riders, and more than four times as likely to have been above the blood alcohol limit, said the study's co-author, Dr Jake Olivier from the University of [New South Wales'](#) School of Mathematics and Statistics.

"Those who wore helmets were more likely to be in high speed areas. If a person didn't wear a helmet they were more likely to be in low speed areas. The overall effect was that helmet wearing was still beneficial," he said, adding that the study showed wearing a helmet greatly reduced the risk of injury while riding.

"There have been calls from some people to get rid of [helmet laws](#). What we have found disturbing is it's [young kids](#) in the accidents not wearing helmets, kids who have their whole lives ahead of them and for whom having a serious [brain injury](#) will change their lives," he said.

"People who don't like helmets say it won't help you with serious injury but this evidence points to the opposite."

Professor Narelle Haworth, from QUT's Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety – Queensland (CARRS-Q) said she was not surprised by the paper's finding.

"This echoes a [study](#) we did that found that wearing a [bicycle helmet](#) was associated with a 69% reduction in the likelihood of head or brain injuries and a 74% reduction in the likelihood of severe brain injury," said Professor Haworth, who was not involved in the UNSW study.

"Another observational study we did found that

people not wearing helmets, or not wearing helmets that were fastened, were more likely to have conflict with pedestrians in the middle of the city."

**More information:**

[www.sciencedirect.com/science/ ...  
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