

#andshecycles



Green-Schools
An Taisce

TOOLKIT



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INTRODUCTION TO THE CAMPAIGN

The #andshecycles campaign was developed to explore, understand, and address barriers to cycling for teenage girls. It focuses on encouraging young women -especially teenagers- to embrace the practice of cycling, while recognising and discussing why they feel that cycling might not be for them and investigating potential solutions to overcome the identified obstacles. Despite the gender specific title of the campaign, #andshecycles aims to be inclusive of trans and intersex women and girls, as well as non-binary and gender fluid people who are comfortable in a space that centres the experience of young women.

This campaign originated from a curiosity about the cycling gender gap in Irish second-level schools and is aimed at exploring why, in Ireland, almost no teenage girls cycle to school when teenage boys frequently do so. The #andshecycles research shows that cycling for girls is not nearly as accessible as cycling for boys.

Across Ireland, data proves that only 0.4% (1 in 250) of girls cycle to school regularly, compared to 3.7% (1 in 25) of teenage boys (Central Statistics Office, 2016).

Additional data supporting the reasoning behind this campaign can be found in the academic paper “The Social Practice of Cycling as ‘A Boy’s Thing’ in Irish Secondary Schools” developed by Dr Robert Egan and former Green-Schools Travel Manager Jane Hackett.



From conducting focus groups with teenage girls, it has been found that the biggest reasons so few teenage girls cycle are:

1. 'Uncool' stigma attached to girls cycling.
2. Intimidating behaviour from teenage boys and men.
3. Feeling unsafe on the road - lack of appropriate infrastructure.
4. Lack of confidence cycling on the road.
5. School bags and uniform.
6. Unappealing cycling attire - helmet, high-vis etc.

The purpose of the #andshecycles campaign is to increase the number of teenage girls cycling to school, and at the same time to steer away from an unrealistic old-fashioned image that girls, when cycling, need to look a certain way. Combining the inclusive nature of the campaign and the purpose of breaking biases and stereotypes on gender linked to cycling, #andshecycles attempts to deviate from the standards of femininity and "traditional beauty" that society imposes and tries to make cycling accessible to all girls, regardless of if they want to maintain "femininity standards" or not.

"I feel like you just need one person to do it"

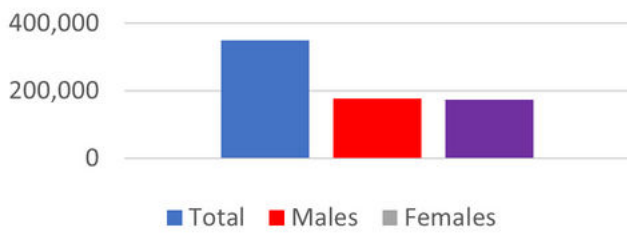
-#andshecycles Focus Group Participant



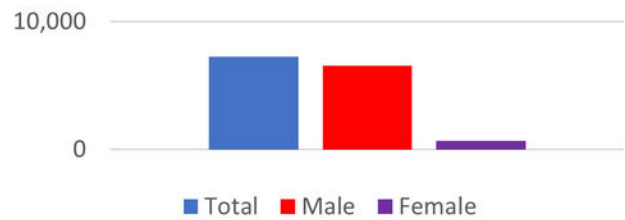
"They think women can't ride bicycles. We will show them we can do anything"

-Manjula, Garment Factory Labourer and Cyclist

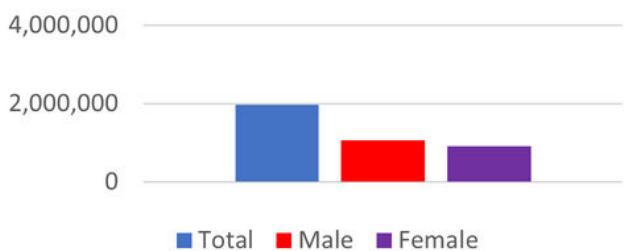
Students at school or college between 13 – 18 years:



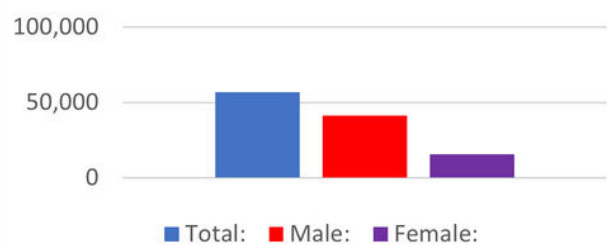
Students at school or college 13-18 years with cycling as means of travel:



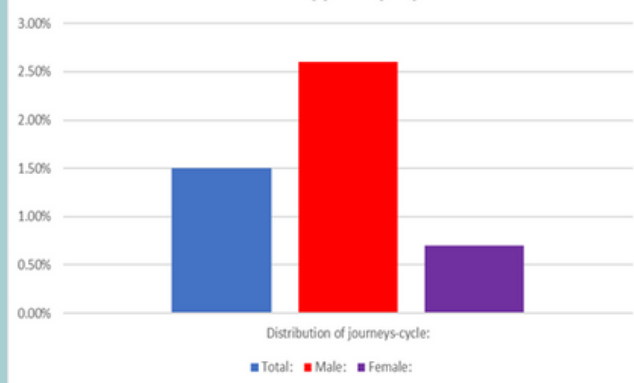
Population 15 years + at work:



Population 15+ at work with cycling as means of travel:



Distribution of journeys-cycles:



(Data taken from 2016 central statistic office)

The obstacles that discourage young women from cycling, identified in the research paper and in the focus-groups carried out during the initial phase of the campaign, are several and of a different nature: from lack of infrastructure and safety concerns, to gender regulation & practical problems (e.g.: having to wear a skirt as part of the school uniform).

One of the biggest deterrents however can be linked to social concerns and peer pressure, as well as harassment on the roads from drivers and men, general perception of being “uncool” and incompatibility with femininity. The aim of this toolkit is to provide a guide for possible solutions to each problem.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TOOLKIT

This toolkit aims to support all teachers and students interested in developing the #andshecycles campaign in their school. As the campaign's title suggests, the main focus of #andshecycles is teenage girls, however, both the campaign and specifically this toolkit aim at being inclusive of trans and intersex women and girls, as well as non-binary and gender fluid people who are comfortable in a space that centres the experience of young women.

The toolkit is available to everyone (independently from what Green-Schools theme the school is currently working on, if any) and it can be used in different ways depending on individual needs and desires. These resources are designed for Secondary School students 1st - 6th years but if teachers consider it an appropriate resource for a certain group of students it can be used for senior pupils in a Primary Education setting. The aim of this toolkit is to not only achieve a greater awareness on cycling and gender equality, but it is also to encourage students to explore activism, allowing them to become confident in taking ownership of a project from start to finish.

Using this toolkit students will learn how to design, develop, and implement a campaign. They will have the opportunity to experience how to act as leaders, as well as to practise teamwork, and they will develop different skills such as:

effective communication, problem-solving, collaborative thinking, organisational and planning skills, effective writing, relevant use of social media, and more.

"If you see a
lad on a bike
it's not really that
different"

-#andshecycles Focus Group Participant

Below is a short list of things the toolkit will be able to support you with:

- It will provide ideas on how to open the conversation about cycling, the gender gap and young women's empowerment
- It will give you insights on the practices of advocacy, activism, and leadership for you to use while developing your campaign
- It will lay out a list of actions that can be taken in schools to decrease the gender gap in cycling as well as practical tips on how to complete them
- It will provide links to valuable resources, websites, and initiatives that could be helpful for your campaign
- It will direct you towards possible useful contacts that could help you implement the campaign
- It will present valuable tips on how to approach Local Authorities and how to write a formal letter

What do you need to run an #andshecycles campaign?

- Enthusiasm and ability to work as part of a team
- An interest in cycling and gender equality (or at least in one of them)
- Motivation to bring about change within your school

Because #andshecycles is an existing national campaign, your own campaign should align with our ethos and the colour scheme of our branding. (Colour scheme details and branding guidance, Appendix 7)

The following section will present a series of actions that can be adopted by students, to develop their own #andshecycles campaign. As we value creativity and initiative, a non-exhaustive list of activities is presented; this should not limit students in exploring and pursuing different actions from those suggested.

Despite this toolkit having been designed specifically for implementing the #andshecycles campaign, the use of it shouldn't necessarily be restricted to the implementation of a cycling related initiative and doesn't exclude students who are not interested or comfortable with cycling. The main purpose of this document is to facilitate dialogue and actions centred around gender equality and young female empowerment.



What do we need a campaign for?

- Informing and educating about a certain topic
- Mobilising and involving people to act
- Pressuring decision makers
- Changing behaviours and attitudes
- Persuading people to support your cause
- Building a positive image for your organization (in this case your school)

What are the steps to follow to develop your own #andshecycles campaign?

1. Create your team. How many people in your school are interested in being part of the campaign? Advertise the campaign, open applications to be part of the team (you could do it online or organise a "sign up day").

2. Work out a clear action plan and set up a list of outcomes you would like to obtain from your campaign. Define your objectives by following the steps below:

- a. An objective should be measurable, you should be able to count or measure what you have achieved
- b. An objective should have a time frame or deadline, by when will you have achieved it
- c. An objective must be realistic and achievable

3. Define tasks and responsibilities. Once you have your team in place make sure that everyone can contribute something, assign tasks and duties to each member. Responsibilities can be shared, and tasks can be assigned on a rotation basis as well, whatever works best for your team (e.g.: one month person X is the meeting organiser and minute taker, person Y will run social media and person Z will communicate with stakeholders, and then you change).

1. Work out the phases on how to implement your action, define a timeline for each outcome that you hope to achieve.
2. Inform and involve your stakeholders (e.g., local businesses, community groups, local authorities) about your campaign and reach out for potential help or possibilities to partner up.
3. Evaluate every campaign step or results with the whole team and remember to learn from your mistakes.
4. Make sure to keep informing the public (your school specifically) about what you are working on and share your successes!

Actions we liked that were carried out by previous #andshecycles Ambassadors

1. Carrying out a survey to understand the barriers that girls at your school face when cycling, can be a good starting point in knowing what issues you will focus on changing.
2. Giving tokens/raffle tickets to students who cycle to school can be a great incentive.
3. Conducting some research to identify how many girls would rather cycle with a friend to create a type of bike buddy scheme.
4. Investigating rental bikes for students, because sometimes the lack of an actual bike is the main barrier stopping girls from cycling. Perhaps approach rental companies for off-season rates or ask the school Board of Management to consider buying bikes and renting in the same way as schoolbooks.

"I began to feel that myself plus the bicycle equalled myself plus the world"

-Francis E. Willard, Suffragist



"I'd cycle if more girls did "

-#andshecycles Focus Group Participant

ACTION PLAN

5. Senator Pauline O'Reilly was invited to speak to students on women and cycling which was a wonderful and inspirational event.

Action Plan Template (appendix 1)

- What do we want to happen?
- What steps do we need to take?
- Who do we need support from/who can help us make it happen?
- What key messages can we communicate?
- What do the school pupils need to know (general key message)?
- What materials/resources/support would be needed for this?

Some actions you might like to think about are:

1. Conduct a survey in your school to find out why girls are not cycling to school.
2. Carry out a cycleability audit, to look at how easy, safe, and enjoyable it is to cycle in the school's proximity while also identifying hazards.
3. Inform the school community about what you are doing through social media.
4. Provide links to websites and apps to provide information on good cycle routes.

5. Develop a workshop or a presentation to give to the students in your school.

6. Organise an awareness raising event, about what you are doing, why you think cycling is important and what can be done to encourage more girls in your school to cycle.

7. Create a petition about changes you want made. This could be to wear trousers as part of the uniform or to improve cycling infrastructure.

8. Write letters to your local TDs and to the local authorities about the lack of infrastructure or hazards that are near the school. (See appendix 2.)

9. Prepare media releases to publicise the work you are doing. (See appendix 3.)

10. Be an influencer in your school and community. (See appendix 4.)

11. Create a zine. (See appendix 5.)

12. Create a blog or a vlog.

13. Organise a poster making workshop discussing the benefits of cycling, highlighting things such as independence, health benefits, and environmental benefits.

14. Organise a bike parts artwork/sculpture project asking friend and family to donate parts.

15. Paint a mural promoting cycling on the school grounds.

16. Hold bike maintenance, bike safety, and/or bike skills workshops.

17. Set up a bring a buddy to school programme, where a more confident cyclist is happy to cycle with someone else to school, who is less confident.

18. Arrange cycling lessons as part of PE class.

19. Host fundraising events, this can be to pay for cycle shorts to wear under skirts, bike equipment, bike rental etc.

20. Try and get rental bikes so students who don't have bikes can also cycle.

21. Speak with the Board of Management to see if a bike rental system could work on the same basis as the book rental system.

22. Try to organise cycle parking for your school through Green Schools (if on the Travel or GC Travel theme), the local authorities, local businesses.

23. Ask the local Gardaí to come to the school to mark all the bikes in the event any are stolen and can therefore be easily identified.

24. Talk to your principal and Board of Management about the uniform, if this is one of the reasons there are less cyclists.

25. Set up after school club bike rides for everyone, not just sporty types of rides, but fun ones too.

26. Invite a cycling role model to come to the school and give a talk to the students.

27. Organise challenges and incentives to promote cycling. E.g., points for the most days cycled, the longest distance cycled, being a cycle buddy etc. Prizes can be given for different categories. Contact local bike shops to see if they will offer some prizes.

28. Write an article for the local newspaper.

29. Create a podcast.

30. Interview well known cyclists and include this in your blog/vlog/local newspaper article/podcast.

31. Organise school art projects using recycled bicycle parts.

32. Encourage the teachers and other staff to also cycle to school.

33. Hold bike blinging/helmet blinging workshops.

34. Organise a space to store helmets in the school.

35. Organise a flash-mob.

36. Set up a book club.

37. Show films/documentaries.

38. Other events could include poetry or art etc.

**"They think
women can't ride
bicycles. We will
show them we can
do anything"**

-Manjula, Garment Factory Labourer and Cyclist

39. Encourage all girls to cycle on International Women's Day (8th March).
40. Organise group cycle activities e.g., to the local park and finish with a picnic.
41. Have an end of year cycle to celebrate all your achievements.
42. Promote a bike-a-thon. This is where the whole school attempts to cycle a certain distance. One previous ambassador organised for her school to attempt to cycle the length of the Tour de France.

Some useful tips

1. Remember your goals, especially when working in a group. Be aware of timelines, who is responsible for what action and be realistic with your ideas and plans.
2. Who in your community can help with infrastructural changes? Contact local authorities and local TDs.
3. Consider a focus group led by a teacher or gather a group of students in your school to discuss cycling. It might be quicker and easier than a full school survey and will allow you to focus your actions/activities on relevant audience and goals.
4. Get in touch with your Green-Schools Officer and see if they can offer your school bike maintenance workshops, cycling skills workshops and help with cycleability audits. Bike shops and Men's Sheds might also be happy to offer bike maintenance workshops.

5. Funding is available for school cycling events during National Bike Week. Why not contact your local Sports Partnership or Local Authority and apply.

6. Focus groups can be quicker and easier to organise than a full school survey, and students are often more comfortable in sharing information in this setting. Appendix 8 provides a focus group guide along with some questions which could be used.

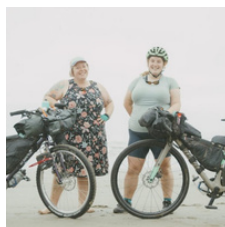
Inspirational Role Models



Lara Gillespie – International Irish cyclist, multiple discipline National Champion, and owner of European Track and bronze world medals at Junior World Track champs.



Katie-George Dunlevy and Eve McCrystal
The tandem “dream team” are amongst the most successful para-athletes to represent Ireland, consistently winning medals at World and Paralympic Games.



Kailey Kornhauser and Marley Blonsky
Co-founders of ‘All Bodies On Bikes’, a movement to create and foster a size inclusive bike community.



Annie Londonderry - Annie Cohen Kopchovsky, a Jewish Latvian immigrant in the US, who became the first woman to cycle around the world in 1894-95.



Sidsel Birk Hjuler – One of the reasons Denmark is the most bike-friendly country worldwide. She is the Head of Office for Cycle Superhighways in Copenhagen's Capital Region.



Dervla Murphy - Travel writer who famously journeyed alone from Ireland to India in 1963.

ADVOCACY, ACTIVISM AND LEADERSHIP

The #andshecycles programme is the perfect platform to inspire young women to engage in activism and amplify their voices. Climate change disproportionality affects the world's most vulnerable and therefore, amplifies issues of gender inequality. Although climate change can cause threat and anxiety, #andshecycles empowers girls to take sustainable modes of transport and contribute to meaningful change in local, regional, and national contexts.

This section of the toolkit will touch on how to promote advocacy, activism and leadership skills while engaging with the #andshecycles programme. Appendix 6 is an interesting document on how to empower women in the transportation sector. Although not relevant just to cycling, we thought it could be useful to get a general picture of the role of gender, in the transportation sector.

Empowering girls to become leaders

Education

By providing unbiased and factual information about the climate crisis, young women will feel more empowered to become a part of the solution. Keeping students in the loop may also ease climate anxieties and guilt.

Upskilling

If working on the Travel or GC Travel theme, Travel Officers offer a number of workshops and events that will provide girls with skills that enable them to participate in active travel e.g., bike skills, puncture repair. There are several other groups that can provide these workshops such as local bike shops, men's sheds, sports partnerships, and community groups.

Role Modelling

Although not always in the spotlight,

there are many role models that act as inspiration for young female cyclists. Some are mentioned in this toolkit. But why not get staff involved? Having women cycle to school will break down stigma and encourage students to get involved.



Advocacy and Activism

A simple, yet effective, mode of youth participation is 'do-it-ourselves' activism. The main aim is for girls to feel that their participation is meaningful and is contributing to change. Advocacy and activism can take many forms and can be altered depending on concerns and desired outcomes.

Creating and Signing Petitions

Signing petitions is an easy way to demonstrate your support for campaigns. Creating petitions can give a space for external support for your school's actions of the #andshecycles programme.

Artistic and Cultural Expression

Giving girls the space to express their worries and requests through art can attract attention to your campaign. This can take many forms such as video production, banners in the hallway and short plays or podcasting.

Writing to your local representatives

It might be a good idea to host a letter writing workshop where students can express their worries, concerns and desires regarding cycling to school. This can be used as an example of how the school campaign can result in regional change. (See appendix 2 for a template).

Media

Students could contact local media outlets to promote their campaign, address issues surrounding active travel and gain support from the local area.

Tackling Climate Anxiety and Activism Fatigue

The imminent climate crisis can cause a lot of stress and anxiety, particularly for young people who can feel helpless. It is important when participating in advocacy and activism that educators support students to feel empowered. Here are our top tips for taking care of your mind, body, and soul while being part of the movement.

Take a break

From time to time, keeping up with climate news might seem overwhelming. It is ok to take a break from the media and to take time to focus on yourself.



Focus on what you can control

The fight against climate change is a huge and complex issue. It is not the responsibility of one student or one school to do all the work. The #andshecycles programme is just one way that you can join the fight against climate change and make a difference in your school community. There are many achievable goals that can be set which will make a huge difference!

Follow some climate positive pages

Following some Instagram pages such as @officialhappyeconews and @the_happy_broadcast is a great way to keep up with all the positive work being done to combat climate change!



Interesting Links

Official #andshecycles video
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-yVd4k6G8mE>

Cycling Ireland

<https://www.cyclingireland.ie/get-involved/initiatives/women-in-sport/>

Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) - Women in Cycling

<https://www.uci.org/article/women-in-cycling-worldwide-initiative-to-boost-equality-and-diversity-in-cycling/6W6Km3IWEg5OXA8ZjSTVG>
G

All Bodies On Bikes

<https://www.allbodiesonbikes.com>

Women Mobilize Women

<https://womenmobilize.org>

Get Women Cycling (GWC):

<https://www.getwomencycling.com/>

World Bicycle Relief

<https://worldbicyclerelief.org/who-we-are/>

<https://worldbicyclerelief.org/how-women-cycled-their-way-to-freedom/>

Sustrans

<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/>

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Action Plan template

Please use the following aim and objectives when planning your actions.

Aim & Objectives

“to take action to enable and empower teenage girls to cycle to school”

1. Develop role models and leaders for school cycling amongst teenage girls
2. Empower teenage girls to shape the cycle-friendliness of their institutions
3. Provide opportunities for teenage girls to cycle

Please answer the following questions	Answers
What is your name?	
What are your team members name(s) <i>(only answer if you are part of a team. Each team member must submit their own Action Plan)</i> ?	
How many girls regularly cycle to school at the moment?	

Action Plan

Please list in the table below all actions you plan on taking, the rough date they are to be completed by, the number of people you wish to reach with each action and the people involved in these actions.

Action Description	Start Date	Expected Finish Date	Potential no. of people engaged	Responsible Person
			i.e. no. of people you hope will be directly involved in the action.	i.e. who needs to be involved to complete this action?

Appendix 2. Letter template

1. Hello,
2. My name is...
3. I live at...
4. My story
 - a. I want _____ because I am concerned about...
 - b. I felt frightened by a bad experience when...
5. (The change I want) would make my life better and safer by _____
6. I ask you to support (specific action, date, location)
7. There is no need to respond to me / Please let me know your thoughts
8. Thank you for your consideration
9. Kind regards
10. (Name)

Appendix 3. Media release

1. Who you are e.g., #andshecycles advocates for X school
2. Accessible contact(s) for more information or interview
3. A compelling, concise headline
4. What you want
5. Facts and figures: details of event, key statistics
6. Quote from named person
7. Ample white space
8. Provide a photograph and caption

Appendix 4. Be an influencer

Following the survey/focus groups/interviews that you have carried out, choose one of the top barriers to cycling that was mentioned.

1. Think about what information/advice/resources are needed to overcome this barrier.
2. Research and design a series of Instagram/TikTok posts that could be used to help address this barrier. Anything goes, inspirational videos, creative photos, practical information. Feel free to tag us #@andshecycles.
3. Think about what type of posts/information you would like to see that would help to overcome these barriers.

Appendix 5. Create a Zine

Zines are generally produced in the format of a small booklet or magazine and are made up of a collection of things such as:

- Sketches, drawings, and mini comics
- A mixture of words with images and textures
- Lines of poetry
- Cuttings from other printed media such as magazines and newspapers
- Short stories or pieces of creative writing
- ...the list goes on

What you include in a zine is only limited by your imagination. Your zine could summarise the findings of the survey/focus groups/interviews and describe either the benefits of cycling or the barriers to cycling.

Appendix 6. Five principles to empower women in transport

Women face different challenges when it comes to mobility, whether it is inclusion, safety, accessibility or entering the workforce in the transport sector. The Transforming Urban Mobility Initiative (TUMI) has identified 5 Principles to empower women in transport:

- Study and understand women's mobility
- Develop inclusive mobility services
- Ensure women's safety in transport systems
- Empower women in the transport sector
- Create awareness and stimulate behavioural change



Appendix 7. Colour scheme details and branding guidance

#andshecycles Official Branding

Design, colours, fonts and delivery

The #andshecycles logo and identities have been developed to be classic with the intent that the campaign identity does not age to passing trends. The fine and un-stylised font style is neutral and non-gender specific in terms of perceived aesthetic. The monochrome palette is bold and impactful to appeal to a youth audience, with a modern accent of teal to communicate an environmental connotation of cycling as a sustainable mode of travel. The hashtag symbol invites discussion around the campaign while the highlighted twin horizontal lines symbolises the issue that at present there are inequalities associated with gender balance in cycling.

The colours used in the #andshecycles brand family are coordinated with pantone colours and should be for both print and digital media.

When referring to the #andshecycles campaign on online or in written format, always include the # symbol, keep each letter in lower case with no gaps or spaces and avoid changing or adapting the hashtag in any way. The hashtag has a consistent presence on social media since 2019, and when used online the hashtag serves encourage public dialogue, raise awareness on the issue of gender and cycling, and enables Green-Schools to monitor public attitudes and engagement with the campaign.

1.0 // Design



#andshecycles Logos

Each of the three official logos are available in .eps, .jpeg and .png formats at <https://greenschoolsireland.org/andshecycles-communication-toolkit/>.



Dos and don'ts

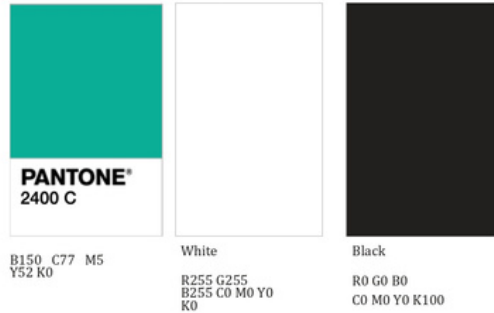
Following these simple rules prevents our logos from losing legibility but also ensures consistency and campaign integrity, wherever they are being used.

- Do use the logo in correct proportions and colours at a size that allows all text to be clearly legible.
- Do not change or manipulate the logo in any way or add additional identities such as a company or sponsor.
- Do not change, swap or invert the colours of the logo in any way.

- Do not stretch the logo horizontally or vertically. Always scale the size in proportion.
- Do not use the logo at a size that means the text becomes illegible.
- Do not use the transparent logo on very dark backgrounds. The black or white based logo should be used on such coloured backgrounds so that the #andshecycles graphic is legible.
- Do not crop or fit the logo into a small space that does not adhere to the exclusion zone. Provide printers with a bleed zone suitable for the print format size and adjust the background accordingly.

2.1 // Colours

There are three colours in the black based logo; black, white and teal. To ensure the logo is processed clearly ensure the black base is solid black (R0 G0 B0 / C0 M0 Y0 K100).



1.2 // Fonts

Only use the recommended font as the primary font when producing brand material as this allows the campaign to have consistency identity throughout all publications.

UltimaPDac-UltraLight is a basic sans serif font, by Alan Prescott and is available for free download and free use

21 // andshecycles logo_3colour.eps



22 // andshecycles logo_3colour.eps



23 // andshecycles logo_2colour_transparent.



24 // andshecycles logo_3colour.eps

Three colour official logo with black base for use in most print circumstances. Use RGB for web use. Also available in Twitter, Facebook, and HDV1080 specifications.

22 // andshecycles logo_2colour_white.eps

Two colour logo with white base for use in some print circumstances, such as headers/footers.

23 // andshecycles logo_2colour_transparent.eps

Two colour logo with transparent base for use in some print circumstances, such as posters, slides, reports or for use on dark backgrounds and images

24 // andshecycles_tilehashtag_3colour.png

Three colour official icon with black base for use in some print and online circumstances, such as instagram. Also available in .jpeg

25 // andshecycles_IGTV_hashtag_3colour.png

Three colour official icon with black base for use as IGTV cover

24 // andshecycles_tilehashtag_3colour.png



25 // andshecycles_IGTV_hashtag_3colour.png



Appendix 8. Focus group guide

Introduction

Focus groups are a technique for data collection that are based on group discussion and interaction. Unlike interviews, which are one-on-one, focus groups involve one or two moderators and a group of participants, in which the moderator(s) sets out the topics for discussion and stimulates the group to talk and discuss these topics amongst one another.

Focus groups are excellent tools for exploring sensitive topics and for understanding how people think and form opinions. Since our research is on a sensitive topic, focus groups are an ideal method, since they not only allow for peer support and solidarity on sensitive topics, but also enable participants to feed off and add to one another's recollection of experiences for a group that may otherwise be reluctant to speak.

There is no such thing as doing focus groups 'wrong' or 'right', just 'better' or 'worse', the aim is to facilitate rich qualitative data collection relevant to participants and the topic of interest.

Organising Focus Groups

1. Voluntary Involvement: first, approach the Principal to explain the project. Following approval, in liaison with the GS Coordinator, go about recruiting students to take part in the focus group.
2. Participants/Group Composition: Diversity is desirable in focus groups, so the cycling gender gap is widely explored and understood. It is desirable to have a mix of girls who cycle and girls who don't. It may be preferable to have girls in the focus group that are within three academic years of one another (e.g., 3rd year to 6th year) rather than having a massive age gap (e.g., 1st year and 6th year) which may lead to very quiet 1st years. However, this could be beneficial if discussion did occur between year groups due to potential differences in experience and perceptions. Ultimately, you can experiment to see what works in your focus groups. Strive for a diversity of cycling experience and a three-year school year similarity if possible. In terms of number, 6 to 8 participants are ideal. Any less and there may be insufficient group interaction, any more and the same problem may occur or the group may become difficult to manage with too many fighting to speak. If there are 12 or more, it is favourable to have separate focus groups at different times (or moderated separately).

3. Moderators: two moderators are favourable over one. Moderators may co-moderate, asking questions at different times or one may take notes while the other focuses on facilitating the group. The gender of the moderator is likely less important than the skill of moderator.

4. Setting: choose a private, quiet, comfortable setting, with minimal posters or art that may influence the discussion. An empty classroom or meeting room may be suitable. Sitting around in a circle or table is fine. Much like workshops, the moderator should be seated along with the group in an egalitarian way so that participants feel that no undue authority or management of the group is taking place and, consequently, that they have the freedom to talk and lead aspects of discussion. If a projector is available, use this to screen the #andshecycles video if you think it is helpful following the focus group briefing (see below: 'Moderating Focus Groups').

5. Recording & Note-Book: audio record your focus group, placing the phone (or whatever recording device) in the centre of the group so that all voices can be clearly heard. Test this yourself to ensure it works well in advance of the group (and, if possible, in the setting where the group will take place) and make sure your battery is charged (bring a charger or backup if needed). Also, bring a notebook for you or the co-moderator to take notes during the focus group for your own records/local activities.

Moderating Focus Groups

Here are the practical steps for moderating a focus group. Excluding the briefing and debriefing phases, these are flexible guidelines NOT rules. Again, focus groups are not done wrong or right, but better or worse, the aim is to generate rich data relevant to the topic of interest and participants:

1. Briefing (including Assurances & Introductions): to create a comfortable and supportive atmosphere and ensure participants know what the focus group and research is about, briefing at the beginning of the focus group is crucial.

i. Explain the aim of the research and what it will be used for.

ii. Emphasise that the focus group is about the group and not you, the moderator, and describe your role (i.e., gently steering and prompting discussion relevant to girl's experiences and perceptions of cycling) and their role (to talk and discuss or even debate among one another their experiences and perceptions of cycling).

iii. Introduce yourself and share something about yourself and invite the group to do the same in a circle (i.e. name and something about themselves - both to build rapport and for the purposes of transcription N.B.: cannot transcribe if participants cannot be identified in audio recording).

2. Stimulus Material: following the briefing, the [#andshcycles](#) video can be used as a conversation starter/point of discussion to kick off the focus group. Consider screening this if a projector is available to break the ice and provoke thought.

3. Open Questions: start with open, general questions to get participants warmed up and reflecting before tackling specific, thematic areas. However, this is a flexible strategy and will depend on the degree of comfort of your group and where they decide to bring the discussion; so, be willing to go with flow if emerging discussion is relevant to the topic. Avoid the use of 'why' questions - these can lead to overly abstract responses which means the details of everyday experiences are lost.

4. Thematic Questions: some or all these questions may be asked over the course of the focus group following talk and discussion relevant to the general open questions. It is likely that many areas will emerge naturally following some of the open questions so there may be no need to ask, or they may simply be added to progress group discussion.

5. Follow-Up Questions: follow up questions are split into three categories: 'probes' (used to follow up any questions or account in order to 'probe' more depth and detail), 'clarifications' (to clarify meaning and understanding of what is being said), and 'prompts' (to encourage participants to talk or discuss more). It is likely that you may only have to ask one or two open questions and from there use follow up questions to gently steer emerging discussions.

6. Steering Discussion/Group Interaction: in the case of a dominating speaker or off topic discussion, you can first use non-verbal cues such as focusing attention/nodding to those who are staying on topic and, if necessary, reminding the group of the aim of the research in a tactful manner.

7. Debriefing: following the conclusion of the focus group based on ample discussion (or, more likely, time limitations), give the group an opportunity to raise any questions/concerns and offer the chance (if you feel necessary) for them to request aspects of what they said to be omitted from transcripts.

8. Notetaking: take notes as moderator or co-moderator regarding key topics of discussion that were particularly relevant, quotes from participants, observations on group dynamics if useful, and as a memory guide for areas to follow up with participants so you do not have to interrupt them. More notes/observations can be taken after focus groups.

9. Recording: see above (Organising Focus Groups).

Focus group questions

Open Questions:

- Having watched the #andshecycles campaign video, what's your experience of cycling (to school)?
- Do any aspects of the video resonate with you? Are there aspects you agree/disagree with?
- What's on your mind when you are cycling?
- What sorts of problems do you encounter when you are cycling?
- Are there any particular things that deter you from cycling (to school)?
- Are there any particular things that enable/motivate you to cycle to school?
- When was the last time you cycled and what happened?
- How do you view cycling? What is your perspective on it as a means of travel? (e.g., cool/attractive/fun etc.)

Specific questions:

- Cool/uncool status: In your opinion, is cycling 'cool'?
- Stigma: Do you think you are/would be stigmatised for cycling?
- Harassment/intimidation: Do you ever experience intimidating behaviour or unwanted attention when cycling?
- Clothing/gear: Do you think uniforms/safety gear would influence your decision to cycle or not?
- Infrastructure: How do you find cycling infrastructure?

Follow up question examples

Probes:

- That's interesting, could you tell me more about..?
- Could you describe in more detail what you mean by...?
- Could you tell me, in your own words, how would you describe this?

Clarifications:

- You mentioned x..., could you clarify what you mean when say x?
- My understanding of what you said is x, is this accurate?

Prompts:

- Use silence – it gives participants the chance to think and builds pressure to speak
- Nodding to encourage more discussion
- I noticed you nodded when x said x, does this resonate with you?

Debrief:

- Participant Concerns/Questions, anything said to be deleted from transcripts?

Ethics considerations:

- If a participant becomes distressed, you can ask:
- Are you comfortable talking about this?
- Are you feeling OK?
- Do you want to carry on, or would you would you like to take a break, or would you prefer to leave the focus group?

Useful Links

Green Schools Website: www.greenschoolsireland.org

Green Schools Staff: www.greenschoolsireland.org/about/our-people/

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