

UK drivers among most tolerant in Europe, unless faced with a dangerous driver

British motorists see themselves as more tolerant of minor driving irritations, such as crawlers, than their European neighbours - but become as outraged when other drivers' behaviour is considered dangerous, says The AA Motoring Trust.

However, British drivers will be surprised to know that, when self-assessing their own driving skills, the French are more critical of theirs than British drivers are. Italians, confessing to be the most intolerant drivers in a new survey, consider their skills to be the best.

The Drivers in Europe survey of 2,700 drivers in 12 countries, commissioned by the Eurotest* consortium which includes the AA Trust as a partner, found that British motorists claim they are more prepared to tolerate dawdlers and overly nervous drivers than those in Holland and Italy claimed to, and were far more tolerant than the European average.

Even when other drivers refuse to let them into a lane, the stated British level of annoyance is 30 per cent less than the European average, and British drivers are 50 per cent less likely to say they are angered by this than drivers in Germany, Slovenia, Holland and Austria.

"When it comes to minor annoyances, British drivers appear almost blasé compared to Dutch and German drivers. However, perceived aggressive and dangerous driving sparks similar anger levels to that of other European drivers", says Paul Watters, head of roads and transport policy for the AA Motoring Trust.

Across Europe, 90 per cent of drivers stated that aggressive driving, such as tailgating and flashing lights, and risky overtaking triggered extreme or serious annoyance.

"Driving that threatens another driver's safety is regarded as almost an attack on them and tolerance goes out of the window, a reaction that is felt across Europe," adds Watters.

Drivers who fail to indicate when changing lane or direction produce only a slightly less angry response in European drivers, including the British, with just over 80 per cent saying it would spark extreme or serious annoyance.

The degree to which drivers say their blood boils when faced with irritating behaviour by other motorists sometimes reflects their opinion of themselves as a good driver. Across Europe, over 94 per cent of motorists claimed their driving skills were good or very good.

The Italians, among the most consistently intolerant of drivers in the survey, rated their driving skills among the best. Second only to Austria, 98 per cent of Italians said they were very good or good at driving.

However, one in 10 French motorists rated their ability on the road as less than good, compared to more than one in 30 British drivers. The French were second to the most honest' in Europe - Norwegian drivers, of whom 19 per cent rated their driving skills as less than good.

NOTES TO EDITORS: *The Eurotest consortium comprises motoring organisations in Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and Switzerland. The survey, canvassing the opinions of 2,747 drivers across Europe, was conducted between 16 June and 31 July 2005. The responses were analysed by the Institute of Applied Marketing and Communications Research in Erfurt, Germany.

Percentage of motorists extremely or seriously annoyed by the following driving behaviour:

Driving too cautiously: Great Britain 25, Portugal 36, Croatia 38, Norway 43, Austria 45, Switzerland 50, Slovenia 50, Spain 52, France 53, Germany 54, Italy 61, Holland 61. *Average 48.*

Respecting traffic rules too strictly: Great Britain 7, France 8.0, Switzerland 9, Austria 10, Spain 11, Portugal 11, Germany 13, Croatia 17, Slovenia 18, Italy 19, Holland 24, Norway 27. *Average 14.*

Driving slowly: Great Britain 29, France 32, Croatia 35, Spain 42, Germany 43, Norway 45, Slovenia 46, Austria 46, Switzerland 47, Portugal 47, Italy 57, Holland 62. *Average 44.*

Refusing to allow other cars into a lane: Portugal 37, Great Britain 46, Norway 51, Switzerland 54, Croatia 61, France 62, Spain 70, Italy 77, Austria 82, Slovenia 84, Holland 84, Germany 89. *Average 68.*

Risky overtaking manoeuvre: Norway 64, Switzerland 83, Great Britain 88, Croatia 89, Portugal 91, Germany 93, Spain 94, Austria 95, France 95, Italy 96, Holland 96, Slovenia 97. *Average 91.*

Not indicating when changing lanes or direction: Norway 66, Switzerland 76, Spain 76, Germany 77, Portugal 77, Great Britain 81, Croatia 85, France 88, Austria 88, Holland 88, Slovenia 92, Italy 93. *Average 82.*

Tailgating and flashing of headlights: Switzerland 84, Norway 86, Portugal 90, Croatia 90, France 91, Spain 92, Slovenia 93, Great Britain 93, Holland 94, Austria 95, Germany 96, Italy 98. *Average 92.*

Annoying car driver behaviour: ratings across Europe

Tailgating and flashing of headlights: 71% extremely annoyed, **21%** very annoyed, 5% slightly annoyed **0%** not annoyed at all.

Risky overtaking manoeuvre: 65%, **27%**, 6%, **2%**.

Not indicating when changing lanes or direction: 42%, **40%**, 14%, **4%**.

Refusing to allow other cars into a lane: 23%, **44%**, 26%, **6%**.

Driving too cautiously: 15%, **34%**, 39%, **13%**.

Driving slowly: 11%, **33%**, 42%, **14%**.

Respecting traffic rules too strictly: 15%, **11%**, 33%, **52%**.

How drivers see their driving skills

Austria: 33% very good, 65% good, 2% less than good.

Italy: 29%, 69%, 2%.

Switzerland: 29%, 69%, 2%.

Holland: 16%, 81%, 3%.

Great Britain: 19%, 78%, 3%.

Croatia: 42%, 54%, 4%.

Germany: 23%, 73%, 4%.

Portugal: 16%, 79%, 5%.

Spain: 24%, 68%, 8%.

Slovenia: 30%, 60%, 10%.

France: 13%, 77%, 10%.

Norway: 19%, 62%, 19%.