



People for Proper Policing in North Wales

BRITS LESS LIKELY TO DRIVE FAST Survey finds UK drivers are law-abiding folk

UK drivers are less likely to enjoy driving fast, less likely to have had a speeding ticket and less likely to have made a mobile call from their car than most of their continental neighbours, according to an EU-funded research project into drivers' attitudes to driving and risk.

They also believe strongly in the need for seatbelts and estimate that their own driving is only slightly safer than the European average – in spite of the fact that the UK, along with Sweden, actually has the best road safety record across the continent.

This picture of UK drivers as responsible and mostly law abiding citizens is at odds with the one that is frequently presented. It has prompted motorist pressure **group the RAC Foundation** to question some of the UK Government's road safety tactics and to urge it to explore new and innovative methods of cutting death and injury.

About the research

The SARTRE 3 (Social Attitudes to Road Traffic Risk in Europe) study was carried out among **1,000 drivers in each of 23 countries across Europe**. The survey provides information on driver attitudes, behaviour and experiences and it showed that :-

29 per cent of UK drivers admit that they like to drive fast. The only nationalities less likely to find speed appealing are the Irish (18 per cent) and Croats and Finns (both 26 per cent). The European average is 36 per cent and the largest proportion of drivers to admit to a penchant for fast travel are Germans and Swedes (both 43 per cent), Cypriots (44 per cent) and Poles at 45 per cent.

Nine per cent of drivers were penalised for speeding in the UK between 2001-2004. The European average is 18 per cent with the Netherlands highest at 46 per cent. Only France is lower than the UK with eight per cent of drivers incurring a speeding ticket.

Drivers in the UK are fairly convinced of the need to wear a seat belt. Only 11 per cent say that wearing a seat belt is not necessary if they drive carefully. This is lower than the European average of 19 per cent - with the Cypriots the most sure of their driving skills - 34 per cent reckon they don't need a seat belt as long as they drive carefully.

66 per cent of UK motorists reckon they are less dangerous drivers than most of their European counterparts. This compares to an average of 63 per cent. The three nationalities most convinced of their driving capabilities are those from Italy (77 per cent) Ireland (74 per cent) and Portugal (73 per cent) – all countries with substantially higher casualty rates than the UK.

Apart from the French, UK drivers admit to making fewer telephone calls while driving than any other European motorists. 14 per cent of UK drivers say they make at least one telephone call per day while driving. This compares to an average of 28 per cent. The biggest telephone users are the Italians (44 per cent), the Estonians (45 per cent) and the Cypriots (46 per cent).

Drivers in the UK are less likely to be breathalysed than almost all of their European neighbours. Less than one in ten UK drivers have been checked for alcohol over the past three years. This compares to a European average of 26 per cent per cent who have been

breathalysed and more than six out of every ten drivers in Finland. Only the Irish Republic at seven per cent of drivers to be breathalysed and Italy at four per cent were lower.

RAC Foundation campaigns head Sue Nicholson said, "These are interesting findings and point up some real differences in attitude and experience across Europe. The UK has one of the best records for road safety – it's surprising that drivers don't hold their skills in even higher esteem.

"Rising road deaths, an increase in drink driving and growing dissatisfaction among motorists with speed camera policy means, however, that we now need to look at some more radical solutions on how we cut our casualty rate even further. Putting all the road safety eggs in one speed camera box just isn't thinking flexibly enough. It's time to stop criminalising drivers and use more effective methods."

RAC Foundation solutions. The RAC Foundation suggested a re-think on the traditional four E's of road safety:

Education

Insufficient importance is given to the education of road users, especially during their formative years. The introduction of a 'road safety' module into the national curriculum could improve road safety.

Re-training should be offered as an alternative to, or part of, criminal proceedings or sentence for some motoring offences, depending on the nature or circumstances of the individual offence.

Motoring penalties should be supplemented with courses to re-educate drivers.

As well as re-training, the RAC Foundation feels that the range of penalties for motoring offenders should be increased in scope to include community service orders.

Education and advice to reduce the likelihood of repeat offending once they are allowed back on the road

Enforcement

There should be a review of the role of speed camera partnerships and more work done on causes of accidents.

More police traffic officers and better use of intelligence to target their efforts to provide both a visible deterrent and a rapid response to the most dangerous motoring offenders. The Association of Chief Police Officers has previously admitted that traffic police numbers dropped by 11 per cent in England and Wales between 1996-2001 and justified the fall on the grounds that greater use of cameras compensated for the loss of police numbers.

A review of speed limits should be undertaken to ensure that they are appropriate for the type of road along with more flexible speed limits relating to time of day or conditions with perhaps an increase in the motorway speed limit.

The use of technology, such as alcohol ignition interlocks devices, to prevent drinkers from driving.

Roadside evidential breath tests.

Speed limits on UK roads should be readdressed with some reduced and some increased.

Many speed limits are illogical and not obvious to drivers.

Government should re-introduce certain elements of the Road Safety Bill at the earliest opportunity.

Engineering

Although good road design, construction and maintenance will not prevent an unsafe driver from a collision, high quality roads can improve safety.

Good, clear and visible signing and effective lighting are essential for the safety of all road users.

Encouragement

More incentives for post test training.