

Stuff

In the UK, most bicycles lack features that are normally found in higher-cycling countries - they don't come with rear wheel locks or built in lights, often there is also no chainguard, mudguards or pannier rack. Most modern UK bikes are influenced by demands of racing (e.g. quick release wheels) even for bikes clearly not sold for racing. This shapes what other stuff people need: for example, to always carry a lock or locks, and lights if they wish to ride legally after dark. There is pressure to wear helmets and hi-vis (fluorescent jacket and other accessories), which are seen as safety clothing. At the same time many cyclists in the Cycling Cultures project talked about wanting to cycle in their everyday clothing, and finding the need to wear specialised clothing and carry additional items inconvenient. We found the level of 'stuff' that people thought they needed in order to cycle varied across the UK (and from person to person, and across the life cycle).



A fairly typical UK commuting bicycle.

Context

This interview extract comes from Cambridge, where commuter cycling rates exceed 30% (UK average = 3%). Cambridge cyclists have relatively low rates of helmet wearing, and may be more likely to ride bicycles that look more like Dutch bikes (with mudguards and rack but still no dynamo or wheel lock) than in other parts of the UK (although these bicycles, particularly cargo bicycles, are still seen as relatively unusual and may not be available from mainstream bike shops). However there is still pressure to wear 'cycle clothing', particularly in the case of children: Eleanor also talks elsewhere in the interview about making her children wear helmets as well as hi-vis, even though she does not wear a helmet.



Safety gear aimed at making the cyclist look like a police officer (more unusual)

Interview Extract

" Yeah, the showiness of the bike has decreased over time. As I've got older as well, I've kind of been a bit more drawn towards the old sit up and beg, lady shopper types, rather than the kind of performance, go fast types, and I'm more interested in function and whether it'll take kids on the back, and how stable it is, and whether I can wear wide trousers without it getting caught in the wheels. So, I think those sort of bikes tend to be less desirable for thieves anyway. [...]

We've all got luminous jackets, and I've got a luminous vest, in case I want to go out and don't want to look like a cyclist, so, I can just put it on and then I can roll it up and put it in a handbag, but other than that, no not really. Now, my bike, partly is chosen so I don't have to worry about what I'm wearing. You don't have to worry about cycle clips and things like that. When I had a bike without a chainguard I probably would wear trousers instead of a skirt, but now I kind of just do what I'm going to do, chuck a coat over the top.

[...] I did wear a hat [i.e. helmet], actually, in London, I have to say. I'm not sure why. I think it's just with age, you get more confident to make decisions like that but I think I probably did feel a lot more at risk as well, in London, cycling. I was still, often I would cycle in my uniform trousers actually erm... but with cycle clips on. So, I'd wear exactly what I would be wearing, I'd get to work, I'd take the coat off, take the hat off, take the cycle clips off, and then I'd be as I was, but obviously it means you can't wear flip flops and you can't wear tight skirts and you have to think about the trousers you're wearing, and I perpetually would go round with the hems (laughs) of my trousers, sort of shredded (laughs). I don't worry about stuff like that, particularly, I have to say." (Eleanor, thirties, Cambridge - hospital worker and mother with children)

Questions:

1. What's your reaction to the quote? Do people think in the same way in your context/s?
2. List the 'stuff' (e.g. accessories, clothing, etc.) that people need to cycle in your context/s. Do different demographic groups need different levels of 'stuff'?
3. Do you think this has changed in the past? Do you expect it to change in the future?
4. What is the relationship between the 'stuff' people need to cycle in your context/s, and the level of cycling? If people need more stuff (like having to carry an extra lock), does it put them off cycling?