

Public attitudes towards mobility scooters, January and March 2010

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report discusses the combined results for questions placed on the ONS Opinions omnibus survey in January and March 2010. These measured public attitudes towards whether those wanting to use mobility scooter need training and testing before being allowed to use one and whether users or scooters need licensing and insuring. This work also identifies how many people either use a mobility scooter or know someone who uses a mobility scooter and how many people have either been injured by a mobility scooter or know someone who has been injured by a mobility scooter.
- 1.2 Detailed tables of the results are available at Annex A.

Survey design

The Office for National Statistics' Opinions omnibus survey is a monthly random probability survey of adults aged 16 and over living in private households in Great Britain.

During January and March 2010, 3,600 people were contacted by interviewers and 2,004 responded (a response rate of 55 per cent).

- 1.3 Extreme weather conditions in winter 2010 suggested fewer people were expected to respond to the January survey. It was therefore agreed that the questions would be repeated in March 2010 to ensure that the final achieved sample size would be large enough to produce accurate estimates.
- 1.4 When the January fieldwork was finished, a number of interviewers reported that some respondents had struggled to answer certain questions. It was therefore agreed that these questions would be rephrased. Section four of this document discusses the rephrasing of the questions and the questions asked in January and March can be found at Annexes B and C respectively. Annex D contains the images used in 'Showcard 1'.
- 1.5 Any differences between results for the months of January and March or other subgroups remarked upon in this text are statistically significant at the five per cent level of confidence (that is, we can be 95 per cent certain that the difference exists in the population). A design factor (DEFT) of 1.2 was used when testing results.

1.6 This report was prepared by Abby Sneade (Statistics Travel).

2 Key findings

- 2.1 The majority of GB adults aged 16 and over believe that people who want to use a mobility scooter should have training before starting to use one (78 per cent), that they should take a test before being allowed to use one (53 per cent), that they should take an eye test before starting to use one (81 per cent) and that mobility scooter users should have insurance like motorists do (61 per cent).
- 2.2 The majority of people (60 per cent) agree¹ that there is no need for mobility **scooters** to be licensed in the same way as cars and 54 per cent agree that there is no need for **people** who use mobility scooters to be licensed.
- 2.3 One in five people (20 per cent) either use a mobility scooter or have a family member, close friend or colleague who uses a mobility scooter. Seven per cent of people have either been injured by a mobility scooter or have a family member, close friend or colleague who has been injured by a mobility scooter.
- 2.4 People who either use a mobility scooter or know someone who uses a mobility scooter are six percentage points (22 per cent) more likely to disagree that those who use mobility scooters need to take a test before being allowed to use them.
- 2.5 People who have either been injured by a mobility scooter or know someone who has been injured by a mobility scooter are 13 percentage points (17 per cent) more likely to agree that those wanting to use a mobility scooter need to have training before starting to use one. They are also 12 percentage points (23 per cent) more likely to agree that those wanting to use a mobility scooter need to take a test before being allowed to use one.

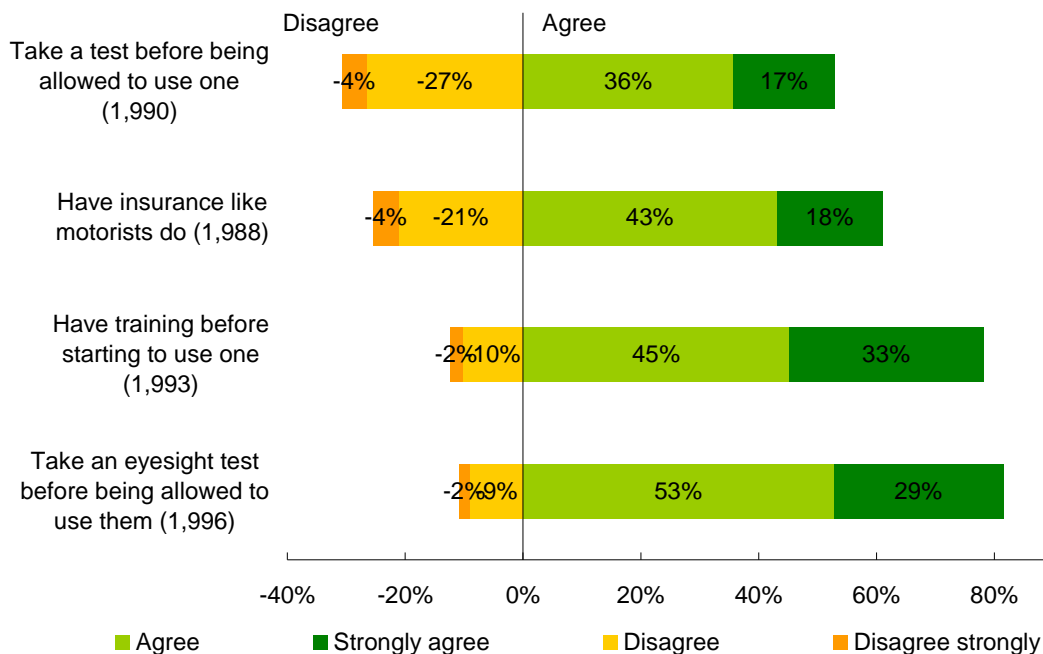
¹ Unless specified otherwise 'agreed' should be read as agreed or agreed strongly and 'disagreed' should be read to mean disagreed or disagreed strongly.

3 Detailed results

3.1 The majority of GB adults aged 16 and over believe that people who want to use a mobility scooter should have training before starting to use one; that they should take a test before being allowed to use one; that they should take an eye test before starting to use one, and that mobility scooter users should have insurance like motorists do:

- 81 per cent of respondents agreed and 11 per cent disagreed that people who use mobility scooters need to take an eyesight test before being allowed to use them;
- 78 per cent of respondents agreed and 12 per cent disagreed that people who want to use a mobility scooter need to have training before starting to use one;
- 61 per cent of respondents agreed and 25 per cent disagreed that people who use mobility scooters need to have insurance like motorists do, and
- 53 per cent of respondents agreed and 31 per cent disagreed that people who want to use a mobility scooter need to take a test before being allowed to use one.

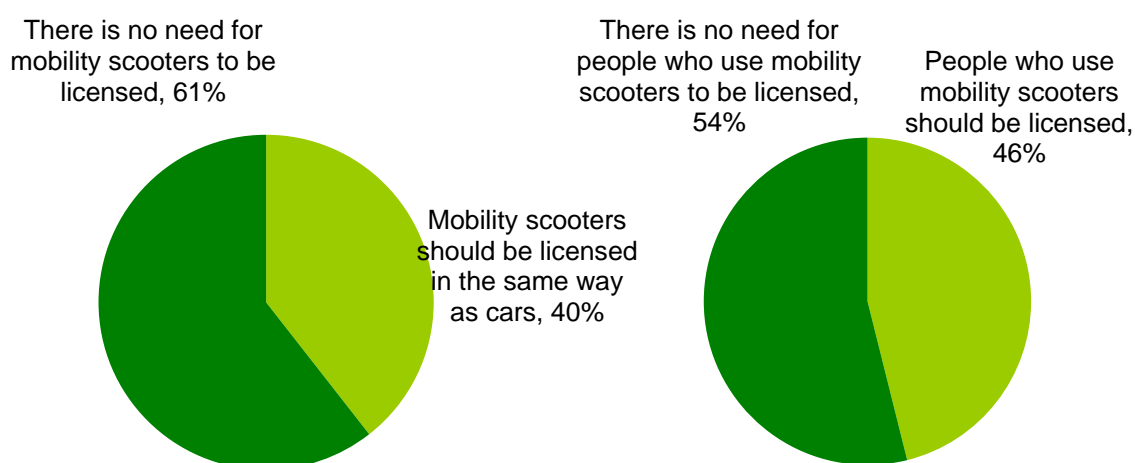
Chart 3.1: agreement with statements ‘people who want to use a mobility scooter need to...



Source: ONS Opinions omnibus survey, January and March 2010.
Unweighted base: indicated in brackets = all respondents excluding ‘don’t knows’.

- 3.2 The proportion of respondents saying they neither agreed nor disagreed with these statements ranged between 8-16 per cent.
- 3.3 The majority of people agree that there is no need for mobility scooters to be licensed in the same way as cars and that there is no need for mobility scooter users to be licensed:
- 61 per cent of respondents agreed that there is no need for mobility scooters to be licensed, and
 - 54 per cent of respondents agreed that there is no need for people who use mobility scooters to be licensed.

Chart 3.2: attitudes towards licensing of mobility scooters/ mobility scooter users



Source: ONS Opinions omnibus survey, January and March 2010.
 Unweighted base: all respondents excluding 'don't knows' = 1,978 (LHS scooters figure), 1,972 (RHS users figure).

- 3.4 To ensure that the order of the two available options for the questions discussed in paragraph 3.3 did not systematically bias respondents towards a particular answer, the order of the responses was reversed for approximately half of the response group. That is, half of the respondents were shown a card listing option A then option B, and the remainder were shown a card listing option B then option A. There were no significant differences in the results in either month, confirming that respondents were not influenced by the order of the options.
- 3.5 One in five respondents (20 per cent) either used a mobility scooter or had a family member, close friend or colleague who uses a mobility scooter. This equates to 9.6 million GB adults aged 16 and over. Those who use a mobility scooter or know someone who used a mobility scooter are more likely to disagree that people who want to use mobility scooters need to have a test

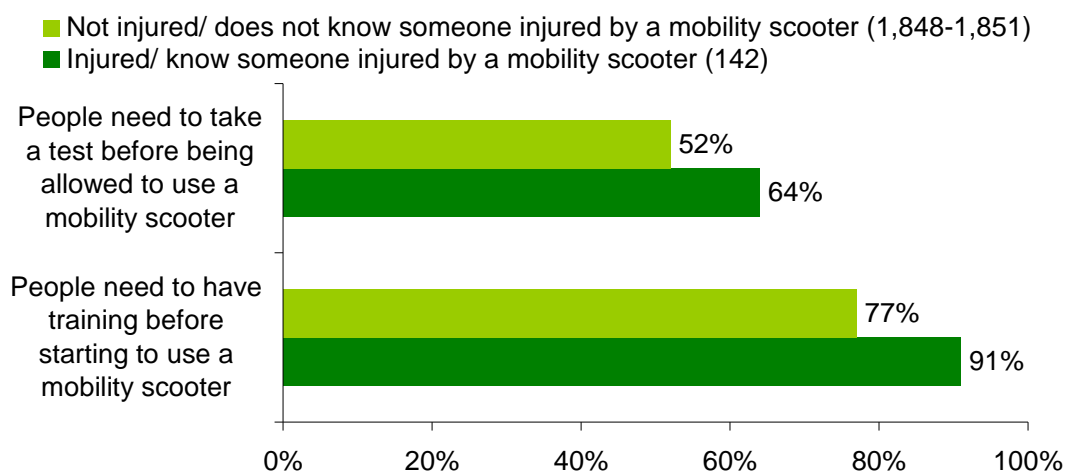
before being allowed to use one. Thirty-six per cent of respondents who said they use a mobility scooter or know someone who uses one disagreed with this statement, compared to 29 per cent of those who did not use a mobility scooter or know someone who used one.

3.6 Seven per cent of respondents had either been injured by a mobility scooter or had a family member, close friend or colleague who has been injured by a mobility scooter. This equates to 3.3 million GB adults aged 16 and over.

3.7 Although the number of respondents who had been injured or knew someone who had been injured by a mobility scooter was relatively small (142) it is evident that such people are more likely to believe that those wanting to use a mobility scooter need to take a test and have training before using one:

- 91 per cent of respondents who had been injured, or knew someone who had been injured by a mobility scooter felt that people who want to use a mobility scooter need to take a test before being allowed to use one, compared to 77 per cent of those who had not been injured or did not know someone who had been injured.
- 64 per cent of those who had been injured or knew someone who had been injured by a mobility scooter believed that people who want to use a mobility scooter need to take a test before being allowed to use one compared to 52 per cent of those who had not been injured or did not know someone who had been injured.

Chart 3.3: attitudes towards mobility scooters/ mobility scooter users according to whether respondent has been injured or knows someone who has been injured by a mobility scooter (proportion agreeing with statement)



Source: ONS Opinions omnibus survey, January and March 2010.
Unweighted base indicated in brackets: excludes don't 'knows'.

- 3.8 Requiring training before starting to use a mobility scooter may be a particularly sensitive issue as different groups appear to have differing attitudes towards this: those who use or know someone who uses a mobility scooter are more inclined to disagree; and those who have been injured by a mobility scooter or know someone who has been injured by a mobility scooter are more inclined to agree.

4 Comparison of March and January results

- 4.1 Four questions were originally designed so that respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with a negative statement. For example:

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement:

There is no need for people who want to use a mobility scooter to have training before starting to use one.

- (1) Strongly Agree
- (2) Agree
- (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree
- (4) Disagree
- (5) Strongly Disagree

- 4.2 Social research conventions usually dictate that questions do not use double negatives as they can confuse respondents. On this occasion negative statements were used because there were concerns that positive statements involving these theoretical proposals could be leading. That is, they could bias the respondent towards agreeing with the proposals.

- 4.3 When the fieldwork for the January survey was completed, approximately a dozen interviewers confirmed that there had been some confusion about the questions using negative statements. Some respondents were uncertain if disagreeing with the negative statement meant they were they were agreeing or disagreeing with the actual proposal. To correct this, questions for the March rerun were amended so that they used a positive statement and became diametric opposites to the original questions. Thus the example above became:

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement:

People who want to use a mobility scooter need to have training before starting to use one.

- 4.4 The January and March datasets were merged and tests were conducted to identify whether there were any differences between the two versions of the questions. Results for two of the four questions were significantly different when they were phrased positively:
- In January 72 per cent of respondents disagreed that 'there was no need for people wanting to use a mobility scooter to have training before starting to use one'. In January, 84 per cent of respondents agreed that 'people wanting to use a mobility scooter need to have training before starting to use one'. This represents a 12 percentage point increase in support for people having training before starting to use a mobility scooter.

- In January, 78 per cent of respondents disagreed that ‘there is no need for people who want to use a mobility scooter to take a test before being allowed to use one’. In March, 85 per cent of respondents agreed that ‘people who want to use a mobility scooter need to take an eyesight test before being allowed to use one’. This represents an eight per cent increase in support for people taking an eyesight test before being allowed to use mobility scooters.
- 4.5 As both negative and positive versions of these questions are potentially leading, the fairest approach to presenting these results is to use the ‘neutral’ weighted average for these data. Combining data for the two unaffected questions and the remaining four un-amended questions is also a practical way of basing the results on a larger sample size.
- 4.6 The key difference in results for the rephrased questions, is that even where the overall proportion supporting the proposed options is not significantly different, there is a significant move from most responses to the negatively posed statement being of the milder ‘agree’ form to more of the responses to the positively posed statements being of the ‘strongly agree’ category. This is illustrated in Charts 4.4.1-4.

Chart 4.4.1: People who use mobility scooters need to have insurance like motorists do

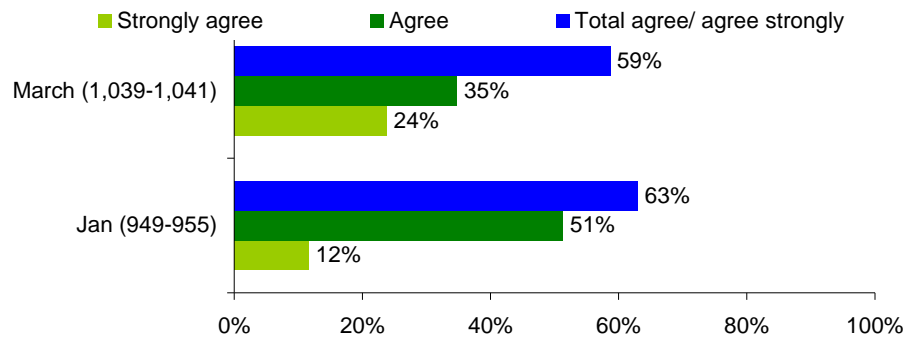


Chart 4.4.2: People who use mobility scooters to take an eyesight test before being allowed to use them

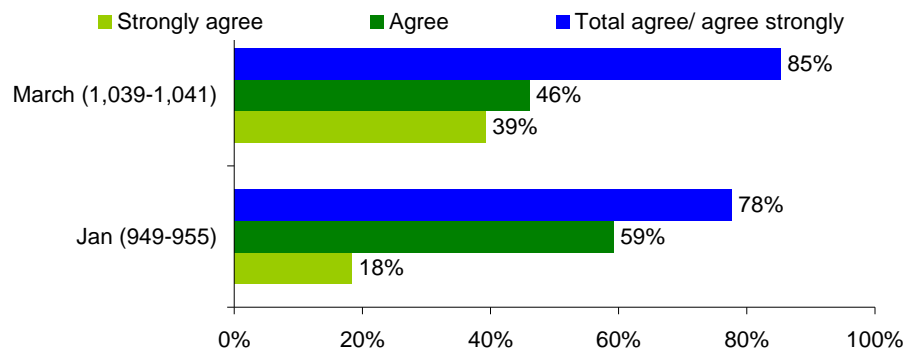


Chart 4.4.3: People who want to use a mobility scooter need to have training before starting to use one

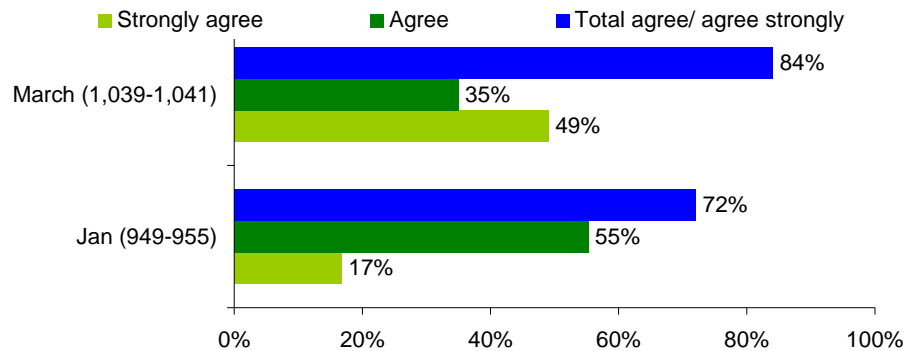
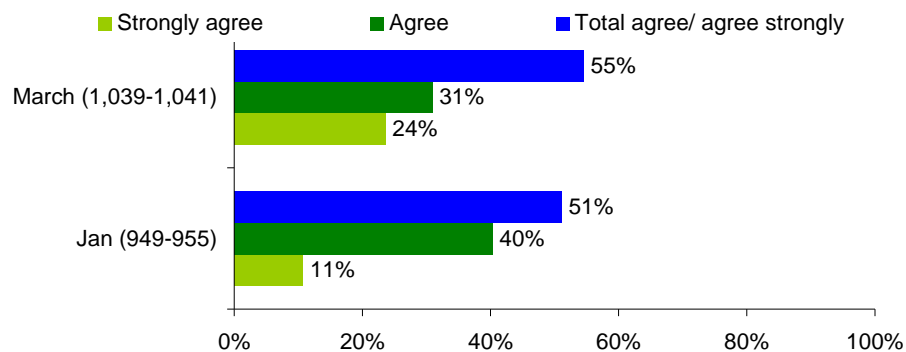


Chart 4.4.4: People who want to use a mobility scooter need to take a test before being allowed to use one



Source: ONS Opinions omnibus survey, January and March 2010.
Unweighted base indicated in brackets: excludes don't 'knows'