



It's official: driving in traffic is hazardous to your health

Traffic puts drivers under huge physiological stress according to new independent research commissioned by TomTom – and men suffer seven times more than women

Amsterdam, 24 May 2011 – On the day that TomTom launches its Break Free campaign, research commissioned by TomTom suggests that drivers – men in particular – suffer a significant and unhealthy increase in physiological stress when driving in traffic.

Independent tests¹ – which measured physiological stress markers in participants' saliva – revealed that women suffered an 8.7% increase in stress from driving in traffic, whilst men suffered a staggering increase of 60%. More worryingly, in the same tests 67% of women and 50% of men reported not feeling stressed 20 minutes after driving in traffic, when physiologically they were. The research goes on to suggest that the effects of long-term exposure to stress chemicals include suppressed immune function, raised blood pressure and elevated blood sugar levels.

Health psychologist David Moxon who led the research said, *"These findings make good evolutionary sense. Men, in particular, show a strong acute physiological 'fight or flight' response. The fact that they are not always aware of this could indicate that driving regularly in dense traffic could have a profound effect on their health."*

Corinne Vigreux, Managing Director, Consumer at TomTom believes the research brings a critical issue to light. *"Many drivers see traffic congestion as a necessary evil. But this research proves that we have an obligation to challenge this line of thinking. As announced in our Traffic Manifesto last September, we pledge to use our unique technology and our driving community to reduce traffic congestion by 5% for everyone."*

The research reveals there is a range of noticeable symptoms, although drivers may be oblivious to the effects. Physical symptoms include dizziness, breathlessness, muscular aches and even chest pains, while behavioural symptoms include agitation and erratic driving.

A recent global driving survey of 10,000 drivers carried out for TomTom² revealed that 72% of people aged 18 to 64 drive on a daily basis – with 92% of people driving from home to work and 80% commuting from home to school. Add the fact that there is an estimated one billion cars on our roads around the world, and it's not surprising that 86% of drivers say they feel negatively impacted by traffic.

To deal with traffic-induced stress, drivers have developed a number of coping strategies. The survey reveals that 82% of drivers listen to music, whilst 21% talk to other passengers in order to pass the time and ease the tension. The survey also shows that coping strategies vary by country – and even by gender. The Americans (38%) and the Swedish (39%) tend to talk on the phone to make better use of their time, whilst the Dutch prefer to comfort eat (14%). English speakers in general, meanwhile, prefer to sing to themselves to reduce stress (US: 20%, UK: 19% and ZA: 16%). And for some, it genuinely seems to work – the TomTom tests² reveal that two out of three women experience a reduction in driving-related stress from singing.

This research proves that traffic has a massive impact on drivers, and society in general. TomTom is encouraging drivers to break free from traffic through its Break Free trade-in promotion, giving them up to 50 euros off a TomTom device with HD Traffic. Drivers can trade in any satnav – of any brand and any age – and benefit from TomTom HD Traffic, so they'll always know how long a journey will take. And if there is a quicker route, they'll get it immediately.

For more information about the Break Free promotion and the trade-in, visit www.tomtom.com/breakfreepromo.

References

1. Moxon, D. MSc, BSc Hons (Psych), Cert Ed. The Stress of Driving – summary report, 2011. 2. TomTom Driving Survey – Global Survey, 2011

Notes for editors

About HD Traffic

HD Traffic is TomTom's revolutionary live traffic service. It delivers accurate traffic information straight to a compatible TomTom device every two minutes – that's up to seven times more frequently than any other provider. This helps drivers to steer clear of delays, and know exactly when they're due to arrive.

HD Traffic is available in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK and the US. For more information about HD Traffic, visit www.tomtom.com/services.

About the trade-in offer

1. Trade-in available to customers who purchase a TomTom GO LIVE 1000, GO LIVE 1005, GO LIVE 820, GO LIVE 825, VIA LIVE 120 and VIA LIVE 125 between 24th May 2011 & 31st July 2011 in retail stores, on retailer websites or on www.tomtom.com.
2. Log on to www.tomtom.com/breakfreepromo to register.
3. Customers must send in the old device they wish to trade in.
4. Once it has been received and checked, the appropriate amount will be transferred within 30 days to the customer's bank account. For a GO LIVE 1000 or 1005, they get €50 back. For a GO LIVE 820 & 825, VIA LIVE 120 & 125, they get €30 back. In Italy, customers will receive a Telepass Premium voucher worth up to €100.