



Image: RAC

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Pothole-related breakdowns jump in first three months of 2020

RAC patrols rescued some 3,426 motorists whose vehicles may have fallen victim to the UK's pothole-ridden roads in the first three months of 2020, more than during the same period last year.

Data from the RAC Pothole Index* shows this represented a massive 64% increase of 1,337 compared to October to December 2019 (2,089) and 150 more than the first quarter last year (3,276) – a rise of 4.5%.

The start of the coronavirus lockdown – which came into force on 23rd March – however meant there were nine days when far fewer cars were on the country's roads, so the actual number of pothole-related breakdowns may have been higher under normal conditions.

In the first quarter of 2020 breakdowns resulting from damaged shock absorbers, broken springs and distorted wheels that are most likely to be attributable to poor road surfaces made up 1.6% of all the RAC's call-outs for its individual members**. This was considerably up on Q4 2019 when the figure stood at 0.9% and marginally up on the same period a year ago – 1.5%.

The RAC's Pothole Index, which is an accurate long-term indicator of the health of the UK's roads, suggests the overall standard of the roads has improved a little [as](#) the Index currently stands at 1.6, down from 2.3 in the same period last year and slightly down on Q4 2019 (1.7). This does mean however that drivers are still 1.6 times more likely to break down as a result of pothole-related damage than they were back in 2006 when the RAC first started collecting data.

While winter was relatively mild overall, the UK suffered catastrophic flooding in some areas between November 2019 and February 2020, which is bound to have taken its toll on overall road surface quality.

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RAC head of roads policy Nicholas Lyes said:

“The jump in pothole-related breakdowns from the last three months of the year to the first quarter of the next year is always the largest as winter weather has the greatest effect of all in wearing down our roads.

“Many parts of the country suffered very wet weather conditions throughout February, though the winter overall was generally mild. While the wet conditions mercifully gave way to much drier weather as we headed into March, it’s still likely that the storms and floods were major factors in why the number of pothole-related breakdowns was higher than the same period last year.

“While millions of cars are mostly confined to streets and driveways during the coronavirus lockdown, people are more reliant than ever on their vehicles to buy food and important household items. The last thing any driver needs on the way to do their essential weekly shop is to suffer a nasty pothole-related breakdown that puts their car out of action, especially with fewer garages open than usual. This means the quality of local roads is, ironically, is as important as ever.

“In his Budget in March, the Chancellor committed to funding our local roads and it is clear that the economic recovery as the UK emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic will need to be built on solid infrastructure – which of course needs to include good quality roads.

“Moreover, it will also be interesting to see if lower traffic volumes during the UK’s lockdown will help prevent further deterioration of roads as fewer wheels going over weaknesses in the asphalt should contribute to less surface wear.”

To report a pothole, or to find out if you suffer from damage from one and wonder if you can claim for compensation, visit [the RAC’s pothole online guide](#). The RAC has also [published a guide on looking after cars during the pandemic](#).

Notes to Editors

* The RAC Pothole Index is a 12-month rolling measure of the share of

pothole fault breakdowns compared to 2006, corrected for seasonal weather effects and improving longer term vehicle reliability Data has been collected by the RAC since 2006. Data excludes punctures.

** The RAC provides peace of mind breakdown cover for more than 12m private and business drivers. The figures quoted are based on its individual members who buy policies direct from the RAC.

About the RAC

The RAC provides complete peace of mind to 12m UK private and business drivers, whatever their motoring needs. Its services include:

- **[Breakdown assistance](#)**. Its highly-skilled, 1,600-strong branded patrol workforce attends more than two million breakdowns every year, fixing on average four out of five vehicles at the roadside. The RAC's patrol fleet is one of the most advanced in the world, and was the first to roll out both an [All-Wheels-Up recovery system](#), allowing the vast majority of vehicles to be recovered from a single patrol van, and [EV Boost](#) mobile electric vehicle charging units
- **[Insurance](#)**. The RAC is a top-five [car insurance](#) broker having surpassed the 500,000 policies-in-force milestone in 2018. It also offers ['black box' telematics policies](#), as well as home and travel insurance
- **[Other motoring services](#)**. The RAC leads in the development of new solutions for business, fleets, electric vehicles and future car technology. Its additional products and services include a [personal loans offering](#), a [used car buying website](#), [vehicle inspections and checks](#), [legal services](#) or up-to-the-minute [traffic and travel information](#). It also has a network of [Approved Dealers](#) and [Approved Garages](#) which combine the trust of RAC brand with local service and convenience

The RAC also works to support the interests of its members and UK drivers on the most important motoring issues which it identifies via the annual [RAC Report on Motoring](#) and the [RAC Opinion Panel](#). The Report on Motoring is the longest running analysis of driver opinion in the UK having been published every year since 1989.

For more information about the RAC, visit the [RAC website](#).

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