

Traffic congestion: how do UAE motorists feel? How to increase car occupancy levels?

- 86% of respondents typically experience traffic congestion when on the roads
- 80% witness more traffic congestion this year than last year
- Almost half (47%) feel frustrated, annoyed, very stressed or anxious in traffic jams
- 82% witness rude or aggressive behavior very often or sometimes
- 92% daily dependency on road transportation is extremely high
- 51% of motorists drive alone (no passengers)
- Study conducted by an international on-line research agency with UAE representative sample of n=1,021 in June 2025

Dubai, 14th July 2025; A few days ago, RoadSafetyUAE and Al Wathba Insurance shared the first part of their UAE traffic congestion study conducted in June 2025. This 2nd part of the study examines the emotional state and the behavior of UAE motorists caught in traffic jams, the level of daily road dependency and car occupancy levels.

“We want to give the concerned traffic participants a voice. We need to understand their feelings and perceptions with regards to the omni-present traffic congestion. We need to understand how much they depend on road transportation. As one of the leading motor insurers in the UAE, and a customer-centric organization, we are committed to staying relevant to the evolving needs of our customers and improving their daily lives. This is the reason why we teamed up with RoadSafetyUAE on this important research project,” said Muralikrishnan Raman, Chief Financial Officer, Al Wathba Insurance.

Thomas Edelmann, Founder and Managing Director of RoadSafetyUAE adds: “For most, traffic congestion means high levels of stress and frustration. This can cause misbehavior which carries the risk of accidents. Hence, from a road safety perspective, traffic congestions should be avoided. Testimony to that, UAE motorists notice a lot of rude or aggressive behavior in traffic jams and hence, the awareness for polite and caring manners must be raised. The dependency on road transportation is extremely high in the UAE and we need to find ways to reduce this dependency and as a consequence reduce the number of vehicles on the roads. Especially, considering the high number of motorists traveling alone in their cars without passengers.”

How big is the problem?

The study shows, that 86% of respondents state they typically experience traffic congestion. The highest values we see in Dubai with 91% and Sharjah with 90%.

80% of respondents witness more traffic congestion this year than last year, with Dubai topping the list with 85%.

How do UAE road users feel when trapped in traffic?

Almost half of the respondents (47%) feel frustrated, annoyed, very stressed or anxious. These feelings are more pronounced with females and younger road users.

29% can deal with it, as they state to be indifferent and used to it, or they stay calm and relaxed.

19% state they feel bored or restless.

Interestingly, a small minority of 5% even enjoys the downtime during traffic jams!

How do motorists behave in traffic congestion?

Unfortunately, only a small number of 18% 'hardly ever' witness aggressive behavior, and in Dubai this number dips further to only 15%.

Contrary, more than 1/3 of respondents 'very often' notice rude or aggressive behavior, and almost half of the respondents notice this 'occasionally'.

Why are there so many cars on the road?

The dependency on road transportation is very high, as 92% of respondents state they depend daily on it by utilizing their own car, bus, minibus or taxi services. Only 8% use transportation by metro or alternative means like eScooter, Bicycle, eBike).

60% of respondents depend on daily transportation in their own car, which is the highest mention by far.

What's the car occupancy?

Of the majority of road users utilizing their own car (60% see above), more than half (54%) travel alone in their car. In Sharjah even 62% of motorists usually travel alone, which might be a contributing factor to the problem of daily traffic congestion there.

In order to reduce the number of vehicles on the roads, one opportunity is to gradually increase the number of people per car. It is interesting to note, that Dubai represents the highest number with 43% of motorists usually carry one or two passengers. It would be interesting to understand the reasons for this and how other Emirates and especially Sharjah can learn from it.

The fieldwork of this research project was conducted in June 2025. It was commissioned by Al Wathba Insurance jointly with RoadSafetyUAE, and conducted by an international on-line research agency (representative UAE sample n=1,021).

The details of this survey can be found in the 'featured' section on:
<http://www.roadsafetyuae.com/statistics>

Q7. Do you depend on road transportation on a daily basis? (Please select one response)					
		UAE EMIRATES			
	Total	Abu Dhabi	Dubai	Sharjah	Other Emirates
Yes, I drive my own car	60%	61%	58%	62%	58%
Yes, I travel by bus or minibus	14%	17%	14%	10%	16%
Yes, I travel in our family car as a passenger	11%	10%	10%	16%	9%
Yes, I use a taxi or ride-hailing service	7%	8%	7%	4%	12%
No, I use the metro/subway	5%	2%	9%	2%	1%
No, I walk or use personal mobility options (eScooter, scooter, eBike, bike)	3%	2%	2%	6%	3%
Calculated: Road Transport Dependency	92%	96%	89%	92%	95%

Q7a. When you drive your own car, how many people (including yourself) are usually in the car? (Please select one response)					
		UAE EMIRATES			
	Total	Abu Dhabi	Dubai	Sharjah	Other Emirates
Just me (I drive alone)	54%	51%	53%	62%	56%
Me (driver) and 1 passenger	21%	22%	25%	12%	18%
Me (driver) and 2 passengers	17%	17%	18%	16%	15%
Me (driver) and more than 2 passengers	8%	10%	4%	11%	10%
Calculated: 1 and 2 passengers	38%	39%	43%	28%	33%

Q6. What kind of behavior do you usually observe from other motorists during traffic jams? (Please select one response)					
		UAE EMIRATES			
	Total	Abu Dhabi	Dubai	Sharjah	Other Emirates
Occasionally – I sometimes notice such behavior	45%	47%	44%	46%	34%
Very often – I frequently notice rude or aggressive behavior	37%	34%	40%	35%	39%
Rarely – I hardly ever notice rude or aggressive behavior	18%	20%	15%	19%	27%

Q5. How do you feel in traffic congestion? (Please select one response)																
		GENDER		AGE GROUP				UAE NATIONALITY					UAE EMIRATES			
	Total	Male	Female	18-24	25-34	35-44	45+	Emirati	Arab Expat	Asian	Westerner	Other	Abu Dhabi	Dubai	Sharjah	Other Emirates
Frustrated or annoyed	26%	24%	30%	32%	27%	24%	24%	34%	17%	28%	39%	27%	21%	29%	25%	25%
Very stressed or anxious	21%	22%	19%	20%	16%	23%	26%	17%	28%	18%	20%	27%	21%	21%	22%	23%
Bored or restless	19%	19%	20%	20%	22%	18%	17%	25%	23%	18%	12%	20%	18%	21%	18%	20%
Indifferent – I'm used to it	16%	16%	16%	15%	14%	17%	19%	8%	18%	17%	17%	12%	15%	15%	23%	13%
Calm or relaxed	13%	14%	12%	9%	15%	12%	12%	9%	10%	15%	10%	10%	20%	10%	9%	16%
I enjoy the downtime / alone time	5%	5%	3%	3%	6%	6%	1%	8%	4%	4%	2%	5%	5%	5%	2%	4%

