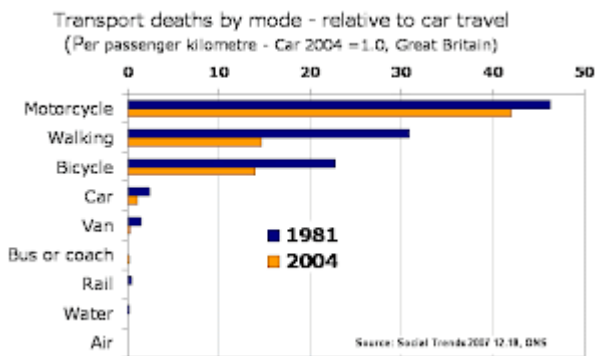


Cyclists - obey the law and die...!



Women are more at risk of dying in cycle accidents, it seems, because they are more likely to obey the law and stop at traffic lights than the typical male 'warrior of the road' [see article in The Times: [Women cyclists 'risk death' by obeying traffic lights](#)].

After endless close shaves or nerve grinding moments, every cyclist eventually comes to feel risk instinctively. (One of the obvious consequences of the recent expansion of cycling in London is the large number of new cyclists who haven't yet developed this instinct, and are apparently oblivious to hair-raising situations!). But I can believe the report about jumping lights being safer - one of the risky moments is pulling away from traffic lights when other traffic or pedestrians can make quite unpredictable moves and it is easy not to be seen. From now on, I resolve to carefully disobey traffic lights where this will reduce risk - it's a health and safety matter, or even a matter of survival. But what do we know of the risks...?

And survive we must because per kilometre, a cyclist is 14 times as likely to be killed as car user. The chart shows the risk relative to car driving [data from [Social Trends 2007 table 12.18](#)]. Good news is that the mortality rate has halved since 1981 for cyclists... but the data still give the lie to the familiar complaint from car users that cyclists are dangerous: "endangered" would be a better word. Motorcyclists over 40 times as likely to die per kilometre, and that has barely fallen. Is that just unlucky, inherently dangerous - or is motorcycle use preselected by people with high risk appetites?

The data of course reveal the extremely low risks for rail travel - but that won't stop billions being spent on rail safety awhile a few token quid will go on motorcycle safety.