

5 FEMALE POWERED TWO-WHEELER DRIVERS

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Even today, it is still unusual to see females driving powered two-wheelers (PTWs) on French roads. However, their numbers are increasing, allowing scientists to reveal the importance of gender in risky driving behaviours.

“Female motorcyclists” – a little-known category of road users

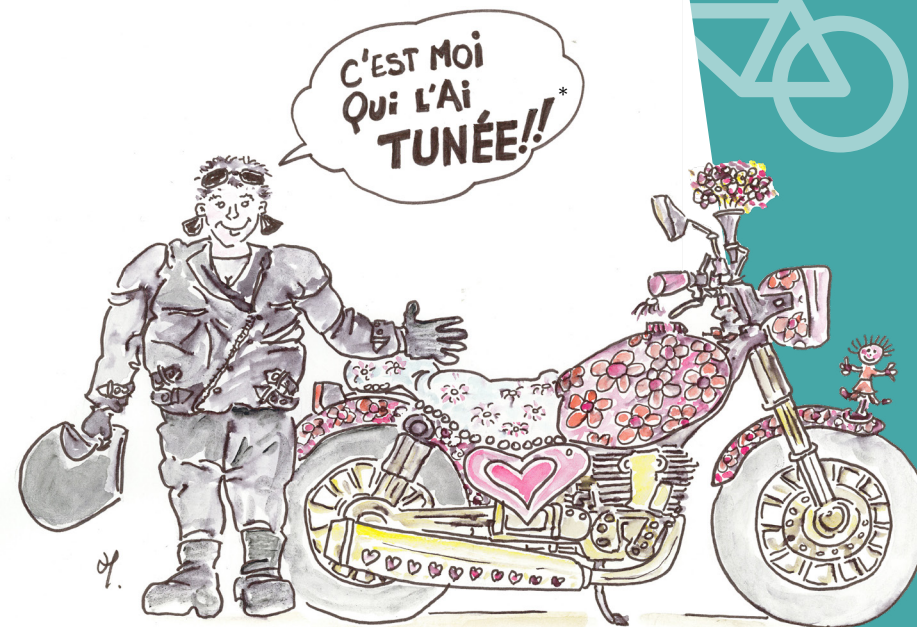
Currently, research that deals with PTW drivers³ takes no, or very little, account of gender differences. Only one study^a, whose findings were published in 2009 and reported in the specialised press, has shown that more and more women are driving PTW, notably large motorcycles (women accounted for 5% of the riders of motorcycles with an engine capacity of over 125cm³ in 2002 and 10% in 2012^b). Modern society is gradually coming to accept and recognise female motorcyclists in the very masculine world of motorcycling. At present, few scientific publications and little information for the general public exist on this topic. To fill this gap, IFSTTAR is carrying out work to highlight the differences between male and female PTW drivers with regard to accident risk and behaviour on the road.

Some differences between female and male powered two-wheeler drivers

The French National Traffic Accident Register (BAAC⁴) shows that women are considerably less frequently involved than men in personal injury PTW crashes, and that this difference is even more marked in the case of fatal crashes^c.

More precisely, an examination of the risky behaviours of the drivers of heavy motorcycles^d shows that men commit more road traffic violations and take more deliberate risks than women. Nevertheless, females who ride mopeds (≥ 50 cm³) are increasingly exhibiting risky and illegal behaviours, unlike female motorcyclists. In the light of these observations, an additional study has shown that gender (masculine/feminine) has a greater impact on risky behaviours than sex (male/female)^e. Indeed, the results show that individuals with high masculinity and low femininity report that they commit more violations. In contrast, individuals with high femininity and low masculinity report that they make more driving errors⁵.

The issue of gender thus provides new opportunities for studying the risky behaviours of PTW drivers.



* I tuned it myself!

1. TS2: Transport, Health, Safety Department
2. LMA: Laboratory of Accident Mechanism Analysis
3. PTW: Powered two-wheelers
4. The Bulletins d'Analyse des Accidents de la Circulation are forms that are filled in by the Police and Gendarmerie following a personal injury crash which they attended. Together they form a database.
5. Sex refers to the biological and physiological factors which differentiate males and females (anatomy, reproductive system and secondary sexual characteristics), while gender is a social construction which refers to social roles based on the beliefs and stereotypes associated with each sex (masculine and/or feminine roles).

Further readings

- a. Fradet, A.-H., *Portrait du conducteur de 2 roues d'aujourd'hui* (No. 410F80) (p. 87). Paris: GEMA Prévention / TNS Sofres, 2009.
- b. ONISR, *La sécurité routière en France. Bilan de l'accidentalité de l'année 2013* (La Documentation Française). Paris, 2015.
- c. Coquelet, C., Granié, M.-A., & Griffet, J., *Les femmes en deux-roues motorisés: Evolution de l'accidentalité*. Poster presentation presented at the 10^e Journée de l'Ecole Doctorale Sciences du Mouvement Humain, Montpellier, 2014.
- d. Coquelet, C., Granié, M.-A., & Griffet, J. (soumis), *Sex and Age Differences on Risky Behaviors Among French Motorcycle Riders*. Traffic Injury Prevention.
- e. Coquelet, C., Granié, M.-A., & Griffet, J., *Conformity to gender stereotypes, motives for riding and aberrant behaviors of French motorcycle riders*. Journal of Risk Research, 2018. DOI: 10.1080/13669877.2018.1454494.



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