

## Bicycles outsell cars in most EU countries

6th December, 2013



The BBC reports that in 2102, more bicycles were sold than cars in 26 out of 28 countries in the European Union. There appear to be several reasons behind this growing trend. One

is because of the recession experienced in many countries after the global financial crisis. Many countries introduced austerity measures, which took away the spending power of consumers who might ordinarily have bought a car instead of a bicycle. The continuing rise in fuel prices is also making motorists think twice about driving. Another reason is that more people are getting into cycling. The BBC reports that: "The popularity of cycling appears to be going beyond the traditional 'cycling capitals' of northern Europe."

A whopping 50 per cent more bicycles were sold than cars. Europeans bought just 12 million cars in 2012, compared to 19.2 million bicycles. Sergio Marchionne, the head of the Italian car giant FIAT, said this was a sorry state of affairs for the car industry, and described it as "carmageddon". Car sales in Italy slumped so badly that they were at their lowest levels since 1965 – a five-decade low. The head of the Italian cycling federation believes there has been, "a small revolution in terms of lifestyle". The head of Italian cycling manufacturer Bianchi agreed. He said: "Customers these days want bikes they can commute with, and top of the range bikes. They are looking for long-term investments."

Sources: BBC / France 24

### Writing

*It is time to start reducing our car use and cycle more. Discuss.*

### Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

*bicycles / reasons / trend / recession / financial crisis / consumers / fuel prices / industry / slumped / revolution / lifestyle / commute / top-of-the-range / investments*

### True / False

- Cars outsold bicycles in just two of the European Union countries. T / F
- The global financial crisis is not a reason for the rise in bicycle sales. T / F
- Gasoline / petrol prices have fueled the popularity of cycling. T / F
- Cycling's growing popularity is still limited to northern Europe. T / F
- In 2012, Europeans bought 12 million cars and 19.2 million bicycles. T / F
- The head of Italy's car giant FIAT apologized to the car industry. T / F
- Car sales in Italy are at their lowest in almost 50 years. T / F
- Bicycles are not seen by people as investments. T / F

### Synonym Match

- |                 |                |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. appear       | a. boss        |
| 2. trend        | b. seeking     |
| 3. measures     | c. huge        |
| 4. motorists    | d. seem        |
| 5. traditional  | e. fell        |
| 6. whopping     | f. maker       |
| 7. head         | g. drivers     |
| 8. slumped      | h. actions     |
| 9. manufacturer | i. shift       |
| 10. looking for | j. established |

### Discussion – Student A

- Are you surprised more people don't cycle?
- What do you think of the term "carmageddon"?
- Should people who cycle instead of drive get tax breaks?
- How different will driving and cycling be in 50 years from now?
- Should cycling lanes be made more important than roads for cars?
- Is it better to cycle or drive to work?
- Would you rather have a top-of-the-range bicycle or a similarly-priced car?
- What questions would you like to ask the boss of a car company?

## Phrase Match

- |                                   |                        |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. several reasons behind         | a. into cycling        |
| 2. austerity                      | b. of affairs          |
| 3. consumers who might ordinarily | c. cycling capitals'   |
| 4. more people are getting        | d. terms of lifestyle  |
| 5. going beyond the traditional   | e. measures            |
| 6. this was a sorry state         | f. term investments    |
| 7. Car sales in Italy             | g. this growing trend  |
| 8. a small revolution in          | h. commute with        |
| 9. bikes they can                 | i. have bought a car   |
| 10. They are looking for long-    | j. slumped so badly... |

## Discussion – Student B

- How important is a bicycle to you?
- Can you remember the first time you rode a bike?
- Should we all be riding bicycles?
- Should more people be cycling instead of driving?
- How safe is it to cycle on your country's roads?
- Would you buy a bicycle instead of a car if your spending power decreased?
- What are the bad points about cycling?
- What questions would you like to ask the boss of a bicycle company?

## Spelling

- because of the rosneices
- countries introduced uteayrtsi measures
- consumers who might nrdiroliay have bought a car
- making srmoottis think twice
- The lraupoipyt of cycling
- beyond the drnalaotiit 'cycling capitals'
- a sorry state of arfisfa
- a five-daedec low
- the Italian cycling rdnefoteai
- Italian cycling amrecrafutun
- bikes they can mmcotue with
- long-term netstmvnisie

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. d	2. i	3. h	4. g	5. j
6. c	7. a	8. e	9. f	10. b

## Role Play

### Role A – Cars

You think cars are the best form of transport. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their modes. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): bicycles, buses or motorbikes.

### Role B – Bicycles

You think bicycles are the best form of transport. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their modes. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): cars, buses or motorbikes.

### Role C – Buses

You think buses are the best form of transport. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their modes. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): bicycles, cars or motorbikes.

### Role D – Motorbikes

You think motorbikes are the best form of transport. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their modes. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): bicycles, buses or cars.

## Speaking - Fitness

Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- |            |                |
|------------|----------------|
| • cycling  | • swimming     |
| • aerobics | • bodybuilding |
| • jogging  | • dancing      |
| • karate   | • tennis       |

### Answers – True False

a	T	b	F	c	T	d	F	e	T	f	F	g	T	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.