

12 August 2025

ZIV background: everyday journey length reveals cycling's potential

Can bicycles play a decisive role as a primary mode of transport? Aren't too many journey simply too long for that?

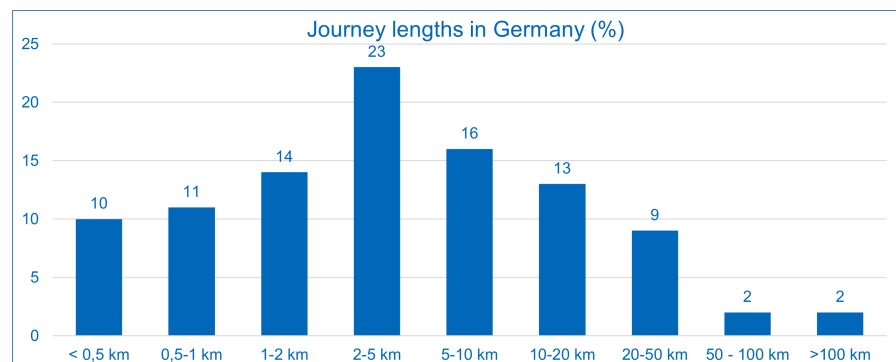
Bicycles and e-bikes have great potential when it comes to the mobility of the future. They help to reduce the burden on road traffic and the environment and also promote a healthy lifestyle. Seventy-five percent of people in Germany already cycle during their leisure time. If the average journey distances are considered, the potential of bicycles and e-bikes in everyday transport is even greater. In future, they could become the main mode of transport as most journeys are actually short.

Journey lengths in detail

Germany is a densely populated country in which the vast majority of people live in a settlement (i.e. a village, town or city). It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that an analysis of journey lengths has revealed that almost all daily journeys are short or even very short.

To break it down:

- 23% of all journeys are 2–5 km in length
- a further 35% are even shorter, under 2 km in length
- 16% are 5–10 km in length¹

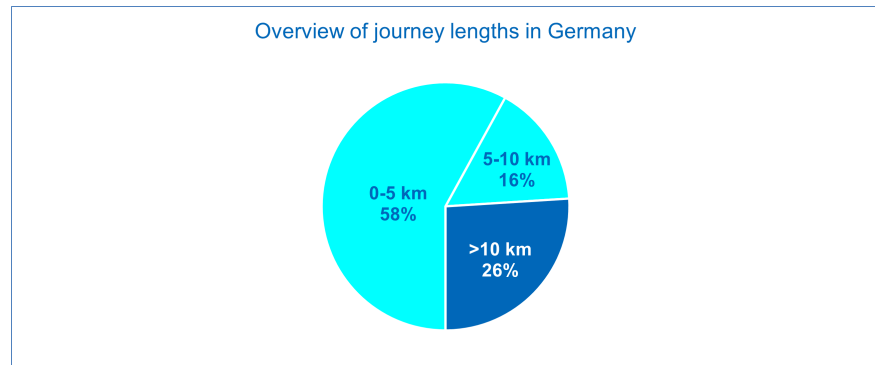


When all journeys are considered, the following picture emerges:

- 58% of all journeys in Germany are less than 5 km in length
- 16% are 5–10 km in length

¹ Unless stated otherwise, all data is taken from the analyses of cycling and walking in 2017 in the [infas study on mobility in Germany](#).

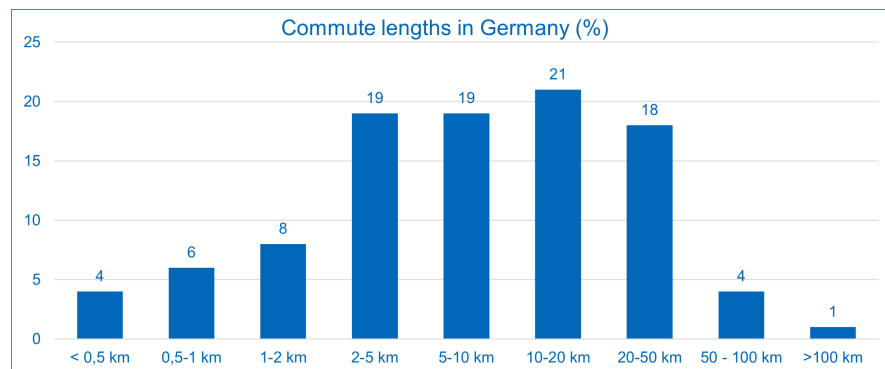
Thus, the majority of journeys within Germany are short or very short: 74% of all journeys are shorter than 10 km. Bicycles and e-bikes are the ideal mode of transport for covering these distances.



Special category: commuting

Bicycles and e-bikes are ideal as the main mode of transport for covering short distances. While this is already increasingly the case during leisure, a different situation still prevails in everyday life. It is often claimed that the distance to places of work is significantly further. At first glance, statistics do indeed suggest this: commuters reportedly travel an average of 17.2 km to reach their place of work.²

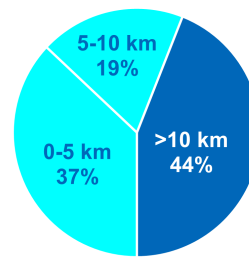
This average is deceptive, however. For one, a commuter is defined as someone, who crosses municipal boundaries to reach their place of work. People who work in their own municipality are not considered. For another, a few people commute very long distances, which distorts the average figures.



A closer look at all commutes reveals that journeys of 0–10 km in length dominate here, too, with 56%. A further 21% of commutes are 10–20 km in length. The working population is by all means able to engage in active mobility to cover such distances, especially if an e-bike or speed pedelec is used.

² [Federal Atlas of Germany](#), data from the BBSR, viewed on 12.12.2024

Overview of commute lengths in Germany



Conclusion Almost three quarters of all journeys in Germany can easily be completed by bicycle or e-bike. With the right infrastructure and maintenance, cycling could once again become a main or mass mode of transport. The ZIV's central strategic goal derives from this:³

80% of journeys should be made by bicycle.

We want bicycles to (once again) become the mode of transport for the majority of people for most journeys. Bicycles and e-bikes are the ideal mode of transport for short and medium distances (up to 10–15 kilometres) – and such journeys make up 80% of all journeys in all European countries.

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³ ZIV Strategy 2030