

Report on Motoring 2026

RAC





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RAC Report on Motoring 2026

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Foreword

Dave Hobday, RAC Chief Executive

For millions of people, whether commuting to work, supporting family life or simply staying in touch with friends, access to a vehicle is not optional – it's essential. But as reliance on cars remains high, so too does the cost of keeping them on the road. Both these themes feature prominently in the Report on Motoring 2026, the 38th edition.

This year's findings paint a stark picture of the growing financial strain facing the nation's drivers. Almost a third (32%) now say the cost of servicing, maintenance and repairs is their single biggest concern when it comes to running a vehicle. That represents a sharp rise from 25% just a year ago, underlining how quickly this issue is escalating. It's also notable that 60% of drivers report the cost of maintaining and repairing their car has increased over the past 12 months.

These concerns are borne out by the rising cost of unexpected repairs, in part driven by the increasing complexity of modern cars. Over the last year, the average repair bill has climbed to £696, up from £650 in 2025 and £617 the year before. This equates to an annual increase of around 6.5% – more than double the rate of inflation – placing yet more pressure on household finances. In this context, it's perhaps no surprise that some drivers are delaying essential maintenance, even though doing so risks safety, as well as higher costs and greater inconvenience further down the line.

Alongside these financial pressures, there is once again a high level of concern about the condition of the UK's roads, cited by 35% of drivers. Poor road surfaces – from potholes to worn markings – not only make driving more challenging, they lead to expensive vehicle damage. Encouragingly, the Government has committed a record £1.6bn to road maintenance in England this year and introduced multi-year funding settlements, giving councils the certainty they need to plan upkeep effectively. Just as importantly, there has been a clear shift towards preventative maintenance, something the RAC has been calling for, to stop potholes forming in the first place rather than simply filling them as they appear.

In the face of these challenges, we remain focused on delivering practical solutions that make life easier, safer and more affordable for drivers. A key pillar of this is the continued expansion of RAC Mobile Mechanics, which is rapidly changing how drivers think about vehicle maintenance and repair. By bringing trusted, high-quality servicing directly to

customers' homes and workplaces, we're removing the need for time-consuming trips to the garage and offering a more convenient alternative. As demand continues to grow, RAC Mobile Mechanics are playing an increasingly vital role in helping drivers stay on top of essential maintenance, avoid breakdowns and manage costs more effectively. This is why we now have more than 400 trusted expert technicians visiting customers' homes and workplaces every day – the largest multi-skilled mobile mechanic workforce in the country. In a world of convenient 'come to you' services like Uber, Deliveroo and Amazon, taking the hassle out of looking after your car was the obvious next step.

Alongside this, digital innovation is central to how we support our members. The myRAC app has become an indispensable tool for today's drivers, putting all the driving services they need in one place. Whether it's a vehicle's digital service and MOT history, booking an RAC Mobile Mechanic at a convenient time and location, finding the cheapest fuel nearby or the quickest way to get help in a breakdown, the app gives drivers greater control, visibility and peace of mind in their day-to-day motoring lives.

On top of this, our unrivalled data and insight, gathered from helping millions of our members, allows us to understand what drivers need and deliver personalised experiences for them.

The combination of high fuel prices due to the conflict in the Middle East and the broader increases in the cost of motoring, such as rising repair bills, continues to place strain on drivers, reinforcing the importance of accessible, affordable and innovative services that help reduce the burden wherever possible. I'm proud to say the RAC plays a vital role in doing just that.

While the challenges facing drivers continue to evolve, so too does the RAC. By combining our long-standing expertise with new ways of delivering services – both physically and digitally – we are adapting to meet the changing needs of drivers across the UK.

Once again, I hope you find this year's RAC Report on Motoring illuminating, and that it serves as a clear reminder of both the challenges drivers face today and the opportunities to make motoring better for the future.







1

Drivers, vehicles and dependency

Drivers' dependency on their vehicles in 2026 has increased. Our findings show that the older drivers are and the more rural their location, the more reliant they are. Meanwhile, a significant percentage of drivers have little alternative to using their cars for commuting.

The shift towards electrified vehicles continues apace, although petrol engines remain the most common form of powertrain, and the age of the average vehicle has held steady following the post-pandemic increase.

Please note that data presented in this report is rounded to zero decimal places. For this reason, some figures when added may not sum to 100%.

Britain's drivers' reliance on their cars to meet their mobility requirements has only increased in the past 12 months. The 2026 RAC Report on Motoring indicates that 82% of drivers say they would find it very difficult to adjust their lifestyle to being without a vehicle. This is a further rise on the 80% recorded in 2025, and in line with the long-term trend seen in earlier editions of the Report.

These findings are particularly noteworthy in light of the Government's higher levels of investment in the UK's public transport network,¹ and its efforts to promote the use of such transport.

Drivers of all ages are increasingly dependent on their vehicles, but dependency is greatest among older drivers. In 2026, 89% of those aged 65 or older say they would struggle to adjust to life without a car. This is up from 86% in 2025, and is the highest level in the Report's history. The equivalent percentage in 2026 for the under-25s is 73% (up from 66% last year), while it is 77% among drivers in the 25-44 age group

89%

of those aged 65 or older say they would struggle to adjust to life without a car

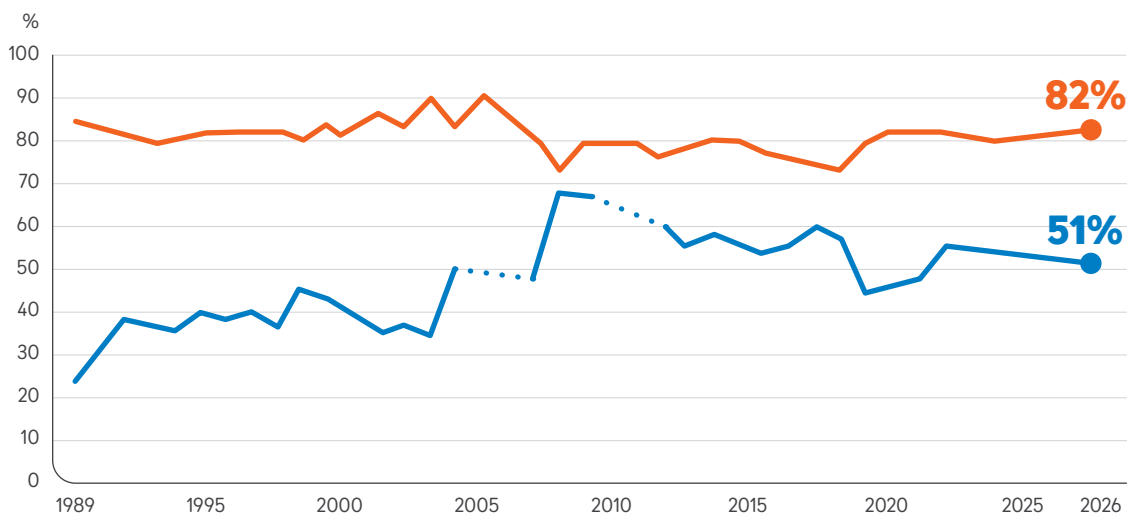
(up from 76%). For those aged between 45 and 64, the rate is 85% (up from 83%).

There are significant differences between urban and rural drivers when it comes to vehicle dependency. These largely reflect the far more limited availability of alternatives to the car, namely public transport services, in less densely populated areas. Looking at drivers who live in Britain's towns and cities, 74% say they would find life without a vehicle difficult. However, this figure increases to 91% among drivers based in villages and rural locations, the highest level ever recorded in the Report. The figure is 83% for those who live in the suburbs or on the edges of towns.

Drivers' dependency on their vehicles

- Would find it very difficult to adjust lifestyle to being without a car
- Would drive less if public transport was better

Dotted lines indicate interpolated data – question not asked in these years.



1. www.gov.uk/government/news/better-buses-more-services-3-billion-boost-for-millions-of-passengers



EXPERT VIEW

David Leibling, transport and motoring consultant, and founder of the Report on Motoring

"Drivers' dependence on their cars has remained at around 80% for many years – medium mileage drivers are most dependent possibly because they do more shorter trips. The propensity to use public transport however has steadily declined over the past 20 years."



1.1 Drivers' main vehicles: powertrain, type and age

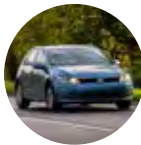
Findings in the 2026 Report confirm the long-term trend of drivers increasingly opting for electrified cars, whether they are conventional or plug-in hybrids, or pure battery-electric vehicles. This year, 19% of drivers say their main vehicle is electrified, up from 17% in 2025 and just 4% at the start of the decade.

Conventional hybrids are the main car for 8% of drivers, followed by 6% for pure electric vehicles and 5% for plug-in hybrids. Meanwhile, 57% of drivers say their main vehicle is fuelled by petrol, down from 59% last year, while 23% say their main car is a diesel (24% in 2025).

In terms of the body type of drivers' main vehicles, the most popular is the small hatchback (22%), followed closely by the mid-size hatchback (21%). There has been an increase in the popularity of sports utility vehicles (SUVs) in 2026, with 14% of drivers



29% SUVs

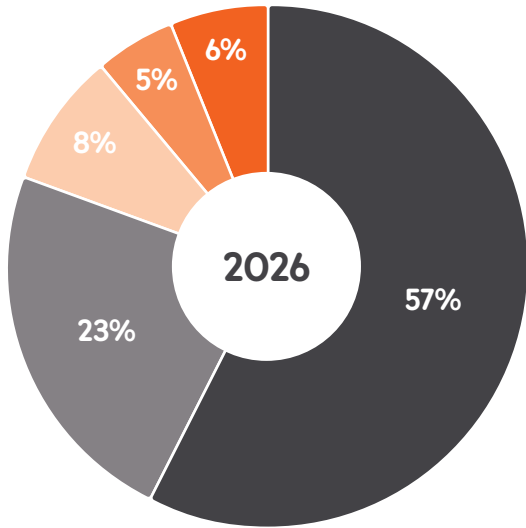
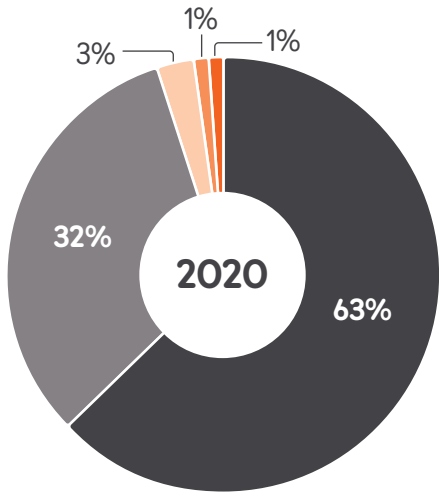


54% Hatchbacks

saying their main car is a large SUV, and the same percentage driving a smaller model of SUV. So in total, 29% of drivers' main cars are SUVs, up from 26% in 2025 and 24% the previous year. Large hatchbacks or saloons are the main car for 10% of drivers, which means that 54% drive some form of hatchback. Finally, 6% have estate vehicles and 5% compact cars.

How UK drivers' vehicles are powered

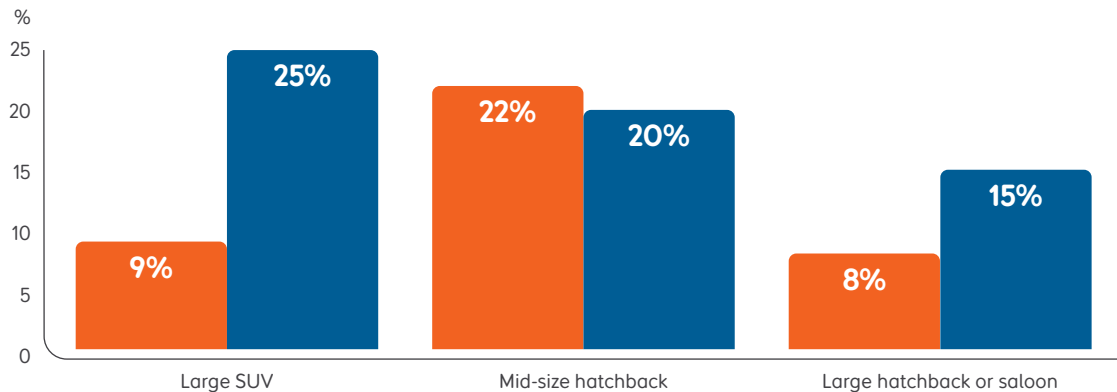
● Petrol ● Diesel ● Conventional hybrid
● Plug-in hybrid ● Battery-electric



Families favour large SUVs

Proportion of drivers whose main vehicle is one of these types

● Drivers living without children ● Drivers living with children up to 17



Drivers who have children under the age of 18 are most likely to have an SUV as their main vehicle. Among such families, 25% have a larger SUV as their main vehicle and 13% a smaller SUV. These figures rise to 30% and 11%, respectively, among families whose children are under 10, and whose requirements for space within their vehicle are therefore typically greater.

Looking at drivers who do not have children or whose children have left home, only 9% say their main car is a larger SUV. Among this group, the most popular body type is the small hatchback (28%), followed by the mid-size hatchback (22%) and smaller SUV (14%).

The average age of drivers' main vehicles has held relatively steady over the last 12 months. In 2026, 58% of main cars are five years old

or more, compared to 57% in 2025 but down from 63% in 2024 and 64% in 2023. Just over a quarter (26%) of main vehicles are more than 10 years old compared with 25% in 2025, 27% in 2024 and 30% in 2023.

There has been a very slight fall in the number of cars that are less than three years old: this year's figure of 30% is down on 2025's 31%, but represents a higher level than in the immediate aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic: the equivalent percentage in 2022 was 22%, and it was 23% in 2023.

Older drivers tend to own older cars. Of those aged 65 or older, 74% have a main vehicle that is at least five years old, while the percentage among those aged between 45 and 64 is 67%. This figure falls to 26% among the under 25s, down from 29% in 2025.



EXPERT VIEW

Steve Gooding, director, RAC Foundation

"For all the anxiety about monster SUVs dominating the streets it seems smaller SUV-styled vehicles are at least as popular, with hatchbacks still being the most common choice."

1.2 Car usage and commuting

Among drivers who use their vehicles to get to work at least some of the time, 40% say they usually commute by car five days a week, down from 43% in 2025 and well below the pre-pandemic level of 49%. A quarter of drivers (24%) say they have no feasible alternative to using their car to get to work.

This figure rises to 44% among those who live in villages or rural locations – a clear reflection of a lack of public transport provision – and 31% for those in suburbs or at the edges of towns. The corresponding percentage is just 7% among town and city dwellers.

In rural areas, only 17% say commuting by bus is a feasible alternative to the car, compared to 66% in urban areas and 34% in the suburbs. Meanwhile, the train is an option for just 11% (52% in urban areas and 24% in the suburbs).

In 2026, 41% of workers say they use their car every time they commute, and 38% say they drive to or from work 'most times'.

24%

of drivers say they have no feasible alternative to using their car to get to work. This figure rises to 44% among those who live in villages or rural locations

Looking at when cars are used most often, almost all drivers (96%) typically drive on working weekdays, while this percentage falls to 69% on Saturdays, 62% on Sundays and just 39% on bank holidays. Drivers aged under 25 are significantly less likely to use their vehicles on non-working days: among this group the percentage on Saturdays is just 56%, falling to 45% on Sundays and 26% on bank holidays.



Most drivers (55%) travel no farther than 30 miles on the typical weekday, although there has been an increase in the percentage of drivers making trips of 100 miles or more on the average weekday, from 6% in 2025 to 11% this year. At weekends, there has been an increase in trips of between 20 and 40 miles, from 21% in 2025 to 26%.

The percentage of drivers whose average weekend mileage is less than 10 miles has fallen from 21% to 18% in the last 12 months. Drivers based in towns and cities are more likely to make lengthy weekend trips: 15% of this group say their average distance driven on Saturdays and Sundays is over 100 miles, compared with 9% of rural drivers and 6% in the suburbs.

Finally, longer trips are more common on bank holidays. A quarter of drivers (25%) say the distance they drive on a typical bank holiday is more than 50 miles. This compares with 22% who say they usually exceed 50 miles on a normal weekday and 21% who do so at weekends.

15%

of drivers based in towns and cities are more likely to make lengthy weekend trips





A dark grey car is parked on a cobblestone driveway. In the foreground, there are two boxes of Brembo brake parts: a smaller box for 'BRAKE PADS' and a larger box for 'FRONT BRAKE DISCS'. The background shows a house with a tiled roof and a stone wall. A large white circular graphic is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the section header and text.

2

What's on drivers' minds?

The state of the UK's roads – and in particular local ones – is the top motoring-related concern for Britain's drivers in 2026, with years of underinvestment resulting in crumbling, substandard road surfaces around the country.

The reckless and dangerous behaviour of other drivers is another major issue, as is the cost of motoring – specifically, maintenance and repair bills, insurance premiums and fuel prices. Drivers also remain unhappy with the UK's parking system, especially the difficulties they face in paying for spaces, but there has been a fall in reported vehicle crime.

A long-term lack of adequate maintenance combined with very wet winter weather has led to further deterioration in the state of the UK's local and high-speed roads over the past 12 months. The RAC Report on Motoring has found that this issue is the top overall concern in 2026, with 35% of drivers saying that the condition and maintenance of roads – covering problems such as potholes, litter and faded road markings – is their number one motoring-related worry.

This figure is substantially higher than the 27% recorded in 2025. In Chapter 4, *The state of our roads*, we drill down into drivers' specific concerns relating to the state of all types of roads. We also underline the considerable risks that substandard road conditions pose to the safety of both drivers and their cars.

Meanwhile, the Report shows that the careless, reckless and often dangerous behaviour of other drivers is their second most significant worry this year: this is cited by 26% of drivers, down slightly from 27% in 2025. In Chapter 5, *The dangers on our roads*, we look at drivers' attitudes to speeding, handheld mobile phone use, drink-driving and other aspects of road safety.

The third most widespread concern in 2026 is the general cost of motoring, from fuel prices and insurance to servicing, repairs, parking and tax. Just under a quarter of drivers (24%) say this is their main concern, down from 30% in 2025.

While this decline partly reflects lower fuel prices between early 2025 and early 2026, the fieldwork for this year's Report was carried out prior to the start of the conflict in Iran and therefore does not reflect the sharp rise in petrol and diesel prices in spring 2026. Chapter 3, *The cost of driving*, examines in detail the most pressing financial challenges facing the UK's drivers – in particular, further increases in the cost of servicing and repairing vehicles.



2.1 Drivers' concerns in detail

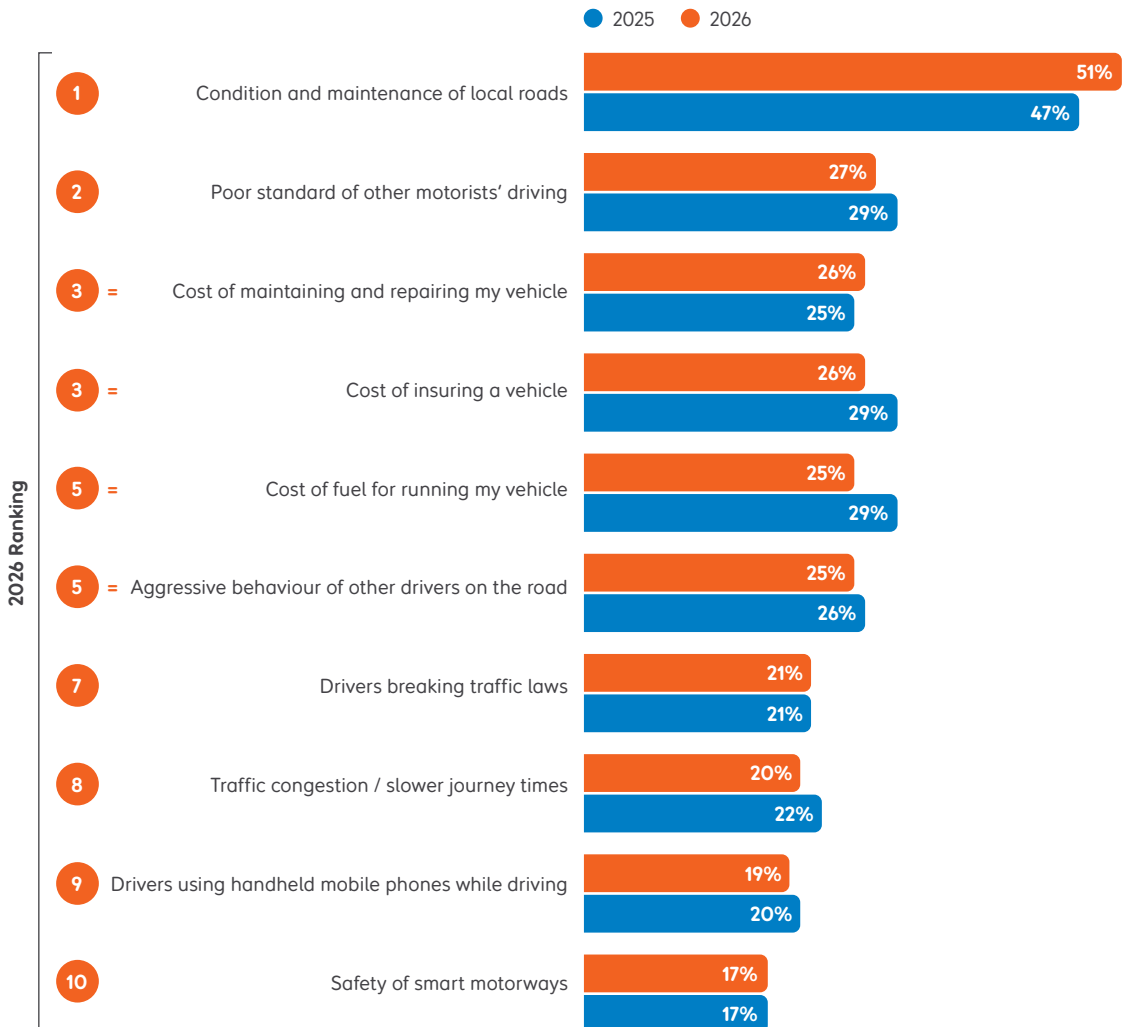
We asked drivers to list their top four individual motoring concerns to gain a broader insight into the challenges they face. In 2026, the condition and maintenance of local roads – those under local authority control – is the most widespread concern, as it has been for each of the past four years: 51% of drivers say this is a worry, up from 47% in 2025.

51%

of drivers say the condition of local roads is a concern, up from 47% in 2025

Drivers' top concerns for 2026 and how they've changed

Figures represent the proportion of drivers that said the issue was a top four concern to them



Concern about the state of local roads has been around the 50% level since 2023; in comparison, the rate was as low as 33% in both 2017 and 2019. This difference is a clear indication of the recent sharp deterioration in road conditions across the country. Meanwhile, concern about the state of the UK's motorways and high-speed roads has held steady at 16% for the past three years.

The poor standard of other motorists' driving is a top four concern for 27% this year. This is down slightly on 29% in 2025, but the figure has been largely stable in recent years. A number of specific aspects of other drivers' behaviour also rank highly: for example, 25% of drivers say the aggressive behaviour of other drivers is a top concern and 21% are worried about drivers breaking traffic laws.

Almost a fifth (19%) cite drivers using handheld mobile phones, while both drug-driving and driving without tax or insurance are a problem for 16%. Drink-driving by other people is a concern for 15% – this is up from 12% in 2025, but lower than the rates seen in the previous decade.

There has been a decline in concern about the behaviour of cyclists, from 16% in 2025 to 13% this year, while 12% are worried about people riding e-scooters on the road. Just 9% say vehicle theft and vandalism are a top concern.

Looking at motoring-related expenditure, there has been a small rise in the percentage of drivers who say the cost of maintaining and repairing their car is a top concern, from 25% in 2025 to 26% this year. Worries over these costs is now drivers' joint-third biggest specific concern, alongside the cost of motor insurance (26% for 2026, down from 29% 12 months ago). There has been no change in the percentage of drivers who say the cost and/or availability of parking are a top worry (15%).

Other issues include traffic congestion and slower journey times, which are a concern for 20% of drivers, and the safety of smart motorways where the hard shoulder is used as a running lane (17%). Finally, 8% are worried about the impact of vehicles on health and the environment.



2.2 Concerns by age, location and vehicle type

Behind the headline concerns described earlier, there are significant differences relating to drivers' age and where they live. While the condition and maintenance of local roads is a top concern for half of drivers of all ages (51%), this percentage rises to 59% of those aged between 45 and 64, and to 68% of those aged 65 or older.

Just 22% of the under 25s say local roads are a top four worry. This variation is perhaps due to the fact that older drivers tend to be based in more rural areas¹ where road surface quality tends to be worse (see Chapter 4, *The state of our roads*).

Older drivers are more likely to be worried about the poor standards of other motorists' driving: the rate among the 45-64 age group is 31% compared to the average of 27%, and it is 30% among those aged 65 and older. At the same time, the cost of vehicle maintenance and repair is a burden most keenly felt by drivers aged between 25 and 44: in this group, 32% say this is a top concern compared to just 16% of those aged 65 and older.



Concerns among younger drivers are dictated by financial considerations. The most common worry among the under-25s is the cost of fuel – this is a top four concern for 31% compared to 25% among all age groups. However, this percentage is exactly half the 62% recorded in 2022 following the spike in fuel prices caused by the start of the Russia-Ukraine war. The cost of insurance is a top concern for 28% of young drivers although, again, this percentage has fallen steadily in recent years as premiums have moderated. The aggressive behaviour of other drivers is the third most widespread issue for young drivers (25%).



EXPERT VIEW

David Leibling, transport and motoring consultant, and founder of the Report on Motoring

"Concern about smart motorways is surprisingly low and falling, even though a fifth of driven miles are on motorways. Are drivers becoming more familiar?"

1. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2024-0119/>

Drivers based outside of Britain's towns and cities are far more likely to complain about the condition of the local roads they use.

While 51% of all drivers say local roads are a top concern in 2026, the percentage rises to 58% for those based in the suburbs or on the edges of towns, and 69% for drivers who live in villages or rural locations.

The second most common concern for both groups is the poor standard of other motorists' driving (cited by 32% in the suburbs and 28%

in rural areas), followed by the aggressive behaviour of other drivers (25% in the suburbs and 28% in rural locations).

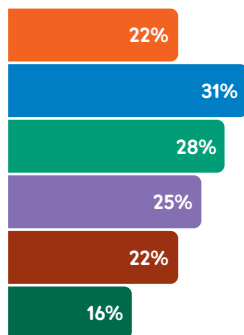
For drivers in cities and towns, the condition of local roads is a top concern for just 24%. Among this group, the cost of vehicle repair and maintenance is the most common issue (28%), followed by the cost of fuel and insurance premiums (both 27%).

By age group – UK drivers' top motoring concerns in 2026

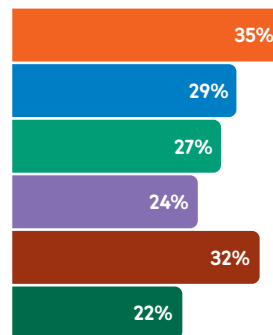
- Condition and maintenance of local roads
- Cost of fuel
- Cost of insuring a vehicle

- Aggressive behaviour of other drivers
- Cost of maintaining and repairing a vehicle
- Poor standard of other motorists' driving

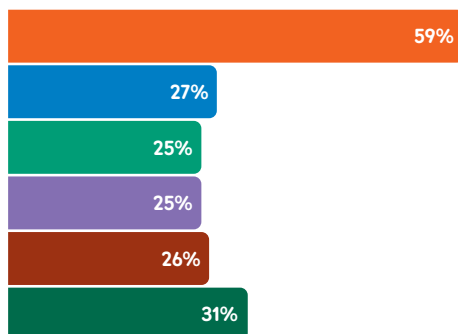
17 to 24-year-olds



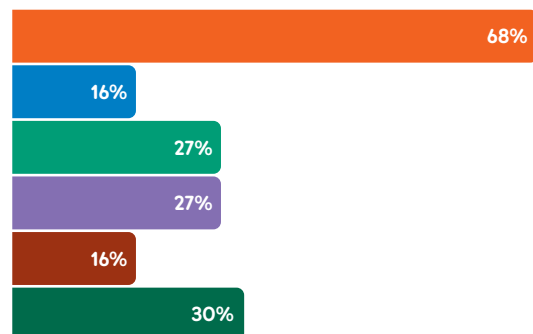
25 to 44-year-olds



45 to 64-year-olds



65-plus





2.3 Parking prices and payment

Drivers report a number of challenges related to parking, from the cost and payment processes to the size of parking spaces. The most widespread issue is the difficulty of paying for parking: almost half of drivers (47%) say they have experienced problems paying due to factors that include the removal of payment machines, the requirement to pay via a smartphone app and the lack of a requisite mobile signal. This figure rises to 66% of drivers aged 65 and older, and to 57% among drivers based in villages or rural areas.

The Government has attempted to simplify the parking payment system through the launch of the National Parking Platform: this has been



37%

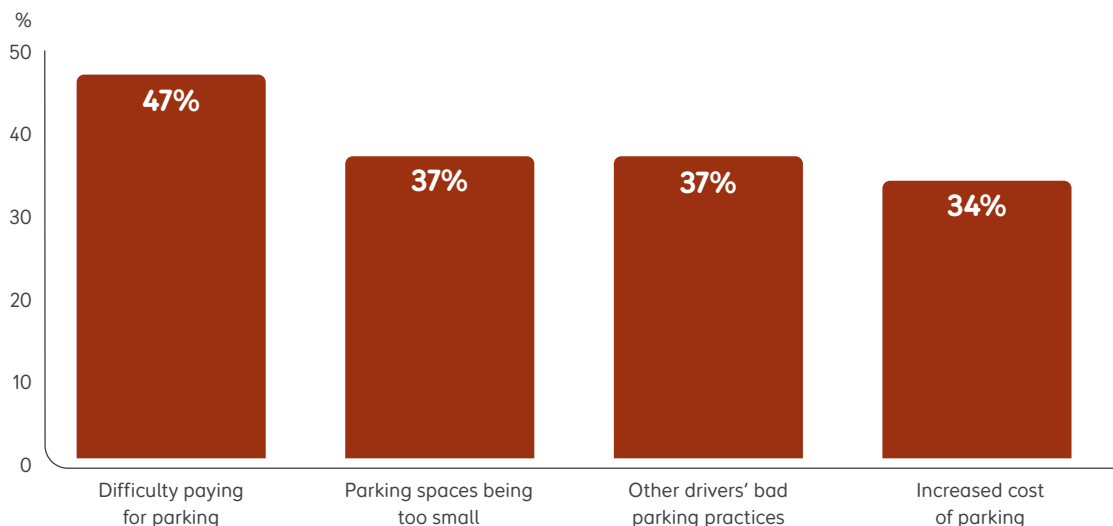
of drivers say
parking spaces are
typically too small for
modern vehicles

designed to enable drivers to use a single parking app to pay for parking at any location.

While reports published earlier this year² indicate that councils across England have so far been relatively slow to adopt the platform for use in the car parks they run, the Government is reportedly set to impose statutory guidance to boost take-up.

Over a third of drivers (37%) say parking spaces are typically too small for modern vehicles, a problem that is reported more by drivers aged 65 and over (50%) than among the under-25s (16%) – a reflection of the larger cars owned by older drivers.

Drivers' biggest parking-related concerns this year



2. www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cvgep3ryp9po



EXPERT VIEW

David Leibling, transport and motoring consultant, and founder of the Report on Motoring

"Parking is always a contentious issue for motorists, whether it's parking on the pavement, a lack of car park spaces or the ever-increasing prices. What's very clear though is that cars have got bigger in recent years, making it harder to negotiate some old car parks, let alone find a suitable space."

The same percentage (37%) complain about the poor parking behaviour of other drivers, for example blocking pavements, wrongly parking in disabled or family spaces, or parking over painted lines. Just over a third of drivers (34%) say the rising cost of parking is a concern.

The conduct of private parking operators when pursuing people for alleged infringements – an area the RAC has campaigned on – is a concern for 29% of drivers.

Recent research³ indicates that private companies in the UK issued almost 48,000 parking tickets every day in 2025, a rise of 19% on 2024.

A total of 76m tickets are estimated to have been issued over the past seven years. The RAC Foundation has suggested that, rather than reflecting widespread rule-breaking, these figures may demonstrate deep-rooted problems within Britain's parking enforcement system.



3. www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/government-steve-gooding-rac-foundation-press-association-britain-b1278912.html

2.4 Vehicle crime

A fifth (20%) of drivers say they have experienced some form of car-related crime in the past 12 months. However, this is a welcome fall on the 26% recorded in 2025. In urban areas, the percentage has fallen from 45% last year to 35%.

In villages and rural areas, only 14% of drivers have experienced vehicle crime in the past 12 months (15% in 2025), while the percentage among drivers in the suburbs or on the edges of towns is 15% (down from 20% in 2025).

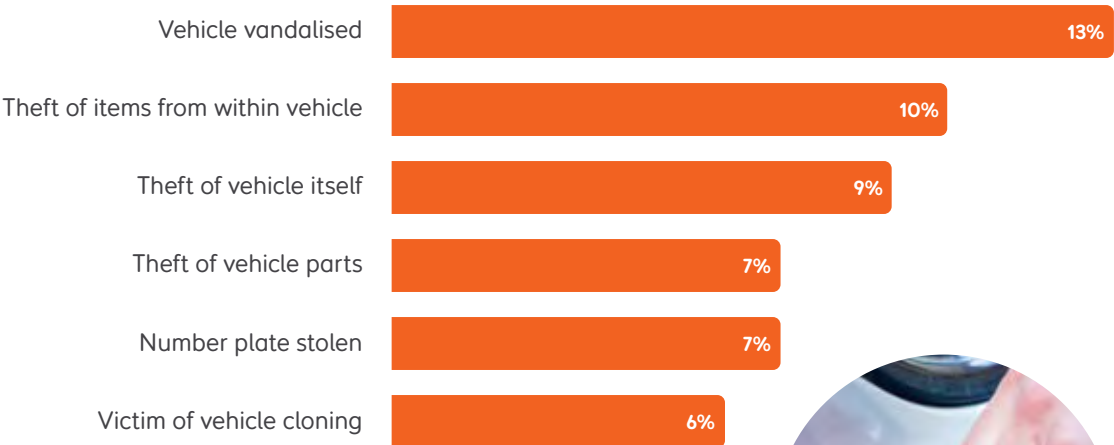
For drivers in the UK's city and town centres, vandalism such as deliberate scratches to the paintwork is the most common form of crime – this has been experienced by 13%, down from 19% a year ago.

20%

say they have experienced some form of car-related crime in the past 12 months

There has also been a fall in the percentage of drivers reporting the theft of items from their cars, from 13% in 2025 to 10%, while the percentage who say another driver has failed to leave a note of their contact details after causing minor damage to a parked car has remained at 9%.

Top vehicle crimes experienced by drivers living in urban areas









3

The cost of driving

Further rises in car maintenance and repair costs are placing an increasing burden on UK motorists, and many drivers are taking drastic and potentially dangerous steps to save money. These include delaying vital repairs and neglecting to have their vehicles serviced.

Insurance premiums and fuel prices have both eased over the last 12 months – but note that the fieldwork for the Report was carried out before the start of the war in Iran caused a spike in petrol and diesel prices. Drivers of electric vehicles have faced further rises in public charging costs.

3.1 Soaring maintenance and repair costs: how drivers are coping

The costs associated with owning and running a car continue to put significant pressure on the UK's drivers. However, the 2026 RAC Report on Motoring once again shows that, rather than fuel prices and insurance premiums, the cost of simply keeping a vehicle on the road now presents the single largest burden – one that is rapidly growing.

This year, almost a third of drivers (32%) say that the cost of servicing, maintenance and repairs, including replacing tyres, is their biggest concern when it comes to running a vehicle – a sharp and eye-catching rise on the 25% recorded in 2025.

32%

of drivers say that the cost of servicing, maintenance and repairs is their biggest concern when it comes to running a vehicle

By contrast, just 21% say their main concern is the cost of fuel or the electricity needed to charge an electric vehicle (down from 23% last year), while there has been a fall from 24% to 20% in the percentage of drivers whose top concern is the cost of motor insurance. Other, less widespread concerns include vehicle excise duty (9%), parking charges (8%) and congestion or clean air zone charges (4%).

Service and repair costs have continued to increase over the past 12 months as repairers face heightened financial pressures. Research published by the Motor Ombudsman at the start of 2026¹ underlines the problem, with increases in operating costs, taxes and bills, as well as a shortage of skilled labour, forcing repairers to raise their fees.





EXPERT VIEW

Jonathan Hewett, chief executive, Thatcham Research

"As vehicles become more complex, repair and maintenance costs are climbing — and total cost of ownership is becoming a bigger factor in buying decisions. That puts a spotlight on designing vehicles that are easier and more affordable to repair."

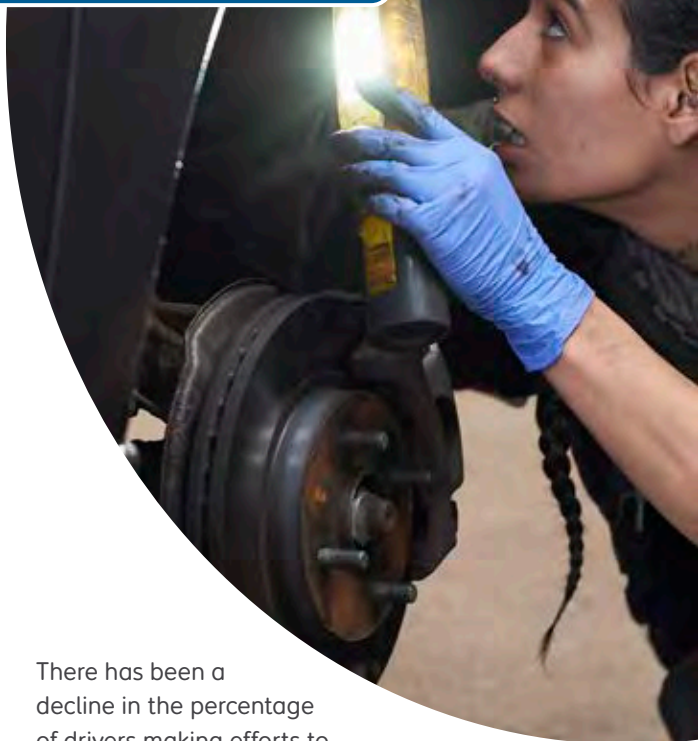
Correspondingly, 69% of vehicle repairers think fewer drivers will be able to afford routine maintenance this year, while roughly the same percentage (68%) expect motorists to delay vital work to their cars in order to save money.

A clear majority of drivers (60%) say the cost of maintaining and repairing their car has risen over the past 12 months. Meanwhile, 53% of drivers say their insurance premiums have increased, although this figure is also lower than a year ago, when the percentage was 72%. Meanwhile, 55% say their expenditure on fuel has increased over the same period (down from 69% in 2025).

It should be noted that the fieldwork for the 2026 Report was carried out just before the start of the war in Iran and therefore does not capture any of the increases in petrol and diesel prices seen since then.

60%

of drivers say the cost of maintaining and repairing their car has risen over the past 12 months



There has been a decline in the percentage of drivers making efforts to reduce the costs associated with running a car. This year, 18% say they have deliberately driven less to save money, down from 22% in 2025, while 12% have used a smartphone app or website to find cheaper fuel (15% in 2025) and 13% say they have deliberately avoided paying for parking compared with 14% last year.

Overall, there has been an increase in the percentage of drivers who say they have not made any specific effort to cut their motoring bills, from 38% in 2025 to 44% this year.

3.2 The cost of unexpected repairs

Over the past year, six-in-10 drivers (61%) say they have faced an unexpected repair bill for their main vehicle, although this is slightly lower than in 2025 (65%). But it has become more of a challenge to afford these repairs: among those who have had an unexpected repair bill, 40% say they have struggled to meet the cost, up from 39% in 2025 and 37% in 2024.

The most common reason drivers face unexpected repair costs relates to their car's tyres: the need for repairs to, or replacement of, one or more tyres is reported by 52% of drivers who had faced an unexpected repair bill, down from 54% in 2025 and 64% the previous year.

Brake repair or replacement is the second most common cause (24%, down from 26% in 2025), followed by suspension repairs (20% versus 18% in 2025). There has been a rise in the need for exterior light repairs, from 16% in 2025 to 19% this year, while 15% of drivers say their unexpected repair related to their car's 12v battery (17% in 2025).

Alarming, drivers have seen the cost of unexpected repairs continue to rise considerably faster than inflation.

Have drivers had to pay for unexpected repairs?

- Yes, and have been fine covering the costs
- Yes, but meeting the costs has been difficult
- No
- Not responsible for the costs



61%

of drivers say they have faced an unexpected repair bill for their main vehicle

30%
of urban
drivers

used a mobile mechanic to have the repair carried out either at their home or place of work

Where did drivers faced with unexpected repairs go?

- A local garage
- A mobile mechanic
- Did the repair themselves



The typical bill over the past 12 months is £696 compared to £650 last year and £617 the year before. These figures imply annual increases in average repair bills of around 6.5%, which is more than double the rate of consumer price inflation in the UK economy over the same period.²

Looking at the services used by drivers to complete unexpected repairs, the majority (79%) used a garage, but a significant minority (17%) used a mobile mechanic to have the repair carried out either at their home or place of work.

The growing appeal of mobile mechanics appears to be especially strong among urban drivers: in this group, almost a third (30%) used a mobile mechanic while 69% used a garage. Meanwhile, 3% of drivers say they carried out the repairs themselves, rising to 5% among those based in rural areas and villages.

Average cost of unexpected repairs increasing



² www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator

40%

of drivers say their main vehicle has spent time off the road in the past 12 months as a result of it breaking down or needing repairs

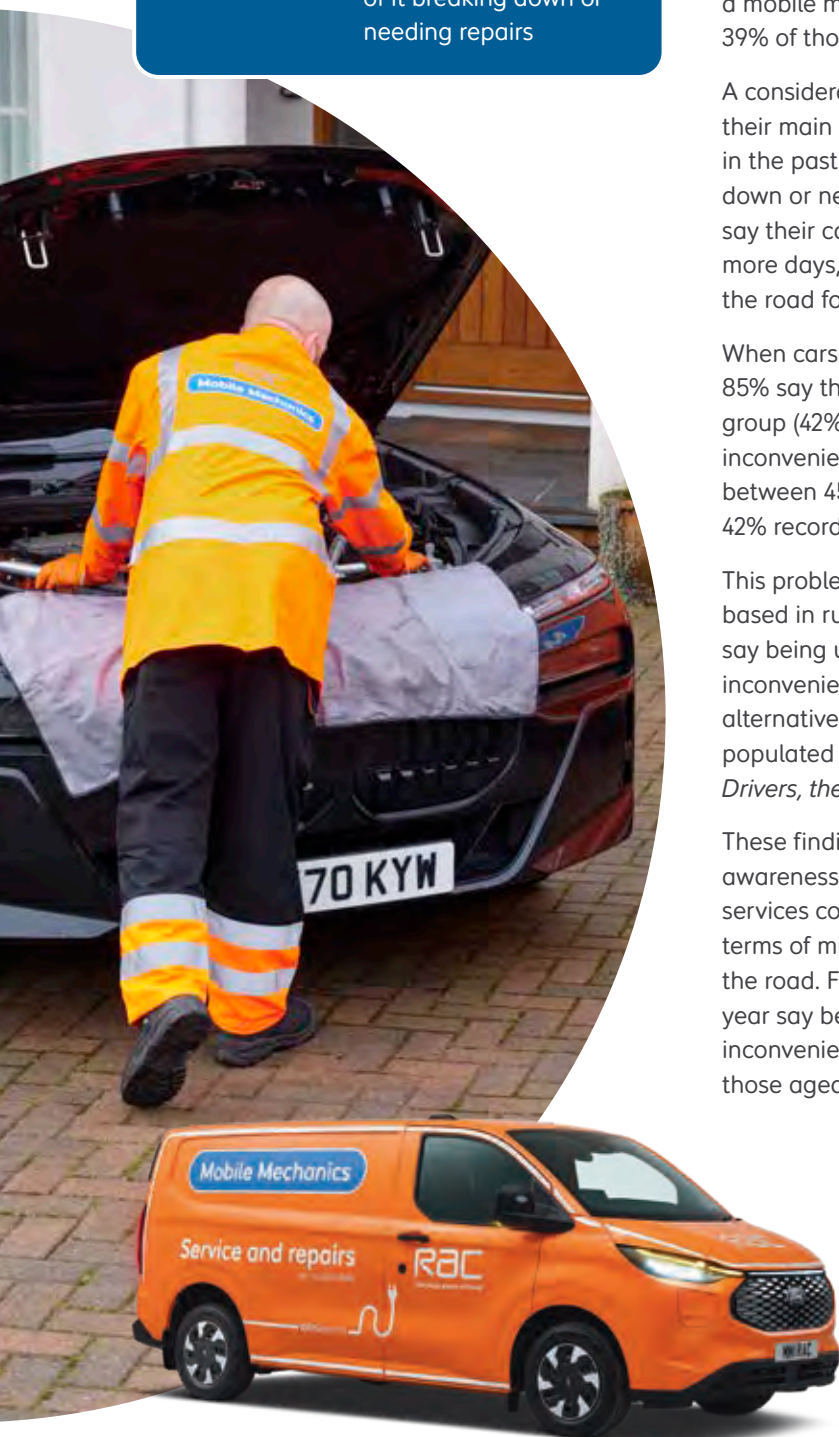
Part of the reason for drivers not choosing to use a mobile mechanic – which can often be a far more convenient option for all kinds of repairs – is that they are not aware this service exists. A third of drivers (32%) who did not use a mobile mechanic say this is the case, rising to 39% of those based in rural areas or villages.

A considerable proportion of drivers (40%) say their main vehicle has spent time off the road in the past 12 months as a result of it breaking down or needing repairs. Almost a third (29%) say their car has been off the road for two or more days, while 11% say their vehicle was off the road for no more than 24 hours.

When cars have had to spend time off the road, 85% say this has been inconvenient. Half of this group (42%) describe the experience as 'very inconvenient', rising to 46% of drivers aged between 45 and 64 – a sharp increase on the 42% recorded in 2025.

This problem is felt especially keenly by drivers based in rural areas and villages: here, 51% say being unable to use their car was 'very inconvenient', no doubt due to the lack of alternative modes of transport in less densely populated parts of the country (see Chapter 1: *Drivers, their vehicles and car dependency*).

These findings suggest that increasing awareness and take-up of mobile mechanic services could deliver significant benefits in terms of minimising the time vehicles spend off the road. Finally, while 15% of all drivers this year say being unable to use their car was not inconvenient, this figure rises to 33% among those aged 65 and older.





Mobile Mechanics

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Forget the garage. Choose the better way. Let RAC Mobile Mechanics come to you.

Find out more at:

rac.co.uk/mobile

3.3 Running the gauntlet

Rising repair costs and other financial pressures are forcing many drivers to take drastic and potentially dangerous steps to save money. Around one in every seven drivers (14%) say they have delayed necessary vehicle repairs and/or tyre replacements in the past year in order to save money (15% in 2025) – a practice that significantly increases the risk of exacerbating existing problems and even causing collisions.

There has been a decline in the percentage of drivers who say they are servicing their vehicles less frequently to save money, from 12% in 2025 to 9% this year. Meanwhile, 4% say they no longer service their vehicles at all, instead only putting it through its annual MOT, down from 5% last year, and 5% admit to having ignored advisory notices on their MOT on the grounds of cost. In addition, 3% of drivers say they have deliberately avoided having their MOT carried out due to the expense involved.

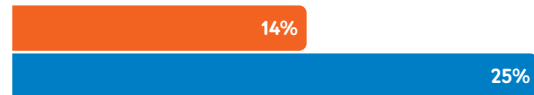
Younger drivers – who are known to be more cost-conscious – are the most likely to delay necessary repairs and/or tyre replacements on financial grounds: 25% of those under 25 and 21% of drivers in the 25-44 age group say they have done so, compared to just 5% of drivers aged 65 and older.

Meanwhile, 7% of the under-25s have avoided booking an MOT to save money, while 8% have ignored MOT advisory messages for the same reason. Drivers aged between 17 and 44 are more likely to say they are servicing their car less frequently in order to save money: the percentage among this group is 11% compared to 9% of all drivers, although this is down significantly from 19% in 2025.

What have drivers done to save money over the last 12 months?

● All drivers ● Drivers aged 17-24

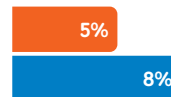
Put off repairs and/or replacing tyres



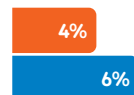
Servicing vehicle less frequently than in the past



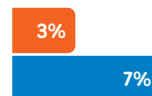
Ignored MOT advisory notices



Stopped servicing vehicle and just MOT it



Avoided having MOT done when it was due



3.4 Insurance premiums continue to fall

Average motor insurance premiums in the UK fell over the course of 2025, data from the Association of British Insurers (ABI) indicates.³ This decline has been reflected in a fall in the level of overall concern among drivers about the cost of insurance: this year, 20% say insurance costs are their main concern when it comes to running a vehicle, down from 24% in 2025.

The ABI's figures show that the price of a typical annual car insurance policy was £564 in 2025 compared to £622 the year before. However, the organisation notes that premiums remain elevated relative to historic trends due to the high costs associated with repairing modern cars.

Indeed, a report published by the ABI in April 2026 found that there was a 3% quarter-on-quarter increase in the cost of vehicle repairs paid by insurers in the first three months of 2026, while the value of the average accidental damage claim was up 8% over the same period.⁴

Fewer drivers have switched to a different insurance provider to save money in the past 12 months, the Report shows: the percentage is 21% compared to 24% in 2025. And only 7% have amended their level of insurance cover to make premiums cheaper (10% in 2025).



EXPERT VIEW

Jonathan Hewett, chief executive, Thatcham Research

"Insurance is still one of the biggest worries for drivers, even if concern has eased a little this year. The way to keep it moving in the right direction is a clearer understanding of the risk each individual vehicle presents — how safe it is, how well protected it is from theft, and how easy it is to repair — so premiums are better aligned to those underlying risks, rather than spreading costs across all drivers."

3. www.abi.org.uk/news/news-articles/2026/2/11.9-billion-paid-out-in-2025-to-support-motorists-across-2.5-million-claims/

4. www.abi.org.uk/news/news-articles/2026/4/motor-premiumsremainstablebutcost-of-repairsstill-high/

3.5 Fuel prices: calm before the storm

The decline in concern about expenditure on fuel reflects the fact that average petrol and diesel prices were lower at the start of 2026 than in early 2025. Data from RAC Fuel Watch⁵ shows that the typical cost of a litre of unleaded petrol declined to 131.9p in January 2026, the lowest level since July 2021 – several months before the Russian invasion of Ukraine sparked global rises in energy costs.

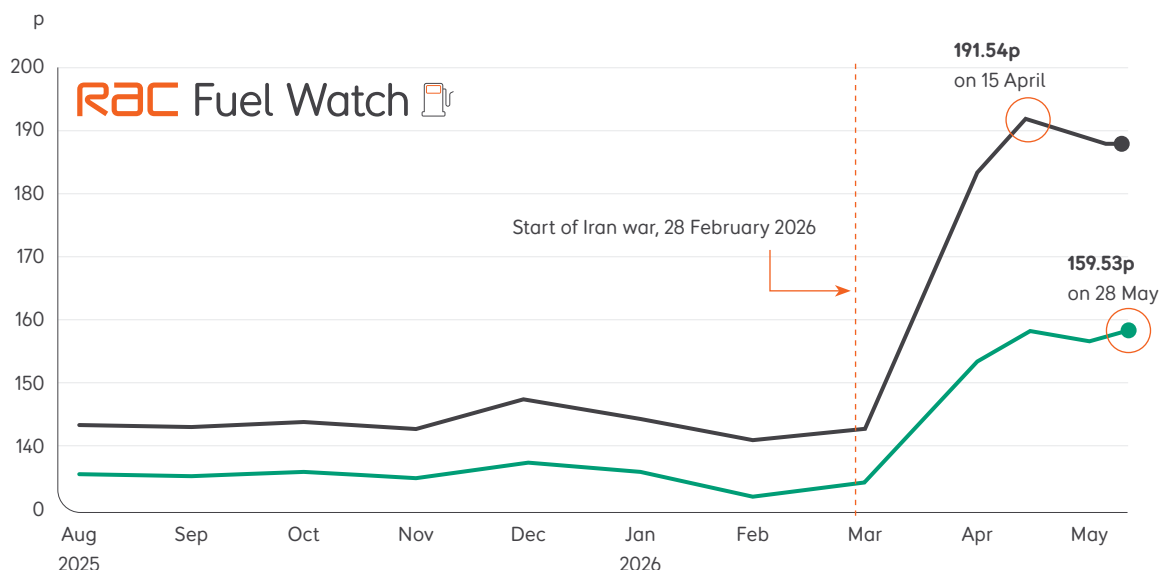
With the fieldwork for the 2026 Report on Motoring carried out before the start of the Iran war, it is unsurprising that drivers' concerns about fuel costs do not rank as highly as in recent years.

Since then, however, the picture has changed dramatically, and the sharp increases in petrol and diesel prices that accompanied the start of the US and Israel's conflict with Iran may inform responses in next year's Report.

In March alone, the average cost of a litre of diesel in the UK rose by a record 40p to more than 182p – almost twice as steep as the 22p rise recorded in March 2022 following the start of conflict in Ukraine.

Average pump prices since RAC Report on Motoring 2025

● Diesel pump (inc VAT) ● Unleaded pump (inc VAT)



5. <https://media.rac.co.uk/rac-data-reveals-petrol-falls-to-lowest-price-since-summer-2021>

6. www.rac.co.uk/drive/electric-cars/charging/electric-car-public-charging-costs-rac-charge-watch/

7. www.theguardian.com/environment/2026/apr/21/uk-appeal-tax-ruling-cutting-vat-public-electric-car-chargers

Unleaded prices increased by 20p in March 2026, which was also a new monthly high. Drivers are encouraged to use apps such as myRAC, which is free to download and use, to find the cheapest fuel near them.

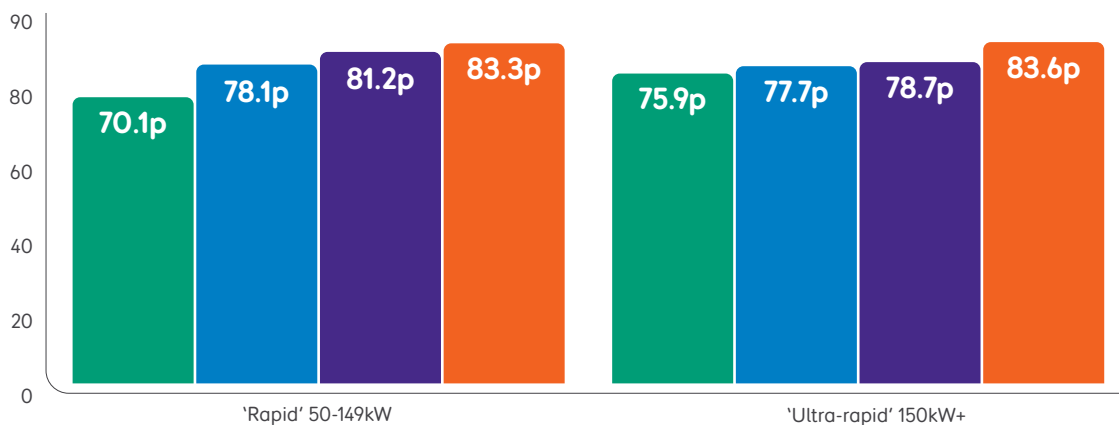
Meanwhile, data from RAC Charge Watch⁶ shows that the cost of charging an electric vehicle at a public rapid or ultra-rapid charger increased further over the course of 2025.

In May 2026, the average price per kilowatt hour for a rapid charger stood at 83.3p, almost 7% higher than two years ago, while the typical price for an ultra-rapid charger was 83.6p – an increase of 7.5% over the same period. Electric vehicle drivers may be set to benefit from a recent tax tribunal case⁷ which ruled that the rate of VAT on public chargers should be 5% – in line with domestic energy use – rather than the 20% standard rate. HM Revenue & Customs has, however, decided to appeal against the decision.

Cost to charge an electric car at rapid and ultra-rapid public chargers

● May 2023 ● May 2024 ● May 2025 ● May 2026

Pence per kilowatt hour



Source: RAC Charge Watch.





The background image shows a road scene with several orange and white traffic cones in the foreground. A blue circular sign with a white arrow pointing down and to the right is visible on the left. The road is paved, and there are green bushes and trees in the background.

4

The state of our roads

The state of local roads has become an even greater concern in 2026, with conditions deteriorating further despite more positive signs last year. A high percentage of drivers say their cars have been damaged by poor road surfaces, and many say they regularly need to take evasive action to avoid potholes. However, news of increased government funding to support councils' road maintenance programmes offers some encouragement.

Meanwhile, there have been further declines in the condition of motorways and high-speed roads. The state of all types of roads appears to be significantly worse in the UK's rural areas.

Drivers are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the condition of the UK's local roads, the 2026 RAC Report on Motoring has found. This year, more than half of drivers (51%) say that the substandard condition of local roads is one of their top four concerns, up from 47% in 2025.

This is a reflection both of a long-term lack of investment in road maintenance and repair by local authorities, and of the road surface issues exacerbated by a particularly wet winter. However, as we explain later, national government has increased its efforts to address the problem.

Over the past 12 months, additional funding worth billions of pounds has been made available to support local authorities' efforts to carry out repair works as well as implement programmes of preventative maintenance.

Looking at the condition of the country's motorways and high-speed dual carriageways, there has been no change in overall concern this year in comparison with 2024 and 2025. However, at 16%, the percentage is currently substantially higher than the average level of 11% recorded between 2016 and 2023.

51%

of drivers say that the substandard condition of local roads is one of their top four concerns, up from 47% in 2025



4.1 Local roads: disrepair and danger

There has been a sharp increase in the percentage of drivers who say the condition of the roads in their local area has deteriorated over the past 12 months. The figure has risen to 66% from 59% in 2025 and represents the sixth annual increase in the past seven years. Meanwhile, just 10% of drivers say the state of their local roads has improved. This is down from 12% in 2025 but higher than the rates recorded between 2020 and 2024.

Local road conditions appear to vary considerably depending on where drivers live. Drivers based in rural areas and villages are much more likely to say that the state of the local roads they regularly use has deteriorated: this year, the percentage is 83%, a significant increase on 2025's 71% and the highest level on record.

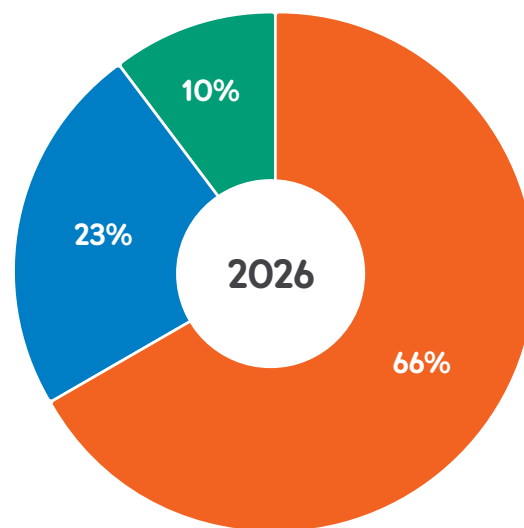
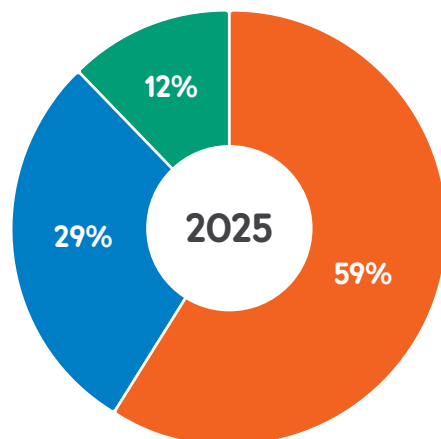
The rate among drivers based in suburbs or the edges of towns is also higher than the overall average (76% this year compared to 67% in 2025). Conversely, only 38% of urban drivers – those who live in Britain's cities and towns – say conditions have worsened. Among this group, 29% report an improvement in the state of their local roads. This is almost three times higher than the national average, and the same percentage as last year.

Potholes and other road-surface issues are by some distance the most common reason for drivers to say the condition of local roads has deteriorated (96%, in line with previous years). But there has been a significant increase in the percentage of drivers who complain of poor drainage and run-off in wet conditions, from 48% in 2025 to 61% this year.

Drivers' views on the condition of local roads

A larger proportion of drivers this year said these roads are in a worse condition than a year ago

- Worse than a year ago
- The same as a year ago
- Better than a year ago



34%

of drivers report damage to their cars as a result of driving on substandard road surfaces

This follows a winter during which a succession of low-pressure weather systems led to elevated rainfall levels in all parts of the country.¹

Other gripes from drivers include faded road markings (57% compared to 60% last year), poor signage visibility (37% versus 40%) and the amount of litter by the road (33% versus 35%). There has been a decline in the percentage of drivers who cite a lack of grass and/or foliage maintenance as a problem, from 28% last year to 22% in 2026, while there has been little change in the percentage of drivers that mention issues such as a lack of street lighting (17%), missing or defective road studs (cats' eyes, also 17%), a lack of or inaccurate signage (13%) and damaged safety barriers (8%).

The majority of drivers (83%) say they encounter potholes on most trips they make by car, and more than half (54%) come across potholes on every trip. It is very common for drivers to be forced to take some form of evasive action when they encounter a pothole. Among drivers who frequently encounter potholes, 58% say they have to make an effort to avoid them on every trip, while a further 37% have to do so on most trips.

Three-quarters of drivers in rural areas and villages (75%) encounter potholes on every car journey they make compared to just 23% of those in towns and cities. Among rural drivers who commonly encounter potholes, 70% say they are compelled to take evasive action on every trip, a percentage that falls to 40% among urban drivers.

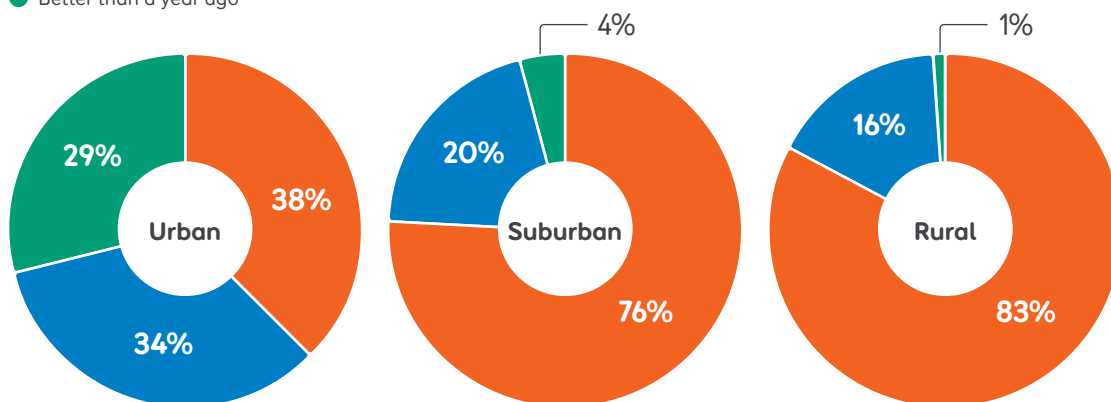
61%

of drivers this year have complained of poor drainage and run-off in wet conditions, up from 48% in 2025

Local road conditions reported by drivers – by location

Drivers in rural areas are far more likely to report local roads have worsened

- Worse than a year ago
- The same as a year ago
- Better than a year ago

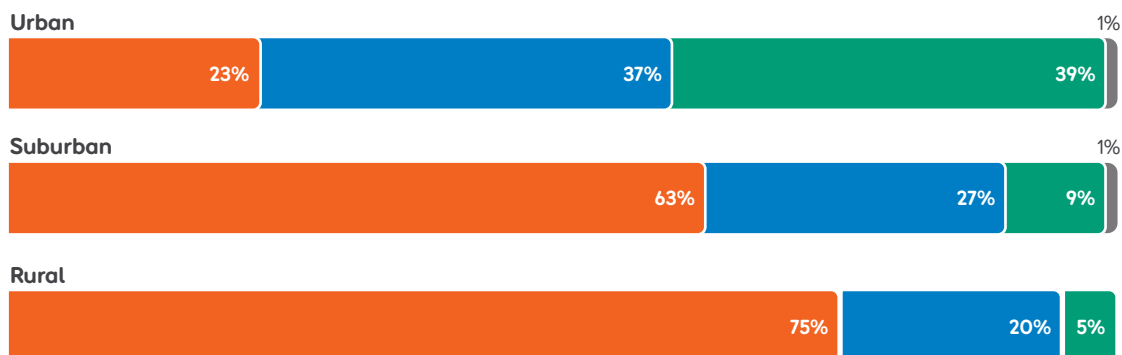


¹ www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/news-and-media/media-centre/weather-and-climate-news/2026/an-early-look-at-winter-2026-just-how-wet-has-it-been

How often do drivers encounter potholes?

Based on where they live

● Every trip ● Most trips ● Occasional trips ● Never



Alarming, an increasing percentage of drivers report damage to their cars as a result of driving on substandard road surfaces: this figure has risen to 34% from 29% in 2025 and 27% the previous year. Despite the reportedly better surface conditions in urban areas (see above), drivers in cities and towns are more likely to say their vehicle has been damaged by a pothole (44% this year compared to 35% in 2025 and 30% in 2024).

This may be because potholes are more difficult to spot on congested roads, or harder to avoid when there is a lot of traffic. Among all drivers, the most common type of pothole-related damage is a punctured tyre (53%, up from 47% last year), followed by a damaged wheel (39% versus 34%). Other issues include broken suspension springs (25%), broken shock absorbers (20%) and other suspension-related problems (14%).

Well over half of drivers (60%) say their main concern when driving on roads with potholes is damage to their own vehicle. However, 26% are worried about collisions that could result from their own or other road users' evasive action. Younger drivers are the least worried about the damage potholes could cause to their own vehicles (35% say this is their main concern).

But among the under-25 age group, almost a third (32%) are worried they could collide with another vehicle when attempting to avoid a pothole – more than double the percentage among all drivers (14%). This perhaps reflects the fact that the insurance cost implications of causing a collision are likely to be more severe for young drivers given their premiums are already significantly higher than other age groups.²

The biggest frustration drivers have with pothole repairs is the perceived poor quality of the work – being poorly repaired or not repaired permanently enough (40%). Meanwhile, 30% say they are unhappy with the amount of time taken for local authorities to deal with potholes, and 18% say they are frustrated when potholes reappear shortly after being repaired.

40%

of drivers say the biggest frustration they have with pothole repairs is the poor quality of the work

2. www.abi.org.uk/products-and-issues/choosing-the-right-insurance/motor-insurance/young-drivers/

4.2 Hopes for progress on local road maintenance

This year's findings once again underline the challenges facing local and national governments in addressing the backlog of repair and maintenance work on Britain's local roads. Figures published by the Asphalt Industry Alliance (AIA) in March 2026³ estimate that investment of more than £18bn is required to return road surfaces in England and Wales to what the AIA regards as a satisfactory state.

This is the highest figure recorded in the AIA's Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM) report since it was first published more than three decades ago. However, the AIA has expressed cautious optimism that recently announced rises in central Government funding for local repair and maintenance works could start to slow further declines.

Council highway budgets in England have been increased to a record £1.6bn for 2025-26⁴: ministers said this would help local authorities repair an estimated seven million potholes. Meanwhile, in November's Budget, Chancellor Rachel Reeves confirmed the allocation of £7.3bn for road improvement works⁵ between now and the end of the decade.

£7.3bn

confirmed for road improvement works between now and the end of the decade

This additional investment gives councils much-needed certainty of funding over an extended period, making it easier for them to plan long-term maintenance programmes – something the RAC has long called for.

Encouragingly, figures published by the Road Emulsion Association (REA) indicate that in 2025 there was a 15% increase in surface-dressing work, which is proven to prevent potholes forming.⁶ The REA found that around 44.4m square metres of surface dressing – enough to treat the equivalent of around 4,340 miles of road – was applied between April and September, the period when the bulk of preventative maintenance work is carried out each year.



**EXPERT VIEW**

Mike Hansford, chief executive, Road Surface Treatments Association

"The report highlights an increase in those that consider the condition of local roads and the motorway network has worsened since the previous year. Furthermore; those surveyed unanimously cited the 'road surface' as the reason for this, which suggests that some highway authorities are not doing enough to protect road surfaces and therefore prevent potholes."

Research suggests that preventative approaches such as surface dressing, which uses stone chippings spread on high-performance bituminous emulsions to protect and seal road surfaces, can be as much as 20 times more cost effective than reactively filling in potholes as they appear.

Meanwhile, the Department for Transport is now requiring local authorities to report how much councils are spending on road repairs and whether they are following best practice in maintaining highways, including having to state how much preventative maintenance they have completed and are planning to carry out. This information is being published online so drivers can check their local authority's road maintenance performance via red, amber and green ratings.

Finally, RAC data shows that there was a spike in pothole-related breakdowns in February 2026, when the bulk of the fieldwork for the 2026 Report was being carried out.

225

reports a day to the RAC from drivers who needed roadside assistance as a result of pothole damage in February 2026 alone



Over the course of the month, there were on average 225 reports a day to the RAC from drivers who needed roadside assistance as a result of pothole damage – more than three times the rate recorded in February 2025. Wet weather throughout the month left significant volumes of standing water on the UK's roads, with many potholes being effectively hidden in puddles. These figures demonstrate the importance of ensuring that drainage issues are addressed when councils carry out road maintenance programmes.

3. www.asphaltuk.org/alarm-survey-page/

4. www.gov.uk/government/news/seven-million-more-potholes-to-be-filled-next-year-as-public-urged-to-report-roads-in-need-of-repair

5. www.gov.uk/government/news/budget-brings-biggest-ever-boost-for-better-roads

6. <https://media.rac.co.uk/new-data-points-to-encouraging-uptick-in-pothole-prevention-work>

4.3 The state of motorways and major A-roads

The percentage of drivers who say the state of motorways and high-speed dual carriageways has deteriorated in the past 12 months has increased to a record high of 53%, sharply up from 42% in 2025. The percentage of drivers that say conditions have improved has fallen slightly from 12% to 11%, although this rate is still higher than the levels recorded between 2020 and 2024.

Drivers who live in the UK's cities and towns are much more likely to report an improvement in the condition of the motorways and high-speed roads they use (28% compared with just 2% in rural areas and villages), and much less likely to say there has been a deterioration in conditions (30% versus 70% in rural areas).

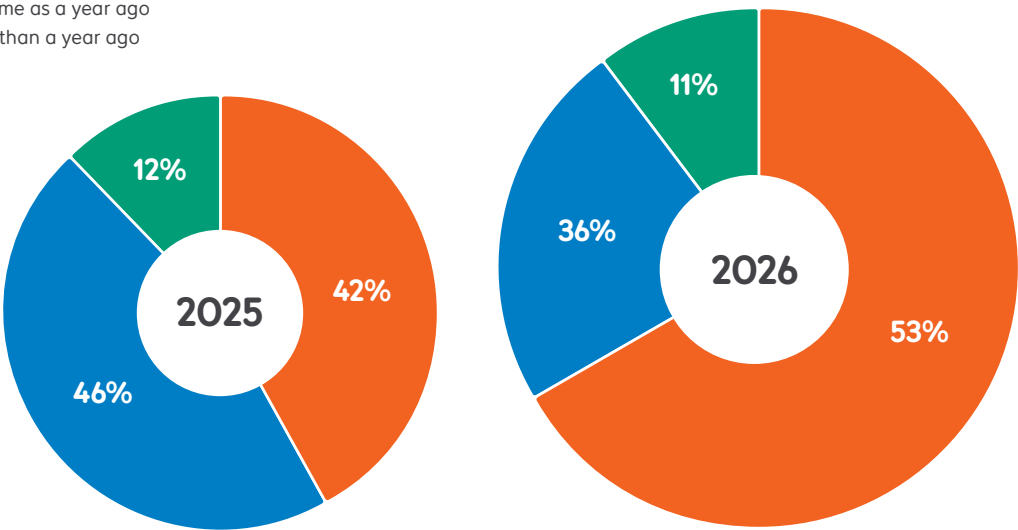
As with local roads, the main issue with high-speed road conditions relates to the surface (78%); there has also been an increase in complaints linked to poor drainage following a prolonged period of wet weather over the winter (from 34% in 2025 to 45% this year).

Other issues include faded lane markings (44%), roadside litter (34%), poor signage visibility (28%) and a lack of carriageway lighting (23%).

Drivers' views on the condition of motorways and major A-roads

A larger proportion of drivers this year said these roads are in a worse condition than a year ago

- Worse than a year ago
- The same as a year ago
- Better than a year ago





EXPERT VIEW

Steve Gooding, director, RAC Foundation

"Road condition is a big concern for drivers - it's a worry to see respondents observing a deterioration on motorways and major roads as well as on more minor, local roads, and having to avoid potholes on the majority of trips they make."







5

The dangers on our roads

Britain's drivers face a worrying number of risks related to road safety in 2026, from the poor standard of other motorists' driving and evasive action to avoid potholes, to excessively bright headlights and widespread road rage incidents.

Fewer drivers admit to speeding in 2026, but there has been a rise in many different illegal uses of handheld mobile phones, especially among younger drivers. These findings are all the more relevant given the recent publication of the Government's draft Road Safety Strategy – the first in more than a decade.

The dangers posed by other motorists is the second biggest overall concern for Britain's drivers. The 2026 RAC Report on Motoring has found that more than a quarter (26%) say their top concern is the poor or reckless behaviour of other drivers. The only issue that ranks higher this year is the condition and maintenance of the UK's roads.

5.1 Safety concerns

This year's report asked drivers for their views on the behaviour of other road users in relation to road safety. There has been a small decline over the past 12 months in the percentage of motorists who say they feel unsafe on the road due to other people's poor driving skills: in 2026, 23% of drivers say they are most concerned about issues such as other motorists' failure to indicate, being distracted or swerving across the road, down from 25% last year.

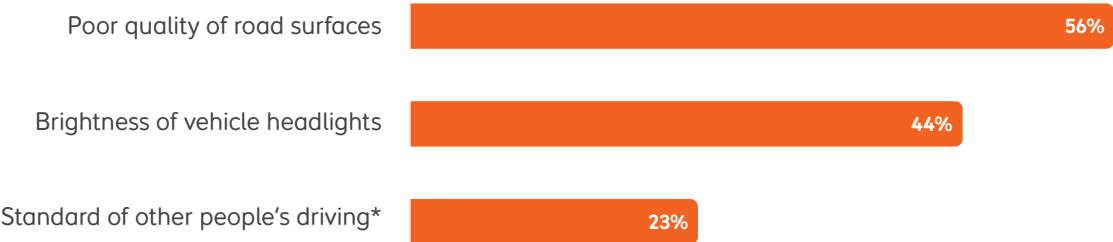
15%

worry about drivers under the influence of drink and/or drugs, up from 12% in 2025

For 15% of drivers, their main road safety concern is the aggressive behaviour of other drivers, including road rage, tailgating and aggressive overtaking. This is down from 18% in 2025. There has been an increase in worry about drivers under the influence of drink and/or drugs, however, from 12% in 2025 to 15% this year.

But there has been no change in the percentage that are most anxious about excessive speeding on 20mph or 30mph roads (8%), or on 60mph and 70mph roads (7%). Interestingly, drivers who have children under the age of 10 are significantly more concerned (12%) about speeding on 60mph and 70mph roads.

Drivers' top three overall road safety concerns this year



*e.g. failing to indicate, being distracted, swerving across the road



Drivers were also asked about their main safety concerns related to the roads they normally use. Confirming the findings on the evasive actions drivers are forced to take to avoid pothole damage that are set out in Chapter 4, The state of our roads, the poor quality of road surfaces is an even more widespread concern in terms of safety this year, up to 56% from 52% in 2025.

There has been an increase in the percentage of drivers who think speed limits are too high on certain rural roads, from 6% last year to 8% – a figure that rises to 13% among drivers who have younger children. There has been a decline in concern, from 10% to 7%, about motorways where the hard shoulder has been removed and turned into a running lane, while 6% think speed limits are set too high on certain urban roads (7% last year). Finally, 6% complain of faded road markings and missing road studs (also 7% in 2025).

Looking at the safety hazards posed by other vehicles, by far the most common complaint remains the brightness of other cars' headlights: 44% say this is their top vehicle-related safety concern. The number of unroadworthy cars on the road is an issue for 14%, while 12% are worried about the increasing size of other vehicles on the roads such as large SUVs. In-vehicle safety technology – including lane assistance and 'phantom' braking – is a concern for 7% while 5% are worried about distracting car infotainment systems. These percentages have remained largely unchanged since last year.



5.2 Drivers' observed behaviours

In terms of the poor or dangerous behaviour of other motorists on urban roads (those with 20mph or 30mph limits), almost two-thirds of drivers (63%) say they have seen other people failing to indicate when turning into or out of a side road on multiple occasions, while 57% have observed excessive speeding (see section 5.3). A similar percentage (56%) say they have witnessed motorists using handheld mobile phones while at the wheel (see section 5.6).

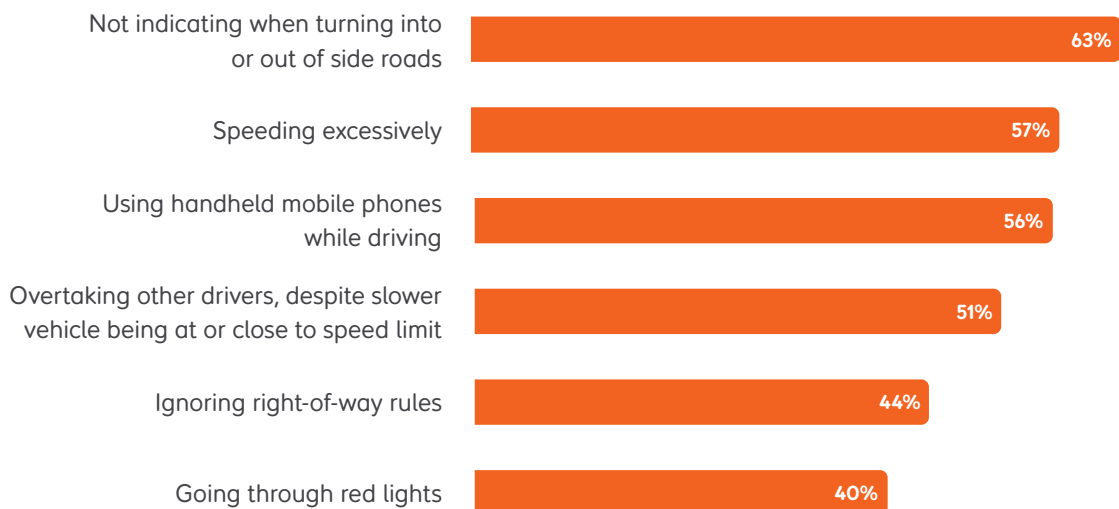
Other common issues include overtaking a vehicle that is driving at or near the speed limit (51%), ignoring right-of-way rules (44%) and running red lights (40%).

In addition, 15% have seen other drivers force pedestrians, wheelchair users or cyclists to take evasive action to avoid being hit by a vehicle, while the same percentage (15%) have observed others driving with children who are not wearing a seatbelt or other restraint.



Driver behaviour on 20 and 30mph roads

What drivers have spotted others doing on several occasions



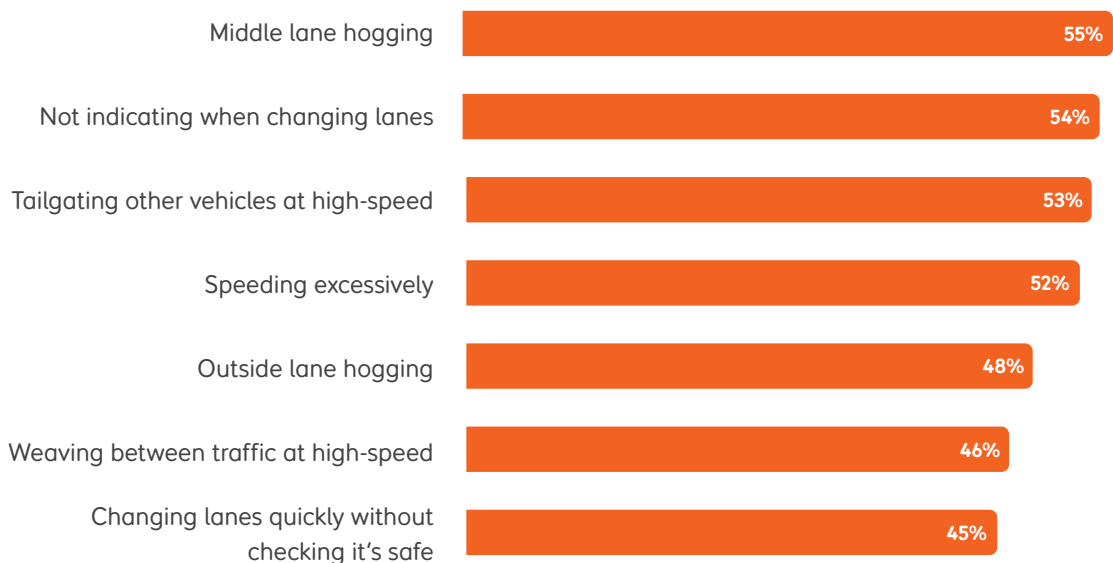
On 60mph and 70mph roads, 55% of drivers have seen other motorists staying in a central lane unnecessarily on several occasions, while 54% say they have repeatedly observed cars changing lane without indicating. Other issues on high-speed roads include tailgating (53%), excessive speeding (52%), staying in the outside lane when there is the opportunity to move into a left-hand lane (48%), weaving in and out of traffic (46%) and changing lanes in an unsafe manner (45%).

Meanwhile, 38% of drivers have frequently seen other motorists on high-speed road use a handheld mobile phone while at the wheel, and 23% have witnessed races between drivers on high-speed roads.



Driver behaviour on 60 and 70mph roads

What drivers have spotted others doing on several occasions



90%

of drivers believe that other motorists are becoming less patient behind the wheel

Finally, 18% have seen drivers intentionally brake hard in order to intimidate the motorist behind them, 17% have seen people driving without their hands on the wheel and 8% have seen others driving with unrestrained children in the car on these high-speed roads.

A worryingly large number of drivers (38%) say they have been the victim in the past 12 months of some kind of road rage incident, where another motorist has behaved aggressively towards them. This figure rises to 57% among drivers under the age of 25, while it is also higher than average among families who have children under the age of 10 (51%).

Incidents are more likely to occur in urban settings: 45% of drivers in the UK's cities and town centres say they have experienced road rage.

Finally, an overwhelming majority (90%) of drivers believe that other motorists are becoming less patient behind the wheel, while almost as many (87%) think other road users are less courteous today than in the past.

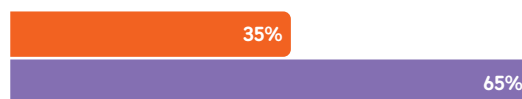
Drivers who have experienced 'road rage' over a 12-month period

- Experienced road rage
- Not experienced road rage

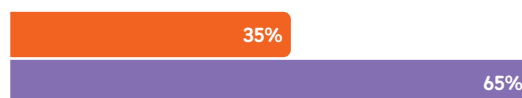
Urban



Suburban



Rural





EXPERT VIEW

Jo Shiner, chief constable, Sussex Police, and Roads Policing Portfolio lead, National Police Chiefs' Council

"The fact that 56% of drivers now believe there is a culture where speeding is acceptable reflects a deeply embedded issue in driver behaviour. Combined with high numbers witnessing aggressive actions such as weaving through traffic, racing on high-speed roads, and increasing levels of road rage, this points to a broader decline in driving standards. We must reset expectations and make it clear that safe, lawful driving is a shared responsibility."



5.3 Speeding: admissions and attitudes

This year, there has been a further fall in the percentage of drivers who admit they frequently or occasionally break the speed limit on roads of all types. Less than half (48%) say they speed on motorways, down from 54% in 2025 and the lowest level on record.

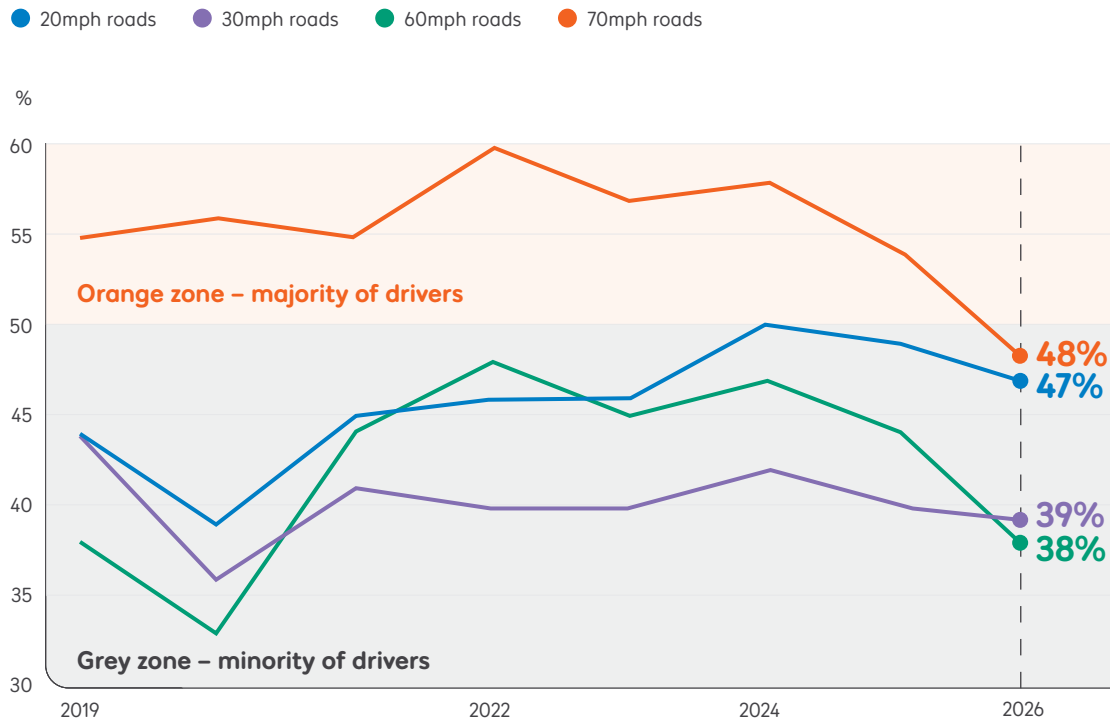
The percentage that break the speed limit on 60mph roads has fallen from 44% in 2025 to 38% this year, while there have been much smaller declines in speeding on roads with limits of 30mph (from 40% to 39%) and 20mph (from 49% to 47%).

48%

of drivers admit to speeding on 70mph roads

Although a large proportion of drivers admit to speeding at least occasionally, a clear majority (74%) say they usually try to drive as close to the speed limit as possible. At the same time, there has been a rise in the percentage of drivers who believe there is a culture in the UK of thinking it is acceptable to break the speed limit – this has risen from 50% in 2025 to 56%, the highest level recorded by the Report.

Proportion of drivers who admit to frequently or occasionally speeding



5.4 Drink-driving

The percentage of drivers who admit to having driven while over the drink-drive limit in the past 12 months has continued to rise back towards the 12% level seen prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2026, 8% of drivers think they have driven while over the limit on the same night as they consumed alcohol, up from 7% in 2025 and considerably higher than the rates seen in 2020 and 2021 (3% and 2%, respectively).

Meanwhile, 6% think they have driven while over the limit the following day (5% in 2025). This year, 88% of drivers say they do not believe they have driven while over the limit – this is the lowest level since 2019.

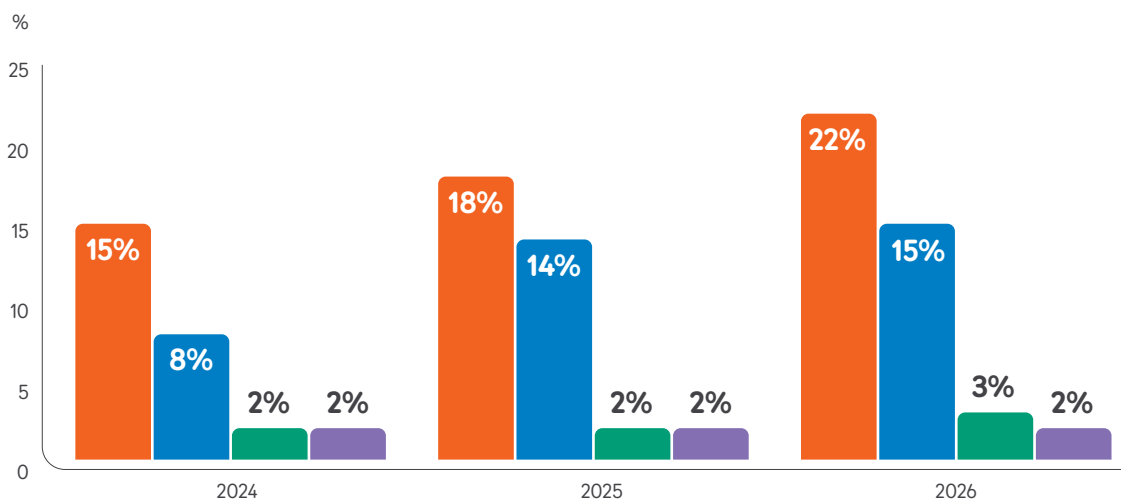
This increase in admitted drink-driving is more pronounced in the under-25 age group: only 69% say they have not driven while over the alcohol limit, and 22% admit to having done so at the end of a night out – up from 18% last year

and more than double the 10% rate recorded in 2023. These figures suggest a worrying degree of 'normalisation' of drink-driving among younger motorists. The percentage of drivers who think they have been a passenger in a car driven by someone who was over the drink-drive limit is 15%, down slightly from 16% last year. Among the under-25s, the rate rises to 36%, while it is 28% among those aged between 25 and 44.



Drivers who know or think they've driven while over the drink-drive limit – on the night

17 to 24-year-olds 25 to 44-year-olds 45 to 64-year-olds 65-plus





EXPERT VIEW

Jo Shiner, chief constable, Sussex Police, and Roads Policing Portfolio lead, National Police Chiefs' Council

"The increase in drivers admitting to drink and drug-driving, including a rise to 22% of young drivers admitting drink-driving on the night, is extremely worrying. We are also seeing more drivers, particularly aged 25 to 44, reporting driving after taking prescribed medication that can impair them. Impairment in any form has devastating consequences, and greater awareness alongside robust enforcement is essential."



Tackling repeat drink-driving

While drink-driving levels remain below those seen in the previous decade, RAC research shows that the scale of repeat offending remains alarmingly high: more than 2,500 drivers have been caught drink-driving at least three times over the past 11 years¹. The RAC believes these figures demonstrate the need for tougher measures to address the dangers posed by reoffenders.

The Lock Out Drink Driving campaign² has been launched to put pressure on the Government to bring forward a mandatory alcohol interlock (alcolock) programme for drink-drivers with multiple convictions.

Alcolocks, which require drivers to provide a negative alcohol breath test before they can start their cars, are already widely used in a number of European Union member states as well as Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the US.

Studies suggest the devices can reduce reoffending rates by up to 70%.



1. <https://media.rac.co.uk/more-than-2500-motorists-caught-drink-driving-three-or-more-times-in-the-last-11-years>
2. www.lockoutdrinkdriving.org.uk/

5.5 Drug-driving

Among drivers of all ages, admitted drug-driving remains low: 95% of drivers say they have not driven after taking illegal drugs or prescribed medication that can impair their performance at the wheel, but this is lower than the 98% recorded in both 2023 and 2024. Looking at the under-25s, 3% say they have driven after taking illegal drugs – down from 6% in 2025 – while 7% have done so after taking medication that can impair driving (10% last year).

Among those aged 25 to 44, the percentage that admit driving after consuming illegal drugs is 3% (2% last year), while 8% say they have driven after taking prescribed medication that can cause impairment.

3%

aged 25 to 44, admit driving after consuming illegal drugs

This is up from 5% in 2025. As with drink-driving, those under the age of 25 are more likely to say they have been a passenger in a car driven by someone who has been impaired by drugs or prescription medication: the percentage among this group is 13% compared to 7% of all drivers, but this is significantly lower than the 28% recorded last year.



5.6 Handheld mobile phone use

The percentage of drivers who admit to illegally and dangerously using a handheld mobile phone while at the wheel for anything other than voice calls has hit an eight-year high, this year's Report has found. Practices such as watching or recording videos, livestreaming and even playing phone-based games have risen to record levels – and are especially prevalent among younger drivers.

In 2026, there have been increases in the percentages of drivers that admit to having checked messages or notifications while at the wheel (from 19% in 2025 to 20% this year), having written a message or social media post (from 12% to 15%) or taken a photo or video while driving (from 11% to 12%).

However, the percentage of drivers who admit to having used a handheld mobile phone to make or receive a call while driving has fallen sharply this year to 20% from 30% in 2025. This is the lowest level on record. These findings may reflect the increasing preference among people of all ages to communicate through messages rather than voice calls³.

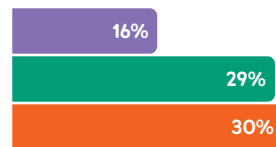
Figures for drivers under the age of 25 are particularly worrying. Among this group, 45% have checked messages (41% in 2025) and 39% have written messages or posts (27% in 2025). Just under half (42%) of the under-25s have made or received a video call while driving (up from 37%) and 30% have taken a photo or video (29% last year).

Young drivers' handheld mobile phone use

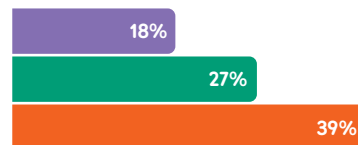
Proportion of drivers aged 17 to 24 who admit to doing the following while driving

● 2022 ● 2025 ● 2026

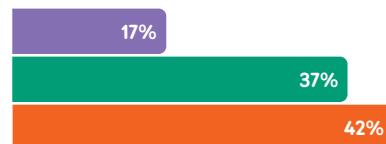
Take a photo or record a video



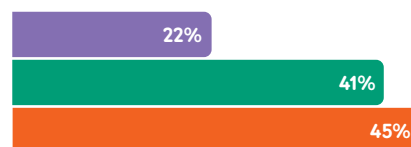
Text, email, post on social media, use internet



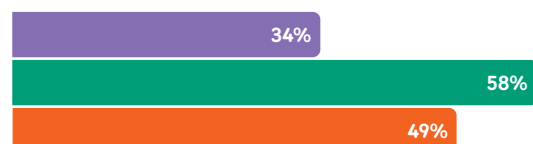
Make or receive a video call



Check texts, emails or social media posts



Make or receive a voice call



3. <https://yougov.com/en-gb/articles/54490-how-brits-communicate-in-2026-messaging-dominates-while-ai-use-is-emerging>



EXPERT VIEW

Nicholas Lyes, policy and external communications director, IAM RoadSmart

"These days, our mobile phones do far more than make or receive calls and this is reflected in the pattern of illegal phone use behind the wheel. The research shows that content and clicks are becoming an increasing menace on our roads as people, particularly younger drivers, struggle to break the cycle of smart phone dependence even when in charge of a vehicle."

There has been an especially shocking increase in the percentage of young drivers who admit to having played a game on their phone while driving, from 14% in 2025 to 22% this year. And while 9% of drivers of all ages have watched or recorded a live stream while at the wheel, the rate rises to 17% among those aged between 25 and 44, and to 27% – a record high – among the under-25s.

Finally, almost half of under-25s (49%) say they have received or made a handheld call while driving, although this is down from 58% in 2025.

The latest government road casualty data covering 2024 shows that a driver using a mobile device was a factor in 340 road collisions in 2024, of which 20 were fatal⁴. In addition, the number of drivers in England and Wales convicted for using a handheld mobile phone while driving is at its highest level since 2016 – the figure now stands at 40,723 for 2024, up from 36,813 in 2023 and 36,660 in 2017⁵.

15%

of all drivers admit to having written a message or social media post while driving

4. Department for Transport - Factors contributing to collisions and casualties (RAS07) – Percentage of reported road collisions, by severity and directly recorded road safety factor, Great Britain

5. Home Office - Motoring offences resulting in fixed penalty notices (FPNs), driver retraining, or court action, by offence type, England and Wales (excluding Metropolitan Police and British Transport Police)



Department
for Transport

Road Safety Strategy



5.7 Welcome proposals on road safety policy

Given drivers' widespread safety concerns as well as official data that shows road casualty figures remain alarmingly high in the UK⁶, the RAC welcomes the recent publication of the Government's consultation on its Road Safety Strategy⁷ – the country's first in more than a decade.



The strategy aims to deliver a 65% reduction in the number of deaths and serious injuries on Britain's roads by 2035, and features proposals that include cracking down on drink and drug-driving, stricter penalties for failing to use seatbelts and action to counter the increasingly widespread use of illegal 'ghost' licence plates, which are designed to avoid detection by enforcement cameras.

Ministers have set out plans to increase the penalties faced by uninsured motorists, and they are also consulting on introducing a minimum learning period for new drivers.

In addition, the strategy intends to address the increasing problem of overly bright headlights and the safety risks they can pose to drivers.

A study carried out by TRL in 2025 – as a result of the RAC's campaigning – confirmed that high-performance headlights can dazzle other drivers⁸, while recent RAC research found that the majority of drivers (57%) think the problem has worsened over the past year.

Indeed, many of those affected by headlight dazzle now actively avoid driving at night⁹. The Government plans to commission further research into the problem before deciding whether legislative action is needed.

The RAC has responded to the consultation and looks forward to finding out which policies and proposals the Government plans on taking forward. Further details of what the RAC is calling for can be found in the *Our calls on the Government* chapter.

6. <https://media.rac.co.uk/rac-reacts-to-latest-road-casualty-data-for-great-britain>

7. <https://media.rac.co.uk/thousands-of-lives-to-be-saved-under-bold-new-road-safety-strategy-rac-comment>

8. <https://media.rac.co.uk/brighter-headlights-more-likely-to-cause-glare-for-drivers-study-finds-rac-comment>

9. <https://media.rac.co.uk/too-bright-to-ignore-more-than-half-of-drivers-affected-by-dazzling-headlights-say-the-problem-is-worse-this-winter-than-last>





6

Choice of next vehicle

Fewer drivers plan to change their current vehicle in 2026 compared to 2025, and their next car is less likely than in previous years to be petrol-driven and more likely to be a battery-electric vehicle (EV). Drivers who intend to buy an EV next are attracted by the ability to charge at home as well as environmental considerations and lower running costs.

Many drivers are concerned about EV range and purchase prices, as well as the reliability of the public charging network. But opposition appears to be softening as the number of EVs on our roads continues to increase. Finally, a majority of drivers think the introduction of electric vehicle excise duty (eVED) in 2028 risks slowing the transition to electric cars.

6.1 Drivers' plans to replace their current vehicles

There has been an increase in the past 12 months in the percentage of drivers (36% compared to 33% last year) who say they are not planning to change their current vehicle, or do not know when they will do so.

The percentage of drivers who expect to change their car in the next three years has dipped slightly from 49% in 2025 to 48% this year, but the rate remains higher than in the immediate aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Among the financial considerations preventing drivers from replacing their current vehicle, 31% say the rising cost of living is an impediment (33% last year), while 15% cite general economic uncertainty, for example concerns about job security (17% last year), and 15% say that high second-hand car prices are an obstacle. However, this figure has fallen steadily in the past four years.

31%

of drivers say financial considerations are preventing them from replacing their current vehicle

Difficulties in finding the right car are an issue for 13% of drivers, while 11% say higher interest rates have made it harder to obtain motor finance. Meanwhile, exactly half of drivers (50%) say they are happy with their current car and have not made any particular effort to look for a new model.

Only a quarter (25%) of drivers under the age of 25 are happy with their present car and not looking to change. Almost half (46%) say the rising cost of living has stopped them changing vehicle sooner, but this concern has steadily eased from a peak of 62% in 2023.

Almost a fifth (19%) say high second-hand prices have prevented them changing car, while there has been a sharp decline – from 31% in 2023 and 25% last year to 16% in 2026 – in the percentage of young drivers who say economic uncertainty has been a reason for them not to change vehicle.



6.2 Electric vehicle popularity increases

There are now more than two million EVs licensed in the UK, data from the Department for Transport shows¹. Having taken 14 years to reach one million, the figure has doubled in just two years. Meanwhile, March 2026 was a record month for registrations of new pure EVs, data from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) found².

While new registrations of all types of cars rose 6.6% year-on-year to 380,000, more than 86,000 EVs were registered – a rise of 24.2% on the same month last year. EVs' share of the total new car market so far in 2026 has risen to 22.4%, up from 20.7% over the same period in 2025.

But the SMMT notes that this market share figure is well below the Government target for 2026 of 33%, and that manufacturers are facing significant cost pressures that are likely to hamper EV take-up. The organisation has called on the Government to review its approach to the net-zero transition in light of its impact on the competitiveness of the motor industry.

It remains to be seen exactly what impact this year's conflict in the Middle East and higher energy costs will have on the UK car market, and EVs in particular.

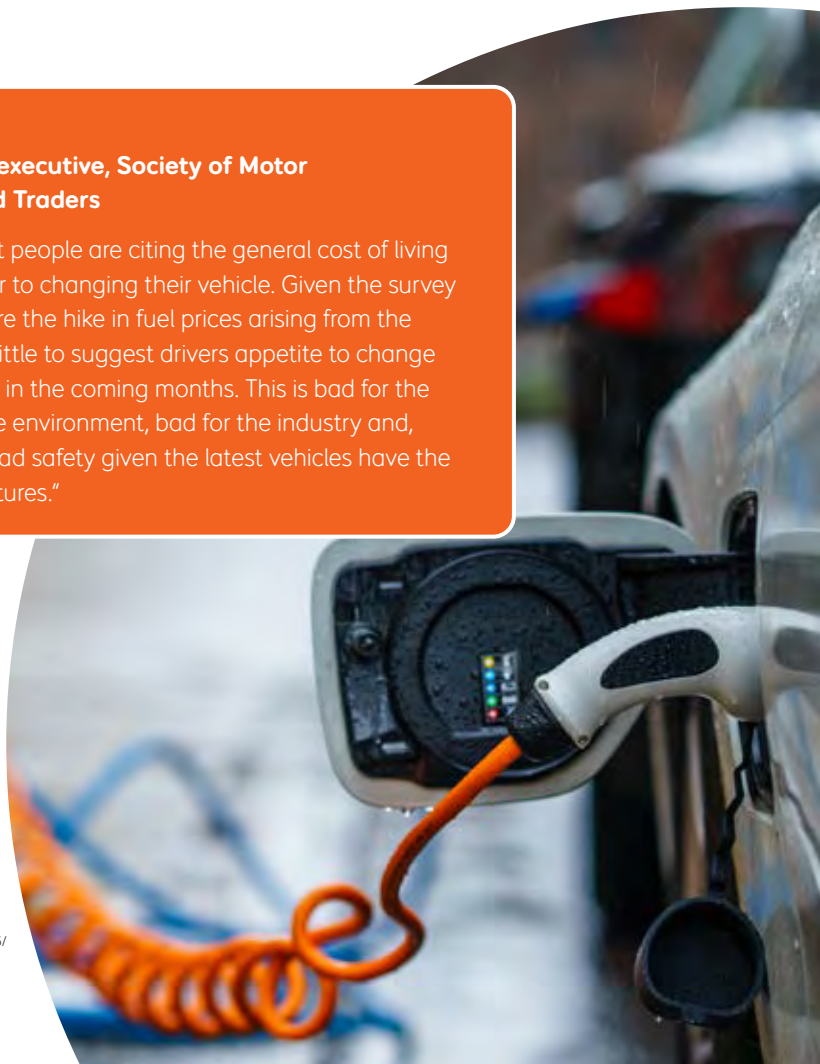


EXPERT VIEW

Mike Hawes, chief executive, Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders

"It's unsurprising that people are citing the general cost of living as the biggest barrier to changing their vehicle. Given the survey was completed before the hike in fuel prices arising from the Iran conflict, there's little to suggest drivers appetite to change vehicles will increase in the coming months. This is bad for the economy, bad for the environment, bad for the industry and, ultimately, bad for road safety given the latest vehicles have the most up-to-date features."

1. www.gov.uk/government/statistics/vehicle-licensing-statistics-2025/vehicle-licensing-statistics-united-kingdom-2025
2. www.smm.co.uk/best-month-ever-for-new-ev-registrations-as-market-grows-in-all-important-plate-change-march/



However, data published in spring 2026 shows that dealers have reported an increase in EV-related inquiries, partly due to recent volatility in fuel costs,³ while sales of used EVs in April 2026 represented almost 10% of the second-hand market, a record high⁴.

Meanwhile, nearly half (44%) of drivers of petrol and diesel cars say they would 'seriously consider' switching to an EV if fuel prices exceeded £2 per litre⁵.

The fieldwork for the 2026 RAC Report on Motoring was carried out before the start of war in Iran at the end of February and therefore does not reflect the sharp rises in fuel costs that were seen in March.

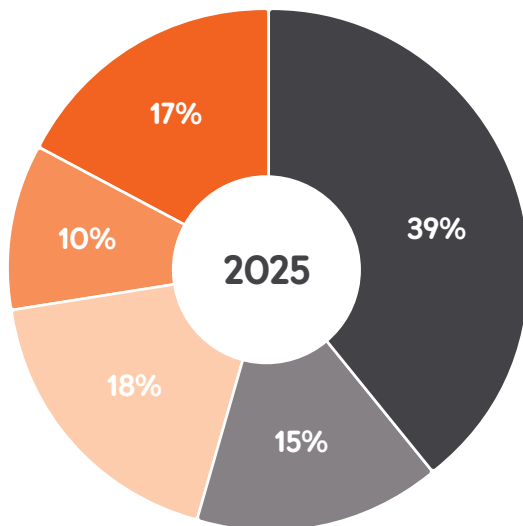
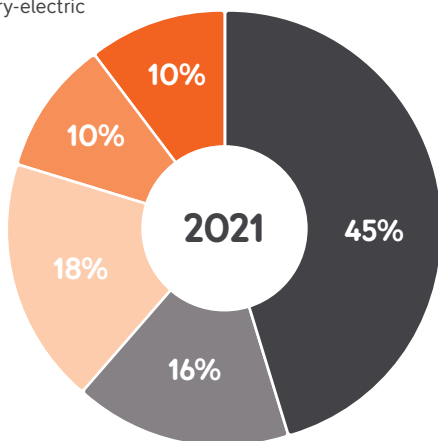
Nonetheless, our figures show that the percentage of drivers that say their next vehicle is likely to be a pure (battery-powered) EV has risen, from 15% in 2025 to 17% this year.

The percentage of drivers who plan to buy a plug-in hybrid car has remained stable (10% this year compared to 11% in 2025), while 18% say they plan to buy a conventional hybrid next – the same level as in the past three years. There has been a further drop in the number of drivers who plan to buy a petrol vehicle next: this has fallen to 38%, an all-time low. Only 15% of drivers say their next car will be fuelled by diesel.

Interest in EVs is greatest among younger drivers: in the 25 to 44 age group, 26% say their next vehicle will be an EV, and the rate is 20% among the under-25s. However, only 7% of drivers aged 65 or older plan to get an EV. Take-up is set to be higher among drivers based in the UK's cities and towns: in these parts of the country, 27% plan to buy an EV next versus 9% in rural areas and villages. This difference may be partly due to the greater availability of charging points in urban areas.

Drivers' choice of next vehicle

- Petrol
- Diesel
- Conventional hybrid
- Plug-in hybrid
- Battery-electric



3. www.motortradenews.com/electric-vehicles/ev-interest-up-28-since-start-of-iran-conflict-autotrader-finds/
 4. www.fleetnews.co.uk/news/pump-price-increase-fuelling-rise-in-demand-for-used-electric-vehicles
 5. www.motortradenews.com/electric-vehicles/ice-drivers-will-consider-an-ev-if-fuel-exceeds-2-per-litre-motors/



6.3 How attitudes to EVs are evolving

The reason given most often by drivers who plan to get an EV next is the ability to charge the car at home (53% compared to 58% in 2025), followed by concern about the environmental impact of conventionally fuelled vehicles (48% compared to 43%). There has also been a rise in the percentage that say lower running costs are a motivating factor, from 40% in 2025 to 46% this year.

If fuel prices remain persistently higher as a result of conflict in the Middle East, we can expect this figure to increase further next year. Meanwhile, the percentage of drivers who plan to choose an EV due to concerns about the health impact of petrol and diesel cars has fallen to 33%, down from 40% last year and the lowest level on record.

Other reasons to opt for an EV include only needing to drive short distances (25%), the fact such cars have fewer mechanical parts that can go wrong (26%), and the ability to avoid clean air zone and/or congestion charges (19%). Only 18% say it is because the upfront cost of an EV is reasonable. Looking at the majority of drivers who do not think their next car will be an EV – 83% of all those who plan to change their

29%

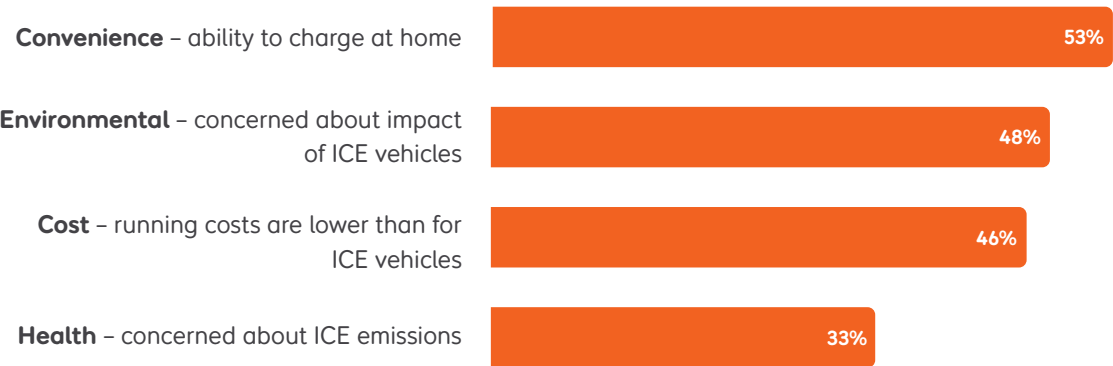
of drivers say a reason for not going electric is the cost of charging is too high

vehicle at some point – cost remains the biggest impediment. However, the situation is changing, with less than half of drivers (46%) now saying the upfront price is an obstacle, down from 50% last year and 55% in 2024.

The percentage that say an inability to make long journeys is an issue is down to 45% from 51%, while 44% feel there are not enough public charging points – a steep decline on the 53% recorded in 2025. The same percentage (44%) are worried about the reliability of the public charging network, down from 50%.

These findings indicate that increases in typical EV range, together with improvements in the extent and dependability of the public charging network, are being recognised by drivers. In the UK, the range of the average EV – the distance it can cover between charges – has risen from 235 miles in 2024 to 300 miles in 2026⁶.

Drivers' top reasons for getting an EV next

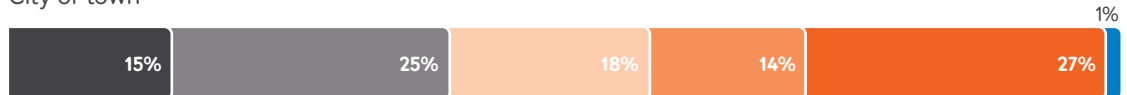


Choice of next vehicle – by drivers' location

Drivers in towns and cities are more likely to opt for an EV next time around

● Diesel ● Petrol ● Conventional hybrid
● Plug-in hybrid ● Battery-electric ● Other

City or town



Suburb / edge of town



Village / rural



Meanwhile, figures published at the end of May 2026⁷ show that there are almost 121,262 public EV charging points across the UK in nearly 47,000 locations – a rise of 18% compared to the end of 2024.

The number of ultra-rapid chargers has grown even more quickly, from 8,511 at the end of 2024 to 13,452 in May 2026 – an increase of more than 58%. Current EV drivers are generally satisfied with the state of the public charging network: 41% say they are 'very satisfied' with the ease of use of public chargers, and a further 37% are 'fairly satisfied'.

Just under a third (30%) of EV drivers use the public charging network less than once a month; and 59% use a public charger at least once a week. Other reasons for not going electric include long waiting times for

charging on journeys (43%), the cost of charging being too high (29%) and a lack of off-street parking making it difficult to charge at home (22%). It should be noted that the Government has recently announced plans designed to make it easier for households to charge EVs on the street outside their homes⁸. Ministers have promised to pass legislation that will remove the requirement to obtain local council permission to run a cable across the pavement through a charging gully.

Finally, the percentage that cite a lack of EV models to choose from has fallen to just 9% – a figure that was as high as 25% in 2021 – while 9% think there is a lack of boot space in the typical EV.

6. www.rac.co.uk/drive/electric-cars/choosing/electric-car-statistics-and-data/

7. www.zapmap.com/ev-stats/how-many-charging-points

8. www.zemo.org.uk/news-events/news/government-set-to-change-rules-on-crosspavement-charging_4839.html



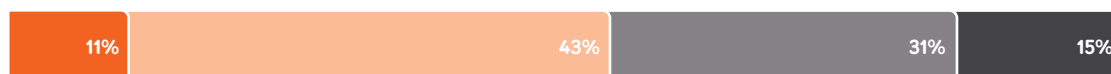
Among drivers who do not plan to get an EV, a quarter (26%) say nothing could convince them to go electric – a rate that rises to 36% among those aged 65 or older. However, there appears to be a softening of attitudes this year: 25% of drivers of all ages say they are keen to get an EV at some stage, despite some lingering doubts, up from 23% in 2025. Among those aged 65 or older, this percentage has risen sharply from 9% to 15% over the last 12 months.

There has been a slight fall in the percentage of drivers who expect to move to an EV within the next five years, from 23% in 2025 to 20% this year – although this figure remains considerably higher than the rates (around 15%) recorded between 2021 and 2024. In urban areas, 44% of drivers who do not currently own an EV plan to make the switch in the next five years. However, the equivalent figure in rural parts of the UK is just 6%.

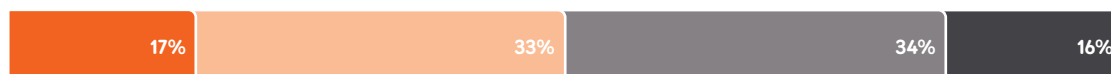
Drivers' attitudes to getting an EV in the future – by age

- Want one; convinced they're a good thing
- Quite keen to get one; have a few doubts
- Not that keen to get one; still have a lot of doubts
- Don't want one and don't believe anything could convince me

17-24



25-44



45-64



65+



1%



EXPERT VIEW

Claire Evans, consumer editor at What Car?

"It's great to see the highest percentage so far of people intending to opt for an EV when they change their car. Two of the most important reasons for going electric are being able to charge the car at home and being able to save money compared with a petrol or diesel car – this demonstrates the need for the Government to do more to make it easier for those who don't have driveways to charge up more cheaply. While the cost of getting a cross-pavement charger has been lowered by Government funding, more needs to be done to address the cost of public charging, both by lowering the rate of VAT on it and reducing the other costs that adversely impact charge point operators."

6.4 The road funding challenge: EVs and vehicle excise duty

In its Autumn 2025 Budget, the Government announced its intention to start charging EV drivers excise duty, to be known as eVED. This is expected to be introduced in April 2028 at the rate of 3p per mile for battery-electric EVs and 1.5p per mile for plug-in hybrid vehicles⁹.

This change is being made to address declines in fuel duty revenues from conventionally fuelled vehicles. According to estimates from the Office for Budget Responsibility, a motorist who drives 10,000 miles a year in an EV will pay an extra £300 a year under the new eVED scheme – roughly half of the total paid in fuel duty by a petrol or diesel driver covering the same mileage. Ministers have recently consulted on how the new system will be implemented and enforced.

£300

is the amount a motorist who drives 10,000 miles a year in a battery-electric vehicle will pay in eVED

The 2026 Report asked drivers whether they thought the introduction of eVED in this form would slow the transition to EVs in the UK. More than half of all drivers (54%) thought eVED would be a disincentive to EV take-up, rising to 72% of current EV owners. However, nearly half of all drivers (47%) think that EV drivers should pay eVED; 29% think they should not and 24% are unsure. Two-thirds (67%) of EV drivers think they should not pay eVED, and only a quarter (26%) of this group believe they should.

In terms of the potential impact of this policy, 71% of current EV drivers say they would continue to drive an EV as their main vehicle despite facing new eVED costs, although the proportion drops to 50% among plug-in hybrid drivers. Among those who currently drive a petrol, diesel or conventional hybrid car, 60% say they would continue with their present vehicle regardless of changes in taxation policy, while 17% say they would be put off from switching to an EV or plug-in hybrid as a result.

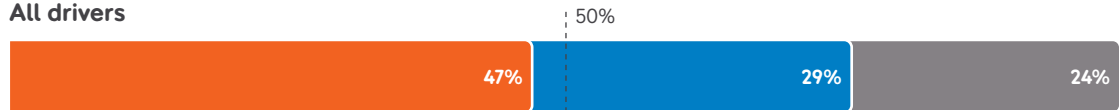
9. www.rac.co.uk/drive/electric-cars/running/electric-car-road-tax-guide-do-i-need-to-pay/



Views on whether pure EV drivers should pay eVED at 3p per mile – by drivers' current powertrain

● Yes ● No ● Don't know

All drivers



ICE – petrol



ICE – diesel



Conventional hybrid



PHEV*



BEV*







7

Alternative transport modes

Drivers' attitudes towards public transport are largely unchanged in 2026, although there has been a notable drop in the number of young drivers who think buses, trains and trams are a viable alternative to driving.

The number of drivers who regularly make journeys on public transport has remained static, although the percentage of under-25s who take the train at least once a month has risen. Finally, the number of drivers who regularly travel by bike has reached an all-time high.

7.1 Drivers' views on public transport

The percentage of drivers who think that public transport is an attractive alternative to driving has barely changed in the past 12 months: the rate is 32% this year compared to 33% in 2025, the 2026 RAC Report on Motoring has found. However, these levels are considerably higher than in the immediate aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The percentage of drivers who say they would use their vehicle less if public transport was more convenient, reliable and/or affordable has also fallen very slightly and stands at 51% compared to 52% last year. Half of drivers (50%) say they generally walk or cycle when making short journeys rather than using their car, the same rate as last year.

32%

of drivers think that public transport is an attractive alternative to driving

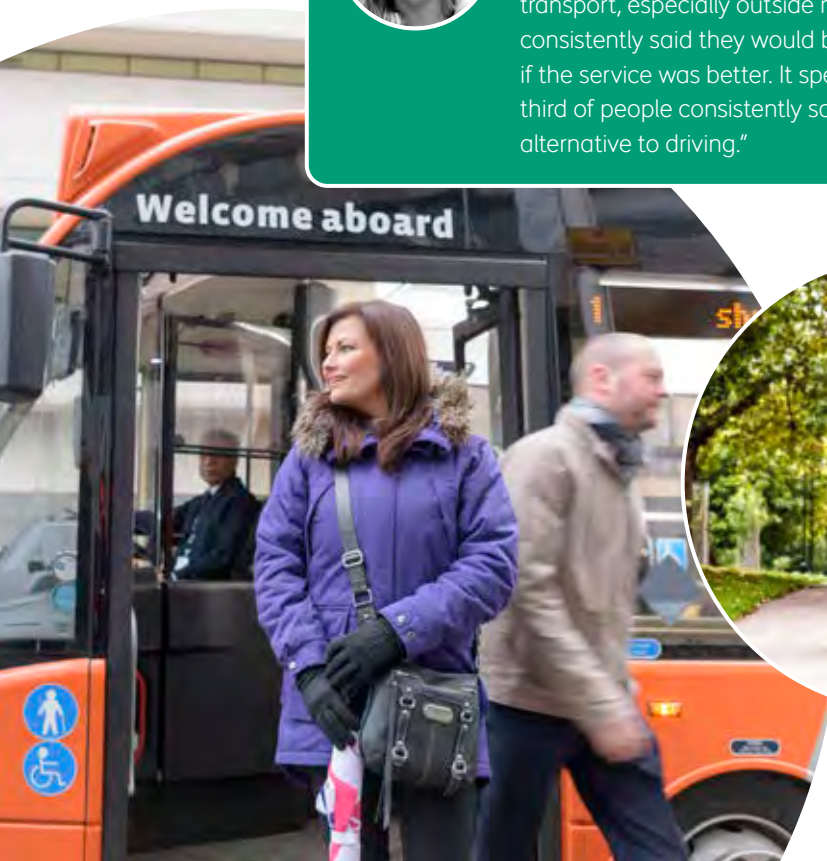
Younger drivers are more likely to see public transport as a viable alternative to driving: among those aged under 25, 43% hold this view versus 32% of all drivers. However, this figure is down sharply on the 53% recorded in 2025.



EXPERT VIEW

Claire Evans, consumer editor at What Car?

"The Government needs to work much harder to improve public transport, especially outside major cities, because people have consistently said they would be happy to use it instead of driving if the service was better. It speaks volumes that less than a third of people consistently say public transport is an appealing alternative to driving."



7.2 Bus, train and bicycle use among drivers

Nearly a third of drivers (31%) take the bus at least once every month – a percentage that is unchanged from last year, and higher than the rates seen between 2022 and 2024. The percentage of drivers who say they never make journeys by bus is 36%, up from 34% last year but considerably lower than the 49% recorded in 2022, immediately after the pandemic.

More than half (54%) of drivers aged under 25 take the bus at least once a month, down from 57% in 2025, but the rate is lowest among those aged between 45 and 64 (17%). A quarter (25%) of drivers aged 65 or older use a bus on a monthly basis.

Meanwhile, the rise in bus use among drivers aged between 25 and 44 recorded last year – the percentage increased to 45% in 2025 from 27% in 2024 – has remained unchanged over the past 12 months.

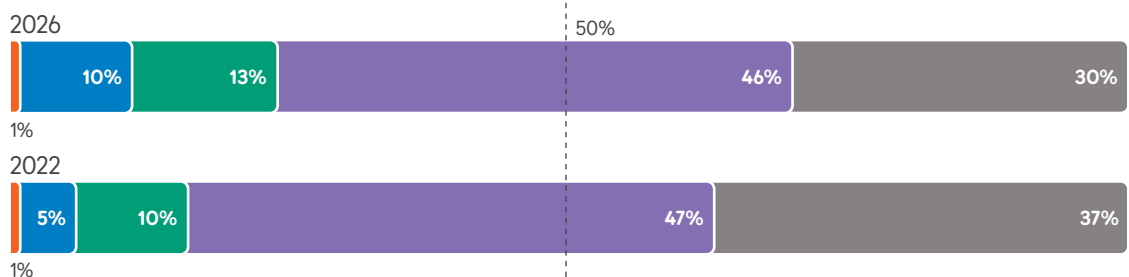
Looking at train use, 24% of all drivers make journeys on the national rail network (i.e., not the London Underground or other metro systems) at least once a month, up from 22% in 2025. This percentage rises to 50% among the under-25s (43% in 2025) and 41% among drivers aged between 25 and 44 (39% last year). Among drivers aged 65 or older, just 8% take the train on at least a monthly basis, although this is higher than the 6% recorded last year.

Drivers' use of public transport

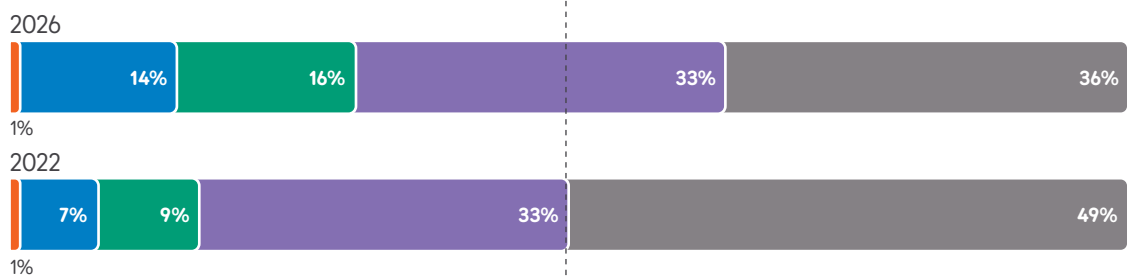
Compared to 2022, drivers' reported use of buses and trains has increased



Trains



Buses



The Government has continued to make efforts to improve the state of public transport in the UK. At the end of 2025, ministers announced a bus funding package worth £3bn¹ over the next four years.

The money will be available to local authorities to spend on a range of measures, including lowering fares, introducing new routes or investing in zero-emission vehicles.

This followed the passing in October 2025 of the Bus Services Act², which gives councils greater powers to preserve vital routes as well as start their own services. Meanwhile, the Government has also announced a freeze in regulated train fares for the 2026-27 period³. It is estimated that the policy will save rail travellers £600m.

18%

of drivers use a bicycle at least once a month, up from 13% last year

Finally, there has been a significant increase in the number of drivers who use a bicycle at least once a month: the percentage has jumped to 18% in 2026 from 13% last year. This represents the highest level on record.

The rise has been driven by greater cycle use among drivers aged 25 to 44 (28% in 2026 compared to 20% last year) and by those in the 45-to-64 age group (14% this year versus 7% in 2025). Cycling remains relatively popular among the under-25s, with 26% saying they use a bike at least once a month – although this is down on last year's 29%.

1. www.gov.uk/government/news/better-buses-more-services-3-billion-boost-for-millions-of-passengers
2. www.gov.uk/government/news/new-era-of-better-buses-landmark-bus-bill-becomes-law
3. www.gov.uk/government/news/passengers-save-millions-as-rail-fare-freeze-starts





EXPERT VIEW

Claire Evans, consumer editor at What Car?

"With regard to other forms of transport, there has been a fairly big push at local government level to offer cycle schemes (we've seen them introduced in many cities that have clean air zones, and use the revenue for these to fund them) and these appear to be paying off with more people than ever cycling at least once a month."

Our successful campaigning for drivers

The cost of driving

✓ Fuel Finder launches, bringing increased transparency to fuel prices

Through its Fuel Watch initiative, the RAC has done more to campaign for fairer fuel prices than any other motoring organisation. This culminated in February with the launch of the Government's Fuel Finder scheme which compels retailers to report pump prices. Consequently, drivers can now use apps to find the lowest petrol and diesel prices near them, just as the myRAC app has been doing since 2023.

✓ Fuel duty rate kept down

We regularly highlight the tax burden drivers face every time they fill up so we were pleased when Prime Minister Keir Starmer confirmed in May that the 5p fuel duty discount – first introduced in the early days of the Ukraine war – would stay in place until the end of the year to help drivers struggling with increased costs at the pumps due to the Iran conflict. A penny was due to be added back on in September with another 2p in December and the final 2p in March 2027.

State of roads

✓ Councils' access to full roads funding dependent on them completing preventative maintenance

For too long, councils have focused on short-term, reactive repairs to their roads, which is one of the reasons the condition of so many of them has declined. Now, after pressure from the RAC, a significant share of the funds councils receive from central government to maintain their roads depends on them completing preventative maintenance – including surface dressing, that can prevent potholes appearing in the first place.

In addition, our longstanding call for roads funding to be agreed over greater periods of time has been heard by the Government as it has told councils how much money they will receive for the next four years. Knowing how much money they have to spend will enable councils to plan long-term maintenance programmes.



Road safety

✓ Casualty reduction targets reintroduced

The RAC has long called for formal casualty reduction targets to be reintroduced after they were scrapped in 2010. The RAC is therefore pleased to see the Government's Road Safety Strategy – published in January – sets bold targets to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on the roads.

✓ Government consults on introducing alcohol interlocks to cut drink-driving

The RAC, through its backing of the Lock Out Drink-Driving campaign, advocates for courts to have the power to order repeat and high-risk drink-drivers to have alcohol interlocks ('alcolocks') fitted to their vehicles. Following a successful event in Parliament to demonstrate the technology to MPs and peers, the RAC is pleased the Government decided to consult on the possibility of introducing them to cut reoffending, as part of the Road Safety Strategy.



✓ Stop Excessive Speeders campaign launched

Speed is the leading cause of fatal road collisions. In June, the RAC hosted MPs and peers in Westminster to launch the Stop Excessive Speeders campaign, calling on the Government to allow courts to order drivers caught speeding excessively or on several occasions to have speed limiters installed in their vehicles to stop them doing so again. Visit media.rac.co.uk/stop-excessive-speeders-campaign to find out more.



Our successful campaigning for drivers

✓ Further research on headlight glare confirmed

The RAC's work over many years led to the Government commissioning its first report into the problem of dazzling headlights. As part of the Road Safety Strategy, it has committed to follow-on research to better understand the problem and what can be done about it. Alongside this, the RAC continues to represent drivers' views on glare at a national and international level.

✓ Consultation on introducing new vehicle safety technologies

Since 2022, the RAC has called on the Government to mandate all new vehicles sold in the UK be fitted with safety systems, including Advanced Distraction Warnings and Intelligent Speed Assistance.

These systems are already commonplace on vehicles sold elsewhere in the world, including in the EU since July 2024. We were therefore pleased to see that the Road Safety Strategy included a consultation on whether these systems should be introduced as standard in the UK.

✓ Tackling vehicle cloning and ghost number plates included as part of Road Safety Strategy consultation

In recognition of the growing problem of number plate fraud, the RAC is pleased to see the Government has consulted on tackling this issue in the Road Safety Strategy.

Ghost plates that can't be read by enforcement cameras and cloned plates which illegally copy the registration of another vehicle, have become a menace of modern-day motoring – something which the RAC has been highlighting consistently as drivers support firm action being taken in this area.



Civil enforcement

✓ Councils given new powers to tackle obstructive pavement parking

Most drivers want to see the problem of obstructive pavement parking tackled, according to RAC research. Nobody walking or wheeling should be forced into the road due to poor parking.

The Government's proposals should clear the way for councils to prevent pavement parking where it causes problems, but permit drivers to partially park on pavements where doing so helps keep traffic flowing and doesn't inconvenience other people.



Find out more
about how the **RAC**
is working for drivers
online at
rac.co.uk/workfordrivers



Sam,
patrol since 2015,
East

Our calls on the Government

The cost of driving

Ensure fairer fuel prices for all

We are concerned the Competition and Markets Authority's ongoing monitoring of fuel prices continues to conclude drivers have been overcharged at the pumps. Data from RAC Fuel Watch also shows drivers in Northern Ireland consistently pay far lower prices for their fuel than drivers in the rest of the UK do. We urge the Government to look into this inequity.

Keep fuel duty down

We call on the Government to leave the 5p duty cut in place until at least the end of the Parliament to ease the cost of driving. Drivers are currently paying 53p duty a litre instead of the previous rate of 58p.

Reduce the motor insurance tax burden

We urge the Government to reduce Insurance Premium Tax from its current 12% rate. This not only increases the risk of people driving uninsured, but it also places an even greater burden on younger and more inexperienced drivers who already pay the highest premiums.

Road safety

A roadmap for achieving the new casualty reduction targets

We would like the next stage of the Road Safety Strategy to include a clear roadmap showing how different government policies will be used to ensure casualty reduction targets are met.

Strengthen enforcement of road traffic laws

The Government has consulted on a wide range of potential new penalties to make the roads safer. Regardless of which of these are taken forward, it's important the subject of enforcement is not forgotten. After all, a law is only as effective as its enforcement. Greater enforcement, such as through an increase in dedicated roads policing officers, can reduce offending.

Introduce an alcohol interlock programme to cut drink-drive deaths

Evidence from countries all around the world where alcohol interlocks ('alcolocks') are used shows lives being saved – a point we emphasised in our response to the Road Safety Strategy consultation. We call on the Government to move swiftly to introduce a suitable programme for the UK.



Clamp down on excessive speeding

We call on the Government to take a technology-led approach to tackling repeat and excessive speeding by giving courts the power to order offenders to have speed limiters fitted to their vehicles.

Action to tackle glare from vehicle headlights

While a commitment to carry out further research into headlight dazzle, which could inform future vehicle design and regulations, is very welcome, the RAC believes the Government should tackle the problem of vehicles with dazzling headlights on the road today – such as through changes to the MOT test and driver education.

Keep young and novice drivers safe

Young people are more likely to be involved in fatal or serious collisions on the UK's roads than any other age group, yet the Government has so far ruled out a national Graduated Driving Licensing scheme. A minimum learning to drive period, which it has consulted on, is positive but there is a good case for going further. The RAC would like to see the Government make black-box telematics insurance mandatory for at least the first year after passing the driving test. A ban on novice or young drivers carrying non-family members, or peer-age passengers under 25 without an older adult present, could also lead to fewer tragic collisions.



Our calls on the Government (cont'd)

Road safety (cont'd)

Communicate the benefits of Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) to the driving public

We hope the Government will decide from its consultation to mandate all new vehicles sold in the UK be fitted with advanced safety systems. Such technologies can improve safety, but only if drivers understand what they're designed to do – and don't elect to switch them off. We call on the Government to run a consumer-facing communications campaign aimed at informing drivers of their benefits.

Give police powers for immediate licence suspension

Police should be granted powers to quickly suspend licences for drink and drug-driving offences and serious incidents involving death or injury, to reduce the chances of immediate reoffending.

Tackle the scourge of vehicle cloning and ghost number plates

The Government has consulted on toughening the penalties for those with illegal ghost and cloned number plates, but it could go further. The RAC believes the Government should standardise the design of number plates to flat (2D) ones that can be easily read by cameras, significantly restrict the number of licensed sellers via annual fees and regular audits, and clamp down on illegal sales and strengthen powers for prosecuting rogue suppliers.

Parking and civil enforcement

Bring the official Private Parking Code of Practice into force

RAC analysis of government data shows a record 17m parking charge notices are likely to be issued to drivers in the current financial year. The RAC urges the Government to finally publish the revised Parking Code of Practice to prevent drivers being unfairly treated by private parking operators. A further consultation was carried out last year, which the RAC responded to, calling for the code to include a ban on the use of debt recovery fees, strict rules on operator conduct and a single independent appeals system.

Mandate councils to permit a minimum of two parking payment methods

We continue to urge the Government to ensure drivers can always pay for council parking by at least two different means, including contactless bank cards/via mobile phone.

Force councils to sign up to the National Parking Platform

To make paying for parking via an app of drivers' choice possible, we call on the Government to order councils to sign up to the National Parking Platform.





National oversight of council enforcement of pavement parking

It's vital councils inform drivers they will be starting to enforce unnecessary pavement parking from the end of this year and are reasonable when doing so. National government oversight in how they are doing this would be invaluable. As it will be down to individual authorities to judge what constitutes an 'unnecessary obstruction of the pavement' and what doesn't, drivers must be treated fairly – or there's a risk councils start receiving a high volume of appeals.

Fair yellow box enforcement

With a growing number of councils now enforcing yellow box junctions, the RAC urges the Government to ensure all boxes are set up fairly. The RAC is aware that some junctions are difficult to negotiate meaning drivers can find themselves stranded through no fault of their own, often because boxes are too large, line of sight is blocked, or they're simply used in the wrong locations.

Electric vehicles

Reduce VAT on public chargers

We continue to believe it's vital the Government reduces the VAT rate at public chargers from 20% to match the 5% levied on domestic electricity. This would ensure those who can't charge at home are able to run a zero-emission vehicle cost effectively and make public charging more affordable, thereby speeding up EV adoption.

Adopt the UK's first public charging charter

The RAC co-authored the UK's first Public Charging Charter that was recommended to the Government by a House of Lords committee inquiry into the EV transition. This calls for chargers that are accessible and safe for all, charger locations that are clearly signposted, kWh prices that are displayed prominently for drivers to see, and states that all chargers work at least 99% of the time. We continue to call on the Government to mandate the charter for all new installations.

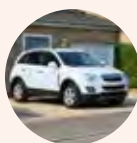
Drivers and their vehicles at a glance

Below is a summary of 2026 Report on Motoring survey respondents' vehicles and usage, with 2025 data in brackets:



Approximate number of miles driven over 12 months¹

Miles driven	%
5,000 miles or fewer	24% (29%)
5,001 – 10,000 miles	45% (49%)
10,001 miles or more	19% (21%)



Number of cars per household

Households with	%
One car	52% (48%)
Two cars	33% (36%)
Three cars	10% (11%)
Four cars	3% (3%)
Five or more cars	2% (2%)



Age of vehicles²

Motorists who own a car	%
Less than a year old	7% (7%)
1 to 2 years old	11% (12%)
2 to 3 years old	11% (12%)
3 to 4 years old	12% (11%)
Between 5 and 10 years old	31% (32%)
More than 10 years old	26% (25%)

Average number of cars	
In household	1.7 (1.8)

1. All who personally drive a vehicle at least once a month.
2. Age of vehicle driven most often.





Research methodology

The RAC Report on Motoring 2026 is based on a large-scale online survey carried out by Online95 on behalf of the RAC. In total, Online95 interviewed 2,238 UK motorists (i.e. those who hold a full, current UK driving licence, drive at least once a month and have a motor vehicle in their household).

The survey was conducted from 14 February to 28 February 2026, with the questionnaire taking around 30 minutes to complete. Responses were rim-weighted to be nationally representative of UK motorists in age, gender, socio-economic groups and all UK regions. The data in the Report was analysed and reported by Ragdoll Research and Planning.

Statistical reliability

Any figures taken from a sample of a population should not be taken as a precise indication of the actual figures for that population. The reported figures are estimates, within a small margin of error, of the actual figures. The margin of error varies with sample size – the larger the sample is, the lower the error will be.

It also varies with the proportions answering: the margin of error is smaller for a 90% or 10% result than for a 50% result. In order to illustrate the use of varying sample sizes and their effect on the statistical significance of results, the table below outlines the degree of statistical error broadly associated with an example sample size of 1,000, and the effective sample size of the weighted survey data, 2,238.

Please note that data presented in this report is rounded to zero decimal places. For this reason, some figures when added may sum to more than 100%.



Sample size	Reported percentage at 95% level of confidence				
	10% or 90%	20% or 80%	30% or 70%	40% or 60%	50%
1,000	±1.86%	±2.48%	±2.84%	±3.04%	±3.10%
2,238	±1.24%	±1.66%	±1.90%	±2.03%	±2.07%

How to read the above table: Assume the reported percentage, with an effective sample base of 2,238, is 23%. The closest column to this reported percentage is the '20% or 80%' column. The significant difference on the table shows ±1.66%. This means that 95 out of 100 surveys (reflecting the 95% level of confidence) with an effective sample size of 2,238 will produce a percentage of 23%, plus or minus 1.66%, or within the range of 21.34% and 24.66%.

Please note that the margin of error will be marginally different for each reported percentage, however, the above table can serve to find the closest estimate.



Company overview

The RAC is the UK's number one driving services provider, offering complete peace of mind to 15.5m UK motorists. Whatever the need, we have a growing range of services and solutions covering everything from breakdown assistance to vehicle insurance, and from car maintenance to servicing and repairs – all increasingly enabled by digital innovation, sophisticated data platforms and our passionate colleagues.

Headquartered in the West Midlands with more than 4,500 staff, the RAC operates from three bases – Walsall, Bristol and Salford – with its vehicle and breakdown services underpinned by 1,700 highly trained patrols. Last year, the RAC attended 2.4m breakdowns.

We provide individual members and small business owners with breakdown cover and a broad range of exclusive optional extras on either an annual or flexible monthly subscription basis. Through our partnerships with leading motor manufacturers, banks, insurance companies and fleets, we also provide breakdown and accident assistance to their customers, as well as technical and customer support services. In insurance, we offer a range of motor insurance policies, many of which are available through price comparison websites.

For the one-in-five vehicles our patrols are not able to fix, the RAC has a nationwide network of more than 400 RAC Mobile Mechanics capable of repairing vehicles at customers' homes or workplaces, as well as carrying out servicing and diagnostic checks. Increasingly, drivers are enjoying the convenience of not having to disrupt their days to get to a garage.

Appointments can be booked on rac.co.uk or via the myRAC mobile app, available for Apple and Android devices. The myRAC app brings

everything a driver needs together in one place to make running a car cheaper and easier.

Drivers can book a service or MOT, see the service and MOT history of all their vehicles, set maintenance reminders and find the cheapest fuel at any location. And it's the quickest way to get help in a breakdown, with drivers able to pinpoint their location via GPS, and track their patrol's arrival.

Our fleet of breakdown vans is already well-equipped to cater for the needs of EVs. We can give emergency charges to depleted EVs and, if needs be, tow them with all four wheels off the road without the need for a separate flatbed recovery vehicle. In addition, the RAC was the first national roadside assistance company to put zero-emission electric patrol vans into service.

The RAC also offers drivers an online shop, legal services, vehicle history checks and inspections, a new and used car buying website, a nationwide network of used car dealerships and circa 1,000 approved garages providing the highest standards of service under the trusted RAC name.

Using our research with drivers, the RAC campaigns at a national level on the biggest motoring issues, including the condition and maintenance of the country's roads, the cost of filling and charging up, and road safety.





Advisory panel

This report was guided by the expert contributions of the following members of the RAC's Report on Motoring advisory panel:



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You can access this report,
as well as those from
previous years, online at
rac.co.uk/report-on-motoring
or by scanning this QR code:

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