



Making safe and healthy journeys

ROADMAP to safe and healthy journeys



Direct Line®

GREEN FLAG

COMMON SENSE TO THE RESCUE



In 2021, Brake, in partnership with Direct Line and Green Flag, launched the **Roadmap to safe and healthy journeys** to enable people to learn about, and commit to making, safe and healthy journey choices.

To support the Roadmap, Brake asked 2,004 drivers about their journey choices and experiences. The survey was carried out online in April 2021 by independent market research company Surveygoo.

This report is based on the findings from that survey.

www.brake.org.uk/roadmap



Introduction

Road crashes are devastating events for families, friends and communities. More than 1,500 people die on UK roads every year, and many thousands more receive catastrophic, life-changing injuries.¹

We know that driver behaviour contributes to many road crashes. We also know that there are many simple solutions that can help prevent road death and injury – and enable everyone to make safe and healthy journeys.

Our report shows that the majority (55%) of journeys are made by car, and although safety is a priority for many drivers, they still don't take all the precautions they can to protect themselves and other road users, particularly when it comes to failing to wear a seat belt, speed, drink-driving and distraction, collectively known as 'the Fatal Four'.

Seat belts are one of the simplest and most effective ways to protect against death and injury in a crash.^{2,3} Despite this, our research shows that many drivers still choose not to wear a seat belt for every journey, with almost two-fifths of drivers aged 25–34 telling us they don't always belt up.

Speed is also a significant factor in many crashes, and the greater the speed, the higher the likelihood of death or serious injury if a crash happens, yet a significant proportion (36%) of people feel it is sometimes acceptable to break the speed limit, and only a quarter (24%) would speak up if a driver was speeding.

We also found that a substantial number of people choose to drive the morning after drinking alcohol, even though they suspect they might be over the limit, and only a quarter of drivers turn their phone off or put it on silent before making a journey.



At Brake we believe that every road death is preventable and that everyone has the right to make safe and healthy journeys. That's why we partnered with Direct Line and Green Flag to create the Roadmap to Safe and Healthy Journeys, giving vital information to help you learn about, and commit to making, safe and healthy journey choices. The Roadmap covers eight key topics, from choosing the right vehicle and checking it's safe to travel, to making sure you are fit to drive or ride, and even what to do if you breakdown or crash.

We all have a shared responsibility to use roads safely, to protect ourselves and others, and we urge everyone to use the Roadmap, to commit to using roads safely, and to play your part in reducing deaths and serious injuries on our roads.

Jason Wakeford
Head of campaigns, Brake



About the survey

In this report, we explore opinions on a range of topics related to making safe and healthy journeys. We sought to understand how people make choices before embarking on a journey and while travelling, and what factors might influence the decisions they make about their journeys. We also explored their knowledge of areas of law relating to road safety.

This report covers respondents' answers to questions about the following topics:

- Choosing the right vehicle
- Choosing the right mode of transport for a journey
- Checking it's safe to travel
- Checking your car or bike is safe to use
- Making sure that you are fit to drive or ride
- Being safe and secure in your vehicle
- How to drive and ride safely
- Knowing what to do if your vehicle breaks down or crashes.

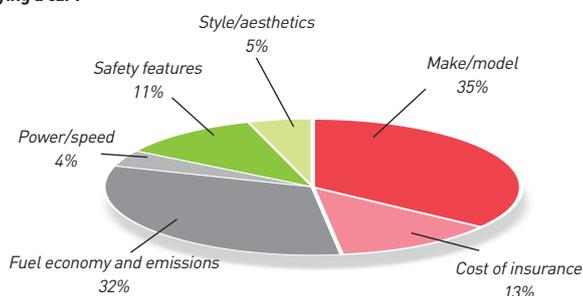
Results

In question 1, we asked people what they consider to be the most important factor (excluding price) when buying a new car.

Vehicle make and model was the most important factor, with 35% of respondents selecting this option; however, fuel economy and emissions (32%) was also highly rated. Almost a third (32%) of respondents said that environmental impact was the most important thing for them when buying a new car – eight times the number who selected power/speed (4%). Cost of insurance was the third most frequently chosen response (13%), and 11% cited safety features as their primary concern. Just 5% selected style/aesthetics as the most important factor.

Results also show that for drivers aged 18-24, cost of insurance is a much more important consideration, chosen by 35% of respondents in this age bracket, whereas only 14% in this age range would prioritise fuel economy and emissions. Younger drivers also express less concern about safety features (3%). Our results show that the importance drivers place on their vehicle's ability to protect them appears to increase as they age, with 13% of 55-64 year-olds ranking safety features as their highest priority.

Q1. Disregarding price, what is the most important factor for you, if you were buying a car?

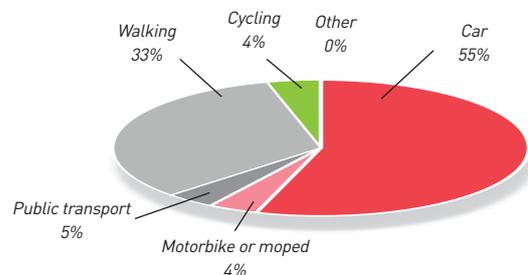


In question 2, we asked people about how they choose to make short journeys.

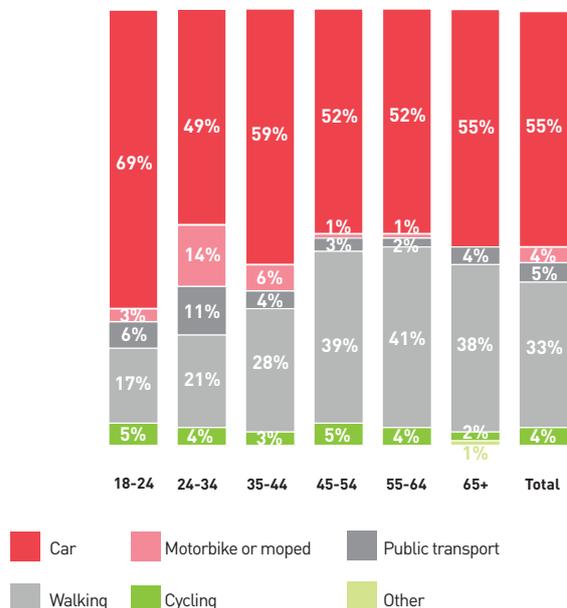
Most respondents (55%) said they tend to use a car to make journeys of less than two miles. Walking is the next most popular choice (33%), with relatively low numbers of people selecting public transport (5%), motorbike or moped (4%), or cycling (4%). People who live outside cities are more likely to walk (42%), but they are just as likely to choose a car for short journeys as the wider population (53%).

Younger people (aged 18-24) told us that they are much more likely to drive for short journeys than older people are, with 69% choosing cars as their preferred method of transport. This compares with 49% of those aged 25-34 and 52% of 55-64 year-olds. Younger people are also the least likely to walk for trips of less than two miles (17%), whereas 41% of respondents aged 55-64 told us they would walk these short distances.

Q2. What is your default mode of transport for a short journey (under 2 miles)?



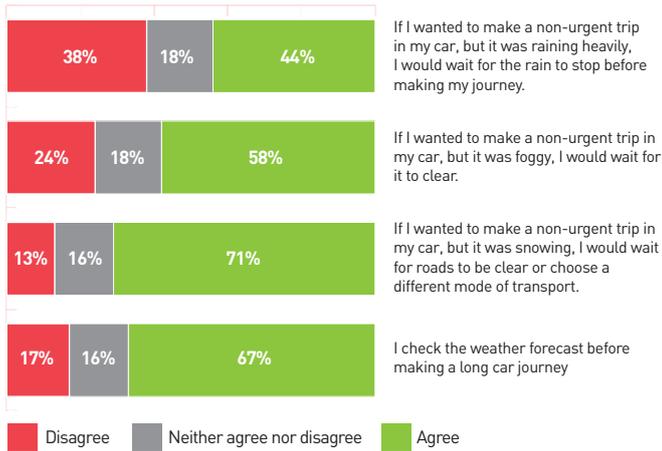
Breakdown by age



In question 3, we asked people to rate their agreement with a series of statements related to the weather.

Two-thirds of drivers (67%) told us they would check the weather forecast before making a long car journey; however, the levels of concern expressed about different weather conditions varied. While 71% of respondents would wait for the roads to be clear or choose a different mode of transport if it was snowing, only 44% said they would delay their journey for heavy rain. More than half of respondents (58%) said they would wait for fog to clear before making their journey.

Q3. Rate your agreement with the following statements:



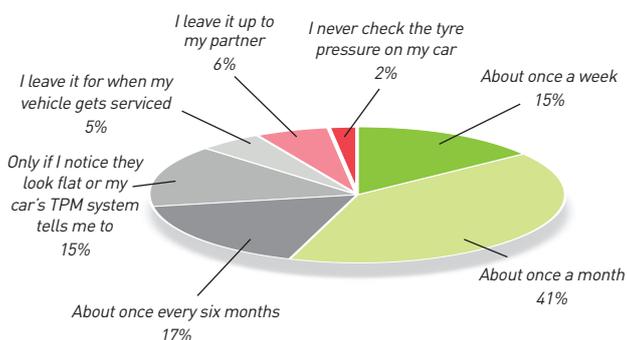
In question 4, we asked drivers how often they check the tyre pressure on their cars.

Our feedback shows most respondents check their tyre pressure once a month, with 41% of respondents choosing this option. Only 15% of drivers said they check their tyres about once a week, as recommended, rising to 23% in the 35-44 age bracket.

The remaining 45% of drivers conduct tyre checks far less frequently, with 17% checking their tyres about once every six months, and 15% checking them only if they look flat or if they are prompted to by their vehicle's tyre pressure monitoring system. One in 20 (5%) said they leave checks for when their vehicle is serviced and 2% never check pressure at all.

Overall, 6% of respondents told us they leave tyre pressure checks up to their partner. However, women are much more likely to say this than men – 12% of women selected this option, compared with less than 1% of men.

Q4. How often do you check the tyre pressure on your car?



Tyre pressure

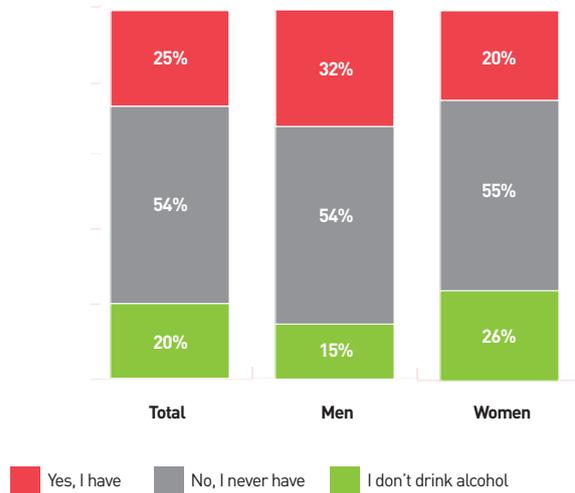
Maintaining the correct tyre pressure is important for safety. It can also help fuel efficiency and extend the life of your tyres. Under-inflated tyres have uneven contact with the road and can wear out more quickly, while over-inflated tyres can cause loss of traction and increase braking distances. Around one in six (17%) of Green Flag call outs are for issues related to either tyres or wheels.

Roadmap advice: Buy a hand-held tyre pressure gauge and check your tyre pressure weekly, when the tyres are cold. The correct pressure will be written in your vehicle handbook.

In question 5, we asked people whether they have ever chosen to drive the morning after drinking alcohol, even if they thought they might still be over the limit.

A quarter of people (25%) told us they have knowingly driven the morning after drinking even though they still may be over the limit – this equates to nearly a third of all respondents who drink alcohol. People aged 25-34 are most likely to have done this (44%), compared with just 14% of drivers over 65. Men are also more likely to admit driving the morning after drinking than women, with 32% choosing this option, compared with 20% of women.

Q5. On the morning after a night where you drank alcohol, have you ever decided to drive, even though you thought you might still be over the limit?



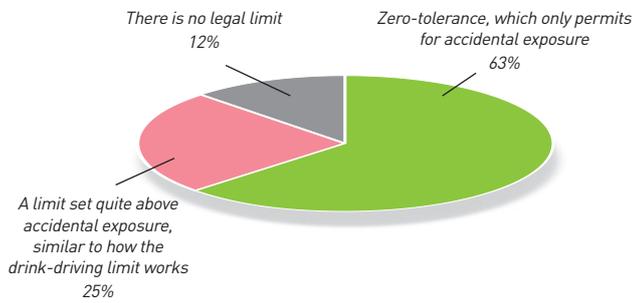


In question 6, we asked people what they think the legal limit is for THC in their bloodstream while driving.

THC is the active ingredient in cannabis. Current law takes a 'zero tolerance' approach to driving under the influence of cannabis, with the blood limit set at two micrograms of THC per litre to account for accidental exposure – one of the lowest thresholds for any 'illegal' drug.⁴

The majority of respondents correctly identified that there is a zero-tolerance approach to driving under the influence of cannabis (63%), while a quarter (25%) believed that the limit was higher, similar to how the limit for drink-driving works. More than one in 10 people (12%) told us they thought there was no legal limit.

Q6. What do you think the legal limit for the active ingredient in cannabis (THC) is in your bloodstream, when driving?



Drink- and drug-driving

Even very small amounts of alcohol or drugs affect your driving and could cause a devastating crash. Just one small drink impairs your coordination, slows reactions and distorts judgement. Cannabis also affects coordination and reaction times, while drugs like ecstasy, speed, cocaine and many legal highs can make you jumpy, paranoid, confused and overconfident. Many prescription and over-the-counter medications also affect driving ability, for instance causing drowsiness, affecting reaction times, coordination, concentration or vision.

Roadmap advice: Not a drop, not a drag! To keep yourself and others safe, never drink any alcohol or take illegal drugs before driving. If you have to drive the next day, limit yourself to one or two drinks.



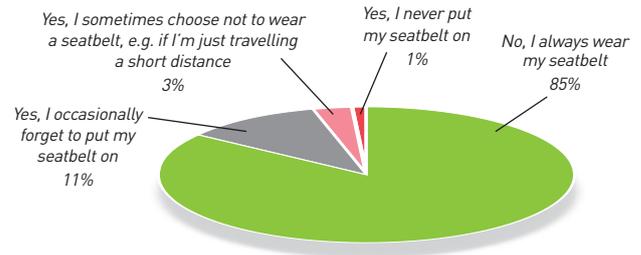
In question 7, we asked people if they ever make a journey in their car without wearing a seatbelt.

Most people (85%) told us that they always wear a seatbelt while travelling in a car. However, 11% said they occasionally forget to put their belt on, and 3% sometimes choose not to wear a seatbelt if they are making short trips. The remaining 1% said they never put their seatbelt on at all.

Looking at the results by age, older drivers are most likely to say they always wear a seatbelt. Almost every driver in the age brackets 45–54, 55–64 and 65+ selected this option (94%, 96% and 96%, respectively). In contrast, 71% of 18–24 year olds – and just 62% of those aged 25–34 – said they always wear a seatbelt.

Men are also seven times more likely to never wear a seatbelt than women. Just 0.2% of women said they never put their seatbelt on, compared with 1.4% of men.

Q7. Do you ever make a journey in a car without wearing a seatbelt?



Seat belts

Wearing a seat belt is one of the simplest and most effective ways to protect yourself in a crash. Seat belts hold drivers and passengers in their seats, to prevent them from hitting the inside of a vehicle or from being thrown out of a vehicle during a crash.

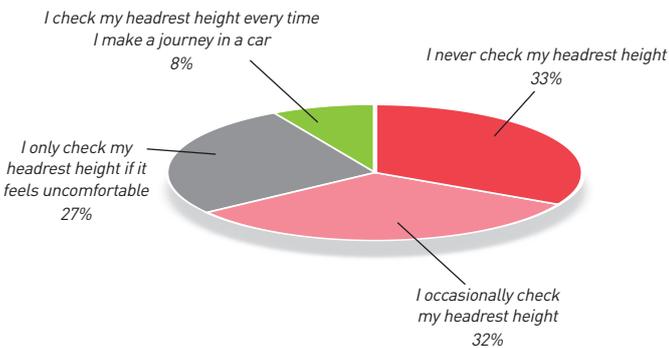
The life-saving potential of wearing a seat belt is widely accepted, although their ability to prevent death and reduce the severity of injury can vary depending on factors such as crash severity and impact direction. Transport researchers estimate that wearing a three-point seat belt halves the risk of death in a crash.^{2,3}

Roadmap advice: Always wear a seat belt, even on short journeys, it's the law. Even if you're just driving around the corner, it could be a life-saver. Before setting off, check that everyone in your vehicle is belted up. Three-point belts are far safer than lap belts. If you travel in an older vehicle with a lap belt in a particular seat, don't use that seat.

In question 8, we asked people how often they check their headrests when they enter a car.

Just 8% of people told us that they check their headrest height every time they make a journey in a car. In contrast, a third (33%) never check the height of their headrest at all, and a similar proportion (32%) said they check it only occasionally. More than a quarter (27%) check their headrest only when it feels uncomfortable.

Q8. How often do you check that your headrest is at the correct height when you get in a car?



Headrests

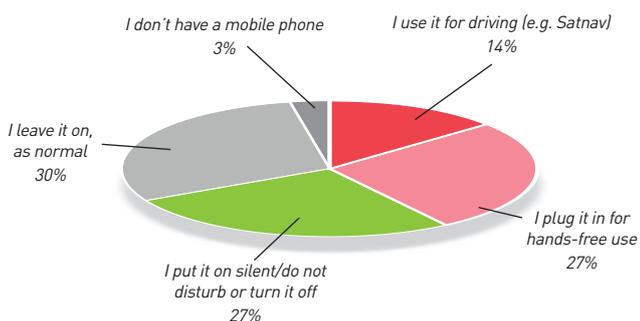
A well-fitted, correctly positioned headrest can help protect against whiplash injuries.

Roadmap advice: Adjust the headrest so the top is level with the top of your head and the headrest is as close to the back of your head as possible. Before setting off, check everyone's headrests. If a headrest is missing, wobbly or too low, don't use that seat.

In question 9, we asked drivers what they do with their mobile phones during a journey.

Three in 10 (30%) drivers said they leave their phones switched on when they are driving. Slightly fewer (27%) put it on silent, or 'do not disturb' mode, or turn it off, and 14% use it for navigating. Another 27% said they use their phone for hands-free calls while driving.

Q9. What do you normally do with your mobile phone when you are driving?



Driver distraction

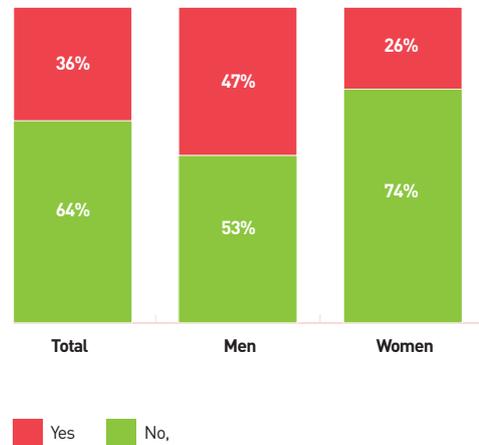
Driving is one of the most complicated and risky tasks many of us do on a regular basis. It requires our full concentration, and both our hands, to drive safely. Making or taking calls, texting, using the internet or checking social media while driving is incredibly risky. Research shows if you are on the phone when driving your reactions are 50% slower and your crash risk is four times higher than normal. Hands-free calls are still dangerous: it's the call that's the distraction, not holding the phone.^{5,6}

Roadmap advice: The only way to avoid dangerous distraction from your phone is to switch it to silent, and put it out of sight and reach when you're driving.

In question 10, we asked people whether they think that breaking the speed limit is ever acceptable.

Most people (64%) do not think that breaking the speed limit is ever acceptable. The remaining 36% said that it sometimes is. However, this rises to more than half (52%) among drivers aged 25–34, and 47% among men compared with just 26% of women.

Q10. Do you think that breaking the speed limit is ever an acceptable thing to do?



Speeding

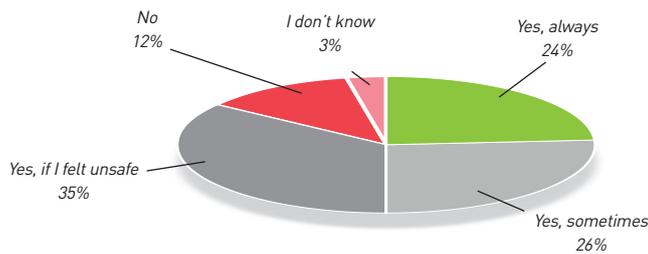
Speed is a critical factor in all road crashes. The faster a vehicle is travelling, the longer it takes to stop, the greater the risk of a crash, and the greater the risk of death or injury if a crash does happen.

Roadmap advice: Driving slowly is one of the most important things drivers can do to protect themselves and others. Stay well within speed limits, slow down to 20mph around homes, schools and shops, slow right down for bends, brows and bad weather, and avoid overtaking.

In question 11, we asked people whether they would say anything to a speeding driver if they were a passenger in their vehicle.

Half of people (50%) said they would always or sometimes say something to drivers who break the speed limit if they were a passenger in the vehicle. Another 35% said they would speak up if they felt unsafe, and 3% said they do not know what they would do. Men are twice as likely as women to say they would never speak out against a speeding driver (16% compared with 8%).

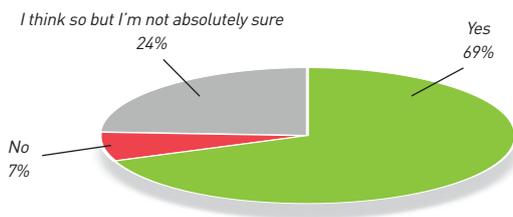
Q11. If you were a passenger in a car and the driver broke the speed limit, would you say anything?



In question 12, we asked people whether they know what to do if their vehicle breaks down while travelling on a motorway.

When asked whether they know what to do if they break down on a motorway, 69% of people told us they do and just 7% said they do not, with the remaining 24% claiming that they are not absolutely sure. Men are more likely to say they know what to do, with 80% selecting 'yes' compared with 59% of women. Older drivers also expressed more confidence about their knowledge, with 76% of those aged 55–64 answering 'yes', compared with 54% of 18–24-year-olds.

Q12. If you break down when driving on a motorway, do you know what you should do?



What to do if you break down on a motorway

In the event that your vehicle breaks down on a motorway, Green Flag gives the following advice:

- indicate and pull over to the left as soon as you notice there's a problem
- enter the next emergency area or hard shoulder, stop near an emergency phone if you can
- switch on your hazard lights, and side lights too if it's dark
- turn your front wheels towards the verge
- get everyone out of the vehicle, using the doors away from traffic
- move away from the vehicle and stand behind the safety barrier or move up the verge
- look after children
- call for help: if you're not near an emergency phone and you've got a mobile signal, call your breakdown provider or the police
- wait for help at a safe distance from your car
- never try to fix a problem yourself.

Find out more at

www.greenflag.com/advice/driving/breakdown-what-to-do

ROADMAP

to safe and healthy journeys



The Brake and Direct Line Roadmap to safe and healthy journeys is full of information, advice and guidance to help you learn about, and commit to making, safe and healthy journey choices. Find out more at www.brake.org.uk/roadmap.

References

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