

Beat the breakdown blues

AA, RAC and Britannia patrols are the hard-shoulder heroes in our exclusive survey

Our annual survey of breakdown service providers is the biggest and best of its kind – it's independent, as you'd expect, and it reports on around 11,000 real call-outs by Which? members. While breakdown cover may seem expensive, it's usually a necessary evil. So here we highlight the providers that won't keep you waiting and reveal those most able to deliver a permanent repair to problems at the roadside.

Service to rely on

The AA comes top in our survey for the second year running (see table, opposite). It received a customer satisfaction score of 84%, closely followed by Britannia (82%) and RAC (82%).

The RAC once again has to settle for second place overall. It attended to 26% of all the breakdowns reported in our survey, but

crucially couldn't match the AA's excellent response times to call-outs. The AA reached 45% of breakdowns within half an hour, compared with the RAC's 41%.

In third place is our final Best Buy brand, Britannia, which dealt with 6% of all breakdowns in our survey. It scored highest for politeness over the phone – 84% of its members were very satisfied. Britannia and AA members are most likely to definitely recommend their services to a friend.

Sadly, Britannia repaired fewer vehicles at the roadside than either the AA or RAC. It mostly uses a network of local agents to answer call-outs, which may be one explanation for its lower fix rate (see 'Roadside repair rates', below). We found that roadside repairs were more likely when branded patrols were in attendance. Branded patrols (such as those from the AA or RAC) also tended to handle the situation better than



their unbranded counterparts – 87% of customers were impressed by their service, while only 72% were impressed with service from unbranded patrols.

Direct Line does well for most services but just falls short of joining our Best Buys, mainly because its recommendation levels were lower than average among customers.

Pre-booked appointments

Most providers offer pre-booked appointments, which allow you to arrange for your car to be fixed at a convenient time rather than waiting around for a patrol to arrive –

The AA reached 45% of call-outs within half an hour

ROADSIDE REPAIR RATES

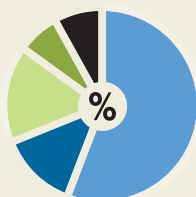
After shelling out more than £100 for cover in some cases, it's reasonable to expect to be back on the road sooner rather than later. But is this a realistic expectation?

Our survey revealed that 52% of vehicles were permanently fixed at the roadside – a further 11% received a temporary fix. The charts show which brands are best at roadside repairs.

KEY

- Permanent fix
- Temporary fix
- Towed to a garage
- Towed home/dest'n
- Other

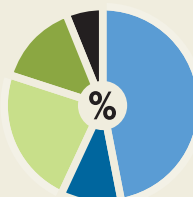
AA



AA members were most likely to have their car permanently fixed at the roadside.

56% 13%
16% 7% 8%

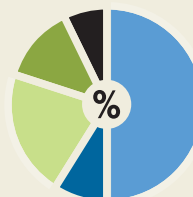
Britannia



Britannia customers were some of the most likely to be towed home.

47% 10%
23% 14% 6%

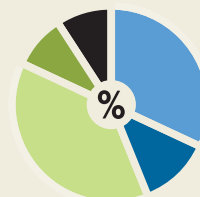
Direct Line



Half of Direct Line customers received a permanent fix at the roadside.

50% 9%
21% 13% 7%

Europ Assistance



Europ Assistance was the provider least likely to fix a car at the roadside.

32% 12%
38% 9% 9%

COMPANY	PRICE (£)					WHICH? SURVEY RATINGS								SCORE %
	COVER TYPE (person/vehicle)	INDIVIDUAL	JOINT	FAMILY	FIRST CAR	CUSTOMER SCORE (%)	SPEED (less than 30min) (%)	SPEED (less than one hour) (%)	REPAIRS	POLITENESS (PHONE)	POLITENESS (PATROL)	OVERALL SERVICE		
1 AA Roadside/Home start/Relay ^a	Either	112	142	192	92	84	45	86	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★★	★★★★★★	78	
2 RAC Solution 3	Person	136	130	177	n/a	82	41	82	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★★	★★★★★	73	
3 BRITANNIA Comprehensive	Either	124	124	n/a	95	82	36	87	★★★★	★★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	70	
4 DIRECT LINE Recovery	Either	98	98	n/a	64	77	41	93	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	69	
5 MONDIAL ^b	Vehicle	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	75	24	69	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	62	
6 GREEN FLAG Recovery plus	Either	113	113	n/a	64	76	38	83	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	59	
7 MORE THAN Roadside Assistance ^a	Vehicle	n/a	n/a	n/a	68	73	29	80	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	55	
8 EUROP ASSISTANCE Breakdown Cover	Vehicle	n/a	n/a	n/a	65	70	21	76	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	50	

^a Based on a cumulative quote, including roadside, home start and relay options. ^b Mondial doesn't sell cover direct to consumers. Instead it provides manufacturer-branded breakdown assistance for certain makes of new car, including BMW, Jaguar, Mazda, Mercedes, Mini, Mitsubishi, Subaru and Suzuki. **Sample sizes** We received responses from the following number of members for each breakdown service provider: AA (4,199), RAC (2,995), Britannia (605), Direct Line (176), Mondial (598), Green Flag (922), More Than (98), Europ Assistance (83)

handy if you break down at home or work, for example.

Mondial customers were the most likely to arrange a pre-booked appointment and, with reasonable scores in most areas, Mondial's service is rated as average overall. But slow response times for immediate assistance prevent the company from rivalling our Best Buys. On average, drivers with Mondial cover had longest to wait for immediate help, at 54 minutes.

Further down the breakdown service chart, Europ Assistance lags behind our Best Buys in key areas. Prices are low, but the Europ Assistance patrols reached the lowest percentage of breakdowns within 30 minutes and were the least likely to fix a car by the road.

Our survey

Our annual breakdown services survey is the largest and most robust in the UK. It's based on data collected in January from Which? members.

In total 10,772 drivers who experienced a breakdown in the past 12 months replied. The survey scrutinises response times, customer service over the phone and call-out care. This

year we've also taken an in-depth look at whether cars were permanently fixed, temporarily repaired or towed to a garage.

In a separate survey in January, we asked 2,382 online panellists what was included in their breakdown package. Most have roadside assistance, towing the vehicle to a destination, and home start.

USING THE TABLE

The more stars the better.

Price Based on a typical package for a medium car under 10 years old, including home and roadside help, and the option to tow a car to your destination. Prices correct as we went to press.

Performance

Best Buys score highest in our reader survey.

Customer score

A combination of overall satisfaction and how likely policyholders are

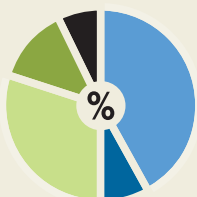
to recommend the company to a friend. **Speed** Percentage of patrols arriving within 30 minutes/one hour. **Repairs** How often patrols repaired faults at the roadside. **Overall service** How customers felt the company dealt with their situation. Includes total time taken for call-out.

Score

This ignores price and includes:

Speed **30%**
Cust'r score **30%**
Repairs **20%**
Politeness **20%**

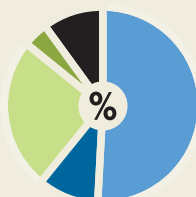
Green Flag



Green Flag members were less likely than average to get a repair at the roadside.

42% 8%
30% 13% 7%

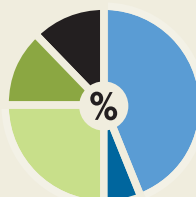
Mondial



Mondial towed home the lowest proportion of cars and permanently fixed half on the spot.

51% 10%
25% 4% 10%

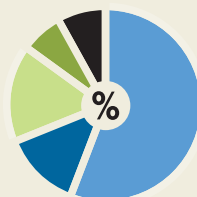
More Than



More Than applied the fewest temporary fixes and permanently repaired 44% of cars.

44% 6%
25% 13% 12%

RAC



The RAC was second only to the AA for successfully repairing vehicles.

53% 11%
18% 8% 10%

Contacts

AA 0800 085 2721
www.theaa.com

Britannia
0800 591563
www.britanniarescue.com

Direct Line
0845 246 8702
www.directline.com

Europ Assistance
0844 338 5533
www.europ-assistance.co.uk

Green Flag
0845 246 1557
www.greenflag.com

More Than
0800 107 1907
www.morethan.com

Mondial
020 8681 2525
www.mondial-assistance.co.uk

RAC
0800 096 0745
www.rac.co.uk