

## Wheels for Wellbeing's Annual Survey of Disabled Cyclists (2019/20)

### Summary

Between August 2019 and January 2020, Wheels for Wellbeing carried out its third annual survey of the views and experiences of Disabled cyclists. Just over two hundred (213) Disabled cyclists took part. This survey is, to our knowledge, the only national survey of its kind provides a vital insight into the lived experience of the Disabled cycling community.

For a third year running, Disabled cyclists identified the same three top barriers to cycling (in this order): **inaccessible cycling infrastructure**; the **prohibitive cost of adaptive cycles** (and lack of local inclusive cycling opportunities) and **the absence of legal recognition of the fact that cycles are mobility aids** for many Disabled people (on a par with wheelchairs or mobility scooters) . Over three-quarters of respondents indicated that they had experienced difficulties in accessing cycling.

Concerns about a **lack of integrated transport modes** for Disabled cyclists remain high with a fifth of respondents being refused access to a train with their cycle. Combined with the absence of inclusive cycle hire, this dramatically limits Disabled people's freedoms.

Our survey reveals some small improvements on previous concerns: fewer Disabled cyclists were worried about having benefits reduced or withdrawn than in 2018, and there were slightly fewer reports of incidences of Disabled cyclists being asked to dismount or being prevented from accessing public spaces and public transport.

Further research in this area is needed but this could point to increased awareness of the fact that Disabled people do cycle in the general population. We will track and hope to see continued improvements in future years.

# Survey Results

## Key Findings

51% of respondents have been unable to complete a journey due to inaccessible cycle routes; 32% have been unable to park their non-standard cycle.

65% of respondents use their cycle as a mobility aid, with 64% finding cycling easier than walking. 49% of those have been asked to dismount while using their cycle as a mobility aid.

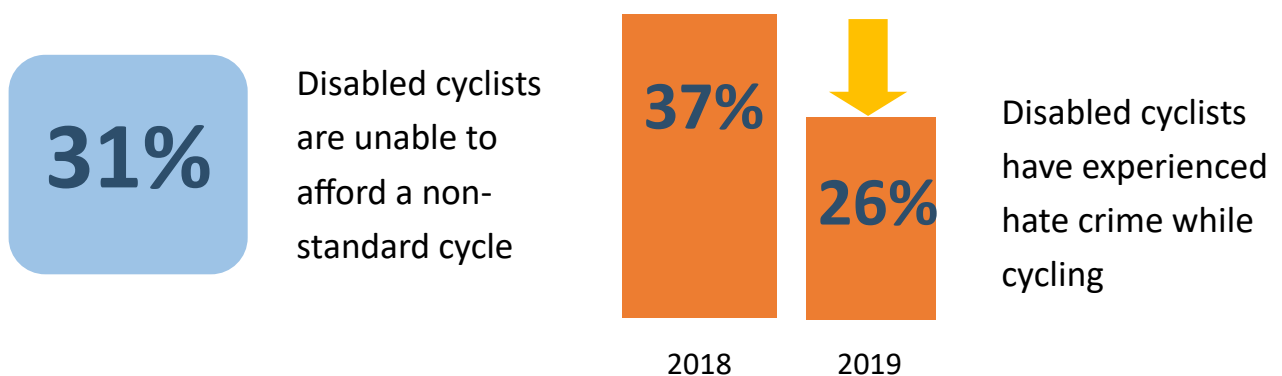
Provision of accessible infrastructure, subsidies for non-standard cycles, and recognising cycles as mobility aids were identified as the most important measures to encourage cycling amongst Disabled people.

## Demographics

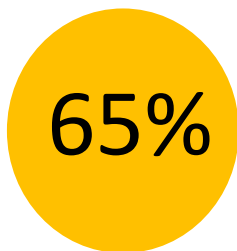
- Slightly more respondents were male (50%) than female (43%)
- Just over half (53%) were aged 45-64. Nearly 1 in 5 (18%) were aged 35-44, 10% were aged between 16 and 34, and a further 10% over 65.

## Common experiences

- 31% of respondents said they have been unable to buy a non-standard cycle because the one they wanted was too expensive. Cost and lack of suitable options also precluded cycle hire, despite 44% wanting to hire cycles more often.
- For those who did not own a cycle, (11% of respondents), 47% cycled at inclusive cycling groups, and 31% borrowed a cycle from a group or an individual. However, 27% were unable to find local inclusive cycling opportunities.
- 26% have encountered abuse or Disability hate crime whilst cycling, a decline from 37% in 2018.



## Reasons for Cycling



Disabled respondents cycle at least once a week

- Most Disabled cyclists cycled for leisure (82%), exercise (74%), and general transport (58%). 31% commuted to work by cycle. Many respondents highlighted the personal importance of cycling to reduce symptoms caused by their impairment or to support their mental wellbeing.
- 65% of respondents cycle at least weekly; 30% cycled daily.

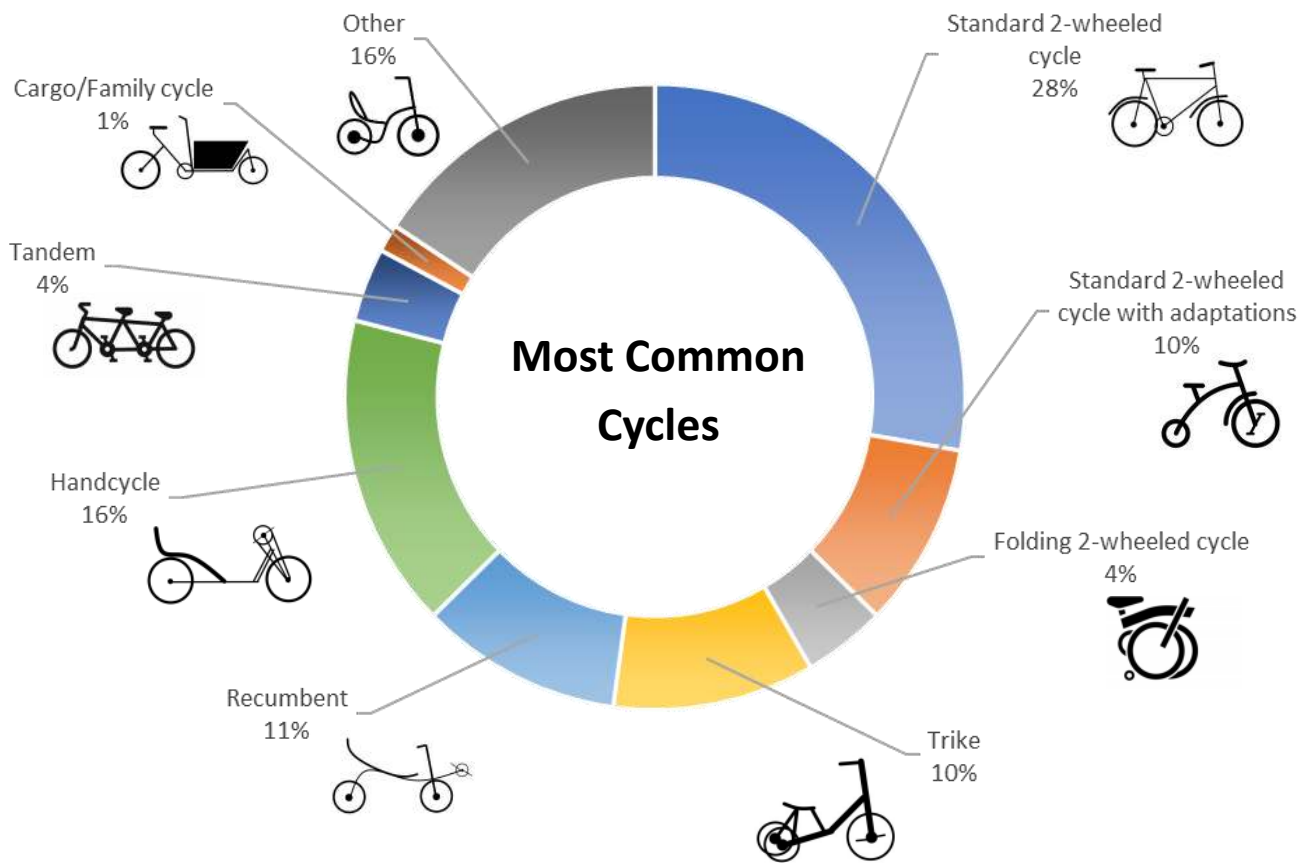
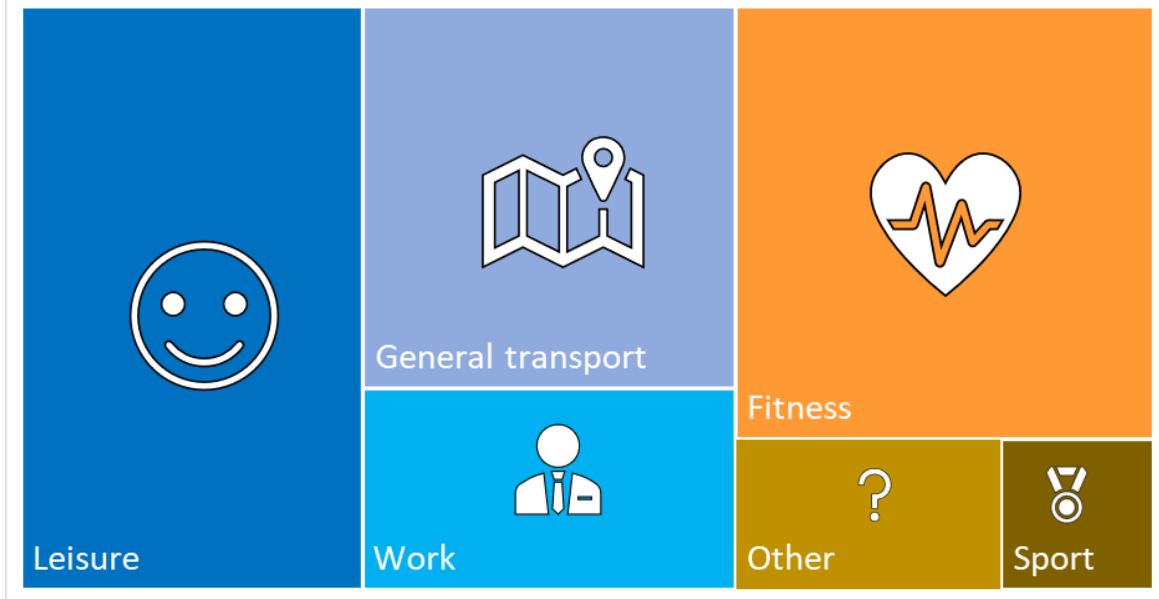


*[I cycle] for mental health and a sense of freedom*

## Ownership and Usage

- Nearly all respondents (89%) said they own their own cycle, a slight drop from the 2018 survey, where 95% owned their cycle. This may result from our actively reaching out to and encouraging Wheels for All centres to point our survey to their participants.
- Of those Disabled cyclists who own a cycle, most own a standard two-wheeled bicycle (44%); a further 13% owned a standard bicycle with adaptations, and 14% owned a folding bicycle. The most common type of non-standard cycle owned by Disabled cyclists is a trike or recumbent trike (25%).
- The figures for the types of cycle most commonly *used* (whether owned or hired/borrowed) by Disabled cyclists paints a similar picture, with most using a standard two-wheeled bicycle, including bicycles with adaptations and folding bicycles (44%). 21% predominantly used a trike or recumbent trike.

## Reasons for Cycling



## Cycling as a Mobility Aid

65% of respondents identified their cycle as a mobility aid, a 7% decrease from 2018.

Of these:

- 41% have been asked to dismount and walk/wheel their cycle (4% decrease since 2018); the same number were permitted to cycle once they had explained that they used it as a mobility aid. This occurred mainly on footways and in 'cyclist dismount' areas.
- 10% 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)
- 21% have been refused from boarding a train
- 16% have been refused from boarding a bus
- 5% have been refused from boarding a tram
- 6% have been refused from using the London Underground

Half had encountered inaccessible infrastructure when using cycle paths or public transport (e.g. being unable to open a gate or access platforms); a further third had been unable to park their non-standard cycle due to inaccessible storage facilities.



***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...***

***Inaccessible infrastructure like locked gates and barriers which are too narrow for me to get through. I can't pick up my trike and lift it, so if I can't cycle it, I can't move it.***



## Disability Benefits

- Over half of those receiving benefits (56%) have worried about having their benefits reduced or withdrawn because of being physically active. 27% said this 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 fearing or having Personal Independence Payment (PIP) withdrawn or denied if they chose to cycle. Similar experiences were reported in 2018.



*What ... caused me to lose one of my benefits revolved around taking a job with [a cycling organisation]. Strangely, even though I am working, which the DWP wants, clearly working within the cycling community is not deemed acceptable to them. As a result, they have terminated one of my benefits (which I am fighting) but it puts me in a position where I may have to ... quit a job which helps people get fit and become more socially active.*

*I do worry that if I was seen out and about [cycling] regularly and trying to increase my strength then the ESA people would misunderstand my limitations and assume that I didn't need benefits any more. Certain members of the public seem to think they're qualified to assess someone on sight as being a fraud ...*



## Encouraging Cycling

The three most important means of encouraging cycling were identified as:

- 1) Ensuring cycle infrastructure is accessible
- 2) Subsidies to reduce cost of non-standard cycles
- 3) The legal recognition of cycles as mobility aids.

This is the same as in 2018.



## **Concluding Remarks**

Though there continues to be a dearth of data around this important area, we have been encouraged to see that Sustrans are increasingly focused on Inclusive Cycling. In their Bike Life survey (2017), they noted that although 84% of Disabled people never cycled, 33% of Disabled people who didn't cycle would like to. This points to considerable demand and scope for increasing cycling within the Disabled community. Our own survey confirms year on year the causes for the low take up of cycling by Disabled people and the concrete changes required for cycling equality to become a reality. This in turn shapes our campaigning work.

With urgent moves to significantly increase space for active travel in urban areas in response to COVID-19, an opportunity exists to reduce the greatest barrier to cycling identified by Disabled cyclists: the lack of accessible infrastructure. We support current moves to reclaim car lanes and car parking spaces in favour of wider footways and segregated cycle lanes, while advocating for the retention of essential car access for Disabled people. Provided that pop-up and subsequent permanent infrastructure is built following the principles set out in our Guide to Inclusive Cycling, this could lead to significant increases in the numbers of cycle journeys made by Disabled people.

Addressing the Cost barrier to cycling will continue to be one of our top priorities, by lobbying the Government, Motability, and publicising existing sources of support for access to cycling.

Finally, this survey once again highlights the importance of recognising the fact that Disabled people use cycles as mobility aids. We will therefore continue to push government to bring about official recognition and, through our #MyCycleMyMobilityAid, continue to increase public awareness and hopefully a further reduction in negative experiences for Disabled people who cycle.