

## Star system rates the safety of UK roads

The first report, launched today, using a new star-rating system for the safety of roads classifies over 40 per cent of the UK's A-roads to be inadequate and no better than two star.

The star ratings, co-funded in the UK by the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM) Trust, classifies the safety of roads on how well their design protects car occupants from death and severe injury in a collision.

Based on initial surveys of 7,000km of the UK's motorways and A-roads, the new system shows that only 11 per cent of A-roads and just half the length of UK motorways make the top four-star grade. Dual-carriageways, widely presumed to be the safest A-roads, rated poorer than expected. Most vary between 3 and 4-star along a route, and just two sections, totalling 30km, make four stars over their entire length: these are the A66 Middlesbrough ring road north; and the A720 Edinburgh city bypass.

The IAM Trust co-funded the UK star-rating, developed by the European Road Assessment Programme (EuroRAP), to provide a recognised standard by which the Government, local authorities and engineers can measure the safety of roads and which is easily understood by all drivers. Its partnership with EuroRAP reflects the dual aspect to road accidents: driver behaviour and the quality of road design.

IAM Trust director, Neil Greig says: The star rating gives responsible drivers a valuable safety tool. Good driving and driver behaviour are key to avoiding accidents. But while errors cannot be eliminated and may be the *initial* cause of a collision, poor design of the road itself is often the killer.

When driving on inferior one and two-star roads, motorists must adapt their driving to compensate for the inadequate features of the road. Drivers who understand that the risk of death or serious injury changes with the star rating of different road sections will be better informed and ultimately safer.

Cutting road deaths requires combined action to improve driver behaviour, to produce safer cars, improve vehicle crash performance, and to provide safety features on the roads themselves.

Dr Steve Lawson, technical director of EuroRAP, the organisation which introduced the star system to the UK, says: Our first report shows clearly that many roads do not provide satisfactory injury protection. Dysfunctional one and two-star main roads, many not built to cope with today's traffic, have death rates at least 10 times higher than other roads and are commonplace in the UK. This is unacceptable when there are well-known means of eliminating injury risk. On some roads, standards can be raised by installing safety fencing, improving junctions – sometimes only with better signing and lining and removing roadside hazards or protecting them from errant vehicles.

The next stage is the Highways Agency funding the star-rating of the remaining two-thirds of its network. The system could then be used to assess the overall standard of the UK road network and identify routes and specific sections which need upgrading.

Other leading countries have edged ahead of Britain in casualty reduction. This research is an added tool in the systematic attention that must be paid to safe roads as well as safe drivers and safe vehicles, says Dr Lawson.

The British economy loses 1.5% of GDP in road crashes. The government has a huge opportunity to develop and fund a large-scale national programme of high-return safety schemes which would be supported by highway authorities across Britain. The UK is now falling behind those countries it used to lead only a few years ago because its pace in applying the results of research into safe road design lags behind the best.

Ends/more

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## Notes to editors

[To download a copy of the report click here](#)

The star-rating of a road is calculated using a Road Protection Score (RPS). This shows how the road infrastructure protects the driver from being severely injured or killed once an accident occurs. The scoring takes into account a comprehensive set of criteria based on three basic categories of collisions that can be affected by elements of the road design: head-on collisions; run-off collisions; and collisions at intersections.

| Total road and motorway length surveyed | England | Scotland | Wales | Nireland |
|---|---------|----------|-------|----------|
|   | (HA)    | 1,578km  | 575km | 620km    |
|   | 2696km  |          |       |          |

### A-roads: total score % length

|            |      |      |      |      |
|------------|------|------|------|------|
| One star   | 0.2  | 0.6  | 0.4  | 2.0  |
| Two star   | 23.1 | 40.2 | 54.0 | 79.3 |
| Three star | 66.4 | 41.5 | 33.8 | 13.7 |
| Four star  | 10.4 | 17.7 | 11.9 | 5.0  |

### Motorways: total score % length

|            |      |      |      |      |
|------------|------|------|------|------|
| One star   | 0.2  | 0.0  | 0.0  | 0.1  |
| Two star   | 0.6  | 0.9  | 0.0  | 11.5 |
| Three star | 50.7 | 13.5 | 38.6 | 75.8 |
| Four star  | 48.5 | 85.7 | 61.4 | 12.5 |

| Motorways scoring | Description               | Length | Score |
|-------------------|---------------------------|--------|-------|
| <b>3 stars</b>    |                           |        |       |
| M6                | J0 to J4a                 | 42.5   | 3.49  |
| M27               | J1 to J8                  | 25.2   | 3.49  |
| M25               | J28 to J31                | 14.2   | 3.48  |
| M62               | J25 to J28                | 16.6   | 3.44  |
| M62               | J22 to J25                | 20.1   | 3.41  |
| M4                | J14 to J15                | 19.7   | 3.41  |
| M20               | J10 to J13                | 19.0   | 3.41  |
| M6                | J21a to J28               | 34.3   | 3.40  |
| M6                | J40 to J44                | 35.3   | 3.38  |
| M3                | J5 to J6                  | 7.7    | 3.35  |
| M2                | J1 to J7                  | 39.9   | 3.31  |
| A1(M)             | Alconbury<br>Peterborough | 17.8   | 3.28  |
| M3                | J3 to J5                  | 22.1   | 3.27  |
|                   | TOTAL                     | 314.4  |       |

NB: The samples of roads inspected although extensive are not a statistically drawn representative sample. Roads known to be of generally poorer and good standard are likely to be over represented. Good roads in Scotland and poor roads in Wales are particularly likely to be over represented.

## IAM Motoring Trust

The IAM Motoring Trust [www.iamtrust.org.uk](http://www.iamtrust.org.uk) is the research and advocacy arm of the IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists).

## EuroRAP [www.eurorap.org](http://www.eurorap.org)

EuroRAP's annual risk rating of British highways maps the risk of death and serious injury across 1000 sections of main road.

The first star ratings of the crash protection provided by Britain's main roads is directly analogous to the crash ratings

Institute of Advanced Motorists

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