

LIVELIHOOD CYCLISTS IN KOLKATA

OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

'CYCLING FOR LIVELIHOOD, NOT LIFESTYLE'



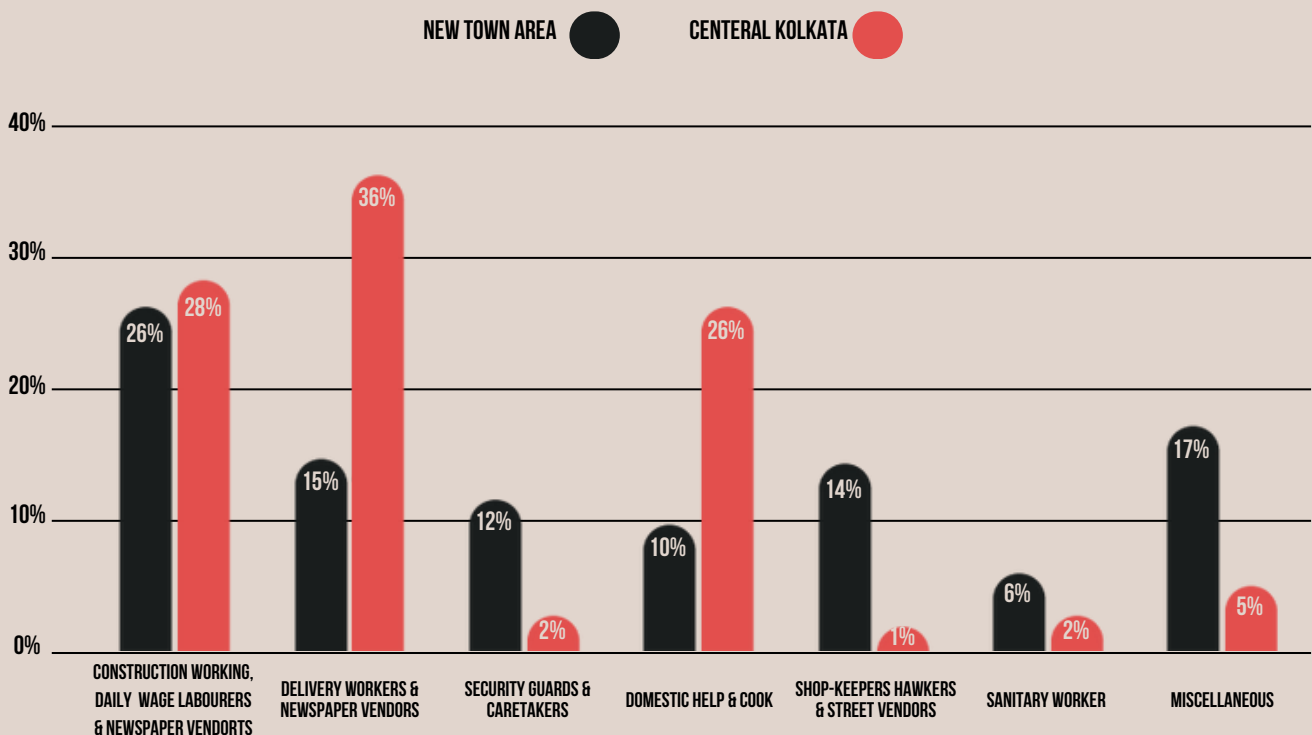
In Kolkata, every day, thousands of people- vendors, blue-collar workers, daily wage labourers, peons, milkmen & women cycle to work, braving the maddening Kolkata traffic, bullying motorists, harsh weather, and the pollution of the city, which is often dubbed as one of the most dangerous for cyclists. For some, cycling is not a recreation, but rather the only mode of transportation to earn their livelihood. Unfortunately, over time the growth of cyclists has reduced, because of the limited cycling freedom and infrastructure in Kolkata.

The survey was conducted among a total of **233 cyclists**, who were identified randomly from localities of Central Kolkata and the New Town area. The majority of the respondents of this survey belong to the lower or lower-middle socio-economic class, the ones who mostly use cycles to reach their workplace. The samples were drawn from the following occupational groups

- SHOP-KEEPERS, HAWKERS, & STREET VENDORS
- SECURITY GUARDS & CARETAKERS
- DOMESTIC HELP WORKERS & COOKS
- CONSTRUCTION WORKERS & DAILY WAGE LABOURERS
- MISCELLANEOUS WORKERS
- SANITARY WORKERS
- NEWSPAPER VENDORS
- DELIVERY PERSONS
- DRIVERS



LIVELIHOOD CYCLISTS IN CENTRAL KOLKATA AND NEW TOWN AREA

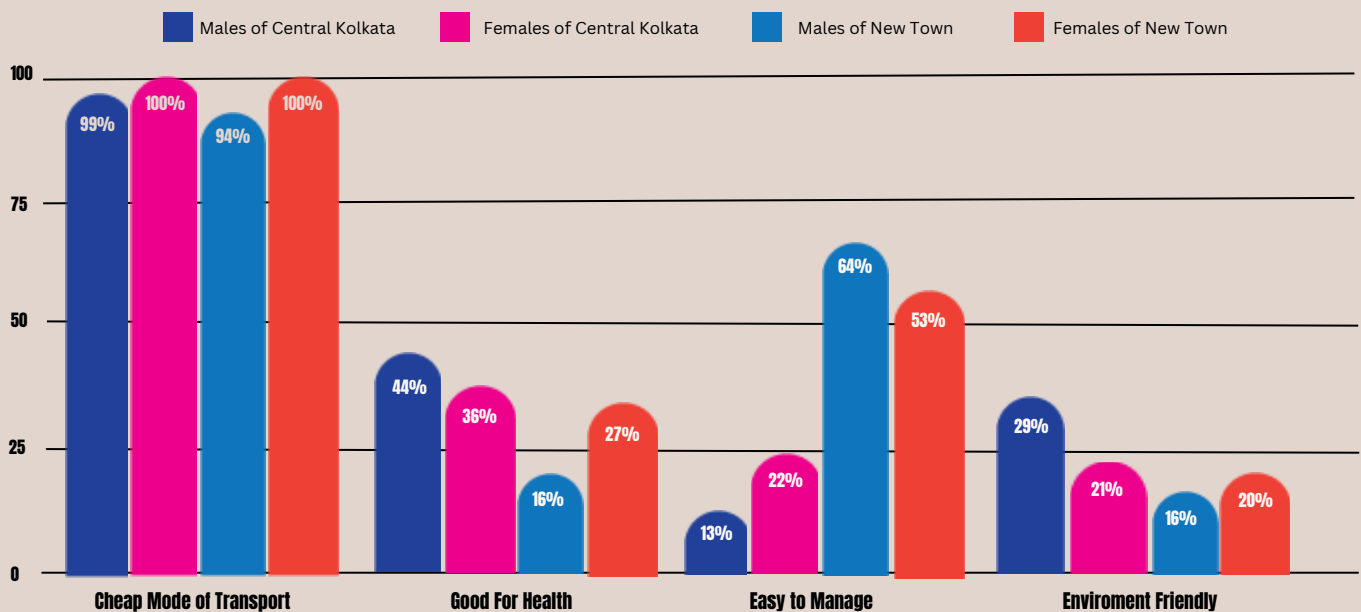


Pedaling on the streets of Kolkata: Kolkata’s cycling community is unique. It is used for livelihood and is not a lifestyle choice. Three types of livelihood-driven cyclists can be categorised from the primary survey conducted in the two selected localities of Kolkata.

1.Business-driven cyclists: Several small businesses, such as laundry, milk, and newspaper distribution have delivery requirements. It is seen that these small business owners use cycles to deliver their products door to door. They usually require to carry loads of newspapers, bottles of milk, or big rugs full of clothes.

2.Employment-driven Cyclists: Riders use bicycles to commute from home to the workplace and back home on a daily basis. Most respondents said cycling is cheaper than buying bus/ train tickets daily, and they also are able to avoid congested public transport.

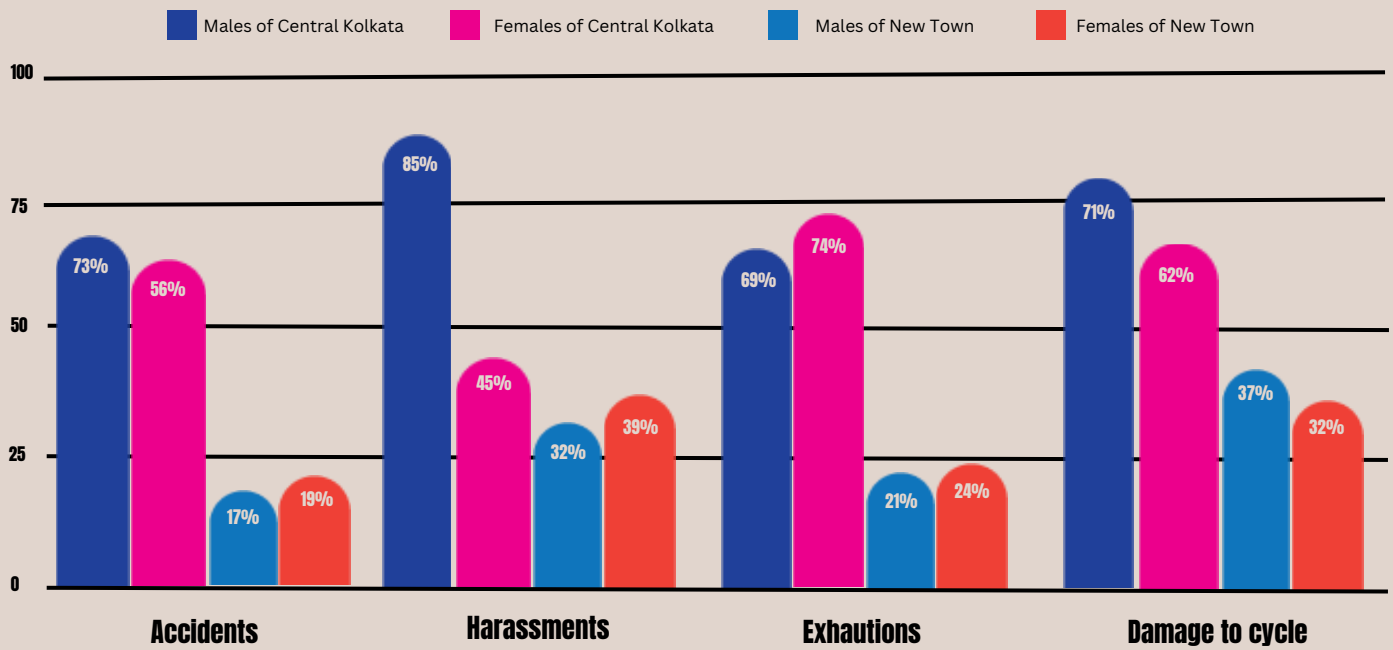
3.Delivery-driven Cyclists: Employers owning all sorts of businesses, like restaurants, and dhabas, pharmaceuticals, also own cycles for the use of their employees. An employee on average cycles for 3 to 5 km on a daily basis to fulfill his/ her’s delivery requirement in his/ her locality.



Reason For Cycling

- Both males and females of Central Kolkata and New Town area cited cycles to be pocket-friendly.



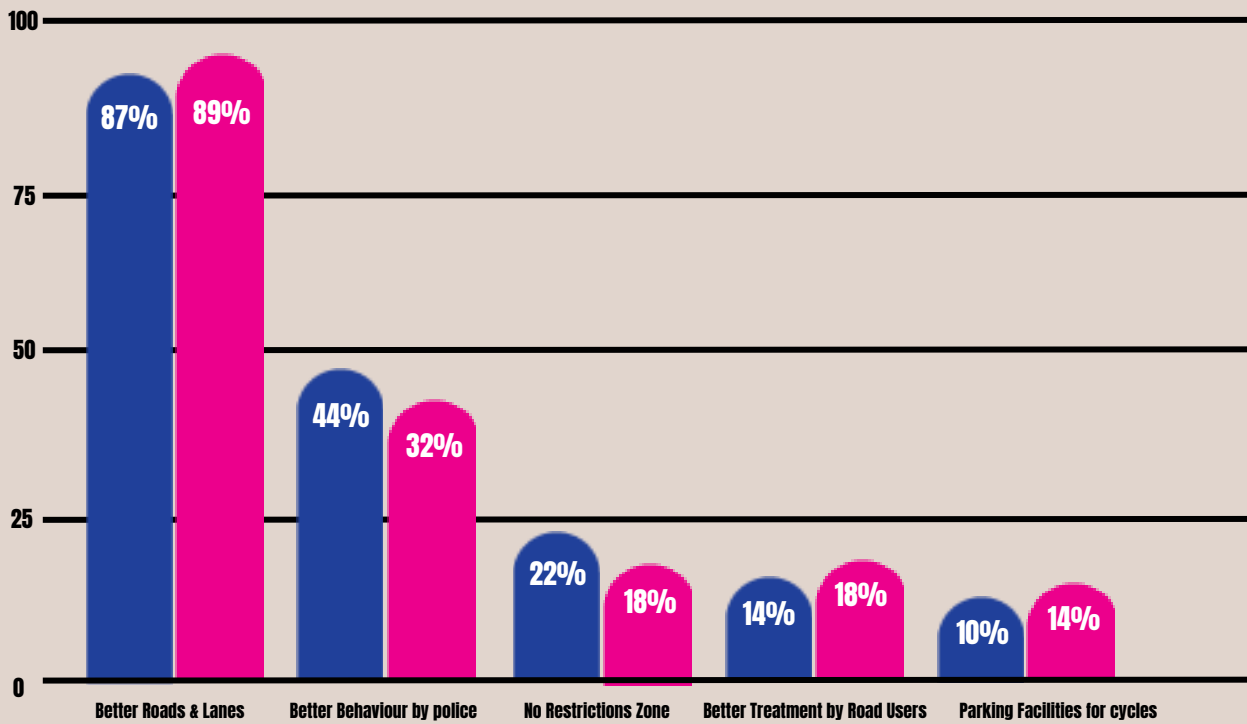


Fear of Cycling in Kolkata

- Both males and females of the study region said that their primary concern about cycling on the roads of Kolkata is fear of accidents due to the dominance of 4-wheelers on the roads and the lack of separate cycling lanes.
- The respondents have also cited 'harassment' by traffic police and other road users to be another greatest concern of cyclists in Kolkata



Male Female



Expectations Towards Better Cycling

- Both male and female cyclists during the survey responded that better road facilities, particularly separate cycling lanes will be beneficial for a better cycling experience on the roads of Kolkata.



There are numerous benefits of cycling. Cycles are not only an eco-friendly and sustainable mode of transportation, but they have an enormous number of health benefits. There are many people in Kolkata who are interested in using cycles to go to their workplaces or choose cycling as a hobby and a sports activity, but the absence of proper infrastructure and cycling lanes in Kolkata restricts them. In addition to offering several health benefits, cycling is an affordable means of transport for low-income households.

Cycling reduces congestion on the roads hugely, and it will also take the load off the public transport system and will help in mitigating the risks of air pollution. Saji Cherian, the director of Operations of SAVEDLife Foundation said that “segregation of traffic is essential to reduce road user conflict and protect vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and cyclists, who form a bulk of the urban road users in India. States must ensure that non-motorised transport users are prioritised in street design rather than motorised street users”.

RECOMMENDATIONS-

- **Developing cycle friendly infrastructure in cities, such as cycle lanes, parking racks etc and develop the cycling culture in the city, cycle sharing schemes can be introduced.**
- **Campaigns to ensure cyclists stick to using the cycling lanes, and cycle lanes are used only by cyclists to maintain traffic rules .**
- **Enforcement of stringent laws by the government with structured fines.**
- **Designated parking facilities for cycles to be constructed in public spaces.**

