

NEW AMERICAN DRIVING SURVEY: UPDATED METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS FROM JULY 2019 TO JUNE 2020

INTRODUCTION

Fundamental to the research that the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety (AAA Foundation) performs is the ability to quantify traffic risks. Quantifying traffic risks requires two different types of data: (a) motor vehicle crashes and number of people who are involved, injured, and killed in those crashes, and (b) driving risk exposure, such as how many miles people travel.

To address the need for driving exposure information in relation to driver, vehicle, and trip characteristics, the AAA Foundation initiated the American Driving Survey in May 2013 and collected national-level data on the driving habits and patterns of the American public. After five years of data collection, the survey methodology was re-examined and new techniques for data collection were evaluated. As a result, the AAA Foundation launched the new, modernized survey, entitled the New American Driving Survey, in July 2019.

KEY FINDINGS AND RESULTS

A majority of survey respondents overwhelmingly chose to take the online survey (90%)—computers (39%), smartphones (48%) and tablets (2%)—with only 10% taking the survey via interviews by telephone. The greatest difference in the characteristics of respondents, in relation to interview mode, is that respondents who completed the survey by telephone tended to be older than those who completed it online. Meanwhile, the majority (73%) of respondents were recruited at the initial stage. Compared with these respondents, those recruited in the non-response follow-up were more likely to be Hispanic, have lower education levels, and/or live in metropolitan areas.

The following summarizes analysis results from data collected between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020.

- About 9-in-10 U.S. residents ages 16 or older drove at least occasionally and made an average of 2.5 driving trips daily during 2019–2020.
- They spent approximately 59 minutes a day driving and drove, on average, nearly 30 miles daily.
- Driving patterns varied by socio-demographic factors:
 - Middle-aged drivers made more trips, spent more time driving, and drove more miles than teens or older drivers.
 - Men drove more often, more time, and more miles than women.
 - The average daily number of trips, minutes, and miles were higher for married people than for the widowed.

ABOUT

Founded in 1947, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety in Washington, D.C., is a nonprofit, publicly supported charitable research and educational organization dedicated to saving lives by preventing traffic crashes and reducing injuries when crashes occur. Funding for this research was provided by voluntary contributions from AAA/CAA and their affiliated motor clubs, individual members, AAA-affiliated insurance companies, and other organizations or sources.

MORE INFORMATION

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- Drivers who lived in non-metropolitan areas made more trips, spent more time driving, and drove more miles than those who lived in metropolitan areas.
- The number of drivers ages 16 or older in the United States was estimated at 246.3 million between 2019 and 2020, using data from the U.S. Census Bureau.
 - It was estimated that they made nearly 225 billion trips, spent about 89 billion hours driving, and drove almost 3 trillion miles.

It is noteworthy that the results included in this report should not be compared with those reported in the previous publications, as the survey methodologies in previous years were significantly different from those reported herein. Additionally, the global pandemic starting early 2020 clearly had a major impact on driving patterns, thus the study period from July 2019 through June 2020 is fundamentally unlike the same period in any prior year with respect to travel.

METHODOLOGY

The New American Driving Survey used NORC's AmeriSpeak®, a large probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population, including all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The panel recruitment procedures consist of two phases: (a) an initial recruitment using United States Postal Service (USPS) mailings, telephone contact, and modest incentives, and (b) a more elaborate non-response follow-up recruitment using FedEx mailings, enhanced incentives, and in-person visits by field interviewers. This two-stage process improves the panel representation by including hard-to-reach groups such as young adults (18- to 34-year olds), racial/ethnic minorities, lower-income households, etc.

The survey began on July 1, 2019, and data have been continuously collected on every day of the year since. This report uses data collected between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish via web (using computers, tablets, or smartphones) and by phone with a sample aged 16 years and older. Respondents were asked a series of questions regarding all their travel over a 24-hour (one day) period beginning the day before the survey. The questions asked when each trip was taken (time), where they began and ended the trip, why they made the trip (trip purpose), and how they traveled (transportation mode). If respondents drove themselves, they were also asked to report the distance and duration of the trip and the vehicle type they drove. These questions were repeated for every trip they reported from 3 AM on the previous day to 2:59 AM on the survey day.

REFERENCE

AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. (2021). *New American Driving Survey: Updated Methodology and Results from July 2019 to June 2020* (Technical Report). Washington, D.C.: AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.

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