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[You're not as visible on a bike at night as you think, new study shows](#)

Posted by [Michael Andersen \(News Editor\)](#) on May 20th, 2013 at 1:37 pm

People who ride bikes at night consistently overestimate their visibility to other road users, a new study has found.

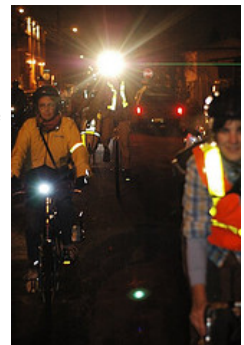
They also overlook a few tricks, like reflective strips around the ankles and knees, that can help the most.

The [report](#), led by Joanne Wood of the Queensland University of Technology in Australia and published in next month's issue of *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, asked both regular and occasional bike riders wearing black clothing, fluorescent or reflective vests, and vests with reflective strips to estimate the point at which an approaching driver would be able to spot them. Different lighting setups were used, too.

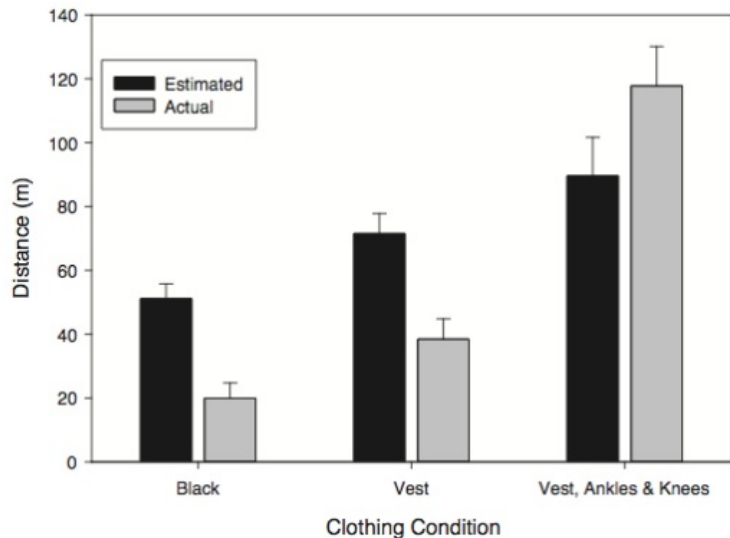
People wearing black clothing on their bike at night, or just a reflective vest, were far too optimistic. They thought drivers would see them from nearly twice the distance drivers actually tend to.

Meanwhile, riders correctly estimated that they were more visible to other road users when wearing retroreflective strips on their knees and ankles. But the strips are actually more effective than people thought.

To see how people's ideas measure up with reality, check out the chart below. The black bars indicate the distance at which people riding bikes thought they would be spotted in each type of clothing, and the grey bars indicate actual visibility:



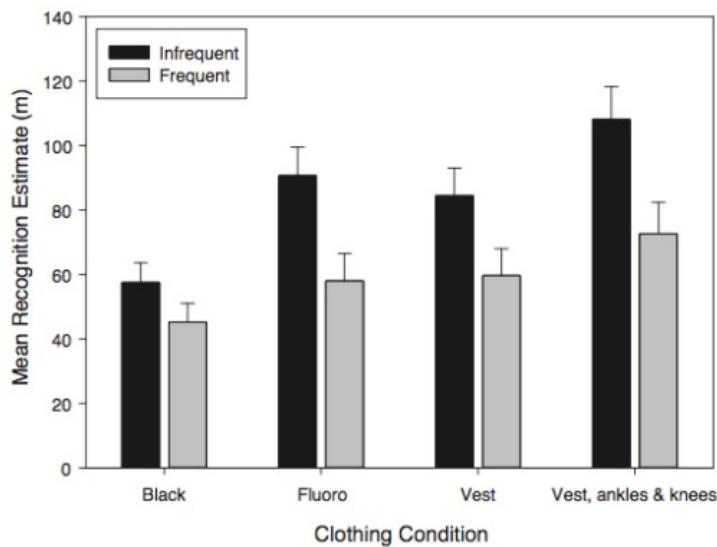
Not as flashy as most people think.
 (Photo © J. Maus/BikePortland)



These figures included tests with three different types of lighting on the bikes: a flashing light, a steady light and no light.

“The bicyclist’s overestimates are greatest for conditions in which actual conspicuity is minimal and they underestimate the effectiveness of vest plus ankles and knees,” Wood’s report summarized. “This study provides the first quantitative data to support the suggestion that bicyclists overestimate their own conspicuity to drivers at night.”

Here’s another important finding: if you bike more often, you tend to get a better sense of just how invisible you can be at night:



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Posted on May 20th, 2013 at 1:37 pm. Filed under [Front Page, issues](#) and tagged with [, research](#). You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.

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