INTRODUCTION

Brake

About this report

This report is divided into five parts, which will be published one at a time at www.driverpoll.com as results are released through the media. This is the seventh in a series of reports on safe driving by Brake and Direct Line. It examines attitudes and behaviour of male and female drivers and riders in relation to speed, drink and drug driving, distractions, testing and enforcement.

The report is based on a survey 2,085 male and 2,291 female drivers and riders. The survey was carried out by Brake volunteers, at locations across the UK. Every effort was made to ensure a wide variety of people responded. Repeating some questions from a 2006 survey by Brake and Green Flag has enabled some analysis of changing driver attitudes and behaviour.

Brake thanks volunteers who helped conduct the survey and collate results. For other reports in the series, visit www.driverpoll.com.

Julie Townsend Brake’s deputy chief executive, says:

“Road casualty statistics show a huge difference between men and women when it comes to safety on roads. From childhood to adulthood, men are far more likely to be killed on roads than women, resulting from a greater tendency to take the risks that often lead to carnage. Data on driving convictions shows how men are more often than not the perpetrators as well as the victims: an overwhelming 95% of dangerous driving convictions are against men.

This report sets out the ways in which male drivers are much more frequently than women putting themselves, their loved ones and others around them in great danger, by taking appalling risks, and often on a habitual basis. It also shows some key differences in attitudes between the genders, for example revealing that more men than women think their safety behind the wheel is above average.

This is by no means justification for letting women off the hook when it comes to raising awareness about road safety. Significant numbers of women are driving dangerously, and in relation to a few types of risky behaviour, such as mobile phone use, women are just as guilty as men. However, recognising the differences between male and female drivers, and the particular risks posed by men, can help us to target efforts to educate and raise awareness about safe driving, with the aim of improving safety for all road users.”
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT

The government should:

- run awareness-raising publicity campaigns which specifically target male drivers, particularly young male drivers, to tackle gender-specific types of risky behaviour on roads;
- disseminate research to road safety practitioners into gender differences and how they typically affect people’s driving and attitudes towards road safety;
- introduce compulsory road safety education in schools, including discussion of the consequences of risk-taking on roads, encouraging pupils to have a positive influence on each other’s driving.

For advice on safe driving, general information on road safety and details of road safety campaigns and events, including Road Safety Week, visit www.brake.org.uk or www.roadsafetyweek.org.uk.
For more information on government campaigns on safe driving, visit the Department for Transport’s Think! website, www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk
**SPEED**

**Q1: Within the past 12 months, on motorways how often have you left less than a two-second gap between your vehicle and the vehicle in front?**

Twice as many male drivers (30%) break the two-second rule on motorways at least weekly compared to their female counterparts (15%).

- 61% of men break the two second rule on motorways, compared to 46% of women
- 8% of men do this daily, compared to 4% of women
- 10% of men do this several times a week, compared to 6% of women
- 12% of men do this once a week, compared to 5% of women
- 13% of men do this once a month, compared to 11% of women
- 18% of men do this less than once a month, compared to 20% of women
- 38% of men never break the two-second rule compared to 51% of women

**Q2: Within the past 12 months, how often have you overtaken when there was a chance you could have hit something you couldn’t see?**

Men are more likely than women to take the horrendous risk of overtaking blind, and twice as likely to do so monthly or more.

- 14% of men have overtaken when there was a chance they could have hit something they couldn’t see, compared to 10% of women
- 3% of men do this weekly or more often, compared to 1% of women
- 3% of men do this monthly, compared to 2% of women
- 8% of men do this less than once a month, compared to 6% of women
- 85% of men never overtake blind, compared to 89% of women

**Q3: Within the past 12 months, how often have you driven at 35mph or faster in a 30mph zone?**

Men are much more likely to risk speeding in a 30mph zone than women, and they are more likely to do this frequently.

- 78% of men have driven at 35mph or faster in a 30mph zone, compared to 67% of women
- 11% of men do this daily, compared to 2% of women
- 19% of men do this several times a week, compared to 11% of women
- 16% of men do this once a week, compared to 13% of women
- 12% of men do this once a month, compared to 14% of women
- 20% of men do this less than once a month compared to 27% of women
- 21% of men never do this, compared to 33% of women

**LOST LIVES**

Rebecca Holwell, 20, from Leicestershire, was killed in a high speed car crash in August 2008. Ben Crossley, her boyfriend, was giving her a lift home in his new car. When he got onto the dual carriageway he lost control on a corner, skidded and slammed into a tree. Rebecca was killed instantly. She worked as a hairdresser and hoped to one day have her own salon. Ben survived the crash, but was in hospital for weeks with serious injuries to his legs.

**Q4: Within the past 12 months, how often have you driven above 60mph on a rural road (not dual carriageway or motorway)?**

Men are three times as likely to speed on rural roads weekly or more (31%) compared to women (11%).

- 64% of men have driven at more than 60mph on a rural road, compared to 39% of women
- 6% of men do this daily, compared to 1% of women
- 11% of men to this several times a week, compared to 4% of women
- 14% of men do this once a week, compared to 6% of women
- 12% of men do this once a month, compared to 10% of women
- 21% of men do this less than once a month compared to 18% of women
- 35% of men never do this compared to 59% of women

**THE FACTS: SPEED**

- Men are more likely to likely to think the speed limit is ‘too slow’ while female drivers are more likely to think it ‘too fast’ on roads like motorways, dual carriageways, and rural roads.
- More men than women think the penalty for speeding is too harsh, while more women than men think it is too lenient.
- Men are more likely than women to drive faster when running behind schedule, when late for an appointment, when in fast-moving traffic and when feeling stressed.
Men Vs Women

Q5: Within the past 12 months, how often have you driven at 80mph or faster on a 70mph motorway or dual carriageway?

Three times as many men speed on motorways or dual carriageways weekly or more frequently (36%), compared to women (12%).

- 73% of men have driven at 80mph or faster on a motorway or dual carriageway, compared to 52% of women
- 7% of men do this daily, compared to 2% of women
- 17% of men do this several times a week, compared to 5% of women
- 12% of men do this once a week, compared to 5% of women
- 16% of men do this once a month, compared to 14% of women
- 21% of men do this less than once a month, compared to 25% of women
- 26% of men never speed on motorways or 70mph dual carriageways, compared to 46% of women

Figure 1: drivers who break speed limits

THE FACTS: MOTORWAY SPEEDS

- Stopping distances increase dramatically at 80mph. It takes an extra 26 metres, or six car lengths, to stop if you are travelling at 80mph compared to 70mph. Higher speeds equal less time to react and avoid a collision in an emergency.
- At 80mph, petrol cars emit 14% more CO2 than at 70mph and diesel cars emit 25% more².

End notes
2. Quick Hits 2: limiting speed, UK Energy Research Centre, 2006
Men vs women

ATTITUDES TO RISK

THE FACTS: RISK TAKING

- Male drivers have a higher crash rate the world over\(^1\). They are more likely to commit traffic offences and are prone to higher levels of sensation-seeking and risk-taking\(^2\).
- Men are more likely than women to be involved in crashes on bends, in the dark or involving overtaking. Women have a greater frequency of crashes occurring at junctions than men\(^3\).
- Even before men reach adulthood they are at significantly greater risk of being killed on roads. In Great Britain in 2010, nearly twice as many boys under 12 were killed or seriously injured than girls when on foot and three times as many when cycling\(^4\).
- This road safety gender difference results from physical differences between men and women (caused by hormones and chemicals in the body) as well as being linked to differences in the social experiences of men and women\(^5\).

Q1: How do you think the safety of your driving compares with that of an average driver on the roads today?

Men are much more likely to believe they are a safer than the average driver, despite evidence that men take more risks and have more crashes.

- 51% of men think they are safer than the average driver, compared to 39% of women
- 47% of men think they are about average, compared to 59% of women
- 1% of men think they are more dangerous, compared to 2% of women

Q2: Do you consciously worry about people you love being killed on the road?

Women are more likely to worry about someone close to them being killed in a road crash, and are nearly twice as likely to say they worry about this all the time.

- 8% of men worry all the time, compared to 14% of women
- 18% of men often worry, compared to 21% of women
- 51% of men sometimes worry, compared to 54% of women
- 22% of men never worry, compared to 10% of women

Q3: Are men or women the most dangerous drivers?

Only a third of men and half of women correctly answered that men are the most dangerous drivers. One in six men wrongly believe that women are the most dangerous.

- 36% of men and 53% of women think men are more dangerous
- 16% of men and 2% of women think women are more dangerous
- 45% of men and 43% of women think they are about the same

ADVICE: PLEDGE TO DRIVE SAFELY

Whether you are male or female you can reduce your road risk and help put an end to the carnage on our roads by signing up to the Brake Pledge. By signing you are making a promise to drive as safely as possible and minimise the amount you drive. The Pledge also asks non-drivers to speak out against dangerous driving and help keep those around them safe.

End notes

1. Sex differences in driving and insurance risk, Social Issues Research Centre, 2004
2. ibid
4. Road casualties online, Department for Transport, 2012
5. Sex differences in driving and insurance risk, Social Issues Research Centre, 2004
**Men vs Women**

### Q1: Have you read the Highway Code since passing your test?

Despite the Highway Code being regularly updated to provide official guidance to drivers, less than a third of women had picked up a Highway Code since passing their test, compared to just under half of men.

- 44% of men and 28% of women had read the Highway Code since passing their test
- 55% of men and 69% of women had not

![Figure 1: Have you read the Highway Code since passing your test?](image)

### Q2: Within the past 12 months, have you always belted up?

Wearing a seat belt is one of the most effective ways people in vehicles can protect themselves in the event of a crash, yet one in eight men (13%) and one in 25 women (4%) don't always belt up.

- 87% of men and 96% of women always belt up
- 13% of men and 4% of women don't

### Q3: How frequently do you check that all your vehicle’s tyres have legal tread depth, the right tyre pressure and no worrying cracks or bulges?

There's a huge difference between the number of men and women regularly checking their tyres; four in 10 male drivers check fortnightly or more, compared to just one in 10 female drivers. A large proportion of women are reliant on others to check for them.

- 5% of men and 2% of women check before every journey
- 17% of men and 3% of women check once a week
- 19% of men and 5% of women check once a fortnight
- 22% of men and 17% of women check once a month
- 17% of men and 12% of women check every three months
- 3% of men and 9% of women check every six months
- 2% of men and 4% of women check yearly
- 4% of men and 6% of women never check
- 9% of men and 38% of women rely on someone else to check

![Figure 2: How frequently do you check your vehicle’s tyres?](image)

### FACTS: MAINTENANCE

- In 2010, illegal, defective or underinflated tyres were a recorded as a causal factor in 159 crashes resulting in a death or serious injury;
- defective lights or indicators were a causal factor in 32 crashes resulting in a death or serious injury;
- and faulty brakes were a causal factor in 137 crashes resulting in a death or serious injury;
- 40% of cars, vans and small passenger vehicles fail their MOT on the initial test: 10% with faulty brakes; 17% with faulty lights or signals; and 8% with illegal tyres.

### Q4: How frequently do you check that your vehicle’s oil and water levels are correct?

Few female drivers are carrying out important checks of oil and water levels on a regular basis; just 8% check fortnightly or more.

- 4% of men and 1% of women check before every journey
- 17% of men and 3% of women check once a week
- 15% of men and 5% of women check once a fortnight
- 22% of men and 14% of women check once a month
- 18% of men and 18% of women check every three months
- 7% of men and 11% of women check every six months
- 2% of men and 4% of women check yearly
- 4% of men and 5% of women never check
- 11% of men and 41% of women rely on someone else to check
Men vs women

ADVICE: MAINTENANCE

Defects such as worn tyres and brakes kill. Carry out a weekly walk-round check of your vehicle before driving to check tyres and other safety critical features are in good condition:

- Change your tyres when they are worn to below 3mm of tread; tyres can be dangerous in wet conditions well before they reach the legal minimum of 1.6mm.

- Make sure you know the correct pressure for your tyres and buy a hand-held tyre pressure gauge to check them every week when tyres are cold.

- Check for bulges, cuts or embedded objects in tyres and don’t forget to also check wheels and wheel fixings for defects, including loose nuts.

- Check your lights are clean and bulbs aren’t blown (ask a friend to help or reflect against a wall).

- Check oil and water levels, and wiper blades.

- When your vehicle is serviced or gets its MOT, ask your garage to tell you the amount of wear on your brake pads and when they will next need changing.

End notes

1. Reported road casualties Great Britain 2010 annual reports, Department for Transport, 2011
2. VOSA Effectiveness Report 2010 – 11, VOSA, 2011 (figures are for April 2010 – March 2011)
**Men vs women**

**MOBILE PHONES**

**Q1: Within the past 12 months, have you driven while sending or reading a text message?**

Exactly the same proportion of male and female drivers admitted to texting at the wheel in the past year.

- 28% of men and 28% of women said they had driven while sending or receiving a text message
- 5% of men said they did this several times a week, compared to 3% of women
- 4% of men said they did this once a week, compared to 5% of women
- 4% of men and 4% of women said they did this about once a month
- 15% of men said they texted at the wheel only once or twice, compared to 16% of women
- 71% of men and 71% of women said they never texted at the wheel

**ADVICE: DISTRACTIONS**

However much you love your phone, when you are driving you need to put it away. Texting, tweeting, emailing, taking or making a call, inputting details into a GPS application, tapping the screen, repeatedly glancing at or watching the screen: all are major distractions that put your life and the lives of others at risk. Driving is the most dangerous and complex activity most of us do on a daily basis and it requires your full concentration. Your phone can wait.

**Q2: Within the past 12 months, have you driven while using the internet or an app on your phone, for example emailing or checking updates on a social networking site (excluding using it as a sat-nav)?**

Men are slightly more likely to use the internet or an app on their phone when driving.

- 11% of men said they had driven while using the internet or an app on their phone, compared to 8% of women
- 88% of men said they never did this, compared to 91% of women

**THE FACTS: TALKING ON MOBILE PHONES**

Some drivers are still unaware that talking on a phone is distracting from driving even on a hands-free kit, believing it is the holding of the phone that is a distraction rather than the call itself. Research indicates it is the call itself that is the main distraction. Tests have found drivers on hands-free mobile phones take 20% longer to brake when needed. Whether or not the driver is using a hands-free kit, talking on a mobile phone has been found to increase the risk of crashing four-fold. Their crash risk remains higher than normal for up to 10 minutes after the call has ended. In laboratory tests, it has been found that reaction times are impaired more during a phone conversation than by having a blood alcohol level at the current UK drink drive limit (80mg/100ml blood).

**IN THE PAST FOUR YEARS...**

- Fewer male and female drivers are talking on hand-held mobile phones, probably due to a shift to hands-free technology following legislation which made it illegal for drivers to use a hand-held phone.
- In 2008, 39% of male drivers admitted to driving using a hand-held phone, compared to 32% in 2012, and 36% of female drivers admitted using a hand-held phone compared to 30% in 2012.

**CASE STUDY**

In August 2010, Lorna Foley’s life changed dramatically. Her boyfriend was giving her a lift home along the A6 when a car travelling in the opposite direction pulled out into their path, hitting them head on. She sustained serious injuries including a six-inch gash on her head, deep lacerations on her left arm, a broken wrist, and dislodged vertebrae in her back. Doctors told Lorna that her head injury would take at least two years to recover from, while the damage to her back is likely to cause her problems with walking and exercise for the rest of her life. The driver was later found to have been talking on her mobile phone at the time of the crash.

**End notes**

1. Association between cellular telephone calls and motor vehicle collisions, Massachusetts Medical Society, 1997
2. Association between cellular telephone calls and motor vehicle collisions, Massachusetts Medical Society, 1997
3. How dangerous is driving with a mobile phone? Benchmarking the impairment to alcohol, Transport Research Laboratory, 2002
Men vs women

IMPAIRMENT

Q1: Within the past 12 months, how often have you driven after drinking alcohol?

Men are much more likely to drink and drive than women, and five times as likely to take this risk on a weekly basis compared to their female counterparts. Two in five male drivers and nearly a third of female drivers admit to getting behind the wheel after drinking alcohol in the past year.

- 40% of men admit to driving after drinking alcohol in the past year, compared to 30% of women
- 5% of men say they do this weekly or more, compared to 1% of women
- 4% of men do this once a month, compared to 2% of women
- 27% of men do this occasionally, compared to 20% of women
- 4% of men did this once, compared to 7% of women
- 59% of men never drive after drinking, compared to 69% of women

Q2: Within the past 12 months, how often have you driven first thing in the morning after drinking a lot of alcohol the night before?

Two in five male drivers and a third of women drivers admit driving first thing after a big night, despite it being likely they will still be impaired, risking their lives and the lives of others.

- 43% of men have driven first thing after drinking a lot of alcohol the night before, compared to 33% of women
- 3% of men do this weekly or more, compared to 2% of women
- 3% of men do this once a month, compared to 2% of women
- 29% of men do this occasionally, compared to 21% of women
- 9% of men and women did this once
- 56% of men never drive the morning after, compared to 65% of women

THE FACTS: ALCOHOL

- In the UK, one in seven deaths on UK roads are caused by drink drivers over the current legal limit.
- Even small amounts of alcohol affect drivers’ reaction times, judgment and coordination. Alcohol also makes it impossible for drivers to assess their own impairment because it creates a false sense of confidence and means drivers are more inclined to take risks and believe they are in control when they are not.
- The UK’s legal limit is currently set at 80mg alcohol per 100ml blood (although Northern Ireland and Scotland have announced plans to lower their limit to 50mg), but drivers with even 20-50mg alcohol per 100ml of blood are three times more likely to die in a crash than those with no alcohol in their blood.

Q3: In the past 12 months, how often have you driven after taking illegal drugs?

Men are three times as likely to risk life and limb by driving on illegal drugs.

- 6% of men have driven after taking illegal drugs, compared to 2% of women
- 92% of men never drive after taking illegal drugs, compared to 96% of women

THE FACTS: DRUGS

- Different drugs affect people in different ways and the effects can last for days, sometimes without someone realising.
- Smoking cannabis up to three hours before driving doubles the risk of crashing. It slows reaction times, can affect coordination and causes tiredness.
- Illegal drugs including cocaine and ecstasy result in over-confidence and risk taking.
- LSD can make it difficult to judge distances and speed and cause people to feel panic and confused.
- Many illegal drugs disrupt sleep, meaning they can also lead to tiredness in the days following.

Q4: In the past 12 months, how often have you driven when feeling tired?

A staggering proportion of both men and women drive tired regularly. About three-quarters of both male and female drivers admitted driving tired in the past year.

- 77% of men have driven tired, compared to 75% of women
- 8% of men and women did this weekly or more
- 6% of men and women did this once a month
- 56% of men did this occasionally, compared to 53% of women
- 7% of men and women did this once
- 22% of men and 24% of women never did this
Men vs women

Q5: In the past 12 months, how often have you fallen asleep at the wheel?

Men are three times as likely to fall asleep at the wheel despite their female counterparts admitting they drive tired about as much as men do, suggesting women are more likely to take evasive action when they notice the signs of sleepiness at the wheel. A shocking one in 11 men admits falling asleep at the wheel in the past year.

- 9% of men have fallen asleep at the wheel in the past year, compared to 3% of women
- No men or women fell asleep weekly or more
- 1% of men fell asleep once a month, while no women said they did this
- 4% of men said they did this occasionally, compared to 1% of women
- 4% of men said they did this once, compared to 2% of women
- 87% of men said they never did this, compared to 95% of women

ADVICE: TIREDNESS

Get plenty of sleep before a journey, plan your journey to include time for adequate rest and don’t set out if you are already tired. Be particularly wary of driving unusually early or after a full day’s work. If you start to feel sleepy while driving, you should find somewhere safe to rest as soon as you possibly can, rather than trying to fight off tiredness. Winding down the window or listening to music do not help prevent sleep. When you stop, drink a high-caffeine drink and then have a 10-15 minute snooze. By the time you wake up any caffeine you have drunk will have kicked in and you may feel alert enough to continue your journey. If you still feel tired, you should not continue your journey. Remember caffeine is a temporary drug and its effects do not last long. Sleep is the only long-term cure to tiredness.

CASE STUDY

Ben Roberts, 19, from Worcester, nearly died when he crashed his car after a night out drinking with friends on in May 2007. Ben clipped the car against a kerb and it rebounded into a concrete pillar. He seriously injured his face, snapped his wrist into an S shape and broke his ankle. Ben has fully recovered and has a new perspective on driving. He knows how lucky he is to be alive.

IN THE PAST FOUR YEARS...

- Fewer drivers are drinking alcohol before getting behind the wheel, whatever their gender. 40% of men and 30% of women admit to this in 2012, compared to 59% of men and 42% of women in 2008.
- Fewer drivers are falling asleep at the wheel. 9% of men and 3% of women admit to this in 2012, compared to 12% of men and 5% of women in 2008.

End notes

1. Reported road casualties Great Britain 2010, Department for Transport, 2011
2. The relationship between serious injury and blood alcohol concentration, University of California San Diego, 2011
3. NICE Review of effectiveness of laws limiting blood alcohol concentration levels to reduce alcohol-related road injuries and deaths, 2010
6. Driving while under the influence of cannabis, British Medical Journal, 2012
7. A-Z of Drugs: Cannabis, Talk to Frank
8. A-Z of Drugs: Cannabis, Talk to Frank
9. A-Z of Drugs: Cannabis, Talk to Frank