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## **Driving stress means no Happy New Year for motorists**

- **Driving increases stress levels in everyone**
- **1 in 4 say driving is most stressful thing they do**
- **48 per cent say driving stress affects their whole day**

If you're dreading the return to work after New Year, you're not alone – driving officially stresses us all and returning to the commute is the most stressful activity many of us will undertake this week, according to research<sup>1</sup> by intelligent driving experts, Trafficmaster.

Motorists say travelling by car is more stressful than financial or work pressures, Christmas shopping, going on a blind date or even meeting in-laws for the first time. Overall, 42 per cent of drivers – equivalent to 15 million – feel stress behind the wheel. Driving is most stressful for 25 per cent of respondents, more than financial worries (13%) a first day in a new job (11%), going on a blind date (4%) or meeting in-laws for the first time (4%).

The study also found half of sufferers can't even leave their tension in the car, with 48 per cent admitting road-based stress affects their whole day and 41 per cent saying this happens at least once a week.

Trafficmaster also worked with health psychologist, David Moxon, to measure stress levels, understand their effects and ways to reduce them. Stress is most accurately measured by increased levels of a naturally occurring hormone, Cortisol. The Trafficmaster study looked at driving with and without satellite navigation and found the following:

- Driving provokes an unconscious increase in Cortisol levels
- On individuals who were generally more 'highly strung', projected results show significant increases in Cortisol levels from driving
- Cortisol levels double when driving without the aid of satellite navigation
- Driving without satellite navigation is nearly three times more stressful than a benchmark activity of shopping

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<sup>1</sup> TNS OnlineBus research for Trafficmaster plc., 24<sup>th</sup>- 30<sup>th</sup> October 2006. Base: 2015 GB adults

David Moxon said: “Long term elevated exposure to Cortisol within the body can have a detrimental effect on health. Studies have shown it can suppress the immune system and damage blood vessels. There’s no escape from pressures in daily driving, but planning journeys in advance and using in-car navigation significantly reduce stress levels,” he concluded.

Philip Hale, spokesman for Trafficmaster, said: “We’re particularly concerned at how the effects of driving stress last throughout many peoples’ day, impacting their productivity and effectiveness at work and potentially having a negative effect on their overall health. Being smart about your journeys can be critical in reducing stress in your life.”

### **Regional breakdowns**

Trafficmaster has also identified that perceived stress is most prevalent overall in the South East and East Anglia, with 46 per cent of the regions’ 3.5 million inhabitants admitting to getting stressed or suffering from road rage in their cars. However, drivers in the North West experience road rage most often, with 47% of sufferers feeling the pressure at least once a week.

<b>Region</b>	<b>% of population that have experienced road rage</b>	<b>% of road rage sufferers who get stressed in the car at least once a week</b>
South East / East Anglia	46 %	40%
Midlands	45%	46%
North East & Yorkshire	41%	40%
North West	41%	47%
Wales & West	39%	41%
Greater London	38%	41%
Scotland	36%	31%

**ENDS**

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### **About Trafficmaster Plc**

Founded in 1988, Trafficmaster Plc is the UK's leading journey management company providing high quality satellite navigation, traffic data and vehicle tracking systems.

Trafficmaster's leading product is Smartnav, an easy to use, technologically advanced, satellite navigation system that guides you around the jams. Smartnav uses Trafficmaster's unique live, incident, historic and predictive traffic data to calculate the optimum route at the start of your journey and will continue to monitor the route for delays until you reach your destination. The Smartnav service also incorporates 24-hour personal assistant support, emergency and breakdown service, nationwide safety camera alerts and GPS stolen vehicle tracking.

Traffic information is derived from a state-of-the-art network of nationwide sensors and transmitters that gather and distribute traffic data of over 8,000 miles of motorway and trunk routes. Designed, developed and patented by Trafficmaster, the system disseminates the gathered data at the company's headquarters at Cranfield in Bedfordshire, and is delivered to the customer through a number of screen or speech-based receivers. These include a variety of in-car products and services that include Smartnav, Trafficmaster Monitor, YQ<sup>2</sup>, Oracle and Freeway units. Traffic information from Trafficmaster can also be obtained by phoning the 1740 service, which is run in partnership with the RAC and the UK's main mobile phone operators. You can also log onto [www.trafficmaster.net](http://www.trafficmaster.net), which provides live traffic information on the PC at home or in the office.

Trafficmaster also offers a Radio Data System -Traffic Message Channel (RDS TMC) service. This provides real time traffic data to other aftermarket and automotive manufacturer own satellite navigation systems.