*No risk compensation for bicycle helmets: results from an experiment of cycling speed and helmet habituation effects*

*Marjolein J. Boele-Vos1, Christian Weber2, Ritwik Swain, Divera Twisk1, Aslak Fyhri2*

*1**SWOV Institute for Road Safety Research, PO Box 93113, NL-2509 AC Den Haag, The Netherlands, e-mail* [*marjolein.boele@swov.nl*](mailto:marjolein.boele@swov.nl)

*2 Department of Safety, Security and Environment Institute of transport economics, Norway, Gaustadalleen21, 0349 OSLO*

*Nearly one third of all severely injured cyclists sustain a head and/or brain injury after a bicycle crash. Although the severity of a head injury can be reduced by wearing a helmet, not many Dutch cyclists wear helmets. One argument against helmet use is based on the idea of risk compensation; helmeted cyclists might compensate for the perceived safety of the helmet and demonstrate riskier behaviour, such as faster cycling.*

*The goal of this study was to discover whether helmeted Dutch cyclists show risk compensation. To measure behaviour, commuter bicycles were equipped with a GPS tracker that recorded speed and location during three weeks. For two weeks, participants wore a helmet on every trip and they went one week without a helmet. Perceived risk was measured by asking participants to report on his or her own perceptions.*

*The results indicated that participants that were given two weeks to get accustomed to the helmet did not increase their speed when wearing one. Also, there was no change in perceived risk or any other measures when cycling with or without a helmet. Another important outcome was that cyclist do not like wearing helmets.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

*Although, with these results, we argue that helmeted cyclists will compensate for their helmet with faster cycling; it will be a challenge to have people wearing helmets.*

***Keywords:*** *bicycle helmet, commuters, risk perception, speed*

1. **Please be aware that the results are made up to be able to make this abstract for homework purposes.** [↑](#footnote-ref-1)