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Six-in-10 want ‘noise cameras’ rolled out so drivers of excessively loud vehicles are caught and fined

Drivers want to see cameras that can automatically detect vehicles with illegally loud exhausts or whose engines are revved unnecessarily rolled out across the UK, according to new RAC research.

Six-in-10 drivers (58%) questioned by the RAC said they would be in favour of so-called ‘noise cameras’ being widely used once the findings of the Department for Transport’s £300,000 trials, which began last October, are revealed. Only a fifth (22%) were against the idea, with a similar proportion

(20%) unsure.

The cameras, which are triggered by a number of microphones, can pinpoint vehicles exceeding the 74-decibel legal limit as they pass by. Pictures of vehicle number plates together with recordings of the vehicle noise are then used by local police to identify and fine drivers. Trials took place in Bradford, Great Yarmouth, Birmingham and South Gloucestershire near Bristol.

A third (34%) of those who took part in the RAC study said they regularly hear loud revving engines or excessively loud exhausts. This rose to nearly half of drivers in London (47%) and to 40% in Wales and Scotland. Half of all drivers (51%) questioned said they occasionally hear one or more vehicles with particularly loud exhausts.

Asked for their opinions about whether the current £50 on-the-spot fine for a vehicle breaching the 74-decibel limit is appropriate, drivers were split. Four-in-10 (39%) felt the fine had been set at the right level whereas 37% disagreed, and a quarter (24%) were undecided. Of those who felt the fine wasn't severe enough, 43% thought it should carry a £200 fine and a driving ban until the exhaust was found to comply with the legal decibel limit. Among Londoners this shot up to more than two-thirds (67%).

Road noise is known to contribute to health problems, such as heart attacks, strokes and dementia, yet there is no requirement for MOT testers to use decibel meters to check exhaust noise levels. The Government estimates the annual social cost of urban road noise, including lost productivity from sleep disturbance and health costs, is up to £10bn**.

RAC head of policy Simon Williams said: "Our research with drivers shows there is a very strong desire to put an end to the scourge of excessively noisy vehicles that disturb the peace all around the country.

"It's plain wrong that those who have fitted their cars with modified exhausts, some motorbike riders and supercar owners can currently just get away with making an unacceptable amount of noise. Fortunately, the Department for Transport's recent noise camera trials may provide the solution. We hope the findings are positive and that the technology can be quickly and cost-efficiently rolled out to the worst affected areas.

“There is no good reason why cars and motorbikes should make so much noise, so the sooner effective camera enforcement can be put in place the better.”

Roads Minister Richard Holden said: “Boy racers are an anti-social menace and we have extensively trialled noise camera technology in various parts of the country over the past year.

“We are currently analysing data from the trials and will update in due course on any future measures which will help bring peace and tranquillity back to our towns, cities and villages.”

The London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea was the first local authority to trial acoustic cameras in May 2022.***

Ends

Notes to Editors

* Based on an RAC Opinion Panel online survey with 1,424 drivers carried out 9-18 December 2022

** The Department for Food, Agriculture and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) estimates that the annual social cost of urban road noise in England is £7 to 10 billion, placing it at a similar magnitude to road accidents (£9 billion).

https://www.cieh.org/media/4898/cieh-noise-survey-findings-2019_20.pdf

*** <https://www.kcfc.org.uk/news/new-acoustic-cameras-approved>

Press office contacts and interviewee availability

ISDN/Skype/FaceTime or conventional phone interviews are available with RAC spokespeople.

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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 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.

Visit the [RAC website](#).

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