Perceptions of cycling amongst high school students and their parents

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Why cycling?
Our approach
**Focus groups**

**STUDENT FOCUS GROUPS**
Students as (potential) cyclists and active citizens forming their mobility norms.
10 focus groups, total of 54 students

**PARENTAL FOCUS GROUPS**
Parents as ‘critical gate-keepers’ to uptake of active transport to school.
6 focus groups, total of 25 parents
The complexity of perceived safety

Participant 1: [Safety is] in your head. It doesn’t stop me. It’s just a bit more selective than you would like to be or be able to be less selective of the roads… It’s to not have to kind of choose certain streets or even times to get to a cycle way or get to a footpath where I can ride on or something.

Interviewer: So what times and what areas would you avoid?

Participant 2: The one-way system, I never cycle on the one-way system.

Participant 3: There’s still so many trucks on it ae?

Participant 2: There are parked cars on one side and traffic on the other. I try to avoid streets where I am in-between parked cars and traffic.

(Parental Focus Group #03)
Negotiating hazards

**Participant 6:** Some of the roads seem to have a bit of glass on them sometimes.

**Interviewer:** Glass on the pavement?

**Participant 6:** No, on the roads where you’re riding your bike… I try and dodge it but it’s not the best.

**Interviewer:** Are there particular roads where you find more glass than others?

**Participant 6:** It’s sort of the off-roads rather than the main roads.

**Interviewer:** So do you avoid those roads?

**Participant 6:** I normally just go on them [the side roads] so that I don’t get run over. Going on the main road, there are a lot more cars.

(Student Focus Group #02)
Distance? Or a Safe route?

“The types of roads that you have to bike on, that’s a huge factor [in whether students cycle to school]”

(Participant 2, Student Focus Group #06)
Gender and school uniforms

**Participant 7:** Generally it’s the boys more than the girls [who cycle to school] because we [girls] can’t actually ride the bikes with skirts without having to get changed before and after.

**Interview:** Ok sure, are you allowed to wear other clothes if you were going to ride a bike?

**Participant 6:** You’re supposed to wear a full school uniform outside of school.

**Participant 7:** Which makes it practically impossible to bike because we can’t actually move our legs.

**Participant 9:** Unless you change into a totally different outfit.

**Participant 7:** Then you get told off when you walk into the school and they’re like you’re not wearing a school uniform.

**Participant 2:** You’re not allowed in school unless you’re in your school uniform.

**Participant 7:** You’re not allowed to do partial [uniform] because it makes it look bad for the school.

(Student focus group #3)
“I’m not sure if we’re allowed to”

**Interviewer:** You mentioned a couple of people you know who cycle to school in their gym clothes and leave their uniforms here. Do you think there are many students in school are aware that they are allowed to do that?

**Participant 3:** I’m not really sure if we’re allowed to. But they’re quite the teacher’s pets so they’re not really [allowed to]. They get away with things that they’re not really supposed to do. I am not sure whether you’re allowed to or not.

(Student Focus Group #04)
Conclusions

- Physical infrastructure developments alone are unlikely to increase perceptions of cycling safety, and increase the uptake of cycling; driver behaviour, proximity to traffic and volumes of traffic also demand critical attention.

- Perceptions of a safe cycling route to school are critical if students and parents are going to support cycling to school.

- Students appear to be broadly unaware of school rules and regulations relating to cycling, and how this intersects with other school rules (e.g. uniform`
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