

Global bicycle production increased by more than 9 percent in 2002, the most recent year for which data are available, bringing production back up to 104 million—about the level of 2000.<sup>1</sup> (See Figure 1.) Output in most countries changed little or declined, but China produced 23 percent more bikes in 2002.<sup>2</sup>

Four of the top five producers are now Asian—China, India, Taiwan, and Japan.<sup>3</sup> (See

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Figure 2.) Viet Nam posted the world's fastest rate of growth, more than 250 percent, and produced more than 2 million bicycles.<sup>4</sup> The European Union, third in the world, is the only non-Asian producer of any size.<sup>5</sup>

The industry has changed significantly over the past decade as production shifted steadily to China, which by 2002 accounted for 61 percent of the world total.<sup>6</sup> Once-large producers such as Japan, Taiwan, and the United States saw double-digit declines in output in 2002, part of a nearly decade-long trend in which cheaper and increasingly high-quality Chinese models grabbed market share worldwide.<sup>7</sup>

Although bicycles are only one segment of a society's transportation picture, their niche is underdeveloped nearly everywhere. The trend in many countries is toward greater automobile use, often at the expense of bikes. In several prospering Asian countries, for example, bicycles, rickshaws, and other forms of nonmotorized transport are being marginalized on city streets to make room for fast-growing car fleets.<sup>8</sup> And in the car-dominated United States, the share of trips to work by bike fell from 0.5 percent to an even more negligible 0.4 percent between 1980 and 2000.<sup>9</sup>

Bicycles are good for short-distance transport, for areas where nimble transportation is required, for users who cannot afford more expensive options, and for people seeking to combine commuting with exercise. Health care providers in Africa, for instance, have found that bicycles offer quick and inexpensive transportation. Bikes seem to be particularly effective in delivery of immunization programs, prenatal care, and ongoing therapies, such as the regime for treatment of tuberculosis.<sup>10</sup> Two

projects in Senegal found that nurses using bikes were 58 percent quicker in their rounds than those who walked, and they saved 40¢ per trip over taking a taxi.<sup>11</sup>

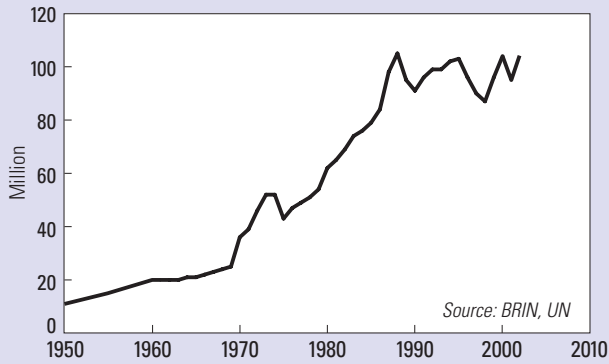
Bicycles are also important complements to other forms of transportation. Bogotá, Colombia, may soon use bicycle taxis to provide feeder service to the stations of its metro-like bus system, bolstering the system's capacity to get citizens where they need to go cheaply and quickly.<sup>12</sup> And the city has installed safe, indoor bicycle parking facilities at some bus system stations to encourage riders to start their morning commutes on a bike.<sup>13</sup>

Boosting the bicycle's share of trips requires policies that shift incentives in its favor and that discourage car use. In the United States, where 95 percent of parking is free and where gas prices, vehicle taxes, and other driving-related costs are among the lowest in the industrial world, using a car is a rational choice and a key reason that biking remains marginalized.<sup>14</sup> The U.S. rate of car ownership is the highest in the world—and about 50 percent higher than in Western Europe.<sup>15</sup>

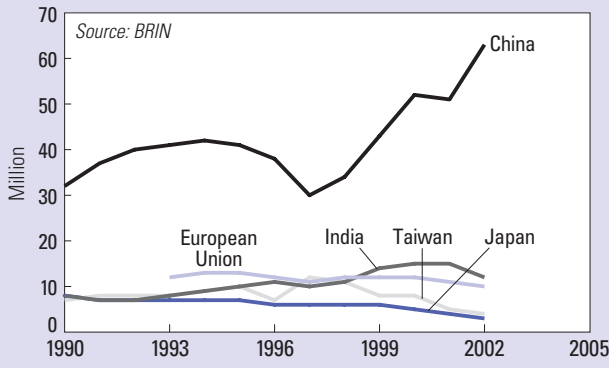
Safety is also a concern. In the United States, cyclists are 12 times more likely than people in cars to die en route.<sup>16</sup> On a per kilometer and per trip basis, U.S. cyclists are twice as likely to die on the road as German cyclists, and more than three times as likely as Dutch cyclists.<sup>17</sup> Cycling fatalities in these countries have fallen over the last quarter-century, but for very different reasons. U.S. cycling deaths have declined largely because of a drop in cycling, especially among children.<sup>18</sup> The Netherlands and Germany, on the other hand, have invested heavily in infrastructure that makes cycling safer.<sup>19</sup>

Six policies appear to have worked to promote cycling in Germany and the Netherlands: improved cycling infrastructure, "traffic calming" in residential neighborhoods, urban design that is people- rather than car-oriented, restrictions on motor vehicle use, traffic education, and traffic regulations and enforcement that are pro-pedestrian and pro-cycling.<sup>20</sup>

**Figure 1. World Bicycle Production, 1950–2002**



**Figure 2. Top Five Producers of Bicycles, 1990–2002**



**World Bicycle Production, 1950–2002**

Year	Production (million)
1950	11
1955	15
1960	20
1965	21
1966	22
1967	23
1968	24
1969	25
1970	36
1971	39
1972	46
1973	52
1974	52
1975	43
1976	47
1977	49
1978	51
1979	54
1980	62
1981	65
1982	69
1983	74
1984	76
1985	79
1986	84
1987	98
1988	105
1989	95
1990	91
1991	96
1992	99
1993	99
1994	102
1995	103
1996	96
1997	90
1998	87
1999	96
2000	104
2001	95
2002	104

Source: Bicycle Retailer and Industry News and United Nations.

## Notes

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