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Three-in-10 drivers have witnessed another motorist being physically abused

Three in every 10 motorists (30%) say they have personally witnessed some form of physical abuse related to a driving incident in the past 12 months, [research](#) for the annual [RAC Report on Motoring](#) has found.*

And, almost half of the 1,753 drivers surveyed for the study* – the equivalent of around 20m drivers – claim to have seen verbal abuse dished out to another motorist this year, while 60% of drivers say they see a greater number of road-rage incidents now than they did 10 years ago.

This is no doubt why the proportion of motorists who say that their single biggest motoring concern is the aggressive behaviour of other drivers has doubled – from 4% to 8% – over the past 12 months, putting it in fourth spot in the RAC's 2019 list of 20 top motoring concerns.

What's more, UK drivers are now so fearful of the dangers posed by other motorists that more than a third (36%**), the equivalent of more than 14 million car owners, say their top motoring-related concern this year is some form of illegal, anti-social or dangerous behaviour on the part of other drivers – behaviour that has the potential to put the lives of all other road users at serious risk.

These feared menaces, which include drivers breaking traffic laws such as tailgating, middle-lane hogging, running red lights or ignoring signs (5% ranked as top concern); texting at the wheel; drink-driving; and road rage – have never ranked higher in the annual research than they have this year.

[Phone use: hardcore of younger drivers still using handheld phones](#)

While aggression at the wheel poses significant levels of danger, the use of mobile phones by other drivers can be just as life-threatening – if not more so. This year's RAC Report on Motoring research has found that this is the most commonly cited top concern with 12% of drivers, the equivalent of around five million people, saying it is their biggest worry.

Staggeringly, however, the RAC's research shows there remains a significant hardcore of motorists who admit to using their phones without hands-free kits while at the wheel, despite the stronger penalties that were introduced in 2017. Almost a quarter of all drivers questioned (23%) – the equivalent of just under 10m motorists – confess to making or receiving calls on a handheld phone while they are driving at least occasionally. But the problem appears to be particularly acute among those aged between 17 and 24, where this rate is more than double at 51% – a figure unchanged compared to 2018.

Meanwhile, 17% of all drivers – and a shocking 35% of under-25s – say they check texts, email or social media while driving, despite the heightened level of risk involved in looking away from the road for seconds at a time.

The risk of being distracted by an incoming call or other form of notification appears to be extremely high for many motorists. Only a small minority of drivers (15%) follow the official government advice to put their phone in their glove compartment while driving: most people either keep their phone in a pocket or bag (45%) or put it on the seat or console next to them (25%). A quarter (24%) of motorists say they usually leave their phones switched on with the sound on when driving, rather than putting the device on silent or switching to some form of safe-driving mode.

Drink- and drug-driving

A significant number of people appear happy to take the risk of driving with alcohol in their systems with a fifth of motorists (19%) – equating to more than seven million individuals – admitting they think or know they have driven while over the drink-drive limit in the past 12 months, either shortly after having a drink, or the morning after drinking.

This proportion rises to just under half (44%) of motorists aged under 25, and 27% of those aged between 25 and 44. Almost a quarter of the motoring public (23%) – which would roughly equate to over nine million drivers – say that they normally consume at least one small alcoholic drink whenever they

drive to a social occasion where family and/or friends are present.

Eleven per cent of the drivers surveyed by the RAC say that their biggest concern in 2019 is other road users under the influence either of alcohol or drugs (drink-driving 7%; drug-driving 4%). Together with the condition and maintenance of local roads, this was the joint third ranking top motoring of the 20 put to drivers behind drivers using handheld mobile phones (12%) and the cost of fuel (12%).

RAC reaction

RAC road safety spokesperson Simon Williams said: “All the fears associated with the behaviour of other drivers on the road have never featured as highly in our research as top motoring concerns as they have this year. This is primarily due to double the proportion of people ranking the aggressive behaviour of other drivers as their top concern this year (4% to 8%).

“Drivers using handheld mobile phones, drink-driving, drug-driving and breaking traffic laws remained as number-one concerns for similar proportions of motorists to last year’s research. This means people must have experienced some very disturbing aggressive behaviour on the UK’s roads in the last year for them all to rank in top spot together.

“The most likely explanation must surely be a combination of factors including the pressure of modern life, reliance on the car for so many journeys, record volumes of traffic and congestion leading to never before seen frustration at the wheel.

“Perhaps it is also the case that our tolerance of other people who make mistakes while driving is falling. A quick sorry in the form of an apologetic wave could go a long way to taking the heat out of a situation, but unfortunately all too often it is a hand gesture of another sort that leads to an unpleasant car confrontation.”

Report on Motoring data - in charts

- [Drivers’ top concerns between 2015 and 2019](#)
- [Drivers’ admission to illegally making and receiving calls using a handheld phone, by age](#)

- [Drivers' admission to texting, using social media or emailing using a handheld phone, by age](#)
- [Drivers' admission to taking photos or video using a mobile phone while driving, by age](#)
- [How often drivers' break speed limits 2018 and 2019, on 70/60/40/30/20 mph limit roads](#)

For more detail on this year's report, [visit the RAC Report on Motoring 2019 website](#).

Notes to Editors

* Research for the RAC Report on Motoring 2019 was carried out by Quadrangle. In total 1,753 UK motorists (i.e. those who hold a full, current driving licence, drive at least once a month and have a motor vehicle in their household) were surveyed between 23 May and 3 June 2019, with the questionnaire taking around 30 minutes to complete.

** 36% consists of the following concerns ranked topped by motorists: drivers using handheld phones – 12%; aggressive behaviour of other drivers on the road – 8%; drivers under the influence of drink – 7%; drivers under the influence of drugs – 4%; drivers breaking traffic laws – 5%.

About the RAC

The RAC provides complete peace of mind to 11m 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](#)

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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