

# 2016 TRAFFIC SAFETY CULTURE INDEX

---

## INTRODUCTION

---

For the ninth consecutive year, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety has continued to measure and benchmark the attitudes and behaviors of U.S. drivers in an attempt to understand and promote a culture of safety on our roadways. As in previous years, the 2016 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 deem as “unacceptable.”

---

## 2016 KEY FINDINGS

---

- Compared to all drivers, those ages 19-24 were:
  - More likely to report reading or typing text messages behind the wheel.
  - More likely to find texting while driving acceptable.
  - Less likely to support legislation aimed at curbing distractions.
- One in nine drivers has been seriously injured in a crash and nearly one in five has been involved in a serious crash.
- Nearly one in three drivers has a friend or relative seriously injured or killed in a crash.
- Most drivers (87.8 percent) view it as unacceptable to drive without wearing a seatbelt and more than 4 in 5 say they never do.

### *Distracted Driving:*

- 81.1 percent of drivers say texting/emailing while driving is a very serious threat to safety and 78.2 percent say it is completely unacceptable. However, 40.2 percent of drivers report having read a text or email while driving in the past 30 days and nearly a third (31.4 percent) typed one.
- More than two thirds (70.4 percent) of drivers say hand-held cell phone use by drivers is unacceptable, while two thirds (65.9 percent) say hands-free phone use is acceptable.
- Support for a texting ban for drivers is strong (88.4 percent). Support for a ban on hand-held mobile devices is at 71.5 percent, while support for a total ban (hand-held and hands-free) is at 42.0 percent.

### *Impaired and Drowsy Driving:*

- Nearly 60 percent of drivers say that driving after using illegal drugs is a very serious threat, while fewer (33.9 percent) say the same about people driving after using prescription drugs.
- 4.9 percent of drivers reported having driven within one hour of using marijuana in the past year, and 2.5 percent reported having driven within one hour of using both marijuana and alcohol in the past year.
- Most drivers disapprove of drinking and driving, and there is strong support for requiring alcohol ignition interlocks for drivers convicted of DWI, even for first-time offenders (81.0 percent).



---

## CONTACT

---

LINDSAY S. ARNOLD

[larnold@aaafoundation.org](mailto:larnold@aaafoundation.org)

---

## ABOUT

---

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.

---

## MORE INFORMATION

---

[AAAFoundation.org](http://AAAFoundation.org)

---

AAA FOUNDATION FOR TRAFFIC SAFETY  
607 14th Street, NW, Suite 201  
Washington, DC 20005  
202-638-5944

# 2016 TRAFFIC SAFETY CULTURE INDEX

## 2016 KEY FINDINGS (CONTINUED)

### *Impaired and Drowsy Driving, continued:*

- Drivers also support: requiring built-in interlocks for all new vehicles (71.8 percent); lowering the legal limit for blood alcohol concentration (BAC) from 0.08 to 0.05 grams per deciliter (g/dL) (63.5 percent); and a marijuana per se law (84.2 percent).
- 47.9 percent say drowsy driving is a very serious threat and nearly 80 percent say it is completely unacceptable, yet 28.9 percent of drivers admit to driving when they were so tired that they had a hard time keeping their eyes open in the past month.

### *Aggressive Driving:*

- 92.8 percent of drivers say it is unacceptable to drive through a traffic light that just turned red when they could have stopped safely. However, more than 1 in 3 drivers (35.6 percent) admit doing this very thing in the past month.
- Nearly half of all drivers (46.0 percent) 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 (88.3 percent versus 75.5 percent).
- More than two thirds of survey respondents oppose speed cameras on freeways (67.7 percent), while more than half (56.2 percent) oppose speed cameras on residential streets.

## METHODS

Sample of 2,511 U.S. licensed drivers ages 16 and older who completed the online survey and reported having driven at least once in the past 30 days, weighted to reflect the U.S. population.

Conducted between Aug. 25 and Sept. 6, 2016, using a probability-based panel representative of the 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.



## CONTACT

LINDSAY S. ARNOLD

[larnold@aaaafoundation.org](mailto:larnold@aaaafoundation.org)

## ABOUT

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.

## MORE INFORMATION

[AAAFoundation.org](http://AAAFoundation.org)

AAA FOUNDATION FOR TRAFFIC SAFETY  
607 14th Street, NW, Suite 201  
Washington, DC 20005  
202-638-5944