

# Winter driving

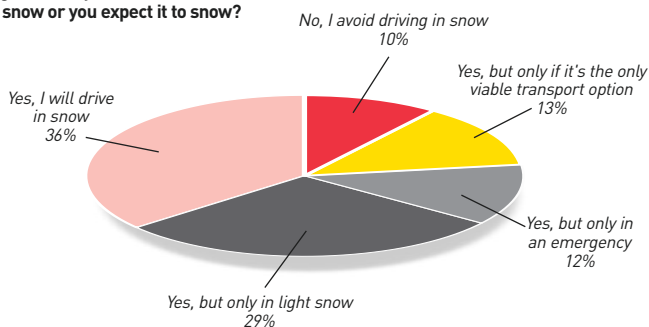


## Q1: Do you drive when there is snow or you expect it to snow?

The risks of driving increase in winter weather, particularly in icy or snowy weather. The Highway Code is clear that drivers should not drive in these conditions unless the journey is essential <sup>i</sup>.

- 10% said, "No, I avoid driving in snow".
- 13% said, "Yes, but only if it's the only viable transport option".
- 12% said, "Yes, but only in an emergency".
- 29% said, "Yes, but only in light snow".
- 36% said, "Yes, I will drive in snow".

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



### THE FACTS: WINTER DRIVING

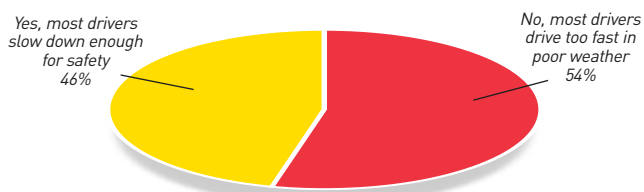
- In wet weather, stopping distances **more than double** <sup>ii</sup>. On top of this, the rain and spray from other vehicles make it harder to see hazards.
- In icy or snowy weather, stopping distances can be **ten times greater** <sup>iii</sup>. Even if you think roads have been treated, it's essential to drive slowly and keep well back from other road users.
- The responsibility for clearing the snow and gritting most roads, including local streets, falls to the local highway authority. However, given financial and resource pressures, it is not possible for all roads to be treated. Around 40% of roads are gritted <sup>iv</sup>. This means that a driver can **never assume that a road has been gritted**.

## Q2: Do you think drivers reduce their speed enough for safety in poor weather conditions such as ice, snow, fog or heavy rain?

Most drivers (54%) believe that other drivers go too fast in poor weather. Older drivers, who are more likely to have more experience driving, are more prone to think that others are driving too fast.

- 54% said, "No, most drivers drive too fast in poor weather".
- 46% said, "Yes, most drivers slow down enough for safety"

Figure 2: Do you think drivers reduce their speed enough for safety in poor weather conditions such as ice, snow, fog or heavy rain?

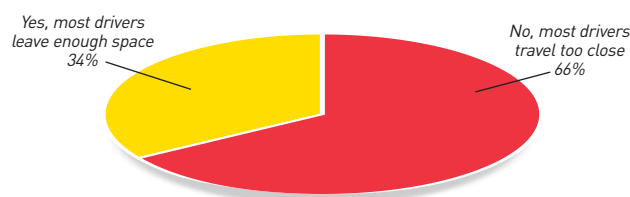


## Q3: Do you think drivers leave enough space between them and the vehicle in front in poor weather conditions such as ice, snow, fog or heavy rain?

Two-thirds of drivers (66%) think that most drivers travel too close to the vehicle in front in poor weather. Older drivers, more likely to be more experienced on roads, are more likely to feel that other drivers are not leaving enough space to be safe, with 85% of drivers over 65 reporting this view.

- 66% say "No, most drivers travel too close"
- 34% say "Yes, most drivers leave enough space."

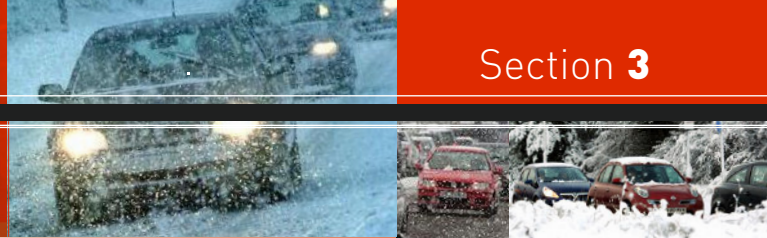
Figure 3: Do you think drivers leave enough space between them and the vehicle in front in poor weather conditions such as ice, snow, fog or heavy rain?



### ADVICE FOR DRIVERS: THE A,B,C OF WINTER DRIVING

- **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 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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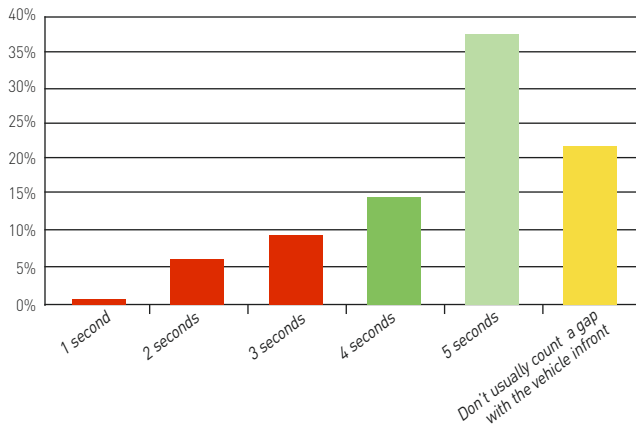


## Q4: How many seconds do you leave between your vehicle and the vehicle in front in wet weather?

Brake recommends that drivers leave four seconds between their vehicle and the vehicle in front in wet weather. More than one in five drivers (22%) fail to check their gap, and another fifth (21%) do not leave a large enough gap, meaning that, if they have to brake suddenly, it could lead to a serious crash.

- 1% say at least one second
- 6% say at least two seconds
- 14% say at least three seconds
- 19% say at least four seconds
- 38% say at least five seconds
- 22% say that they don't usually count a gap behind the vehicle in front

Figure 4 : How many seconds do you leave between your vehicle and the vehicle in front in wet weather?

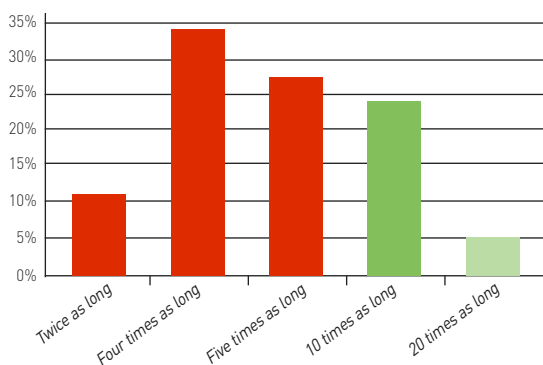


## Q5 How much do you think stopping distances increase in icy conditions?

In icy conditions, stopping distances are up to ten times as long as in dry conditions<sup>v</sup>. Only a quarter of drivers (23%) know this, with the majority under-estimating the distance, meaning that many drivers may be unwittingly putting themselves and other road users at risk in icy conditions.

- 11% say twice as long
- 33% say four times as long
- 27% say five times as long
- 23% say 10 times as long
- 6% say 20 times as long

Figure 5: How much do you think stopping distances increase in icy conditions?



### End notes

- i. The Highway Code, Rule 228, Department for Transport, 2015
- ii. The Highway Code, Rule 227, Department for Transport, 2015
- iii. The Highway Code, Rule 230, Department for Transport, 2015
- iv. Your winter watch questions answered, Local Government Association, 2015
- v. The Highway Code, Rule 230, Department for Transport, 2015