

Image: RAC

Jan 15, 2021 00:00 GMT

## RAC data shows drivers still fell foul of potholes in late 2020 despite lower traffic volumes

**Despite lower overall traffic volumes than normal due to the pandemic RAC patrols went to the rescue of nearly 1,500 drivers who had more than likely suffered a pothole-related breakdown in the last three months of 2020.**

An analysis of fourth quarter RAC breakdowns\* for [National Pothole Day](#) reveals there were 1,461 call-outs for damaged shock absorbers, broken suspension springs and distorted wheels reveals, representing nearly 1% (0.9%) of all RAC attendances.

While the pothole proportion of all RAC breakdowns in the last three months of 2020 is down on the previous quarter, it is identical to the same period in 2019 and slightly higher than 2018 (0.8%). The RAC finds this concerning given the lower traffic volumes brought about by coronavirus travel restrictions as in theory, less traffic should mean less damage to road surfaces.

Looking across the UK, the South East saw the largest number of vehicle problems most likely to be caused by potholes at 242 – equating to 17% of all the pothole-related call-outs dealt with by the RAC's expert local patrols. While this could be attributed to the region being more densely populated, this is unlikely to be the case for the South West which saw 12% of all the RAC's pothole breakdowns (173), almost the same number as the North West (170).

However, the [RAC's Pothole Index\\*\\*](#), which is a long-term indicator of the

health of the UK's roads available, suggests the overall standard of road surfaces has been improving since the start of 2019. Having begun at 1.0 in 2006, the index currently stands at 1.44 which means drivers are nearly one and a half times as likely to experience damage caused by a pothole as they were 15 years ago.

**RAC head of roads policy Nicholas Lyes said:**

“As if 2020 wasn't bad enough for other reasons, nearly 1,500 of our members have also had to endure unwanted, and no doubt expensive, damage to their vehicles caused by potholes and other road surface defects.

“While the actual number of pothole-related call-outs our patrols have attended is down significantly compared to the same time in 2019 due to lower traffic volumes in the pandemic, they account for the same proportion (0.9%) of all RAC rescues which clearly demonstrates there are still far too many poorly maintained roads.

“We realise council budgets are under incredible pressure due to the coronavirus, but we badly need the Government to recognise the significance of local roads and take a fresh look at how to fund them.

“The Government's approach of allocating funding to councils from various pots on an annual basis means authorities are always having to play catch-up by fixing potholes rather than focusing on preventative maintenance. We would prefer to see them make five-year funding settlements which would allow councils to make longer-term plans for their roads. This could be funded by introducing a similar scheme to the National Roads Fund which ringfences money paid in vehicle excise duty by road users in England for the upkeep of major roads.

“Putting aside 2p from the existing 58p a litre duty on the sale of petrol and diesel would generate nearly £5bn of additional funds for local roads over five years. This would surely help to bring our local roads back to a fit-for-purpose state.

“The RAC Pothole Index clearly shows that the long-term degradation of road surfaces, which began in 2008, has now – to some extent – been arrested, but nevertheless overall road conditions are precariously balanced on a knife-

edge. The fact the country is experiencing a colder winter than it has done for several years, coupled with the risk of less investment in local road maintenance due the pandemic, means that the delicate balance may sadly end up tipping in the wrong direction.

“We also know from the 2020 RAC Report on Motoring that the condition and maintenance of local roads is currently the top overall concern for drivers so there is a real clamour from drivers for action to fix them. And if the UK is to emerge strongly from the pandemic and the ensuing recession, good quality infrastructure is essential.”

*To report a pothole, or to find out if you suffer from damage from one and wonder if you can claim for compensation, visit [the RAC's pothole online guide](#). The RAC has also [published a guide on looking after cars during the pandemic](#).*

[View embedded content here](#)

---

### **Notes to Editors**

\* The RAC provides ‘complete peace of mind’ breakdown cover for more than 12m private and business drivers. The figures quoted are based on its individual members who buy policies direct from the RAC.

\*\* The RAC Pothole Index is a 12-month rolling measure of the share of pothole fault breakdowns compared to 2006, corrected for seasonal weather effects and improving longer term vehicle reliability Data has been collected by the RAC since 2006. Data excludes punctures.

The press office email address is [press.enquiries@rac.co.uk](mailto:press.enquiries@rac.co.uk). **Please note:** the press office is unable to help with individual customer enquiries - please visit the [RAC contacts page](#) to find the right contact.

ISDN radio studio facilities are available for interviews Monday to Friday.

## 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](mailto:press.office@rac.co.uk)

Emails monitored during normal office hours. For breakdown queries, call 0330 159 0740

ISDN number on request