



WOMEN ON A ROLL

Benchmarking women's bicycling in
the United States — and five keys to
get more women on wheels

THE LEAGUE OF AMERICAN BICYCLISTS
REPORT OF CURRENT DATA

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INTRODUCTION

Nationwide, bicycling is making a move into the mainstream, from the painting of bike lanes on iconic avenues to the placement of bicycles in all forms of advertising. Look closer, though, and there's another transformation afoot: *Whether avid, longtime cyclists or simply curious about the benefits of using a bicycle for transportation, more and more women are getting on bikes.*

In 2009, women accounted for just 24% of all U.S. bike trips ⁽⁴⁾ — but a groundswell of efforts are pushing toward gender equity.

The League's Women Bike program aims to change the face of bicycling by getting more women on bikes and participating as riders, advocates and leaders. Our goal is to unite efforts nationwide and act as a hub of best practices and information on women's bicycling.

But where do we stand in women's participation right now — and how can we keep the momentum going? This report compiles key statistics, revealing the current and potential impact of women bicyclists and identifies five specific focus areas to lead us forward.

Over the past decade, the growth of the League's Bicycle Friendly America program has been framed by the five Es (engineering, enforcement, encouragement, education, and evaluation). In this report, we reveal five Cs that will get more women biking:

- » Comfort
- » Convenience
- » Confidence
- » Consumer products
- » Community

We know gender equity in bicycling is possible. In the Netherlands, women account for 55% of bike trips, in Germany 49%. In the United States, women from all demographics are recognizing and championing the bicycle as a simple solution to so many social challenges: economic recovery, community health, environmental protection, and neighborhood vitality.

More than social good, bicycling also offers a quintessential liberty: not only freedom, but joy in our daily mobility — no matter where the ride takes us.

For more information, visit www.bikeleague.org/womenbike.

10 MYTHS ABOUT WOMEN AND BICYCLING

WOMEN DON'T LIKE BIKES

82% of American women have a positive view of bicyclists. ⁽¹⁾

WOMEN AREN'T CONCERNED ABOUT BIKING IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

2/3 of American women agree: "My community would be a better place to live if biking were safer and more comfortable." ⁽¹⁾

WOMEN ARE JUST A SMALL NICHE MARKET

From 2003 to 2012, the number of women and girls participating in bicycling rose 20%, while dropping 0.5% among men and boys. ⁽⁶⁾ 60% of bicycle owners aged 17 to 28 years old are women. ⁽²⁾

WOMEN AREN'T INTERESTED IN RIDING

47% of potential cyclists in Portland, Ore., who are "Interested but Concerned" about riding a bike are women. ⁽³⁾

WOMEN ACCOUNT FOR VERY FEW BIKE TRIPS IN THE U.S.

Women took more than 982 million bicycle trips in 2009. ⁽⁴⁾

WOMEN DON'T BIKE TO WORK IN SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS

1.9 million women regularly commuted to work by bike in 2011. The overall number of women who bike commute grew 56% from 2007 to 2011. ⁽⁵⁾

BICYCLE RIDING ISN'T A POPULAR ACTIVITY AMONG WOMEN

Bicycle riding ranked #9 out of 47 popular sports for total female participation in 2011, surpassing yoga, tennis, and softball ⁽⁶⁾

WOMEN DON'T SPEND MONEY ON BIKES

Women accounted for 37% of the bicycle market in 2011, spending \$2.3 billion. ⁽²⁾

MEN ARE THE FACE OF BICYCLE ADVOCACY

45% of paid staff at bicycle advocacy organizations are women. ⁽⁷⁾

WOMEN AREN'T BICYCLING EVANGELISTS

There are more than 630 active blogs related to women and bicycling. ⁽⁸⁾



Photos credits, clockwise from top right: Cameron Adams, Ovarian Psychos, Russ Roca (Alliance for Biking & Walking photo library), Allan Crawford, Russ Roca (Alliance for Biking & Walking photo library), Nona Farnado



MAKING THE CASE:

BICYCLING AS A SAFE AND PRACTICAL AVENUE TO HEALTH

Heart disease is the No. 1 killer of women in the United States⁽⁹⁾ and more than 1/3 of American women are obese.⁽¹⁰⁾ In 2011, less than 18% of American women (vs. 23% of men) met physical activity recommendations for both aerobic and muscle-strengthening exercise.⁽¹²⁾ As a low-cost, low-impact activity accessible to all fitness levels, bicycling offers a safe and practical avenue to better health. More than 80% of bicycle commuters reported that their health had improved since they started riding⁽¹¹⁾ and an overwhelming amount of research specifically highlights the benefits of bicycling for women.

- » 49% of trips in the United States are three miles or less; 39% are two miles or less and 24% are less than one mile — all distances easily covered by bike.⁽⁴⁾
- » Women represented just 14% of the 618 bicyclist fatalities and 25% of bicyclist injuries in 2010.⁽¹³⁾
- » In an analysis of Seattle women, 93% of daily riders cited “it’s great exercise and keeps me in shape” as a motivation for riding.⁽¹⁴⁾
- » Active commuting is positively associated with fitness for women.⁽¹⁵⁾
- » For a 150-lb woman, bicycling at less than 10 miles per hour, burns about 300 calories in 60 minutes.⁽¹⁶⁾
- » Women who biked just four hours per week were less likely to gain weight over a period of six years than women who didn’t ride.⁽¹⁷⁾
- » Bicycling just 20 miles per week reduces women’s risk of heart disease by 50%.⁽¹⁸⁾
- » Active commuting — biking and walking — reduces women’s risk of cardiovascular disease by 13% (compared to 9% for men).⁽¹⁹⁾
- » Women with an active commute of just 30 minutes were half as likely to suffer heart failure as women who didn’t have an active commute.⁽²⁰⁾
- » Women who walk or bike 30 minutes per day had a lower rate of breast cancer.⁽²¹⁾



CONGRESSWOMAN **TAMMY DUCKWORTH,** ILLINOIS' 8TH DISTRICT

In the blink of an eye, Tammy Duckworth went from the peak of physical fitness to the confines of a hospital bed. One of the first Army women to fly combat missions during Operation Iraqi Freedom, Duckworth lost both of her legs when the Blackhawk helicopter she was piloting was shot down in 2004. “I went from strength to absolute weakness,” says Duckworth, now a member of Congress, representing Illinois’ 8th District. “I couldn’t even scratch my nose. I couldn’t move a single part of my body except for my left wrist. To go from commanding a Blackhawk helicopter to not being able to even roll over in bed, I needed something. And biking was it for me.” Using a recumbent, hand-crank bicycle, Duckworth rebuilt her strength. Now part of two bicycling clubs, she’s completed three Chicago marathons and has become a vocal advocate for cycling as a healthy lifestyle. “Too many Americans are unhealthy; too many children suffer from childhood obesity; too many Americans will see their lives cut short for lack of exercise,” she says. But bicycling is an activity that’s accessible to all. “You feel powerful; you feel strong; you feel in control,” she says of bicycling. “If your body can do this, you can do anything... It’s really quite an amazing gift to have.”

THE 5 Cs OF WOMEN'S BICYCLING:

KEY STATISTICS AND TANGIBLE STEPS TO GETTING MORE WOMEN ON BIKES

COMFORT

Making biking safe and inviting

A GROWING NUMBER OF COMMUNITIES ARE EASING CONGESTION AND INCREASING SAFETY BY MAKING STREETS MORE ACCOMMODATING

FOR BICYCLISTS. Bike facilities and low-stress roads, like bicycle boulevards, can play an important role in this transformation — with pronounced impact on the number of women riders. It's not surprising that while Portland has created an expansive network of bicycle facilities, the percentage of women bicyclists grew from 21% in 1992 to 31% in 2012.⁽²²⁾ According to a 2009 study of bicyclists in six cities, "the most important determinant of bicycling for women was their comfort bicycling."⁽³¹⁾

- » More than half of American women (53%) say more bike lanes and bike paths would increase their riding.⁽¹⁾
- » According to the 2010 Women Cycling Survey, women's top safety concerns were distracted driving (73% of respondents) and speed of cars (63% of respondents).⁽²³⁾
- » A 2009 survey in Portland, Ore., found that 94% of women agreed that separated lanes made their ride safer, compared to 64% of men.⁽²⁴⁾
- » According to a 2005 analysis, women will ride an additional 5 minutes further than men to access a bike facility, like a bike lane or path.⁽²⁵⁾
- » In Minneapolis, 4 of the top 5 locations for total number of female bicyclists in a 2012 count were locations with bicycle facilities.⁽²⁶⁾
- » The number of women riders rose 100% on Los Angeles' Spring Street after the installation of a buffered bike lane in 2011.⁽²⁷⁾
- » According to a 2013 analysis, the presence of a bike lane on a street increases women's ridership, on average, by 276% in Philadelphia.⁽²⁸⁾
- » The number of female riders grew 115% after the installation of a bike lane on New Orleans' South Carrollton Avenue in 2009.⁽²⁹⁾
- » A 2011 bike count in New York City showed that 15% of the cyclists on a street without a bike lane were women, compared to 32% on a nearby streets with a bike lane.⁽³⁰⁾
- » Feeling comfortable is strongly positively associated with women's bicycle use. Women are most comfortable riding:⁽³¹⁾

Quiet street (bike boulevard) (2.91)

Off-street path (2.74)

Two-lane local street with bike lane (2.70)

Four-lane local street with bike lane (2.38)

Two-lane local street without bike lane (1.65)

Four-lane local street without bike lane (1.36)

KEY:

3 = COMFORTABLE

2 = UNCOMFORTABLE, WOULD RIDE

1 = UNCOMFORTABLE, WOULDN'T RIDE ON IT

SUSI WUNSCH, FOUNDER OF VELOJOY.COM

For Susi Wunsch, the love of bikes started in spin classes in New York City. Before long, cranking the pedals in the name of fitness took her to the roads, training for Olympic distance triathlons. Soon the Manhattan resident saw a transformation on her local streets, as well. “In 2010, I discovered the protected bike lane on Ninth Avenue,” she says. “To me, it signaled the city’s commitment to making a place for cyclists on our streets, and it made me feel safer. I’ve been happily using my bicycle for daily transportation ever since.” Wunsch didn’t just join the ranks in the bike lanes – she became an evangelist for cycling lifestyle, launching velojoy.com, a site dedicated to attracting more people to riding bicycles by demystifying and celebrating the joys of two-wheeled transportation. “What gets lost sometimes in the discussion about bicycling is what’s most elemental: the fun and freedom of it,” she says. “Making cycling a part of everyday life is what Velojoy is about.”



CONVENIENCE

Addressing practical realities for women and families

IN THE UNITED STATES, TRAVEL PATTERNS TEND TO BE MORE COMPLEX FOR WOMEN THAN MEN, DUE TO CHILDCARE AND HOUSEHOLD RESPONSIBILITIES.

In the Netherlands and Denmark — countries that have attained gender equity in bicycling — approximately 25% of bike trips are for shopping, while such trips account for just 5% in the United States.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Large numbers of U.S. women believe they simply can't accomplish their daily tasks on a bicycle and, for many, the ease of fitting bicycling into their lifestyle is key. For instance, a survey of university employees found that convenience was a significant factor for women (but not for men) in choosing to commute by bicycle.⁽⁴³⁾ Convenience comes, not just from products and bicycles that address the practical needs of women's day-to-day lives, but also in systems like bike sharing that make riding a flexible mode of transportation that provides additional mobility choices.

- » On average, women take an additional 110 trips per year than men.⁽⁴¹⁾
- » More than 40% of the women in two-adult households with small children chain non-work trips into their commutes.⁽⁴¹⁾
- » In two-worker households, women make twice as many trips to drop off and pick up children than men (66% vs 34%).⁽⁴¹⁾
- » Women bicyclists were more than twice as likely as male bicyclists to ride their bicycle for shopping and errands.⁽²⁵⁾
- » An analysis of Seattle women found that errands (78%), stores (76%) and socializing (74%) were among the top five destinations for daily female bicycle riders.⁽¹⁴⁾
- » Women are far more likely than men to report as a barrier to bicycling:⁽³²⁾
 1. "Lack of time" (29% vs 21%)
 2. "Inability to carry children and other passengers" (19% vs 7%)
 3. "Inability to carry more stuff" (32% vs 20%)
- » Women are embracing the flexibility and easy adoption of bike share systems:
 1. According to a 2012 study of North American bicycle sharing systems, 43% of all bike share members were female.⁽⁵⁵⁾
 2. In 2011, 44% of annual members of Nice Ride bike share in Minneapolis were women.⁽⁴⁴⁾
 3. 47% of current or past Boston Hubway members are women.⁽⁴⁵⁾
 4. In 2012, 54% of new members of Capital Bikeshare in Washington, D.C. were women.⁽⁴⁶⁾



EMILY FINCH, PORTLAND, OR

Three years ago, while pregnant and living in Williamsport -- a small town in Pennsylvania -- Emily Finch made a decision that changed her life dramatically: She traded in her nine-passenger Suburban for... a bike. Rethinking the impossible, the Portland mom now shuttles her six children — and all the necessities of family life, from groceries to home improvement supplies — with a seven-passenger Bakfiets bicycle. Yes, surly children, rain showers and the stress of household responsibilities often make it difficult, but Finch has tapped into a depth of strength and spirit she never would have experienced in her GMC Suburban. “My bike has brought me unspeakable happiness and joy,” she says. “I’ve realized that I want to continue to spread the message to women like me that biking is soooo much fun (and realistically, sometimes very challenging with small children); women you might expect to be the last type of people to get on their bikes, kids in tow. I’ve realized that my voice is important.” And her story has become an inspiration nationwide.

CONSUMER PRODUCTS

Fashion and function in bikes and gear

WOMEN ARE A POWERFUL CONSUMER FORCE, BUT TOO OFTEN THEY DO NOT FEEL WELCOME IN BIKE SHOPS OR DO NOT FEEL PRODUCTS ADDRESS THEIR DESIRES AND NEEDS. While the market is beginning to evolve — with new woman-owned shops more oriented toward European style bicycles and family transportation — bike shops and industry leaders are still geared toward the male consumer. Meanwhile, women are an upcoming majority in bicycle ownership, representing 60% of bicycle owners aged 17-28 years old. ⁽²⁾ Successful, female entrepreneurs are meeting this demand, designing new products that address the crossover of style and cycling, but much work remains to be done in making the shopping environment and available products more inviting and appealing to women.

- » From 2003 to 2012, the number of women and girls participating in bicycling rose 20%, while dropping 0.5% among men and boys. ⁽⁶⁾
- » Only 2 of the top 15 largest American bike brands are led by women.
- » 43% of female bicycle owners said they planned to buy a new bike in 2012, spending, on average, \$523. Women also planned to spend, on average, \$418 on other bicycling-related products in 2012. ⁽²⁾
- » 37% of women (vs 48% of men) purchased their current bike from a bike shop and 57% of women bicycle owners reported not visiting a bike shop in the past year. ⁽²⁾
- » 89% of bike shop owners are men and 96% are white; 33% of bike shops are operated by a husband-wife team. ⁽⁵⁶⁾
- » Just 1/3 of women said it's "no problem" to find clothing and gear that fits their personal style. ⁽³²⁾
- » Seattle women who do not ride on a daily basis cited higher levels of fashion and equipment concerns, including: ⁽¹⁴⁾
 1. It's difficult to bring spare clothes (44%).
 2. Clothing/grooming are a problem (36%).
 3. I hate arriving somewhere all red and sweaty (34%).
 4. Helmets mess up my hair (31%).
- » In 2012, women account for just 20% of buyers / attendees at Interbike — the largest bicycle trade show in the country. ⁽⁴⁷⁾
- » Since 2008, approximately 430 women have graduated from the United Bicycle Institute, which trains bicycle mechanics. Just 12% of graduates in 2012 were women. ⁽⁴⁸⁾
- » Only 1 of 12 board members of the National Bicycle Dealers Association is a woman. ⁽⁴⁹⁾

ELYSA WALK, GENERAL MANAGER, GIANT BICYCLES, INC.

At the end of the challenging, 600-mile ride around the perimeter of Taiwan, Elysa Walk was the only female General Manager worldwide to roll into Giant Bicycles' global headquarters, fireworks blazing and people cheering. As a top executive in the bicycle industry, Walk is often the only woman in the room — or on the ride — in the male-dominated sector. After 10 years in telecommunications, Walk joined the bicycle industry in 2004 and stepped up to General Manager for Giant USA in 2007. Since then, she's not only grown the company by 40% overall, but launched Giant's women's specific brand, Liv/giant, and pioneered an innovative female ambassador program to engage more riders at the local level. "A friend inspired me to start cycling, and I think that women have such powerful relationships with their friends and enjoy riding together in non-competitive, fun adventures," Walk says. "With the ambassador program, we want to support those local ladies who are key influencers for bicycling in their community. We're giving them tools and incentives to structure women's group rides, maintenance clinics, ladies nights — because we want to get more women on bikes." Beyond mentoring women in her company, Walk has been a trailblazer for women across the industry, serving in key board positions for Bikes Belong (the industry advocacy group) and the Bicycle Product Suppliers Association.



CONFIDENCE

Tools to ensure women feel secure in their skills

NO MATTER WHERE OR WHY THEY RIDE, WOMEN WANT TO FEEL NOT JUST SAFE ON THE STREETS, BUT CONFIDENT IN THEIR SKILLS. Whether it's learning how to ride with children after becoming a parent or regaining their muscle memory after years away from the saddle, easily available and relevant education can encourage more women to dust off their bicycles and hit the road. In fact, many women-specific courses, like Women on Wheels series from the Marin County Bicycle Coalition, are thriving and growing each year. In many cities, courses geared toward women are, for many organizations, filling (and selling out) even faster than traditional classes.

- » Only 6% of American women vs 13% of men say they're confident riding on all roads with traffic.⁽¹⁾
- » 26% of American women say learning more about bicycling skills would encourage them to ride more.⁽¹⁾
- » 58% of women vs 81% of men said they are "very confident" riding a bicycle.⁽⁵⁰⁾
- » Of more than 3,500 League Cycling Instructors nationwide — who are certified to teach the League's Smart Cycling curriculum — only 28% are women.⁽³³⁾
- » In 2012, 62% of participants in the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition's bicycle education classes and 75% of Adult Learn to Ride classes were women.⁽⁵⁷⁾
- » In 2012, 82% of Learn to Ride class participants offered by Cycles for Change in Minneapolis were women.⁽⁵⁸⁾
- » In a survey of six cities, 29% of women vs 83% of men said they could fix a flat tire and only 3% of women (vs. 34% of men) said they could fix any problem.⁽⁵¹⁾
- » Nearly 20% of respondents of the 2010 Women Cycling Survey said that a "bike repair class" would cause them to start or increase their riding.⁽²³⁾
- » More than 1/3 of American women say plentiful, secure bike parking would increase their riding.⁽¹⁾

MARIA SIPIN, WOMEN ON BIKES SOCAL, LEAGUE CYCLING INSTRUCTOR (LCI)

As Melissa Balmer was launching Women on Bikes SoCal in 2011 she had a quick realization: Despite living one of the most densely populated areas of the United States, Balmer discovered that the League of American Bicyclists had only three female Cycling Instructors in Long Beach, the South Bay, and South and East Los Angeles County. To get more female leaders engaged in bicycling skills education, Balmer garnered the support of organizations like the California Bicycle Coalition, Bike Long Beach, and the California Endowment to launch the first all-women's LCI training, engaging 10 women from diverse backgrounds. "I became an LCI to increase my capacity as a bicycle advocate and educator," says Maria Sipin, one of the training participants and now active LCI. "This certification pushed me to be more active in teaching about safety, as well as promoting the benefits and joys of biking. Since my LCI certification in 2012, I'm now working with local organizations to facilitate Traffic Skills 101 classes offered at no cost in cities where they have never been available before. Reducing barriers to education and sharing my experiences with others are just some of the rewards of being an LCI."



COMMUNITY

Building connection and cultivating diverse bicycling interests

WOMEN ARE NOT A HOMOGENOUS DEMOGRAPHIC. From spinning classes for fitness to leisurely rides on the weekend with family; from Spandex racers to Cycle Chic urban commuters, women represent the full spectrum of riding styles and motivations. Women already play a major role in some of the nation's largest cycling events and the number of women's rides and riding groups are increasing quickly. Whether the Illinois Women Cyclists, aimed at racers, or the Heels and 2 Wheels ride series in Columbus, Ohio, geared toward social city excursions, women are riding for charity, competition and, perhaps most importantly, social connection.

- » The top reasons women ride:⁽²⁾
 1. Fun (73%)
 2. Fitness (69%)
 3. Recreation (45%)
- » 42% of female bicyclists described themselves as a “regular fitness rider” — more than four times the response for “racer” or “transportation rider.”⁽³²⁾
- » Women are significantly more likely than men to ride as a “family activity” (31% vs. 18%).⁽²⁾
- » 42% of American women say “people to bike with” would encourage them to ride more.⁽¹⁾
- » 10,968 women participated in the 2012 National Bike Challenge (36% of participants), a national online bicycling competition and community.⁽³³⁾
- » In 2012, 42,672 women participated in MS150 rides (37% of all riders)⁽³⁴⁾ and 25,000 women participated in American Diabetes Association Tour de Cure rides (40% of all riders).⁽³⁵⁾
- » 12,500 females participated (39%) in New York City's Five Borough Bike Tour, America's largest cycling event, in 2012.⁽³⁶⁾
- » 38% of participants in 2012 multi-day bike tours hosted by Adventure Cycling, the nation's largest bike touring group, were women.⁽³⁷⁾
- » In 2012, 36% of USA Triathlon members (50,135) were women.⁽³⁸⁾
- » In 2012, 13% of USA Cycling members were women (6,554), with 10% growth in women's road race licenses and 11% growth in mountain bike licenses.⁽³⁹⁾

SARAI SNYDER, CO-FOUNDER OF CYCLOFEMME

After years as a bike shop co-owner and advocate, Sarai Snyder started GirlBikeLove.com to connect women bicyclists of all types and backgrounds across the country. But she didn't stop with the web. "I couldn't help but feel we needed the camaraderie of shared experiences to bring us all together," she says. "That desire for a shared experience evolved into CycloFemme — a single day that would unify our voices and showcase the diverse power of women who ride." In 2012, 164 rides took place in six countries with the simple but powerful mission: *Honor the Past, Celebrate the Present, Empower the Future*. "We rode as casual riders, road racers, coffee sippers, beer drinkers, gritty mountain bikers, mothers, daughters, and professional athletes," she says. "We saw beautiful images of women on bikes stream onto social media — and immediately felt an amazing camaraderie with strangers." Uniting the full spectrum of female riders under the banner of a single cause, CycloFemme exploded to 229 rides in 31 countries in 2013, showcasing the growth and passion around women's cycling worldwide.



ENGAGING AND ELEVATING FEMALE LEADERS

IN POLICY, ADVOCACY, AND INDUSTRY

As the interest in bicycling grows among women, new and female-focused initiatives are blossoming, from Women Bike Mississippi to Black Women Bike DC. Women are both influential political constituencies and highly engaged in peer-to-peer encouragement and information sharing — creating a powerful pool of effective advocates and leaders in all aspects of bicycling. In advocacy, policy and the industry, women are still dramatically under-represented in membership and leadership. One of the top reasons women reported NOT being part of an advocacy group was simple: “Never been asked.”⁽³²⁾

- » Women are still under-represented in the membership of many advocacy organizations:
 1. USA Cycling: 13%⁽³⁹⁾
 2. International Mountain Biking Association: 18%⁽⁵¹⁾
 3. Adventure Cycling Association: 21%⁽³⁷⁾
 4. League of American Bicyclists: 30%
 5. People for Bikes (Bikes Belong) signatories: 33% women⁽⁵²⁾

... and their boards:

1. International Mountain Biking Association: 1 of 11
 2. USA Cycling: 3 of 20
 3. Bikes Belong: 2 of 18
 4. Alliance for Biking & Walking: 3 of 15
 5. Adventure Cycling Association: 4 of 10
 6. League of American Bicyclists: 7 of 15
- » In 2011, women made up just 28% of members of local bicycle advisory committees in California.⁽⁵³⁾
 - » Currently, only 18 of 51 state bicycle coordinators are women.⁽³³⁾
 - » While women represent 18% of the U.S. House of Representatives, they make up 22% of the Congressional Bike Caucus.⁽³³⁾
 - » According to the National Family Biking Survey, women were more likely than men to:⁽⁵⁴⁾
 1. Learn about bicycling with their children online (41% vs 25%).
 2. Be inspired by another person's example (18% vs 11%).
 - » Women bicyclists were more likely than men to have a:
Facebook account (85% vs 64%), Twitter account (34% vs 24%),
personal website (28% vs 20%).⁽³²⁾

VERONICA O. DAVIS, BLACK WOMEN BIKE, DC

Veronica O. Davis was just biking to meet some friends for a movie when a little girl's glee opened a new avenue of bicycle advocacy in Washington, D.C. Davis, a local planner and engineer, was riding through a predominantly African-American housing complex when she heard a shout: "Mommy, mommy, look at the black lady on a bike!" a young girl exclaimed. For a moment Davis was taken aback. "This is an area with bike lanes, so I know there are bicyclists," she says. "But I had the realization that, I looked like her, and she was very excited to see someone who looked like her riding a bike." Davis and a few fellow bicyclists started a simple but bold Twitter hashtag — #blackwomenbike — that set a movement in motion. A Twitter following became a Facebook group, buzzing with wide-ranging conversations about biking. Soon the online presence spawned a formal group, with rides, workshops and high-profile media coverage. Ranging from teens to retirees, from first-time riders to endurance athletes, Black Women Bike now has more than 700 members — creating a powerful new presence and voice in the bike lanes and local advocacy and policy discussions.



CONCLUSION

Already, more than 250 cities large and small have been designated Bicycle Friendly Communities by the League — and many of these cities have among the highest rates of women cycling according to local counts and surveys, including Boston (Silver BFC – 32% women’s ridership), San Francisco (Gold BFC – 33% women’s ridership), and Philadelphia (Silver BFC – 32% women’s ridership).

To continue this growth — and make bicycling for transportation and recreation accessible for all — women must be engaged and encouraged to ride in greater numbers and take leadership roles in the movement.

Women are role models for the next generation, decision makers for their households, persuasive political constituencies and ingenious entrepreneurs. Bringing more women into all aspects of the bicycle movement, from riding to the grocery store to lobbying on Capitol Hill, is beginning to change the face of bicycling — and the bicycle movement.

By more fully and effectively engaging women’s perspectives, experiences and leadership, advocates can accelerate and sustain this burgeoning boom in bicycling — and move to close the gender gap in American bicycling.

Get involved:

1. Visit www.bikeleague.org/womenbike.
2. Add your efforts to our Women & Equity survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/womenandequity>

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