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Investigating the impact of the Cycling Proficiency Scheme in schools in Northern Ireland, 2022



Analysis, Statistics and Research Branch

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Gníomhaireacht Thuaisceart Éireann
um Staitisticí agus Taighde

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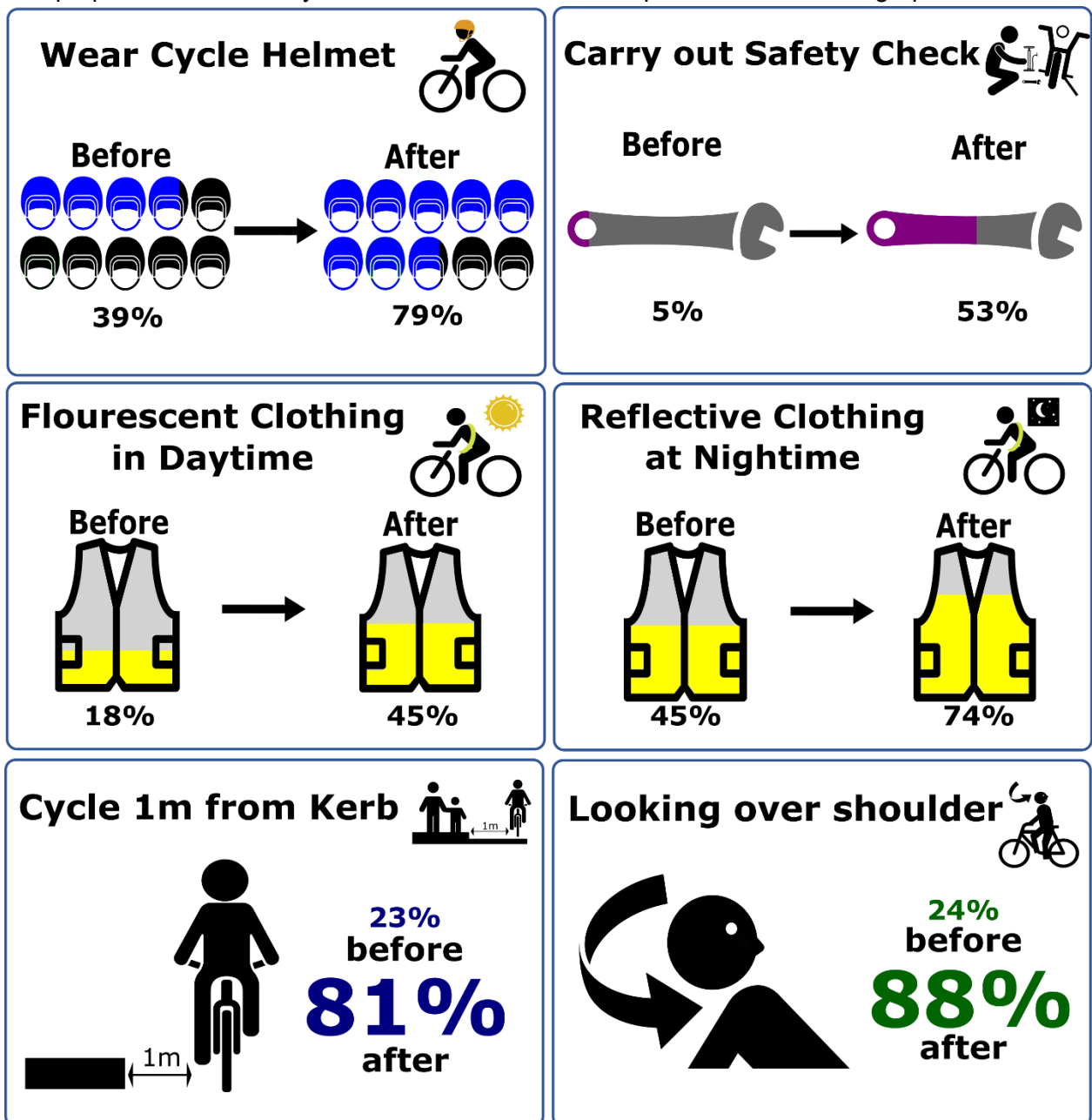
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Infographics

Pupils were asked six questions about their cycling behaviours before and after they completed the Cycling Proficiency Scheme (CPS). The questions were:

- Do you wear your cycle helmet every time you ride your bicycle?
- Do you carry out a safety check on your bicycle each time before you ride it?
- Do you wear something fluorescent and bright when riding your bike in the daytime?
- Do you wear something reflective and bright when riding your bike at night?
- When cycling do you keep about a metre away from the kerb / road side verge?
- When cycling do you look over your shoulder before signalling or moving?

The proportions who said 'yes' before and after CPS are presented in the Infographics below:

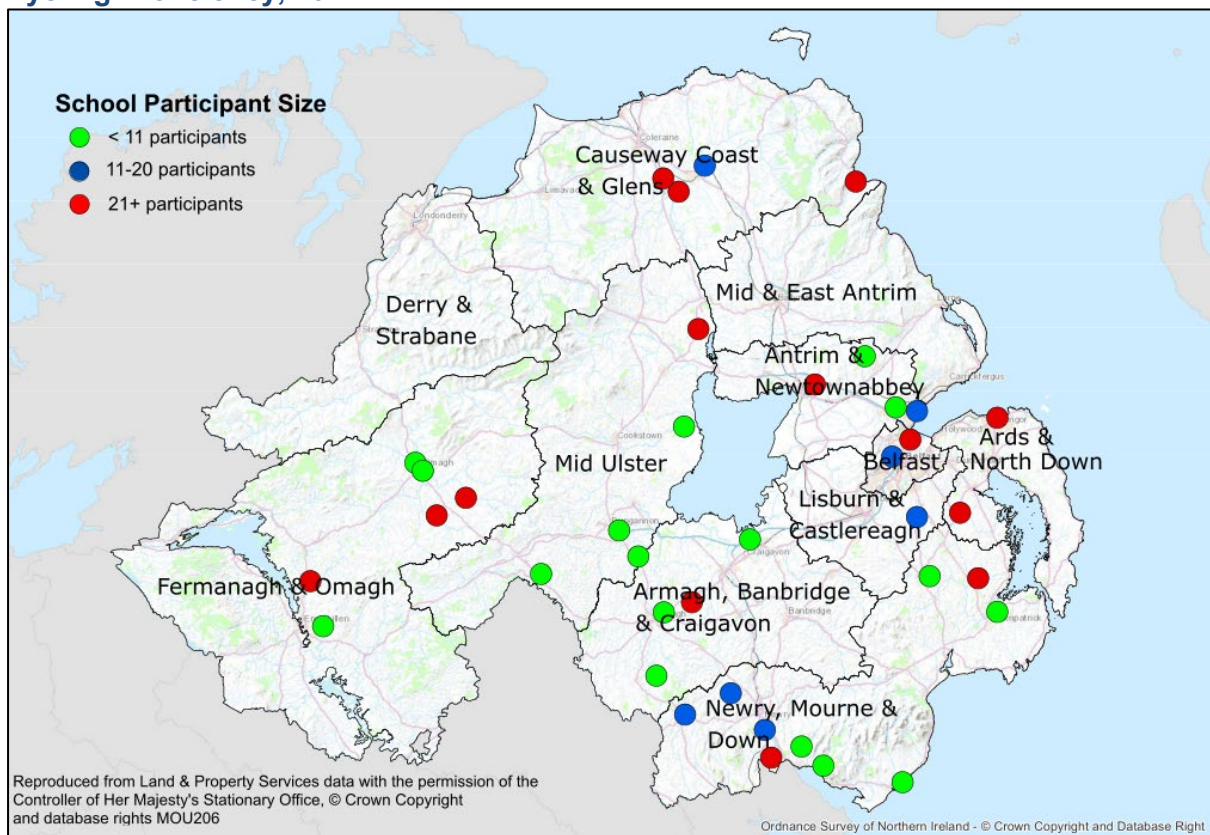


For the seventh year, a survey of school children who took part in the CPS in Northern Ireland was carried out to consider the attitudes of the children towards various aspects of road safety before and after completion of the scheme.

Participating schools

In 2022, 349 schools in Northern Ireland carried out the Cycling Proficiency Scheme and out of the 144 schools sampled for this survey, 38 schools responded. See Survey Methodology on page 17 for more information. Figure 1 maps the location of the 38 schools that completed and returned the cycling proficiency survey.

Figure 1: Map of Northern Ireland plotting the schools that completed the survey for Cycling Proficiency, 2022



The majority of schools who completed the survey were located in a rural area (58%), while the remaining 42% were in urban areas (22 and 16 schools, respectively). Over a quarter of the schools were in Newry, Mourne and Down District (26% or 10 schools). The schools were more or less evenly split by participant size with just over a third of schools (37% or 14 schools) having fewer than 11 participants and just under a third each having 11-20 participants or 21 or more participants in the Scheme (32% or 12 schools). See Figure 2 overleaf.

Figure 2: Breakdown of Schools that completed the CPS survey in 2022

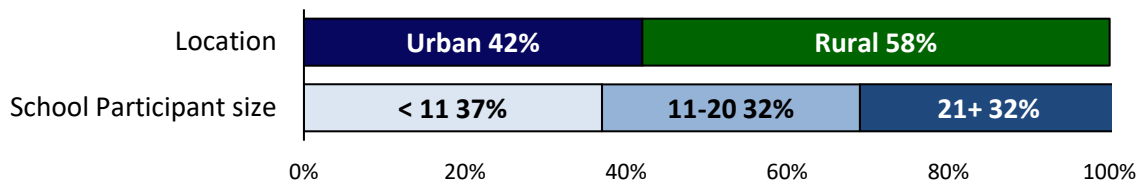
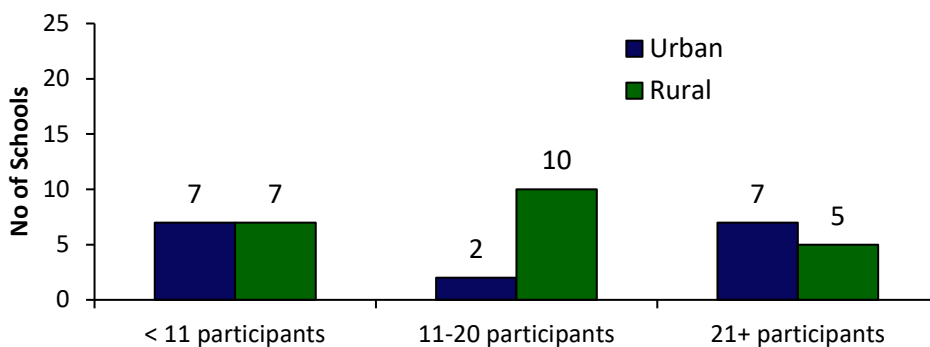


Figure 3 shows the breakdown by participant size in 2022 across urban and rural schools. The most frequent group size in a rural school area was those with 11-20 participants (45%), and indeed, 10 out of the 12 schools from this group size were located in a rural area (83%). Of the sixteen urban schools who completed the survey, seven had a group size of fewer than 11 (44%), seven had a group size of 21 or more (44%) while the remaining two had a participant size of 11-20 (13%).

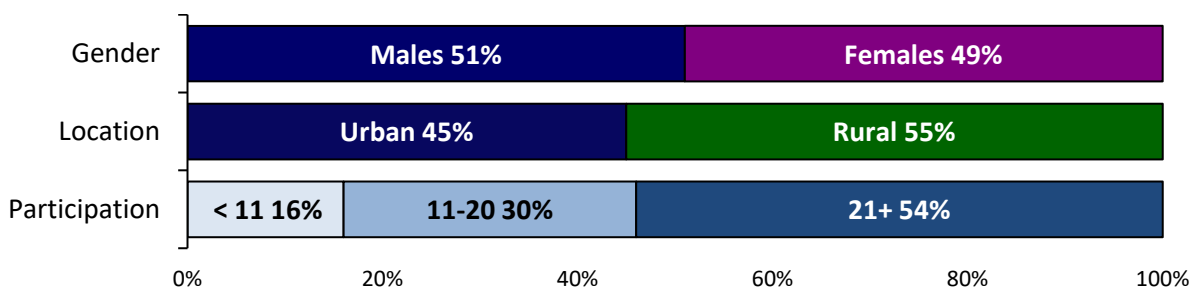
Figure 3: Schools who completed the CPS survey by participant size and urban/rural location, 2022



Participating pupils

There were 307 boys (51%) and 295 girls (49%) who completed the survey, comprising 602 pupils from the 38 schools (down by 596 pupils from 2021; a decrease of 50%). More than half (55%) of these pupils were from a school in a rural area and 45% from an urban area school. In terms of group size, 323 were taught in groups of 21 or more (54%), 181 were in groups of 11 to 20 participants (30%) and schools with fewer than 11 participants made up the final 98 (16%). See breakdown below:

Figure 4: Breakdown of pupils who completed the survey, 2022

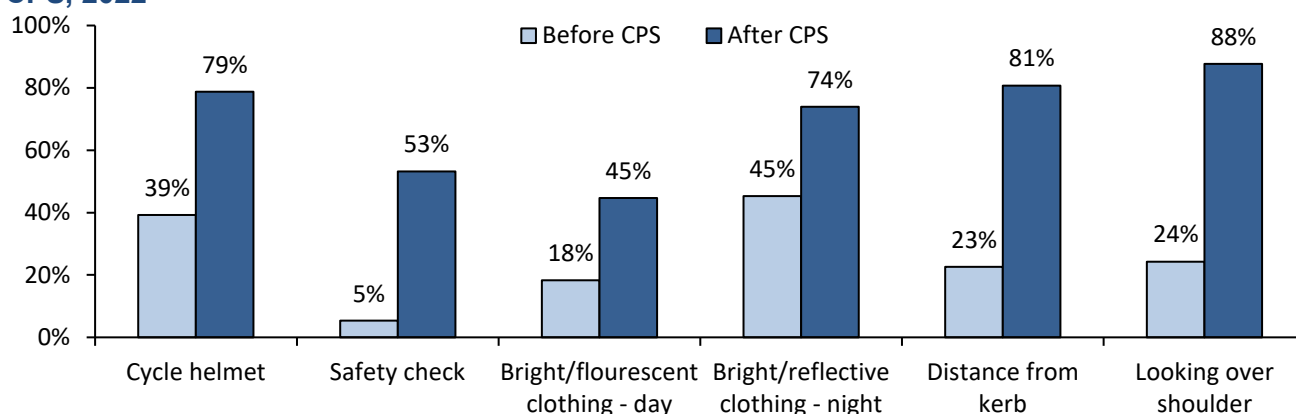


Findings

The Cycling Proficiency Scheme aims to promote safe cycling behaviours among children. The training seems to have been very effective – **93% of pupils said their knowledge of cycling safety had increased as a result of completing the CPS training**. This is lower than the 97% reported in 2021 (although 4.3% of responses to this question were missing this year in comparison with just 0.6% missing in 2021). The children reported a positive shift in all six safe cycling behaviours on completion of the course. Figure 5 below illustrates a clear increase in the proportions of pupils who answered ‘yes’ to each of the questions after completing the CPS.



Figure 5: Proportion of pupils who answered ‘yes’ to each question before and after CPS, 2022

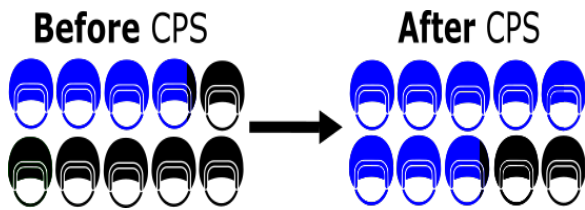


Key Points

- The behaviours in all six disciplines all increased greatly following the Cycling Proficiency Scheme with wearing a cycle helmet, cycling at least one metre from the kerb and looking over the shoulder all increasing to over 75%.
- The highest pre-course score was for those pupils who wore bright and reflective clothing at night with 45%; this increased on completion of the Scheme to 74%. The highest post-course score was looking over shoulder with 88% of pupils complying with this after CPS.
- The discipline of carrying out a safety check showed the greatest proportionate increase following CPS. Ten times more pupils than before training indicated that they now performed a safety check before cycling.
- Girls indicated that they were more likely than boys to:
 - Wear a cycle helmet prior to training.
 - Wear fluorescent and bright clothing at night following the delivery of CPS.
- Prior to training, children from an urban school were more likely to wear a cycle helmet than rural school children. Pupils from urban schools were also more likely to follow each discipline following CPS than rural pupils.
- Those children taught in groups of 21 or more participants indicated that they were less likely to use the majority of the procedures following CPS than pupils taught in smaller class sizes.

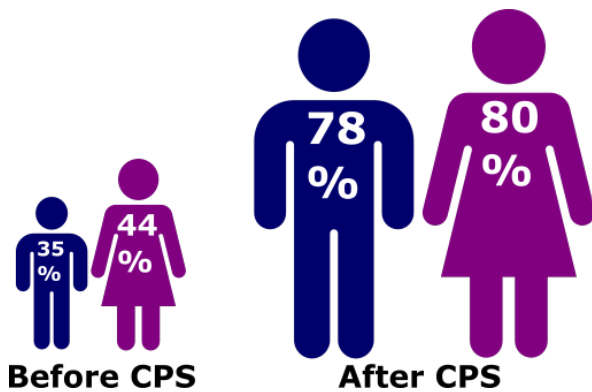


Question 1: Cycle Helmet - Do you wear your cycle helmet every time you ride your bicycle?



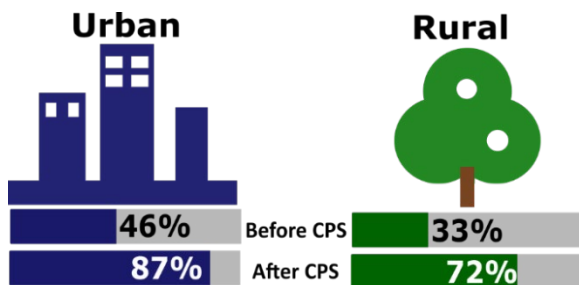
Before completing the CPS, just under **two fifths of all pupils (39%)** said they **wore their helmets** every time they ride their bike. **After** completing the CPS this proportion **more than doubled, with 79%** now saying they wear their helmets.

Figure 6 : Proportion of pupils who said they wore a cycle helmet, by gender, 2022



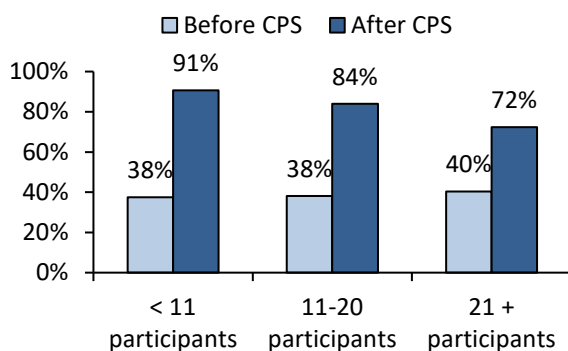
The proportion of **females** who said 'yes' prior to training **was greater than that of males** but there was **no difference to report between the two genders** on helmet wearing following CPS training.

Figure 7: Proportion of pupils who said they wore a cycle helmet, by location, 2022



The proportion who responded 'yes' to this question **before CPS was greater for urban schools (46% urban; 33% rural)** and it was also **greater for urban schools following training (87% urban; 72% rural)**

Figure 8: Proportion of pupils who said they wore a cycle helmet, by the number of CPS participants in the school, 2022



There was no difference between the group sizes prior to training. On completion of the course, all participant groups reported a significant increase in proportions of helmet wearing, with those pupils taught in group sizes of **21 or more (72%) reporting lower compliance** than class sizes of fewer than 11 (91%) or classes of 11-20 pupils (84%).

Question 2: Safety Check- Do you carry out a safety check on your bicycle each time before you use it?

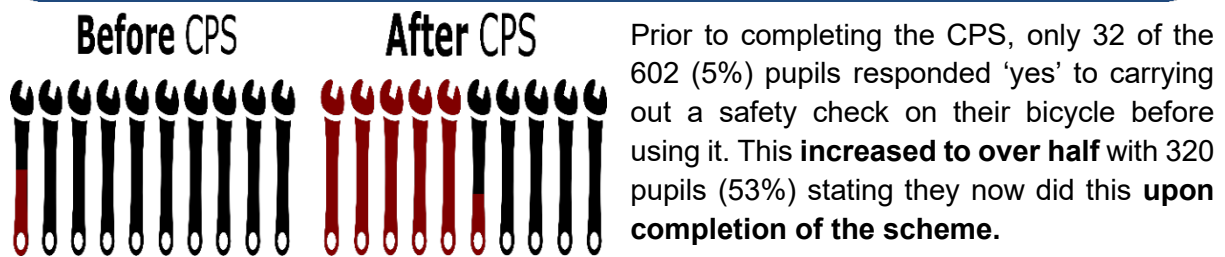


Figure 9: Proportion of pupils who said they carried out a safety check, by gender, 2022

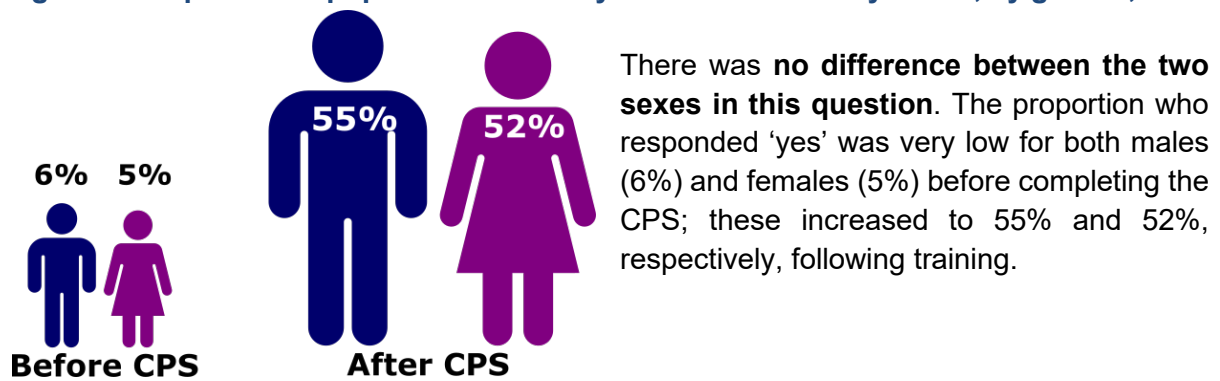


Figure 10: Proportion of pupils who said they carried out a safety check, by location, 2022

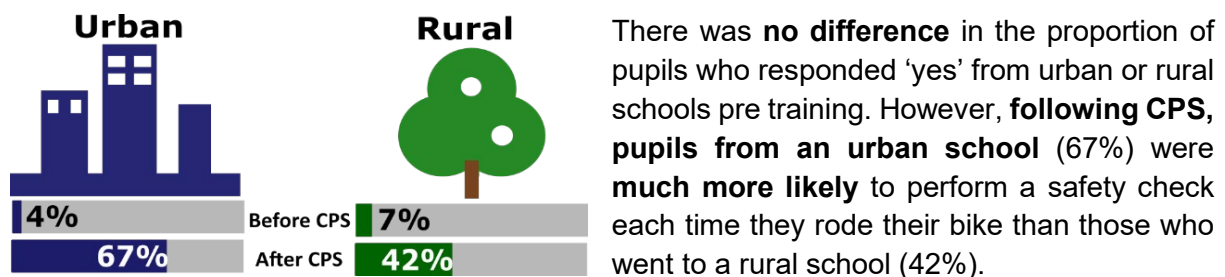
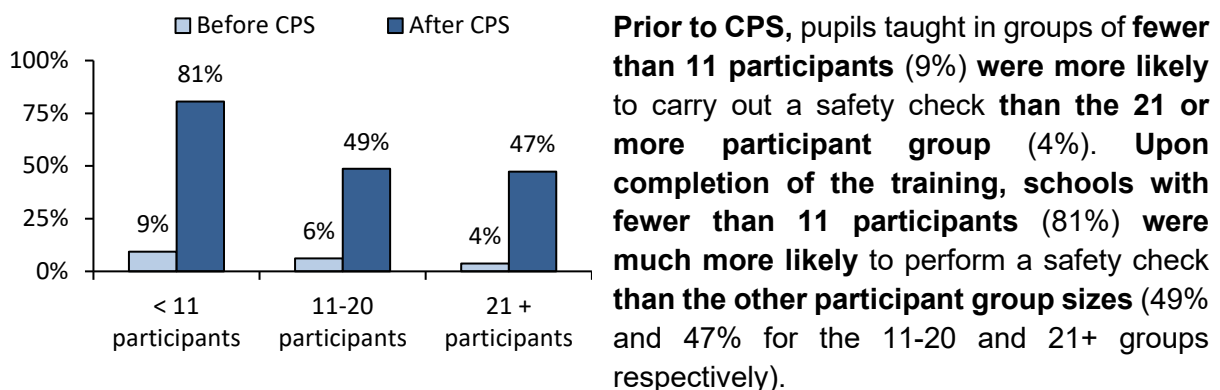

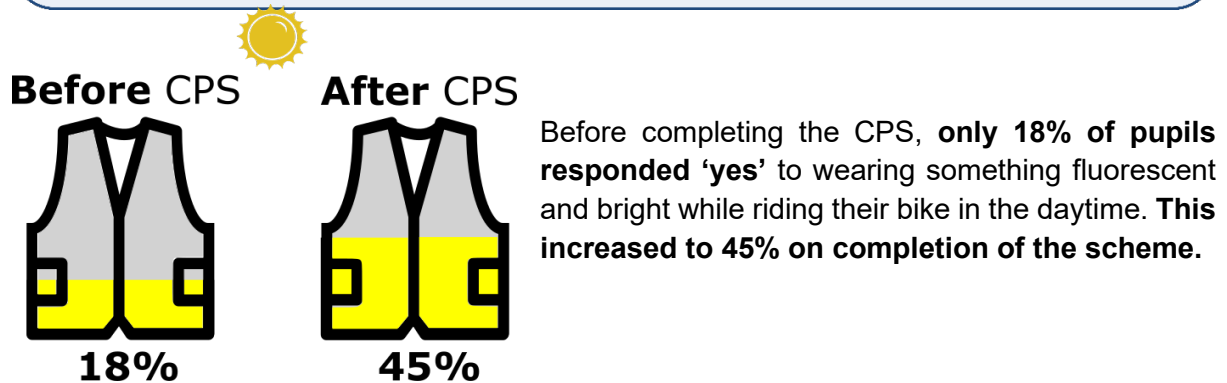


Figure 11: Proportion of pupils who said they carried out a safety check, by the number of CPS participants in the school, 2022

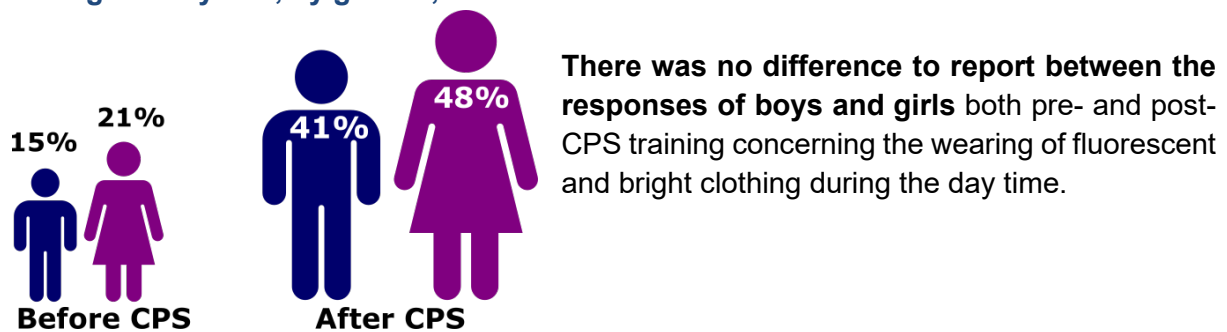


 **Question 3: Fluorescent Clothing- Do you wear something fluorescent & bright when riding your bike in the daytime?**



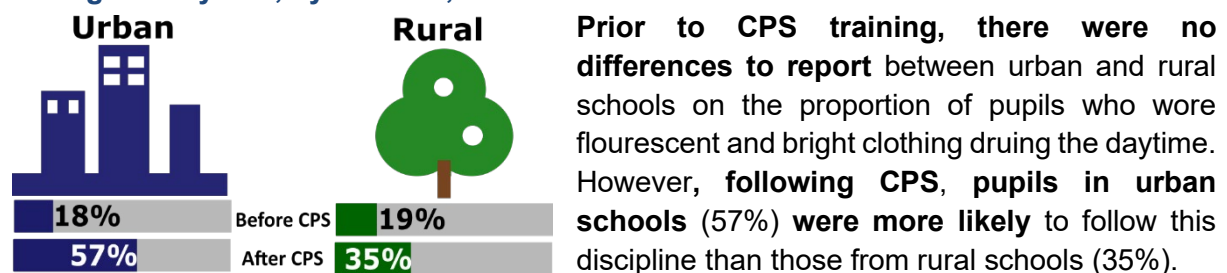
Before completing the CPS, only 18% of pupils responded 'yes' to wearing something fluorescent and bright while riding their bike in the daytime. This increased to 45% on completion of the scheme.

Figure 12: Proportion of pupils who said they wore fluorescent and bright clothing during the daytime, by gender, 2022



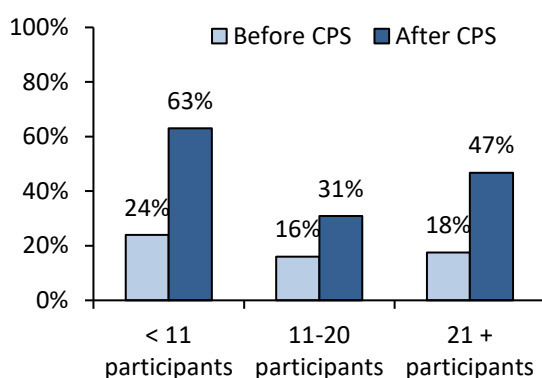
There was no difference to report between the responses of boys and girls both pre- and post-CPS training concerning the wearing of fluorescent and bright clothing during the day time.

Figure 13: Proportion of pupils who said they wore fluorescent and bright clothing during the daytime, by location, 2022



Prior to CPS training, there were no differences to report between urban and rural schools on the proportion of pupils who wore fluorescent and bright clothing during the daytime. However, following CPS, pupils in urban schools (57%) were more likely to follow this discipline than those from rural schools (35%).

Figure 14: Proportion of pupils who said they wore fluorescent and bright clothing during the daytime, by the number of CPS participants in the school, 2022



There was no difference pre-course between the group sizes regarding wearing fluorescent and bright clothing during daylight hours. Following training, schools with fewer than 11 participants (63%) reported a significantly higher post-test score than the other participant groups. Those with 21 or more participants (47%) also reported significantly higher compliance than those with 11-20 participants (31%).



Question 4: Reflective Clothing- Do you wear something reflective & bright when riding your bike at night?

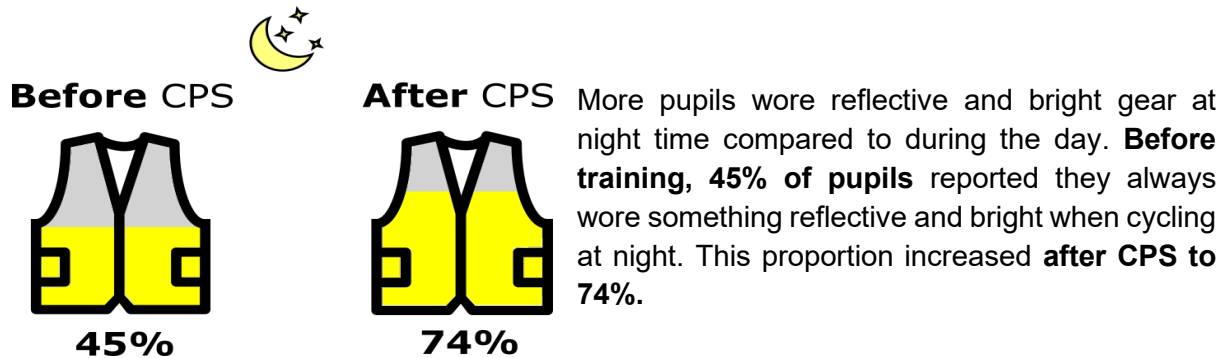


Figure 15: Proportion of pupils who said they wore reflective and bright clothing at night by gender, 2022

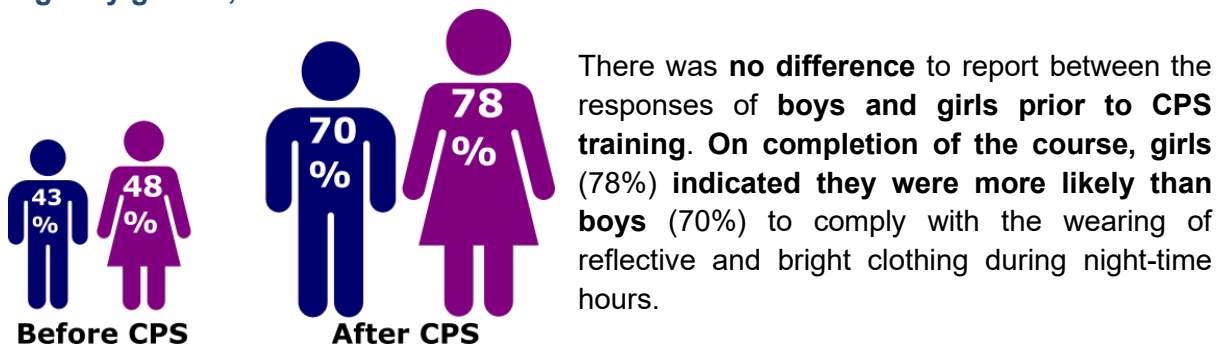


Figure 16: Proportion of pupils who said they wore reflective and bright clothing at night, by location, 2022

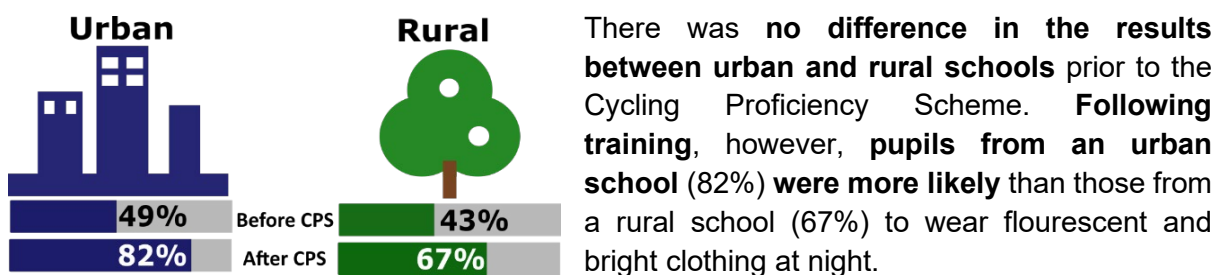
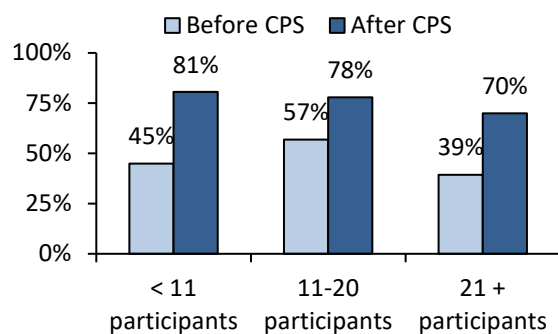


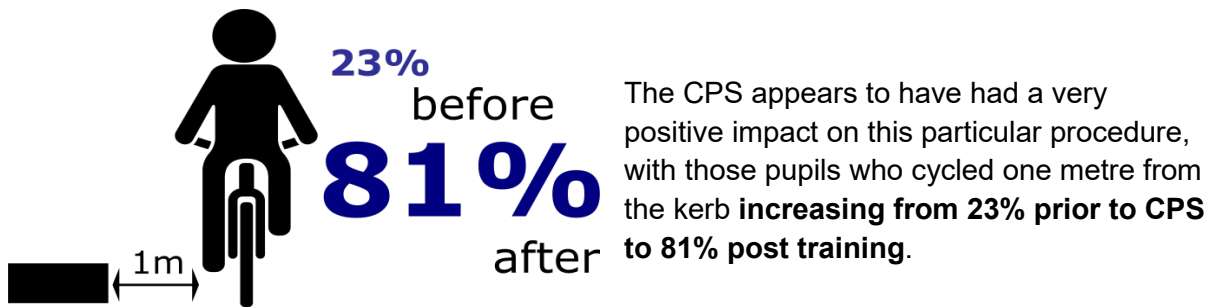
Figure 17: Proportion of pupils who said they wore reflective and bright clothing at night, by the number of CPS participants in the school, 2022



There was **no difference** in the results between urban and rural schools prior to the Cycling Proficiency Scheme. **Following training, however, pupils from an urban school (82%) were more likely** than those from a rural school (67%) to wear fluorescent and bright clothing at night.

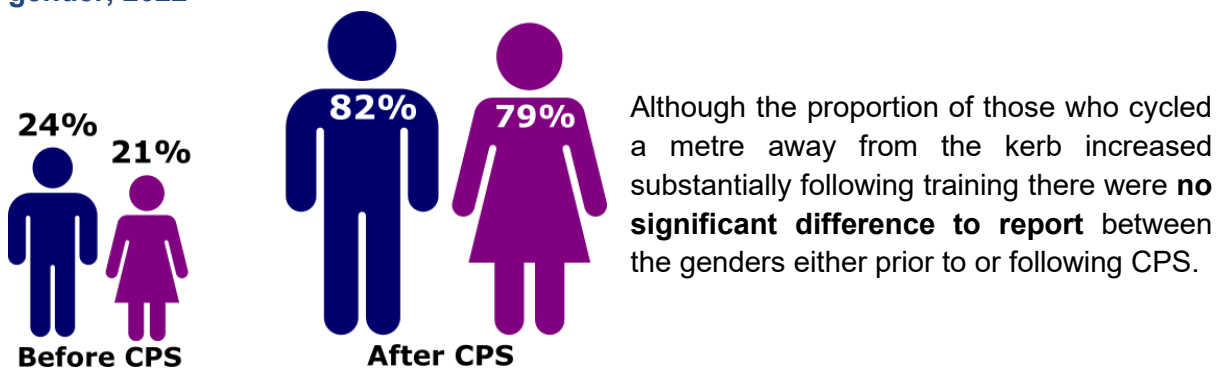
Before CPS, those in the 11-20 group (57%) were more likely to wear reflective and bright clothing during night-time hours than those with 21 or more participants. Following training, those taught in groups of 21 or more reported lower compliance than those taught in smaller group sizes.

Question 5: Distance from Kerb - when cycling do you keep about a metre away from the kerb/road side verge?



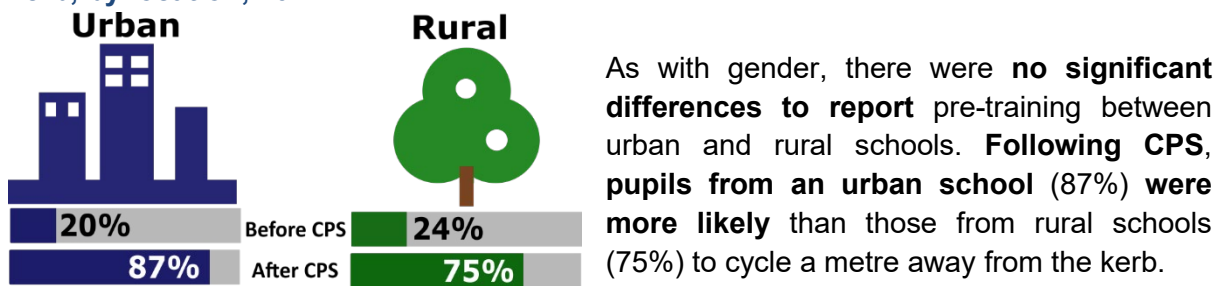
The CPS appears to have had a very positive impact on this particular procedure, with those pupils who cycled one metre from the kerb increasing from 23% prior to CPS to 81% post training.

Figure 18: Proportion of pupils who said they kept a metre away from the kerb by gender, 2022



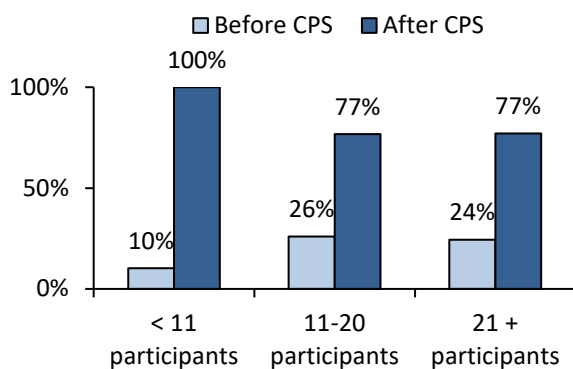
Although the proportion of those who cycled a metre away from the kerb increased substantially following training there were **no significant difference to report** between the genders either prior to or following CPS.

Figure 19: Proportion of pupils who said they kept a metre away from the kerb, by location, 2022




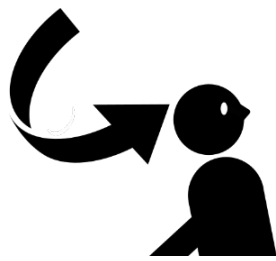
As with gender, there were **no significant differences to report** pre-training between urban and rural schools. **Following CPS, pupils from an urban school (87%) were more likely** than those from rural schools (75%) to cycle a metre away from the kerb.

Figure 20: Proportion of pupils who said they kept a metre away from the kerb, by the number of CPS participants in the school, 2022



Those pupils taught CPS in **group sizes of fewer than 11 pupils had a lower compliance** of cycling one metre away from the kerb **before training** than those in larger class sizes. **Following the delivery of the Scheme, all pupils in class sizes fewer than 11 reported that they now cycled a metre away from the kerb (100%), a higher post-test score** than those with larger participant groups.

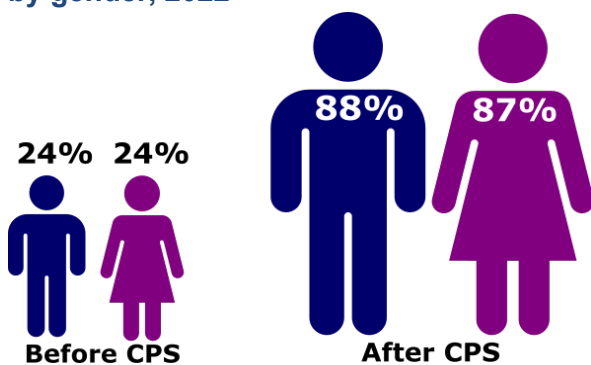
 **Question 6: Looking over shoulder - When cycling do you look over your shoulder before signalling or moving?**



24% before
88% after

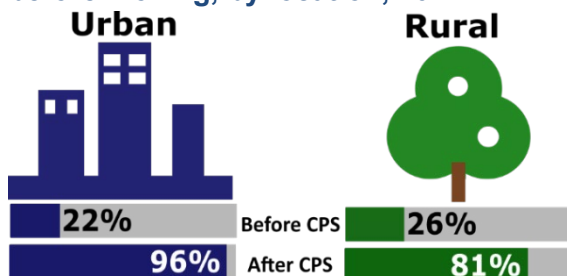
There was a significant increase in the proportion of children who responded 'yes' to this question after CPS training. **Before training, 24% of pupils** reported looking over their shoulder before moving or signalling which **increased to 88%** following the CPS.

Figure 21: Proportion of pupils who said they looked over their shoulder before moving, by gender, 2022



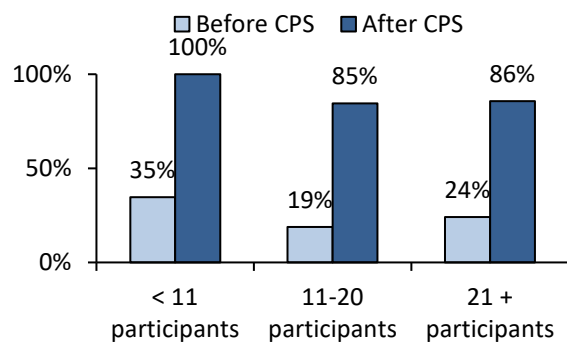
There were no differences to report between the genders regarding this discipline both pre and post-training. Fewer than a quarter of boys and girls (both 24%) reported looking over their shoulder prior to CPS. This increased to 88% for boys and 87% for girls following the delivery of the course.

Figure 22: Proportion of pupils who said they who said they looked over their shoulder before moving, by location, 2022



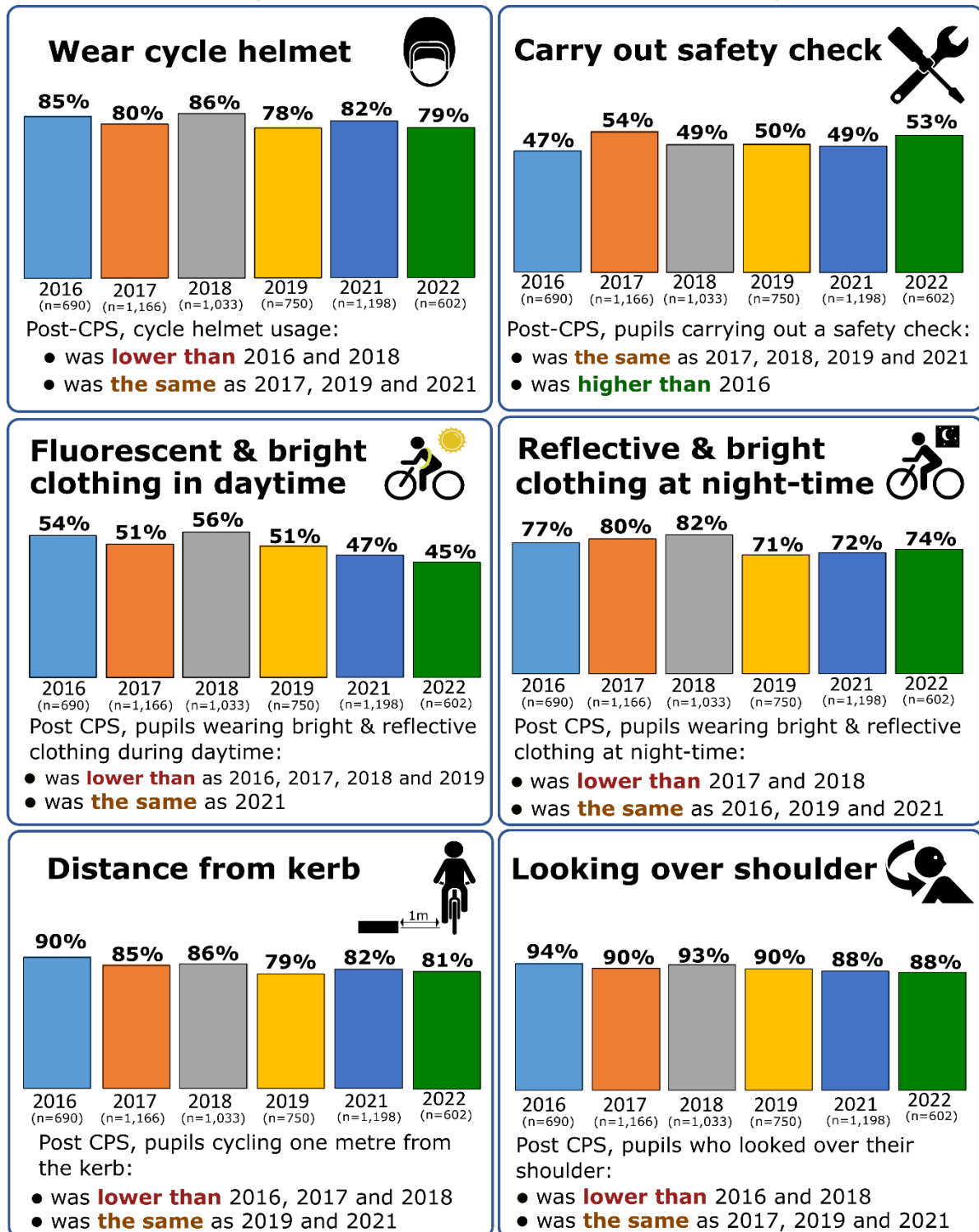
There was no difference between pupils from schools in urban (22%) or rural (26%) locations prior to CPS concerning looking over their shoulder before moving. **Following training, pupils from an urban school (96%) were more likely to do so than those taught in rural schools (81%).**

Figure 23: Proportion of pupils who said they looked over their shoulder before moving by the number of CPS participants in the school, 2022



Those school groups with **fewer than 11 participants (35%) reported more pupils** looking over their shoulder **prior to CPS than those in the other group sizes**. This was the same observation **following training**; all **pupils taught in smaller groups** stated that they now looked over their shoulder every time they rode their bike, **significantly higher than the other group sizes**.

Post CPS Training – 2022 Comparison with previous years



A comparison of 2022 with previous years is illustrated in the infographic above. It can be seen that a lower proportion of pupils in 2022 observed each of the disciplines than in at least one of the previous years with the exception of performing a safety check. It should be noted though, that comparisons between the years should be viewed with caution as the study population is different and the number of schools and pupils involved this year in the study were lower than previous years.

Survey of Parents/Guardians

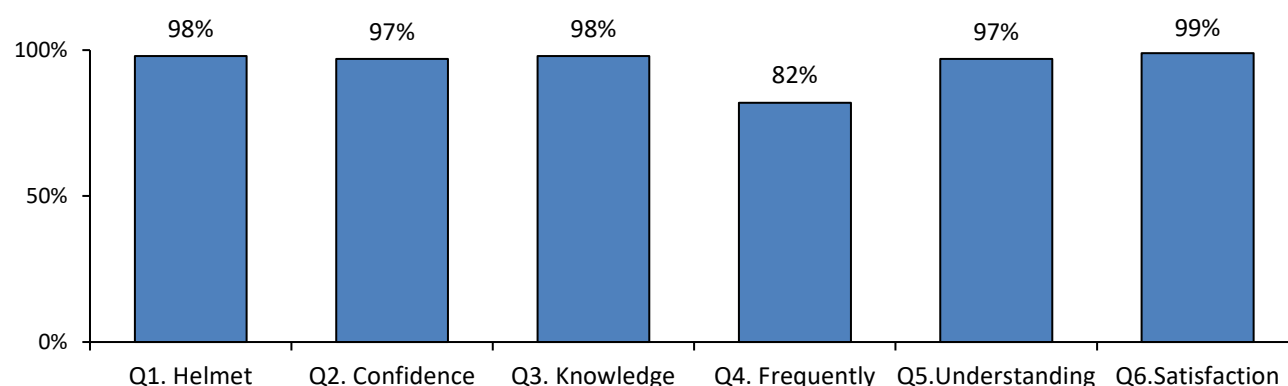
In addition to surveying pupils who participated in CPS, a short survey of parents was undertaken for the second time in 2022. This follows recommendation from the Department of Environment's Review of Cycling Proficiency in 2013 that parents/guardians assess the impact that CPS has had on their child's cycling behaviours.

The survey asked the parents/guardian five statements about their child's cycling post course and their overall satisfaction with the Cycling Proficiency Scheme. The responses were based on a five point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. It is envisaged that this survey will be carried out every third year. The questionnaire with the percentage for each of the 325 responses is displayed below:

Figure 24: Cycling Proficiency Scheme – Parent/Guardian Survey

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know/ Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Q1. My child wears a helmet when they ride their bicycle. (base=325)	75%	23%	0%	2%	<1%
Q2. I feel the scheme has improved my child's confidence when cycling. (base=325)	68%	30%	2%	1%	0%
Q3. I feel my child's knowledge of cycling safely has increased as a result of participating in the scheme. (base=325)	72%	26%	1%	1%	0%
Q4. My child rides their bicycle more frequently as a result of participating in the scheme. (base=325)	39%	43%	6%	11%	1%
Q5. I feel my child has gained a better understanding of how to interact with other road users as a cyclist. (base=325)	58%	39%	2%	1%	<1%
Q6. Overall, I am satisfied with the cycling proficiency scheme. (base=325)	74%	26%	0%	1%	0%







Figure 25: Parent Survey – percentage who strongly agree/agree with each statement



- The responses ranged from a low of 82% of parents who stated that their child rides their bicycle more frequently to almost all who stated that they were satisfied with the Cycling Proficiency Scheme (99%).







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Tables: Pupil responses for each Cycling Proficiency Scheme question before and after training by school participant size, gender and urban/rural school area

	Q1 Helmet Usage 				Q2 Safety Equipment 				Q3 Fluorescent & bright clothing – day time 				Q4 Reflective & bright clothing – night-time 				Q5 Distance from kerb 				Q6 Looking over shoulder 			
	Total				Total				Total				Total				Total							
	Before	%	After	%	Before	%	After	%	Before	%	After	%	Before	%	After	%	Before	%	After	%	Before	%	After	%
Yes	236	39	474	79	32	5	320	53	110	18	269	45	273	45	445	74	136	23	486	81	146	24	528	88
No	144	24	33	5	457	76	91	15	325	54	139	23	166	28	46	8	259	43	30	5	296	49	7	1
Sometimes	208	35	77	13	98	16	173	29	135	22	177	29	141	23	82	14	191	32	68	11	138	23	53	9
Missing	14	2	18	3	15	2	18	3	32	5	17	3	22	4	29	5	16	3	18	3	22	4	14	2
Total	602	100	602	100	602	100	602	100	602	100	602	100	602	100	602	100	602	100	602	100	602	100	602	100
	< 11 participants				< 11 participants				< 11 participants				< 11 participants				< 11 participants							
	Before	%	After	%	Before	%	After	%	Before	%	After	%	Before	%	After	%	Before	%	After	%	Before	%	After	%
Yes	37	38	89	91	9	9	79	81	24	24	62	63	44	45	79	81	10	10	98	100	34	35	98	100
No	32	33	0	0	68	69	2	2	57	58	21	21	16	16	4	4	48	49	0	0	38	39	0	0
Sometimes	29	30	9	9	21	21	17	17	17	17	14	14	32	33	6	6	39	40	0	0	26	27	0	0
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	6	6	9	9	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	98	100	98	100	98	100	98	100	98	100	98	100	98	100	98	100	98	100	98	100	98	100	98	100
	11-20 participants				11-20 participants				11-20 participants				11-20 participants				11-20 participants							
	Before	%	After	%	Before	%	After	%	Before	%	After	%	Before	%	After	%	Before	%	After	%	Before	%	After	%
Yes	69	38	152	84	11	6	88	49	29	16	56	31	103	57	141	78	47	26	139	77	34	19	153	85
No	52	29	7	4	140	77	37	20	76	42	47	26	46	25	16	9	71	39	22	12	93	51	4	2
Sometimes	58	32	20	11	27	15	54	30	59	33	75	41	28	15	21	12	61	34	17	9	52	29	22	12
Missing	2	1	2	1	3	2	2	1	17	9	3	2	4	2	3	2	2	1	3	2	2	1	2	1
Total	181	100	181	100	181	100	181	100	181	100	181	100	181	100	181	100	181	100	181	100	181	100	181	100
	21+ participants				21+ participants				21+ participants				21+ participants				21+ participants							
	Before	%	After	%	Before	%	After	%	Before	%	After	%	Before	%	After	%	Before	%	After	%	Before	%	After	%
Yes	130	40	233	72	12	4	153	47	57	18	151	47	126	39	225	70	79	24	249	77	78	24	277	86
No	60	19	26	8	249	77	52	16	192	59	71	22	104	32	26	8	140	43	8	2	165	51	3	1
Sometimes	121	37	48	15	50	15	102	32	59	18	88	27	81	25	55	17	91	28	51	16	60	19	31	10
Missing	12	4	16	5	12	4	16	5	15	5	13	4	12	4	17	5	13	4	15	5	20	6	12	4
Total	323	100	323	100	323	100	323	100	323	100	323	100	323	100	323	100	323	100	323	100	323	100	323	100

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Tables cont'd: Pupil responses for each Cycling Proficiency Scheme question before and after training by school participant size, gender and urban/rural school area

	Q1 Helmet Usage 				Q2 Safety Equipment 				Q3 Fluorescent & bright clothing – day time 				Q4 Reflective & bright clothing – night-time 				Q5 Distance from kerb 				Q6 Looking over shoulder 							
	Males				Males				Males				Males				Males				Males							
	Before	%	After	%	Before	%	After	%	Before	%	After	%	Before	%	After	%	Before	%	After	%	Before	%	After	%	Before	%	After	%
Yes	106	35	238	78	17	6	168	55	47	15	126	41	131	43	216	70	75	24	253	82	74	24	270	88				
No	84	27	18	6	236	77	43	14	192	63	78	25	91	30	33	11	121	39	11	4	157	51	3	1				
Sometimes	112	36	46	15	48	16	90	29	58	19	97	32	76	25	45	15	104	34	37	12	70	23	28	9				
Missing	5	2	5	2	6	2	6	2	10	3	6	2	9	3	13	4	7	2	6	2	6	2	6	2				
Total	307	100	307	100	307	100	307	100	307	100	307	100	307	100	307	100	307	100	307	100	307	100	307	100				
	Females				Females				Females				Females				Females				Females							
Yes	130	44	236	80	15	5	152	52	63	21	143	48	142	48	229	78	61	21	233	79	72	24	258	87				
No	60	20	15	5	221	75	48	16	133	45	61	21	75	25	13	4	138	47	19	6	139	47	4	1				
Sometimes	96	33	31	11	50	17	83	28	77	26	80	27	65	22	37	13	87	29	31	11	68	23	25	8				
Missing	9	3	13	4	9	3	12	4	22	7	11	4	13	4	16	5	9	3	12	4	16	5	8	3				
Total	295	100	295	100	295	100	295	100	295	100	295	100	295	100	295	100	295	100	295	100	295	100	295	100				
	Urban				Urban				Urban				Urban				Urban				Urban							
Yes	125	46	234	87	10	4	181	67	48	18	152	57	131	49	221	82	55	20	235	87	60	22	259	96				
No	57	21	14	5	235	87	32	12	160	59	50	19	79	29	17	6	115	43	7	3	145	54	2	1				
Sometimes	87	32	19	7	24	9	53	20	58	22	66	25	59	22	27	10	97	36	26	10	62	23	8	3				
Missing	0	0	2	1	0	0	3	1	3	1	1	0	0	0	4	1	2	1	1	0	2	1	0	0				
Total	269	100	269	100	269	100	269	100	269	100	269	100	269	100	269	100	269	100	269	100	269	100	269	100				
	Rural				Rural				Rural				Rural				Rural				Rural							
Yes	111	33	240	72	22	7	139	42	62	19	117	35	142	43	224	67	81	24	251	75	86	26	269	81				
No	87	26	19	6	222	67	59	18	165	50	89	27	87	26	29	9	144	43	23	7	151	45	5	2				
Sometimes	121	36	58	17	74	22	120	36	77	23	111	33	82	25	55	17	94	28	42	13	76	23	45	14				
Missing	14	4	16	5	15	5	15	5	29	9	16	5	22	7	25	8	14	4	17	5	20	6	14	4				
Total	333	100	333	100	333	100	333	100	333	100	333	100	333	100	333	100	333	100	333	100	333	100	333	100				

Survey Methodology

Pupil Survey

The Cycling Proficiency Scheme (CPS) has operated in Northern Ireland schools for 50 years, training approximately 450,000 pupils. Early road safety education is crucial in keeping children safe on the roads. The purpose of the scheme is to help children develop their skills, increase their confidence as cyclists and identify risks they may come across on the roads. The CPS is delivered by school staff and instructors who are trained and approved by, and registered with, DfI Safe & Accessible Travel Division, Promotion and Outreach Branch. For the seventh year, a survey of school children who took part in CPS in Northern Ireland was carried out to consider the attitudes of the children towards various aspects of road safety before and after completion of the scheme. The questions were designed to assess how much the scheme had changed the attitudes and actions of participants in respect of various safety aspects of cycling such as wearing a helmet and reflective clothing, carrying out safety checks on bicycles and specifics of manoeuvring on the roads. This analysis monitors the effectiveness of the Scheme, allowing the Department to identify positive changes in participants' behaviour as well as areas requiring improved support and guidance. As with previous years, the cycling survey responses in 2022 were obtained through a show of hands in the classroom. When this new methodology was introduced in 2016, there were concerns that results could potentially suffer from bias as responses were not anonymous and participants may be hesitant responding in front of their classmates. However, the method was one that teachers could easily facilitate in order to get timely feedback and ensure a high response rate. Results in previous years were not significantly different, and Analysis, Statistics and Research Branch therefore concluded that the revised methodology could be continued.

A stratified sample was taken of 349 schools in Northern Ireland who had announced their intention to take part as of May 2022. A stratified random sampling methodology on these 349 schools (stratified based on gender, urban v rural and course participant size) was used to choose the sample of 144 schools (41%). Responses were received from 38 of these, giving a response rate of 26%. This is 27 fewer schools than took part in the survey in 2021, and as a result, the number of pupils responding decreased from 1,198 to 602 (a decrease of 50%) representing the fewest pupils participating since the CPS was first reported on in 2015.

The table below shows the percentage of respondent schools by gender, urban/rural classification and number taking part compared with the 349 CPS sampled schools.

	CPS School Profile (n=38)	Sample School Profile (n=349)
Male	51%	51%
Female	49%	49%
Urban	42%	37%
Rural	58%	63%
< 11 participants	37%	11%
11-20 participants	32%	44%
21+ participants	32%	45%

The figures show that the respondent profile is broadly representative of all 349 sampled schools, with no groups particularly over or under-represented in terms of their gender or urban/rural classification¹. Also, whilst a proportionate stratification by former Education and Library Board (ELB) area was not a key survey aim, nevertheless a good geographical spread of schools was achieved in the final sample. See the map of schools provided in Figure 1 of this report (Page 4). There was no need, therefore, to weight the results prior to undertaking the analysis.

Note that as the findings are derived from a sample survey and hence subject to sampling error, all differences reported in the commentary were tested to ensure that they were statistically significant (i.e., there was a less than one in twenty chance that they occurred through random factors alone). This means that, when comparing differences between subgroups with small numbers of respondents, some apparently large differences may not actually be statistically significant.

¹ Location defined using NISRA Central Postcode Directory urban/rural classification. Boundaries are available for Northern Ireland as defined by the Planning Service. These areas are defined from Settlement Development Limits (SDLs) which are a statistical classification and delineation of settlements. See [review-of-the-statistical-classification-and-delineation-of-settlements-march-2015.pdf \(nisra.gov.uk\)](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/review-of-the-statistical-classification-and-delineation-of-settlements-march-2015.pdf) for more information.