

Should We Ditch Bike Helmet Laws?

In recent decades, Americans have witnessed a number of laws and regulations passed in the name of “safety.”

Thus, among other things, we now have bike helmet laws. Currently in the U.S., there are 22 states and 201 localities that mandate the wearing of helmets for bike riders (mostly for riders under the age of 18).

But people are increasingly beginning to question whether these bike helmet laws *actually do promote safety*.

As the [Wall Street Journal reports](#), “Many cycling advocates have taken a surprising position: They are pushing back against mandatory bike-helmet laws in the U.S. and elsewhere.”

Their reasoning?

- Statistically, bike helmet laws decrease the number of riders, and less riders on the road increases the number of accidents. (The theory is that the more riders there are, the more car drivers learn to watch for them).
- The decrease in riders also decreases the number of people who enjoy the health benefits of riding – something they argue is much needed in our sedentary culture. It’s especially disappointing that [children ride less](#) in places with bike helmet laws.

There is also some pushback against the commonly-held view that helmets decrease the number of head injuries from bike accidents. A study published in the British Medical Journal in 2013 “showed [no noticeable drop in head injuries](#) after enforcement of helmet laws in parts of Australia, Canada and New Zealand, but drops in cycling of between 20% and 44%.” Another [report](#) proposed that “the observed reduction in bicycle-related head injuries may be due to reductions in bicycle riding induced by the laws.”

Benjamin Franklin famously warned us about giving up freedom

in the name of safety. When it comes to bike helmet laws, it might turn out that, overall, we don't even get the safety we were promised.

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