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## Group: Scooter Sales Skyrocketed In '08

by [Karl Greenberg](#), 2.09.09, 3:10 PM

Motorized vehicles on four wheels were not selling well at all in 2008, but the lighter two-wheeled variety was selling like hotcakes.

The big sellers on two wheels last year were scooters and dual-purpose bikes, according to preliminary data from The Motorcycle Industry Council (MIC), the Irvine, Calif. industry group. The organization's Retail Sales Report, which shows percentage growth or decreases among all categories of bikes in 2008, revealed that scooter sales went through the roof—driven by gasoline prices and Americans' rethinking two-wheeled transport for commuting, not just recreation, the top reason that consumers buy bikes.

The council reported that through the first nine months of that study, with the final quarter's results still to be factored in, commuting and errands moved up to second place among the reasons for riding. Five years earlier, in the 2003 survey, commuting and errands ranked in third place, behind touring.

Sales by the four reporting brands in the scooter segment were up 41.5% compared to all of 2007. And sales of dual-purpose bikes—motorcycles that have both on and off-road characteristics—jumped 22.8% last year for the six brands tracked. However, since no other categories in the report showed an increase, total motorcycle sales were actually down 7.2%, per the group.

MIC President Tim Buche said the results reflect "not nearly as sharp a decline as many other consumer products in today's economy." Buche said that any bike that was "smart-sized, offered great value and high fuel mileage," sold well last year. "Availability mattered, too. Many dealers could have sold more of these kinds of motorcycles if they only had them. Demand was so much higher than anyone could have expected."

The report compiles U.S. sales information every month from BMW, Can-Am, Ducati, Harley-Davidson/Buell, Honda, Kawasaki, KTM, the Piaggio Group, Victory, Suzuki, Triumph and Yamaha. The group also says the data provide an indicator of market trends, and that it is preparing an initial estimate of overall motorcycle sales in mid-February and a final estimate by midyear.

Among these 12 bike brands, sales of on-highway bikes—cruisers, sport bikes, touring bikes and standard motorcycles—slipped by 5.6% last year. Off-road bike sales fell dramatically—by 30% among the six brands that make such machines.

"Casual riding and riding for pleasure are still the top reasons for Americans to go motorcycling," Buche said. "But more people are seeing motorcycles as green transportation that can help reduce traffic congestion and make parking easier."