

TRAFFIC SAFETY CULTURE INDEX

INTRODUCTION

For the last decade, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety has been committed to deepening our understanding of America's traffic safety culture. The first Traffic Safety Culture Index, a nationally representative survey, was conducted in 2008. Since then, this annual effort has continued to identify and assess critical indicators of American drivers' values and pursuit of traffic safety. The questionnaire was updated in 2018 and the 2019 Traffic Safety Culture Index continues to include various measures: drivers' perceived danger, risk of getting caught, perceived social approval for risky driving, and their support for laws and policies designed to curtail these behaviors and their self-reported engagement in these behaviors. This document details the data collection methodology and summarizes the significant national-level results of the 12th annual Traffic Safety Culture Index (TSCI)

2019 KEY FINDINGS

Distracted Driving Behaviors

- A majority of drivers view typing (96.2%), reading (94.3%), and talking (79.7%) on a hand-held cellphone while driving to be very or extremely dangerous. In contrast, only 22.5% perceive the use of hands-free technology of their phones, such as Bluetooth or CarPlay, while driving to be very or extremely dangerous.
- More respondents believe drivers' risk being caught by the police for reading (43.7%) or typing (42.7%) a text/email on a hand-held cellphone than they do for talking on a hand-held cellphone (40.6%).
- A majority of drivers support laws against distracted driving, with over 76% of drivers supporting a law against holding and talking on a cellphone and about 86% of drivers supporting a law against reading, typing, or sending a text or email while driving.
- Nevertheless, 43.2% drivers report having driven while talking on a hand-held cellphone at least once in the past 30 days. Fewer respondents report engaging in distracted driving by reading (38.6%) and typing a text/email (29.3%) on a hand-held cellphone while driving.
- Drivers involved in one or more crashes in the past two years are significantly more likely to engage in any type of self-reported distracted driving behaviors.

ABOUT

Established in 1947 by AAA, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety is a nonprofit, 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.

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Aggressive Driving Behaviors

- More than half of drivers (55.1%) indicate that speeding on a freeway is dangerous, while about 64% of drivers perceive speeding on a residential street as dangerous.
- Over 65% of respondents think that the police would catch a driver for driving 15 mph over the speed limit on a freeway, yet 48.2% report having done so in the past 30 days.
- Over 86% of drivers report speeding through a red light to be very or extremely dangerous, and 52% of drivers think that the police would catch a driver for running a red light. Drivers who have been involved in one or more crashes in the past two years are significantly more likely to engage in any type of self-reported aggressive driving behavior.

Drowsy Driving Behaviors

- About 96% of drivers identify drowsy driving as very or extremely dangerous. However, only 29% think drowsy drivers risked being caught by the police.
- Over 97% of drivers socially disapprove of drowsy driving.
- Despite high rates of perceived danger and social disapproval regarding drowsy driving, about 24% of drivers admit to having driven while being so tired that they had a hard time keeping their eyes open, at least once in the past 30 days.

Impaired Driving Behaviors

- Most drivers (94%) perceive driving after drinking as very or extremely dangerous. However, almost 10% admit to having done so in the past 30 days.
- Nearly 70% of respondents consider driving shortly (within an hour) after using marijuana to be very or extremely dangerous. However, 91% of drivers socially disapprove of driving soon after using marijuana.
- Most drivers (88.3%) indicate driving after using potentially impairing prescription drugs as very or extremely dangerous. About 47% of drivers consider that someone driving after using potentially impairing prescription drugs would be likely to be caught by the police.

METHODS

The 2019 TSCI is a sample of 2,714 U.S. licensed drivers ages 16 and over who completed the online survey and reported having driven at least once in the past 30 days before the survey, weighted to reflect the U.S. population. Survey participants were asked questions regarding perceived danger, risk of apprehension, social approval of dangerous driving, and support for laws and policies designed to curtail these behaviors, as well as self-reported engagement in these behaviors. Data from the 2019 TSCI were collected between Sept. 6th and Oct. 8th, 2019, and used a probability-based sampling panel representative of the U.S. population.

SUGGESTED CITATION

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