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It's what's on the outside that counts: RAC Cars uncovers Britain's 'superficial society' of motorists

Keeping up appearances is king when it comes to car cleaning as research from [RAC Cars](#)* reveals three-quarters of Brits (73%) would rather go the extra mile to make the outside of their motor gleam than tackling the inside (27%) where the filth is allowed to flourish.

Among those that admitted to cleaning their cars in the last seven days, more opted to wash the outside (24%) rather than do away with the dirt inside (14%), with two-fifths (39%) saying they think it's "important to have a clean-looking car *from the outside*" – suggesting we live in a 'superficial society' where it's what's on the outside that counts.

If you only had time to clean the inside or wash the outside of the vehicle you drive most regularly, which would you do?

	Clean inside		Wash outside	
	National average	27%	National average	73%
1	North West	34%	London	83%
2	South West	34%	North East	80%
3	Wales	32%	West Midlands	77%
4	East Midlands	31%	East of England	77%
5	Scotland	27%	South East	77%
6	Yorkshire & Humberside	25%	Yorkshire & Humberside	75%

7	West Midlands	23%	Scotland	73%
8	East of England	23%	East Midlands	69%
9	South East	23%	Wales	68%
10	North East	20%	North West	66%
11	London	17%	South West	66%

Shockingly though, 9% of those surveyed said they hadn't cleaned their cars in more than six months, which combined with the 2% who never clean theirs at all, means there are 3.3m* TLC-neglected motors on Britain's roads.

When was the last time the outside of the vehicle you drive most regularly washed?

	Over six months ago			Never	
	National average	6%		National average	1%
1	East Midlands	10%	1	Scotland	4%
2	North East	7%	2	East Midlands	3%
3	Yorkshire & Humberside	7%	3	North West	2%
4	London	7%	4	Yorkshire & Humberside	2%
5	East of England	6%	5	East of England	2%
6	South East	6%	6	South West	1%
7	Wales	6%	7	South East	1%
8	North West	5%	8	North East	0%
9	South West	4%	9	West Midlands	0%
10	Scotland	4%	10	London	0%
11	West Midlands	3%	11	Wales	0%

Strangely, both sexes agree nothing beats a DIY clean, with the [RAC Cars](#) research showing most motorists (48%) prefer to wash the outside of their cars themselves, followed by 29% who opt to have the dirt wiped away by a hand-wash expert. And, it appears the automated carwash may be going down the drain as just seven per cent say it's their top choice for a regular rinse. Asked to compare the quality of their own handiwork to an automated car wash, three in 10 (29%) said their cleaning was equivalent to a gold or executive standard whereas more than a third (35%) admitted it was really

only bronze level.

How would you describe the results of the last time you cleaned the vehicles you drive most regularly, in automatic car wash terms?

	Gold / Executive			Bronze / Basic	
	National average	29%		National average	35%
1	West Midlands	41%	1	North West	46%
2	London	41%	2	Wales	42%
3	Scotland	36%	3	North East	38%
4	North West	32%	4	South East	38%
5	Yorkshire & Humberside	30%	5	South West	37%
6	East Midlands	30%	6	East of England	36%
7	North East	29%	7	East Midlands	30%
8	East of England	29%	8	Scotland	30%
9	South West	23%	9	West Midlands	29%
10	South East	22%	10	Yorkshire & Humberside	28%
11	Wales	22%	11	London	24%

The devil is in the detail when it comes to car washing, wiping or waxing as almost half of motorists (47%) say they do it to make their cars feel brand new again. Some do it for love by cleaning their motors before going on a date (2%) and just five per cent feel pressured into washing their vehicles if they're giving a colleague a lift.

RAC Cars spokesman Pete Williams said: "The importance of cleaning the car clearly varies from household to household but our research has found much greater preference for washing the outside as opposed to vacuuming and dusting the inside. We suspect the reason for this is not wanting to be seen driving around in a filthy-looking car which means if there's only limited time to give the car some TLC, the outside takes precedence.

"Unless you give friends or colleagues lifts, not many people get to see the inside of your car so you can get away with it not being that clean. And, interestingly, despite the prevalence of automatic car washes and

independent car cleaning companies, the DIY clean was still preferred by many.

“Clearly, some people just don’t prioritise cleaning their cars at all as 1% say they never have and 6% haven’t done so in more than six months. Those that do, have varying standards with a healthy amount (29%) saying their work was as good as a gold or executive automatic car wash.

“But the best motivation for getting the car cleaning equipment out has to be having a nice new motor to take pride in, whether that’s a brand new model straight out of the showroom or a ‘new to you’ used vehicle from a dealer or private seller. RAC Cars gives buyers the chance to find their perfect four-wheel match together with the buying confidence the RAC name brings.”

Notes to Editors

* RAC Opinion Panel surveyed 1,226 motorists.

** 3.3 million figure based on 30.3 million cars on the road – nine per cent of survey respondents said they had not cleaned their car at all for six months or more and two per cent said they had never done so.

About the RAC

With more than eight million members, the RAC is one of the UK’s most progressive motoring organisations, providing services for both private and business motorists. Whether it’s roadside assistance, insurance, 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 is the motorist’s champion and campaigns to support the interests of its members and UK motorists 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 – 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](#) or follow [#racfuelwatch on Twitter](#). RAC Fuel Watch is a comprehensive guide to the latest UK unleaded petrol and diesel prices – both at the wholesale level and at the pump. RAC Fuel Watch analyses how prices changed through the previous month and compares the most recent prices with those from three, six and 12 months before.

Key facts:

- RAC patrols fix four out of five vehicles at the roadside and on average within 30 minutes
- RAC vans carry more than 500 parts and tools to get members' vehicles going again
- 92% of members would recommend RAC Rescue to their friends and family

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