ΠΟΛΕΙΣ ΓΙΑ ΠΟΔΗΛΑΤΟ | Μέλος της ECF EUROPEAN CYCLISTS' FEDERATION

ΑΡΙΣΤΟΤΕΛΕΙΟ ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗΣ

Cities for Cycling

Technical Report

Cycling in Greece: a National Survey

Athens, 2025-2026

Cycling in Greece: a national survey

We all have a sense of the challenges and opportunities facing cycling in Greece, but we lack a clear picture of who cycles, what kind of bicycle they use, where they use it, and the most significant problems they encounter.

On the occasion of World Bicycle Day, the organisation Cities for Cycling invited people from across Greece who are interested in cycling to take part in an online survey on bicycle use in our country.

The aim of this survey was to document, among other things:
– Who uses a bicycle and why
– What difficulties cyclists face
– What prevents some people from starting to cycle
– What needs to change in our cities

We would like to extend special thanks to the Transport Systems Research Group of the Department of Transportation Engineering and Project Management, Laboratory of Transportation Engineering, Department of Civil Engineering, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, for their collaboration and scientific oversight.

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Summary

This study aimed to explore the attitudes, experiences and habits of cyclists, and to document their difficulties and expectations. To this end, a structured questionnaire was designed and implemented, completed by 637 participants from various regions of the country. The questionnaire covered thematic areas related to demographic characteristics, frequency and mode of bicycle use, infrastructure, sense of safety, barriers encountered, as well as the benefits and motivations associated with cycling.

The results showed that cycling is a frequent activity for a significant proportion of participants, with the main reasons being recreation, exercise and, to a lesser but growing extent, everyday commuting. The majority of cyclists are **men aged 35–54, while women's participation remains limited. Electric bicycles show significant momentum**, as many users have already tried or intend to try this technology. At the same time, the survey revealed **serious problems limiting the spread of cycling**: lack of continuous and safe infrastructure, poor road surface conditions, aggressive driver behaviour, and a low sense of safety. Nevertheless, participants highlighted the **multiple benefits** they gain, including improved health, joy, and wellbeing.

Overall, the findings show that cycling in Greece has significant growth potential, provided it is supported by comprehensive policies addressing **infrastructure, road safety, education, and financial incentives**.

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Research Framework

The bicycle has long been one of the most accessible and environmentally friendly modes of transport (1). In European countries with a strong cycling culture, such as the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany, cycling has emerged as a core element of everyday mobility, contributing to reduced traffic congestion, environmental protection and improved public health (2). In Greece, however, cycling remains at lower levels of uptake, as urban organisation, infrastructure gaps and traffic conditions create a less cycling-friendly environment. Despite these challenges, recent years have seen a growing shift towards cycling among citizens, both for recreation and exercise and for everyday commuting.

The importance of cycling is multidimensional. At the individual level, it is associated with improved physical and mental health, enhanced wellbeing and reduced stress (3). At the societal level, it contributes to reducing car dependency, improves the quality of the urban environment and creates more sustainable and human-centred cities (1). At the financial level, cycling is a low-cost transport option, which is particularly significant during periods of economic uncertainty and rising energy costs (4).

However, promoting cycling requires an understanding of the needs, attitudes and experiences of users themselves. Documenting the habits, motivations and barriers faced by cyclists in Greece can be a valuable tool for designing policies that will promote cycling activity and make our cities more cycle-friendly.

Aim and Objectives of the Survey

The primary aim of this study is to explore cycling activity in Greece by capturing the experiences, attitudes and perceptions of users themselves.

Specifically, it seeks to:

– Document the demographic characteristics of the cyclists who participated in the survey

– Map the frequency and mode of bicycle use (recreation, exercise, commuting, tourism)

– Investigate the barriers and risks cyclists experience in the road environment

– Record attitudes towards existing infrastructure and implemented policies

– Highlight the benefits that cyclists themselves recognise in cycling

Through the achievement of the above objectives, the report aspires to reveal the potential of cycling in Greece, identify the main problems constraining it, and offer recommendations that could be used to improve cycling policy.

Methodological Approach

To achieve the research objectives, a structured questionnaire was designed, implemented, and distributed online through relevant channels and networks. A total of 637 people participated, answering questions about their cycling habits, experiences in the road environment, motivations and benefits of cycling, as well as their suggestions for improving conditions.

The collected data are presented in the form of simple descriptive statistical analysis, which meets the needs of this report. The following chapter presents the key findings.

Key Findings

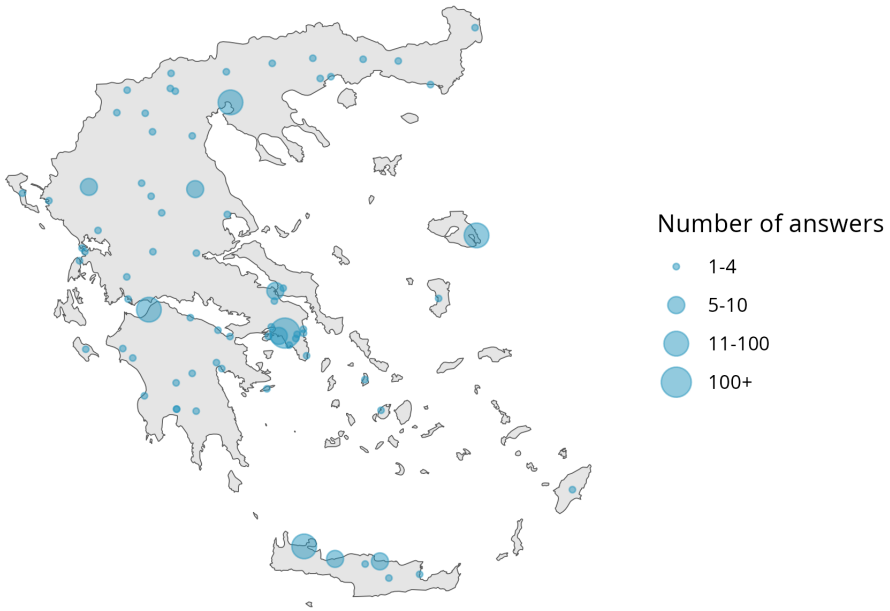

Figure 1: Map showing all areas given as responses to the question "Where do you live?"

The geographical distribution of responses shows a clear concentration in major urban centres, with Athens (n=388) and Thessaloniki (n=69) accounting for the highest proportions. Due to this distribution, the results primarily reflect the views and needs of bicycle users in large cities. Nevertheless, the presence of responses from many smaller towns indicates that interest in cycling is widespread throughout the country.

Below we present and analyse the key findings from the survey: on the one hand, the lack of safety, and the low participation rates of women and young people; and on the other, interest in electric bicycles and increased use of cycling for everyday transport and tourism.

1. Lack of safety limits cycling uptake

The lack of safety was highlighted over and over in our survey, either as a response to the relevant question (figure 2), or through comments about obstacles and suggestions for improvement.

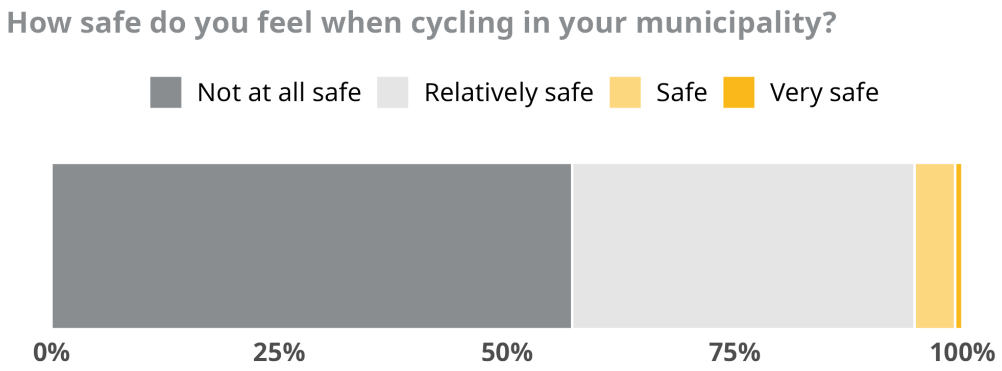

Figure 2: How safe do you feel when cycling in your municipality?

The majority of participants (57.2%) do not feel safe at all when cycling in their municipality. This is a significant problem, as most research shows that perceived risk is a major deterrent to wider cycling uptake (5). Among people who do not cycle, the impression is created that only confident and highly skilled individuals can defend against road hazards, making cycling less attractive to those who do not identify with such characteristics (6).

Consequently, **increasing safety** must be the first priority for promoting cycling. It has been shown that, on the one hand, safety improvements attract proportionally more people to cycling (5), and on the other, that increasing the number of people who cycle increases safety for everyone (7). This creates an upward spiral that can lead to exponential growth in cycling uptake.

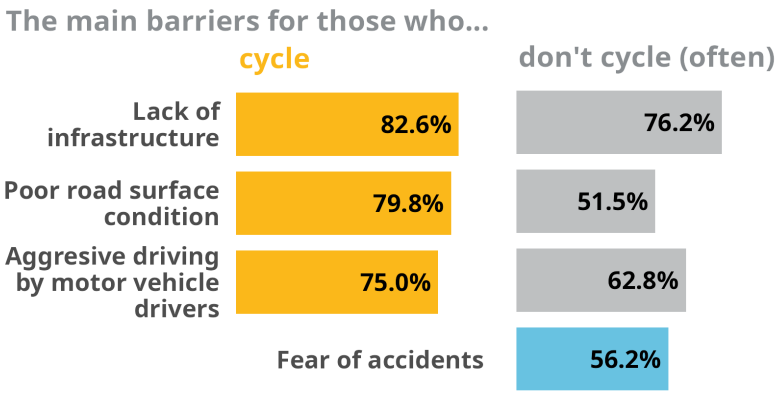

Figure 3: Combined responses from two questions: "What are the three most significant barriers you face when cycling?" (left) and "If you do not cycle often, or if you do not cycle at all, what are the most important reasons for this?" (right), excluding those who responded that they cycle regardless of problems, or do not own a bicycle. Only responses selected by at least 50% of participants are shown.

Figure 3 demonstrates the importance of perceived risk, as "fear of accidents" is a barrier for more than half of respondents who do not cycle often, but is less significant for those who cycle more. The three factors cited by both groups indicate areas for policy intervention.

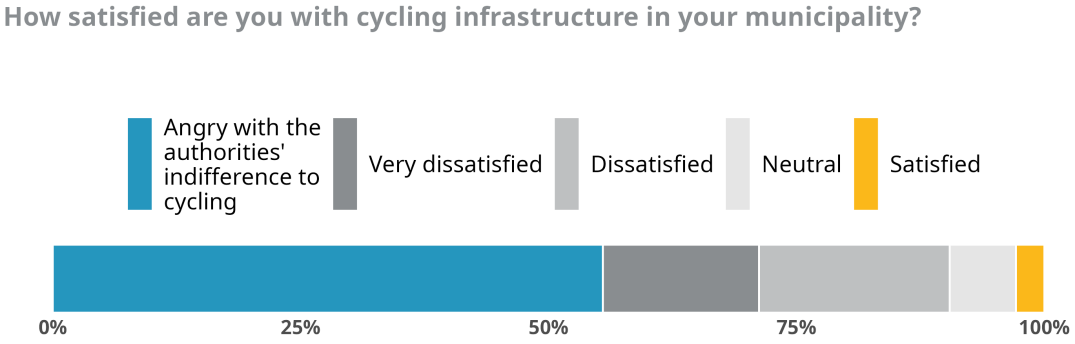

Figure 4: How satisfied are you with cycling infrastructure in your municipality?

The lack of infrastructure is the most significant factor, and figure 4 shows that the large majority of participants express strong dissatisfaction and frustration with municipal cycling policy (89.3% ranging from dissatisfied to angry).

The **provision of separated cycle lanes and bicycle paths** is undoubtedly the cornerstone of interventions in countries such as the Netherlands and Denmark, to make cycling safe and attractive (2). This infrastructure, which in those countries has been designed to be safe and comfortable for all levels of cycling ability, is not sufficient in itself, but is essential to ensure that cycling is achievable for a wide range of the population (8).

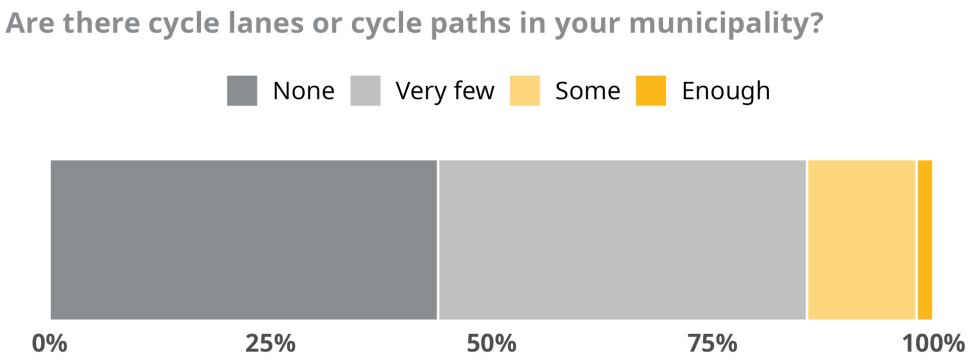

Figure 5: Are there cycle lanes or cycle paths in your municipality?

Our survey shows that most cyclists move in a road environment without safe and separated infrastructure (Figure 5 - 85.4% ranging from very few to none), and this is their first priority (Figure 6). This finding reinforces the need for strategic municipal interventions aimed at developing a safe and functional cycling network.

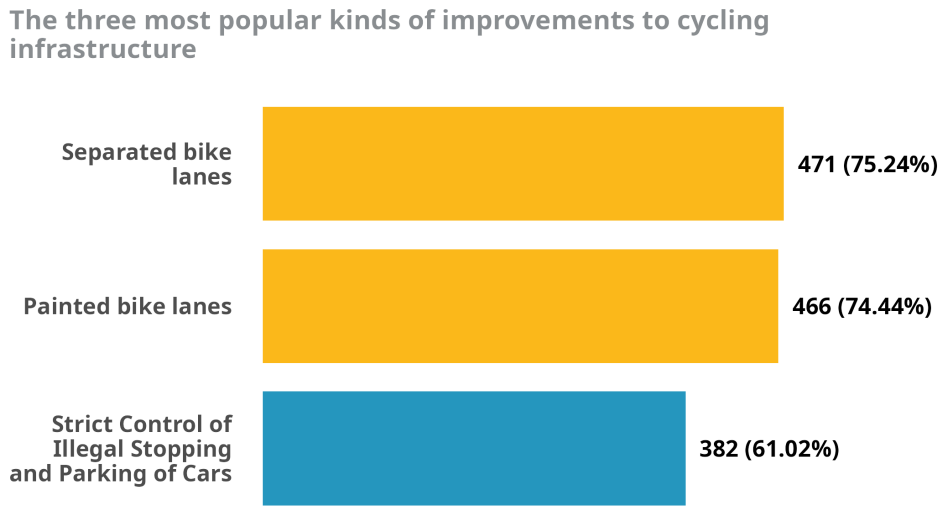

Figure 6: What kinds of improvements to cycling infrastructure in your municipality would you like to see? Only the most popular suggestions (selected by more than 50% of participants) are shown.

On smaller local roads, it is neither possible nor necessary to provide separated cycle paths and lanes, but these roads form an important part of the overall cycling route network. The best approach is to create continuous, separated and safe cycle paths along roads with heavy traffic, combined with an extensive network of low-traffic residential streets (2).

Returning to the barriers cyclists face (figure 3), beyond the lack of infrastructure and poor road surface condition, a significant deterrent is **aggressive driving by motor vehicle drivers**. If we add to this **illegal stopping and parking of cars**, identified as a major obstacle in figure 6, we see that driver behaviour creates serious hazards for bicycle users.

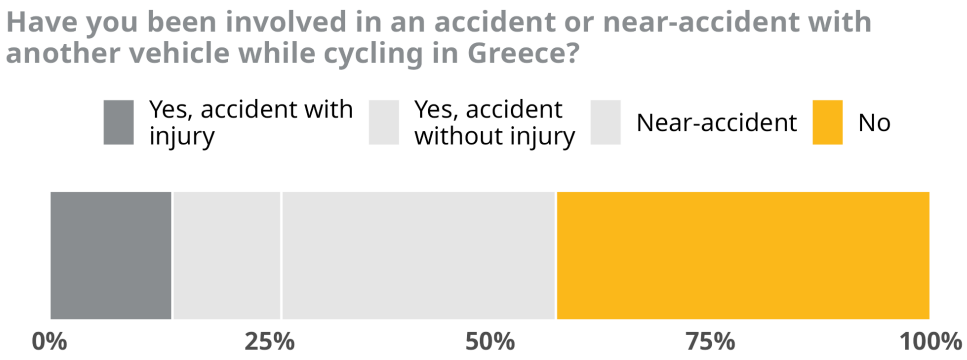

Figure 7: Have you been involved in an accident or near-accident with another vehicle while cycling in Greece?

Studies show that, although most bicycle accidents do not involve another vehicle, those involving cars have far more serious consequences (9). In our survey, more than half of participants (57.1%) reported having been involved at some point in an accident or near-accident with another vehicle (figure 7). This picture underscores the need for substantive interventions in road safety, with measures targeting both **infrastructure improvement** and **driver compliance with the Highway Code** (enforcement of 30 km/h limits in urban areas, systematic checks, and zero tolerance for illegal parking and driving in cycle lanes).

Another area of intervention is **education** for drivers - not only regarding the rights of cyclists, but also regarding the benefits of cycling for all road users. Research shows that aggressive driver behaviour is associated with negative social perceptions of cyclists, so targeted awareness programmes can help foster mutual respect and greater acceptance of cycling (10).

2. Bicycles are used mainly by middle-aged men

The survey results show that cycling in Greece remains an activity carried out mainly by middle-aged men (figure 8 - across all age groups: men**: 74%** / women: 26%, across both men and women - under 35: 13% / **35-64: 82%** / 65+: 5%). This picture possibly reflects the distribution method of the questionnaire through online channels, but it is consistent with other studies in car-centric countries: when the proportion of the population that cycles is low, there is limited participation by women, children and older people (11).

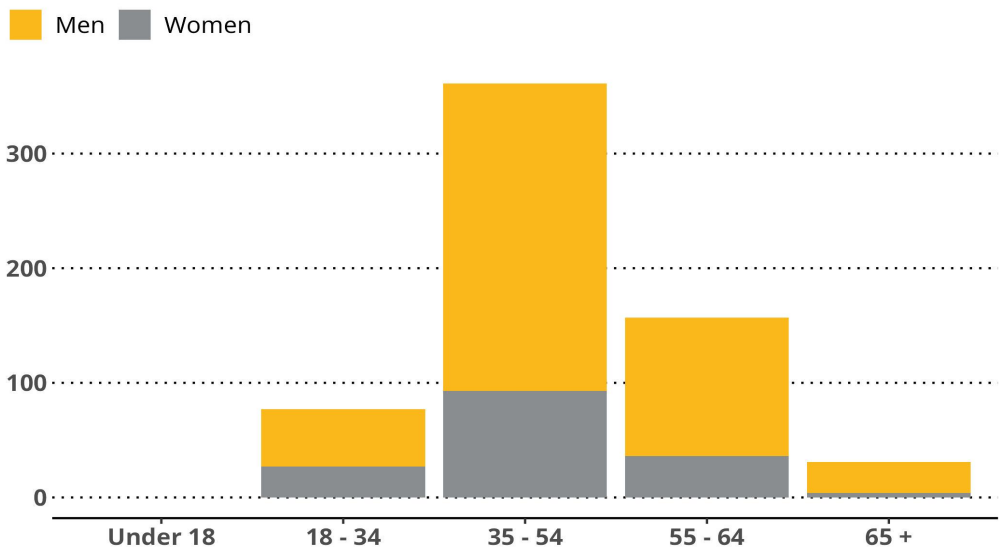

Figure 8: Gender and age of participants. Those who responded "Prefer not to answer" (n=7) to the gender question are not included.

Regarding young people, one of the main reasons that prevent the choice of active travel is access to a car (12). Even those who cycled as children often see their bicycles as fun "toys", which they abandon when they learn to drive (13). A change in mindset therefore begins in childhood, where the choice of cycling as a mode of transport, rather than merely as play, often continues into adult life (14).

Beyond the prevailing societal attitude towards cars, the views of parents and guardians strongly influence children's transport choices (15). Parents worry about safety, and rightly perceive a conflict between promoting their children's independence and protecting them from danger (16). Therefore, **improving safety in the road environment** is key to

increasing cycling among children. In addition to what was said in the previous section, priority should be given to **safe roads around schools**. But the network must cover as much of the wider neighbourhood as possible, as it has been shown that cycling for all activities, not just to school, is associated with higher levels of cycling in adult life (17).

Another area of focus is **education**. Integrating cycling education into schools, as is done in countries such as the Netherlands and Denmark (2), is considered not only essential for children's safety, but also helps them acquire useful skills for adult life.

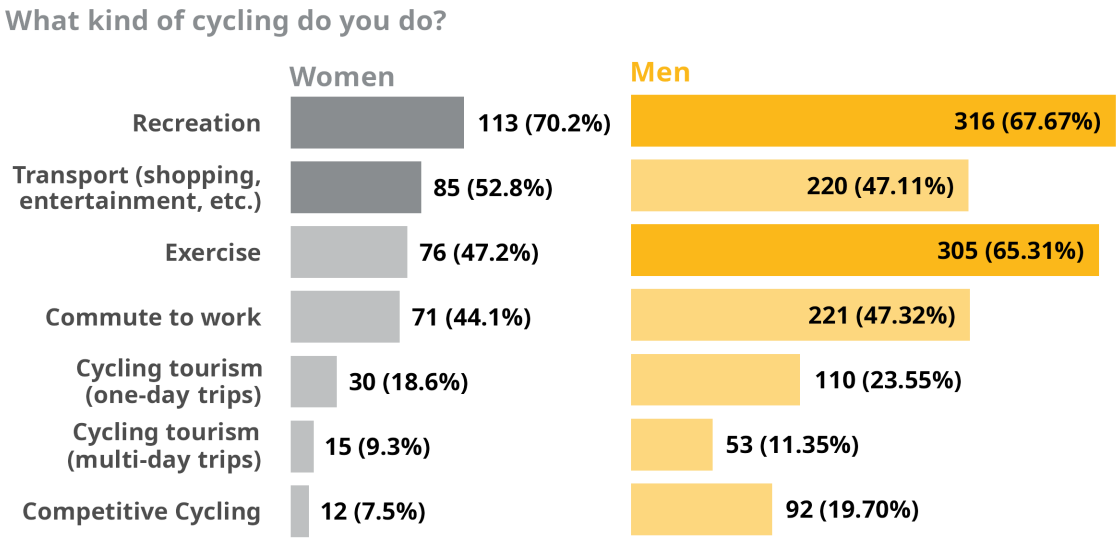

Figure 9: Responses by gender to the question "What kind of cycling do you do?" Those who responded "Prefer not to answer" (n=7) to the gender question are not included.

The lack of safety in the road environment is also a significant deterrent to cycling among women and older people (8).

Women also have different mobility needs (18) and this affects the way they use the bicycle, which is also reflected in our survey (figure 9). For men in our sample, the second most important reason for cycling is exercise, while for women, daily transport surpasses exercise.

Women in our sample travel shorter distances within the city than men: the majority cover up to 10 km (figure 10).

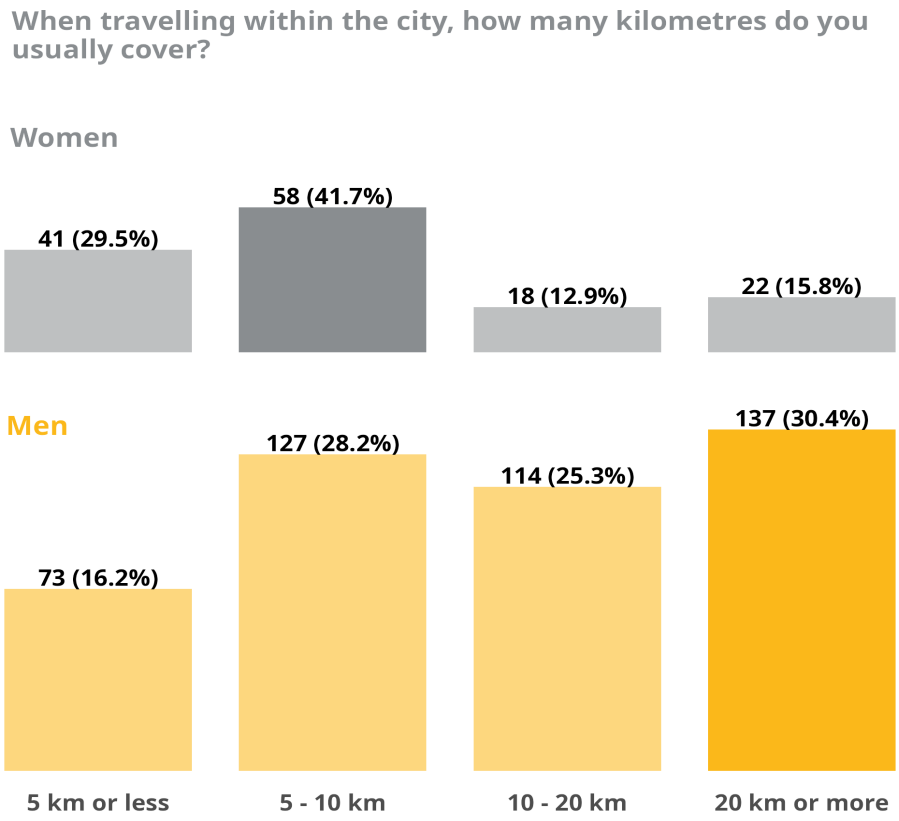

Figure 10: Responses by gender to the question "When travelling within the city, how many kilometres do you usually cover?" Those who responded "Prefer not to answer" (n=7) to the gender question are not included.

These data are consistent with research showing that women are more likely to travel shorter distances, make "chained" trips, and make more non-work-related journeys (18). Women tend to make more trips than men for care-related purposes, for example, taking children to school and other activities, caring for elderly relatives, or doing daily shopping (19).

It is important to take these facts into account when examining policies that encourage more women to cycle. Studies show that the more time spent on household tasks and care-related trips, the more difficult it is for women to cycle (20). The reason these constitute

barriers to cycling is that accompanying children by bicycle or carrying items such as shopping can be more difficult in cities designed around the car.

The answer, once again, is **investment in supportive infrastructure**, such as protected cycle paths and low-traffic streets on key routes between schools, workplaces and shops. This can be combined with promoting the use of personal or shared cargo bicycles, which provide an effective means of carrying shopping and small children.

Finally, it is important to **include women in the design of infrastructure**, to ensure that it meets their needs. For example, a separated cycle path through a park or isolated area, away from motor traffic, may sound ideal in theory, but if it is too remote from other people, it may not feel safe and may not be used by women. More broadly, it is important to conduct consultations with a wide and diverse range of stakeholders, to ensure that different needs and requirements are recognised in urban mobility planning (21).

3. There is growing interest in electric bicycles

Electric bicycles (e-bikes) are becoming increasingly popular: in the European Union, sales increased tenfold between 2009 and 2021, reaching 5.1 million (22). E-bikes increase cycling uptake, as electric assistance makes cycling attractive even to people who would otherwise avoid it due to distance, terrain or fitness level (23). Research shows that in areas with low general cycling levels, the choice of an e-bike replaces the choice of a car (24), making it one of the best tools for promoting sustainable mobility.

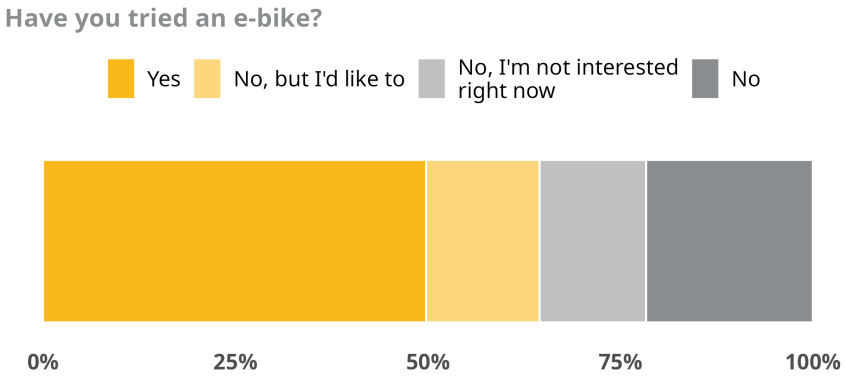

Figure 11: Percentage of participants who have tried an e-bike.

Approximately 65% of participants in our survey have either tried or would like to try an electric bicycle (figure 11).

11% of the bicycles owned by participants are some type of e-bike, while in response to the question about which type of bicycle they are considering purchasing, this proportion rises to 30.25% (figure 12). This shows that there is growing interest in electric cycling in our country too, and points towards a direction for supporting policy.

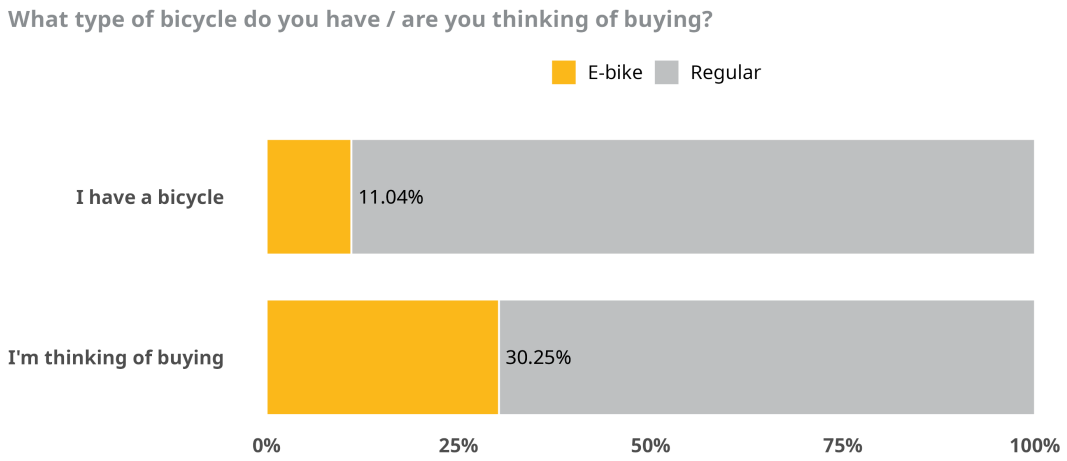

Figure 12: Percentage of e-bikes / regular bicycles owned or being considered for purchase by participants. Those who do not own a bicycle, or are not considering a purchase, are not included.

The three main reasons why interested parties do not own an e-bike are cost, the weight of the bicycle, and fear of theft (figure 13). The latter two reasons are likely related to the lack of secure parking spaces, either at home (which for residents of flats without large elevators means manually carrying the bicycle up the stairs), or at destinations within the city.

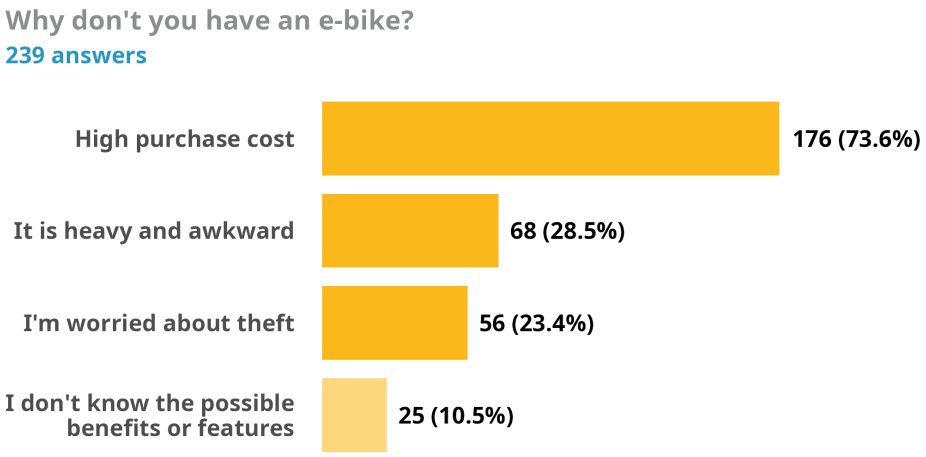

Figure 13: Reasons why participants do not own an e-bike. Those who already own an e-bike or stated they are not interested are not included.

Based on these data, to encourage the uptake of electric cycling, we need **financial incentives** (subsidies for purchasing e-bikes, incentives for companies to implement

schemes such as "bike-to-work" including e-bikes), and **secure parking spaces** (enclosed parking areas in every neighbourhood, incentives for providing bicycle parking in public buildings and private car parks, with e-bike charging stations).

4. The bicycle is increasingly used for transport and tourism

When the car age began, in many parts of the world, the bicycle was downgraded to a children's toy or a fitness tool for a small minority. Recently, with unbearable traffic congestion in urban centres, the threat of the climate crisis, and growing interest in improving quality of life and public health, the bicycle is returning as a primary vehicle for transport and tourism (25). We observe the same trend in the data from our survey (figure 9), and it is important to support it with appropriate policy interventions.

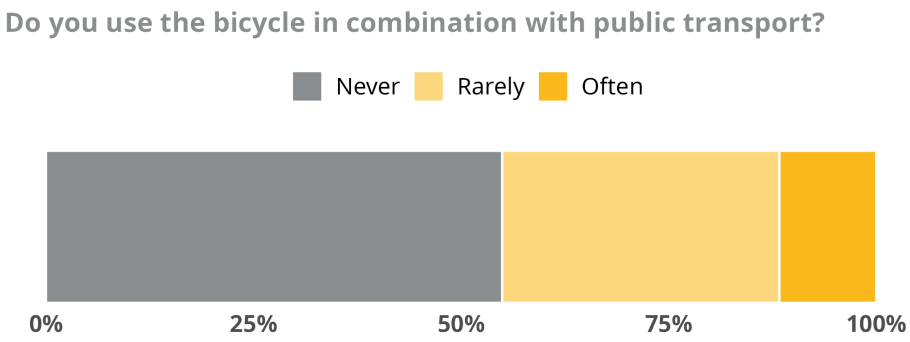

Figure 14: Cycling and public transport.

The majority of participants in our survey (55%) state that they never use the bicycle in combination with public transport (figure 14). This distribution reveals that in Greece, multimodal travel combining cycling and public transport remains limited.

Increased use could be promoted through policies that facilitate this combination, particularly in major urban centres. Specifically, we need the creation of **networks of safe routes** from every neighbourhood to transport hubs, **bicycle parking, station accessibility**, and adequate **space for bicycles on metro and tram services**.

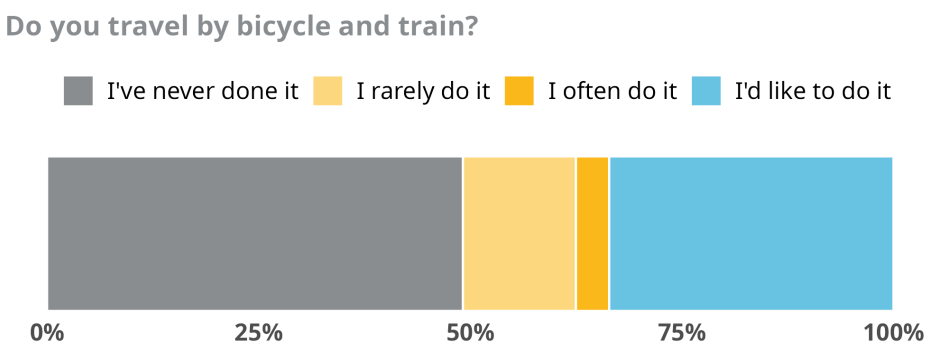

Figure 15: Cycling and trains.

A similar picture is observed for trains. Almost half of participants (49.1%) have never done a combined trip by bicycle and train, while about one third (33.1%) say they would like to do it. The low frequency of regular use is likely due to limitations of the rail network and the difficulties of transporting bicycles on trains.

This picture shows that there is potential for developing cycling tourism, through better **integration of cycling into rail transport**. The practice can be strengthened by creating and promoting **tourist routes**, connecting with attractions across the country, and through European **EuroVelo** routes.

In summary, our survey showed that in Greece there is growing interest in cycling - beyond exercise - as a means of everyday transport and tourism. Cyclists also recognise the advantages of electric assistance. However, cycling remains used by a limited part of the population, and this is closely linked to the main problem cyclists face: **lack of road safety**.

Based on the responses of participants, the solutions proposed by our survey are a **comprehensive network of safe cycling routes** (including separated cycle paths on main roads, low-traffic residential streets, and good connections to public transport, schools and commercial areas), **frequent and secure bicycle parking, strict enforcement of the Highway Code**, and **improved road education** for both cyclists and drivers.

With so many difficulties and dangers faced by cyclists, why do they choose to cycle? Figure 16 shows the most popular benefits, led by **joy** (selected by 25% of respondents), **health** (24%) and **wellbeing** (23%).

Figure 16: Word cloud from responses to the question "Can you name the three most important benefits you have seen in your life since you started cycling more?" where "joy" includes "happiness" and "pleasure", and "physical health" includes "fitness" and "bodily health".

These results are consistent with studies showing that cycling is associated with better physical health, lower stress, better mental health, higher vitality and fewer feelings of loneliness (3).

Our survey shows that it is important for urban mobility planners to examine problems and solutions both at the societal and the individual level: **every person who starts cycling thanks to improved infrastructure and other policy interventions, will be a happier and healthier person.**

Policy Recommendations

The findings of the survey clearly show that cycling in Greece has significant growth prospects, provided that there are targeted policies on infrastructure, road safety, education and financial incentives.

The need to improve infrastructure is urgent. The creation of continuous, separated and safe cycle paths connecting neighbourhoods, city centres, schools, shops and public transport hubs, combined with an extensive network of low-traffic streets, can be a catalytic factor in increasing cycling uptake. At the same time, regular road surface maintenance and the protection of cycling routes from illegal parking are essential prerequisites for improving safety.

The low participation of women and young people highlights the need for policy and social interventions. Beyond improving road safety, involving women in the design of cycling networks and other infrastructure can ensure that the infrastructure meets their needs. At the same time, introducing cycling education in schools could create a new generation of users with a deeper integration of cycling into everyday life.

The momentum of electric bicycles reveals new policy opportunities. Providing incentives such as purchase subsidies or "bike-to-work" schemes, and creating secure parking spaces, can boost the uptake of electric cycling and make bicycle use accessible to larger segments of the population.

The bicycle can act as a tool for improving public health and quality of life. Systematic cycling use contributes to physical exercise, wellbeing, and reduced stress, while also strengthening social cohesion through the sense of freedom and autonomy it offers. Promoting cycling activity can yield significant benefits for the health system, reducing in the long term the costs associated with a sedentary lifestyle.

The bicycle is closely linked to environmental and economic benefits. Increasing cycling uptake can contribute to reducing emissions and alleviating traffic congestion, while at the same time offering an economical transport solution during a period of rising fuel costs. Promoting cycling as a means of transport can therefore support the goals of sustainable mobility and green development.

Overall, cycling can serve as a strategic lever for promoting sustainable mobility, protecting the environment and improving public health, provided there is political will and systematic planning.

Limitations of the study

Despite the interesting and useful findings, this survey comes with certain limitations that must be taken into account when interpreting the results.

First, the size and composition of the sample were influenced by the method of questionnaire distribution. Data collection was carried out mainly online through cycling-related networks, which likely attracted more people with higher levels of cycling activity, rather than occasional users. As a result, rates of regular cycling may appear inflated.

Second, the geographical distribution of participants shows an overrepresentation of major urban centres, particularly Athens and Thessaloniki. This limits the ability to generalise results to smaller towns or rural areas, where cycling conditions may be different.

Third, the questionnaire was based on self-reports, which carries a risk of subjectivity. Factors such as individual memory, personal perceptions or the desire to present a positive image may have influenced responses.

Fourth, the survey did not include qualitative data (e.g. interviews or focus groups), which could have provided deeper understanding of cyclists' attitudes and experiences. As a

result, certain aspects, such as feelings towards safety or social perceptions of cycling, are only captured indirectly and involve interpretation by the researchers.

Finally, the timing of the survey may have influenced the results. Factors such as weather conditions, infrastructure under construction, or concurrent social conditions may have shaped responses in ways that do not fully reflect the long-term reality.

Despite these limitations, the survey provides a clear and reliable picture of the trends characterising cycling use in Greece and can serve as a starting point for more specialised studies.

Final Observations

This survey offered a detailed picture of cycling activity in Greece, highlighting both the opportunities and the barriers that characterise the current situation. Although the sample had certain limitations in terms of geographical and social representativeness, the results provide clear indications of the trends shaping cycling culture in the country.

The core message that emerges is that cycling can serve as a meaningful pillar of sustainable urban mobility, provided it is supported by comprehensive policies and coherent interventions.

This research aspires to serve as a starting point for further research and practical initiatives, contributing to the design of a safer, healthier and more environmentally friendly urban mobility system. **The promotion of cycling does not only concern bicycle users themselves, but society as a whole, as it is associated with improved quality of life, environmental protection, and long-term economic benefits.**

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