



Road User Community

Winter driving

18 December 2020

What did we ask our community?

Winter travel

Given the prospect of cold winter weather, what precautions are road users taking to account for this?

Have they seen any messages or campaigns around winter driving, and how did they respond to that information?

Has Covid-19 impacted road users' ability to plan ahead and take those precautions? What information do road users employ to prepare for the winter, if anything?

And finally, have road users been satisfied with the quality of their journeys on motorways and major 'A' roads? Should further precautions for winter have been taken?

Who is our road users community?

40

people using
motorways and major
'A' roads in England



Across England



Mix of vehicle types



Mix of commuters,
leisure and business
travellers, and those
who drive for work

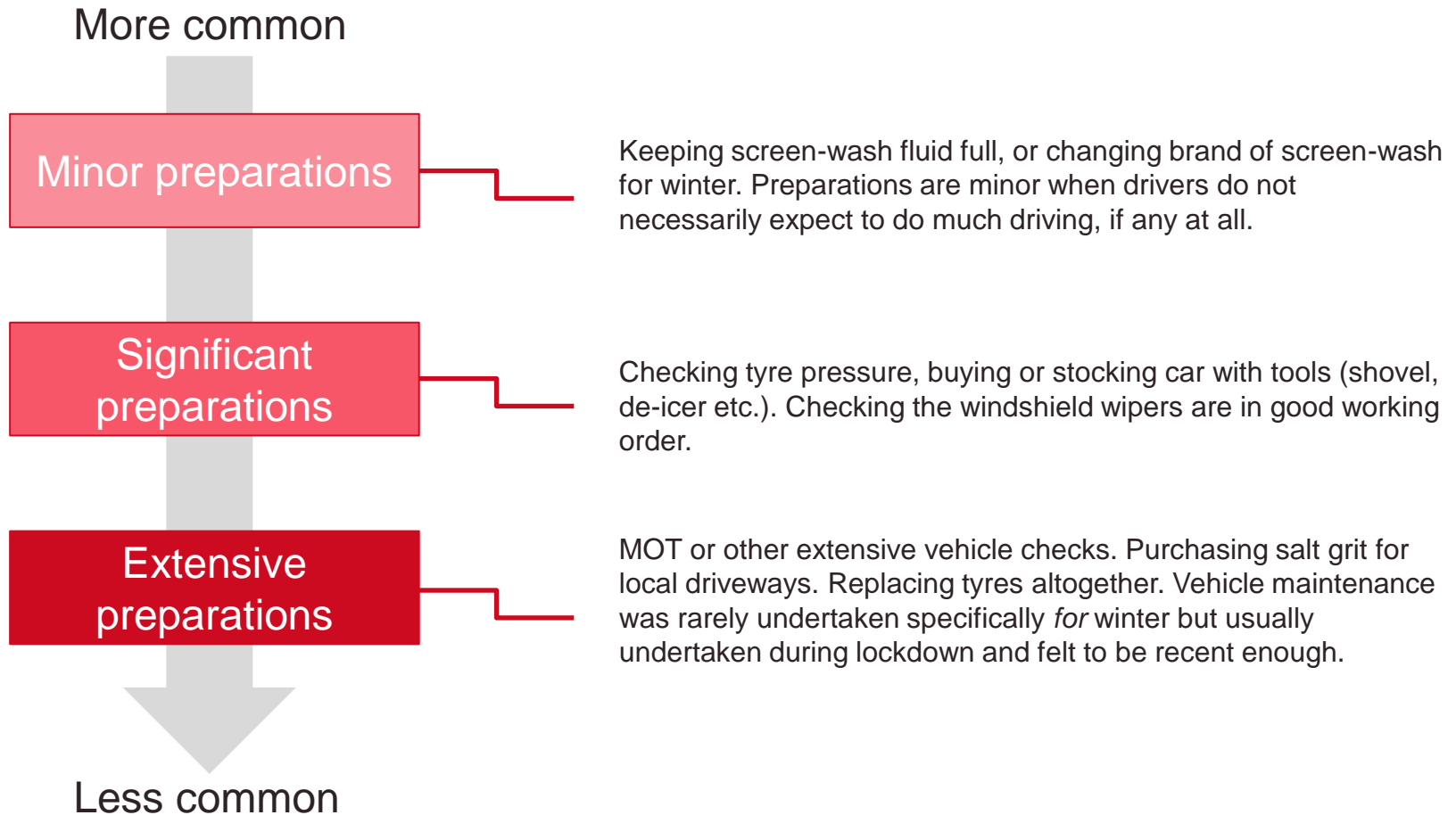


A spread of age,
gender and ethnicity



Some have
disabilities

Most respondents have prepared their vehicles for winter, but the degree of planning varies



Respondents in this community have encountered several obstacles to vehicle maintenance

Several point to maintenance challenges as a direct result of Covid-19

- Two respondents said their MOTs were delayed as a result of their garages closing down due to COVID.
- One respondent points out that his local mechanic has struggled to source parts for maintenance as a result of supply chain challenges caused by the pandemic.
- Several have had their MOTs extended by six months due to the pandemic – while this is not a major cause for concern, at least one respondent drives with more *caution* as a result.
- Others argued that garages were busier during lockdown as a result of heightened demand, but this has not impeded anyone from ultimately doing their necessary maintenance.

Generally, these respondents have been proactive about their vehicle maintenance. Covid-19 has not outright prevented any of our community from maintaining their cars for winter to the degree they had hoped for.

"During the first lockdown I was unable to get my MOT done due to the garage being closed. This meant I had to take the bus to the supermarket, which I would never normally do. I always check the weather on my iPhone and I have Twitter for live travel updates."

Female, 29, South East, road user

"Due to the first lockdown I was unable to get an MOT check like most people but have since got it done. I put more air into my tyres at my local petrol station."

Male, 24, South East, road user

"I check with the Met Office every morning for the temperature or what the weather will be like for the day. If it's an icy day I'll have to leave the house a little earlier to de-ice the car."

Female, 39, South East, roads user

Information for winter driving tends to be accessed on-demand and shortly before embarking on the journey itself

Weather reports were the most common source of information

- Often accessed *reactively* rather than proactively – some respondents receive push notifications from their phone in the case of adverse weather.
- Some respondents use this to decide whether or not to drive – these people tend to be less confident drivers who do not want to drive during adverse weather.

Sat-nav information, accessed at the start of the journey, is reassuring

- Again, this information is not accessed far in advance. They often view this at the point of starting the journey to check:
 - **Road surface condition** – have any potholes been reported?
 - **Congestion levels and expected journey time** – how long will my journey take?

The only specific campaign or messaging that drivers have seen came from garages

- Several were aware that Halfords, QuikFit and other garages are offering free winter checks although only one respondent had taken them up on the offer.

"I usually put anti-freeze for the winter, ensure the oil is checked regularly, Tyres are changed for winter. These are the main checks. And making sure my lights are working."

Male, 35, Midlands, road user

"I know that Halfords advertise their five-point free winter check. My MOT renewal has been extended by six months and I couldn't do servicing on time due to the second lockdown – I'm more cautious than before."

Male, 46, South East, road user

"I have travelled on the motorway, the M1 and M25, and the roads were fine - no ice but on one visit there was torrential rain that made travel difficult."

Female, 57, North West, road user

Among the relatively few respondents who are currently travelling on motorways and major 'A' roads, satisfaction was strong

As in previous weeks, frustrations emerge more around local roads than the motorways and major 'A' roads

Specific experiences include:



Positive experience of seeing road gritting already in place and speed limits reduced.



No specific winter preparations noticed but overall satisfaction. One respondent is frustrated by the lack of lighting given the continuous rain.



Satisfaction with the road surface quality and in particular the lack of potholes, but concern around lighting emerged, exacerbated by fog.

Road surface quality and lighting were the main winter priorities for the roads, according to these current travellers.

"Due to my limiting the amount of driving I've been doing over Christmas I haven't actually put too much thought into this. I always tend to drive extra carefully during the winter months as the surfaces of the roads are far more slippery."

Male, 25, South East, road user

"Our service on the vehicle was much later than it normally would be as the dealership garage was closed for a while. I would consider checking the weather for longer journeys but I don't think the weather has quite got to the level of coldness that I would check more regularly."

Male, 38, North West, road user

"Yes, I do check the weather or travel reports before making any journeys as I do not really like to travel if there is heavy rain or extremely cold weather. And, depending on how necessary my travel is on that occasion I may change my mind about making the trip that day."

Female, 20, Midlands, road user