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Drivers not ‘dreaming of a white Christmas’ as driving in bad weather tops concerns

Drivers are hoping for anything but a white Christmas this year with fears of driving in bad weather top of their list of festive motoring concerns – despite them expecting to clock up 3.2bn Christmas miles to see family and friends, according to a poll of 2,500 drivers conducted by the RAC.*

With weather forecasts pointing to the possibility of strong winds, rain, sleet and even snow for some in time for the 25th, the fears of bad Christmas

driving conditions shared by 59% of drivers might turn out to be true.

Sadly, there seems little chance of escaping drivers' second biggest worry (45%) – the high cost of filling up, as retailers everywhere continue to charge too much for petrol and diesel despite the price of wholesale fuel dropping. With the average cost of 55-litre tank of unleaded standing at £80, artificially high pump prices will make Christmas visits more costly than they should be. RAC analysis shows that petrol should be charged 10p less at around 135p per litre, and diesel 8p less at around 141p per litre. However, [average prices](#) currently sit at 145.81ppl for petrol and 149.07ppl for diesel.

After understandable worries about getting stuck in Christmas traffic jams (expressed by 39% of drivers), the next biggest concern for a third of respondents is the potential for an increase in the number of people drink-driving. Around one-in-10 (11%) think there will be far more people drinking and driving than in a typical year, while a fifth (19%) believe there will be slightly more. Last week, [analysis by road safety charity Brake](#) confirmed that December is the second deadliest month of the year for drink-drive casualties.

To reduce the number of drink-driving incidents this Christmas, 63% of drivers would like to see police forces increase roadside breath tests while 38% would like the Government to come out with a strong anti-drink-drive advertising campaign. But sadly, a fifth of drivers (20%) don't believe anything can be done to combat a rise in drink-drivers this month.

But despite these concerns, and the fact the increase in Omicron Covid cases may yet thwart some people's plans, the RAC's research suggests that motorists plan on driving an estimated 3.2bn festive miles* between Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, with the average return trip length being 115 miles – roughly the distance from Oxford to London or Leeds to Warrington and back again.

And, if there's one Christmas tune that's unlikely to be switched off when it comes on the radio, it's The Pogues' classic *Fairytale of New York*, which was voted by drivers as their most-loved Christmas driving hit, followed by *Driving Home for Christmas* by Chris Rea, *Last Christmas* by Wham! And *All I Want for Christmas* by Mariah Carey.

RAC Breakdown spokesperson Rod Dennis said:

“It’s certainly been a grey run-up to Christmas for most of us, but our research shows that drivers would clearly prefer it stays that way. Even a light dusting of snow could be enough to severely hamper people’s chances of getting away to see friends and family. Fog, ice, sleet and rain can also make driving this Christmas much more challenging than normal. So, it’s perhaps understandable that a majority of drivers – nearly six-in-10 – say the risk of bad weather is their top motoring concern this festive season.

“While the unbelievably and, in our view, unnecessarily high cost of fuel at forecourts is clearly on drivers’ minds, it’s also clear that a significant proportion of drivers are concerned there will be an increase in drink-driving this year. The rise in Omicron cases might reduce that possibility slightly if it means more people stay at home, but motorists are clear that strong action from the police and the Government is needed to reduce the number of drink-drive casualties.

“Nonetheless, with our analysis showing that drivers expect to rack up a total of 3.2bn miles to see friends and family between Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve, it’s very apparent that that most drivers want to try to make this festive season as normal as possible.”

Drivers’ top five festive motoring concerns

1. Driving in bad weather – 59% of drivers
2. High cost of filling up – 45%
3. Getting stuck in Christmas traffic – 39%
4. Increase in drink-drivers – 34%
5. Driving in the dark because of the short days – 19%

Top ten Christmas driving songs, as voted for by drivers

1. Fairytale of New York – The Pogues feat. Kirsty MacColl
2. Driving home for Christmas – Chris Rea
3. Last Christmas – Wham!
4. All I want for Christmas – Mariah Carey
5. Merry Xmas everybody – Slade
6. Wish it could be Christmas every day – Wizzard
7. Step into Christmas – Elton John
8. Do they know it’s Christmas? Band Aid
9. Merry Christmas everyone – Shakin’ Stevens

10. White Christmas – Bing Crosby

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* Based on research conducted 10-15 December among drivers on the RAC Driver Opinion Panel – weighted to be nationally representative. 3.2bn Christmas miles based on average length of a return trip to see friends or family this Christmas being 115 miles. [Separate RAC research](#) suggests estimated 27.8m separate trips of this type between 24 and 31 December 2021

About the RAC

The RAC, an iconic UK brand, provides complete peace of mind to 13 million UK 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.

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