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Private used car buyers risk £6bn a year by gambling on unchecked cars

Vehicle history data from the RAC reveals that nine out of 10 motorists are taking on unnecessary risk when it comes to vetting the next car in their life, as just 10% of used car buyers bother to check a car's history before buying.

With 2.8m* used cars sold privately every year that means that over 2.5m are being bought without checking into their past history. With the average value of a car up for private sale at £2,465* that means that buyers are spending over £6.1bn each year on used cars that may have nasty secrets lurking in their pasts.

The data from the RAC Car Passport service showed that out of a sample of over 21,000 checks almost one quarter (23%) highlighted serious issues with a vehicle's history that should be of significant concern to any buyer. These included: one in eight with outstanding finance (12.5%); one in 10 (9.4%) which had been recorded as an insurance write-off; one in 100 (0.8%) which had a colour change; one in 1,000 recorded as having been scrapped (0.1%); and one in 2,000 that were marked as stolen (0.05%).

Issue	Number	Percentage	Rate
Outstanding finance	2,655	12.59%	1 in 8
Insurance write off	1,977	9.37%	1 in 10
Change of colour	180	0.85%	1 in 100
Scrapped	24	0.11%	1 in 1000
Stolen	10	0.05%	1 in 2000
Number plate change	5,815	27.57%	1 in 4

Mileage discrepancies	1,078	5.11%	1 in 20
Import/export	132	0.63%	1 in 200
No issue/clean car	9,224	43.73%	2 in 5
Total	21,095		

A separate study of drivers who had purchased an RAC Car Passport data check** found that one in three (33%) decided not to purchase the car they were looking at based on the information they received in the report. These savvy buyers potentially saved thousands of pounds by avoiding buying a ‘lemon’ – the term used to describe a vehicle with a pre-existing fault or suspect history – simply by running the 60-second online check.

Happily, two thirds (67%) of motorists went on to buy the vehicle that they had originally been smitten by after completing the check and almost half (48%) of these had the confidence to complete the deal in under 48 hours.

Car data checks such as the RAC Car Passport raise alerts which should make a potential buyer think twice about buying the car and demand a clear explanation and paper trail to explain the issue.

RAC Car Passport managing director Robert Diamond said: “These figures reveal the risks used-car buyers are taking by not obtaining a simple car data check to uncover any suspect history their intended purchase may be hiding. Buying a car can be a stressful experience because of the sums of money involved so it makes sense to find out as much as you can about a car’s history as it may just save you thousands of pounds.

“The RAC Car Passport is a wise investment because it gives buyers greater insight into a car’s past, enabling them to either proceed with their purchase with confidence or back out without getting their fingers burned. Our analysis of shows very clearly that a significant number of people have done the latter by using the information in the RAC Car Passport report to avoid buying a ‘lemon’ – saving them a great deal of money and stress in the process.”

Here’s a list of typical car data check alerts and advice on how to address them:

- **Outstanding finance** – make sure the seller has paid off the finance in full and ask them to re-run the RAC Car Passport check

to prove it

- **Written off** – here you need to know your ABC (and D!). There are four classes of ‘write off’ – category A and B shouldn’t be on the road and are illegal to drive – avoid and report it! C and D mean that it wasn’t financially worthwhile for an insurance company to repair the damage – you may grab yourself a bargain but proceed with caution and get a professional vehicle inspection first
- **Colour change** – this may just mean a change in fashion – but more often it means a re-spray after an accident. Again, get a professional inspection before you buy
- **Imports** – while only one in 200 cars checked by the RAC Car Passport were identified as imports, they require a much closer inspection of the paper trail as imported cars require specific documentation

As well as car data checks, the RAC also provides a [vehicle inspection service](#). This consists of two levels – an Essentials package from £99 and Essentials Plus from £175 which includes a full mechanical and structural inspection, an underbody check, full interior check, an extended road test and 307 checks.

Notes to Editors

About the RAC

With more than eight million members, the RAC 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, including advancing levels of road safety, supporting the needs of young drivers and voicing concerns about the increasing cost of motoring. The RAC’s annual [Report on Motoring](#) – first published in 1989 – 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](#) or follow [#racfuelwatch on Twitter](#). This is a comprehensive guide to the latest UK unleaded petrol and diesel prices – both at the wholesale level and at the pump. RAC Fuel Watch analyses how

prices changed through the previous month and compares the most recent prices with those from three, six and 12 months before.

The RAC supports and is a founding member of [FairFuelUK](#) which campaigns for fairer taxes on petrol and diesel.

Key facts:

- RAC patrols fix four out of five vehicles at the roadside and on average within 34 minutes
- RAC vans carry more than 500 parts and tools to get members' vehicles going again
- 98% of members would recommend RAC Rescue to their friends and family

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