

# CASE STUDY

WOMEN  
N  
SPORT

Exploring the transition from recreational to challenge rides with British Cycling



# WHAT DID WE WANT TO KNOW?

**British cycling wanted to identify the barriers and motivators to women entering more formal ‘challenge’ rides; and to explore the potential methods of persuading women to try them.**

There are a number of cycling challenge rides (a challenge ride is a large, organised, non-competitive ride where you don’t race each other) across the country each year and we know that women who participate in these cycle more regularly each week.

Women in Sport embarked on a project to investigate how to transition those women who are cycling recreationally to take part in challenge rides, applying insights from our ‘Understanding Women’s Lives’, (2013) and ‘What Sways Women to Play Sport’ (2015) reports.



# WHAT DID WE FIND OUT?

We talked to three groups of women to explore what holds women back from challenge rides, and how British Cycling could encourage them to participate.

We found similarities and differences in their motivations and values. From our 'Understanding Women's Lives', (2013) research we know that a complex values system drives women's decision-making. By understanding why these women are deciding to cycle, cycling offers can be tailored to be more appealing.



## REGULAR CHALLENGE RIDERS

- Fitness was the main reason for cycling
- Socialising was an important reason for cycling
- Were motivated by achieving goals
- Had cycling prioritised in their lives
- Dominant Values: Having Fun, Feeling Good, Achieving My Goals



## RECENTLY TRANSITIONED CHALLENGE RIDERS

- Fitness was the main reasons for cycling
- Socialising was important reason for cycling
- Take part in a mix of activities
- Dominant Values: Having Fun, Feeling Good, Achieving My Goal



## RECREATIONAL RIDERS

- Fitness main reason for cycling
- Take part in a mix of activities
- Dominant Values: Having Fun, Feeling Good, Achieving My Goals, Nurturing Friends and Families

# MAIN BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATING IN CHALLENGE RIDES



## FEAR OF NOT FITTING IN

"It's not for people like me" - there is a perception among recreational riders that they would not fit into that type of ride. "It's for lycra-clad whippets, not for the likes of me."

**Recreational rider**



## FEAR OF WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN ON THE DAY

"My biggest concern when I was thinking about entering [a challenge ride for the first time] was that I would let everyone down."

**Recently transitioned rider**



## LACK OF CONFIDENCE

"In my mind [to enter a challenge ride] you go from pootle rides to Bradley Wiggins overnight."

**Recreational rider**

# OVERCOMING THE BARRIERS

Applying Women in Sport's 'Spheres of Influence' model (from the 'Sway to Play' research) helps to understand some of the findings and create strategies to leverage solutions to barriers.

## POSSIBILITIES

Opening her eyes to what she can do. The most persuasive messages identified through the research were those which sought to reassure women that challenge rides were welcoming, for a mix of abilities and planned for safety.

*"It's a day out on your bike where you don't have to worry about getting lost, where to eat, mechanical back up or being on your own"*

**Breeze Champion**

## SUPPORTING

Ensuring she has behind the scenes support. The ride leaders felt strongly that it was important to demystify challenge rides to help women overcome their fear of the unknown.

*"I'm quite sceptical of marketing but my friend asked me to join her on a ride and I believed her when she said it was fun."*

**Challenge rider**

## TOGETHERNESS

Together she is stronger. The best way of reaching recreational riders was felt to be through existing challenge riders.

*"I get my new ladies through my existing ones - they bring along their friends, family and colleagues."*

**Breeze Champion**

## BELONGING

Making her feel included and valued. Socialising, encouragement and mutual support lay at the heart of what cyclists loved about challenge rides.

*"The camaraderie and sharing the experience makes it special."*

**Challenge rider**

# WHAT ARE OUR RECOMMENDATIONS?

From our insights we developed a series of recommendations to support British Cycling in encouraging more women to take part in challenge rides.

British Cycling have begun working through the recommendations and Women in Sport have created two research summary documents, one to support the recruitment of more recreational cyclists into challenge rides and one for British Cycling to support their communications and messaging to women considering challenge rides.

## NEXT STEPS

Women in Sport will continue to work with British Cycling to implement these recommendations to help recreational cyclists become challenge riders.

- British Cycling will update their guidance for Challenge Ride providers on how to engage more women and girls in their events.
- British Cycling will create and tailor communications delivered by ride leaders to allay fears of recreational cyclists considering a challenge ride.

## WHAT DID BRITISH CYCLING THINK?

“Working with Women in Sport has provided us with an in-depth insight into the barriers and motivations of women looking to move into challenge riding. There are a number of recommendations which we can start to integrate into our work across the organisation and hope to see an increase in the number of women interested and taking part in challenge riding.

Thanks to Women in Sport for their support and expertise in conducting the research and providing tangible recommendations to make a difference.”

**Women’s Cycling project Manager - British Cycling**

**For more information on women’s cycling, please visit:**  
[www.britishcycling.org.uk/womens-cycling](http://www.britishcycling.org.uk/womens-cycling)

# WANT TO WORK WITH US?

Are you interested in working with Women in Sport on a similar project or would like to support the development of women's cycling?

If so, email [info@womeninsport.org](mailto:info@womeninsport.org)

