

★ ★ ★ ★ Safety Culture

“Do As I Say, Not As I Do” Attitude Persists among American Motorists

[2014 Traffic Safety Culture Index](#) Fact Sheet

For the seventh consecutive year, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety has continued its efforts to measure and benchmark the attitudes and behaviors of American drivers in an attempt to understand – and strengthen – a culture of safety on our roads. As in previous years, the 2014 *Traffic Safety Culture Index* found that an attitude of “do as I say, not as I do” persists among motorists, many of whom admit to engaging in the same dangerous behaviors that they criticize as being “unacceptable.” Highlights are below.

Methods

- Sample of 2,705 U.S. licensed drivers age 16 and older who reported having driven at least once in the past 30 days, weighted to reflect the U.S. population
- Conducted between August 29 and October 6, 2014 using web-enabled probability-based panel representative of U.S. population
- Participants were asked questions about threats on the highway, acceptability of behaviors, support for laws and countermeasures, and frequency of engaging in risky behaviors
- Survey conducted by GfK for the AAA Foundation

2014 Key Findings

Personal Experience with Crashes:

- **One in ten** drivers have been seriously injured in a crash, and nearly **one in five** have been involved in a serious crash
- Nearly **one in three** drivers have a friend or relative seriously injured or killed in a crash

Severity of Traffic Safety Concerns:

- **Three in five** drivers (61.3%) say aggressive drivers are a somewhat or much bigger problem today compared with three years ago
- Nearly **nine in ten** (85%) say this about distracted drivers
- Roughly **half** (41.6% and 45.6%, respectively) say this about drunk driving and drivers using drugs
- More than **five in six** drivers support their state adopting a vision to reduce the number of people killed in crashes to zero

“Do As I Say, Not As I Do”:

- **Red light running:** 54.7 percent say it is a very serious threat, 72.7 percent say it is completely unacceptable, yet more than a third (35.6%) of drivers admit to doing so in the past 30 days



Car crashes rank among the leading causes of death in the United States.

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- **Speeding (10+ mph) on residential streets:** 45.2 percent of drivers say it is a very serious threat, 64.6 percent say it is completely unacceptable, but nearly **half** (43.5%) have done it in the past month
- **Texting/emailing:** 78.6 percent of drivers say it is a very serious threat to safety, and 84.4 percent say it is completely unacceptable; however, more than a third (36.1%) read a text or email while driving in the past 30 days, and more than a quarter (27.1%) typed one
- **Drowsy driving:** 45 percent say it is a very serious threat, 81.3 percent say it is completely unacceptable, yet nearly three in ten (29.4%) have done it in the past month

Perceptions of Cognitive Distraction:

- **Two thirds** (65.7%) of drivers say hand-held cell phone use by drivers is unacceptable, while **two thirds** (65.4%) also say hands-free phone use is **acceptable**
- Nearly **half** (46.4%) of drivers who report using speech-based in-vehicle systems say they do not believe these systems are at all distracting
- Support for texting bans for drivers is strong, with 89.3 percent support. Support for bans on hand-held mobile devices is lower but solid at 67.8 percent, while support for a total ban (hand-held and hands-free) is even lower (40.2%)
- Nearly **three quarters** (74.6%) say they believe hands-free devices are safer to use behind the wheel than hand-held ones
- AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety research has indicated that talking on either a hand-held or a hands-free device while driving is not risk free and both impose comparable levels of cognitive distraction

Variations by Age:

- In general, compared with older drivers, younger drivers were:
 - ✓ More likely to report engaging in distracting behaviors behind the wheel;
 - ✓ More likely to find these behaviors acceptable; and
 - ✓ Less likely to support legislation aimed at curbing distractions

Support for Laws and Countermeasures:

- Strong societal support exists for texting bans (89.3%), ignition interlock requirements for all offenders (80.2%), and universal helmet laws for motorcyclists (82.1%)
- There is strong support for mandatory driver education for new drivers—89.6 percent for new drivers under 18, and 82.6 percent for all new drivers regardless of their age
- A majority of drivers oppose speed cameras on freeways (63.1%) and residential streets (56.3%)

For More Information

For more information about the Foundation's work pertaining to traffic safety culture and its specific elements (e.g., drowsy, distracted, and impaired driving), as well as products and other materials, visit www.AAAFoundation.org.

The 2014 *Traffic Safety Culture Index* will be released in January 2015. The complete report, along with summaries of survey results in 24 states, is available at www.aaafoundation.org/projects.

Established in 1947 by AAA, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety is a not-for-profit, publicly funded, 501(c)(3) charitable research and educational organization. The AAA Foundation's mission is to prevent traffic deaths and injuries by conducting research into their causes and by educating the public about strategies to prevent crashes and reduce injuries when they do occur. This research is used to develop educational materials for drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists and other road users. Visit www.aaafoundation.org for more information.

