Executive Summary
RAC Report on Motoring 2007 Driving Safely?

As the most comprehensive report of its kind, the 2007 RAC Report on Motoring is the 19th of RAC's annual in-depth research reports into the views of Britain's motorists. Based on the views of over 2,000 drivers, the Report acts as the 'voice' of the British motorist and explores the really key issues facing drivers, including congestion, the environment and taxation.

This year's Report focuses on the one issue that Britain's drivers say is of utmost concern – safety.

Car Dependency
- Motoring remains as fundamental a part of people's lives as ever.
- Four out of five drivers would find it very difficult to adjust their lifestyle to being without a car and 8% of drivers say they never walk anywhere.
- This is despite a view that over two-thirds (71%) consider the quality of roads to be noticeably worse and a strong belief that the cost of motoring is increasing at a rapid rate.

Motoring and the Environment
- Support and understanding of the 'green' agenda is growing among motorists but this is not yet being translated into action.
- Only 37% of motorists take CO_2 emissions into account when it comes to buying a new car and 45% will only take account of environmental issues once they see more people doing the same.
- The Government needs to seize the initiative, with 66% of motorists claiming they would buy a more environmentally friendly car if the tax incentives were better.

Motoring Revenues
- Revenues from motoring offences should be used to fund safe driving initiatives for all motorists.
- Motorists are generally sceptical about the Government's use of motoring revenues. Nearly three out of four (73%) believe that most driving offences are only there to generate money for the Treasury, rather than improve road safety.

Reducing Traffic
- The majority of motorists (57%) believe tougher steps should be taken to tackle congestion. However, there is a big difference between recognising the problem and achieving a solution.
- Opposition to road pricing is high, with only 30% of drivers supporting the principle whilst 75% believe it to be ineffective at reducing traffic – it merely shifts the problem elsewhere.
- But the deal highlighted in last year's Report is still on the table and support for it is growing… 73% (compared to 68% in 2006) of drivers believe that to make road pricing acceptable they would want to see immediate evidence of investment in public transport.

Drivers' Concerns about Motoring
- Ahead of congestion, the cost of motoring, the number of cars on the road and the environment, driving and safety is by far the greatest area of concern for the vast majority of motorists.
- The concerns motorists have about driving safely are overwhelmingly about the behaviours of other motorists. Their biggest concern is other motorists driving under the influence of illegal drugs.
- British motorists say cars and authorities have made roads safer – not motorists themselves.

Safety and Technology
- 86% of motorists believe more safety features on cars (such as airbags, seatbelts, ABS) have had the single biggest impact on road safety.
- Motorists are very confident that they know how to check the car they drive is safe – around 90% say they can perform basic safety checks.
- Although most drivers (58%) believe in-car technology makes driving safer, 71% believe that the complexity of modern cars means motorists need to be shown how to use safety features for them to have any impact.
- There is a sense that in-car technology might have the opposite effect of what was intended with 50% of motorists believing too much reliance on technology makes people less safe drivers.

Feeling Safe
- Virtually all (98%) motorists say they are a safe driver but only 81% feel safe while driving.
- Feeling safe noticeably declines with age with only 35% of drivers aged 65 and over feeling very safe driving today, compared with 48% of 17-24 year olds.
- Men feel noticeably safer than women, with 48% of men and 34% of women feeling very safe.
- Drivers who live in cities are more likely to feel very safe (47%), especially when compared to motorists in suburbs (38%).
- Drivers who say they feel very safe driving are more likely to be habitual speeders and have speeding penalties.
- Whilst there is a clear hierarchy of seriousness in unsafe behaviours, the overall message is that all unsafe behaviours are very serious.

Speeding
- Britain's drivers need constant reminders of the risks of driving at an inappropriate speed.
- Speeding is the most common unsafe driving behaviour, with around half of motorists admitting that they sometimes speed, even though it is regarded as unsafe behaviour.
- It also represents the most common motoring offence – 16% of those surveyed have been convicted of a speeding offence in the last five years.

Familiar Dangers
- Drivers need to be helped to understand the inherent risk in how they drive – new language and ways to engage them are required.
- Motorists underestimate the risk of everyday distractions, such as in-car instruments and systems, children and eating or drinking.
- The Report questions whether we are now driving in cocoons – removed from the perception of danger and well within our comfort zone.
- The most common distraction for motorists was found to be radio/CD controls (82%) followed by heating/air-conditioning controls (44%).

Personal Responsibility

- The primary focus of future strategy to improve driving safety must be on drivers themselves.
- Drivers differentiate between unsafe behaviours that are deliberate (e.g. drugs or drink, dangerous driving, insurance) and unintended (e.g. distraction, tiredness, carelessness).
- Deliberately unsafe behaviours are seen as deeply irresponsible, whereas unintended behaviours are seen as 'only human' and forgivable.
- 94% of drivers consider themselves to be law-abiding and they place the blame for unsafe driving on 'other drivers'. But, we are all 'other drivers' to everyone else on the road.

Improving Driving Safety

- Britain needs a more prominent and integrated system for people to learn what they need to drive safely throughout their lives.
- Young people are at far greater risk – a third of all car drivers killed or seriously injured and half of all car passengers are under 25 years old.
- Young people acknowledge the need to be better prepared before they are allowed to drive. Their priorities are:
  - more education about safe driving at school (58%)
  - more emphasis on 'teaching to drive safely' (37%)
  - better preparation for 'modern driving' (30%)
- As a whole, motorists are interested in helping young people to improve their driving skills. For example, 88% would like to see training on night driving.
- There is an emergent view amongst the authorities of a need to adopt a 'lifelong learning' approach to driving.
- 42% of motorists agree with 'making all drivers re-take the driving test periodically'.
- 51% of motorists agree with 'making drivers re-take the driving test at 65 – and periodically thereafter.
- 79% of motorists agree with 'having regular medical checks for elderly people'.
- However, nearly a third (29%) of drivers believe they would not pass their driving test if they were to take it tomorrow.
- The most acceptable safety initiative is to design cars so that they minimise injury to pedestrians – 88% of motorists supported this. This is closely followed by greater emphasis on teaching and testing road safety in the driving test – this is supported by 84% of those surveyed.

Harder Policies and Tougher Penalties

- National road safety targets should be unpacked into specific localised targets that reflect local concerns and priorities.
- There is a deep-rooted willingness to accept limited constraints in order to improve road safety and 59% of drivers think deaths should be cut by at least half.
- 56% support a goal of zero fatalities although this is tempered by scepticism about how realistic such a policy might be.
- Harder policies on drink-driving and drug-driving are supported. Over two-thirds of motorists back random breath testing, reducing the UK drink-drive limit to be in line with Europe, naming and shaming convicted drink/drug drivers and the use of alcolocks.

The Great British Motorist

There are about 46.5m people in Britain eligible for a driving licence, i.e. aged 17 or over.
72% hold a full driving licence, which is 81% of men and 63% of women, giving a total of 33.3m motorists.

There are now 27.8m licensed cars on Britain's roads. This number has increased by c.25% in the last 10 years.

In round terms, there are:
- about 6 cars on the road for every 10 adults in Britain.
- over 8 cars on the road for every 10 drivers in Britain.

75% of all households have access to a car, and 32% have access to 2 or more cars.

43% of 5-10 years olds now go to school by car compared to 38% 10 years ago.

313,061,320,000 vehicle-miles are driven each year, with cars accounting for 79%.
Roughly a fifth of this is on motorways, a third on minor roads and the remainder on A roads.

The average person makes 1,044 trips per year and travels 7,208 miles per year:
- 2 out of every 3 trips are by car: 42% as a driver; 23% as a passenger.
- 4 out of every 5 miles travelled are by car: 51% as a driver; 29% as a passenger.

The average motorist drives 3685 miles a year:
- 39% commuting or on business
- 30% leisure
- 12% shopping
- 8% personal business
- 2% education/ school runs
- 9% ferrying people about e.g. children, friends, older people

The driving population is ageing:
- the proportion of older drivers is increasing: from 38% of drivers in 1995 to 51% in 2005.
- the proportion of younger drivers is reducing: from 43% of drivers in 1995 to 32% in 2005.

Sources: Transport Statistics, Department for Transport.

Media enquiries:
Liz Kennett

Senior Media Relations Manager
RAC
Surrey Street
Norwich NR1 3NG

Tel: 01603 688 263 / 01603 354 337 / 07800 699 667
Email: liz-kennett@norwich-union.co.uk

Public Affairs enquiries:
Gill Kerr

Public Affairs Manager
RAC
11th Floor, St Helen's
1 Undershaft
London EC3P 3DQ

Tel: 020 7662 3653
Email: gkerr@rac.co.uk