

Cycling in Québec in 2020



Cycling in Québec in 2020

I am writing this not only in my capacity as the Minister of Transport but also as a cyclist myself. The year 2020 was anything but typical, and the economic and social consequences have affected us all. During these unusual times, many people have found solace on two wheels.

Cycling, like other forms of active transportation, has experienced a surge in popularity. People are re-embracing it as a recreational activity, a way of getting around and a lifestyle choice — and that's wonderful.

Our job now is to ensure these good habits become entrenched over the long term. We are doing our part to make this happen, for example by increasing our investment in supporting the Route verte, recognizing regional cycling networks and launching a financial assistance program to help communities develop or expand bike sharing programs.

I wish you all an enjoyable and safe cycling season this summer!

François Bonnardel
Minister of Transport



Cycling is a leisure activity, a form of exercise, an athletic pursuit and a means of transportation. It's no surprise there are so many cycling enthusiasts in Québec. It is an easily accessible way of keeping your whole body fit and lets you explore some of the most beautiful parts of the province at your own pace.

This 2020 edition of *Cycling in Québec* takes a closer look at cyclists, cycling infrastructure and the impact of cycling on our society. I encourage you to read on and learn more about this vibrant world, with its rich past and bright future.

I always make a special point to promote recreational and sporting endeavours that are open to everyone, to encourage people to be active and to make physical activity a part of their everyday routine. Cycling definitely fits the bill on all counts.

Enjoy!

Isabelle Charest
Minister for Education
and Minister Responsible for the Status of Women



Cycling in Québec is a comprehensive portrait published by Vélo Québec every five years. The following pages contain a wealth of data on Québec cyclists, their habits, the physical and political environment that surrounds them, and cycling's contribution to society.

Table of Contents

An Ever-Growing Family	4
A Year Unlike Any Other	6
Four-Season Cycling	7
Kids and Bikes:	
A Match Made in Heaven	8
Bikeways for All	10
Ease Off the Gas!	12
Steering Political Conversations	13
Staying Safe	14
Cycling in Québec in 2020 Highlights	16
Spotlight on Utility Cycling!	18
A Million Cyclists and Counting	20
Saddling Up to See the World	22
A Passport to Freedom	23
The Route Verte in All Its Glory	24
The Hills Are Alive...	26
You Bike It, You Buy It	28
Good for You, Good for Us All	29
Bike to the future	30
Methodology Team Partners	31

An Ever-Growing Family

The number of people in Québec who have embraced cycling is higher now than it was a generation ago.

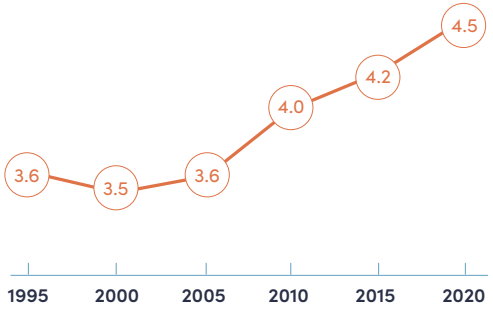
Broadening appeal

Cycling in Québec has grown steadily in popularity over the past 25 years. There are now 4.5 million two-wheeled enthusiasts in the province — 250,000 more than in 2015 and an impressive 800,000 more than in the mid-1990s. From busy city streets to quiet rural roads to trails deep in the woods, cyclists are everywhere you look.

A mainstream activity

With over half of the population (54%) engaged in cycling in 2020, bicycle use in Québec is more widespread than ever.

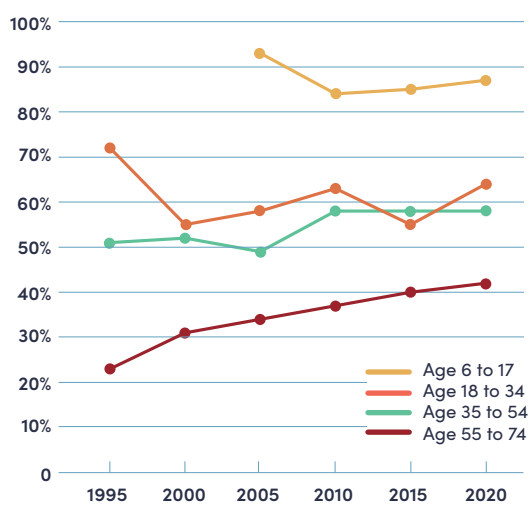
NUMBER OF CYCLISTS IN QUÉBEC (in millions)



Age is only a state of mind

Quebecers are aging at a faster rate than most of the rest of the world. The province's median age in 2020 was 42.7, up a full 7 years from 1995. But that has done little to impact the overall popularity of cycling. Among the 55+ age group, the proportion of cyclists nearly doubled between 1995 and 2020, from 23% to 42%. And in the 65–74 age group, the increase is even more dramatic, up from 12% five years ago to 34% now.

PERCENTAGE OF CYCLISTS BY AGE

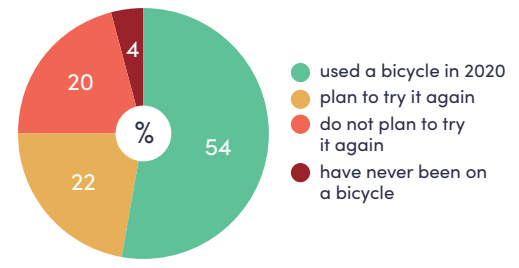


Freedom on two wheels

Almost all Québec adults (96%) have been on a bicycle at least once in their life, up 10 percentage points from 86% in 1995.

Of the 7.1 million adults and children who know how to ride a bicycle, 4.5 million chose to do so in 2020. For the remaining 2.6 million, their last time in the saddle dates back to before last year. Of this number, 1.4 million are considering taking it up in the near future to once again experience the world from behind handlebars.

ADULTS AND CYCLING



Still a lopsided gender ratio

The path to gender parity among cyclists continues to be an uphill one. Currently, 47% of women are cyclists compared to 62% of men, and the gap tends to widen with age. It is at its narrowest in the 25–44 age group, with 59% of women and 67% of men engaging in cycling. In the 45+ group, these numbers are 34% and 56%, respectively.

Getting out as often as possible

Who says Quebecers are bicycle buffs? Just about everyone! About two out of three cyclists in the province — 2.7 million people in all — ride at least once weekly. Between May and September, cyclists put in 44 km, or 3.3 hours, on average each and every week.



A Year Unlike Any Other

The pandemic has thrown us all off-kilter.

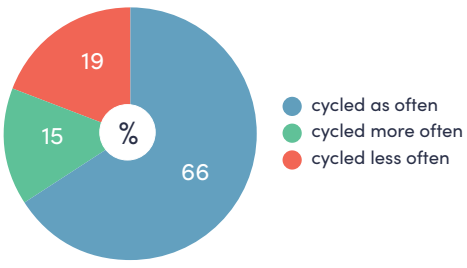
The COVID-19 factor

COVID-19 has disrupted our day-to-day lives and considerably reduced the amount of time spent travelling by any mode of transportation, albeit to a lesser degree for cycling.

Many Quebecers' cycling habits have nevertheless changed since the onset of the pandemic in spring 2020, which has prevented 350,000 people who regularly use a bicycle from doing so.

And yet, there are more cyclists in Québec than ever before, which is encouraging news under the circumstances. In fact, 15% say the public health crisis has actually prompted them to bike more frequently, compared to 19% who report the opposite. For the remaining 66%, bicycle use has remained much the same as before.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE HABITS OF ADULT CYCLISTS

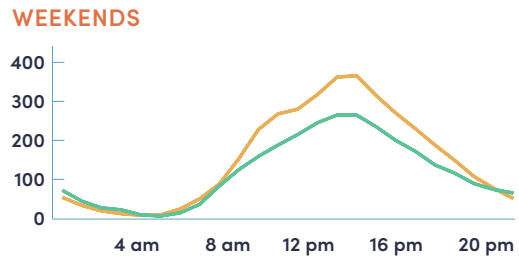
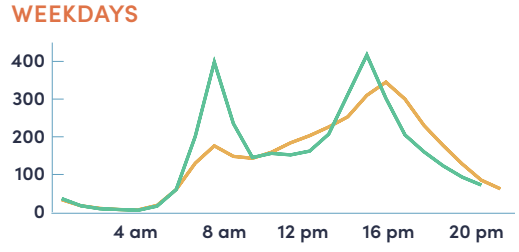


Cycling and the coronavirus

The mass transition to working from home in response to the pandemic has meant new daily routines for cyclists. In Montréal, two-wheeled transportation on weekdays was down 6% year over year in June 2020. The most profound impact has been on the morning bicycle commute. Late afternoon trips have also been affected, but not as sharply. Between these two peak periods, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., there has actually been an increase in overall bicycle traffic.

In contrast, a significant boost in weekend cycling volumes has been observed, climbing 28% in June 2020 compared to a year earlier. Relative use throughout the day has remained unchanged since the beginning of the pandemic, with the highest volumes continuing to occur mid-afternoon.

TRIPS TAKEN IN JUNE (Average of 5 counters in Montréal)



Source: David Beitel, Eco-compteur

Four-Season Cycling

For many adult cyclists in Québec, cycling is a year-round affair.

365 days a year

The warmer months are unsurprisingly the most popular time of year for cycling. With the first rays of spring sunshine, cyclists come out in droves. In 2020, some 700,000 adult cyclists in Québec were already out and about in April — a significant increase over the 500,000 cyclists who kicked off the cycling season in 2015.

Summer is the ideal time to enjoy the benefits of bike riding, which is why 98% of cyclists engaged in the activity between May and September.

As fall rolls around, nature may start to slow down, but the same cannot be said for cyclists. In October and November, 1.45 million adults were still active, which is up 350,000 from the same figure five years ago. Nor were they deterred by frigid temperatures and accumulating snowfall: in fact, no fewer than 190,000 adult cyclists continued to ride between December and March.

A longer season

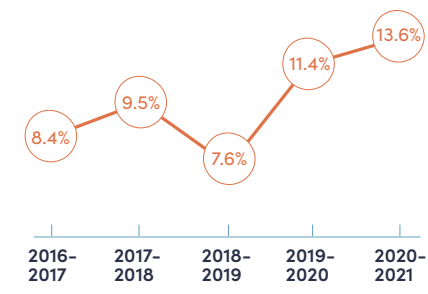
Year after year, Quebecers do everything they can to make the bike season last as long as possible. In 2020, the average cyclist rode for five months, two weeks more than in 2015. Breaking this down further, people who cycle as a means of transportation are active for an average of 5.4 months a year, compared to 4.6 months for those who do so for recreational purposes.

The rise of winter cycling

More and more Montrealers are cycling year-round. The winter retention rate — calculated by comparing the number of cyclists counted from December to March against the number from June to September — grew from 8.4% in winter 2016–2017 to 13.6% for the same period in 2020–2021.

This shift toward winter cycling has occurred alongside an increase in the number of snow-cleared bike paths, of which there were precious few in 2015, and better winter maintenance practices. These improvements were undoubtedly influenced by the 2017 Winter Cycling Congress held in Montréal as well as the snowball effect of the ongoing expansion of the city's cycling infrastructure and traffic-calming measures.

WINTER RETENTION OF MONTRÉAL CYCLISTS



Source: David Beitel, Eco-compteur

CYCLISTES ADULTES SELON LES SAISONS



Kids and Bikes: A Match Made in Heaven

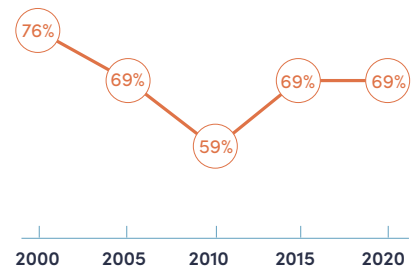
Young Quebecers aged 3 to 17 are as enthusiastic as ever about cycling.

An enduring love affair...

The popularity of cycling among children and youth in Québec has held steady for the past decade. In 2020, 87% of the 6–17 population were bicycle users. In any given year, between 8 and 9 out of 10 young Quebecers participate in cycling.

And young cyclists tend to ride a lot: an average of 3.4 hours a week during the May–September season. For 800,000 kids and teens, cycling is a regular weekly activity.

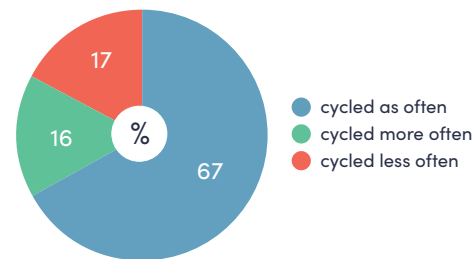
PROPORTION OF REGULAR CYCLISTS, 6–17 (at least once a week)



Impact of the pandemic

COVID-19 has not had much of an effect on young cyclists' behaviours. Only 3% of those who normally ride their bike refrained in 2020 because of the pandemic. A total of 16% of those in this age group who went cycling during the year indicate they did so more frequently, compared to 17% who say it was less. The bulk of bicycle users aged 3 to 17 (67%) did not see any changes in the amount of time spent cycling.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE HABITS OF YOUNG CYCLISTS, 6–17



Getting from point A to point B

Cycling is more than a leisure activity for young Quebecers 3 to 17 years old. No fewer than 500,000 use their bicycle to go to school, see their friends and otherwise get around. This represents 60% of young cyclists.

It would not take much to increase this percentage. The key lies in developing more bikeways and having more faith in our children and teens. Apart from the age of their children and the sometimes prohibitive distances involved, the lack of safe bicycle infrastructure is often what stops parents from letting young cyclists enjoy the independence they yearn for.



Cycliste averti: Learning to be responsible cyclists

The *Cycliste averti* program is designed to help students in grades five and six become safer and savvier bicycle users. Launched by Vélo Québec in 2015, *Cycliste averti* combines theory and practice, with a healthy dose of fun. The program is available in communities across the province, thanks to a network of local partners. And the results speak for themselves: in 2019, the number of participating schools grew sixfold compared to 2016, with a total of 184 classes and 3,659 students, representing an 85% increase in three years. To date, 8,500 preteens have learned the basic rules of the road from *Cycliste averti*'s expert instructors, helping them be more self-sufficient in their daily lives and allowing parents to overcome their fear of letting children set out on their own.



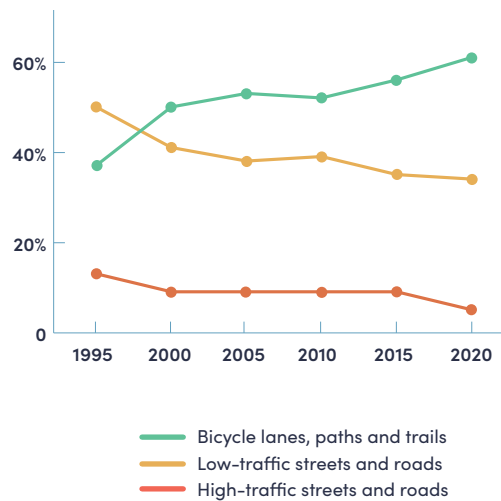
Bikeways for All

Bicycle-friendly environments are no longer a rarity in Québec – and cyclists are taking full advantage of them.

Where it's at

The use of bike paths and trails is more widespread than ever. A total of 61% of all cycling trips are taken on these dedicated bicycle facilities. This is up sharply from the 37% from 25 years ago. Likewise, cyclists' shift away from high-traffic streets is telling: these represented 5% of all bike trips in 2020, versus 13% in 1995.

TRIPS BY TYPE OF BIKEWAYS



More, please!

The demand for these types of infrastructure is on the rise. Seven out of ten people feel bikeways should be more widespread in their community. And almost nine out of ten say that bikeways are instrumental in improving cyclist safety.

The end justifies the means

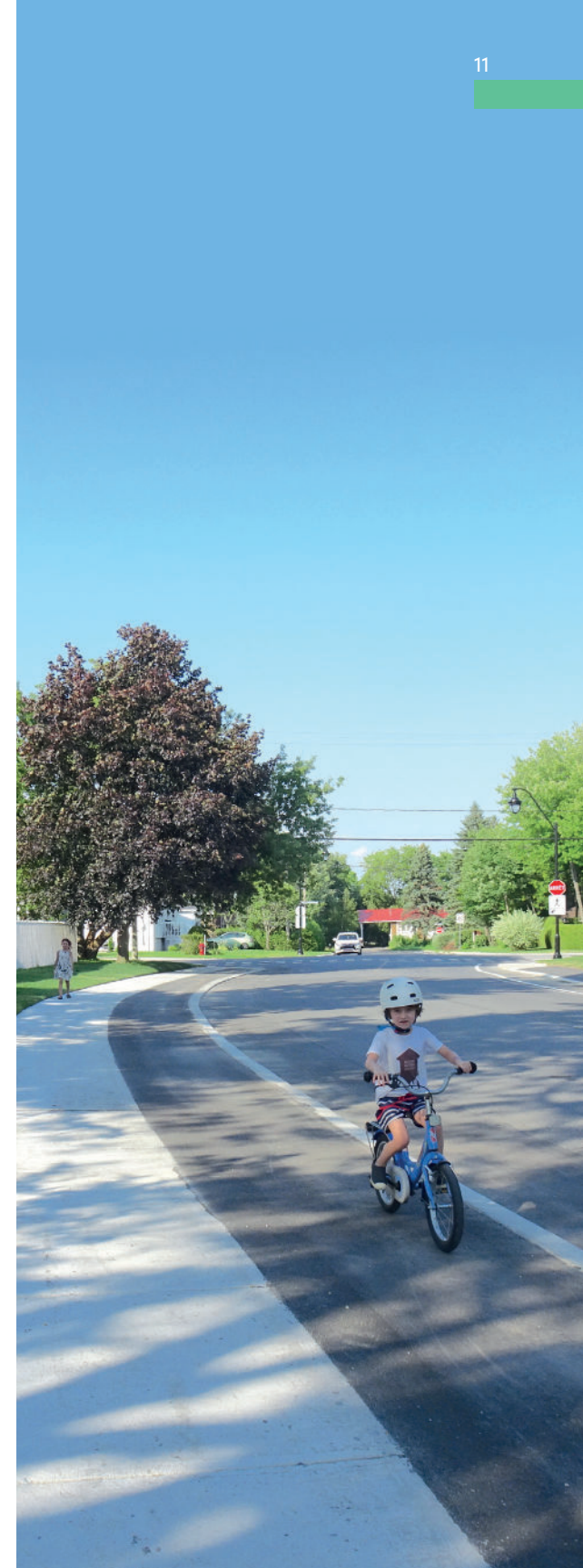
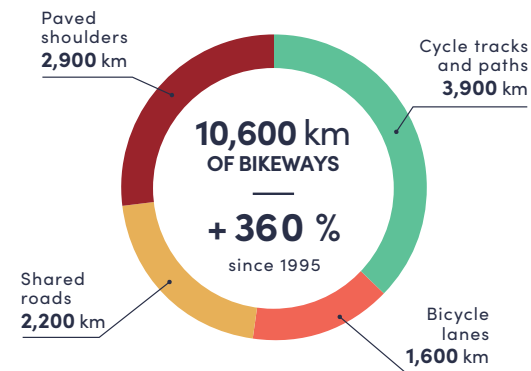
Some 50% of Montréal cyclists rode on the temporary bike lanes set up on the Island of Montréal during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nearly two out of three say that these temporary facilities prompted them to do more cycling.

A growing network

Since the first bike paths were built in the 1970s, the Québec-wide network of cycling infrastructure has been growing steadily. In 1995, there were 2,300 km of bikeways in the province. Today, 25 years later, there are 10,600 km, almost five times more. The total length of bikeways separated from motor vehicle traffic (bicycle paths, multipurpose trails and protected bike lanes) has almost tripled from 1,400 km in 1995 to 3,900 km in 2020. There has also been a spectacular boom in the availability of cyclist-friendly paved shoulders, which went from non-existent in 1995 to close to 2,900 km today.

Cities like Gatineau and Laval currently boast about 300 km of bikeways in their community. In Québec City, there are more than 350 km for cyclists to enjoy. And at the top of the list is Montréal, which has nearly tripled its network in the past 20 years to its current 1,001 km.

QUÉBEC CYCLING NETWORK



Ease Off the Gas!

More and more Quebecers are demanding — and getting — solutions to calm traffic in their community.

Slower means safer

Should road speeds be lowered? Most people in Québec would seem to think so. Six out of ten are in favour of introducing traffic-calming measures in residential streets, while two out of three feel cyclists are safer when the speed of motor vehicles is controlled.



The situation in Montréal...

Montréal is the undisputed champion in Québec for traffic-calming measures. More than 1,200, or 7%, of the city's intersections have curb extensions. And there are 2,700 speed humps on over 250 km of streets. In total, 540 km of streets on the Island of Montréal are fitted with traffic-calming devices.

Some Montréal boroughs have been particularly successful in this regard, for example Outremont, Rosemont–La-Petite-Patrie and Plateau-Mont-Royal, where 20% of intersections have curb extensions and traffic-calming measures are in place in no fewer than 30% streets.

...and the rest of the province

Communities throughout Québec have actively embraced traffic-calming measures. In Laval, 160 curb extensions, 200 speed humps, 5 raised crosswalks and 3 raised intersections have been built since 2017.

In the west of the province, 700 mid-street crosswalk signs and 1,300 flexible traffic delineator posts have been installed in Gatineau, the capital of the Outaouais region, from 2014 onward. The city has also stepped up its efforts in this regard in recent years, completing a total of 166 projects with a traffic-calming component.

Steering Political Conversations

Cycling is having an increasingly significant impact on the local political scene in Québec.

Concrete plans

Municipal administrations are paying more attention to sustainability, with cycling among the issues at the head of the pack. Today, 62% of Quebecers live in communities that have adopted a cycling plan, active transportation plan or sustainable mobility plan with a cycling component — communities like Alma, Contrecoeur, Drummondville, Lavaltrie and Rouyn-Noranda, to name a few. What's more, many of the province's larger administrations, including those of Montréal and Québec City, have updated their transportation policies to make them even more conducive to cycling.



Welcome to the movement

Launched in 2015, *Mouvement VÉLOSYPATHIQUE* has been growing in size and momentum ever since. A total of 29 cities and towns, 1 regional county municipality and 4 boroughs have signed on to this certification program for communities and organizations, the aim of which is to make cycling a truly viable transportation and recreational option for everyone. With municipalities as diverse as Chelsea, Drummondville, Montréal and more among its ranks, *Mouvement VÉLOSYPATHIQUE* clearly has a lot to offer.

Staying Safe

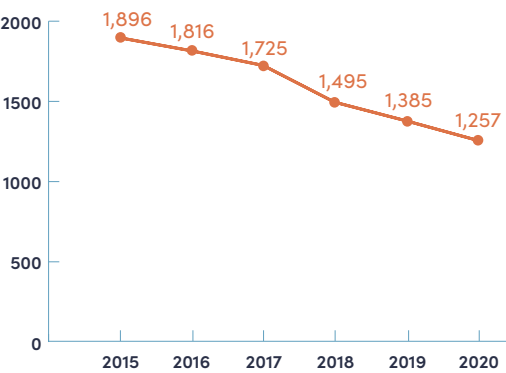
Cycling in Québec is a low-risk, high-benefit activity, offering multiple health and fitness rewards.

Cycling-related injuries down

Good news: Accidents between cyclists and motorists are becoming scarcer in Québec. From 2015 to 2020, the number of minor injuries among cyclists fell by 34%. In terms of serious injuries and fatalities, the decline follows a similar pattern: there were only 84 such incidents in 2020, down 32% from the 123 reported in 2015.

Unfortunately, this downward trend was not reflected in pedestrian statistics: between 2015 and 2019, the number of injuries and fatalities in this group remained relatively stable (between 2,699 and 2,806 from year to year). There was nevertheless a significant decrease in 2020, when the total number of pedestrian injuries and fatalities dipped to 1,836.

CYCLISTS INJURED IN A COLLISION WITH A MOTOR VEHICLE



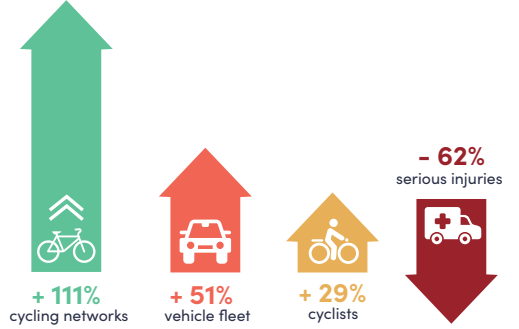
Putting things in perspective

Cyclist safety in Québec has been improving for the past two decades. Although the number of cyclists has climbed 29% since 2000, serious injuries have decreased by 62%. This trend is even more heartening when we consider that the number of cars on the road in Québec has grown by 51% in the last 20 years. This can be attributed to the simultaneous development of cycling infrastructure, which has doubled in the same period, and the introduction of traffic-calming measures along hundreds of kilometres of city streets in Québec, a trend that has been accelerating in recent years.

SERIOUS INJURIES AND FATALITIES FROM ROAD ACCIDENTS IN 2020 (SAAQ, 2021)



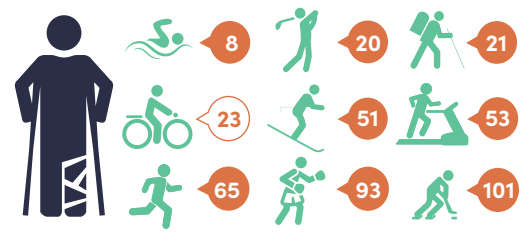
CYCLISTS SAFETY (2000-2020)



Risk vs. reward

So is cycling a risky activity? No more so than golf! The annual rate of serious injuries requiring medical care is 23 per 1,000 cyclists, compared to 20 per 1,000 golfers.

INJURIES PER 1,000 BY ACTIVITY IN 2015-2016 (INSPQ, 2019)



Bicycle helmet usage

Bicycle helmets are being worn more frequently with each passing year. In 2020, adults donned a helmet for 69% of their trips, up significantly from 36% in 1995. Helmet usage also continues to increase among young riders, who wear one 81% of the time now, up from 72% in 2015. This includes 63% of teenagers 14 to 17, thereby refuting the idea that this age group is inclined to ignore safety precautions.



CYCLING IN QUÉBEC IN 2020

4.5 MILLION
cyclists in Québec

3.4 MILLIONS
ADULTS

56%
MALE



44%
FEMALE

1.1 MILLION
YOUTH



2.7 MILLION
Québecers cycle every week

A PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

EACH WEEK

3.3 h
ADULTS



3.4 h
YOUTH



44 km

**VALUE AS
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

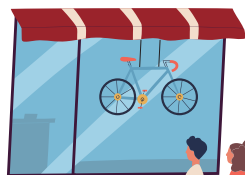
\$2 BILLION/YEAR*



*based on WHO/HEAT figures

AN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

\$565 MILLION



Acquisition
and maintenance
(bicycles and accessories)



7.2 MILLION
bicycles in Québec



365,000
E-BIKES



2.1 MILLION

Québecers cycle as means
of transportation



+17%

trips in Montréal
between 2013 and 2018

BICYCLE NETWORK AND MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS

52%

of trips are made
on bicycle networks

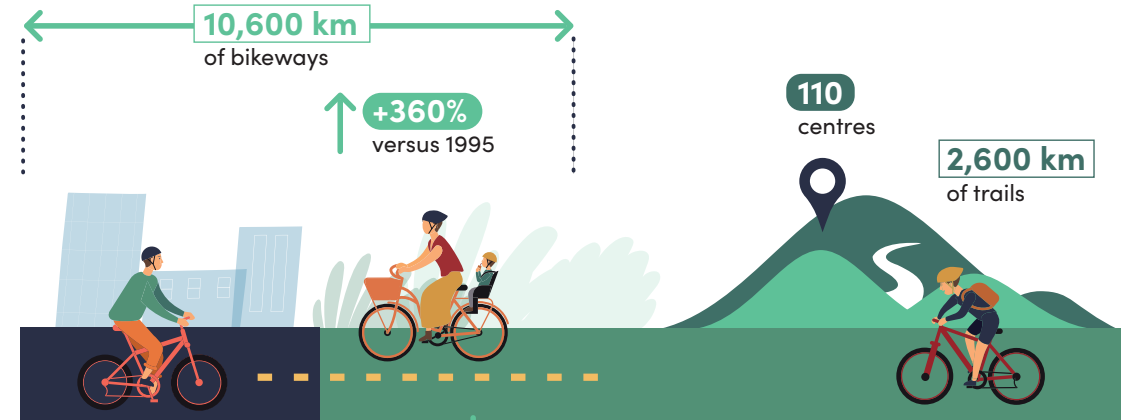
10,600 km
of bikeways

+360%
versus 1995

1.1 MILLION
mountain bikers

110
centres

2,600 km
of trails



5,100 km
Route verte



Spotlight on Utility Cycling!

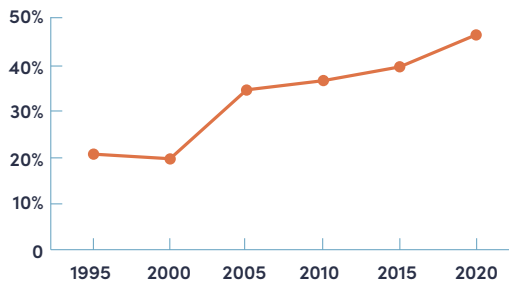
Using a bicycle to get around is now a way of life for many people across the province.

A preferred transportation option

Some 2.1 million Quebecers of all ages cycle at least occasionally to and from work, school and the grocery store.

In 2020, 47% of adult cyclists (1.6 million) used this mode of transportation for utility trips. This stands in stark contrast to the 21%, or 600,000 cyclists, reported in 1995. Cycling as a means of transportation has therefore more than doubled in the span of 25 years.

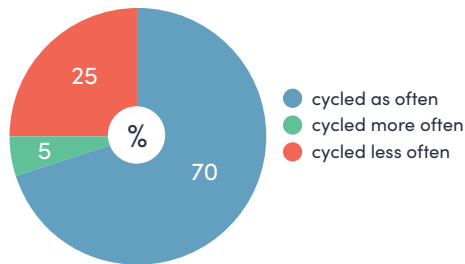
ADULT CYCLISTES WHO USE A BICYCLE AS A MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION



No backpedalling

Getting from point A to point B via bicycle is a well-established habit for many Quebecers. Some 800,000 engage in utility cycling at least once a week between May and September, the equivalent to just over 3 hours of travel by bike per week. These figures are similar to 2015 statistics. Given the COVID-19 situation, where the need to leave home to work or attend school has been greatly reduced, with 25% of utility cyclists saying they spent less time in the saddle in 2020, this relative stability is heartening indeed.

HABITS OF UTILITY CYCLISTS DURING THE PANDEMIC



So much potential

Many people who live within a bikeable distance of their work do not fully appreciate how simple cycling can be as a commuting solution. The federal census in 2016 indicates that 36% of Québec workers live 5 km or less away from their workplace. This proportion climbs to 44% in medium-sized cities like Saguenay, Trois-Rivières and Sherbrooke. In smaller communities, the percentage of people living within a 5-km radius of work is higher still, exceeding 60% in Sept-Îles, Saint-Hyacinthe, Matane, Val-d'Or, Victoriaville, Saint-Georges and Dolbeau-Mistassini.

There is plenty of room for improvement in this regard. A study by the Chaire Mobilité de Polytechnique Montréal shows that 18% to 25% of all trips made in Québec's largest cities could be done by bicycle. This potential is based only on short trips, with no loads or passengers to carry. In actual fact, running errands and taking children to school is possible by bike, so the potential would likely be much higher. As would it if electric bicycles and combined bicycle/public transit trips were taken into account.



A Million Cyclists and Counting

Montrealers are no strangers to the charms of cycling.

A bike-friendly city par excellence

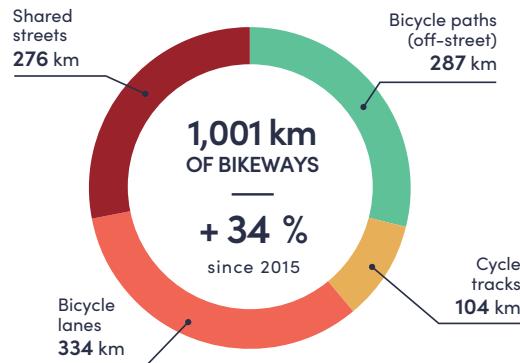
Cycling is an integral part of Montréal's urban fabric, or so say the 1.1 million people who partake in this activity. It is estimated that two out of three adults, or 600,000 people, used a bike for utility purposes occasionally or more often in 2020, up 42% from 2015.

An increase was also observed in terms of frequency of use. In 2020, 350,000 Montrealers were out riding once a week or more often, compared to 275,000 five years earlier.

Environments made for cyclists

Continued investments in cycling infrastructure and traffic-calming measures are to credit, at least in part, for the growing popularity of cycling in Montréal. There are currently 1,001 km of bikeways on the Island of Montréal, 34% more than in 2015, and traffic-calming measures have been incorporated into 540 km of the city's streets. That's four times more than five years ago.

MONTRÉAL'S CYCLING NETWORK



A growing mode share

Cycling holds a place of honour among the various means of transportation used by Montrealers. Some 3.3% of trips made on the Island of Montréal in 2018 were done by bike, based on the latest origin-destination study conducted by the Autorité régionale de transport métropolitain (ARTM). This represents an increase of 18% compared to 2013.

The average Montréal cyclist makes 2.3 trips per day by bicycle, which by itself accounts for 140,000 daily trips on the Island.

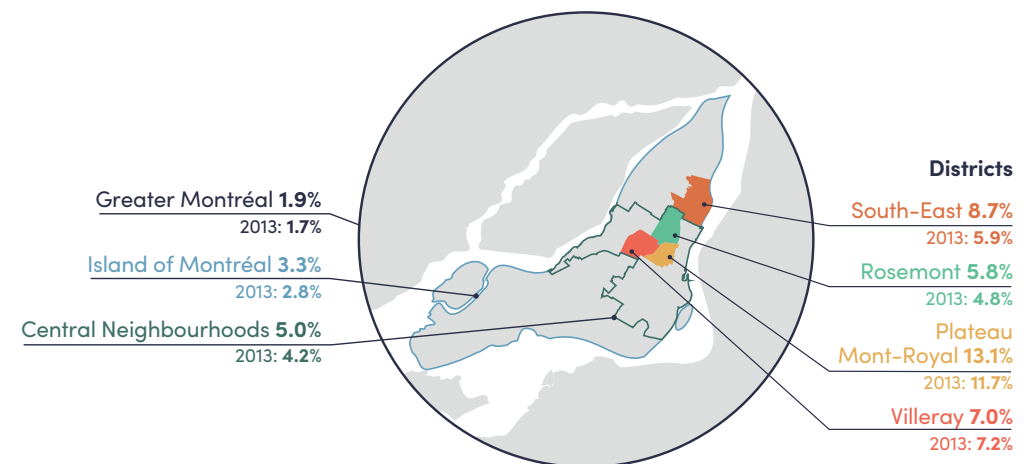
The 2018 origin-destination study shows that men make 4.1% of all their trips by bike. The corresponding mode share for women is 2.5%

The one and only BIXI

BIXI has played an important role in democratizing bicycle use in Montréal. From 2015 to 2019, use of the bike-sharing system has grown 62%, from 3.5 million to 5.7 million trips. Clearly, BIXI holds a special place in Montrealers' hearts.

The public health crisis may have put the brakes on BIXI's momentum, but its bikes were nevertheless used 3.3 million times in 2020. Downtown trips, or the lack thereof, account for a significant proportion of the slowdown, in that most of the office towers in the central business district have been all but deserted while stay-at-home guidelines have been in effect. Still, this temporary setback for the bike-sharing movement is relatively minor compared to the effect on automobile traffic and public transit ridership, both of which had plummeted by 75% Canada-wide in June 2020, according to Statistics Canada.

BICYCLE MODE SHARE IN 2018



Saddling Up to See the World

More than ever, cycling is a preferred way to discover new destinations..

Day trips...

Quebecers love to see new places and explore new frontiers by bicycle. In 2020, over 1 million of them travelled more than 40 km from their home to take part in a cycling excursion.

Excursion cyclists tend to spend money in the area they are visiting, to the great delight of the local tourism industry. The average expenditure on food, transportation and local attractions is \$62 per household, for an annual province-wide total of \$162 million in 2020.

...or something longer

About one out of ten cyclists in Québec, or 370,000 people, made cycling part of their travel experience in 2020. In some cases, it was one activity among many, but for more than 230,000, cycling was the focal point of the trip. This translated to 630,000 stays in 2020 and 1.5 million travel days.

Bienvenue cyclistes!

After a day of pedalling, touring cyclists like to relax in accommodations that cater to their specific needs. In 2020, there were 346 tourist accommodation establishments and 110 campgrounds certified under the *Bienvenue cyclistes!* program, all offering an array of cyclist-friendly services and amenities.

More, please! (Take two)

On average, excursion cyclists ventured out six times on cycle trails, twice on mountain bike trails and five times on rural roads in 2020.

Touring cyclists' preferences weren't much different. During their last trip of 2020, cycle trails and mountain bike trails were the preferred destination for 67% of them, while the remaining third chose to hit the pavement instead.

A Passport to Freedom

The joys of cycling are appreciated by many across the province.

A beloved pastime

Cycling is a leisure pursuit that is enjoyed by Quebecers of all ages. It is third only to walking and swimming in terms of the province's most popular physical activities. The amount of time spent on two wheels for pleasure in 2020 was 2.7 hours per week, the same as in 2015. And half of adult cyclists in Québec — 1.6 million — hop on their bikes for fun at least once a week.

An abundance of options

As a physical activity, cycling is unrivalled for its diversity. Cyclists can explore all types of terrain from one season to the next, by themselves, as a group or as part of a competition. From mountain biking, fatbiking and road biking to electric-assist cycling and bicycle touring: there's truly something for everyone to enjoy.

The newest member of the family

Gravel biking has recently taken the Québec cycling scene by storm. These all-terrain bicycles let users discover thousands of kilometres of quiet back-country roads crisscrossing the province. Judging by the excitement this has elicited in the cycling community in the past five years, it would seem that we are witnessing the birth of a long-term trend rather than a passing fad.



The Route Verte in All Its Glory

The Route Verte is the backbone of Québec's flourishing cycling network, with close to 5,100 km of bikeways divided into seven zones, running through 16 regions, 382 communities and seven national parks across the province.

A masterpiece... and a work in progress

Off-road bicycle paths and multiuse trails make up some 1,900 km of the 5,100-km Route Verte, or about 2 out of every 5 km, among them the Estriade trail, the Petit-Témis interprovincial linear park and the Vélo piste Jacques-Cartier/Portneuf — not to mention many others winding through such gems as the Pointe-Taillon, Le Bic and Mont-Orford national parks.

The remaining 3,200 km meander through picturesque towns and villages dotting the Québec landscape and along paved shoulders that afford one breathtaking view after another, from the Chemin du Roy, which hugs the St. Lawrence River shoreline through the Lanaudière, Mauricie and Québec City regions, to the Véloroute des Baleines (Côte-Nord). Route 132, which curves around the Gaspé Peninsula, and a section of Route 148 running parallel to the Ottawa River are among the other unforgettable destinations in this category.

Another 200 km of bikeways are currently in development and will undoubtedly add to the beauty and charm of the Route Verte in coming years. The 2018–2023 action plan associated with the Ministère des Transports's Sustainable Mobility Policy – 2030 foresees the addition of a further 900 km, bringing the total length to 6,200 km.

Known...

The Route Verte is a source of deep and abiding pride for Quebecers. The name sparks immediate recognition for six out of ten of them. A whopping 820,000 commuters, recreational cyclists and tourists alike confirm having ridden on the Route Verte in 2020, although countless others were probably so busy drinking in the spectacular scenery that they didn't even notice the signposts!



...and loved

The Route Verte is attracting more and more cyclists with each passing year. In 2015, 2.13 million trips were logged by 23 automatic counters set up at various points along North America's longest network of fully signposted bikeways. Five years later, the same counters tallied 2.7 million trips, which works out to an increase hovering around the 27% mark.

And this increase in volume is being seen across the province at points including the following:

30,000+ trips a year:

- Saint-Modeste (Petit-Témis interprovincial linear park)
- Brownsburg-Chatham (VéloRoute d'Argenteuil)

50,000+ trips a year:

- Baie-Comeau (Véloroute des Baleines)
- Alma, Dolbeau-Mistassini, Métabetchouan-Lac-à-la-Croix and Roberval (Véloroute des Bleuets)
- Saint-Raymond and Sainte-Catherine-de-la-Jacques-Cartier (Vélo piste Jacques-Cartier/Portneuf)
- L'Ange-Gardien (La Montérégiade)
- Les Coteaux (Soulanges bike path)

75,000+ trips a year:

- Approach to the Québec Bridge
- Longueuil, Brossard and Boucherville (La Riveraine)

150,000+ trips a year:

- Québec City (Promenade Samuel-De Champlain)
- Mirabel, Saint-Jérôme, Sainte-Adèle and Mont-Tremblant (Le P'tit Train du Nord liner park)
- Brossard (Marie-Victorin Boulevard)

250,000+ trips a year:

- Lévis (Parcours des Anses)
- Granby (Estriade bike trail).

The Hills Are Alive...

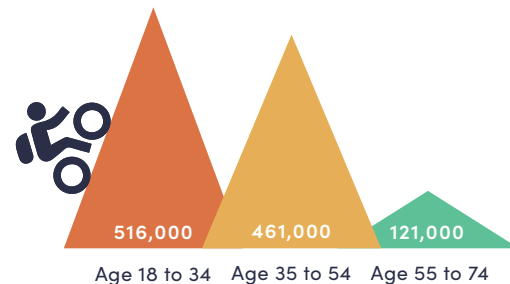
Mountain biking centres in Québec are more popular than ever.

Going off-road

Quebecers have fallen head over heels for the beauty and adventure of cycling through mountains, forests and other off-road destinations. A total of 1.1 million mountain bikers hit the trails in 2020, up substantially by 480,000 since 2015.

Mountain biking appeals to adventurous spirits of all ages. In the 18–34 age bracket, there are currently more than 516,000 enthusiasts. Just behind are the 461,000 mountain bikers aged 35 to 54. And joining them are 121,000 others 55 and up. The overall breakdown by age is similar to that of 2015, with growth in use being robust in each category.

MOUNTAIN BIKERS BY AGE



New trails sprouting up everywhere

Some 660,000 Quebecers headed out mountain biking on single-track trails in 2020. With 2,600 km to enjoy — 400 km more than in 2015 — across 110 separate networks, the province has no shortage of destinations to explore.

At the top of the leaderboard with 575 km of trails, the Capitale-Nationale region offers a striking variety of mountain biking options to choose from. The Laurentians are in second place, with 330 km, followed by the Eastern Townships, with 255 km. The more remote Gaspé Peninsula and Abitibi-Témiscamingue regions feature 159 km and 118 km trails, respectively, just waiting to be discovered.

Visitors are also flocking to bike parks as a complementary activity to mountain biking trails. Thanks to investments by numerous municipal administrations, there are now more than 50 such facilities across the province, most of which feature a pump track that allows cyclists of all ages to further develop their skills.

Record numbers

The sharp rise in the number of mountain bikers who are new to the sport is a province-wide phenomenon. Five of the most popular mountain biking networks saw ridership increase fivefold between 2015 and 2020.

Compelling statistics

On average, mountain bikers spend 72 minutes a week taking part in their chosen pursuit. Many of them head out on their own, but a significant number belong to one of 80 clubs across the province, approximately 10 of which have an all-female membership. Mountain bikers as a whole are more than prepared to invest in their passion, spending \$110 million every year on bicycles, equipment, accessories and apparel. This represents 19% of total cycling-related spending across all categories.

A winter wonderland

Fatbiking is now a well-established form of winter recreation for many Quebecers, who have 1,300 km of groomed trails at 95 different sites to choose from. That's three times as many kilometres and twice as many sites as in 2015. This groundswell of interest mirrors that of mountain biking.



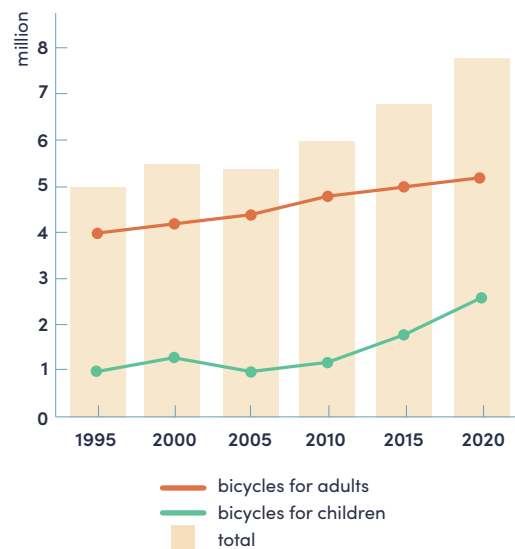
You Bike It, You Buy It

Cyclists are doing their part to gear up the Québec economy.

Bikes by the millions

It turns out there are more bicycles than there are cyclists in Québec. Some of the more avid enthusiasts own several bikes for tackling different terrains and destinations. And there are plenty of bicycles in the back of garages across the province just waiting to be rediscovered. Every year, Quebecers buy more bicycles than they discard. The result: an extra 400,000 bicycles that have been added to our collective stable since 2015, for a current total of 7.2 million. Of this, roughly 4.8 million are for use by adults and 2.4 million for children. This works out to an average of 1.5 adult bicycles per household, to which an average of 2 children's bicycles can be added when there are junior cyclists in the family.

QUÉBEC BICYCLE OWNERSHIP



Record-breaking sales

For the first time ever, bike shops across Québec actually ran out of bikes in 2020, ostensibly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Close to 950,000 bicycles were purchased during the year (430,000 for adults and 520,000 for children). The yearly average since 2000 has run closer to 600,000.

The emergence of the electric-assist bicycle

Sales of electric-assist bicycles, which were little more than a blip on the radar in 2015, have since captured a significant market share. Some 110,000 were snatched up in 2020, representing 26% of all sales of adult bicycles. The 365,000 electric-assist bicycles currently in use in Québec represent a full 8% of adult bicycles on the road.

A growing market

Québec cyclists as a rule have no qualms about investing in their favourite pursuit. The average household spends \$178 a year on bicycle-related purchases and maintenance, including gear, accessories and clothing. The estimated total market is valued at \$565 million, or \$65 million more than five years ago.



\$565 million/year
in purchases of bicycles,
gear, accessories and apparel

Good for You, Good for Us All

As individuals and as a society, we reap a number of unexpected benefits from cycling.

Impact on overall health

Every week, Quebecers spend 3.3 hours riding a bicycle, together chalking up the equivalent of 14 million hours behind handlebars. According to the calculations of the Health Economic Assessment Tool (HEAT) developed by the World Health Organization, 724 deaths are prevented in the province every year as a result of this physical activity.

Money in the bank

The HEAT method also helps estimate the economic value of various forms of physical activity. The dollar amount attributable to preventing 724 deaths in Québec through cycling works out to close to \$2 billion. In other words, without cycling in our lives, we would all be \$2 billion poorer.



Bike to the future

This sixth edition of *Cycling in Québec* shows that bicycle use is becoming more and more widespread in the province and attracting an ever-growing number of people. In fact, a full half of the population are now cyclists. And this momentum has continued to build amid the COVID-19 pandemic that has disrupted our daily travel habits. Yet, interestingly enough, bicycle-related injuries are at a decades-long low.

This increase in ridership is closely linked to the creation of environments conducive to bicycle use. The cycling network in Québec has quadrupled in size since 1995, and traffic-calming structures have sprouted up across the province in recent years in response to public demand.

Québec's cycling culture has also been shaped by a host of other measures that have been introduced by our communities, from programs in our schools that foster bicycle literacy to a plethora of maps and routes, bike-share facilities and group cycling outings that contribute to the pleasure and ease of a two-wheeled lifestyle.

Bicycles are more vital than ever to our day-to-day lives. With every pedal stroke, cyclists are doing their part to improve public health, strengthen our local and provincial economy, promote sustainable tourism via the Route Verte, and advocate for greener transportation and a cleaner planet. Let's all continue to be champions of cycling in Québec and aspire to an even smoother ride ahead.



Methodology

The data used for this sixth edition of the study came from a variety of sources:

- A province-wide survey on cycling in Québec conducted by the Léger polling firm in the fall of 2020 and analyzed by André Poirier, a professor in the Département de techniques de recherche sociale at Collège de Rosemont.
- Analyses of origin-destination study data for several Québec cities performed by the Chaire de recherche Mobilité at Polytechnique Montréal.
- Automatic counters and counting campaigns, courtesy of some 40 municipalities and bikeway management organizations.
- Data collected, compiled and analyzed by our team on the Five E's: engineering, encouragement, education, enforcement, and evaluation and planning.

For further information on the methodology used and for detailed results: velo.qc.ca/cycling2020

Team

DIRECTOR
Marc Jolicoeur

RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS
Jérémy Voisin

With contributions from:

Nicolas Audet
Antoine Hébert-Maher
Louis Lalonde
Vincent Lessard
Christine Préfontaine-Meunier
Maxime Résibois
Francis Tétrault

COMMUNICATIONS
Anne Williams

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS
Julien Puget

WRITING (French edition)
Maxime Bilodeau
Louis Lalonde

TRANSLATION
Shonda Secord, EVOQ Communications

**GRAPHIC DESIGN
AND ILLUSTRATIONS**
Odile Lareau and Good Studio/Vectorstock

PHOTOGRAPHY
Jonathan B. Roy, Sandra Larochelle
and Vélo Québec

Partners

Autorité régionale de transport
métropolitain

CIUSSS Centre-Sud de Montréal

Ministère de l'Éducation et de
l'Enseignement supérieur

Ministère de la Santé et des
Services sociaux

Ministère des Transports

Société de l'assurance automobile
du Québec

Ville de Boucherville

Ville de Gatineau

Ville de Laval

Ville de Longueuil

Ville de Montréal

Ville de Québec

Ville de Saguenay

Ville de Sherbrooke

Ville de Trois-Rivières



Every five years since 1995, Vélo Québec has prepared a detailed report on cycling in Québec. Among the topics covered and analyzed in detail are cyclists' habits, the economic, health and ecological benefits of cycling, and the prevalence and use of bicycle-friendly facilities. Based on this vast undertaking, we can identify trends, correlations and observations – and use this to prepare a comprehensive profile of what cycling is, does and means to Quebecers to enable well-informed decision-making on cycling in the future.



Vélo Québec

1251, Rachel Street East, Montréal (Québec) H2J 2J9 Canada
Phone: 514-521-8356 • 1-800-567-8356 velo.qc.ca

ISBN 978-2-924149-25-6

Legal deposit - Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, June 2021.

This document may be reproduced provided the source is acknowledged.