



Image: RAC

Nov 20, 2023 00:01 GMT

The end of the humble spare: just 3% of new cars come with a back-up wheel in the boot as standard

Only 3% of new cars on sale in the UK today come with any form of spare wheel as standard, increasing the number of breakdowns where drivers need help in the event of an unreparable flat tyre, new analysis by driving services company the RAC has found.*

After reviewing equipment lists of more than 300 car models across 28 brands – everything from the smallest superminis to the largest 4x4s – [the](#)

[RAC found just eight \(2.6%\) come with a spare](#), with half of these only available on specific variants of the same model. Perhaps unsurprisingly, with a couple of exceptions, it is predominantly larger, heavier-duty vehicles that come with a spare wheel.

The dramatic decline of the spare wheel, has had a stark effect on RAC breakdown call-out volumes with patrols going out to nearly 200,000 jobs last year where drivers experienced a puncture but found they had no spare wheel, up from around 165,000 four years earlier.**

And the situation is not going to change with the advent of electric vehicles either, with cars needing to use the space that in some cases was once the home of the humble spare wheel to accommodate battery packs.

Luckily for drivers, the RAC was the first breakdown assistance provider to equip all its iconic orange vans with a multi-fit, five-stud spare wheel, which its patrols can quickly fit to a stricken vehicle in the event of a puncture. From this week, the RAC is also now rolling out a new version of the spare featuring four studs, as car manufacturers are increasingly fitting four-stud wheels to their models, meaning it can help more drivers than ever.

Spare wheels have increasingly fallen out of favour with car manufacturers as tougher legislation demanded that they do all they can to reduce emissions. With a spare wheel easily adding up to 20kg to the overall weight of a vehicle, removing them from the standard list of equipment supplied with a new car has been an easy change for manufacturers to make to increase fuel efficiency.

RAC Breakdown spokesman Rod Dennis said:

“Getting a puncture on a journey has to be one of the most irritating breakdowns for drivers, especially if it’s as a result of hitting one of the plethora of potholes that currently characterise so many of our roads. In the past, a driver could have reached for the spare wheel in the boot but this new analysis shows that these are now pretty much a thing of the past, with a minuscule number of new cars sold in the UK coming with one as standard.

“It’s understandable therefore that drivers are increasingly calling on us to help them out of a tight spot, and it’s a trend we fully expect to continue as

electric vehicles are even less likely to come with a spare. Fortunately, we're continuing to innovate to ensure our members get the best service possible should they breakdown as a result of a puncture, having just rolled out a four-stud version of our pioneering multi-fit spare wheel, that's carried by every single one of our patrols.

“Interestingly, in many cases drivers ordering a new car can still buy a spare wheel – whether that's a full-size one or the more common lightweight 'space saver' type – as an optional extra. This might turn out to be a wise investment if you are one of the many drivers who unfortunately suffers a puncture.”

The [RAC's annual Report on Motoring](#)*** released in October found drivers' anger with the poor state of Britain's local roads has reached its highest point in nine years, making it the top overall concern by a considerable margin, having displaced the price of fuel as motorists' main worry.

Earlier this month, [the RAC released figures](#) that showed its patrols had attended a record number of breakdowns over the summer where potholes were to blame – nearly 6,000 separate breakdown jobs between July and September, the highest number over this period since data was first recorded in 2006.

* 313 separate car models analysed across all major manufacturers. Those that come with some form of spare at the time of research are: Fiat Tipo, Ford Focus (selected models), Hyundai Sante Fe (PHEV), Land Rover Defender, SEAT Ateca (selected models), Suzuki Across, Volvo XC90 (not PHEV), Toyota Land Cruiser. Webpage with details (goes live Monday 20 November) here:

** RAC breakdown data for 2018 and 2022

** RAC Report on Motoring 2023 – survey completed by a nationally-representative sample of 2,583 UK drivers

The press office email address is press.office@rac.co.uk and media centre is at media.rac.co.uk. **Please note:** the press office is unable to help with

individual customer enquiries - please visit the [RAC contacts page](#) to find the right contact.

About the RAC

The RAC, an iconic UK brand, provides complete peace of mind to more than 13 million private and business drivers, whatever their motoring needs. As well as its premium nationwide breakdown assistance service – with an expert branded patrol workforce attending more than two million breakdowns every year – it offers a wide range of market-leading products across insurance, legal services, vehicle inspections and service, maintenance and repair. The RAC is also at the forefront in helping drivers make the switch to electric vehicles and leads in the development of new solutions for businesses and OEMs, partnering with the best in the motoring and mobility space.

Visit the [RAC website](#).

Contacts



RAC Press Office

Press Contact

press.office@rac.co.uk

Emails monitored during normal office hours. For breakdown queries, call 0330 159 0740

ISDN number on request