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Three-in-10 drivers so worried about narrow country lanes they deliberately avoid them

Three-in-10 motorists admit to deliberately steering clear of narrow country lanes and are prepared to take a detour of 16 miles or 25 minutes to avoid them, according to new research from one of the UK's biggest car insurers, Ageas, and the RAC.*

As millions of Brits jump into their cars and head off on staycations in the countryside this summer, the figures highlight just how unnerved many

drivers – especially those who live in towns and cities – are by Britain's rural roads, which account for more than half of all those in the country.**

More than half of drivers (58%) say they find using narrow country roads stressful, a figure that rises to 76% for drivers who live in urban areas. The two biggest causes of stress, according to the research, are the difficulty of squeezing past other vehicles in tight spaces (62%) and the fear of colliding with another vehicle head on (61%).

But the etiquette of who moves out of the way is also high on drivers' list of concerns about these types of roads. Having to try to reverse back to find a passing place (45%), the fear of meeting a tractor and not being able to pass (44%) and deciding who succumbs to back up to a passing place (37%) make up drivers' top five stress factors. More than a third (36%) meanwhile say they think the default 60mph limit on country roads is just too fast to begin with, while 35% say they fear damaging their car.

The research suggests that some motorists are more vocal than others when it comes to deciding who has to reverse, with one-in-10 drivers admitting they've had an argument with another driver over who should go back when driving on a narrow country road.

But it is the detours that drivers are prepared to go to avoid the stress of rural lanes which is perhaps most surprising. On average, people are prepared to add 16 miles – more than a half marathon – to their journey if it means they can avoid driving down this type of road. They'd also be willing to add another 25 minutes to their drive – enough time to watch a whole episode of Eastenders.

City-dwellers are also much more concerned about narrow country lanes and go to longer distances to escape them. Three-quarters (76%) of these drivers say they find them stressful, of which 27% say they will always stick to wider main roads instead. What's more, these drivers say they'd be willing to add 23 miles or 30 minutes to their journey to avoid them, 14 miles and 10 minutes more than their rural counterparts.

Robin Challand, claims director at Ageas Insurance, said:

“We understand that getting to your holiday destination can be stressful at

the best of times. Between packing, long car journeys and hot weather, there's a lot to get flustered about.

"Our research shows the type of roads we drive on can also be a cause of stress, with crashes and scrapes high on the list of people's concerns, so we're urging people to stay calm and – most importantly – stay safe this summer.

"Negotiating narrow rural lanes can be tricky, even for the most seasoned of drivers, but by following some simple tips and staying calm, you can avoid adding a damaged car to your list of things to get stressed about this summer."

RAC Breakdown spokesman Simon Williams said:

"With unprecedented numbers of drivers on the UK's roads this summer, more and more people will find themselves squeezing down narrow country lanes to reach beaches and popular countryside spots – and these figures show just how uncomfortable many drivers are using doing this, especially those who are used to wider city roads with much better visibility.

"For any driver less confident with tackling rural lanes the message has to be to plan a journey properly before setting out, and drive at the right speed according to the nature of the road, even if the official limit is 60mph. We'd also advise not becoming too reliant on a car's sat-nav – while ducking off a main road to shave off a few minutes might seem like a good idea, if you're then faced with having to carefully negotiate a tractor and queue of vehicles coming the other way, any advantage is soon lost."

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The RAC offers three simple tips to help drivers negotiate rural roads safely and more stress-free this summer:

1. **Check your route carefully** – if using a sat-nav, scrutinise the suggested route before setting out and see whether it's actually easier and more comfortable to stick to main roads as far as possible instead. And be aware of sat-navs recommending diversions down narrow lanes for the sake of making up just a few minutes – it's time that's easily lost if you meet oncoming traffic. Don't be afraid to take the long way round – perhaps an extra 16 miles or 25 minutes is well worth it
2. **Get in some practice** – if you're not used to negotiating narrow roads, then have some practice driving on some close to home before the pressure of a family holiday
3. **Take your time** – while many country roads might have speed limits of 60mph, that doesn't mean it's the right speed to drive at – in fact, in many cases it's incredibly unsafe to do so. Read the road carefully and consider what forward visibility you have. If it's narrow and winding, reduce your speed accordingly

Separate RAC research suggests this summer will see very high levels of traffic on UK roads, with drivers planning in excess of 29m staycations – 16m of these in the school holidays ***

Notes to Editors

* Survey of 2,000 UK drivers conducted by One Poll on behalf of Ageas Insurance and the RAC 21.07.2021 - 23.07.2021

** Source: Department for Transport, Road Lengths in Great Britain 2020, published 4 February 2021. 151,873 rural A, B, C and U roads out of a total of 247,500

*** <https://media.rac.co.uk/pressreleases/rac-forecasts-unprecedented-summer-on-the-uks-roads-3117243>

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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](#).

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