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A Safety Perception Indicator for vulnerable Road users in urban Environments (ASPIRE)

ABSTRACT

Built environments that are perceived to be connected, convivial, conspicuous, comfortable and convenient (Gardner et al, 1996). They should also be safe, enhance community participation, encourage physical activity, connect communities, and contribute to the health and wellbeing of local residents. Most industrialised countries are seeking ways to encourage people to walk and cycle and not use cars in order to reduce emissions and to counter the rise in obesity. For example, cycling and walking, particularly as part of a person's daily commute, is known to have a number of health benefits.

The road traffic environment can have a major impact on people's choices to walk or cycle, how safe they feel when engaging in these activities, and can influence how connected residents feel to each other. For example, fear of injury is the number one stated reason for Londoners choosing not to cycle. People living in low income urban areas are most likely to experience the negative impacts of transport in terms of injuries and quality of life which is a barrier to active travel and the health benefits this confers (Christie et al 2010; Christie et al 2011; Lyons et al 2003; Titheridge et al 2014).

For most industrialised countries road safety is measured by counting casualties or rates per head of population. These data are collected by the police and focus on those collisions which involve a mechanically propelled vehicle. These data are generally used to identify intervention policy and practice and in this respect such approaches tend to be reactive. At a local level once interventions are implemented their evaluation generally requires several years of collision data in order to judge whether it has been successful. This is because of the relatively low frequency of collisions at local levels. There are a number of problems with using casualty data to measure the safety of roads.

The aims of ASPIRE are

1. To understand what are the key aspects of feeling safe as pedestrians and cyclists in urban communities and how this links to active travel and wellbeing, taking into account contextual factors such as the characteristics of the environment and traffic within it.
2. To explore how feeling safe differs between low income communities compared to more affluent ones.
3. To develop a tool that can be used by local authorities to design interventions and to improve perceived safety and measure impacts on active travel and wellbeing especially among the most low income communities.
4. To understand and be equipped to promote policy actors to improve the road traffic system (actor analysis; system approach dealing with content, context and process aspects of the road traffic system).

This presentation present an overview of our project and then will primarily discuss the data collection and database management aspects. These are key issues that must be resolved before the questions above can be addressed.

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