

# A Bibliography of Helmet and Motorcycle Safety Studies

by Drew Avery

The following pages are a bibliography of some of the helmet studies and information available out there. Now that you have them what do you do with them? This is where it can get tricky and a little confusing if you are not into statistics. Most of these studies are directed by the author to other members of his or her profession, which is usually the medical or statistical field, and therefore need some translating for normal people to understand.

These surveys, for the most part, try to prove that helmets play a statistically significant role in reducing deaths and injuries. Yet, they also tend to treat helmets as the causal factor without taking into account any other factors. It is very easy to present something as statistically significant without it actually being associated or only being partially associated.

Confused? All right here's an example: there is a statistically significant correlation between the Ganges River in India flooding its banks and street crime in New York City. Every time the Ganges floods, street crime goes up.

What is the connection? Are muggers in New York somehow tuned in to the Ganges? No, both events happen in the spring when the weather gets warmer. We have two events with no connection, yet it is possible to prove a statistical correlation. Most of the helmet studies use the helmet as the only causal effect without taking into account any other factors, like level of experience, weather or even alcohol involvement.

So, why bother with them? Because as Mike Lewis said in the MRF White Papers (Vol. 2), we are in a war, and any veteran can tell you that to win you have to know your enemies' strengths and weaknesses.

You have to be familiar with a survey before you can effectively argue against it. Possibly some of the best rebuttals can be found in the series of articles by Prof. J. Goldstein. His articles, while extremely technical, do an excellent job of showing the difference between causality and correlation.

The easiest way to obtain copies of this information is to ask a friendly college student to hit their library. Most of the journal articles can be found there, or can be ordered for little to no cost. The government information is sometimes available at a government repository or can be ordered directly from NTIS. If ordered from NTIS, the cheapest way is to get the microfiches, which are only \$9.00 each. A paper copy of a report can run up to \$80.00.

The MRF is setting up a central library at the main office in Washington, D.C. This should be operational by the end of summer 1995. In connection with that, we are interested in any additional information that is available out there. Newspaper articles, local studies, state handouts, legal documentation, etc. can be sent to me at the address below. We are interested in anything pertaining to motorcyclists' rights, including RICO act and anti-club legislation. All of this will be correlated and made available to state organizations and individuals.

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I'm a 35 year old college student (single). I've been riding since the late 70's, joined ABATE of Washington & ABATE of Colorado in the early 80's, and am a long time member of the MRF. This project started with a paper for a political science class (the teacher hated it), took deeper root as a project for a research class, and has escalated from there. That's OK - it gives me an excuse to hang out in libraries.

Since this volume went to press, the bibliography has nearly doubled, and is expected to keep growing. Additional articles, news clippings, etc. may be sent to Drew Avery, PO Box 8777, Norfolk, VA 23503.

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## Supplement No. 1, September 1995

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This Supplement should be appended to Volume 3 of the MRF White Papers, in which six pages of this bibliography are published. The eight pages of this Supplement contain entries that were not available in time to be included in Volume 3, due to publication timelines.

Abrams, B. "Night Vision, Visual Perception and Increasing Motorcycle Conspicuity." *Proceedings: International Motorcycle Safety Conference (1990): Motorcycle Safety Foundation*

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