

CAR HORNS

WHAT A HOOT!

With over 30 billion beeps hooted a year, many of them inappropriately, car horns are apparently driving us Brits beeping mad....



Over 90 per cent of motorists regularly violate the Highway Code by using their car horn inappropriately.

In fact, Brits are so horn-happy that they toot their car horns over 30 billion times a year.

Despite the traditional British reputation for impeccable manners, the sound of a car horn literally causes good behaviour to go 'out of the window' as more than one in ten (13 per cent) of motorists questioned in a recent survey admitted to aggressive behaviour as the result of a blown horn. Over one million drivers (5 per cent) even slowed down or hit the brakes when they were hooted at, causing potential danger on the roads.

Of the 1,000 motorists questioned by esure car insurance, over 70 per cent said that the main reason for using their horn was 'impolite' driving by others on the road. The top road offences include:

- Trying to push into a traffic queue at the last minute (24 per cent)
- Taking a disabled person's parking spot when not disabled (23 per cent)
- Pulling out in front of a fellow motorist (19 per cent)
- Not indicating when over-taking or turning (19 per cent)

Over a third of motorists (37 per cent) become 'angry' when another driver questions their competence by beeping their horn, and a further 30 per cent admitted that they felt 'stressed' when hooted at. However, most worryingly, a massive 75 per cent of the motorists questioned believe that the sound of the car horn can contribute to road rage.

To help reduce the stress caused from the noise of car horns, 44 per cent of motorists thought that having a two-tier horn, with both the conventional horn sound and a less aggressive tone, would alert drivers of the vehicle's presence without causing negative feelings of stress or anger.

TOP TEN HORN SOUNDS

Motorists questioned gave their top ten preferred sounds for the alternative 'beep':

1. Lion 'roaring'
2. Cow 'mooing'
3. Owl 'hooting'
4. Elephant 'trumpeting'
5. Pig 'oinking'
6. Wolf 'howling'
7. Hyena 'laughing'
8. Gorilla 'growling'



9. Cockerel 'crowing'

10. Horses 'neighing'

GENDER DIVIDE

Female motorists tended to feel more 'stressed' when others hooted at them whilst driving (41 per cent), compared to men (21 per cent). However, 76 per cent of men admitted to venting irritation at others' bad driving by using their car horn when they believe a fellow driver to be 'impolite'.

Interestingly, although a third (33 per cent) of male motorists admit to swearing or venting anger while driving, only 24 per cent display anger in their home environment when irritated. In contrast, more women admit to venting their anger at home (46 per cent), rather than on the road (27 per cent).

The research also revealed that men and women even have different 'hooting techniques', with five per cent more men than women holding the horn down for almost two seconds, despite both sexes identifying this as the most 'aggressive' way of beeping (72 per cent).

Professor Steve Stradling, Professor of Transport Psychology at Napier University and member of the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (PACTS) and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), says: "Sounding your horn at other road users breaks the rules of the road, which are intended to facilitate safe progress for all. Being beeped at enrages motorists because it calls their competence as a driver into question. It is an aggressive violation, which transgresses the bounds of civility while sharing the public roadways with others."

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

Unsurprisingly, Londoners are the least patient of all UK residents, with 36 per cent of drivers in the capital admitting to tooting their horn at least once or twice in the rush hour. In fact, 12 per cent of Londoners claim to use their car horn simply as a result of 'boredom' or 'frustration'.

London was also the most patriotic region, with 29 per cent saying that they would beep their horns if England won the World Cup. In contrast, only 2 per cent of Welsh motorists would hoot their horn to celebrate a World Cup victory. East Anglia and those from the South West are the least stressed drivers, with 82 per cent of motorists from these regions claiming to never beep their horns during rush hour.

The top reasons for tooting car horns:

1. Warning other cars of your presence
2. Annoyance at others' 'impolite' driving
3. To let someone know you're waiting outside their house
4. Motorcyclists or cyclists driving erratically
5. If your country wins the World Cup
6. If another motorist is driving too slow
7. Beeping at attractive passers by
8. Boredom and frustration