

DRUGS, DRINK, DISTRACTIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL DRIVING Annual Report on Motoring highlights generational divide among motorists

Submitted by: Soup Ltd

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One in four young drivers has been in a car when they believed the driver was under the influence of drugs – and one in 10 young drivers has admitted taking the wheel themselves while under the influence, according to the 2009 RAC Report on Motoring (<http://www.rac.co.uk/report-on-motoring/report-2009/>)*.

The report – now in its 21st year as the voice of the motorist – also shows 17 to 24 year olds are more likely to be distracted while driving than their older counterparts. More than one in four occasionally send text messages at the wheel – but 5% admit to being frequent texters.

However the report shows that younger drivers are less likely to drink-drive, and are more knowledgeable about environmentally friendly driving techniques. Almost a third (32%) of 45-64 year olds admitted to driving while potentially over the drink-drive limit compared to fewer than a quarter (24%) of 17-24 year olds. Meanwhile, a third (36%) of 17-24 year olds are very confident they understand the skills required to be a greener driver, compared to just a quarter of other motorists.

Adrian Tink, RAC's Motoring Strategist, said: "This year's report clearly shows a generational divide among motorists as regards their vices. Younger drivers have many good habits that bode well for the future of motoring, but their attitude towards drug-driving is worrying, particularly as the number of fatal accidents involving drugs has increased by 28%** in recent years. For other motorists, there's still work to do on tackling the drink-drive culture, and raising awareness of environmental driving issues.

"The Government needs to listen to the voice of the new generation of motorists. They want more clear and accessible information on the effects of drugs, the reality of the drink-drive limit and the 'morning after' risks. We've seen successful high profile campaigns showing the devastating impacts drink-driving can have, and there's more vital work to be done on that issue, but we need to see more high profile information for the potentially equally tragic and ever increasing problem of drug-driving."

Drug-Driving

The report revealed:

- 25% of 17-24 year olds and 29% of 25-34 year olds have been in the car when they believed the driver was under the influence of drugs
- 9% of 17-24 year olds and 13% of 25-34 year olds admitted driving under the influence themselves
- Of the 8% of 35-44 year olds who admitted to drug-driving, a third had taken class B drugs and a fifth had taken class A drugs
- 8% of 45-64 year olds believe it's acceptable to drive after taking class A drugs.

Drink-Driving

The report showed:

- Almost a third (32%) of 45-64 year olds admitted to driving while potentially over the drink-drive

limit, compared to 25% of younger drivers

- Younger drivers are more supportive of further efforts to tackle drink-driving than their parents' generation. Almost nine out of ten (88%) of 17-24 year olds demand further information on drink-drive limits, compared with 83% of 45-64 year olds
- 72% of 17-24 year olds are in favour of random breath testing on the roads, compared to 67% of 45-64 year olds
- 89% of 17-24 year olds think longer sentences for drink-driving offences would be acceptable, compared to 82% of 45-64 year olds

Environmental Driving

The report shows younger drivers aged between 17-24 years old are emerging as a positive influence in changing long-held driving habits:

- Over a third (36%) of the 17-24 age group are very confident they understand the skills required to be a greener driver, compared to a quarter of other motorists. It shows teaching these skills as part of the modern driving test is paying dividends
- Younger drivers are more likely to car share, cutting congestion and CO2 emissions. One in five shares a vehicle at least once a week compared to only 4% of other drivers
- 83% of the 17-24 age group are in favour of increased investment in alternative fuel technologies, recognising that they cannot depend on the internal combustion engine forever, compared to only 68% of all motorists
- 41% of the 17-24 age group agree they will be more inclined to choose an alternative power source when buying their next vehicle, compared to 26% of all motorists.

To tackle the twin issues of drug and drink driving, RAC calls for:

On drug-driving: greater education on the effects of drug-driving, including prescription drugs. It must be as high profile as drink-driving - with the same message that it is socially unacceptable to drive after taking drugs. Roadside testing equipment must also be introduced as soon as possible to aid the Police in enforcing the law. All messages need to target the general population, not just younger drivers.

On drink-driving: a reduction in the drink-drive limit to 50mg. This reduction should be accompanied by random breath-testing and continue to focus on the most serious offenders. Increased driver education is needed to reinforce what the limit means in practice. Education should also focus on the less-publicised effects of 'morning after motoring'.

Other themes from the RAC 2009 Report on Motoring

1. Motorists disengaging with the big policy issues of the day such as the environment, traffic management and long-term road improvement and planning. Their focus is instead on issues of immediate relevance to their wallets such as reducing car usage.

2. Growing support for the role of public transport with 67% of motorists stating they would use their

cars less if these options were better and 75% demanding further investment in it.

3. Efforts by motorists to lower the cost of owning their vehicles, with 53% walking more often and 77% shopping around for car insurance, plus increased risk-taking to save money, such as reducing breakdown cover and servicing their own vehicles.

4. Frustration at the condition, maintenance and lack of improvement to the roads with 82% of motorists believing the quality of roads is getting noticeably worse.

5. Support for government transport policies such as Active Traffic Management, but opposition to others, such as the continued prevalence of speed cameras, with 75% believing they are about raising money rather than improving road safety.

6. A lack of clear communication by government on recent motoring-related legislative changes, with only 32% of motorists aware of the new CO2-related road tax bands.

- Ends -

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* In total, 1,109 British motorists were surveyed (i.e. those who hold a current driving licence and drive at least once a month). The survey was conducted in April 2009, with the questionnaire taking around 20 minutes to complete.

** Figures from the Department of Transport show that the number of fatal accidents on UK roads involving drugs as a "contributory factor" increased 28% between 2005 and 2007. The number of total accidents involving drugs as a contributory factor also increased 8% during this period

About RAC

With around seven million members, RAC (<http://www.rac.co.uk>) is one of the UK's most progressive motoring organisations, providing services for both private and business motorists. Whether it's breakdown cover (<http://www.rac.co.uk/breakdowncover/>), car insurance (<http://www.rac.co.uk/car-insurance/>), vehicle inspections and checks (<http://www.rac.co.uk/vehicle-checks/>), legal services (<http://www.rac.co.uk/legal-services/>) or up-to-the-minute traffic and travel information (<http://route.rac.co.uk/>) - RAC is able to meet motorists' needs.

RAC is committed to providing the very highest levels of service to its members and has been ranked first

for customer service by J.D. Power and Associates' UK Roadside Assistance Study for the last three years.

Aviva bought RAC in May 2005. The acquisition brings together RAC's powerful brand and customer base with the expertise and leading position in motor insurance of Aviva UK Insurance (formerly Norwich Union Insurance). Aviva is the UK's largest insurer with a market share of around 15 per cent.

RAC is part of Aviva, the world's fifth largest insurance group which operates in 28 countries.

RAC's news releases and a selection of images are available from the internet press centre at www.racnews.co.uk.