

# New Riders of Motorcycles and Scooters: Motivations, Aspirations, and Barriers to Progress

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# Introduction

*'I've always wanted to ride, but never really had an opportunity.'*

This report emerged from discussions between the Motorcycle Action Group (MAG) and researchers at the School of Politics and International Relations, University of Nottingham (UoN), regarding what kind of knowledge acquisition and analysis might be both useful to MAG, and also of interest to researchers working on the politics of road transport.

The collective conclusion was that it would be beneficial to all parties to learn more about the motivations and aspirations of new riders. There is of course existing literature on why people choose to ride motorcycles, but much of it is speculative, and often it does not focus on those who are coming to riding anew (or back to riding after a long absence). *Why do people, in the UK, in the 2020s, choose to ride a motorcycle or scooter (collectively here 'powered two-wheeler' or PTW)? What aspects of riding are important to them? Who influences their decision to ride? What is the experience like to ride for the first time on contemporary roads? What do new riders hope to get out of their riding 'career'?*

In order to address these questions, the researchers at UoN applied for and were awarded an ESRC Impact Accelerator Award, which funded a temporary Research Assistant and some focus group research. After recruiting through a rider training school, eleven new riders (three female, eight male) took part in two focus groups (or were interviewed separately if not available for the focus groups) in early 2022. All had taken their initial Compulsory Basic Training within the last four years. Given the issues that arose in the first round of focus groups, a third focus group was later held with the female participants.

## Summary of findings

**Motivations:** It appears that a key driver for wanting to ride PTWs as an adult is early, positive exposure to motorcycling or scootering in childhood. Several of our participants cited contact, in their early years, with relatives who rode as a key influence. Others cited the desire for a practical (and cheap) form of commuting, learning new and challenging skills, the sociability of the bike and scooter scene, and just having fun and a sense of freedom on the road.

**Influences:** Again, relatives and peers appear to be key influencers, both positively and negatively, for taking up riding. Non-riding friends and relatives often talk up the dangers and risks of riding. While these were clearly not decisive objections for our new riders, we don't know how many aspiring riders might be dissuaded by such pressure.

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**Expectations and reality:** For most participants the experience of riding itself had lived up to expectations, providing feelings of freedom and belonging to a community (although some female participants noted the male-dominated nature of this community). More negative experiences tended to concern ancillary factors, such as the cost of decent protective clothing (again, especially for women) and the cost of insurance.

**Training:** The experience of training was overwhelmingly positive, with trainers being praised for their experience and knowledge. Negative experiences of training largely involved the difficulties of arranging both training and tests during, and in the aftermath of, the COVID-19 pandemic. One female participant, however, reported markedly sexist treatment in her interactions with some training schools.

**Gender:** Female participants reported finding the PTW culture male-dominated (around 92% of riders in the UK are male (see <https://www.thebikeinsurer.co.uk/motorbike-news/industry/uk-female-motorcyclists-revealed/>)). This does not necessarily translate into feeling unwelcome, but there have been experiences of feeling marginalised and not being taken seriously as a rider. This can range from feeling less likely to get ‘the nod’ when out on the road, through to being openly laughed at when calling to book a test, when it was established that the call was not on behalf of ‘somebody else’.

**Aspirations:** All of our riders hoped to continue in the long term. Most, but not all, planned to go on take a full licence, and to progress to both riding larger PTWs, and travelling further, both within the UK and abroad.

**Politics:** When prompted to think about the ‘politics of motorcycling’, one participant was highly resistant, saying that he did not ‘do’ politics, and just wanted to ride. For the rest, the key issue was a sense that there remains a kind of stigma to travelling on two wheels in a transport culture dominated by the car. As a result, PTW riders tend to lose out in questions of road use planning, and to be unfairly targeted in campaigns around noise and excessive speed. Others highlighted the complexity of the PTW testing regime, when compared to cars, and the need for universal access to bus lanes and secure PTW parking.

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# Methodological Considerations

## Who are the participants of this project?

The research design and the selection and recruitment of the participants were organised to facilitate the aims of the project.

For the recruitment of the participants, two calls were advertised through the Newsletter of 'RideTo', one of the leading Motorcycle Training Schools in the UK, which is sent to 23,000 current and former trainees. We asked for volunteers to come forward who were either current trainees, or who had 'recently' learned to ride. Our cut-off was that a 'new rider' should have taken their first Compulsory Basic Training (CBT) within the last four years (in line with de Rome, *et al.*, 2010).

The response rate was relatively low. One possible explanation for this is that the recipients of the newsletter will have been added throughout multiple years, many will now be historic trainees and no longer consider themselves 'new riders'. The final sample consisted of 11 new riders in the United Kingdom. Table one gives some basic demographic information about our participants. As can be seen, we had three female and eight male participants, with an age range from 21 to 53, and a mean age of 41 (in line with the finding that around 1/3 of UK motorcyclists are in the age range 41-50 (<http://www.cambriantyres.co.uk/bridgestone-survey-data-looks-at-uk-bikers/>)). Nine participants self-identified as British, although this included the joint nationalities British-Venezuelan and British-Romanian, one participant was Italian, and one Dutch.

Table 1: Demographic information of the participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Occupation
4	Female	37	Chief operating officer
6	Female	47	Administrative Assistant
9	Female	21	Unemployed
11	Male	53	Company Director
12	Male	47	Sound Engineer
13	Male	34	Key Account Manager
15	Male	37	Claims Handler
17	Male	30	Investment Banking
18	Male	42	Paediatric Surgeon
19	Male	53	Carer
20	Male	50	Carer

Table 2 includes some information on the participants' current riding status.

*Table 2: The riding profile of the participants*

Participant	CBT	A2	Model
4	February 2022	N/A	Honda PCX 125
6	TBD	N/A	N/A
9	May 2021	N/A	Royal Alloy GT125
11	March 2018	N/A	Vespa
12	March 2022	N/A	Brixton
13	September 2021	N/A	Hanway Raw 125
15	July 202	TBD	KTM125 Duke
17	July 2021	November 21	N/A
18	August 2020	October 2020	BMW R1200 RT
19	Need to retake	TBD	Honda CB125F Red
20	April 2021	TBD	Triumph Tiger 900 t40

All the participants were fully informed about the purpose and the aims of the project, the research process, and the way the data will be used, and offered their informed consent. Moreover, the study was given ethical approval by the University of Nottingham and all the necessary steps were taken to secure the safety and anonymity of the participants.

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## How were the data collected and analysed?

The research design was based on the use of focus groups for the collection of data (for a prior focus-group study of motorcycle riders, see Huth *et al.*, 2014). This decision was considered appropriate as the interaction of participants during focus groups provides the opportunity for new topics to be raised and for a deeper exploration of the examined phenomenon.

After the call for participants was sent the researchers were contacted by members interested in participating in the project. Initially, two focus groups (Focus Group 1: 5 participants, Focus Group 2: 4 participants) were formed around participants' availability. These focus groups were followed by individual interviews of two participants that were not available around the time of the two original focus groups but were eager to share their experiences and perceptions.

During the focus groups, the female participants raised gender-specific issues that were not addressed by the original research design. Wanting to further explore the effect of gender on the experiences of new female riders, a third all-female focus group was arranged.

All the interviews and focus groups were conducted online through Microsoft Teams and were video recorded. They were moderated by Mat Humphrey, Professor of Political Theory at UoN, Colin Brown, Director of Campaigns and Political Engagement at MAG, and Vasiliki-Eleni Selechopoulou, the Research Assistant on the project. After collecting the data, the researchers transcribed the focus groups and the interviews, making sure all data have been anonymised. No third party was involved in the transcription process, as it was seen as an initial and important part of the analysis of the data.

The data were analysed using computer-assisted text analysis. The analysis of the data consisted of two main stages. The first involved initial readings of the transcripts to form an understanding of the main themes and the experiences of the participants. The second stage consisted of computer-assisted analysis of the data, using the NVivo and Yoshikoder software. Computer-assisted analysis was selected to ensure the data were analysed systematically and to avoid a projection of researchers' own biases into the data.

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# Literature Review

## Novice riders

Our study involved new riders (first training within the past four years), looking at issues such as their motivations, aspirations, training, and experiences on two wheels. Previous work on novice riders has tended to look at their riding experience, their risk factors in relation to road traffic accidents, their performance relative to other rider groups, and at the effectiveness of the provided training.

In terms of the riding experience, a study by de Rome *et al* (2010), using Australian data, examined how many hours of riding novice motorcyclists undertook before gaining a full licence. On average, new riders completed 101 hours (and 1,331.4 miles) of riding over a six-month period. This is comparable to the experience gained by novice car drivers prior to testing, but, in contrast to new drivers, many novice riders had little or no experience of riding in the rain, at night, in heavy traffic, or on winding or high-speed roads. This may reflect the fact (often also true in the UK) that new riders have many hours of unsupervised learning, for which they may choose favourable weather conditions and familiar roads.

Another Australian study looked at the risk factors for novice riders with regard to motorcycle crashes. Möller *et al* (2020) analysed data from 2,399 novice riders in Victoria which were gathered between 2010 and 2012. Crashing was highly correlated with previous near-crash experiences – riders with three or more near-crash experiences in the prior twelve months had a 2.37 times higher risk of crashing than the average. Riders involved in an actual crash prior to the study had a 1.58 times higher risk of crashing. Intriguingly, riders who had completed pre-learner rider training had a 1.41 times higher chance of crashing during the study period.

This raises the question of whether the training of new riders is effective, in terms of reducing crash risk. Many of our participants spoke very highly of their experience with trainers, but is it effective? It is an intuitive and common assumption that ‘training should produce safer riders’ (Daniello, *et al.*, p.211). It would be fair to say that the evidence on this is mixed. A longitudinal study by McDavid *et al* (1989) found that in British Columbia, Canada, trained riders tended to have fewer road accidents of all kinds, fewer motorcycle accidents in particular, and less severe motorcycle accidents, when they were involved in a collision. A 2016 study by Ivers *et al* (in Victoria, Australia) on training for novice riders, using a randomized control trial, found ‘no evidence’ that a rider coaching programme reduced the risk of crashing. The coached group reported fewer near-crashes at three months, but this effect was not sustained at twelve months. Among the coached riders there was an increase in riding exposure, speeding behavior, and rider confidence – all crash-risk-related factors – compared to



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uncoached riders. This study reinforces the findings of a survey article published in 2009 by Daniello *et al*, which looked at studies of training effectiveness up to that point, and found that the literature on the effectiveness of training is 'inconclusive' and that much variation in results appears to be dependent on the measurement methods used in the study.

Some of the novice riders in our study were returning to riding after a long hiatus, sometimes lasting from teenage years to middle-age. A study by Symmons and Mulvihill (2011), using a motorcycle riding simulator to assess on-road performance, suggested that this group may be the most vulnerable in their early years of riding again. In their tests, 'continuing' riders had the best simulator performance for coping with hazards and emergencies, but in the same study 'new' new riders performed better than 'returning' new riders in the same hazard tests.

Finally, on the question of motivations for riding, one of our riders told us that a key motivation for riding was learning to master a new and complex skill. That this might be a more widespread motivation for riding is supported by Broughton and Walker's (2009) book-length study of recreational PTW riders (not, in this case, novice riders). They found that, although motorcycle riders are often portrayed as risk-loving, it is the challenge of mastering a difficult skill that appears most closely linked to rider enjoyment. Low task difficulty (such as just riding in a straight line) inhibits enjoyment, but as higher task difficulty begins to approach the limits of a rider's skill set, then anxiety takes over and this is felt as a 'non-enjoyable state of risk' (p.134). Enjoyment is maximised when levels of difficulty and risk are in balance with a riders' sense of their own skills, leading to riding being experienced as a completely absorbing 'flow' activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

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## An overview of the data

Our initial approach to the computer-assisted analysis of the data included a word frequency analysis to identify patterns in the experiences and perceptions of the new riders. Figure 1, shows a word cloud by NVivo, which provides an initial overview of the collected data.

Figure 1: Word Cloud from Collected Data



As expected, new riders often mentioned aspects of their training (example of words: CBT, tests, courses, training, licence) and their experiences of riding (example of words: fun, freedom, enjoy).

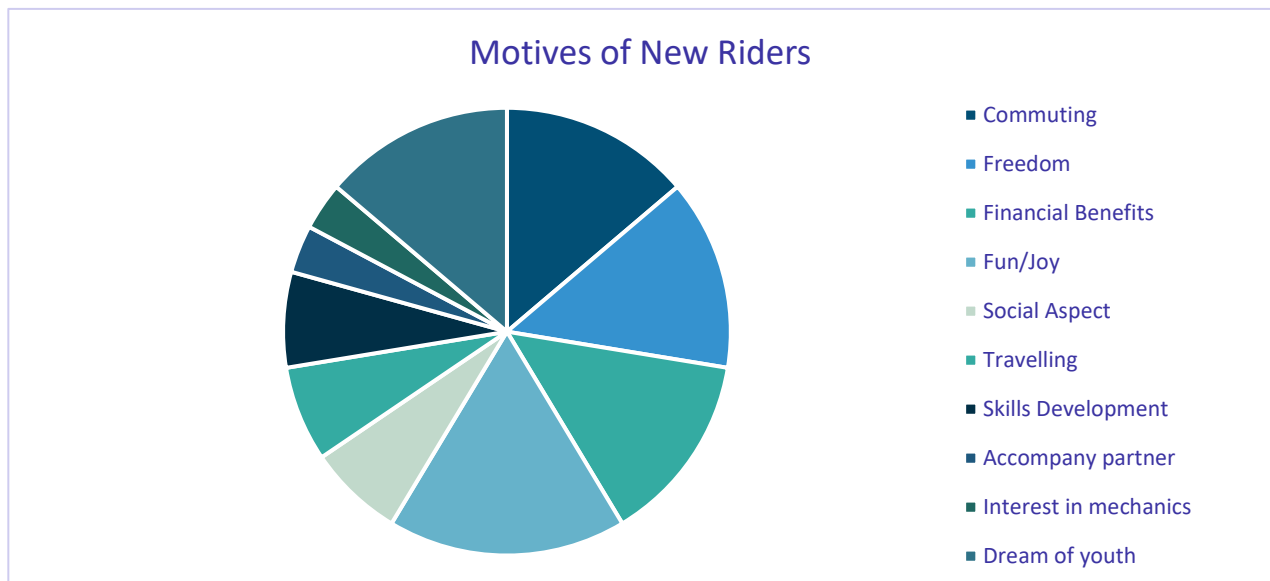
Based on the overview of the data and further analysis seven aspects of new riders' experiences were highlighted. In the following sections we will present the findings of the analysis divided into seven sections, describing:

- New Rider Motivations
- Influences on the decision to ride
- Initial Expectations and the Reality of riding
- The Experience of Training
- The position of the female new motorcyclist: Issues of gender
- New Rider Aspirations
- The Politics of Motorcycling

# New Rider Motivations

The first question asked to our new rider focus group members was about their motivations for riding. What had inspired them to take up powered two-wheel (PTW) transport? The question elicited a variety of responses, but some common themes emerged. Figure 3 provides an overview of the participants' responses.

Figure 2: The motivations behind new riders' decision to ride



Many of our new riders were aged thirty-plus and were either getting back into motorcycle or scooter riding after a long absence or were, finally, realising a long-held ambition. This is reflected in the fact that many of our focus group members claim to have got 'the bug' for riding at a young age – often in childhood, if they'd seen an admired family member, or a friend, getting about on two wheels. Indeed some participants had ridden with L-plates as a teenager but dropped out of riding before ever taking a test.

Examples of this discourse include:

*'The reason I started riding, is I always wanted to ride when I was a youngster, sixteen/seventeen. I wanted to ride. I remember one of my friends had a 50cc scooter and I wanted one. I looked into it back then, but a 50cc little hair dryer wasn't really going to cut it for me at the time. So I was like, I'll get to twenty-one and then I'll get something and all the rest of it.'* (Participant 15)

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*'And kind of the motivation essentially was, you know, I've always wanted to ride but never really had an opportunity.'* (Participant 18)

*'The second motive behind it was the fact that I was kind of surrounded in my teenage years by motorcyclist groups. A lot of my friends were part of those and own motorcycles. And I was also fascinated about the mechanics.'* (Participant 13)

One common element in these accounts is the idea that 'life got in the way' of an intention to start riding at a young age. Family responsibilities and work held participants back from realising their dream to ride.

*'I moved away, got married, started work. At the time it wasn't feasible to carry on riding or start riding.'* (Participant 11)

Therefore, finally finding a way to pursue riding, was very welcomed by the new riders. Participant 15 never did pick up riding at the age of 21:

*'Life got in the way, came back around as an opportunity and I took it. I just took it with both hands.'* (Participant 15).

Other motivations that came up included the need for an efficient, flexible, and economical mode of commuting, which could be a viable alternative to using public transport.

*'First commute. I am sick of commuting by public transport. A car is not really feasible where I am. I did have a car before and it was a nightmare. So the car was only used to go shopping on Sundays and because I've never used it, I used to go shopping to Brighton from London just to use the car. It was awful.'* (Participant 12)

*'It was partly commute, partly the public transport in [home town] is not great. It stops ridiculously early and doesn't really go to the places you want to go to.'* (Participant 4)

While commuting by motorcycle or scooter is seen as economical, some riders admitted that when they stressed the value-for-money side, it was essentially due to a rationalisation of their decision.

*'Because for me it was something I wanted to do as a child...For convincing myself, for purchasing the bike, spending five grand on a bike! Even though I'd only just passed the CBT on an automatic scooter, I bought a manual 125. I'd convinced myself that yeah, I can use it in the*

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*long term. I can use it to save on the economics and all the rest of it. So that's really what drove me.'* (Participant 15)

The participant here seems to be hinting, strongly, at there being a 'real' reason for taking up riding (realising a long-held aspiration), and a rationalised reason (or at least a less important reason) involving saving money. Riding is just something they had wanted to do since childhood days, and the opportunity to save money on travel costs was how they 'convinced' themselves that buying a bike would be a good idea, for long-term savings. Another respondent describes the cost savings, in similar terms, as an 'excuse' for riding:

*'I've always wanted to ride but never really had an opportunity. But then, I was moving work so I was having to travel. And my excuse is that it might be cheaper to get a motorbike than to buy a train ticket. I wanted to try it anyway.'* (Participant 18)

Stressing the cost-saving side of running a PTW, even when it's not the primary motivation, might be, at least in part, about social acceptability. It may be that the idea of riding a PTW because it is 'cost-saving' or 'economical' represents a reason that people can expect to be shared and widely understood, even by people who would not understand or be sympathetic towards the idea that 'I want to ride a bike, 'cause I wanna' (Participant 9). Therefore, the cost-saving motivation, is usually used as something that can be told to tell friends and family about why new riders want to do this, as well as an argument to 'convince' themselves.

Other motivational reasons included:

The fun and enjoyment the new riders get from riding a motorcycle. However, this reason is mostly presented as a supportive and not the main motivation. *'I mean as for my motivation, well, commute and it's fun. I would have to say more of transport, commute, facility thing. Yes, it's fun, but I think that for me that's a second thing.'* (Participant 12)

- The social dimension of riding, i.e. riding with partners or friends, or riding in groups. This was a particularly important reason for one scooterist: *'I just love the scene socially. I've got good friends in it. So that seems to be my main motivation for riding again.'* (Participant 11).
- Some female riders told us that they wanted to ride so that they could accompany their partners independently, rather than riding as a pillion. One participant told us that she wanted to *'Follow my partner, rather than just sitting on the back of it. And I used to be terrified of speed. Now I'm not, which is a really big issue.'* (Participant 9). Riding, and being

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in control of the machine, have given this participant the confidence to feel comfortable riding at speed, a feeling she did not get from just riding as a pillion.

- The sense of freedom that riding provides – for example, *‘absolutely, it’s freedom for me’, and ‘why I started riding was just for the freedom’* (Participant 9). One participant, however, said that he thought it ‘dull’ to talk about PTW riding in terms of freedom, seeing it as a rather clichéd trope.
- To experiment with new experiences and master a complex skill. As one new rider put it: *‘It’s a very complex skill, which you can get as an individual. And I think that was my main motivation because I like not just to experiment with new things, but to explore a new thing which is not as accessible to everyone. Because if it’s easy, everyone can do it. So, let’s find the challenge. Let’s find something harder to do.’* (Participant 13)

This particular participant also highlighted an interest in coming to understand the mechanics of motorcycles as a second key motivation. Both riding well, and learning to maintain one’s own bike, were seen as challenges that are worth rising to. This discourse is in line with the research findings of Broughton and Walker (2009), who found that ‘recreational PTW riders’ were more motivated by the desire to master a difficult and challenging skill, than they were by a simple attraction to risky activity, although the latter motive is often attributed to riders by others.

## Conclusion

*Our new riders expressed a diverse set of reasons for taking up PTW riding at the stage of life they have. It was a common theme for older new riders to be realising a childhood or teenage ambition.*

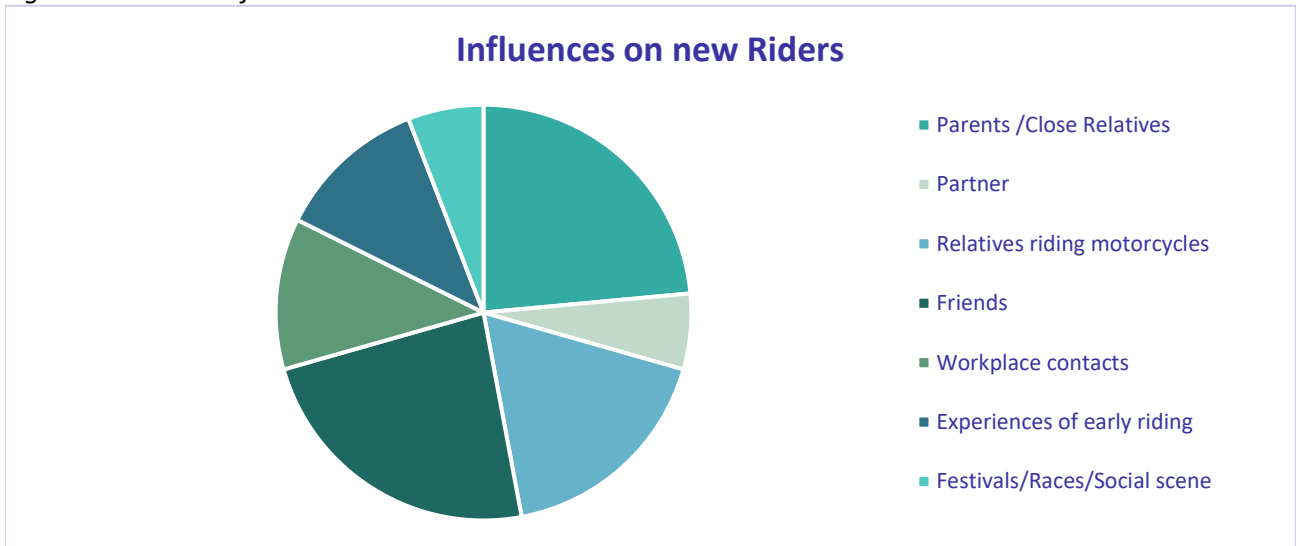
*Other reasons expressed were practical commuting, particularly in urban environments, cost savings, sociability, riding with a partner, a sense of freedom, and the opportunity to master a complex and challenging skill. It would be of interest to get data on this from a larger group of respondents (possibly through survey data) to get a sense of how these motivations might break down by demographic factors such as age, gender, and level of education. What matters, and to whom, in the decision to start riding?*

# Influences on the decision to ride

Apart from exploring the motives that led new riders toward motorcycling, we also explored the external influences that encouraged or discouraged them to take on riding. We asked new riders to tell us who influenced their decision to ride and how.

Figure 3 shows the external influences mentioned by participants, based on frequency in the collected data.

Figure 3: External Influences on new riders



According to the chart, a plurality of participants received external positive or negative influences from their friends and parents (or close family members). This is followed by exposure to relatives that were/are riding motorcycles themselves. Less but still significant influence was exercised by workplace contacts and experiences of riding at a younger age, whereas fewer participants identified being influenced by the social scene of motorcycling and relevant events, or from their partners who were part of this scene.

An interesting observation is that none of the participants mentioned being encouraged or discouraged by the relevant authorities from choosing a motorcycle as a mode of transport. Even when specifically asked about that, participants could not identify any official sources of positive or negative influence.

Social influences in new motorcyclists' lives varied from extremely positive to completely negative, but as one participant stated they didn't seem to *'find anybody that didn't have an opinion'* (Participant 12). Positive influences seem to be mostly linked to interactions with friends or relatives who ride or used to ride. According to the participants' statements, the earlier one is exposed to riding by people close to them, the more possible it is for them to ride later on.

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*'I was lucky really 'cause my dad at the time was in the police, MoD police at Boscombe Down, and they actually encouraged us. They taught us how to ride bikes. So we were very lucky back then. You know, I'm talking late seventies, that's when I started to ride a bike.'* (Participant 19)

*'When I was younger, so when I was nine/ten years old, I think that might have been what sparked it. My uncle used to have a motorbike. I can't remember which one, I just remember it was an orange Yamaha. And my older cousin, who's about seven/eight years older than me, used to take it out when his dad wasn't around. (...) Just as a kid running up to it, sitting on a stationary bike, I think that's where I might have sparked my interest originally.'* (Participant 15)

Moreover, participants emphasised the positive influence of friends on deciding to ride. Considering the opportunities at a social level, many participants decided to start riding a motorcycle.

*'I was never advised or actively motivated. "You should get a bike as well", I was never told that believe it or not. It was just the fact that I was included. (...). In the end, it was the social factor of it more than anything. Secondly, it came with the mechanics. All my friends always liked to tweak their bikes. There was a lot of DIY, do-it-yourself, and I often gave them a hand. And I think these two elements combined actually triggered my interest and were the deeper motivation behind it.'* (Participant 13)

Negative reinforcement mostly came from close family members, specifically parents. Interestingly, only one case was reported of a parent encouraging the new rider to pursue a full license (participant 19, quoted above). However, in all cases, negative remarks were associated with the widespread stereotype of depicting motorcycles as high-risk and dangerous modes of transport. In some cases, the arguments used to discourage new riders based on this stereotype are distressing.

*'Not many supportive people. Even at work, they were asking me if I've got a donor card.'* (Participant 18)

The stereotype of motorcycling as a high-risk activity has been reproduced through several channels throughout the years, and is often reinforced in the media (see for example here:

<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2015/jun/19/motorcycling-accidents-near-miss-dangers-stories>). It is not without an element of truth (riders are 38 times more likely to be killed or seriously injured in a collision than car drivers) and it is still perpetuated in the social sphere. However, new riders renounce it by rationalising the use of motorcycles and recalculating the associated risks.



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*'The people that I've met and some of my mates say "You don't want the bikes, they're gonna kill you.". You know, 'deathtraps' and all the rest of it. I just turn and say that it's just like the young lady said, it is how you control that machine. You're in control of the machine. Yes, you can get killed in a car accident. Yes, you can get killed stepping out on the road as well.'* (Participant 19)

## Conclusion

*The most important influence towards deciding to ride a motorcycle for our new riders is early exposure to and interaction with other people that ride, as well as early riding experiences as a driver or a pillion. On the other hand, close family members and parents are the main sources of negative influence reproducing the stereotype of risk-loving motorcyclists. However, although aimed at discouraging the new riders, negative influence did not seem to be as effective for the participants in this study. Of course, this research does not capture those who might have wanted to start riding but were dissuaded by family or peer pressure.*

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## Initial Expectations and the Reality of Riding

All of the new riders came into riding having some already formed expectations of the risks and the benefits of motorcycling. Hence, we asked them whether motorcycling lived up to their initial expectations or not. Depending on their motives, social influences, and their own research on the matter, all the participants had presumptions regarding what their experience of riding would be like. Most of the new riders' expectations were related to positive aspects of motorcycling, and less to the risks of riding. All of the new riders that participated in the study stated that their initial expectations were met, concerning both their training and the actual riding experience.

However, the participants also stressed that in most cases the reality surpassed their expectations in both positive and negative ways. Starting with the positive, unexpected aspects of motorcycling, new riders were positively surprised by the sense of belonging they felt in the riders' community. An explicit 'ritual' of this community is the exchange of nods with other motorcyclists.

*'They give you that nod and just make you feel so good inside. (...) And I started doing it to everyone as well. Just so nice. It's like camaraderie. It's just awesome.'* (Participant 15)

Moreover, sharing a common interest in motorcycles helps individuals form communities of sharing with people close to them.

*'There's three of us in my office that have now got a bike or have ridden bikes in the past. So we tend to have conversations about what bike have you got, how it is getting to here, where we park it. All of those practical conversations about riding a bike.'* (Participant 4)

New riders also stressed how travelling or commuting with a motorcycle gave them a sense of freedom. Although this description is sometimes seen as a cliché, being a common term used to describe the experience of riding, it was mentioned by many participants.

*'It's that freedom. It's that freedom that you won't get anywhere else. (...) It's that freedom and that you're in control.'* (Participant 19)

*'It is that freedom. You can't explain it anywhere. Like you can't physically explain it apart from, you're just free again.'* (Participant 9)

But *'what is that sense of freedom that you pursue and a motorcycle can give you?'* (Participant 13). This sense of freedom was expressed in various ways by the participants, with some describing it as an escape from reality and everyday cares, a *'need to take the bike out and just disappear'* (Participant 15). Some also connected it with higher mobility and the ability to easily access all destinations. While others stressed how riding a motorcycle offers *'a feeling of freedom and a feeling that you're part of the views that you get and that you're part of the environment'* (Participant 18).

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On the other hand, new riders' experience also revealed some unexpected negative aspects linked to motorcycling. Many participants mentioned the additional costs that are part of this process. These include the costs related to the purchase of appropriate and safe gear, and insurance and maintenance costs, including winter protection for the bikes. Concerning insurance costs, new riders shared how the differentiation between quotes from different companies and the factors taken into consideration for these quotes create a big challenge for prospective riders.

*'But insurance for me has been ridiculous. It's eight hundred to twenty-five thousand pounds a year for me. Like I have been quoted by certain people (...) for six thousand pounds a year. (...) I don't understand why and the people on the phone can't even tell me why. It's like if I have security devices, that increases my insurance premium. If I'm part of an organisation, which I am now, I'm part of an association, it goes up in price. It's just like ridiculous. The insurance part of it, I never expected it to be so expensive and that's a really big shock. And if I had known that it was going to be fifteen hundred pounds a year to insure a 125, I would probably never have gotten like a license at all, I think.'* (Participant 9)

Especially for new riders, challenges also pose the lack of enough training slots, as well as the limited training centre coverage in different locations. This situation has worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, when the demand increased, and the offer remained the same or in some cases decreased. This issue will be further elaborated on in the next section of the report.

*'There is a lack of training centres within London, not to mention it must be much more difficult midland or up north.'* (Participant 13)

Related to accessing motorcycling, apart from training, participants referred to the inability of people with foreign full licenses to convert them in the United Kingdom.

Moreover, focusing on the case of the United Kingdom, new riders also mentioned the challenges they faced in using motorcycles throughout the year due to the weather conditions, as well as the lack of garages that serve motorcycles. Finally, another interesting point raised by the participants was the feeling of fear that they sometimes experience while riding the motorcycle, stressing that it is *'a lot more tricky and indeed scary than [they] anticipated'* (Participant 17). However, it should be stressed that fear does not discourage new riders from pursuing their goals.

## Conclusion

*All of the new riders responded that motorcycling has lived up to their initial expectations. Most of them also stressed that reality exceeded their expectations on both the positive and the negative aspects of riding. On the positive side, new riders highlighted the sense of belonging and the feeling of freedom. On the other hand, the challenges the participants faced related to the additional costs, the lack of training centres and the weather in the UK.*

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# The Experience of Training

Our new riders were asked about their experiences of rider training, and to raise any positive or negative elements that they recalled.

Several of our participants were enthusiastic about their training experience, particularly at the point of delivery.

*'With regards to the CBT and the training side of things they were really good. Like I mentioned, I was lucky to be able to get myself booked onto a course the day after I called up and I just called up to inquire. And on the day, it was a rainy day in May, I think it was a light drizzle and all the rest of it, a bit gloomy, overcast, but the training, delivered in the way that she delivered it, it was really good.'* (Participant 15)

*'In regards to just the training, the CBT, I obviously only had like a couple of people that were willing to do the Ride Free thing [This participant had won in a competition for free rider training]. But the person I went to was absolutely amazing. They treated me no differently than anybody else.'* (Participant 9)

*'The training, it was fantastic. I did learn a thing or two actually, lifesavers. When I was a youngster, indicators, mirror, go. But now it's more lifesavers, the blind spots.'* (Participant 19)

*'I still find it a bit strange that there's no practising on a big bike. They go into the main road and through the traffic in London. But then, you know, in the end, everything went fine and I think the instructors were really good. They were instructors for like fifteen/twenty years, very knowledgeable. So you know, that was all fine.'* (Participant 17)

*'I found the trainers really good. I didn't have any problems with any of the trainers. The only problem was it was around COVID time.'* (Participant 18)

*'They were absolutely great. I even gave them a fantastic review at the end. The training school I used for my CBT, they were absolutely fantastic. The advice was not just general, but it was personal, it was tailored to each and everyone.'* (Participant 13)

In general, there was overwhelming satisfaction with the quality of training being offered by training schools for CBT and test preparation. More than one participant noted that their trainers were good at giving individualised feedback appropriate for their level of skill and experience. Those who were

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returning to riding often noted the contrast with their past experience, when *'you just get on it and you start driving'* (Participant 17).

In terms of negatives, one issue raised was the wait time, often due to training centres having to shut down during the COVID-19 pandemic, and therefore being inundated with applicants who want to train, once they re-opened. At times, this has led some participants to go far outside of their local area for training.

*'I was hammered by COVID. So it was only recently that local ones have started springing up. So I travelled to a different region and trained there.'* (Participant 19)

For some, there was a long wait between taking basic training and being able to enter their test:

*'So I did the three days of training and then the exam on Monday. But because I didn't pass the second level, I wanted to have two additional training days, but I had to wait like three/four months before I could take the training. And then I had to wait for another like two months before I could take the test. So then there's a lot of time in-between the training and the test, which I thought was not really helpful.'* (Participant 17)

This same participant continued later:

*'So there were plenty of slots at the DVLA, but there were just no instructors to take me to the test. So I think it just has been a lot of demand for Direct Access Scheme, their training and because of that they are just completely booked up. I think I called something like ten driving schools in London to get the test earlier, but everyone was just telling me it's super super busy at the moment and they don't have any slots for the next six months or so.'* (Participant 17)

Another participant said, in a similar vein:

*'It was very difficult to get onto a training, to find someone who would do the training and then get the tests booked. No. For the CBT I was in a different location. I did it in Birmingham. And then the actual bike test, I did it in Cambridge. I used somebody else. And the other thing is it was difficult to get everything with one person because again of timing and they didn't have space. So I just had to go wherever there was space because my work was starting in October. I had to just get it done.'* (Participant 18)

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One participant with experience of the riding scene in Italy noted that, in comparison to there, the path to getting an A-licence in the UK was complex, even though, ostensibly, all EU countries follow the same EU guidelines.

*'Part of my friends, my social group, are Italians. None of them, even though some of them of Italian heritage were actually born in the UK, none of them that have dual citizenship took the license test for A here. They all went to Italy, and it was much easier. Everyone gets it. And again, it's not that they are less careful. No, because if they would be, there wouldn't be so many riders in Italy, if they were less careful. They probably do not have the same stringency.'* (Participant 13)

One female participant reported receiving sexist treatment at the hand of training schools when trying to book both training and test slots. We expand upon this in the chapter on gender, but it is worth noting this in the 'training' section as well.

*'But now, trying to get my MOD 1 or MOD 2, whatever it is, it's so confusing. We're trying to get my theory done. That's nearly been impossible, trying to get that booked. And then now trying to get the practicals. I've spoken to three people locally. Like I'd have to travel an hour, that's how 'local' they are. They don't teach women, because women don't know how to ride motorbikes. They don't want to teach women, because women are 'insert multiple horrible names there' and then the other person just laughed on the phone when I said "hi, I wanna book test" and they said, "oh for you or somebody else?" I said for myself and they just started laughing and I just thought, well, OK then, that's nice. And they just hung up and it's just like that part of my experience has been awful. Trying to just find somewhere to even get started has been just. Again, it's just so sexist, and it's not that I'm incompetent. It's not that I've failed loads of tests, it's just that I'm a woman.'* (Participant 9)

Participants were also asked if they would consider taking post-test further training, in order to develop their skills as riders. Some responded that it was too early to consider this: *'I think I need to buy a bike now and just get some experience. No further training at this point'* (Participant 17). For many, however, the prospect of doing more training in the future to develop their skills (and to learn more about motorcycle maintenance) was attractive.

*'I would definitely be interested in some more training to learn more about it and doing maintenance on the bike as well. I think if there was a course you could do for a day that showed you how to look after the bike and things you can do to make it last longer, I think that would be really useful.'* (Participant 4)

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*'I'll just carry on training. I found a bunch of courses and there is one that the police give out. I'm not sure how it's called, but I'm doing that one. Yes, whatever it's called. I mean, it's actually instructed by the police. And yeah, I mean sure. I mean, I will keep on training. Yes, of course.'*

(Participant 12)

## Conclusion

*For the vast majority of our participants, the experience of training to ride a motorcycle, be that CBT, or Mod 1 or 2, has been hugely positive. The delivery of training is described as 'fantastic' and 'really good', and trainers are seen as knowledgeable and enthusiastic. The world of motorcycling is overwhelmingly male (some 92% of riders in the UK are men) and one female participant gave us a rather disturbing report of sexist treatment when trying to purchase training and test slots. Aside from that, the main negative is the wait times that new riders have when booking training and tests, sometimes having to choose between long waits, or going far from their local neighbourhoods for training. We expect that this, in large part, reflects the knock-on effects of covid lockdowns, both in terms of a backlog of training and rising demand for motorcycle training post-pandemic. Most new riders would consider taking more advanced training in the future.*

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# The Position of Female New Riders: Issues of Gender

The effect of gender on the position and the experiences of new riders was not raised by the researchers during the focus groups. However, one of the female participants spontaneously reflected on challenging experiences she has faced and the way she is positioned in the riding scene based on her gender. This was an unexpected outcome of the focus groups which created the need to learn more about the experiences of female riders in what they perceive to be a *'male-oriented community'* (Participant 9), by organising an additional all-women focus group. The findings are shared on the belief that motorcycling *'should be less of a man's world'* (Participant 9).

Although the life stories and the gender-focused incidents described by the female participants varied on the subject of intensity and frequency, all the female participants referred to riding as a traditionally male-dominated activity.

*'It is a very male-dominated community and I do feel incredibly out of place everywhere I go.'*  
(Participant 9)

Since the United Kingdom is a multicultural society, this perception is also intensified by cultural stereotypes and traditions regarding the position of men and women in societies all over the world.

*'It is like a gender-cultural thing. Non-European countries, and especially South American and maybe African and Arabic countries, do have other approaches towards gender equality and all these things. They still do have some reminiscences. Especially in South America, we still do have all these reminiscences in our culture about the mucho macho Mexicano.'* (Participant 6)

And these perceptions are reflected in the expectations set for women in the riding community. The examples provided by the participants refer to the expectation of women to be on the back of the bike accompanying their partner. Interestingly, two of the three female participants pursued riding in order to be able to accompany their partners - on equal terms and not as a pillion.

In some cases, gender-based stereotypes also influence the way female riders are treated in the streets and are positioned in the riding community. For example, participants reflect on the way their male counterparts do not engage in 'traditional rituals', like the exchange of nods, with them, ignoring them, and/or trying to discourage them from riding. A common challenge addressed by the participants is also the way female riders are treated by male garage employees. One of the participants referred to this situation as a *'worldwide cliché'* (Participant 6), which is not only limited to motorcyclists but also extends to female car drivers.



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*'It's usually where I feel more conscious that I'm a female. I took the bike in, 'cause one of the brakes wasn't quite working as well as it should be, and got a lot of questions about "How often do you service this? How do you do that? What are you doing with the bike?", which I don't think I would have got if I was male. (...) If you take a man with you, you don't get nearly as much feedback from them.'* (Participant 4)

However, in the case of one of the participants gender-biased behaviours were extreme and linked to the restriction of her access to the riding community. This participant described instances of sexist behaviour being demonstrated by employees at training centres around her area, as well as employees of both genders working at equipment stores.

*'They don't teach women, because women don't know how to ride motorbikes. They don't want to teach women (...) The other person just laughed on the phone when I said "oh hi, I wanna book a test" and they said, "oh for you or somebody else?". I said for myself, and they just started laughing (...) And they just hung up. It's just like that part of my experience has been awful. Trying to just find somewhere to even get started has been just... Again, it's just so sexist. It's not that I'm incompetent. It's not that I've failed loads of tests, it's just that I'm a woman. And it's like, to have that experience with somebody who's meant to be able to bring you into that community even further and they have that reaction...'* (Participant 9)

A really interesting remark on the gender aspect is that also women tend to perpetuate gender-based stereotypes related to men's riding. When asked about the riding styles, female participants stated that *'women would be much less reckless than men in regard to safety'* (Participant 6) and more *'conscious of safety and the consequences of not taking safety seriously'* (Participant 4).

The female participants also reported that they face challenges with the purchase of the appropriate equipment to ensure they are safe on the road. The first challenge they addressed is related to the big differences between sizes, which makes it more difficult for them to purchase the right equipment. However, the second and most important challenge that female riders face is related to the cost of motorcycling clothing and the small availability of female-fitting gear. Targeting the female audience, appropriate gear is overcharged, creating more difficulties for women.

*'I think definitely the clothing and getting stuff to fit is more challenging. I would love a pair of motorcycle boots with a heel on that are nice enough to wear out and be fit to wear on a motorcycle. But they are crazy expensive to get. There are a few companies that make them as a female-fitting but they are very expensive to buy.'* (Participant 4)

*'I believe they probably try to charge you more just because it's done for women and they would try to label it as a kind of fashion. So it would probably cost a bit more for boots, jackets.'* (Participant 6)

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Therefore, the experiences that the female participants shared demonstrate how gender-based stereotypes, behaviours, and perceptions jeopardise women's position in the riding community and discourage them from pursuing more. In the light of this situation, the participants proposed that the existence of more female riding groups would strengthen their confidence and sense of belonging.

*'If there was a group of female riders that could share where they're getting kit from, what problems they're having or what networks there are, or what the opportunities are for female riders, it would be quite good.'* (Participant 4)

## Conclusion

*Although a diverse sample, the female new riders that participated in this project describe the riding scene as male-dominated. Gender and cultural stereotypes and preconceptions reproduced in society influence their opportunities for equal access and position in the riding community. One of the participants addressing the issue of gender suggested the formation of female rider communities to facilitate new female riders' access to the community [all-female rider groups do exist, of course. It's not clear if the participant was aware of this].*

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# New Rider Aspirations

We asked new riders about what they hoped to achieve in their riding career, in particular where they might imagine themselves in five years' time with respect to the kind of bike they might ride, what kind of licence they hope to hold, and the type of riding they want to do. All of the participants who answered hoped to still be riding in five years' time, although that hope was not always expressed with certainty:

*'Yes, I would still like to be riding in five years' time. Probably, thinking about that space of time, I probably would like to have upgraded to a bigger bike at that point if I'm still riding. I would have liked to make the investment and be riding around on a bigger bike. I think so. I think I would probably stick to a scooter. I did do my CBT on a manual, but I do feel much more comfortable on a twist and go rather than doing gears as well.'* (Participant 4)

*'Oh well, I'm just starting to ride. So hopefully in five years, I will still be doing it. I want to buy a bike now that's not too heavy. So did a test on a 1200CC and I thought it was just a bit too much to start with. So perhaps, like in five years' time, it will be that I have enough experience that would be the type of bike I'd like to ride.'* (Participant 17)

*'I think that in five years' time, I would also hopefully still be riding. I think that at that stage, I would like to have maybe a couple of bikes, one for commuting in the city, going to work and back, fast, easy, quite small. And then probably I will get a touring or something. So I could just tour around.'* (Participant 12)

A number of our respondents hoped that within five years they would be holding a full 'A' licence:

*'I am planning to get my full licence soon. For my assessment, I thought that I need at least one year of experience on this bike. And once I master what I'm capable of, once I get my skill to an acceptable level, then I can take my A license. Because of my age, I have full access so I can just get my straight A. Everyone just thinks "Oh my goodness, I'm going to get my A license and get a litre bike". Well, I don't think so. Honestly, I don't plan to get anything more than, even though it is quite difficult, this type of engine, but anything more than 500cc. Perhaps I was looking at 300cc.'* (Participant 13)

The same participant also hopes to take test training, and then more advanced training in the future:

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*'I do plan to get the DSA course, which offers the training for the actual license, the MOD 1 and 2. Once that is completed and I finally get my license and let's say a decent bike, then I plan to do some specialised courses.'* (Participant 13)

This was not, however, true for every respondent – one female participant was content, for now, to ride a 125 with 'L' plates:

*'I don't know if I would take my full motorbike license. It's not in the plan at the moment. At the moment I'm riding a scooter, so it might be something I look into to take a full licence on an automatic if I can find somewhere that does that training.'* (Participant 4)

Another aspiration is to travel further afield on motorcycles once progress has been made to riding larger capacity machines. This may involve touring the UK, or overseas riding.

*'That will give me at the end the freedom to actually travel on the motorways and get to explore more of the UK as opposed to 125CC.'* (Participant 13)

*'I already planned out, so to say. Got to be a GSA, BMW. I have already had a sneaky ride on a 1200 and thoroughly enjoyed how it handled. And the fact that the weight is so low down. Adventure riding, for sure, touring adventure riding. I have got a plan to go through North Africa at some point. That is on the cards. When it will happen, not a hundred percent sure, but it will definitely happen.'* (Participant 20)

For another participant, the 'tour' ride would be to ride to a holiday destination, but not, then, to tour further:

*'And then probably I will get a touring or something. So I could just tour around. Yeah, probably like a touring, quite relaxed though. I'm not the kind of person that would actually. I wouldn't take a holiday on the bike. I would use the bike to go on holiday, which is a different story. So I'm not the kind of person that will go "Yeah, let's go ride ten hours a day for two weeks". No, I'll ride two days to get there and then leave me there for two weeks and then I come back.'* (Participant 12)

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## Conclusion

*All of our new riders were hoping to still be riding in five years' time. For most, this would also involve gaining a full licence and upgrading to a larger (but not necessarily very large) capacity motorcycle or scooter. Some are also considering the possibility of undertaking more advanced training. A larger motorcycle will also open up opportunities for travelling further, be that touring around the UK, or taking a bike overseas to somewhere such as North Africa.*

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# The Politics of Motorcycling

As MAG is a political organisation, dedicated to campaigning on behalf of riders' rights, one of the questions that we asked our new riders is whether they think there is a 'politics' of motorcycling, and if so, what that politics might consist of. Of course, in semi-structured focus groups such as this, the conversation is very much shaped by the questions asked, and so it may be unlikely that any of our new riders would have raised this topic spontaneously. Responses to a question such as this can, however, still be revealing.

Slightly to the surprise of the researchers, the most common response to the question about politics was to raise the issue of stigma, and the negative public image that several of our new riders feel still attaches to motorcycle riders – in particular, in relation to perceived anti-social and unruly behaviour on the road, and the generation of noise pollution. The negative image of motorcyclists, particularly amongst car drivers, was also thought to be something that drew motorcyclists together in response. For example:

*'The motorbiking community is very tight-knit, and I think that's because we're so alienated. It's like motorcyclists are all d\*cks. That's the vibe I got from being around just car people...They take liberties and stuff like that. I think it would be good to have a better public image.'* (Participant 9)

*'When you first asked the question, what first sprang to mind is what everyone else alluded to. The stigma and the stereotypical view and image that we have of motorcyclists. It's always been the same. If it's not the mods and rockers from the seventies, it's Hells Angels gangs. If it's not them, it's the scooter gangs that are making the robberies etc.'* (Participant 15)

*'I think we've got a stigma of if you are a motorcyclist then you are a hooligan. I can see that everywhere.'* (Participant 20)

Some felt that this stigma was not universal – one noting that they see this kind of stigma back in the Netherlands, connected with motorcycle gangs, but *'at least in London here, I don't see any stigma'* (Participant 17).

The clearest connection between the perception of this sense of stigma and policy-making is that this low view of motorcyclists leads to policies that are biased against, or problematic for, motorcyclists. One respondent linked negative attitudes to bikers directly to the testing regime.

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*'The policing behind it seems to be what's driving policies with regard to motorcycle testing and the Mod1/Mod2 etc. Yeah, there are safety elements in there, but is it actually practical?'* (Participant 15)

Other participants linked negative stereotypes of bikers to the rise of noise cameras and speed cameras focused on places where motorcyclists gather, such as Loomies Café.

*'On the A272 near Petersfield and Loomies you've got somewhere called West Meon and they've got noise cameras, speed cameras, there's been petitions to shut down Loomies.'* (Participant 20)

Another noted that loud vehicles, including motorcycles, are an issue in London, but *'I don't think it's something that's specific to motorcycles'* (Participant 17).

Another issue raised was the recent changes to the *Highway Code* in the UK. The perception of these changes is that they allow cyclists and pedestrians to behave how they please on UK roads, with the emphasis always on the rider or driver to avoid collisions. *'Pedestrians have basically the right of way for everything. In general, that's incredibly dangerous'* (Participant 9). Another participant raised the problem of cyclists riding two or three abreast in the New Forest area.

The relatively complex process of obtaining a full motorcycle licence was an issue raised more than once in the focus groups. As noted above, it was linked by some to negative stereotypes of motorcyclists. For others, there is a desire that the testing regime became simpler.

*'I think there was a strategy behind this. I know it came a long way. Things have changed, but there haven't been many changes to it for a long time now.'* (Participant 13)

The participant goes on to approvingly cite the view of a motorcycle instructor who they watch on YouTube, that *'the testing regime could be a lot simpler'* (Participant 13). Another respondent suggested that to encourage motorcycling, those with a full car licence should be allowed to ride a 125 without L-plates, and carry passengers, on the grounds of having a general road sense.

Other respondents would also like to see politics used to promote biker-friendly policies such as full access to bus lanes. *'Being able to use bus lanes, maybe, like a taxi. That would be nice.'* (Participant 20). One problem raised in relation to the use of bus lanes is the current inconsistency of policy on the question of motorcycle access:

*'For me, the one thing I find, especially when I was going to London, or if I'm in certain areas, is that in some cities it's OK to use a bus lane to get through traffic, and in other places, it isn't. Even*

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*in London, there are some parts where it's OK and some parts where it's not. And then filtering I think isn't as safe as just using a bus lane, for example. And especially with the R1200 filtering isn't that easy. So I think the use of the bus lanes, whether that could be extended nationally for motorcycles, just as it is for taxis and buses or something like that. I think that would be useful.'* (Participant 18)

Another reason cited for promoting PTW-friendly policies was the green agenda around pollution and clean air, and decongesting urban environments.

*'Can you imagine the traffic on motorbikes? Let's say if half of the vehicles in London were motorbikes?'* (Participant 13)

*'If there were more people on motorbikes, there will be less congestion, less traffic, etc.'* (Participant 12)

*'So, it's a cheap method of transportation, it's lower pollution and actually, it could be a really positive thing to get people out of their cars and onto bikes. But that never seems to happen. It doesn't seem to be regarded as a positive option in terms of politics.'* (Participant 4)

It should be noted that one respondent felt very strongly that motorcycling had nothing to do with politics, and that the two should be kept separate: *'I don't do politics mate, I just get on and ride'* and later *'I am not really a part of politics. I don't believe in politics. All I enjoy is waking up, getting on the bike, off I go. Job done.'* (Participant 19).

This was, however, a minority view, more typical were responses along the lines of *'I think there is a politics around motorcycling. I think yes, definitely there is. Probably because there's a smaller population, there's less emphasis on it.'* (Participant 18). All respondents could cite at least one relevant political issue.

There were two other matters raised under politics. One was the need for the public provision of secure motorcycle parking:

*'The other thing I think that would be useful is parking for motorbikes and security where you can get locks on the floor so that you can chain your bike to something.'* (Participant 18)

The other contribution placed the lack of motorcycle-friendly policies in the UK in an international context. The view here is that numbers matter:



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*'I guess there's a perception in this country that the roads are kind of designed and meant for cars. Whereas if you look at Italy or Spain, there are so many more people on scooters, people on mopeds. I think they get a lot more consideration and it's sort of built-in to the culture of how they use the roads and you're kind of much more aware of them.'* (Participant 4)

## Conclusion

*While one respondent felt that politics and motorcycling should not mix, the general perception amongst our participants was that the treatment of motorcycling in terms of transport policy is overwhelmingly negative, or at least not as positive as it could be/needs to be. This was strongly associated with the view that there is still a stigma attached to motorcycling as a chosen form of transport, and while the nature of that stigma may change over time (from mods and rockers to loud exhausts and scooter-enabled crime), it remains attached to this small community of road users. As a result, motorcycling is not taken seriously as a mode of transport, despite what it offers in potential benefits for reducing congestion, and the associated environmental benefits that would come from that. This negative view of motorcycling is also associated with what some participants saw as an overly complex and expensive testing regime, which contrasts starkly with the regime for passing a car test.*

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## Concluding Remarks

- New riders in the UK are a diverse group of people and their motivations for entering the riding scene vary significantly. The main motivation for the participants was realising a teenage ambition, being influenced mainly by relatives/friends that used to, or still, ride. The data suggests that there is a link between early exposure and experiences of riding and the decision to ride later on in life.
- More practical motivations for taking up riding are linked to fast and cost-effective commuting and mastering a complex skill. According to the new riders, apart from financial, there are also environmental benefits from choosing a motorcycle as a mode of transport.
- New riders also highlighted the sense of freedom that they experienced whilst riding as a highly motivating and empowering aspect of motorcycling. Added to the feeling of freedom is also the sense of belonging in the riding scene, experienced through interaction on the streets, the formation of riding groups and the organisation of ride-outs.
- Female new riders still face challenges entering the riding scene. Dealing with long-held cultural stereotypes, exclusion, and sexism they sometimes struggle for equal opportunities.
- Apart from gender stereotypes, two main stereotypical views seem to accompany new riders. The first is the image of a risk-loving reckless individual, while the second is the stigma of trouble-making, dangerous ridings groups. The first is mainly reproduced by family members and friends wanting to discourage new riders. The second is, unfortunately, according to our participants, still driving the policymaking around motorcycling.