E-BIKES IN NORTH AMERICA results from an online survey (14-4885)
John MacArthur¹, Jennifer H.¹, & Mark Person²

What’s an e-bike?

Electric bikes, or e-bikes, vary widely in their technology and style. This study focuses on e-bikes that are essentially standard pedal bicycles that have a battery and small motor to assist the rider with propulsion. Electric scooters with pedals are not considered e-bikes for this project.

OBJECTIVES

Our survey respondents were primarily white (90%) males (56%) and had average or above average income. About half made $70 thousand per year or more. This reflects their high level of education, with nearly three-quarters having at least a college degree. Most (50%) were not married to a motor vehicle. Those who indicated they had a condition that made riding a standard bicycle difficult totaled 30%.

In 2012, 48% purchased an e-bike.

E-BIKE PURCHASE DECISIONS: CONVERSION & COST

The survey concluded on July 1, 2013. Total e-bike sales in 2012 were estimated at 100,000 units. 2013 is expected to have doubled to 200,000.

What type of bike did you convert?

This survey concentrated on e-bikes that are essentially standard pedal bicycles that may be assisted by a small electric motor with or without a throttle or pedals.

METHODOLOGY

Survey respondent demographics

Our survey respondents were primarily white (90%) males (56%) and had above average income. About half made $70 thousand per year or more. This reflects their high level of education, with nearly three-quarters having at least a college degree. Most (50%) were not married to a motor vehicle. Those who indicated they had a condition that made riding a standard bicycle difficult totaled 30%.

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To replace 95% of car trips and make commuting fun.

Other reasons to replace car trips included: faster commute (40%), more convenient (25%), and fun (20%).

INVITATIONS TO PLATFORMS

Survey respondents were primarily white (90%) males (56%) and had above average income. About half made $70 thousand per year or more. This reflects their high level of education, with nearly three-quarters having at least a college degree. Most (50%) were not married to a motor vehicle. Those who indicated they had a condition that made riding a standard bicycle difficult totaled 30%.

Our current research is working with Kaiser Permanente at three employment campuses on an 18-month-long study. By lending 30 e-bikes to employees, we hope to see if electric bicyclists have a ride in first-mile last-mile.

CONCLUSIONS

E-bikes have potential to get more people on bicycles. E-bikes are especially appealing to older adults, people with physical limitations, and perhaps women. These vehicles are encouraging a wider range of people to be more active and to more distant locations. For commuters, the benefits come with an easier ride with less stress while not avoiding trips or locations.

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CONTACT: Jennifer H.®, 503-725-4376, Jennifer.H@pdx.edu