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RAC pothole-related breakdowns for 2023 jump by a third compared to 2022

Britain's 'pothole plague' took even more of a toll on drivers in 2023 as RAC patrols attended nearly 30,000 pothole-related breakdowns over the course of the year, up by a third (33%) on 2022.

Roadside patrols at the motoring services company went out to 29,377 breakdowns in 2023 – the equivalent of 80 breakdowns a day – for faults including broken suspension springs, damaged shock absorbers and distorted wheels.

Looking at the most recent data from the fourth quarter of 2023, drivers called the RAC out to 5,153 breakdowns caused by potholes, the highest amount for any October to December period since 2017. And, the problem is only likely to get worse in the colder months of ‘pothole season’ – January to March – when water makes its way into cracks in the road, freezes and expands, causing surfaces to deteriorate even more.

The [RAC Pothole Index](#)*, which has tracked the condition of Britain’s roads since 2006, now stands at 1.70, up from 1.62 at the end of 2022. While this is nowhere near the all-time high of 3.5 recorded in Q1 2010, at 1.7 the index suggests drivers are more than one-and-a-half times as likely to experience pothole damage as they were 15 years ago.

RAC head of policy Simon Williams said:

“The cracks in Britain’s road maintenance system have once again been embarrassingly exposed as nearly 30,000 RAC members endured pothole problems and potentially very costly repairs in 2023. Potholes are so much more than an irritation – they are a very serious danger to all road users which we fear will only get worse as the weather gets colder during these next few months.

“Local councils have been cash-strapped for years due to lower road maintenance budgets, causing roads across the country to fall into disrepair and leaving drivers fighting for compensation when their vehicles are inevitably damaged.

“Fortunately, the Government has committed an extra £8.3bn of funding to local councils over the next 11 years, which we hope will give squeezed authorities some certainty of cash to help them plan consistent longer-term maintenance. Now we urge the Department for Transport to lay out clear guidance as to how this money should be best used so that councils can actually improve their roads for the future.

“To prevent water damaging the roads in these winter months when it freezes and expands, we implore local highways authorities to completely resurface those in the worst condition and carry out more surface dressing between April and September on roads that are starting to deteriorate. It’s not just about plugging potholes, it’s a question of getting roads up to a reasonable standard and keeping them that way so drivers and indeed those

on two wheels can finally feel confident and safe on their journeys.”

In a bid to make highways authorities aware of as many road surface defects as possible, the RAC is joining forces with technology company Metricell to encourage drivers to use [Stan, a new free mobile app that automatically collects data on the state of roads via smartphone video cameras](#).

The app uses AI to automatically identify more than 40 different defects including potholes, road cracking and broken signs, which will form a national road map of surface issues on the RAC and Stan websites. Metricell will also share the data with highways authorities to help them locate the problems on their networks and encourage repairs to be carried out quickly and efficiently. Download Stan on the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#).

Pothole breakdowns – how 2023 compared to previous years

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total pothole-related breakdowns	21,7 25	31,1 46	22,0 95	29,3 77
Pothole share of all RAC breakdowns	0.9%	1.5%	0.9%	0.8%
RAC Pothole Index at end of year – likelihood of drivers breaking down compared to 2006, ie 2.0 = twice as likely	1.44	1.63	1.60	1.69

*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 deliberately excludes punctures.

The press office email address is press.office@rac.co.uk and media centre is at media.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.

About the RAC

The RAC, an iconic UK brand, provides complete peace of mind to more than 13 million 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.

Visit the [RAC website](#).

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