

# 2-5 Trends in Promoting Bicycle Use

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The 2017 "Bicycle Utilization Promotion Act" was enacted to reduce dependence on automobiles, followed by the 2021 "Second Bicycle Utilization Promotion Plan," which guides local implementation and infrastructure expansion. In 2025, the "Guidelines for the Development of Bicycle Parking Facilities" were updated to address societal changes, such as the rise of electric micromobility and needs like short-term rentals. While the pandemic decreased national bicycle usage, the demand remains steady in major metropolitan areas. Regarding safety, the proportion of bicycle-related accidents is increasing, and public support for mandatory helmet laws in Japan remains lower than in other countries.

**Table 1 Bicycle Policy**

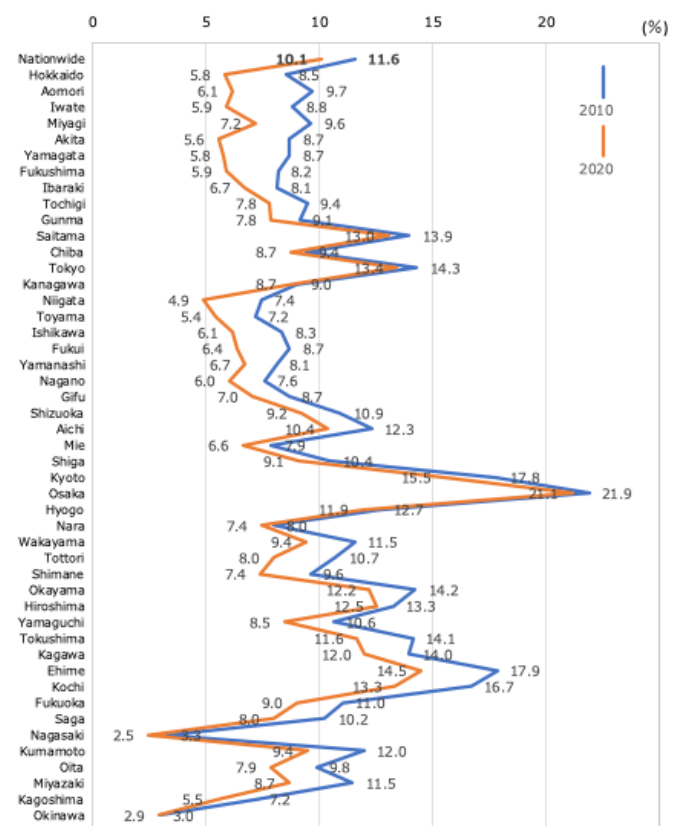
- Revised in March 2025, the "Guidelines for the Development of Bicycle Parking Facilities" expanded on strategies for integrating bike-sharing with urban development. The update responds to recent societal shifts, including bicycle promotion initiatives, the emergence of new mobility options like specified small motorized bicycles, and changing user demands such as short-term rentals.

| Year | Key Change                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2007 | <b>NPA/RTA:</b> Clarified conditions for bicycles to use sidewalks.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 2008 | <b>MLIT•NPA:</b> Designated 98 model districts nationwide for bicycle-friendly infrastructure.                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 2009 | <b>MEXT:</b> Partial Amendment of the School Health Act, to mandated the creation of "School Safety Plans".                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 2010 | <b>MLIT/RMO:</b> Established a new category for "Bicycle Lanes".                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 2011 | <b>MLIT/RMO:</b> Established a new sign for one-way restrictions for cyclists<br><b>NPA:</b> Notice on "Promotion of Comprehensive Measures for Achieving an Orderly Bicycle Traffic Environment".                                                                                                  |
| 2012 | <b>MLIT•NPA:</b> Formulated the "Guidelines for Creating a Safe and Comfortable Bicycle Use Environment," introducing shared lane markings as an interim measure.                                                                                                                                   |
| 2013 | <b>NPA•RTA:</b> Restricted bicycle traffic on roadside strips to one-way only.                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 2015 | <b>NPA•RTA:</b> Established a mandatory training system for cyclists committing repeated violations, <b>JSTE:</b> Published an intersection design guide.                                                                                                                                           |
| 2016 | <b>MLIT•NPA:</b> Revised the "Safe and Comfortable Bicycle Use", <b>MLIT:</b> Revised "Guidelines for the Development of Bicycle Parking Facilities".                                                                                                                                               |
| 2017 | <b>MLIT:</b> Enacted the "Bicycle Utilization Promotion Act",<br><b>MEXT:</b> Approved the "First Second School Safety Plan".                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 2018 | <b>Cabinet decision:</b> Approved the "First Bicycle Utilization Promotion Plan",<br><b>METI:</b> Revised electric-assist-bicycle certification standards.                                                                                                                                          |
| 2019 | <b>RTA Ordinance:</b> Prohibited aggressive cycling, <b>MLIT/RSO:</b> Established new standards for bicycle lane and clarified requirements for bicycle track installation, <b>MLIT:</b> Created the National Cycle Route system, <b>PBU:</b> developed "A Guide for Introducing Bicycle Commuting" |
| 2020 | <b>JSTE:</b> Published a revised intersection design guide, <b>MLIT•NPA:</b> Amended to update the definition of a standard bicycle.                                                                                                                                                                |
| 2021 | <b>Cabinet decision:</b> Approved the "Second Bicycle Utilization Promotion Plan".                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 2022 | <b>MEXT:</b> Approved the "Third School Safety Plan".                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 2023 | <b>NPA/RTA:</b> Defined "Specified Small Motorized Bicycles" and their traffic rules, and make helmet use mandatory effort for bicycle users without age restrictions. <b>MLIT:</b> Issued "A Guide for Bicycle Trains/Buses" and "A Guide for Bicycle-Share Systems".                              |
| 2024 | <b>NPA/RTA:</b> Established a traffic violation ticketing system for cyclists and a safe passing duty for motorists. <b>NPA•RTA:</b> Revised "A Guide for Introducing Bicycle Commuting"                                                                                                            |
| 2025 | <b>MLIT:</b> Revised the "Guidelines for the Development of Bicycle Parking Facilities".                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

**RTA:** Road Traffic Act, **RSO:** Road Structure Ordinance, **RMO:** Road Signs and Markings Ordinance, **MLIT:** The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, **NPA:** the National Police Agency, **MEXT:** The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, **METI:** The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, **JSTE:** Japan Society of Traffic Engineers, **PBU:** Public-Private Partnership Council for Promoting Bicycle Utilization

**Figure 1 Bicycle Commuting Trends**

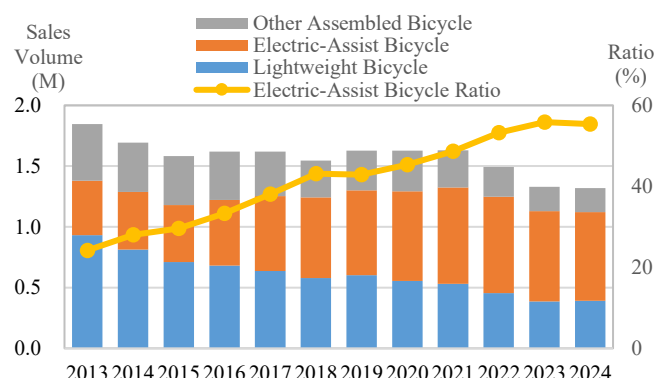
- The modal share for bicycle commuting fell nationwide to 10.1% due to the pandemic, though the decline was less significant in major metropolitan areas like Tokyo and Kansai.



Source: Population Census (2010, 2020)

**Figure 2 Bicycle Sales**

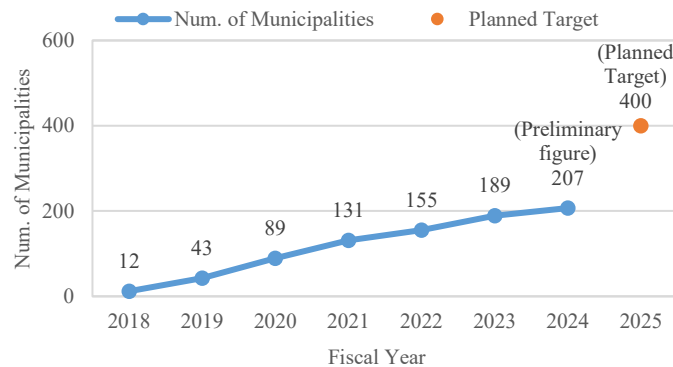
- While total bicycle sales are decreasing, the market share of electric-assist bicycles is growing.



Source: METI(2024)

**Figure 3 Progress on Promotion Plans**

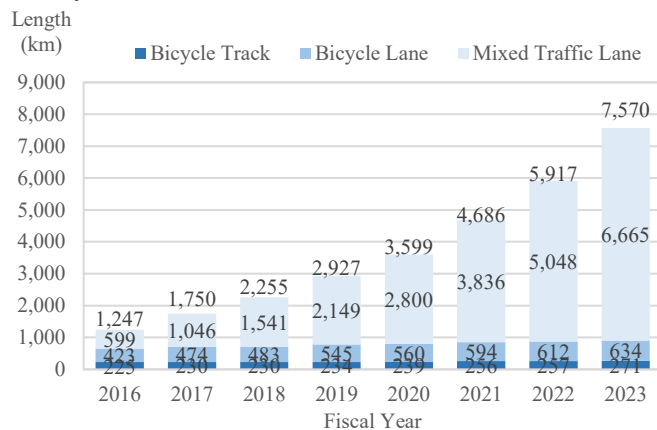
■ Only 207 municipalities have adopted promotion plans, falling short of the 2025 target of 400.



Source: MLIT (2025)

**Figure 4 Infrastructure Development**

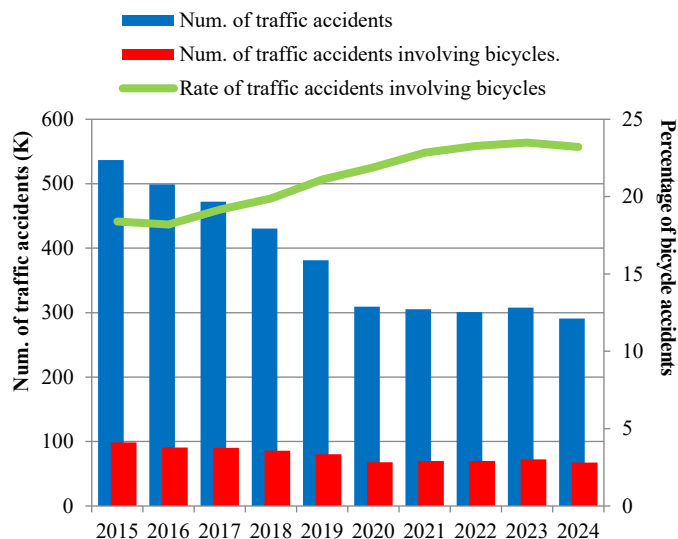
■ Bicycle infrastructure has expanded six-fold in seven years, reaching 7,570 km, primarily through on-road shared-lane markings ("Mixed traffic lane") rather than "Bicycle lane".



Source: MLIT (2025)

**Figure 5 Accident Statistics**

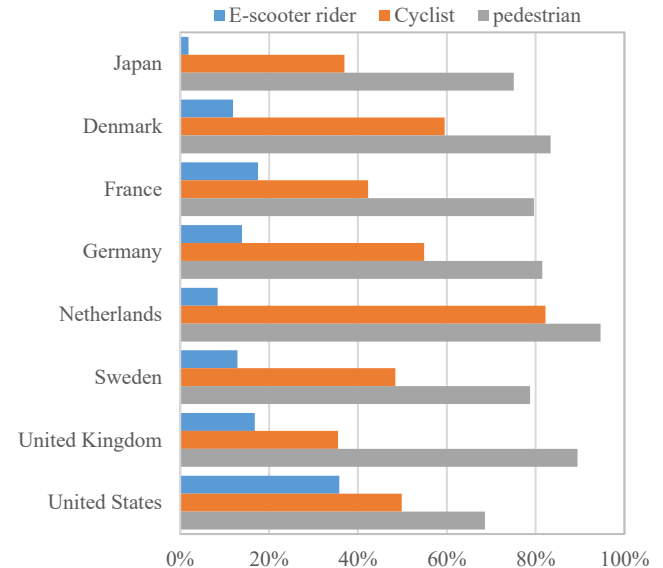
■ Though the number of bicycle accidents has stabilized, their proportion of all traffic accidents has increased, reaching 23.2% in 2025.



Source: NPA Bicycle related accidents etc.(2025)

**Figure 6 International Comparison: Usage**

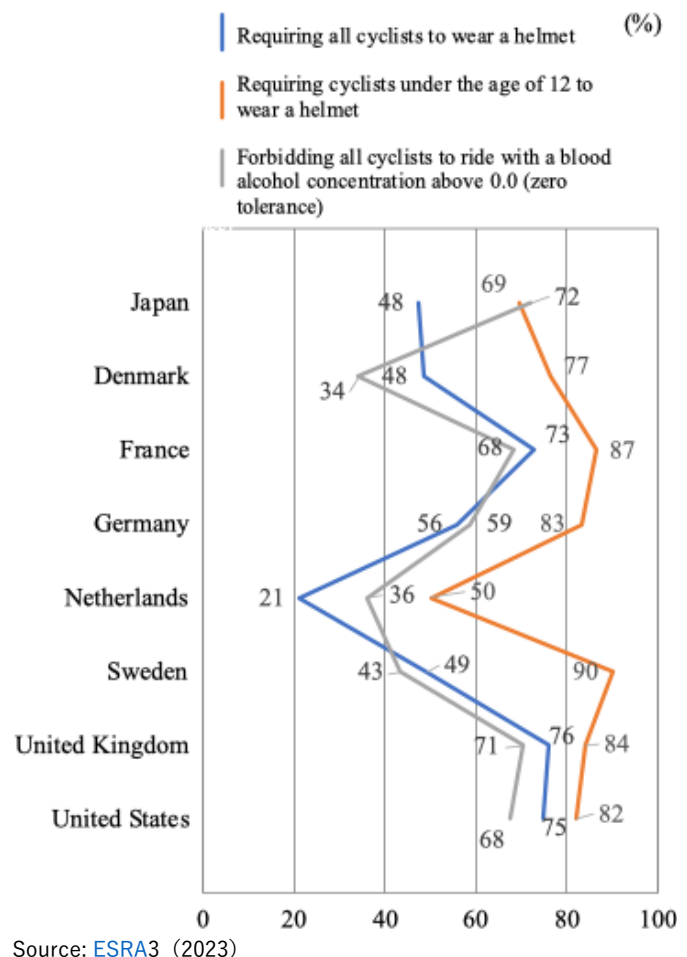
■ Self-reported data (use at least 2-3 days per month) indicates that cycling and walking rates in Japan are lower than in other surveyed countries. E-scooter usage is significantly more widespread in Europe and North America; in the United States, its usage rate is comparable to that of bicycles in Japan.



Source: ESRA3 (2023)

**Figure 7 International Comparison: Support for policy measure**

■ Compared to other countries, Japan has less public support for mandatory helmet laws.



Source: ESRA3 (2023)