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Biking to work increasingly popular in Boston, census shows

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JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF

Hubway bike stations are located around the city, including at this Post Office Square location.

By Matt Rocheleau

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The number of Boston residents who regularly commute by bicycle has more than tripled in a decade,

according to data from the US Census Bureau.

An estimated 8,100 workers regularly pedaled themselves to their jobs last year, up from 2,300 in 2005, according to the bureau's American Community Survey, which was released last month.

The percentage of Bostonians traveling to work by bike also more than doubled, from 0.9 percent to 2.4 percent during that 10-year span.

The popularity of biking to work has risen significantly for both men and women, but the estimates show it remains more popular among men, with 3.6 percent of them cycling to work compared with 1.2 percent of women.

The data is not a perfect snapshot of how many people ride bikes in Boston.



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At least 13 people have been killed while bicycling on city streets in the last five years, ranging in age from 8 to 74.

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For example, it does not account for those riding for reasons other than work and it does not capture people who live outside Boston but ride in the city. The estimates are based on a survey question that asks how the respondent usually got to work during the prior week.

Still, the figures are considered an indication of the explosion of cycling's popularity in Boston.

The Census data was noted by the city last week when it announced results of an informal annual survey of cyclists it conducts.

"More and more people are choosing to bike in Boston," the city's Boston Bikes program said in an e-newsletter on Wednesday.

Similar to the Census, the city's survey has found a surge in the number of cyclists in Boston in recent years and that biking has been more popular among men than women. It has also found that most cyclists wear helmets.

As the number of Bostonians biking to work has risen, Census data shows there have also been increases in the number of people commuting by public transit and walking and the number of people working from home. One thing that has dipped: the number of people driving themselves to work.

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