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Drivers more likely to suffer a breakdown that can't be fixed when heading out rather than returning home

Breaking down and finding your vehicle can't be fixed at the roadside is never good news, but new research from the RAC* shows the Law of Sod also has a significant part to play as more of these incidents tend to happen on the outward leg of a journey than the return.

A poll of more than 2,200 drivers found nearly half (46%) had suffered a breakdown where their vehicle could not be fixed at the side of the road, with a fifth (18%) of those saying they had been through this experience on more than one occasion.

Among the unlucky ones who had experienced this one or more times, 64% had been on their way out in contrast to 54% who were heading home.

And, as if breaking down and finding your vehicle can't be fixed at the roadside isn't bad enough, having to make your own arrangements to complete your journey is enough to make most people feel as though they've just joined the cast of 'Planes, Trains and Automobiles'.

For two-thirds of people questioned by the RAC who had to make their own plans, the experience of trying to get everyone and everything from their broken-down vehicle to their final destination was classed as stressful (67%) – although possibly not quite to the same level as Steve Martin's character experienced when his flight was cancelled and he ended up struggling to get home, exasperated by having to travel with the irritating character played by John Candy.

Looking at everyone whose vehicle broke down and couldn't be fixed on the road, 90% relied on recovery services to rescue the vehicle and 77% of those were then taken home or to their desired destination in the recovery vehicle.

Of the remaining percentage, an unlucky 18% had to do their best to sort out their own interrupted travel plans while only one in 10 (10%) relied on their breakdown company's [onward travel](#) services.

Among those who tried to sort out their own arrangements to complete their journeys the ending wasn't always happy with 28% failing to make it to where they were going, while 64% did, but arrived late. Nearly half of those surveyed who had broken down but had to make their own plans, sadly missed important gatherings, such as parties, altogether (47%).

Strikingly, 41% of those with onward travel cover from their breakdown service provider were given a free hire car to get them on the move again in stark contrast to 60% of those fending for themselves who turned to family and friends for help.

In terms of where drivers had been heading in all the times they broke down and couldn't be fixed at the roadside, a fifth (20%) said they were driving to work and a similar proportion (20%) were on the way to visit family or friends. However, 11% said they had to endure the stress of an unfixable breakdown when they were driving to a UK holiday destination. While this is undoubtedly stressful it probably wasn't quite as bad as the 2% who were trying to go abroad on holiday. In addition, one in 10 (10%) found themselves in this predicament when they were going out on a day trip and 5% said their crisis occurred on the way to an important gathering or occasion.

RAC Breakdown spokesperson Simon Williams said:

“Breaking down is always stressful, but finding your car can't be fixed at the roadside is particularly bad news. Our new research shows Sod's Law also appears to have a hand in this type of breakdown as they are more likely to happen on your way out from home than they are returning – pretty much a textbook definition of the law which says that things will go wrong exactly when you really want them to go right.

“While RAC members only encounter these irreparable breakdowns

infrequently due to our patrols fixing four out of five breakdowns at the roadside, it's clearly important to have the right cover in place in case it happens to you.

“[RAC Onward Travel cover](#) is designed to take the stress out of this kind of situation by helping to get people to where they need to be by arranging alternative transport or accommodation. This really is a case of ‘better safe than sorry’.”

*From 4 April 2019, [RAC Onward Travel cover](#) is free to new customers when selected with Roadside and Recovery or Roadside, Recovery and At Home. The cover includes a hire car for up to three days or reimbursement of alternative travel costs – train, plane, taxi, or other means of public transport – up to the value of £150 per person or up to £500 for the full party. Alternatively, RAC Onward Travel offers one night's bed and breakfast accommodation for the full party (to the same values as above**) to wait for the vehicle to be fixed.*

Notes to Editors

* Research was carried out online with 2,225 members of the RAC Opinion Panel from 22 February to 2 March 2019

** Onward Travel or B&B has a value of up to £150 per person or £500 per party

About the RAC

First formed in 1897, the RAC has been looking after the needs of its members for more than 120 years.

Today it has more than eight million members and is one of the UK's most progressive motoring organisations, providing services for both private and business motorists. Whether it's [roadside assistance](#), [insurance](#), [buying a used car](#), [vehicle inspections and checks](#), [legal services](#) or up-to-the-minute [traffic and travel information](#) – the RAC offers a solution for all motoring needs. The RAC is committed to making motoring easier, safer, more affordable and more enjoyable for drivers and road users.

The RAC supports the interests of its members and UK drivers at a national level. This includes voicing concerns about the increasing cost of motoring, particularly the price of fuel and the high level of tax levied on it, advancing levels of road safety, and supporting the needs of all drivers, from young to old.

The RAC's annual [Report on Motoring](#) – first published in 1989 – is one of a kind and provides a clear insight into the concerns and issues facing today's motorists.

For the very latest news on UK fuel prices, check [RAC Fuel Watch](#). It provides a comprehensive guide to the latest UK unleaded petrol and diesel prices – both at the wholesale level and at the pump - and tracks these prices daily to help drivers check if the price they pay to fill up is a fair one.

Contacts



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