

M42 Named Britain's Worst Motorway

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Britain's most frustrating motorway has been revealed, and it is not the M25. Despite the London orbital motorway's notorious reputation for congestion, a survey has found that drivers experience even greater dissatisfaction on the M42, a key route through the Midlands.

The independent watchdog Transport Focus conducted its Strategic Roads User Survey last year, polling over 9,000 road users across England. The findings placed the M42 at the

bottom of the satisfaction rankings, with an overall score of just 56 per cent. By comparison, the M60 motorway scored 60 per cent, while the M25 received 67 per cent.

Running from Bromsgrove in Worcestershire to Ashby-de-la-Zouch in Leicestershire, the M42 is a vital artery for the Midlands, passing through towns such as Redditch and providing access to major destinations including Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre (NEC). Its significance to regional transport and commerce makes the survey's findings particularly notable.

Drivers highlighted several issues affecting satisfaction. Complaints centred on variable speed limits, frequent delays, ongoing roadworks, and potholes. One respondent remarked: "Variable speed limits do not always reflect the traffic conditions. Directed to reduce speed for no apparent reason." Such frustrations are reflected in the motorway's comparatively low ranking.

Transport Focus emphasised that the survey aimed to capture the real experiences of everyday road users. The results provide insight into how infrastructure issues can affect travel times, safety perceptions, and overall satisfaction on major routes.

Further complications are expected as work continues on the M42. From 22 September, National Highways will begin repairing two bridges, leading to planned closures and lane restrictions. The northbound lanes of the A454, which connect to the motorway, will also be affected. Officials have warned drivers to anticipate additional delays during this period.

National Highways has acknowledged the challenges and highlighted the long-term benefits of the maintenance work. "Traffic congestion and poor journey reliability have constrained investment and economic growth around the M42 at Junction 6," the organisation stated. "Having almost reached capacity, the junction has become a bottleneck, causing delays across the network."

The improvements aim to increase road capacity and improve journey reliability, particularly at Junction 6, a recognised pinch point. Officials have indicated that the project will address recurring congestion and reduce the frequency of traffic-related delays in the area.

Despite the planned works, drivers' frustrations remain clear. Surveys like the one conducted by Transport Focus help identify priorities for road maintenance and infrastructure investment, reflecting the experiences of thousands of motorists.

The M42's lower satisfaction rating compared to the M25 challenges popular assumptions about which motorways are the most troublesome. While London's orbital motorway is often associated with heavy congestion and delays, the Midlands route's issues with speed limits, surface quality, and maintenance disruptions have proven equally impactful on driver satisfaction.

Experts suggest that such surveys are essential for informing future infrastructure planning and ensuring that road users' concerns are taken into account. By prioritising upgrades and repairs, authorities can improve safety, reduce travel disruptions, and enhance the overall travel experience for commuters and freight transport alike.

For motorists in the Midlands, the survey underscores the importance of planning journeys carefully, particularly during ongoing maintenance work. Transport Focus encourages drivers to remain aware of speed limits, lane closures, and alternative routes to minimise travel disruption.

The M42 may now hold the unenviable title of Britain's worst motorway, but it also highlights the ongoing challenges of maintaining major transport routes. Investment and repair work are set to improve the road in the long term, aiming to restore satisfaction levels and ensure that this crucial artery can support the region's transport and economic needs effectively.