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Lockdown speeders: drivers exploit coronavirus restrictions to speed excessively

‘Lockdown speeding’ has become a very unwelcome by-product of the Government’s fight against coronavirus with 20 police forces catching their worst offenders at speeds in excess of 100mph, according to data analysed by the RAC as part of a freedom of information (FOI) request to all British police forces*.

The worst speeder in the first three weeks of the lockdown was caught in

West Yorkshire driving at 151mph on the M62 motorway – a shocking 81mph over the speed limit. This was 11mph faster than the next fastest recorded which was 140mph on the A14 in Suffolk.

Six forces – The Met, Northamptonshire, Gwent, Staffordshire, Kent and Humberside – all caught motorists driving at speeds in excess of 130mph and three others – Police Scotland, The Met and Lancashire – recorded drivers at speeds over 120mph.

The highest speed seen in a 40mph limit was 134mph – a frightening 94mph above the limit – recorded by the Met on the A10 in North London, while Cambridgeshire Police detected a car being driven at 73mph in a 30mph area. Derbyshire Constabulary also caught a driver going at 108mph on the M1 – 68mph above the speed limit. The only other force whose highest speed was in a 40mph limit was Bedfordshire – here the driver was clocked at 104mph on Airport Way in Luton.

Only three forces saw their worst speeding offences occur in 50mph limits, with South Wales Police recording by far the worst with a driver being caught at 108mph on the M4 at Port Talbot. Four constabularies captured their worst speeding offences in 60mph limits with a driver in West Mercia snapped at 92mph on the M5 between junctions five and six.

While only one other force – Durham Constabulary – caught their fastest speeder in a 30mph limit (44mph), nationally the first three weeks of the coronavirus lockdown still produced 17,363 speeding offences in 30mph limits (in the 30 force areas which responded to the RAC's FOI) compared to 40,497 in the same period in 2019.

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RAC road safety spokesman Simon Williams said: “Some of the speeds police forces have caught drivers doing are truly shocking. At such high speeds there is virtually no time to react should anything unexpected happen in front such as a car changing lanes at the last second or a vehicle having to brake suddenly.

“Clearly, some drivers have taken advantage of quieter roads to speed excessively putting the lives of others at risk at the worst possible time, but at the same time it’s encouraging that so many police forces have taken firm action even during the lockdown, which sends a strong message to other would-be offenders.

“While the most of highest speeds were recorded were on motorways, some occurred on roads with much lower speed limits, which is an even greater concern. The figures for speeding offences on 30mph roads are particularly worrying as far more people have been walking and cycling due to the lockdown.

“As some schools and nurseries in England begin to open their doors from this week there will be even more pedestrians on the roads so we urge every driver to obey the speed limit and keep all road users safe.”

Police force	Highest speed detected (mph)	Speed limit where recorded	Mph over the limit	Stretch of road	Time of day
West Yorkshire Police	151	70	81	M62	21:55
Suffolk Constabulary	140	70	70	A14	Not provided
Northamptonshire Police	138	70	68	M1 J17-J16	21:11
Gwent Police	136	70	66	M4 J23a-J24	Not provided
Staffordshire Police	135	70	65	Not provided	Not provided
Metropolitan Police	134	40	94	A10 N London	Not provided
Kent Police	132	70	62	M20	16:00-17:00
Humberside Police	130	70	60	M62 J35	11:43
Police Scotland	128	70	58	A77 Southbound btwn Monkton & Sandyford	13:56
Lancashire Constabulary	120	70	50	M6 J35-J33 & M65	05:30 & 21:30
Merseyside Police	115	70	45	M6 Southbound J24-23	15:21
North Wales Police	111	70	41	A55	12:46
Norfolk Constabulary	110	70	40	A11	Not provided

Derbyshire Constabulary	108	40	68	M1 (N)	20:33
West Midlands Police	108	70	38	M5 J3-J4	Not provided
South Wales Police	108	50	58	M4 - Port Talbot	23:51
Gloucestershire Constabulary	106	70	36	M5	08:00 & 12:00
Bedfordshire Constabulary	104	40	64	Airport Way Luton	10:02
Devon & Cornwall Police	101	70	31	A38 Haldon Hill	14:00-18:00
Hampshire Constabulary	101	70	31	A331	18:28
Cheshire Constabulary	95	70	25	M56 & M6 - 5 vehicles	5 vehicles
West Mercia Police	92	60	32	M5 J5-J6	05:07
Cumbria Constabulary	89	60	29	A590	Morning
South Yorkshire Police	88	60	28	A616 (T) East past A629 Exit Barnsley	Not provided
Dyfed-Powys Police	88	60	28	A483 - Belan	12:26pm
Cleveland Police	86	70	16	A19	16:25
Northumbria Police	86	70	16	A1 Felton by Pass	Midday
Dorset Police	73	50	23	A31 St Leonards	10:00-11:00

Cambridgeshire Constabulary	73	30	43	Barnwell Road, Cambridge	19:30
Leicestershire Police	58	50	8	A47 Uppingham Road, Billesdon	09:07
Durham Constabulary	44	30	14	Watling Street, Consett	11:52

Notes to Editors

* The RAC's freedom of information request was sent to all police forces in England, Wales and Scotland. It asked for the highest recorded speed by a driver within each force area between the dates of 23rd March 2020 and 13th April 2020. In total 30 forces provided data. It also asked how many drivers were caught exceeding a 30mph limit in this period and the same three weeks in 2019.

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 UK, 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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