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Majority shun the chance to drive to see family and friends despite new lockdown rules in England

Despite this weekend being the first in England when groups of up to six family members or friends are allowed to meet up following the easing of the coronavirus lockdown, very few plan on making such trips by car, RAC research has found.*

Two-thirds (66%) of those surveyed said they had no intention of visiting family or friends this week. Those intending on travelling this weekend will

make an estimated 3m such trips, with most being made on Saturday (1.9m), falling away to fewer than 1m on Sunday.

The RAC's research found 80% of 'social' trips were made from Monday to Friday with the remainder taking place this weekend. It also revealed there is very little appetite for longer journeys this weekend with the bulk of the planned trips (1.6m) being of no more than 30 miles, perhaps due to the abrupt end of the heatwave.

Ironically, the consistently hot and dry weather seen throughout the lockdown which has encouraged so many people to spend more time outdoors, now appears to have disappeared just as families and friends in England are allowed to meet up outside.

Separate RAC data suggests there has been a steady increase in traffic levels since the initial lifting of lockdown restrictions in England on 13 May, although volumes are still below what would normally be expected at this time of year. Between the first week of the lockdown and last week, RAC black box insurance data shows there was a 19% increase in vehicles on the road, with vehicles on average now doing twice the weekly distance they were at the end of March. Vehicle breakdowns are also increasing, up 45% since compared to the week commencing 23 March.

For those who are planning trips, the RAC is issuing a reminder to check their cars to ensure they are ready for the road, especially if they are contemplating longer day trips.

RAC spokesperson Rod Dennis said:

“Despite this week being the first when people in England can legally meet up outdoors in numbers of no more than six, our research indicates people remain very cautious about driving to do so. The bulk of those surveyed have no appetite to travel and those that are planning to drive clearly favour making short trips. As a result, this coming weekend doesn't look like one when a great many family reunions will take place, especially where those groups live a long distance apart.

“Had the summery weather not come to such a sudden end the weekend may well have been far busier on the roads. While Government rules in England

might now permit groups of up to six to meet, it's still the case time must only be spent outside, with those from different households keeping two metres apart so the weather looks like being the defining factor.

“Both our black box insurance and breakdown data clearly indicate that overall traffic on our roads is increasing but based on our research these journeys are more likely for essential purposes than for ‘socially distant socialising’. Where people are meeting up with others in England, it seems they are choosing to stay local.

“Perhaps it's going to take a further, significant change in who we can see and where before more of us venture further afield to visit friends and family who we've not seen in months.

“For those drivers who are heading out for longer trips, it's vital they check over their cars – especially if they haven't used them very much during the lockdown. While our breakdown numbers are edging back to where we'd expect them to be for early June, it's still the case that many of these are related to cars not starting, but with more of us driving more regularly it's only a matter of time before other common issues such as flat tyres start going up.

“We therefore recommend drivers check their tyres thoroughly before heading out. It's vital to ensure there is no cracking in the sidewalls, at there's plenty of tread and are properly inflated, as flat spots can appear if a car has been left unused for a long time. The RAC's tyre website, www.ractyres.co.uk, offers a nationwide fitting service for anyone needing one or more new tyres.”

Notes to Editors

* Research conducted among 1,800 UK drivers between 29 May and 3 June 2020.

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



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