

Survey: Impact of Bike Theft in Reading (2026)

THE SURVEY

Reading Cycle Campaign (RCC) ran an online survey to understand the personal impact of bike theft in Reading (RG postcode). The survey was open for two weeks from 25th January to the 8th February 2026. The survey focused on the circumstances of the theft, financial loss, behavioural changes, and the emotional and practical consequences for victims.

The survey link was emailed to the RCC membership and subscriber (694 contacts) and shared on FaceBook. This generated 25 responses, with some respondents listing multiple thefts. As we were not looking for statistical data and rather an insight to individual experiences, the responses were very useful. A few of the respondents were subsequently interviewed by a local journalist for an article on Bike Theft.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bike theft in Reading is holding our town back. It stops people cycling, drains household finances and leaves riders feeling unprotected and unheard. This report brings together real stories from local cyclists to show the true scale of the problem and the urgent need for action.

Key findings:

- Theft hotspots around Reading Station, Broad Street, and residential sheds and gardens
- Financial losses commonly between £250–£1,000, with many losing over £1,000
- A clear drop in cycling levels after theft
- Deep frustration with lack of CCTV, poor follow-up and unclear jurisdiction
- Multiple respondents experiencing repeat thefts

This is a call for Reading to invest in secure cycle hubs, better CCTV and a coordinated response that treats bike theft as a real barrier to active travel.

VOICES FROM READING'S CYCLING COMMUNITY

“There was no CCTV... the police could do nothing to help.”

“Used the bike for Deliveroo — lost my income.”

“I have lost all confidence in authorities and justice.”

These are not isolated incidents. They reflect a pattern of preventable harm and a sense that Reading is not yet a safe place to leave a bike.

KEY FINDINGS (WITH CHARTS)

Where bikes were stolen

Locations Where Bikes Were Stolen (Q4)

Location Category	Count	Notes / Examples
Reading Station (north/south, taxi rank, racks)	7	Multiple incidents at both entrances
Town Centre / Shopping Areas	4	Broad Street, Itsu, general shopping
Home (gardens, sheds, cycle racks)	7	Includes locked sheds and gardens
Workplace	2	Office/workplace racks
Train Station Car Parks / Bike Sheds	2	Wokingham, St George's Hospital
Shop / Business Premises	1	Cycle shop theft
Leisure Centre	1	Palmer Park
Multiple Locations (summary responses)	1	Several thefts over 10 years

Financial loss

Financial Loss Bands (Q5)

Financial Loss Band	Count
Under £250	2
£250–£500	8
£500–£1,000	9
Over £1,000	6

Impact on Cycling

Did the theft affect how often you cycle? (Q8)

Impact Category	Count
Cycled as normal	10
Cycled less	6
Stopped cycling temporarily	8
Not stated / unclear	1

Was the bike locked?

Was the Bike Locked? (Q9)

Locked at Time of Theft	Count
Yes	17
No	8

If not locked, why?

- “Thought area was safe”: 40%
- “Other”: 60% (including workplace storage, home gardens, or unclear circumstances)

Was the bike marked/registered?

- Yes: 47%
- No: 53%

This suggests that follow on research is required to determine the effectiveness of bike marking in terms of discouraging theft.

What Victims Did Afterwards

Actions taken after the theft (Q12)

Action	Count
Reported to police	18
Checked online marketplaces	11
Contacted BikeRegister / Immobilise	8
Used a tracker	0
None of the above	1

Recovery rate

- Recovered: 13.3%
- Not recovered: 86.7%

The recovery rate is disappointingly very low.

THE HUMAN IMPACT

Financial strain

“I had to spend money I didn’t have before Christmas... I struggled to get back on track.”

Respondents reported:

- Losing work income
- Struggling to afford replacements
- Insurance issues
- Long-term financial stress

Emotional toll

“It was just infuriating... someone had gone to significant effort to steal the bikes.”

Themes included:

- Anger
- Fear of cycling in town
- Feeling targeted
- Loss of trust in authorities

Repeat victimisation

Several respondents had multiple bikes stolen, sometimes from the same location. This suggests offenders operate with confidence and low risk of detection.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

Reading Borough Council

- Install secure, monitored cycle hubs
- Improve lighting and CCTV coverage
- Partner with RCC on BikeRegister marking events

Thames Valley Police

- Improve CCTV access and coordination
- Prioritise repeat-offence hotspots
- Provide clear follow-up communication

Train Operators

- Expand PIN-protected cycle storage
- Ensure CCTV covers bike racks

For Cyclists

- Use high-quality locks
- Register bikes on BikeRegister (or similar schemes)
- Report all thefts

CALL TO ACTION

Reading needs secure cycle hubs and storage. Reading needs proper CCTV. Reading needs a coordinated response. Reading needs to be a place where cycling feels safe.

Why this matters

Reading Borough Council wants more people cycling. The Government wants more people cycling. We all want safer, cleaner and healthier streets. But we cannot grow cycling while bikes keep disappearing.

Bike theft is a barrier to active travel.