



# Safety Culture

## FACT SHEET

### 2015 Traffic Safety Culture Index

For the eighth 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 2015 *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.” In fact, about 87 percent of drivers engaged in at least one of the risky behaviors examined in the survey while behind the wheel within the past month. Highlights are below.

#### **Methods**

- Sample of 2,545 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, who completed the survey online
- Conducted between July 28 and August 12, 2015 using a 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

#### **2015 Key Findings**

##### *Personal Experience with Crashes:*

- **One in nine** 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

##### *Impaired Driving:*

- **A majority of drivers** (57.3%) view people driving after using illegal drugs as a very serious threat, while much fewer (31.8%) say the same about people driving after using prescription drugs
- 4.2 percent of drivers reported having driven within one hour of using marijuana in the past year, and 1.8 percent reported having driven within one hour of using both marijuana and alcohol in the past year.
- **Virtually all drivers** disapprove of drinking and driving, and there is majority support for requiring alcohol ignition interlocks for drivers convicted of DWI, even for first-time offenders (80.1%); requiring built-in interlocks for all new vehicles (70.3%); and lowering the legal limit for blood Alcohol concentration (BAC) from 0.08 to 0.05 grams per deciliter (g/dL) (63.1%).



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



*“Do As I Say, Not As I Do”:*

- **Red Light Running:** 93.5 percent of drivers view it as unacceptable to drive through a traffic light that just turned red when they could have stopped safely; however more than 1 in 3 drivers (38.7%) admit doing this in the past month.
- **Speeding (10+ mph) on residential streets:** nearly **half of all drivers** (45.0%) say they have driven 10 mph over the speed limit on a residential street in the past month. There is greater social disapproval for speeding on a residential street than on the freeway (88.6% versus 74.1%)
- **Texting/emailing:** 77.4 percent of drivers say it is a very serious threat to safety, and 80.6 percent say it is completely unacceptable; however, more than a third (42.3%) read a text or email while driving in the past 30 days, and nearly a third (31.3%) typed one
- **Drowsy driving:** 47.8 percent say it is a very serious threat, 83.2 percent say it is completely unacceptable, yet 31.5 percent of drivers have done it in the past month

*Perceptions of Cognitive Distraction:*

- **Two thirds** (68.6%) of drivers say hand-held cell phone use by drivers is unacceptable, while **two thirds** (63.1%) also say hands-free phone use is **acceptable**
- Support for texting bans for drivers is strong, with 87.7 percent support. Support for bans on hand-held mobile devices is lower but solid at 70.3 percent, while support for a total ban (hand-held and hands-free) is even lower (42.4%)
- More than **1 in 8** drivers (14.1%) don't perceive social disapproval from others regarding texting or emailing while driving

*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 (87.7%), ignition interlock requirements for all offenders (80.1%), and universal helmet laws for motorcyclists (80.1%)
- A majority of drivers oppose speed cameras on freeways (64.5%) and residential streets (54.4%)

---

For more information on this study and the AAA Foundation's other traffic safety research and materials, please visit [AAAFoundation.org](http://AAAFoundation.org).

\*\*\*\*\*

*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](http://www.AAAFoundation.org) for more information.*

**February 2016**