

PSU Center for Urban Studies
 Center for Transportation Studies
**Understanding and measuring
 bicycling behavior:**

Implications for urban planning, health, and research



Background

With rates of obesity, heart disease, and related health problems increasing in the U.S., health professionals, urban planners, and policy makers are looking for ways to increase physical activity through changing the environment. While walking is an attractive option for many reasons, bicycling offers many benefits and warrants further research. Nationwide, over 60% of all daily trips people take are five miles or less in length – a reasonable distance to ride a bike – and nearly 40% are two miles or less. Despite the potential, only about one percent of the trips people make in the U.S. are on bicycles.



Why aren't more people cycling? There are many reasons, including demographics (e.g. age), the physical environment, and the presence of bicycle lanes, paths, and other facilities. People's attitudes and perceptions about things like safety are also important. This project is trying to figure out how all of these factors influence the decision to bicycle. Understanding why people do or do not bicycle can help planners and engineers design better cities to make cycling safer and more attractive.

Our Research

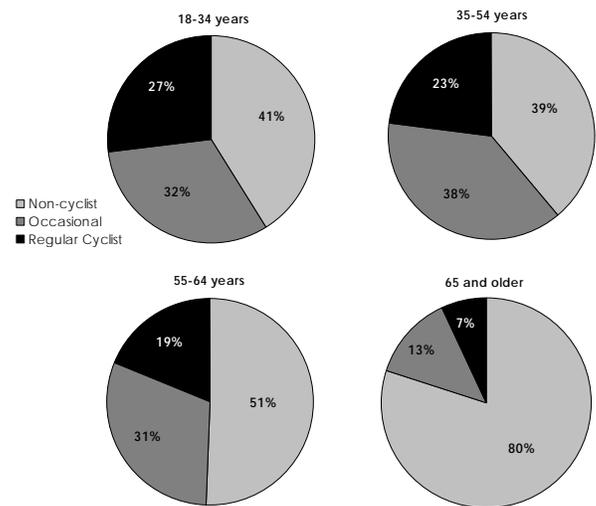
The first part of the project was a random survey of 566 adults in the Portland, OR region. The survey included extensive questions about bicycling habits and attitudes. The respondents fell into three groups: Non-cyclists (50%), occasional cyclists (30%), and regular cyclists (20%). Regular cyclists rode their bike about once a week year round. Occasional cyclists rode less than once a week or only rode in the summer months. Some survey results are highlighted here. The second part of the project, currently underway, involves using GPS technology to measure actual bicycle use.

How does cycling vary by neighborhood?

Respondents who lived in neighborhoods closer to downtown Portland and with well-connected streets (e.g. few cul-de-sacs) were more likely to bicycle to get to work, shopping, or other "utilitarian" purposes.

Who is bicycling?

Younger adults are more likely to be regular cyclists than older adults, particularly those 65 and older. Men are twice as likely to be regular cyclists; 27% of men surveyed cycled regularly, compared to 13% of women.



Why don't people cycle more?

Over 80% of the occasional cyclists indicated that they wanted to cycle more. The amount of car traffic on streets was a significant barrier.

	% of respondents who would like to bicycle more who listed this as a barrier
Too much traffic	56%
No bike lanes or bike trails	37%
No safe places to bike nearby	33%
Too many hills	30%
Distances to places are too great	28%
Poorly maintained streets or rough surfaces	23%
No interesting places to bike to	19%

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