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Motorists have spent over £181m replacing lost car keys

When it comes to car keys it appears that we are a forgetful and careless bunch. New research suggests that while millions of drivers waste hours every year searching for missing keys, those unfortunate enough to lose them for good have spent an eye-watering £181m replacing them.

An RAC survey found that one in 20 (5%), or almost two million drivers, admit they have lost their car keys for good and 6% of these say they have actually managed to do this twice. When questioned where they thought they had lost them one in five (18%) thought it was somewhere outdoors, 9% lost them in

the house, 5% lost them at work and the same number said it happened when shopping. Another 4% said they vanished when they were out socialising, 14% said they were stolen, but a quarter (23%) simply didn't have a clue what happened to them.

Four in 10 (39%) of those who permanently 'misplaced' their car keys just made do with their spare key, but over half (54%) said they bought a replacement key at an average cost of £176.20 which equates to a UK-wide bill of over £180m.

The RAC Opinion Panel survey of 2,068 motorists also revealed that four in 10 (43%), the equivalent of 16 million drivers, admit to regularly forgetting where they leave their car keys with absent-minded drivers spending on average two minutes 10 seconds looking for them every day - adding up to almost 14 hours a year.

Apparently women are more prone to mislaying their keys with 45% saying they frequently forget where they last put their keys, compared with 38% of men who confess to doing the same. However, when it comes to locking keys in the car men are exposed as the most careless with 30% admitting to the mistake, compared to 23% of women who have done it.

Overall a quarter (27%), or 10 million drivers, admit to having locked their keys in their car. When asked how this happened three in 10 (29%) said they simply weren't thinking what they were doing, 7% were distracted by somebody else or looking after a child, 5% said it was because they were in a rush, 21% said they put them down to get something out of the car and 22% said the car locked itself with the keys inside. Interestingly, this happens most commonly at home (21%), closely followed by at work (17%) and at the shops (16%).

To recover the keys and access their car 31% of these drivers called the RAC or another breakdown provider, 32% used their spare key, 20% found another way to open the door and 3% called a locksmith. But for a desperate 3%, or 300,000 drivers, they had to resort to smashing a window.

If the mere act of losing or mislaying your keys is not enough strife for individuals, a third (29%) of all couples said their partner's forgetfulness or constant turning the house upside down in the hunt for their keys results in frequent quarrels.

RAC spokesman Pete Williams said: “When it comes to car keys the evidence suggests that we are a forgetful and careless bunch. It is therefore no surprise that such a high proportion of us find ourselves scrabbling around in the bottom of our bags, in the cutlery drawer or through countless pockets in a frantic search for our keys. Losing, or temporarily mislaying our car keys is an endless source of frustration and our forgetfulness can be the cause of heated arguments with our better halves sick and tired of the fraught daily hunt.

“And for hundreds of thousands of drivers every year their keys are never seen again and have to be replaced. With today’s sophisticated keys, including transponders and remote devices, a replacement key can cost up to £500 - a not insignificant sum. That’s why the RAC offers a [Key Replace** insurance option to all of its breakdown customers](#) giving peace of mind for £24 a year. This covers you for accidental damage to or loss of your car keys and the cost of locksmith charges, replacement locks, keys and reprogramming of the electronics and immobiliser up to £1,500. We are currently offering this service free to new breakdown members together with free Onward Travel – worth a minimum of £39.98.

“Locking your keys in your car is perhaps one of the most frustrating experiences that any of us face resulting in maximum inconvenience and stress. The RAC dealt with over 57,000 members with key-related problems including lock-outs and faulty locks in 2017 so it is always good to know where your spare key is so a friend or family member can find it in a crisis.”

Notes to Editors

* Survey carried out with 2,068 members of the RAC Opinion Panel from April 2018

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For all media enquiries, please contact the RAC press office team on **+44 (0)1454 664 123**. The line is manned by an on-call press officer outside office hours. ISDN radio studio facilities are available for interviews Monday to Friday.

About the RAC

First formed in 1897, the RAC has been looking after the needs of its members and championing the interests of motorists for more than 120 years.

Today it has more than eight million members and is one of the UK's most progressive motoring organisations, providing services for both private and business motorists. Whether it's [roadside assistance](#), [insurance](#), [buying a used car](#), [vehicle inspections and checks](#), [legal services](#) or up-to-the-minute [traffic and travel information](#) – the RAC offers a solution for all motoring needs. The RAC is committed to making motoring easier, safer, more affordable and more enjoyable for drivers and road users.

The RAC is the motorist's champion and campaigns to support the interests of its members and UK motorists at a national level. This includes voicing concerns about the increasing cost of motoring, particularly the price of fuel and the high level of tax levied on it, advancing levels of road safety, and supporting the needs of all drivers, from young to old.

The RAC's annual [Report on Motoring](#) – first published in 1989 – is one of a kind and provides a clear insight into the concerns and issues facing today's motorists.

For the very latest news on UK fuel prices, check [RAC Fuel Watch](#). It provides a comprehensive guide to the latest UK unleaded petrol and diesel prices – both at the wholesale level and at the pump - and tracks these prices daily to help drivers check if the price they pay to fill up is a fair one.

Contacts



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