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Current lockdown car use at similar levels to May 2020

An analysis of RAC data confirms suspicions that car use by drivers in the UK has not fallen to the same extent as it did during the first coronavirus lockdown in March 2020.*

During the first week of the latest lockdown, data from [RAC Black Box Insurance](#) customers shows there were on average 10% more cars in daily use than during the first week of March's lockdown, leading to 31% more daily miles driven. This represents a 22% reduction in car use compared to normal

(first week of February 2020).* The RAC believes traffic volumes are now at a similar level to the middle of last May, which interestingly was the point restrictions first started to be eased, with people encouraged to return to workplaces if they were unable to work from home.

According to RAC data, the quietest week for traffic since the start of the pandemic was the second week of the first coronavirus lockdown (w/c 30 March), with a 41% reduction in car usage compared to normal. This contrasts with the first full week of September (w/c 7 September) when the RAC recorded its highest levels of car use of the year as schools in England returned after the summer holidays, with traffic back to normal levels.

A further sign that vehicles are being used more during this latest lockdown is the extremely high number of breakdowns attended by RAC patrols so far this year. Incredibly, the RAC had its busiest start to a New Year on record with 8% more breakdowns handled over the first four days of January compared to the same period in previous years. While the cold weather and the fact cars were used even less than normal over Christmas as a result of the coronavirus will both have been major factors, the data confirms that drivers are still deeming it necessary to use their vehicles for essential trips in 2021.

RAC data insight spokesman Rod Dennis said:

“Despite the whole of the UK now under a further coronavirus lockdown, our data shows the number of cars in use has not dropped to the same extent it did the first time restrictions were brought in last March.

“The feel of this latest nationwide lockdown is very different to that which was first imposed in 2020 with greater numbers of people working in ‘Covid-secure’ workplaces, more shops offering click-and-collect services, and more children of keyworkers attending schools. In addition, with so many avoiding public transport, there will inevitably be far more people opting for the safer environment of the car. Together, these differences help account for the busier roads.

“Nonetheless, it’s vital drivers think carefully before using their vehicles and ensure they’re only venturing out for essential trips as specified by government guidelines. Every unnecessary journey increases the chances of a breakdown, or worse a road traffic collision, and risks adding to the pressures

being experienced by our emergency and healthcare workers.

“Unfortunately, the return of colder weather from next week risks increasing the chances of drivers encountering breakdowns with flat batteries which we expect to cause people problems, especially if they’re hardly using their vehicles at the moment. Drivers can protect themselves by buying a trickle charger, although these are only really practical for people with driveways or garages and it’s always best to check compatibility between charger and car first. Those with two cars should make sure they alternate between them for their essential journeys.”

Notes to Editors

* Periods compared are first weeks of lockdowns that began in March 2020 and January 2021. Dates analysed are 23 to 29 March 2020 and 5 to 11 January 2021. ‘Normal times’ baseline is first week of February 2020

The press office email address is press.enquiries@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.

ISDN radio studio facilities are available for interviews Monday to Friday.

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](#).

Contacts



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