

# MVA Winter Weather Research

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 The Highways Agency is working to improve its response to severe winter weather. MVA Consultancy was commissioned by the Highways Agency to undertake qualitative and quantitative research during the 2004-05, 2005-06, and 2006-07 winter seasons to gain an in-depth understanding of people's perceptions of driving in severe winter weather.

A total of 1288 individuals completed the winter weather survey in 2006/07 which was weighted to reflect census data for England.

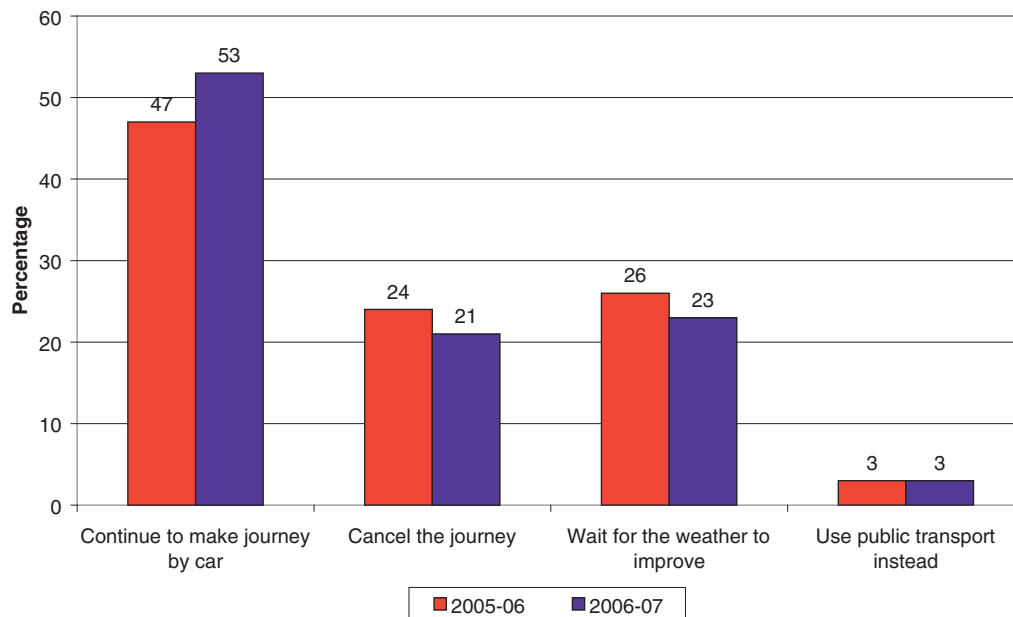
## 2 Past experiences of travelling in severe winter weather

- 2.1.1 MVA asked respondents whether they had made any journeys last winter in severe weather conditions (fog, heavy rain, wind, snow or ice). The most commonly reported weather condition that respondents had travelled in was heavy rain (45%).
- 2.1.2 When the data were further analysed by gender, age and user type, the following findings emerged:
- men were more likely than women to have driven in all of the severe weather conditions last winter: for example, 51% of women said they never travel in severe weather, compared to 40% of men;
  - those aged 65 or above were the most likely age group to report that they never travel in severe weather conditions (64% of this age group never travel in severe weather, compared to 39% of 45-64 year olds);

## 3 Attitudes towards travelling in severe winter weather

- 3.1.1 Respondents were asked whether a severe winter weather warning heard before travelling would affect their decision to travel. The proportion of respondents who would continue their journey by car increased from 47% in 2005-06 to 53% in 2006-07. In 2006-07, just under a quarter of respondents (23%) would wait for the weather to improve and a further 21% would cancel the journey altogether. Only 3% of respondents would consider using public transport as an alternative (the same percentage as in the 2005-06 survey).

**Figure 3.1 Travel behaviour after hearing a severe weather warning**



Base (2005-06) = 596, Base (2006-07) = 697

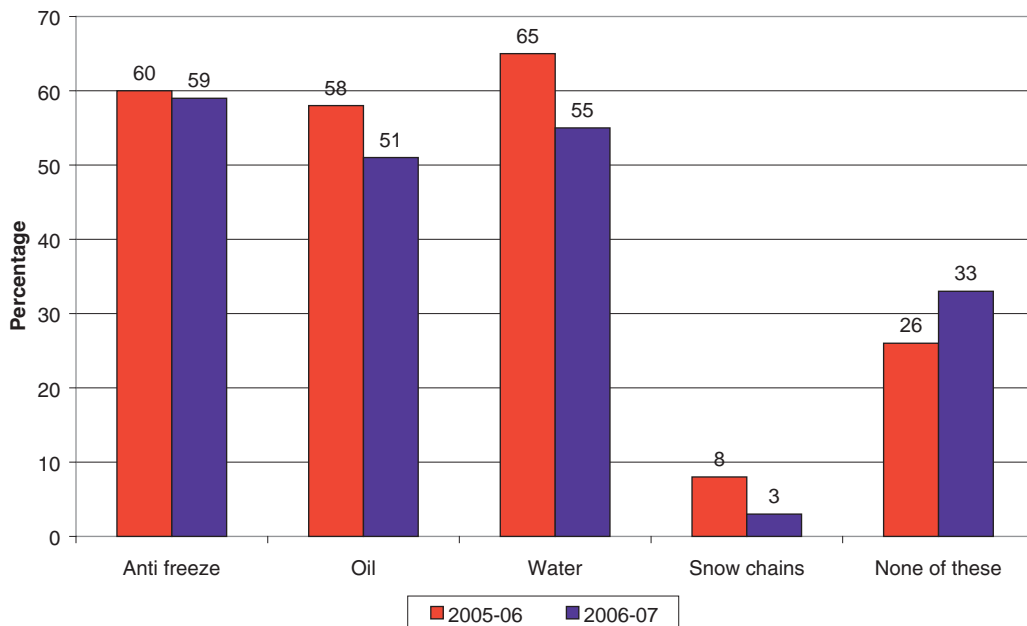
3.1.2 Further analysis of this question by age, gender and user type revealed the following:

- men were more likely than women to continue to make their journey by car after hearing a severe weather warning. While 62% of men would make this choice only 44% of women would.
- the likelihood of respondents continuing their journey decreased with age: while 65% of respondents aged 18-24 would continue their journey in severe weather conditions, this fell to 40% for those aged 65 or above.

## 4 Preparations made prior to travelling in severe winter weather

4.1.1 Respondents who indicated that they would continue to make a journey following a severe weather warning, either immediately or after waiting for the weather to improve (n=530), were asked what kind of checks they would make to their vehicle before departing (see Figure 4.1 below). The most common check made by respondents was checking anti-freeze (59%), followed by checking the water (55%). A third (33%) of respondents stated that they would not make any of the checks before setting off. The proportion of respondents making checks to their vehicle before travelling in severe weather is lower than in 2005-06 for all types of vehicle check.

**Figure 4.1 Vehicle checks prior to travel in severe weather conditions**



Base (2005-06) = 419, Base (2006-07) = 515

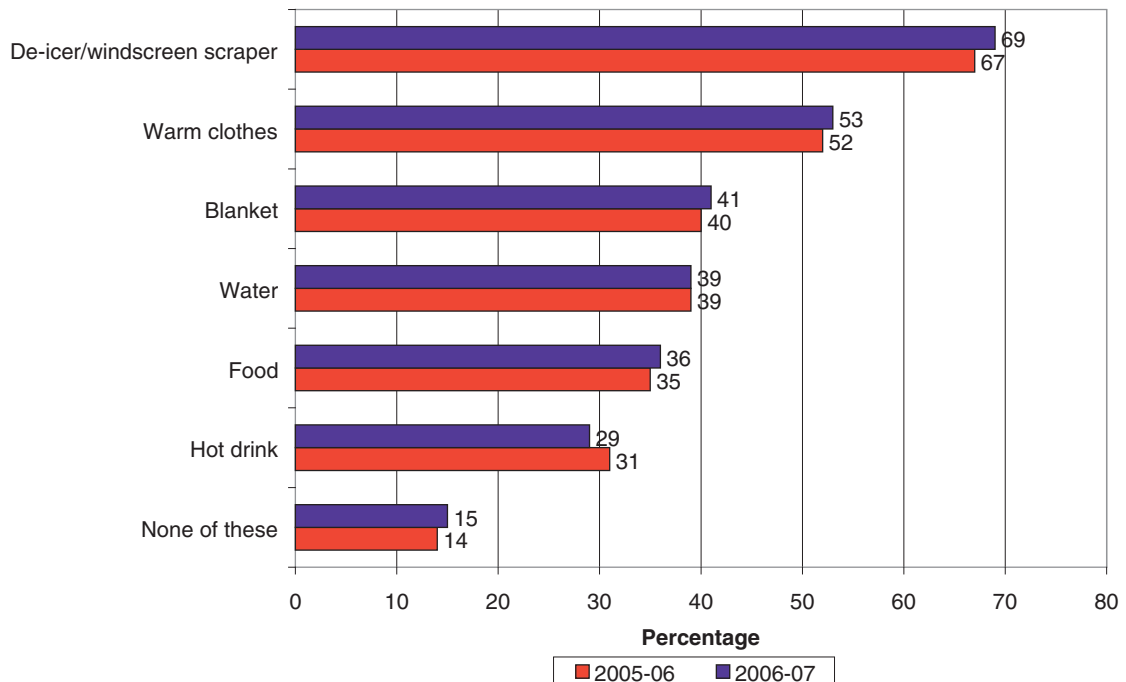
4.1.2 Further analysis revealed that:

- slightly more women (35%) had made none of the checks before setting off on a journey in severe winter weather in comparison to men (31%);
- the oldest respondents were less likely to make checks than other age groups (37% of over 65s made none of the checks listed, compared to 32% for all other age groups);

4.1.3 To further investigate the preparation of those drivers who would continue to travel in severe winter weather, respondents were asked what items they would take with them on their journey. This question was asked of all respondents who stated that they would continue their journey by car, wait for the weather to improve before commencing or use public transport as an alternative.

4.1.4 The most popular item was de-icer or a windscreen scraper, with 69% of respondents reporting that they would take this with them on a journey in severe winter weather. Over half (53%) of the respondents would ensure they had warm clothes before setting off and a further 41% would take a blanket (see Figure 4.2 below).

Figure 4.2 Provisions taken on a winter weather journey



Base (2005-06) = 442, Base (2006-07) = 539

4.1.5 Analysis by gender, age and user type showed that:

- women were more likely than men to take every item listed, particularly water (reported by 44% of women and 34% of men) and a blanket (38% of women compared to 33% of men);
- the likelihood of taking provisions for a winter weather journey tended to increase with age: for example, only 24% of 18-24 year olds would take food, compared to 47% of those aged 65 or above. However, the youngest age group was most likely to take de icer (74% of 18-24s compared to 59% of over 65s)