

# Cycling

## Summary Report No. 4 2005

- **Approximately 95,000 South Australian adults cycle on a weekly basis.**
- **The majority of cyclists identify themselves as riding for recreation rather than for transport.**
- **More than a third of all adults (whether or not they cycle) said that if more cycling paths and lanes were built it would encourage them to cycle more.**

### Introduction

Cycling is a popular pastime for South Australians but do we know how many people are cycling and what sort of things motivate them to do it? The 2004 State Physical Activity Survey asked a sample of 2999 South Australian adults about their cycling habits and preferences. The results of the survey provide some answers to these questions about cycling in this state and provide an overall picture of the place this physical activity takes in our lives.

### How many people cycle?

A substantial proportion (29%) of adults report that they cycle (children's cycling was not measured in this survey). Some of these adults who cycle do so only rarely but nearly half (48%) of cyclists ride at least once a month and most of these are weekly riders. Overall, 8.5% of South Australian adults are weekly cyclists which equates to approximately 95,000 people.

The survey suggests that adults are more likely to be a cyclist if they are either a male, work fulltime, have never been married, or if there are children under 18 years of age in the household.

### Characteristics of cycling

The survey separately measured two main purposes for cycling, these being for transport (to reach a particular destination) or recreation (to enjoy the exercise). What was measured was whether people could identify they had cycled for either purpose in the week before the survey. These were nearly all respondents who reported cycling at least once a week i.e. very frequent cyclists. The greatest number of cyclists (62%) identified that they rode primarily for recreation. There were a further 18% who identified they rode for recreation as well as transport. The remaining 20% of cyclists identified that they rode for transport. This suggests that cycling for fun and exercise is more popular than cycling as a means of getting to and from places (Figure 1). This view is supported by 47% of the cyclists interviewed who reported that the destination they most often cycled to was "just riding around" rather than to work, shops, school etc. (Figure 2)

Figure 1: Reasons for cycling - cyclists

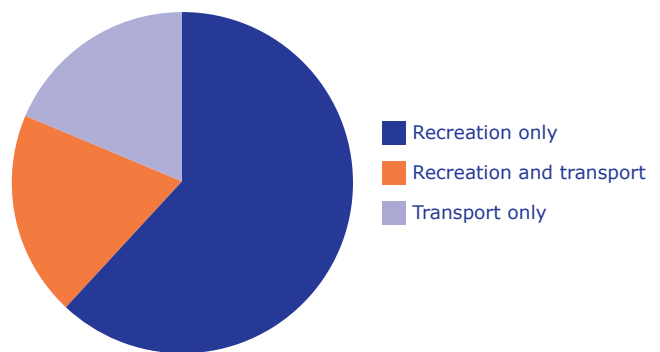
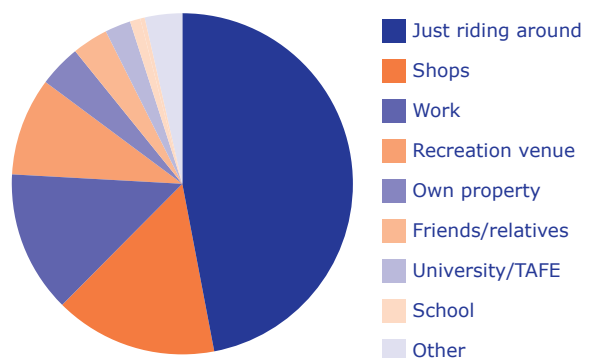
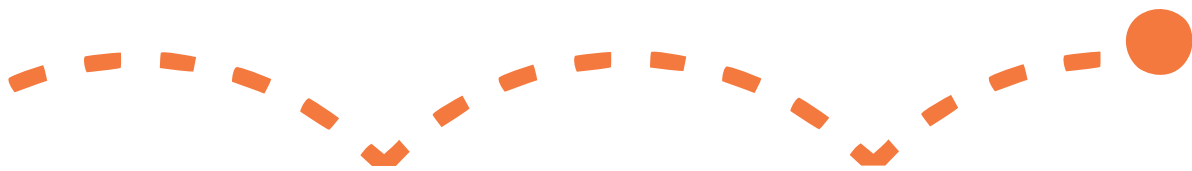


Figure 2: Most common destination when cycling

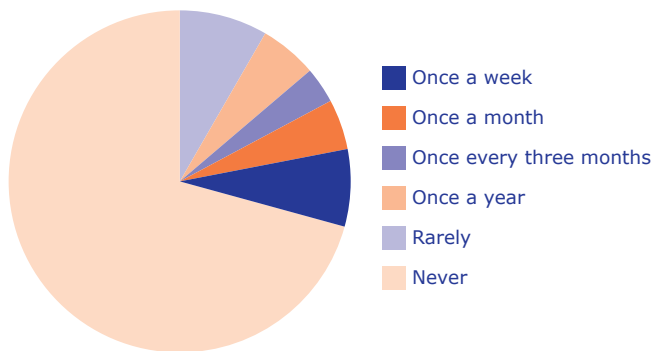


### People who could ride more often

Apart from regular or weekly cyclists there are a substantial number of adults who cycle occasionally, even rarely. In the survey there were 15.2% of adult South Australians who cycle less than once a month (Figure 3). These cyclists equate to nearly twice the number of adults who ride every week, that is, approximately 170,000 infrequent cyclists. This figure may reflect a substantial number of bicycles that are not taken out of the shed very often. The survey looked at possible ways to encourage people to get these bicycles out and use them.



**Figure 3: Cycling activity in South Australian adults**

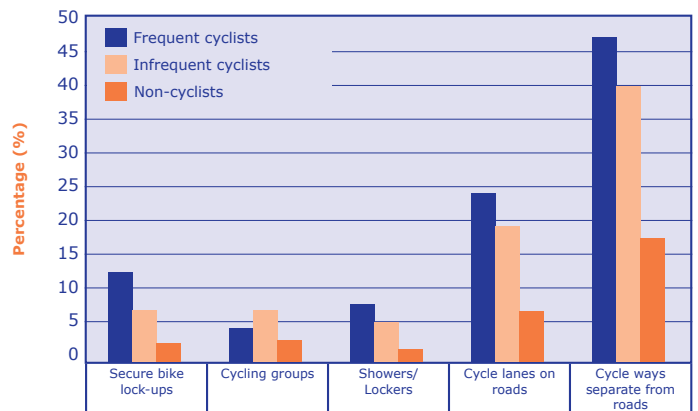


**Encouraging people to ride more often**

Everyone who answered the survey made mention of factors that may encourage them to cycle more often. The responses came from frequent, infrequent, and non-cyclists combined, as they were all viewed as potentially being able to cycle more than at present. These groups are looked at separately later. The majority of people (60%) said that nothing would encourage them to cycle more often than they currently do, but beyond this group there were some good indications of factors that could be changed to make it easier to get people to cycle more. A large number of people responded positively to the suggestion that more cycling paths and lanes would encourage them to ride. A quarter of all adults (whether they were cyclists or not) said that cycle ways that are separate from roads would get them riding more. A lesser but still substantial proportion (11.1%) said that more cycle lanes on roads would be an inducement. These suggestions stood out from other solutions, however there were still considerable numbers of people who would like secure bike lock-ups and showers and lockers at their destination, and cycling groups that would support them riding.

When these data are looked at by frequency of cycling a more detailed pattern emerges. Figure 4 shows that frequent cyclists are looking for safer ways to ride, and are keenly supportive of dedicated cycle ways. They reported that these factors would encourage them to ride more often. This is encouraging for those who are already frequent cyclists, but what about people who do not ride frequently? The provision of cycle ways either on or separate from roads appears to be a motivating factor for infrequent cyclists to ride more, perhaps making them frequent cyclists, but not necessarily for people who currently do not cycle. It may be that a few non-cyclists could be encouraged to ride but that there still remains a large section of the population for whom cycling is not an attraction.

**Figure 4: Factors that would motivate more cycling, by frequency of cycling**



**Conclusion**

Cycling has been shown to be a popular pastime, and one that a lot of people do just for the enjoyment of it. It is clear, however, that an even greater number of people would like to cycle more, and that safer environments such as cycle ways that are not on roads and cycling lanes on roads could enable this to happen. The popularity of cycling in other countries where cycle networks are common, such as the Netherlands, points to this being a successful strategy.

**So what?**

Cycling is shown here to be a popular recreation but there is substantial scope for many more people to participate. What is needed to encourage more people to cycle is safe places to ride that are dedicated to cycles rather than transport corridors that are shared with cars. These results for adult cyclists, when added to the large number of children who cycle, show that cycling is a substantial part of the effort for South Australians to be more physically active. In order to address these issues, the Ministerial Physical Activity Forum and Physical Activity Council have been established. For more information go to [www.beactive.com.au](http://www.beactive.com.au)