

A risky business



WINTER DRIVING

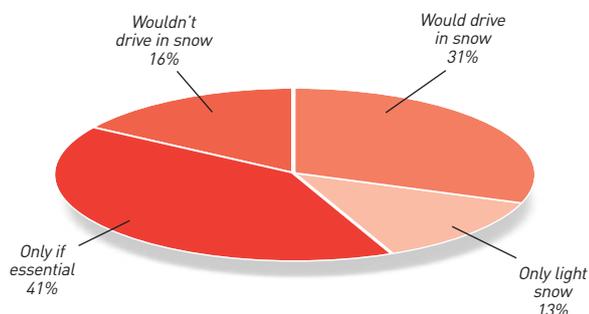
Q1: Do you drive when there is snow or you expect it to snow?

Only one in six drivers (16%) follow safety advice and avoid driving in snow. Worrying, nearly a third (31%) are prepared to risk driving in heavy snow for a non-essential journey. Men were significantly more likely than women to take this risk.

Among all drivers:

- 31% would drive in snow
- 13% would only drive in light snow
- 41% would only drive in snow if they had to
- 16% would avoid driving in snow

Figure 1: do you drive when there is snow or you expect it to snow?



Men vs women:

- 39% of men and 23% of women would drive in snow
- 11% of men and 15% of women would only drive in light snow
- 39% of men and 43% of women would only drive in snow if they had to
- 11% of men and 20% of women would avoid driving in snow

LOST LIVES

Paul Dobson, 24, from Davyhulme, Manchester, was in a crash three days before Christmas 2007, caused by a driver speeding in icy conditions. On Boxing Day, four days later, he died in hospital from head injuries. Paul's mum **Sheila Quinn said:** "Paul's death was utterly devastating. I went through agony that Christmas and New Year, and now every year at Christmas I'm reminded of how needless and tragic his death was. Too many drivers overestimate their abilities and underestimate the dangers of bad weather. I want to get the message out that drivers need to take winter seriously. Please slow down and keep your distance if caught out in rain, ice or snow, and please, if you don't need to drive, don't."



Q2: What items do you carry in your vehicle in winter in case of bad weather or breakdowns?

A large number of drivers are grossly under-prepared for bad conditions and breakdowns, despite the unpredictable nature of UK weather. Young drivers (18-24) are far less likely to carry important emergency gear than older drivers.

Among all drivers:

- 73% don't carry a high-viz vest
- 70% don't carry food and drink
- 65% don't carry a warning triangle
- 65% don't carry a spade
- 54% don't carry a first-aid kit
- 50% don't carry blankets or warm clothes
- 47% don't carry cloths
- 46% don't carry a torch
- 14% don't carry an ice-scraper or de-icer

Among young drivers:

- 92% don't carry a spade
- 87% don't carry a high-visibility vest
- 85% don't carry food and drink
- 80% don't carry a warning triangle
- 72% don't carry a first-aid kit
- 67% don't carry a torch
- 67% don't carry cloths
- 65% don't carry a blanket or warm clothes
- 25% don't carry an ice-scraper or de-icer

ADVICE FOR DRIVERS: WINTER WEATHER

Brake advises drivers to follow its A, B, C of safe driving in winter:

Avoid driving in snow and other treacherous conditions. Never set off when it's snowing or forecast to, and avoid driving if you possibly can in other bad conditions like fog, heavy rain and ice. Consider alternatives such as walking or public transport if available. If you drive to work, speak to your employer about working from home when weather is very bad, especially if you live in a rural area prone to snow or floods.

Be prepared. Make sure your vehicle is well maintained, and tyres have a tread depth of at least 3mm. Check forecasts and plan your route to avoid roads likely to be more risky and allow plenty of time. Pack a winter driving kit in case you're caught out. This should include: an ice scraper or de-icer; torch; cloths; a blanket and warm clothes; food and drink; first-aid kit; spade; warning triangle; and high-visibility vest. Always take a fully charged phone in case of emergencies, but never use it when driving.

Careful and cautious driving. If you do get caught out driving in bad conditions, you need to slow right down increase the distance behind the vehicle in front. In rain your stopping distance doubles, so keep a four second gap. In snow or icy conditions stopping distances increase by as much as ten times so you need to drop right back. Keep careful look out for people on foot and bikes who may be harder to spot. Avoid harsh braking and acceleration and carry out manoeuvres slowly and with extra care.

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Q3: Do you ensure your car tyres have a minimum 3mm tyre tread over winter?

While nearly nine in ten (87%) drivers said they ensure they have a minimum 3mm tread depth in winter, three in 10 (30%) young drivers (18-25) do not take this important safety precaution.

Among all drivers:

- 87% said yes
- 13% said no

Among young drivers:

- 70% said yes
- 30% said no

THE FACTS: WINTER DRIVING

Stopping distances double in wet weather and it takes up to ten times longer to stop in snow and ice,¹ so it's essential to drive much slower than normal and keep large distances behind the vehicle in front if caught in bad weather.

The Highways Agency is responsible for keeping England's motorways and major 'A' roads clear of ice and snow. It has a fleet of 500 gritters, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and go into action every time freezing temperatures are forecast.²

Local authorities look after local road networks. They have a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice.³ However, because of financial and resource limitations, it is not always possible for authorities to clear and grit all roads and in some cases conditions can change very quickly meaning there is a lag before roads are treated.⁴

Drivers should therefore never assume that roads have been treated, and take responsibility for avoiding driving if possible in bad conditions, and if caught out, ensuring their driving is slow and cautious.

Q4: Do you think drivers go too fast for safety in ice or snow?

The vast majority have a low opinion of other drivers' safety in wintry weather conditions, with more than nine in 10 (92%) saying many or most go too fast.

- 28% said most drivers go too fast
- 64% said many drivers go too fast
- 8% said no

End notes

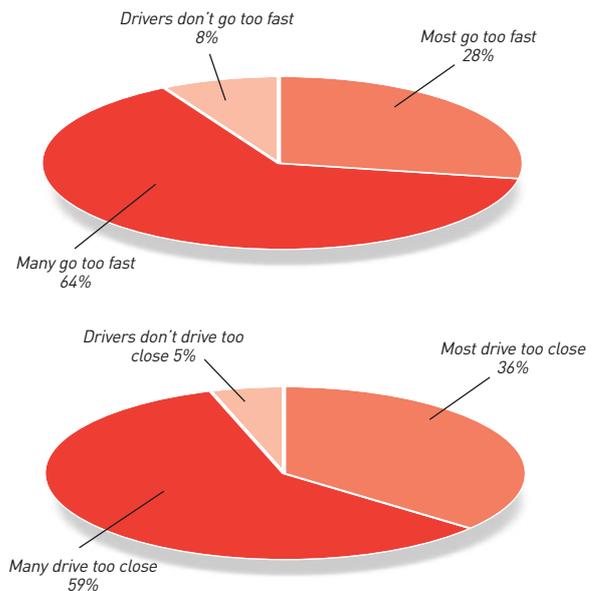
1. The Highway Code, 2011
2. Winter Maintenance, www.highways.gov.uk (Highways Agency)
3. Well-Maintained Highways - Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance (Road Liaison Group, 2005)
4. Well-Maintained Highways - Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance (Road Liaison Group, 2005)

Q5: Do you think drivers travel too close to the vehicle in front in ice or snow?

Similarly, almost all drivers (95%) think many or most people fail to leave sufficient gap behind the vehicle in front in bad conditions.

- 36% said many drivers travel too close
- 59% said most drivers travel too close
- 5% said no

Figure 2: do you think drivers travel too fast and too close in ice or snow?



Q6: How many seconds do you leave between your vehicle and the vehicle in front in wet weather?

Despite almost all being critical of other drivers driving too close in bad weather, nearly half (47%) admit leaving less than the recommended four second gap in the wet or don't bother checking.

- 28% usually don't count the gap behind the vehicle in front
- 1% leave at least one second
- 5% leave at least two seconds
- 13% leave at least three seconds
- 15% leave at least four seconds
- 38% leave at least five seconds

Q7: By how much do you think stopping distances increase in icy conditions?

The majority of drivers lack awareness of the huge increase in stopping distances caused by ice. Nine in ten (91%) underestimate stopping distances in icy weather by half.

- 6% said it's a 50% increase
- 30% said it's a 100% increase
- 34% said it's a 200% increase
- 21% said it's a 500% increase
- 9% said it's a 1,000% increase