Bike Helmet Backlash

There’s a battle over bike helmet laws. Those who want helmets mandated say it decreases the risk of head injury by 66 percent. Those who oppose mandates say helmets keep people from biking, and thus from a healthier life.

One study in the British Medical Journal found no noticeable drop in head injuries from bike helmet laws but a 20 to 44 percent drop in biking. Another study found 29% fewer adults and 42% fewer children biking at all. In short, forcing people to wear helmets discourages an easy form of exercise and has, as one professor says, “a net negative health impact.” It’s also less fun. Twenty-one states have helmet laws for young people.