



# Driver vs Cyclist

**Florida's Struggle to 'Share the Road'**

A Study Commissioned By:

**BILL BONE  
BIKE LAW**

# The Battle between Driver and Cyclist

Embracing the culture of cycling is a perpetual issue in the United States today. In fact, recent studies indicate that not one American metropolis is listed amongst the world's most bike-friendly cities.

This lag in acceptance surrounds a general false impression in relation to cycling as a means of transportation, a sport, and a culture. The transformation of driver perception in America toward cyclists is a slow process that will require a substantial effort from both sides of the fence.



## Cycling Survey Objectives & Methodology

Over the last several years, cycling accidents accounted for 2 percent of all traffic fatalities in the United States, and Florida ranked first for the most pedal cyclist fatalities, according to reports from the U.S. Department of Transportation. The negative trend in bicycle accident deaths and injuries begs many questions, most notably:

what do drivers think about cyclists on the roads today?

Research signifies just how essential a change in perception will be for the future safety of American roadways.

[BILL BONE BIKE LAW](#), a Florida bike accident law firm dedicated to education, advocacy, and legal justice for all cyclists, has conducted a study to better understand the general driver perception of cyclists throughout the United States today. In addition, the study serves to pull cyclists' perceptions towards drivers to evaluate a balance in sentiment.

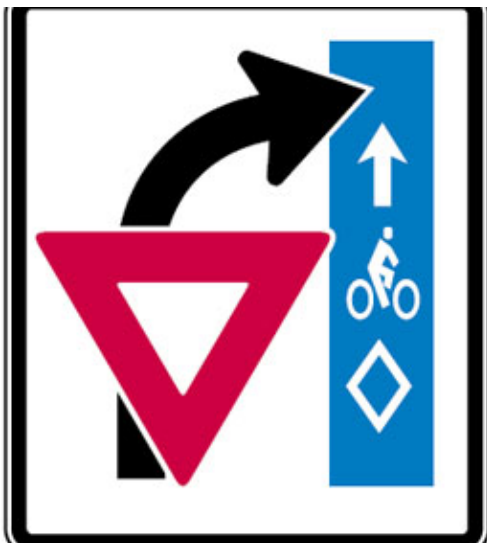
“The continuation of roadway improvements is the biggest thing that will help the cyclists out. Bike lanes will help both the cyclists and drivers of vehicles to remain safe on Florida’s roadways.”

– **Sgt. Mark Wysocky**, [Florida Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles](#)

# What do drivers think about cyclists on the roads today?

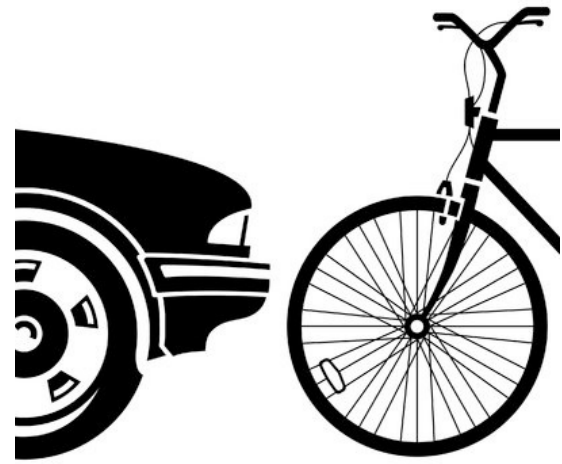
The research in this study was designed to answer questions such as:

- 🚲 What are drivers' initial thoughts about cyclists riding on the road?
- 🚲 Do drivers believe that bikes belong on the road?
- 🚲 Do drivers understand the bicycle traffic laws in Florida?
- 🚲 What are drivers' intentions when traveling in close proximity to a cyclist?



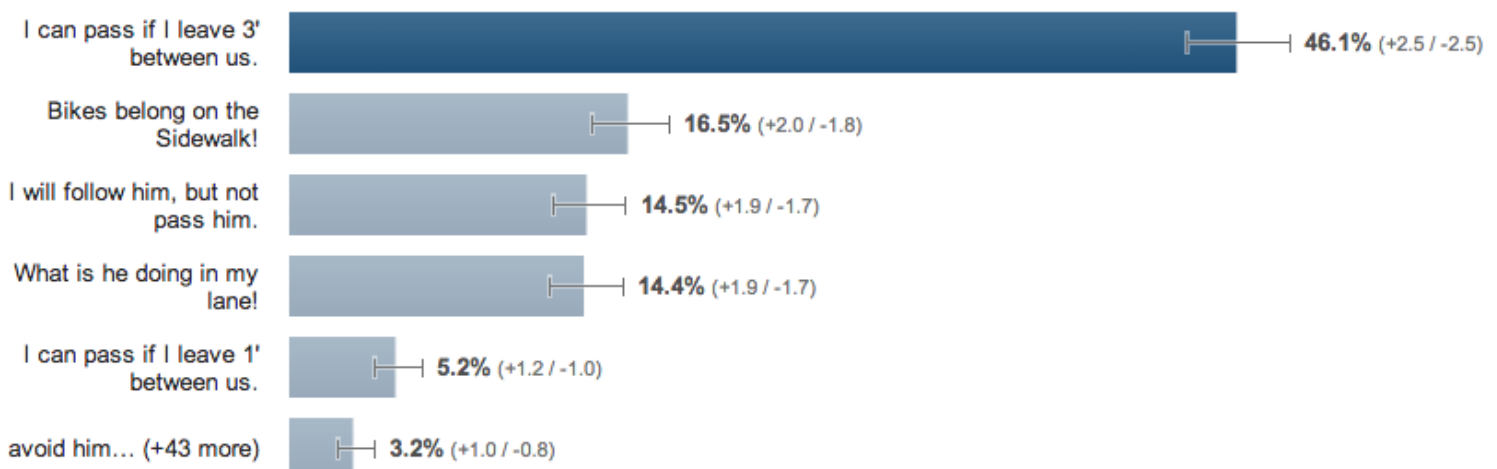
The study was conducted on behalf of BILL BONE BIKE LAW where over 1,500 responses were recorded and analyzed for further data. Respondents were presented with the survey via Google Consumer Surveys with participants from the Midwest, Northeast, South, and West regions of the United States. In addition, a [Facebook survey](#) was utilized to catapult Florida cyclist's perception against the general driver response. All respondents voluntarily participated in this survey.

# Part 1: Driver Perception of Cyclists on the Road



In law in the state of Florida, states that “the driver of a vehicle overtaking a bicycle or other nonmotorized vehicle must pass the bicycle or other nonmotorized vehicle at a safe distance of not less than **3 feet between the vehicle and the bicycle** or other nonmotorized vehicle”. While the bicycle lane, marked by a stripe and bicycle symbols, is the designated place for Florida cyclists to travel, confusion often arises when no bicycle lane is marked. In these cases, the cyclist must ride as close as practicable to the edge of the roadway or the right-hand curb.

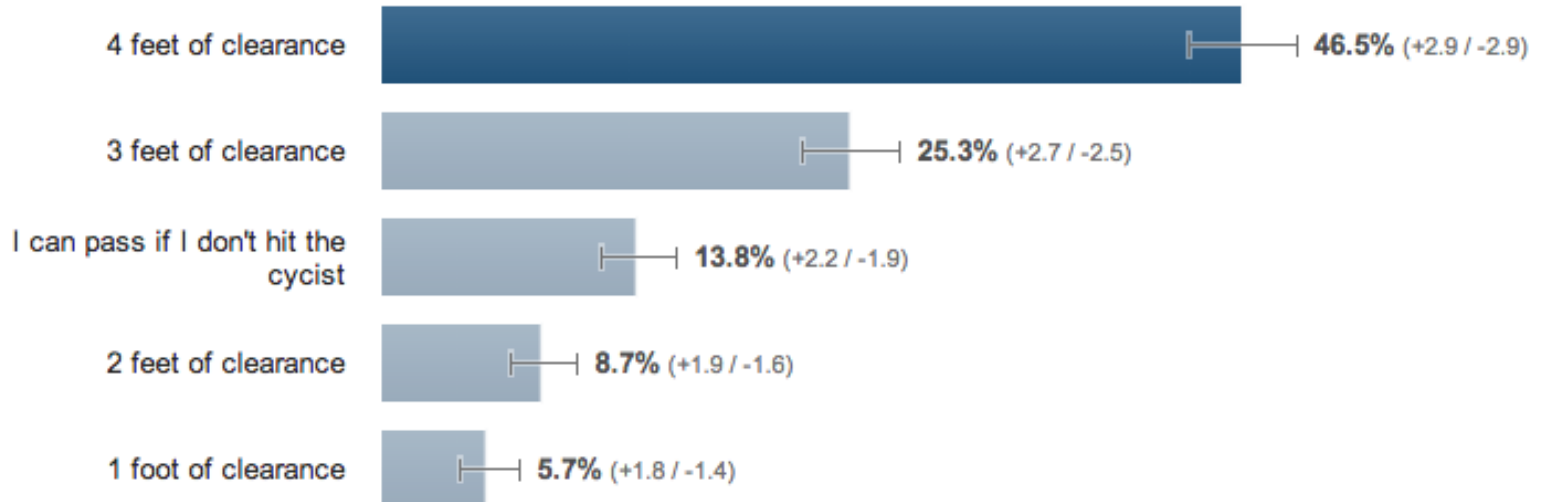
The implications from the driver perception study highlighted a diverse set of important results for both cyclists and drivers in Florida and across the United States. Nearly 50 percent of the respondents were aware of the fact that they may pass a bicycle rider if they leave 3 feet between their vehicle and the cyclist. While this is certainly encouraging to some degree, the study must recognize the fact that this may have been presented as the most “logical” answer in comparison to the other answer choices. Regardless, the correct answer was chosen by 46.1 percent of the respondents, indicating statistical significance.



# The Tale of Two Studies

When presented with the most “logical” answer, almost half of the respondents chose the correct answer, “I can pass if I leave 3’ between us”. The first survey would indicate that the average driver is aware at least intuitively of Florida’s 3-foot law for cyclists. However, **an additional study was conducted** to gain a better understanding of the education level of the average motorist when presented with the following question:

“If you’re approaching a cyclist in the same lane as you while driving, what is a safe distance to pass?”



The answer options were presented in specific a manner which allowed for an evaluation of the education level of respondents. The results suggest that **nearly 75 percent of people are unaware of Florida’s 3-foot law**. Sadly, only 25.3 percent of those surveyed correctly answered the question, further signifying the need to improve driver education about cycling safety laws in Florida. When no bike lane is present motorists are often left confused and unaware of the proper and legal way to pass a cyclist.

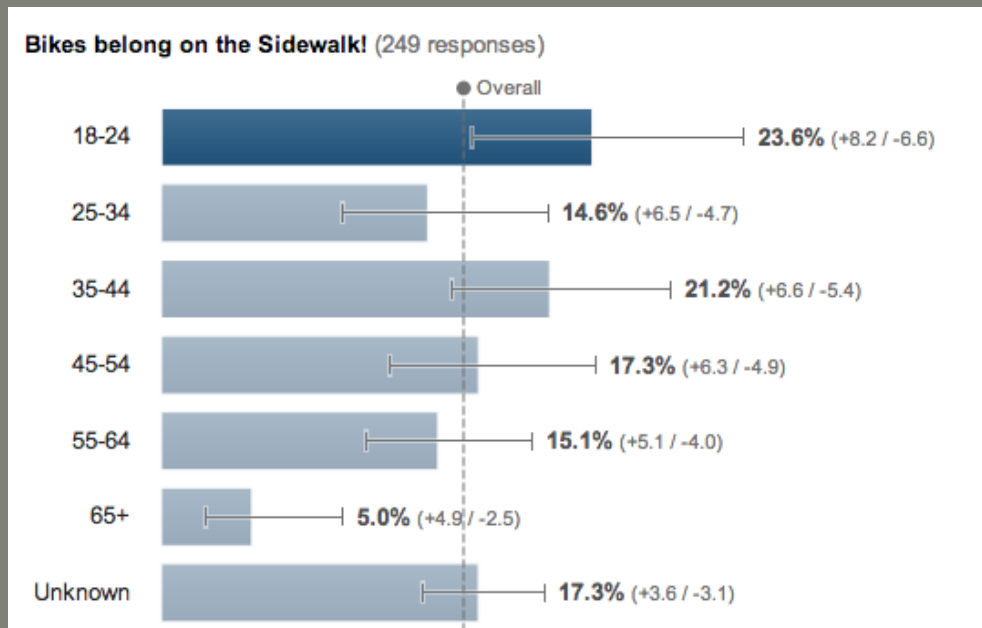
Regrettably, 13.8 percent of the respondents chose “I can pass if I don’t hit the cyclist”. Not only does this denote a frightening misunderstanding of the law, but it also points to the general attitude that drivers maintain regarding cyclists on the road.

## Bikes Belong on the Sidewalk!

The driver perception study was further impacted by those respondents who believe that “bikes belong on the sidewalk”, accounting for almost 20 percent of the response opinion. Bill Bone a legal advocate for the cycling community analyzed the survey results and concluded “The substantial number of respondents sharing this opinion indicates a massive miscommunication between drivers and the legalities surrounding cycling. In Florida a bicycle is legally defined as a vehicle and is subject to all rules of the road. Cyclists must obey traffic laws in the same way that operators of vehicles do so and are therefore given the same rights to the roadways.”

The majority of the respondents who believe that cyclists should remain on the sidewalks came from the South Florida region, highlighting a lack of education about cyclists and their rights on the road.

Sgt. Mark Wysocky, from the [Florida Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles](#) states, “Bicycles have to follow the rules of the road, stop at red lights, etc. You see different articles and different things, especially now in South Florida where cycling is much more popular, and a lot of counties are putting in bike lanes to try to help cyclists out.”



“The substantial number of respondents sharing this opinion indicates a **massive miscommunication between drivers** and the legalities surrounding cycling”

- Bill Bone, Legal Advocate for the Cycling Community

# How They Really Feel!

Demographically, the respondents who believed that cyclists should remain on the sidewalk were in the 18-24 segment. These responses signify a lack of education paired with a generally poor attitude regarding cyclists. In addition, a large portion of the 18-24 segment answered that their first reaction to a cyclist on the road is “what is he doing in my lane”. Young drivers seem to lack a level of patience and understanding for cyclists which outlines a potential risk for a car versus bicycle accident. In contrast, the 65+ segment answered most correctly regarding the 3 feet law.

Respondents were also given the option to type in their perception of a cyclist in their lane as opposed to choosing from one of the provided answers. Some of the most notable responses were as follows:

 “Bikes don’t belong on the road”

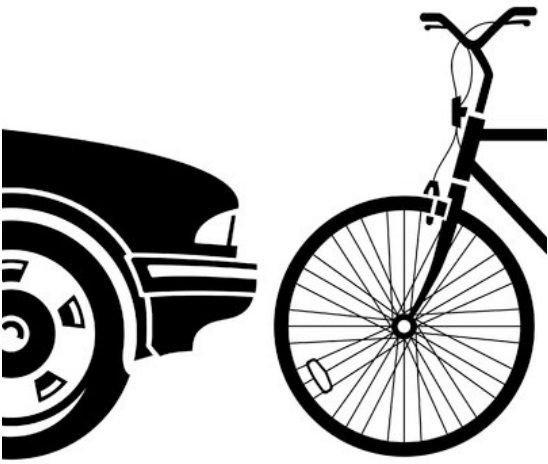
 “Get off the road”

 “Move to the side so I can pass you”

 “What a pain”

The predominately negative tone coming from the responses points to the lack of education amongst drivers, particularly young drivers. While many drivers are aware of the 3 feet law, far too many appear frustrated by the law. As such, it is imperative to offer better communication, education, and advocacy in order to give the cycling community the voice that they deserve. Raising awareness about cycling laws will play a significant role in reducing the number of bicycle accident injuries and fatalities occurring each year.





# Part 2: Cyclist Perception of Approaching Vehicles

Cyclists frequent America's roadways for a wide variety of reasons. From leisurely riding with family to training for a cycling event, bicycle riders of all kinds are on the roadways each and every day. As a result, cyclists have formed their own opinion regarding approaching vehicles and their ability to safely maneuver around a bicycle rider. The study conducted addressed cyclists in regard to three topics:

- 🚲 How do you feel when a car is approaching behind you while cycling?
- 🚲 Has a careless or reckless driver ever affected your desire to cycle?
- 🚲 What advice would you give drivers on how to share the road with cyclists?

Responses from the assortment of participating cyclists unearthed a common theme throughout the survey: cyclists are fearful of impatient, uneducated, and inattentive drivers. The excuse that the driver "didn't see the cyclist" came up numerous times, as this is one of the most common excuses for car versus bike accidents. The majority of the respondents indicated the large amount of caution and apprehension that surfaces when they can feel a car is approaching behind them. Sadly, almost every respondent indicated an unfortunate incident with a careless or reckless driver.

Some of the most notable responses came when cyclists' offered advice for drivers on how to share the road:



“The only answer is driver education; I live on a bike route road in the country and won't chance my well being on it because there's not enough bike traffic.”

– Gary Wendt

“Please just stay patient. You're frustration of sharing the road doesn't justify running over & ruining someone's life.”

– Sean Lynch

“Be aware that person riding is human, pass with caution as if it is your child riding. Pass slowing and adhering to the given law of 3'.”

– Jim Pennington



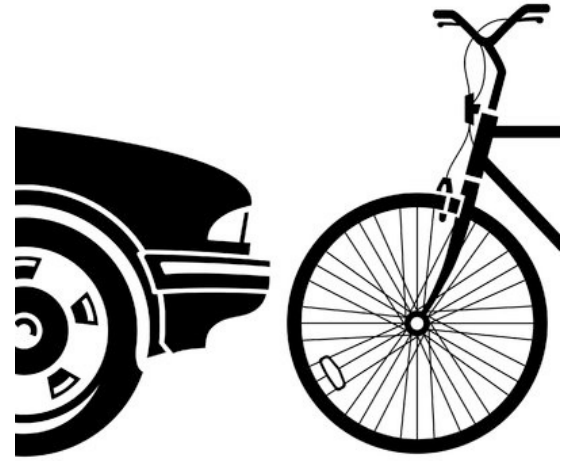
“If you take a moment to slow down and pass with care it will make everyone's day better. The safer the road conditions, the more cyclists will ride, and the more that ride will equal more money to devote to cycle tracks and lanes. This meaning less cyclists on the actual roads and happier drivers and cyclists.”

– Eugene Cusie

## A CHANGE IS COMING?

For years cyclists have altered their routes, adjusted their schedules, and made concessions upon concessions to make their rides as safe as possible. Today, drivers are beginning to see the necessity of sharing the road for the safety of all. Nevertheless, cyclists have shared countless stories regarding careless and reckless motorists and their inability to share the road. The battle continues to alter the general perception of cyclists in the eyes of our nation's drivers.

# Conclusions: More Education Equals Less Accidents



The survey results reveal that the general driver perception of cyclists in their lane correlates to a lack of education regarding cycling laws and how to mutually navigate the nation's roadways. Research indicates an increase in bicycle fatalities and injuries, particularly in the state of Florida. As a result, driver education must be paired with cycling advocacy to spark a change in general attitude amongst the American population.

**Ken Foster, Director of [Share the Road](#) notes,** "Camaraderie, dread and fear are some of the thoughts and feelings I get when I see a cyclists on the road. It is very satisfying to see one of my brothers or sisters out there riding. Knowing we have shared experience, no matter how different we might be off the bike. Watching a new or indifferent cyclists use busy roads when quiet routes are available or shooting down sidewalks along busy street or even riding against traffic makes me cringe in fear. Then I sometimes feel like the watchful parent knowing I am helping make things better while encouraging thoughtful use with the occasional need to take corrective action."

Cycling plays a role in decreasing pollution and auto emissions, enhancing health, reducing obesity, and creating a positive economic impact on the community as a whole. While encouraging more people to ride bicycles is certainly a goal, it must begin with increasing bicycle safety throughout the country.

## About BILL BONE BIKE LAW

BILL BONE BIKE LAW is steadfast in their pursuit of making the roads safer for cyclists throughout the state of Florida. Through a combination of advocacy, education, and legal justice, the firm serves to provide a voice to cyclists who so often suffer from the actions of careless motorists.

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