

It's official: women are actually better parkers than men

After years of debate and banter, comes the news that will have men running for cover. It's now official; women are actually better parkers than men.

The month-long study published today looked at various aspects of parking, including technique, accuracy and time taken, in order to produce a 'parking coefficient', a score of how good their parking was. In addition, drivers were questioned about their parking beliefs and behaviours.

The 'NCP Parking Report', which was carried out amongst 2,500 drivers by NCP, reveals that out of a maximum total score of 20, women have an average parking coefficient of 13.4, while the average male score was just 12.3.

The 'NCP parking coefficient', how the sexes fared:

Activity	Men	Women
Appropriate space finding speed	64%	92%
Good or very good 'pre-parking pose'	53%	77%
Reverse into space	28%	39%
Forward into space	72%	61%
Speed of manoeuvre	16 secs	21 secs
Reposition shuffle	29%	56%
Central finish	25%	53%
Total co-efficient (max 20)	12.3	13.4

In what may come as a shock to the egos of men across the country, women fared better in many areas of the scoring. This is despite the fact that, when questioned about their beliefs, only one fifth (18%) thought they were better parkers than men and less than a third (28%) of women believed they were better parkers than their partners.

The initial area analysed was the ability to find a space. This was the first skill that let men down, as their impatience meant they often missed spaces by driving through the car parks too fast. The ladies' slower approach meant they were better able to notice spaces, or spot when other drivers were about to leave.

Seasoned parkers will know that good parking is all about the angles. The study showed that not only was there a difference between the sexes when it came to the initial 'pre parking pose', the position adopted as the driver approaches the space, there was a difference in the preferred entry method. Well over a third (39%) of women opted to reverse in, the method preferred by instructors, compared to just over a quarter (28%) of men.

The one area that did let women down was their timing. On average it took them 21 seconds to park, while men took 16 seconds. As the study also revealed that we park our cars 1,004 times a year, we can conclude that over a lifetime of driving* women spend 12 days carrying out a parking manoeuvre and men nine days.

Men were also happier with the position of their cars once in the space. Only 29% chose to start 'repositioning' the car, while over half (56%) of women found themselves shuffling forward and backwards to try and obtain a better final position.

However, despite this confidence displayed by men, it seems the 'female shuffle' pays dividends as women beat men hands down with the final position of the vehicle. More than half (53%) of women were found to have parked centrally, compared to only a quarter (25%) of men. Unfortunately for the boys, it was this final position that was given the heaviest weighting in the coefficient.

Intriguingly, the study noticed men also love to 'pose park' when accompanied by a female passenger by opting to squeeze into a small space when a bigger one is available.

The coefficient was designed for NCP by the senior driving instructor from ITV's 'Last Chance Driving School' documentary, Neil Beeson.

Commenting on the research, 'nosy parker' Beeson said:

"I was quite surprised by the results, because in my experience men have always been the best learners and usually performed better in lessons.

"However, it's possible that women have retained the information better. The results also appear to dispel the myth that men have better spatial awareness than women.

"What the 'NCP Parking Report' shows is that us men need to give our partners more respect when it comes to parking. The facts don't lie."

Interestingly, people's views on their parking skills differ dramatically from their actual skills. When asked how long they thought it took them to park a car, men were very modest, claiming it took them 28 seconds to park, almost double the 16 seconds it actually did take them. They weren't very complimentary about women parkers though, with over three quarters (78%) thinking it took women longer than the 21 seconds it actually takes them.

'Getting the angle right first time' was seen as one of the hardest part of parking by both sexes, with 50% of people finding this a problem. This was closely followed by 'getting into the centre of the space' (30%), knowing when to stop at the back of the space (30%) and knowing whether to go in forwards or backwards (7%).

Jo Cooper, Chief Executive at NCP says:

"Parking is our business, so we carried out the research to see how well people park their cars.

"As an interesting by-product of the research, we've also found out that there is a difference in parking skills between the sexes, although perhaps not in the way that most people expected."

As a result of the research, and to help people park better, NCP is looking to install parking aids in many of its car parks.

Ms Cooper continued: "The parking aids will include 'stop lollipops' at the back of each space, and raised 'park central' markers in the front of the bays so drivers can align their tyres and park in the centre of the space. This addresses two areas that people seemed to struggle with."



Parking Tips

In addition to providing the parking aids, NCP has also provided the following 'perfect parking' tips for those that need them:

Bay parking

- Drive across the front of your parking space.
- Steer away from the space to create an angle for reversing in.
- Reverse slowly into the space.
- Keep checking both wing mirrors to ensure you have sufficient space either side of your vehicle.
- Once in the space shunt backwards and forwards as necessary to ensure you park pretty (square and central in bay).

On street parking

- Pull up alongside the vehicle in front of your parking space.
- Reverse slowly until the back of your car is level with the end of the vehicle alongside you.
- Turn in to the space, keeping your speed low.
- When you think you are close enough to the kerb steer the opposite way to bring the front of your car in to the space, keeping your speed low.
- Shunt as necessary and park pretty.