RAC
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RAC data confirms car use is rising despite the lockdown

Ahead of this weekend's announcement on how the UK might begin to ease the current lockdown restrictions, an RAC study confirms drivers are already using their cars more than they were earlier in the coronavirus lockdown.

The study analysed RAC 'black box' driving data, breakdown numbers and route planning figures since the lockdown began. Comparing the second week of lockdown with last week*, 11% more cars were on the road and 23% more daily miles were driven, based on analysis of hundreds of thousands of

trips taken by RAC Black Box Insurance customers with telematics units fitted. Vehicle breakdowns are also up, with those attended by RAC patrols up by nearly a fifth (18%) across the same period.

The number of routes planned via the RAC Routeplanner is also increasing, suggesting a rise in trips being taken by drivers. More routes were planned on Monday 5 May 2020 than on any other day during the lockdown, with 16% more planned on this day than just a week earlier.

The data is supported by the findings of a new survey by the RAC which suggests that four-in-10 drivers (41%) admit they are now using their vehicles more frequently than earlier in the nationwide coronavirus lockdown.**

The survey of 1,500 drivers found that the top reason for using a car more was for food and grocery shopping (almost a quarter, 23% of drivers), while 9% said that they were doing so to pick up essential supplies or for trips to a pharmacy. But worryingly, a small but appreciable 5% said they were using their vehicle more now to specifically purchase alcohol, while the same proportion (5%) said they were going out in the car specifically to visit DIY stores as Britons look to make home improvements while spending more time at home.

A slightly smaller proportion of drivers (4%) said they were using their car more to drive somewhere to do exercise, and the same percentage said they were using their vehicle more for work purposes. A fraction of drivers (1%) said they were taking their car solely to give it a run, with the same proportion citing the reason as driving to a beauty spot. The same percentage (1%) said they driving to see relatives or friends though it is unclear whether these relatives are vulnerable and require assistance.

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RAC head of roads policy Nicholas Lyes said:

“There is now mounting evidence that people are venturing back out in their vehicles for more essential, as well as arguably non-essential journeys. This perhaps is being driven by lockdown fatigue and boredom while the sunny spring weather might also be enticing drivers back into their vehicles. Additionally, some who are indoors might have chosen to carry out home maintenance and DIY, so have taken an opportunity to visit DIY stores that are now open.

“Our own data clearly shows a slight, but nonetheless steady, rise in the number of drivers using their vehicles, and the distances they are travelling in them on a daily basis, compared with earlier in the lockdown. As we near the end of the seventh week of the lockdown, all eyes are on what the Government announces this weekend in terms of how and when movement restrictions might be lifted.

“Until anything concrete is confirmed, the current advice remains to only go out when necessary for essential purposes, or where you cannot work from home. Even where drivers need to head out to pick up food shopping, this should be done as infrequently as possible to help stop the spread of the virus. The question drivers should ask themselves before venturing out is ‘do I *really* need to?’

“By only using the car for essential journeys at this time, we’re not only helping prevent the virus spreading, but are also reducing the risk of being involved in a road collision and avoiding putting any further pressure on the NHS.”

Notes to Editors

* Vehicle numbers, vehicle miles and breakdown data analysed comparing w/c 30 March (lockdown week two) with w/c 27 April (lockdown week six)

** Research conducted among UK drivers between 29 April and 5 May 2020 on behalf of the RAC. Sample: 1,534 UK drivers

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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