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Nearly half of drivers break speed limit on 60mph country roads – highest level seen by RAC since 2016

There has been a significant rise in the proportion of drivers who admit to speeding on 60mph rural roads where more deaths occur than on any other road type, new RAC data* has found.

Nearly half (48%) of the 3,102 drivers questioned for the [RAC Report on Motoring](#) say they have driven faster than the limit in the past year on these roads – up from 44% in 2021 and matching the highest figure ever seen by

the RAC in 2016. Eight per cent confess to having done this frequently while 40% say they have done it occasionally on up to half of their journeys on these roads. In 2021 514 people were killed in a total of 11,827 collisions on 60mph non-built-up roads – a fatality rate of 4%, which is higher than on motorways.

On motorways and high-speed dual carriageways, the UK's fastest roads, as many as 60% of drivers say they have broken the 70mph limit, either on most journeys (16%), or on up to half of their trips (43%) in the last 12 months. This is up by five percentage points compared to 2021 when 55% admitted to having exceeded the limit. The 60% figure is the biggest percentage seen by the RAC since 2017, when 66% owned up to this. However, it is still down on the record of 70% reported in both 2015 and 2016.

The percentage who speed on urban roads has changed very little in the past 12 months with 40% of drivers saying they have exceeded the 30mph limit at least occasionally, compared to 41% in 2021, while 46% have broken the limit on 20mph roads, a figure unchanged on the year before.

The most common reason drivers give for exceeding the motorway 70mph limit is that they are travelling at the same speed as other motorists (42%). The same justification is used by 32% of those who break 60mph limits – the most popular explanation given for exceeding the limit on these roads.

Almost half of drivers who have exceeded the speed limit in 20mph zones say this is because they think the limit is inappropriate for that particular road. Most drivers (69%) think motorists only adhere to 20mph limits when there is enforcement or physical traffic-calming measures in place, while 65% say that signs warning of speed cameras nearby help them stick to the limit. And, half (52%) say they would be opposed to additional 20mph limits being introduced in their local area. However, a similar proportion (48%) believe some 60mph limits on unclassified rural roads should be reduced.

RAC road safety spokesman Simon Williams said: "The recent increase in the proportion of drivers admitting to speeding on 60mph rural roads is extremely worrying as more people lose their lives every year in collisions on these roads than on any other.** It's even more concerning that this figure is now back to the all-time high of 48%.

"While the number of fatalities on our roads is no longer falling, we certainly

don't want to see an increase in deaths. We think the Government should address the issue of fatalities on 60mph rural roads by advising roads authorities to reduce limits on the most dangerous stretches to more appropriate levels. This is something half of drivers (48%) surveyed for the RAC Report on Motoring would like to see, with only a quarter (24%) disagreeing.

“Drivers sometimes forget or underestimate the role speed plays in fatal and serious collisions as they tend not to see it in the same light as offences like drink or drug-driving or talking on a handheld phone. In fact, in 2021 as many as 253 people lost their lives in collisions where someone was exceeding the speed limit.***

“Unfortunately, with our data showing a bigger proportion of drivers now admitting to exceeding the 70mph limit on our fastest roads than at any point since 2017, we are fearful this could be on the way back to the high points of 2015 and 2016 where 70% admitted this. The implications of this from a road safety point of view would be negative.

“What's more, although motorways are statistically the UK's safest roads****, the abundance of digital signage on them could easily be used to make to try to make them even safer by reminding drivers of the dangers of breaking the speed limit.”

Ends

* RAC Report on Motoring 2022 – 3,102 drivers – 30-minute online survey, 28 April – 13 May 2022. Base is a representative sample of UK drivers

** RAS0301: Reported road collisions and casualties by severity, speed limit, and road class (built-up and non-built-up), Great Britain, 10 years up to 2021
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1106311/ras0301.ods

*** RAS0701: Reported road collisions and casualties contributory factors by severity and road user type, Great Britain, 10 years up to 2021

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1106324/ras0701.ods

**** Facts on Road Fatalities, June 2015

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/448037/road-fatalities-2013-data.pdf

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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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