

Chicago Bicycles

BACKGROUND:

Arnold, Schwinn & Company rented a building in 1895 near downtown Chicago, where they produced about 25,000 bicycles. In 1900, the company bought the former March-Davis Bicycle Company. In 1901, the company built a new factory at 1718 N. Kildare. It continued to grow. By 1974, Schwinn & Co. was producing 1 ½ million bicycles annually (including imported bicycles).

The Schwinn Bicycle Company has sold many of the bicycles Americans use – since 1895. This table shows their production (the bicycles the company made) and their share of the market (what per cent of the people who bought bicycles in a year who bought them from Schwinn).

| Year | Bicycles Bought | Schwinn Bicycles Sold | Per Cent of Market |
|------|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1904 | 250,487 | 20,215 | 8% |
| 1909 | 233,707 | 46,454 | 19.8% |
| 1914 | 398,899 | 59,982 | 15% |
| 1919 | 479,163 | 46,024 | 9.6% |
| 1924 | 343,033 | 32,715 | 9.5% |
| 1929 | 301,892 | 29,620 | 9.8% |
| 1934 | 518,773 | 86,986 | 16.8% |
| 1939 | 1,258,380 | 189,907 | 15.1% |
| 1944 | 148,799 | 18,929 | 12.7% |
| 1949 | 1,451,685 | 352,302 | 23.8% |

PRIMARY SOURCE: U.S. Bicycle Market Statistics – 1895-1980 (Schwinn Sales, Inc.)

Analyze and Infer

CCSS Math Practice Standard 4. Model with mathematics.

CCSSR1. Read closely, then infer.

1. What are some things people think about before they buy a bicycle?
2. How much did Schwinn's sales go up between 1904-1909? What might have helped them to sell more bicycles?
3. In 1934, many people were out of work. How did that affect bicycle sales?
4. What was happening in the United States in 1944 that might have caused bicycle production to go down? Why might it have caused that change?
5. Which of the years would you say was the best year for the company? Why would you choose that year?
6. In 2013, Chicago introduced DIVVY bicycles—bicycles people can rent for a short time. More Chicagoans started to use bicycles. What do you think the effect of that change on bicycle sales will be? Explain your reasons for that prediction.