



## The Motor Ombudsman clarifies the position regarding recalls, often misunderstood by younger drivers

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### The Motor Ombudsman tells us:

(Photographs and all words from The Motor Ombudsman).

**A Motor Ombudsman study has found that, on average, more than half (60%)<sup>1</sup> of young drivers aged 17 to 34<sup>2</sup> are of the opinion that they would need to pay for repairs if their car was affected by a recall - a process designed to fix any safety faults at no cost to motorists**

- **Over a fifth (22%) of 17- to 24-year-olds would rely on the seller to inform them of any existing recalls for a car they would be looking to buy**
- **The Motor Ombudsman website ([TheMotorOmbudsman.org](http://TheMotorOmbudsman.org)) has a dedicated category on its Knowledge Base offering bite-sized FAQs on recalls, as well as a recalls database to check for affected vehicles**

**London, 11 November 2025** Passing a driving test and owning a car for the first time is often an exciting milestone for young drivers, signalling a newfound independence. However, a study by a motoring expert has revealed that confusion is likely to set in if they were to be informed by the manufacturer of their car that there was a recall for a safety issue, and were advised to take it to a dealership to be fixed.

The poll by The Motor Ombudsman, which quizzed 1,100 drivers across the nation, has seen on average, more than half (60%)<sup>□□</sup> of young motorists aged between 17 and 34<sup>□□□</sup>, incorrectly assuming that they would have to foot the bill in the event of a recall. Motorists are typically notified via a letter from the carmaker that known faults need putting right because of how their specific model was built - a service which is always free of charge to motorists.



The latest research showed the majority (56%)<sup>[1]</sup> of 17- to 24-year-olds sharing the school of thought that recall repairs were payable, with this level of unfamiliarity then rising to around six in ten (62%)<sup>[2]</sup> drivers aged between 25 and 34. In contrast, motorists of 55 years and over emerged from the study as the most conversant with this element of the recalls process, with only 9%<sup>[3]</sup> believing they would need to pay for recall repairs. This is likely thanks to a longer driving career, and possible experience of having gone through the motions of such a process in the past.

In addition, the findings of the survey highlighted that just over three in ten males (35%) getting behind the wheel believed there would be an associated cost for their car going on the ramp in the event of a recall versus around a fifth of female drivers (23%).

Sam Burton, Group Aftersales Manager at The Motor Ombudsman-accredited Gates car dealerships, said: “It may be daunting, especially for first-time car owners, to receive a letter in the post out the blue, or to read in the news, that your car – often a prized possession and a significant investment, suddenly has something wrong with it.

A recall notice is ultimately issued with everyone’s safety in mind, and often explains what the problem is, and the recommended steps for drivers to get their car fixed, and we urge anyone that gets such a letter to not ignore it and book their vehicle in when they can. Just as important to remember is that you should never be handed an invoice for the work, as this is not related to how you have driven or how long you have owned the car.”

The poll also highlighted that around a fifth of 17- to 24-year-olds (22%) – often making their debut car purchases as new drivers, would solely look to sellers to inform them of any existing recalls affecting the actual vehicles they were looking to buy, rather than doing this as part of their own homework prior to signing on the dotted line. This compares to 12% of 25- to 34-year-olds, who are the least reliant age group on sellers for such information.

“At a time when many are feeling the pinch, it is essential that this misconception amongst the younger driving population about thinking they are liable for the cost of repairs under the recall programme does not act as a deterrent for not following the recommendations of vehicle manufacturers by deferring essential work needed”, explains Bill Fennell, Chief Ombudsman and Managing Director at The Motor Ombudsman.

Bill added: “The recalls scheme is a long-established and effective safety net for consumers to be aware of



any known issues as and when they arise, to give the means to put them right, and to never be out of pocket. As a new driver, there's often a lot to learn about the car purchase and ownership journey. We therefore have some easily accessible and digestible resources on our website for motorists to stay up to speed and be familiar with how the recalls process works, as well as being able to check if a specific car is impacted by one."

To view the dedicated category on recalls on The Motor Ombudsman's Knowledge Base, visit [www.TheMotorOmbudsman.org/knowledge-base-category/recalls](http://www.TheMotorOmbudsman.org/knowledge-base-category/recalls).

To check for affected vehicles on The Motor Ombudsman's recalls database, visit [www.TheMotorOmbudsman.org/vehicle-recalls](http://www.TheMotorOmbudsman.org/vehicle-recalls).

### **Motor Ombudsman resources**

The Motor Ombudsman provides a comprehensive library of [impartial motoring resources](#) for consumers embarking on the car buying and ownership journey.