

# RAC Report on Motoring 2009

# Foreword

## Robert Gifford

Executive Director  
The Parliamentary Advisory  
Council for Transport Safety (PACTS)



The annual RAC Report on Motoring represents an important insight into drivers' attitudes on the cost of motoring, the state of the road network and the underlying beliefs of road users.

Over the last two decades, there has been increasing focus on reducing the number of people killed and injured on our roads. In April this year, the Government published a consultation asking for views on making our roads the safest in the world – an aspiration with which I am sure most drivers would agree.

There are, however, key challenges in meeting such a goal. First, policymakers need to engage with road users, to understand their concerns and to help meet them. The Audit Commission has suggested that targets can be more effective when those they have affected have been involved in their construction. We need to adopt such an approach in road safety policy, incorporating road users in the decision making process.

We also need to recognise the age divide that is beginning to emerge. For younger drivers, the mobile phone, whether as phone or text messaging service, is part of everyday life. This is a generation that has grown up with technology. As new technologies are introduced into the vehicle, they will pose little challenge. The flip side is that they may not bring the benefits of casualty reduction over the long term if drivers have become accustomed to them.

This all makes for an exciting time in policy formulation. Reports such as this can help us to focus our efforts to engage with the disaffected motorist, to improve the safety of our roads and to minimise the environmental impact of motoring.

# RAC Report on Motoring

## Contents

Foreword	6.0 Motorists, safety and society
Executive summary	6.1 Making money
1.0 Introduction	6.2 The law
2.0 Motorists and their cars	6.3 Safety
2.1 Car ownership	6.4 On the road
2.2 Motorists' views	6.5 Speeding
2.3 Getting about	6.6 Attitudes to speed limits
2.4 How motorists drive	6.7 Distractions
2.5 Buying a new car	6.8 Drink-driving
2.6 The alternatives	7.0 Motorists, taxation and cost
3.0 Motorists and the economy	7.1 The cost of driving and the tax burden
3.1 Reducing motoring costs	7.2 Tax spend
3.2 Future savings	7.3 Road tax changes
4.0 Motorists and the environment	8.0 Motorists and congestion
4.1 Green issues	8.1 What currently works
4.2 Green driving	8.2 What the Government should do about congestion
4.3 Buying green	8.3 What motorists will do to reduce congestion
4.4 Making motoring greener	9.0 Conclusion and commentary
5.0 Motoring and the new generation	RAC call to action
5.1 Gadgets	Appendix
5.2 Drugs	Company overview/contacts

# Executive summary

This report explores in detail motorists' attitudes, actions and priorities with regard to their vehicles, the road network, government transport policy and the effects of recession on their everyday motoring lives in 2009 and beyond. It is based on research from a sample of 1,109 British motorists.\*

There are a number of key findings emerging from this year's research which include:

An increasing sense of **motorists disengaging** with the big policy issues of the day and the debate surrounding them, such as the environment, traffic management and long-term road improvement and planning. A focus instead on issues of immediate relevance to the motorist's wallet such as reducing car usage and the perception that they are an easy target for further taxation.

Growing support for the role of **public transport** with 67% of motorists stating they would use their cars less if this option were better and 75% demanding further investment in it as a method for reducing congestion.

Evidence that the **newest generation** of drivers is more knowledgeable about how to be environmentally-friendly, but are more at risk from in-car distractions (55% of young drivers are distracted by in-car gadgets) and are less aware of the dangers of drink and drug driving (12% of young drivers believe motorists are fit to drive after taking a class B drug).

Dedicated efforts by motorists to lower the cost of owning their vehicles, with 53% walking more often and 77% shopping around for car insurance. But also evidence of increased risk-taking by **motorists to save money**, with 31% increasing the period between servicing their vehicle, 27% cutting back on breakdown cover and 25% conducting their own repairs without the specialist knowledge required to do so.

Frustration at the condition, maintenance and lack of improvement to the roads. Around 82% of motorists think the quality of roads is getting noticeably worse, (a rise of 14% on 2008 figures).

Motorists' support for some government **transport policies**, such as Active Traffic Management, but opposition to others, such as the continued prevalence of speed cameras, with 75% believing they are about raising money rather than improving road safety.

A lack of **clear communication by the Government** on some recent motoring-related legislative changes, with only 32% of motorists aware of the new CO<sub>2</sub>-related road tax bands and only 16% of motorists claiming to understand them.



\* Further information about the research can be found in the Appendix on page 58

# 1.0 Introduction

## Just some of the things UK drivers have been telling us...

“The increase in the cost of motoring is contributing taxation revenue to the Government and yet this is not translating into improved roads or other transport services.”

Paul 43  
Hertfordshire  
Company director



“I’m saving for a car, but the insurance will probably cost me more than the vehicle. Luckily my dad lets me borrow his car occasionally.”

Tom 20  
Manchester  
Student



“My 4x4 might not be fashionable but it’s what you need on these Devon roads.”

Simon 39  
Devon  
Builder



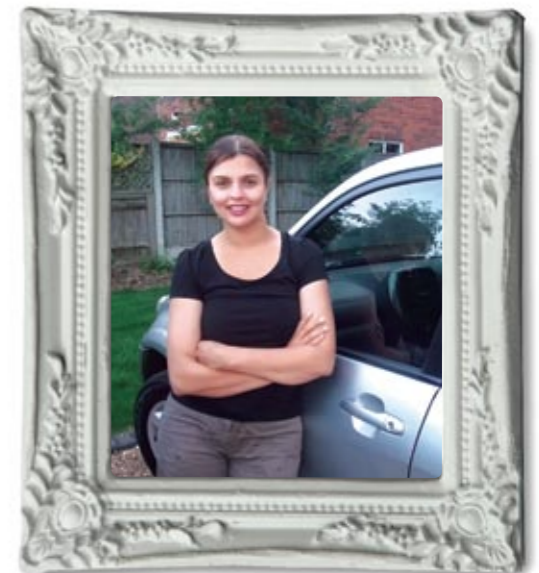
“I really enjoy driving but I’m concerned about the environment. So I’m cutting down on non-essential journeys which also helps with the finances”

Hema 34  
Buckinghamshire  
Analyst



“We moved from the country to the city, so now we use the bus to get around. But it’s still much cheaper and easier to use the car to travel outside Edinburgh.”

Lorraine 41  
Edinburgh  
Reflexologist with husband and two car mad sons.



# 1.0 Introduction

**2009 is proving to be a tough year globally – recession, the threat of unemployment and money worries are all causing unprecedented challenges.**

**But what does all this mean for the motorist?**



# 1.0 Introduction

Are motorists shunning their cars in favour of public transport? Are they happy with the status quo in terms of investment in the road system? Are they still getting greener? Or have money worries knocked all these concerns into touch while they concentrate on making ends meet?

The 2009 RAC Report on Motoring shows starkly the effect the current economic climate is having on motorists. This UK based report gives the motorist a voice – what they are thinking and feeling about current driving conditions and the laws that surround motoring.

The emerging theme this year is one of increasing disengagement. Motorists do not currently feel connected with the big issues of the day, such as the environment, traffic management and road pricing.

Motorists drive where they have to out of necessity, choose public transport where they can and are not worrying about the bigger picture. There is also a growing belief that their voice is not being heard. This is illustrated by the move away from the desire, evidenced in the

2008 RAC Report on Motoring, to form a partnership with government and manufacturers to improve motoring. This year there has been a shift back towards putting the onus for change firmly on the Government's doorstep.

Concerns over greener motoring are also sidelined, as motorists concentrate on saving money rather than the planet. But there is a welcome side effect to this behaviour – the more economically a motorist drives, albeit to save money, the more environmental their behaviour becomes. Using the bus or train rather than their car reduces CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Buying a more fuel-efficient car also reduces CO<sub>2</sub> emissions as well as costs.

**The challenge however is to make sure motorists continue with this thrifty and environmental behaviour after the economy has improved.**



# 2.0 Motorists and their cars

Cars continue to be an integral part of people's daily lives, but how motorists use them is beginning to change. As part of their economy drive, motorists are getting out of their cars more often and using other modes of transport. But have motorists attitudes really changed or is their current behaviour a temporary blip borne out of necessity? >>

**89%**  
of us think the cost of motoring is increasing at a very rapid rate

# 2.0 Motorists and their cars

## 2.1 Car ownership

Car ownership is important in today's society with over 50% of households owning one car\*, almost two fifths owning two and nearly one in ten being three or more car households.

But the 28% year-on-year fall in new car purchases in the first four months of this year, reported by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT), is reflected in the average age of a motorist's car. In 2009 only 8% drive a car less than a year old with the majority owning one over three years old – the average age is 5.6 years. Nearly a sixth drive a car more than 10 years old and how motorists have reacted to the new car scrappage scheme is explored in section 2.5.

A third of motorists drive a mini or super-mini with another four in ten driving small and medium sized cars. Only 12% drive a people carrier or 4x4 and less than one in ten a luxury saloon or sports car.

The car scrappage scheme<sup>†</sup> was proposed in the Budget in April this year and runs until March 2010. Anyone who has been the registered keeper for at least 12 months, of a car over 10 years old will be given a £2,000 discount when they trade it in for a new one.

The £2,000 comes equally from the Government and the manufacturer of the new car they are purchasing. The Government has set aside £300m to help 300,000 motorists driving older more polluting cars to change their vehicle using the scheme.

Percentage of drivers who would reduce their car usage if public transport were better



**73%** felt a car scrappage scheme for cars over ten years old was a compelling reason to buy a low emission car



‘Car sales overall have plummeted and motorists appear to have put their replacement plans on hold...’

\* Source: RAC Report on Motoring 2009

† Source: www.berr.gov.uk



# 2.0 Motorists and their cars

## 2.2 Motorists' views

There are a number of key issues that concern motorists.

89% think the cost of motoring is increasing at a very rapid rate.

82% think the quality of the roads is getting noticeably worse – a significant 13% increase on last year.

54% would oppose any technology that allows their vehicle movements to be tracked.

50% find themselves getting more frustrated and annoyed while driving than a few years ago.

More specific to actual driving, the table shows what areas are concerning motorists most. It is interesting to note drivers are less concerned over every issue than they were two years ago, and bar the behaviour of other drivers, than they were last year as well. This 'disengagement' is reflected throughout the report on key issues such as the environment and taxation.

Overall motorists appear to be more concerned with economically surviving the recession than wider issues surrounding motoring, although they still show relatively high levels of concern over the issues. Typically during a recession people focus on the most pressing day-to-day issues leaving the less urgent and potentially more esoteric problems to when they feel more secure. However, the Government shouldn't necessarily adopt a similar mentality when considering transport policies and need to continue to think about the longer term strategy.

**54%**  
would oppose any technology that allows their vehicle movements to be tracked



## Changes in motorists concerns

The cost of driving & running a car



The behaviour of other drivers



Other people driving without insurance



The number of accidents on the road



Traffic congestion/slower journey times



The environmental impact of motoring



2009 2008 2007

**82%**  
think the quality of the roads is getting noticeably worse – a significant 13% increase on last year

# 2.0 Motorists and their cars

## 2.3 Getting about

Motorists are more likely to get out of their cars and walk, ride a bicycle, travel as a car passenger or take public transport than ever before. While the majority of this can be put down to a desire to save money, the year on year upward trend suggests this behavioural change is more significant than an economic blip.

Walking is the most popular form of alternative transport, two in five motorists walk most or every day. But while over two fifths say they are doing more walking than last year, a staggering one in 14 never walks at all.

92% will also get into the passenger seat of someone else's car, with a third taking another seat between one and three times a week.

Motorists are also choosing two wheels as well as four, with 35% of motorists saying they cycle, up by 11% on last year.

\* Based on those surveyed for RAC Report on Motoring 2009

† Based on those surveyed for RAC Report on Motoring 2008, Report One

## 2.4 How motorists drive

The distance motorists drive is falling. This year a motorist's annual mileage averages 8,610\*, down from 9,010 in 2008†. Two in five motorists drive less than 6,000 miles a year.

The type of journey taken is beginning to change, with just over one motorist in five reducing the number of journeys – both long and short – they make. Significantly over half of motorists have started driving more responsibly to conserve fuel. The belt tightening also extends to the one in five households now using a lower consumption car than last year.

Annual average mileage

**9010\***

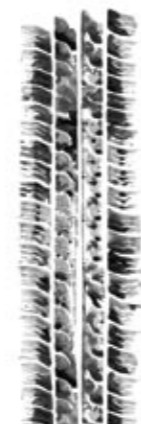
in 2008



Annual average mileage

**8610†**

in 2009



# RAC recommends...

Driving in an environmentally friendly manner will conserve fuel so saving money and reducing the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions the car produces.

## Drive smoothly and slowly



Check the road ahead and anticipate traffic. Avoid sharp braking and accelerating. This can save as much as 30% on fuel costs.



Stick to the speed limits – slowing by 10mph saves 40p on fuel for every 10 miles.

## Change gear at the right time



Shift up a gear at 2,500 revs per minute (rpm) for petrol cars and 2,000 rpm for diesel cars.



A vehicle travelling at 37mph in third gear uses 25% more fuel than it would at the same speed in fifth gear.

## Stop and start less



Get in and go – modern engines are designed to be most efficient when driven this way.



Switch off the engine if the car won't be moving for a while.

## Maintaining your car



Check the car's tyre pressures regularly, as under-inflated tyres can increase fuel consumption by up to 2%.



Change air filters when they get dirty as they can seriously reduce your fuel economy.



Remove unnecessary weight and roof racks – they increase the weight and air resistance, and therefore the amount of fuel used.



Air conditioning and other on-board electrical devices (such as mobile phone chargers) increase fuel consumption, so only use them when necessary. Open air vents to keep the car cool.



## 2.0 Motorists and their cars

### 2.5 Buying a new car

Car sales overall have plummeted and motorists appear to have put their replacement plans on hold for the time being. This year, on average, they intend to replace their car in just over two years' time. But this does vary depending on the age of the car.

Almost three in ten owning a car over 10 years old intend to replace it within the next year, against one in five for all motorists. But worryingly for the Government nearly a third of older car drivers didn't know when they would change their car. The Government has set aside millions through the car scrappage scheme to boost the motor manufacturing industry, which has been hard hit by the recession. It wants to encourage hard-pressed consumers and help protect British jobs by stimulating demand for new cars.

The idea of a car scrappage scheme for cars over 10 years old was also seen as a compelling incentive to buy a low emission car by 73% of motorists – although only 11% said it would definitely make them buy one. More on motorists' attitudes to the environment are revealed in Chapter 3 of the report.

### 2.6 The alternatives

Half of motorists still strongly agree they would find it difficult to adjust to life without a car. But there has been a steadily growing consensus that they would use their cars less if public transport were better, up from 48% to 67% since 2007. However, on balance, motorists disagree with the statement that 'people in cars could use public transport instead' – some 40% disagreeing, against 33% agreeing. This unsurprisingly polarises depending on where the motorist lives, with almost half of people living in towns agreeing with the statement against 27% of those living in a rural location.

**67%**  
of motorists used the train or tube in 2009



The Government has launched a cycle scheme\* to encourage people to cycle more. Employees can borrow the cost of buying the bike from their employer and then pay it back out of their pre-tax income. This means the cyclist reduces the cost of the bike, as they do not have to pay tax or National Insurance on the amount of repayments (known as salary sacrifice). At the end of the loan period, typically one year, they have the option to own the bike.

Almost one in four motorists say they are using public transport more than last year. In 2009, 69% now use the bus – with one in ten using it at least once a week – up from just 50% claiming to travel in this way in 2007. More than two thirds (67%) used the train or tube, up from just over half (56%) last year.

Males aged 17-24 are more likely to use other forms of transport such as bicycles, tubes, trains and car sharing.

\* Source: [www.cyclescheme.co.uk](http://www.cyclescheme.co.uk)



# 3.0 Motorists and the economy

Throughout the report the effects of the recession can be seen to be influencing motorists' driving behaviour. They are driving less, using public transport more and as the next chapter reveals, putting in place a range of measures to reduce and keep their motoring costs as low as possible. Whether these cost saving actions become ingrained or are temporary measures while finances are tight remains to be seen. >>

**19%**  
have downsized in terms of the size of their vehicle – 13% for economic and personal reasons – saving £366

# 3.0 Motorists and the economy

## 3.1 Reducing motoring costs

There are a huge range of actions that can be taken to reduce motoring costs – some having a positive effect such as finding a better deal on insurance, others a potentially more negative effect such as waiting longer between servicing.

Over the last 12 months:

77% have shopped around for car insurance – 69% for economic or personal reasons – and saved an average £106.

46% have cut down on short distance journeys – 32% for economic or personal reasons and 11% for environmental reasons – saving an average £100.

53% walk more leaving the car at home – 36% for economic and personal reasons and 11% for environmental ones – saving £79.

19% have downsized in terms of the size of their vehicle – 13% for economic and personal reasons – saving £366.

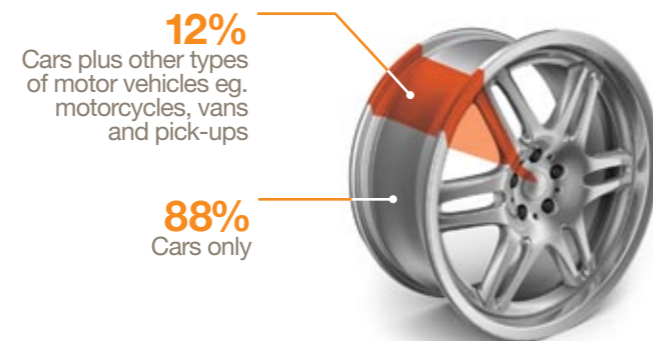
20% have downsized in terms of the engine size of their car – 14% for economic and personal reasons – saving £318.

11% are car sharing more, using car club services such as Zip Car and Street Car or more informal car shares often incentivised by added work benefits such as preferential parking. 7% said they did this for economic and personal reasons – saving £119.

The less positive side to motorists' economy drive is they are taking action that could put their lives at risk.

This year almost a quarter have serviced or repaired their own vehicle to save money – saving an average of £162. But with cars becoming increasingly complex it is not always possible to rectify faults without using information stored by the on-board computer, much of which can only be accessed at a repair garage.

### Other vehicles in household



The rise in DIY repairs contrasts sharply with last year's findings which showed only 12% serviced their own cars, or got a friend or relative to do it for them.

In tandem, nearly a third of motorists are waiting longer between services to save an average of £127. 12% have cancelled their breakdown cover to save around £57 a year and 15% have reduced the level of breakdown cover they buy, saving £45. But motorists who economise on servicing their vehicles are more likely to breakdown. If they have also economised on their breakdown cover they face a large bill for towing their car to a garage or for a roadside repair. Cutting back on servicing and breakdown cover then becomes a false economy and one the motorist will potentially live to regret.

## 3.2 Future savings

Over the next 18 months motorists intend to continue economising. Again finding a better insurance deal is favoured by 69% – although they anticipate a lower saving than last year – at £85 against £106 in 2009. Radically almost one in ten motorists say they intend to sell their car and use public transport, a bicycle, walk or use a motorbike

instead. They estimate this will save them £923 over the year.

Just over one in ten motorists intend to make more use of informal car sharing or car clubs next year although savings are expected to be less than this year at £103. An identical number (12%) intend to use car-pooling more to save £137. Car clubs are a recent phenomenon allowing members to pick up a car from a pre-agreed location, use it for an agreed period of time and then drop it back at the same or other designated location. These schemes are typically city based, which limits their appeal, but as their geographical reach expands so should their appeal.



**53%**  
walk more leaving the car at home

# 4.0 Motorists and the environment

Until the economic crisis, the environment was one of the key issues for motorists. The Government has been introducing higher taxes for the most polluting cars and the focus had been firmly on reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions wherever possible. But now green issues are being left by the wayside. >>

**86%**  
think investing in  
alternative fuels  
will have the  
biggest impact

# 4.0 Motorists and the environment

Saving money and environmental driving are not mutually exclusive. Driving less and economical driving both reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. But will the environment come back into the spotlight over the next few years as the economy recovers or will motorists find other issues to focus on?

## 4.1 Green issues

Although the Government is trying to guide motorists towards greener behaviour, the issue is not currently high on a motorist's agenda.

More than one in four do not believe it is 'realistic to take account of environmental issues in today's motoring world' – with a further third firmly stuck on the fence.

Only 41% would consider CO<sub>2</sub> emissions when buying a car, down from almost half last year. More worryingly for environmentalists, 25% of motorists do not consider CO<sub>2</sub> emissions at all now, up from 16% last year.

72% would consider buying a more environmentally friendly car if the tax incentives were better – but compared to last year motorists are less certain this would be a deciding factor in their actual purchase.

## 4.2 Green driving

The vast majority (84%) of drivers are confident they understand to some degree how to drive in an environmentally friendly manner. The most confident age group is the 17-24 year olds, showing teaching environmentally friendly driving as part of the driving test is paying dividends.

## What needs to be done over the next 20 years to make motoring more environmentally friendly?

**86%**

think investing in alternative fuels will have the biggest impact

**81%**

want better training on environmentally friendly driving as part of the driving test

**76%**

suggest fitting speed limiters on cars

Clear direction from government is needed on greener motoring. See page 56 for full RAC call to action.

## 4.3 Buying green

Motorists are giving mixed signals on environmental issues. They are aware they ought to be looking to buy the most environmentally friendly car, but other factors have higher priority.

The number of motorists saying they 'may' consider a more environmentally friendly car, or a car with lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, when they make their next purchase has fallen from 82% to 76% since last year. More significantly only 8% say they will 'definitely' consider this – a fall from 21% in 2008.

The desire for a more fuel efficient car was expressed by 58% of motorists, while 46% would actively seek a car with lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Only one in four want an alternative fuel car and reduced engine or body size appeals to only one in five as a new purchase.

So what would influence a motorist's decision to buy a more environmentally friendly car?

85% would welcome financial incentives to buy a low CO<sub>2</sub> emission car.

75% want more information on a car's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

73% would make a more environmental purchasing decision if there were an increase in the road tax for high CO<sub>2</sub> emission levels. These increases came into force on May 1 this year so they could kick start motorists into translating words into actions.

65% of motorists would be more likely to switch to an environmentally friendly car if there was an increase in petrol and diesel costs at the pump.

## 4.4 Making motoring greener

While motorists are not currently motivated by green issues, they do have strong views on what needs to be done over the next 20 years to make motoring more environmentally friendly. However the most popular suggestions are ones enacted by industry and Government rather than the motorist themselves, or that impact their wallets least.

86% think investing in alternative fuels will have the biggest impact.

81% want better training on environmentally friendly driving as part of the driving test.

76% suggest fitting speed limiters on cars.

# 5.0 Motoring and the new generation

Younger drivers typically have different views on motoring to the older generation, partly borne out by their driving experience and education, but also by their differing outlook and attitude to society. >>

## 2 in 5

motorists admit to being distracted by in-car gadgets and instruments while driving





# 5.0 Motoring and the new generation

Greater education is needed on the effects of drug-driving (including the effects of prescription drugs).  
**See page 56 for full RAC call to action.**

The introduction of environmentally friendly driving as part of the driving test means this group of motorists are the most aware of green issues and most likely to drive in a green manner. But their youth brings with it other issues, which are less relevant to older drivers. Drink driving continues to be an issue with certain driving segments – see section 6.8 of the report – but what is happening with the new generation of motorists?

## 5.1 Gadgets

The clearest difference between older and younger drivers is the amount they are distracted while driving and their acceptance of certain modes of behaviour.

Almost two in five of motorists admits to being distracted by in-car gadgets and instruments while driving. But this increases to over half (55%) of those aged 17-24.

The biggest in-car distraction for 57% of all motorists is their radio/CD/DVD controls – shooting to 72% for young drivers. Distractions are explored further in section 6.7.

## 5.2 Drugs

The younger generations' attitude to drugs also differs from that of their older counterparts.

Worryingly 12% of 17-24 year olds believed a motorist might be fit to drive after taking a class B drug such as cannabis or amphetamines against just 5% of 35-44 year olds and under 10% of all other age groups.

9% of the youngest drivers were also more likely to believe a motorist could drive after taking a class A drug such as ecstasy, cocaine or heroin, more than any other age group.

Almost two thirds of 17-24 year olds (63%) said a motorist might be fit to drive after taking a legal drug such as one on prescription or a cold remedy which did not state 'non drowsy'.

Only in the case of class C drugs, such as tranquilisers and GHB, did 17-24 year olds concur with other age groups. In the case of such drugs, 8% of both the youngest and 45-64 year olds agreed a motorist could be fit to drive after taking them.

One in four 17-24 year olds have been in a car when they believed the driver was under the influence of drugs.

But young motorists, those aged 17-24 were not the worst offenders for actually driving while under the influence of drugs. Some 9% of this age group admitted to such activity against 13% of 25-34 year olds.

Of those motorists who admitted drug-driving, almost one in ten of the 17-24 year olds and more than one in five of the 25-34 year olds had driven under the influence of a class B drug. However, of the 8% of 35-44 year olds who admitted drug-driving, a third had taken a class B drug and just under a fifth had taken a class A drug\*.

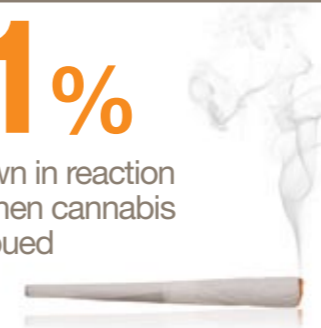
**35%**

slowdown in reaction times when writing a text message



**21%**

slowdown in reaction times when cannabis was imbued



The RAC Foundation commissioned research amongst social networking site Facebook users and found 48% of motorists aged 18-24 text while driving. Further research conducted by TRL (Transport Research Laboratory) studied the level of impairment caused by texting while driving on 17-24 year olds.

The research revealed that reaction times slowed significantly while the driver was texting. Compared to normal reaction times there was a 35% slowdown when writing a text message compared to a 21% slowdown when cannabis was imbued.

\* For the latest Government information on drug-driving visit [www.dft.gov.uk](http://www.dft.gov.uk)

# 6.0 Motorists, safety and society



Motorists are dissatisfied with having what they perceive as their civil liberties curtailed. They believe the Government already has enough safety measures in place and some, such as speed cameras, are imposed as revenue raisers rather than to reduce accidents. While there is some agreement over speed limits, motorway limits need a rethink.

But what else are drivers thinking? >>

**45%**

think there should be more severe punishment for those caught speeding

# 6.0 Motorists, safety and society

## 6.1 Making money

The general disillusionment motorists feel comes through clearly in their views of revenue generation.

More than 75% think speed cameras are more about raising cash than improving road safety, with a noticeable decrease in the number of motorists sitting on the fence on the issue since last year.

Four in five also believe most driving offences generate money for the Treasury rather than improve road safety, a view that has been increasing steadily over the last few years.

## 6.2 The law

The vast majority (91%) of motorists believe themselves to be law-abiding. But a quarter admit that if they thought there was a greater chance of being caught they would break the law less often. Whilst just over half disagreed with the statement that the benefits of breaking minor driving laws outweighed the risk of getting caught – one in five motorists agreed and three in ten sat on the fence.

## 6.3 Safety

Over the years motorists have said driving is getting less safe and this trend continues. Almost three quarters now say motoring

is less safe than it was 10 years ago, despite the number of fatalities on the roads dropping significantly over this period. Women and motorists aged over 65 are more likely to feel this than other groups.

So what can be done to improve motorists' perception of safety and security on the roads?

Two fifths would like the Government to focus more on prosecuting dangerous drivers than banning in-car activities. This view was most strongly held by 17-24 year olds reinforcing their views of the acceptability of certain in-car activities.

Three in ten motorists think the Government should do whatever it takes to improve road safety, even if it means restricting what they can do while driving and how fast they can go. This was least popular with younger drivers at just 22% and most popular with the over 65s at 34%.

One in five motorists think the Government should do whatever it takes to improve road safety but stop short of further bans on what can be done while driving. This was most popular with young drivers at 28% and least favoured by the oldest drivers at 18%.



## 6.4 On the road

The Government has introduced a wide range of traffic features aimed at improving safety over the years, some more successfully than others.

Almost three quarters think motorway and dual carriageway advanced warning signs have made the roads safer.

68% say speed awareness signs have improved safety though a significant minority at 26% think they have had no impact at all.

Information boards on motorways similarly polarise motorists, with 55% thinking they improve safety but 39% thinking they have no impact.

Average speed cameras are accepted by 46% of motorists as a way of improving safety against 38% who think they have had no impact.

Speed cameras also prove divisive. Almost one third think speed cameras have made driving safer, but the same percentage say they have made it less safe and 39% think they have had no impact either way.

## 6.5 Speeding

While motorists do not necessarily agree with speed cameras, they are strongly against speeding itself. Three in four agree that 'driving over the limit is potentially dangerous to myself, other road users and pedestrians'.

After that, the remedy begins to polarise motorists:

45% think there should be more severe punishment for those caught speeding. However 30% disagree and over 25% are undecided.

More than a third think speeding should be treated with the same severity as driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, but just under half disagree and almost one in five are on the fence.

RAC would like to see greater use of average speed cameras and the use of speed activated warning signs.

RAC wants local solutions to local issues. Speed limits should be set dependant upon the risk each road represents.

See page 56 for full RAC call to action.

# 6.0 Motorists, safety and society

The focus of safety campaigns should be widened to include all of the in-car distractions.  
**See page 56 for full RAC call to action.**

## 6.6 Attitudes to speed limits

Underlying many motorists attitude to speeding is the belief that speed limits are not necessarily high enough on some types of roads. The majority feel the speed limit should be linked to the risk of accident on the individual road rather than a blanket limit on all roads in that category.

On limits themselves, some seven in ten think the speed limit should be raised to at least 80 mph on motorways. Motorists do however agree with current limits on urban roads at 30 mph (supported by two thirds) and between 50-60 mph on country roads – with 60 mph supported by half and 50 mph by a third of motorists.

There is no apparent support for a blanket introduction to reduce the speed limit on selected residential roads to 20 mph – which received the approval of just 2%.

## 6.7 Distractions

It is not just what is outside a car that affects a motorist's safety; what is inside also plays a large part.

In-car sound systems and mobile phones are the two biggest distractions – with company car and young drivers the most likely to be distracted by in-car gadgets (section 5.1). SatNavs also prove distracting for two in five and heating and air-conditioning distract almost a third of motorists.

What is equally important however, to the safety of all motorists, is how acceptable certain distracting activities are seen as being. Overall the frequency and acceptability of performing certain activities is highest within the 17-24 year old age group.

Over one in ten (11%) admitted to texting while driving – although 96% said that such behaviour was unacceptable.

8% admitted to using a mobile phone without a hands-free kit of any sort, even though 94% said it was unacceptable.

5% admitted to doing their hair/make up/tie while driving, against 93% who thought the behaviour unacceptable.

7% listened to their iPod®/MP3 player using headphones, which was disapproved of by 71%.

More acceptable was eating and drinking while driving, carried out by over half of motorists, but thought unacceptable by over two in five.

26% used a mobile phone hands-free and 20% a speakerphone, but these were deemed unacceptable by 44% and 53% respectively.



### Eat & drink while driving

50% Occasionally  
 46% Not at all  
 4% Frequently

### Do make-up /hair/tie etc.

95% Not at all  
 4% Occasionally  
 1% Frequently



### Listen to iPod®/MP3 player using headphones

93% Not at all  
 6% Occasionally  
 1% Frequently

### Use mobile phone hands-free

73% Not at all  
 22% Occasionally  
 4% Frequently

### Send text messages

89% Not at all  
 10% Occasionally  
 1% Frequently

### Use mobile phone illegally

92% Not at all  
 9% Occasionally  
 0% Frequently

## GRE THX

The issue of texting was researched further by the RAC for this report. The extra research revealed the age group most likely to read a text or text while driving were 25-34 year olds. Almost half carried out these activities occasionally but 7% regularly sent and received text messages while at the wheel of a car.

# 6.0 Motorists, safety and society

A reduction in the drink-drive limit to 50mg. See page 56 for full RAC call to action.

## 6.8 Drink-driving

The reduction in the acceptability of drink-driving is one of the great success stories of recent years. In 2009 more than two thirds of motorists think it would be acceptable to lower the drink-driving limit\* to 50mg of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood, in line with other EU countries, in an attempt to further reduce accidents. This suggestion was found most acceptable by motorists aged 35-44 and least acceptable by those aged 17-24 years old.

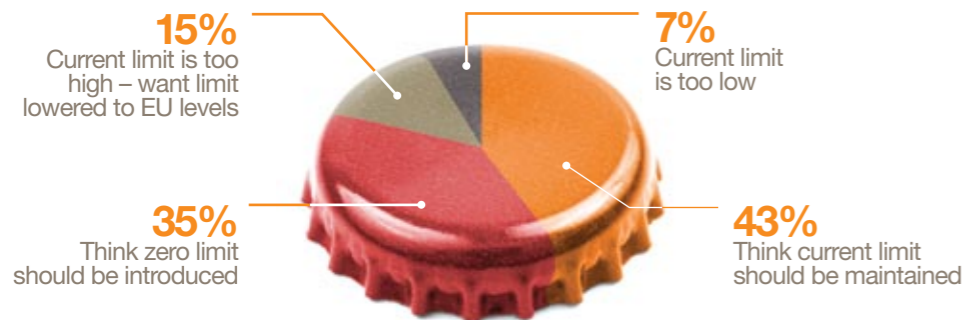
However the percentage of people finding such a reduction in the limit acceptable has fallen from three quarters last year. Whether this slip is part of motorists' wider disengagement from issues being seen throughout the report, or a more worrying trend, is unclear.

Just under two thirds of motorists would find a reduction in the limit to zero acceptable. Again motorists aged 35-44 were most amenable to this suggestion and 17-24 year olds the least. This has also slipped marginally from seven in ten last year.

The issue of drink-driving is to some extent a generational one. Almost a third of motorists (32%) aged 45-54 admit to driving while over the legal limit either shortly after drinking or the morning after, compared with just under a quarter (24%) of motorists aged 17-24. Around three in ten drivers over the age of 54 also admit to drink-driving against 27% of 25-44 year olds.

Moving forward, motorists favour a range of measures to further reduce the incidence of drink-driving.

### Attitude to drink-driving limits



91% favour better education about the dangers of drink-driving for learner drivers.

85% favour longer sentences for those convicted.

85% want more information on drink-drive limits and units of alcohol. Currently just over half believe the legal limit equates to one drink of beer or wine and just over a third think it equates to two drinks.

69% would like in-car anti-drink-driving technology (alcolocks).

64% would find the random breath testing of every driver stopped by the police acceptable.

50% would abolish 24-hour drinking laws

But only:

24% favour increasing the price of alcohol in shops and supermarkets.

18% favour increasing the price of alcohol in pubs, bars and restaurants.

## Reducing drink-driving

### Better education on the perils of drink-driving for learner drivers



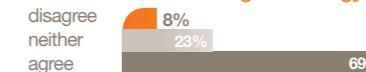
### Longer sentences for drink-driving offences



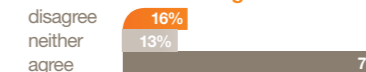
### More information on drink-drive limits & alcohol units



### In-car anti-drink-driving technology



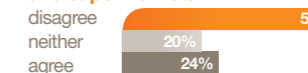
### Random breath testing



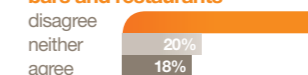
### Abolishing 24-hour drinking laws



### Increasing the price of alcohol in shops and supermarkets



### Increasing the price of alcohol in pubs, bars and restaurants



\* Current drink-driving laws can be found at [www.dft.gov.uk](http://www.dft.gov.uk)

# 7.0 Motorists, taxation and cost

The cost of motoring is of huge concern. According to the RAC Cost of Motoring Index 2008\*, the average overall cost of keeping a car on the road had risen to £6,133 – a staggering 19% increase from 2007. Part of this is cost of fuel, but depreciation had also increased by 35% over the previous year. Motorists believe they are seen as an easy target for raising revenue – and they do not appreciate this. >>

\* Figures are based on the running costs and depreciation value of a suite of 17 cars that are mathematically weighted to be representative of the numbers of those type of cars sold in Britain

## 83%

of motorists don't believe that the motoring taxes they pay are sufficiently reinvested into motoring

# 7.0 Motorists, taxation and cost

## 7.1 The cost of driving and the tax burden

Stripping out the effect of depreciation, motorists estimate their car costs them £1,835 a year to run in 2009. Of this £1,835, motorists believe some two thirds is paid in tax to the Government.

The majority of motorists are aware that a large proportion of the motoring taxes they pay is spent elsewhere and not on transport projects. However, according to a recent RAC report on tax, congestion and the road network, only 5% of motorists say they trust their motoring taxes will be appropriately used and 89% would like greater clarity on where these taxes are actually spent.

## 7.2 Tax spend

Motorists accept the fact they need to pay taxes to drive, but resent that more of this money is not being ploughed back into the transport system.

89% believe that more of their taxes should be put back into the transport system – both roads and public transport.

83% don't believe that the motoring taxes they pay are sufficiently reinvested into motoring.

80% believe the current level of taxation is too high compared with the service motorists receive.

79% say all money raised through motoring taxes should be invested back into transport.

## 7.3 Road tax changes

The introduction of the new levels of road tax is a good example of how messages are not getting through to motorists. Just under a third are aware of the new tax bandings, which more closely link road tax to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. However of those who were aware, only one in six actually understood them.



**79%**  
of motorists said all money raised through motoring taxes should be invested back into transport

# 8.0 Motorists and congestion

**46%**

The increase in  
traffic volume over  
the last 20 years

Closely linked to motorists' feelings that they shoulder an unfair burden of taxation, is their perception the roads are getting more congested. Although they are resigned to this, they want to be made aware of delays in advance and want to be able to circumnavigate them where possible. >>



# 8.0 Motorists and congestion

Many roads were designed and built when there were far fewer vehicles on the road – the number of vehicles has increased 46% over the last 20 years\* – and only a handful have been updated to cope with today’s traffic levels. Frustration is also directed at the state of local roads with 89% of motorists fed up with the conditions they have to drive under daily. So what do motorists think should be done to manage congestion?

## 8.1 What currently works

Motorists acknowledge the Government has introduced new technologies to try and combat congestion and manage traffic flows – but with mixed success.

63% think advanced warning signs on motorways are effective.

47% think redesigning road layouts is effective.

45% favour speed awareness signs.

44% favour active traffic management (ATM) and hard shoulder running.

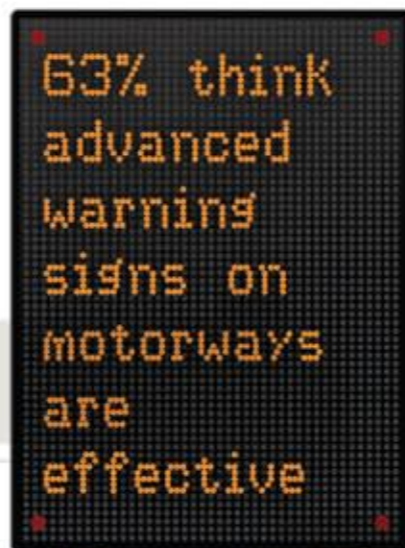
But less successfully:

38% feel speed cameras are not effective in reducing congestion, with a further third undecided.

Average speed cameras are rated slightly more favourably – with a third thinking they are effective. But a further third are undecided and a quarter think they do not ease congestion.

Toll roads are seen as a positive measure by a third, but a further third are undecided and 18% discount them as a traffic management tool.

\* Source: RAC Report on Motoring 2008, Report One



## 8.2 What the Government should do about congestion

The vast majority of motorists think the Government should use existing motoring related taxes to either improve public transport or build/widen more roads at the expense of spending elsewhere in the economy. But motorists are not in favour of indiscriminate road building.

Over three quarters would like more invested in targeted bypass schemes around traffic blackspots.

77% want more local traffic management schemes to remove bottlenecks at junctions.

Three quarters want more money invested in all public transport.

75% want more invested in targeted road building and road widening.

Less than half want restrictions or bans on vehicle use in town centres.

Active Traffic Management, (ATM) is a toolbox that can be used to manage traffic flows in peak traffic periods. The toolbox includes measures such as electronic signage above lanes to vary the speed limit and use of the hard shoulder as a running lane and ramp metering, all of which can be used on a mix and match basis depending on local requirements.

It is currently only in operation on a section of the M42 in the West Midlands, with elements also in use on sections of the M25 though it has been approved for wider roll out as a means of easing congestion. The Highways Agency’s 2009/10 business plan anticipates an expansion of ATM schemes onto the M1, M6, M4 and M5.

# 8.0 Motorists and congestion

## 8.3 What motorists will do to reduce congestion

Motorists are aware they must take some responsibility for easing congestion. But there is a great deal of antipathy about the measures they know they need to take.

64% are likely to use public transport more – but only 26% are very likely.

60% are likely to reduce the number of personal journeys they make – but only 20% are very likely.

51% that could, said they are likely to car share or car pool with colleagues more often – but only a quarter are very likely.



84% of motorists also say they would want to see immediate evidence of investment in public transport to make road pricing acceptable. But the experience in Manchester highlights how messages are not getting across to motorists. 79% of voters rejected a proposed congestion charging scheme in the city even though the Government pledged £3bn investment in public transport and, more crucially, that the charge would only be brought in once 80% of the public transport improvements were in place.

**51%**  
that could car share  
said they would  
more often



**84%**  
of motorists also say they would want to see immediate evidence of investment in public transport to make road pricing acceptable

## 9.0 Conclusion and commentary

**This year the main theme of the Report on Motoring is the reduced levels of engagement motorists' feel and an apparent reduction in their interest in motoring issues. This contrasts sharply with previous years where motorists were more willing to become involved with wider motoring issues.**

This disengagement is in part due to the global recession, job insecurity and more personal money worries. Motorists do not have the time or energy to worry about matters that will not help pay the bills or put food on the table.

However, the other factor contributing to this is that motorists do not perceive there is a coherent plan for the future of motoring. Motorists are confused by a plethora of national and local government policies, many of which appear to be conceived in isolation of one another.

**On the environment:** Should motorists be considering alternative fuels or should they simply buy the most fuel-efficient car that uses conventional fuel? Should motorists expect

to buy electric cars in a few years time and if so, will there be enough electricity generated from renewable resources to realise the benefits in reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions?

**On taxation:** Motorists accept the cost of motoring should be based on the amount a car is used and the level of CO<sub>2</sub> emitted by the car. But they also demand a fair return – in terms of investment in transport – for their taxes. They see new car tax scales, ever increasing fuel duty, the proposed showroom tax and the charges based on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions being introduced by some local authorities, and wonder if investment will increase proportionately. They also question whether they are being asked to pay a higher charge for the CO<sub>2</sub> they generate than other forms of transportation, such as air travel, which also generate large quantities of CO<sub>2</sub>? If so, is this fair?

**On public transport:** More than ever before motorists are willing to get out of their cars and use public transport. But only where it offers a credible and cost-effective alternative. They worry they may be priced off the road before improvements in public transport make it a viable alternative. This is especially true of motorists living in rural areas.

**On road pricing:** Motorists are worried about road pricing. Is it just another revenue generator for the Government or can it really help to reduce congestion going forward? They also want investment in public transport to provide alternative methods of travel before being asked to pay more. Motorists have yet to be convinced that road pricing is essential to fund road maintenance and ease the bottlenecks within the infrastructure.

**On road safety:** Motorists are unclear where the balance lies between the interests of society in accident reduction and the freedom of the individual. They worry the boundaries are getting blurred between safety improvement and revenue generation – which is leading to a distrust of the motives of many 'safety' initiatives.



# 9.0 Conclusion and commentary

Motorists have become disillusioned with the way those in the corridors of power have behaved and are sceptical about the motivation behind changes that affect them. The opportunity lies in migrating to a more coherent and transparent policy framework for motoring. Any political party achieving this will go a long way to winning back the good will of motorists. Such a framework would need to:

Motivate motorists to choose vehicles that minimise the damage to the environment.

Motivate motorists to drive their cars responsibly and only when there isn't a viable alternative.

Ensure motorists pay a fair price for the CO<sub>2</sub> they generate.

Motivate driving behaviour that minimises congestion by making best use of the existing road infrastructure.

Pay for the cost of maintaining the road infrastructure with those who use it most paying most. But one that balances the needs of maintaining the infrastructure with those of the wider economy in a clear and fair manner.

Campaign against the use of drugs while driving, in a bid to produce similar reductions in the number of accidents as the anti-drink-driving campaign has achieved.

Pay for infrastructure fixed costs such as DVLA on an equitable basis.

Continuously improve road safety while maintaining the goodwill of motorists by balancing any loss of individual freedom against the benefits to society.



**Motorists are realistic.** They realise the Government needs to protect revenue generation. They also realise society cannot move to a more equitable and transparent framework overnight and that this migration will take a number of years. Crucially it also needs to be seen to be fiscally neutral. The key to this is open and effective communications.

The Government has shown it can communicate effectively on matters such as tackling drink-driving and in doing so, has maintained the support of the motorist by demonstrating the benefits to society. It has also managed this by personalising the message. It is much easier for people to support, for example, a reduction in urban speed limits, if they are asked how fast they would want people driving past their house or child's school.

**The challenge for all policymakers now is to re-engage motorists. RAC believe messages on the environment, speeding, using mobile phones and drink and drug driving are too important to be allowed to fall by the wayside. As the political and economic world changes there is a window of opportunity to radically change the face of motoring, so when the recession ends everyone – motorists, government and manufacturers – go forward with a new sustainable agenda for motoring.**

# RAC call to action

## In-car distractions

The focus of safety campaigns should be widened to include all of the in-car distractions, such as adjusting the radio or heating and air-conditioning controls as well as just the dangers of using mobile phones. Motorists need better awareness of how to use in-car technology responsibly.

## Drink-driving

RAC recommends a reduction in the drink-drive limit to 50mg. This reduction should be accompanied by random breath testing and continued focus on the most serious offenders. Increased driver education is needed to reinforce what the limit means in practise. Education should also focus on the effects of 'morning after motoring' when it might have been some time since the driver last had a drink.

## Speed cameras

Greater use of average speed cameras and the use of speed activated warning signs. RAC believes these help to educate motorists to stay within the limit and promote safe driving behaviour rather than simply penalising. A nationwide audit of existing speed cameras also needs to be carried out to ensure that each one can demonstrate a proven effect in reducing accidents. Those which cannot should be removed.

## Speed limits

RAC wants local solutions to local issues. Speed limits being set dependant upon the risk each road represents rather than blanket 20mph or 50mph limits. RAC would like to see motorists involved in the issue using personalised campaigns such as "how fast would you want people driving outside your home?". RAC would welcome an accident black spot map, which would help local authorities in making local decisions.

## Environment

Clear direction from government on greener motoring. It needs to be a simple and affordable solution. In addition, messaging needs to hook motorists by showing them the money they can save and in the process reduce their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

## Drug-driving

Greater education is needed on the effects of drug-driving (including the effects of prescription drugs). It must be as high profile as that for drink-driving – with the same message that it is socially unacceptable to drive after taking drugs. Roadside testing equipment must also be introduced as soon as possible to aid the Police in enforcing the law. All messages need to target the general population, not just younger drivers, as the issue is relevant to all generations.



# Appendix

**Research Methodology**  
‘RAC Report on Motoring 2009’ is based on a large-scale internet survey carried out by Quadrangle on behalf of RAC.

In total, Quadrangle interviewed 1,109 British motorists (i.e. those who hold a current driving licence and drive at least once a month). The survey was conducted in April 2009, with the questionnaire taking around 20 minutes to complete.

The sample was nationally representative of age, gender, socio-economic groups, all GB regions and new car buyers. The number of company car drivers in the sample was boosted by an additional 65 to provide sufficient numbers for analysis of this group (resulting in a total of 105 company car drivers in the overall sample). The results were then post-weighted to represent national household car ownership.

**Quoted costs**

All costs quoted are motorists’ estimates unless stated otherwise

**Statistical reliability**

Any figure taken from a sample can never be taken as a precise indication of the actual figures for the total population being sampled. The figures shown are an estimate, within a small margin of error, of the actual figures. The error margin varies with the sample size – the larger the sample is, the lower the error will be. It also varies with the proportions answering so the error is lower for a 90/10 result than for a 50/50 result.

In order to illustrate the use of varying sample sizes and their affect on the statistical significance of results, the table below outlines the degree of statistical error broadly associated with different sample sizes. For example, from a sample of 1,000, if 50% answered in a particular way, we would be 95% confident that the true range is between 47% and 53%.

Sample size	Percentage error 90/10	result 50/50 result
2,000	+/-2	+/-3
1,000	+/-2	+/-3
800	+/-2	+/-3
600	+/-2	+/-4
400	+/-3	+/-5
200	+/-4	+/-7
100	+/-5	+/-10

# Company overview Contacts

**About RAC**

With around seven million members, RAC is one of the UK’s most progressive motoring organisations, providing services for both private and business motorists. Whether it’s roadside assistance, insurance, vehicle inspections and checks, legal services or up-to-the-minute traffic and travel information – RAC is able to meet motorists’ needs.

RAC is committed to providing the very highest levels of service to its members and has been ranked first for customer service by J.D. Power and Associates’ UK Roadside Assistance Study for the last three years.

Aviva bought RAC in May 2005. The acquisition brings together RAC’s powerful brand and customer base with the expertise and leading position in motor insurance of Aviva UK Insurance (formerly Norwich Union Insurance). Aviva is the UK’s largest insurer with a market share of around 15%.

RAC is part of Aviva, the world’s fifth largest insurance group which operates in 28 countries.

RAC’s news releases and a selection of images are available from the internet press centre at [www.racnews.co.uk](http://www.racnews.co.uk)

**Media enquiries**

Adrian Tink  
RAC Motoring Strategist  
Tel: 01603 681922  
Email: [adrian.tink@aviva.co.uk](mailto:adrian.tink@aviva.co.uk)

**Marketing enquiries**

Paul Napleton  
RAC Marketing Manager (Brand)  
Tel: 01603 683605  
Email: [napletp@rac.co.uk](mailto:napletp@rac.co.uk)

**Public Affairs enquiries**

Tracey Crouch  
Head of Public Affairs  
Tel: 02076623959  
Email: [tracey.crouch@aviva.com](mailto:tracey.crouch@aviva.com)

**Research enquiries**

Stuart Peters  
Insight Manager  
Tel: 01603 680236  
Email: [stuart.peters@aviva.co.uk](mailto:stuart.peters@aviva.co.uk)

**Credits**

Report author: Rosanna Spero  
Design: [www.milestonedesign.co.uk](http://www.milestonedesign.co.uk)  
Printing: Williams Lea

