



'Assessing the needs and experiences of Disabled cyclists' - annual survey

2018

Results

Summary

Between August and September 2018, Wheels for Wellbeing carried out a survey to gather the views and experiences of Disabled cyclists. Just over two hundred (202) Disabled cyclists from across the UK took part.

As this is the second such survey of its kind, we have the benefit this year of being able to measure the change in Disabled cyclist's experiences over the past twelve months. This year, we also took the opportunity to ask some new questions and to look at issues which, up until now, had never been explored.

Undoubtedly our most significant and shocking finding relates to disability benefits and cycling. Our results show that half of Disabled cyclists have worried about having their benefits reduced or withdrawn due to being physically active. This raises some big questions about how we perceive disability. It also poses a challenge to the Government and its commitment to tackle the physical inactivity crisis, especially when you consider that Disabled people are half as likely as non-disabled people to be physically active, and more likely to be older and experience a variety of health issues.

There are also some stark findings around Disabled cyclist's experiences of abuse and disability hate crime. Added to this, the ongoing challenges faced by Disabled people who use their cycle as a mobility aid are laid bare (this year, for instance, saw an increase in the proportion of respondents who have been asked to dismount and walk/wheel their cycle).

On a more upbeat note, Disabled cyclists appear to be having more positive experiences when parking and storing a non-standard cycle, which could indicate a greater availability of - and awareness amongst local authorities of the need to provide - inclusive cycle facilities.

We would like to thank everyone who participated in our survey. The data we have collected will help to inform our ongoing policy and campaigning work. It also strengthens our argument to government for more accessible cycle infrastructure and the need to formally recognise cycles as mobility aids, amongst other things. We also hope that it will encourage others to undertake more research in this area and increase awareness of the needs of Disabled cyclists.

Findings

Key findings:

- **1 in 2 Disabled cyclists have worried about having their benefits reduced or withdrawn because of being physically active**
- **Three-quarters of Disabled cyclists use their cycle as a mobility aid, with the same proportion finding cycling easier than walking**
- **37% have encountered abuse or disability hate crime whilst cycling**

Demographics

- Slightly more respondents were male (55%) than female (43%)
- Just over half of respondents (54%) were aged 45-64, whilst 19% were aged 65 and over. Nearly 1 in 5 (18%) were aged 35-44. Just 9% were aged between 16 and 34

Reasons for cycling

- The most common reason for cycling amongst Disabled cyclists is for leisure/fun (84%), whilst 81% say they cycle for exercise. One quarter of Disabled cyclists (24%) cycle for work or to commute. Many also said that cycling improves their physical and mental health



I cannot walk very far at all. Cycling is non-load-bearing for me, carries my luggage and enables me to maintain some independence...

Frequency of cycling

- Most respondents said they cycle on a weekly basis (43%), with a third (32%) cycling every day

Cycling or walking?

- The vast majority of Disabled cyclists (75%) find cycling easier than walking

Cycle ownership and usage

- Nearly all respondents (95%) said they own their own cycle
- Of those Disabled cyclists who own a cycle, most own a standard two-wheeled bicycle (43%). The most common type of non-standard cycle owned by Disabled cyclists is a recumbent trike (21%). 1 in 5 Disabled cyclists own a cycle that uses electrical assistance (e-assist)
- The figures for the types of cycle most commonly *used* by Disabled cyclists paints a similar picture, with most using a standard two-wheeled bicycle (28%)

Access to cycling for those not owning a cycle

- For those respondents who said they don't own a cycle, the most common way of accessing cycling is by attending an inclusive cycling group (42%) - an increase of 83% on last year - whilst 13% hire a cycle when they need one

Using a cycle as a mobility aid

- Nearly three-quarters of Disabled cyclists (72%) use their cycle as a mobility aid. Of these:
 - 45% have been asked to dismount and walk/wheel their cycle (41% increase on last year)
 - 14% have been told they were allowed to cycle in a pedestrianised area once they had explained that they use their cycle as a mobility aid (27% increase on last year)
 - 14% have been refused admittance to a park or outdoor area
 - 13% have been refused admittance to an indoor area (e.g. shopping centre, train station)
 - 25% have been refused from boarding a train

- 16% have been refused from boarding a bus
- 4% have been refused from boarding a tram
- 4% have been refused from using the London Underground
- Many also encountered barriers when using cycle paths (e.g. being unable to open a gate), whilst several respondents reported negative views from the public, including being challenged that 'anyone fit enough to cycle can't be disabled'



I've been challenged when bringing my handcycle on Virgin trains, the Newcastle Metro and the London Underground. In all instances I argued with the people who were challenging me and 'won' the argument, but it is always distressing to be challenged in this way...

- The most common location for Disabled cyclists to be asked to dismount and walk/wheel their cycle, when using it as a mobility aid, is on the footway (32% have experienced this). Just over 1 in 5 (21%) have experienced the same problem in a 'cyclists dismount' zone, whereas 17% have been asked to dismount when cycling in a park. 1 in 10 have been asked to dismount in a shopping centre, with the same proportion reporting this experience on a train concourse



I've never tried accessing a shopping centre as I'm sure I'd be refused, even though my cycle is smaller than a mobility scooter...

People tend to express the view that anyone fit enough to pedal a cycle cannot possibly be disabled. Disabled people are often considered as only those who are wheelchair users. People are generally ignorant of the concept of a mobility aid - and the more so if it is a bike...

Barriers to cycling

1. Inaccessible cycle infrastructure was cited as the biggest difficulty faced by Disabled cyclists
2. Cost (i.e. non-standard cycles being too expensive) was felt to be the second biggest difficulty
3. The inability to cycle in places where a mobility scooter would be allowed (e.g. pedestrianised areas, shopping centres, train concourses) was the third biggest difficulty faced by Disabled cyclists

(these results reflect no change on last year)

Key experiences

- 36% of respondents said they have been unable to buy a non-standard cycle because the one they wanted was too expensive (this question was not asked last year)
- 1 in 10 Disabled cyclists have been unable to obtain a cycle through the Cycle to Work scheme because the one they requested exceeded the £1,000 limit (no change on last year)
- 14% have not been given VAT exemption on the purchase of a non-standard cycle, despite it being for their own personal use and giving proof of their disability (this question was not asked last year)
- 37% have encountered abuse or disability hate crime whilst cycling (up 3% on last year)
- 22% have been unable to find any inclusive cycling opportunities in their area
- Nearly 1 in 3 (31%) have been unable to park or store a non-standard cycle somewhere because the facilities were inadequate (down 14% on last year)



My disability is invisible so I get lots of other cyclists telling me I'm cheating. I don't count this as abuse, but it's tiring and intrusive and puts me off cycling...

I worry about leaving my trike in places because it is worth so much and I can't afford to replace it. Insurance wouldn't cover it properly so I don't bother. This restricts how much I can use it as a mobility aid...

I am deaf rather than mobility impaired. Traffic noise comes at me from all directions making road cycling uncomfortable and scary...

Disability benefits and cycling

- Nearly half (49%) of respondents said they have worried about having their benefits reduced or withdrawn because of being physically active, with 17% of this cohort saying this worry had deterred them from cycling, caused them to cycle less or to give up cycling altogether
- 6% of respondents said they have had benefits reduced or withdrawn because they cycle and are physically active. Some reported having Personal Independence Payment (PIP) withdrawn or were worried that they would not be awarded PIP because they cycled



There seems to be an assumption that disabled people must not be allowed to do more (physical activity) and, if they do, must be treated harshly by removing benefits...

The DWP is not only one of the biggest deterrents to finding work, but they are also one of the biggest deterrents to becoming physically active...

I'm currently awaiting DLA/PIP transition but was told that cycling as a hobby would "count against me" when assessing my care and mobility needs...

Measures to encourage more Disabled people into cycling

1. “Ensuring cycle infrastructure is accessible and meets the needs of Disabled cyclists” was cited as the most effective way of encouraging more Disabled people to cycle
2. “Introducing subsidies to make non-standard cycles less expensive” was the second most popular measure
3. “Introducing legislation that legally recognises cycles as mobility aids” was the third most popular measure

(these results reflect no change on last year)