

# TRAFFIC SAFETY CULTURE INDEX

## INTRODUCTION

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety has been committed to deepening our understanding of our nation's traffic safety culture. The tenth Traffic Safety Culture Index identifies key indicators regarding the degree to which traffic safety is valued and pursued by U.S. drivers. Much like in previous years, the 2017 traffic safety culture index reveals motorists' discordance between traffic safety culture beliefs and actual driving behavior. The results continue to show an attitude of "do as I say and not as I do" among motorists.

## 2017 KEY FINDINGS

- More than 1 in 5 (21.4%) drivers report having been involved in a motor vehicle crash in which someone had to go to the hospital, including 11.1% who have been seriously injured in a crash themselves.
- Nearly 1 in 3 (31.6%) drivers report having had a relative who was seriously injured or killed in a motor vehicle crash.
- Most drivers (87.5%) perceive that distracted drivers are a bigger problem than years past. Moreover, distracted driving outpaced all other issues as a growing concern. It was followed by traffic congestion at 74.5%, then aggressive drivers at 68.1%, drivers using drugs at 54.9% and drunk driving (43.4%).

### Distracted Driving

- Cellphone use while driving is common. In the past month, 60.5% of drivers talked on a hands-free cellphone, while 49.1% talked on a hand-held cellphone. Drivers are more accepting of hands-free cell phone use (69.0%), than hand-held cellphone use (24.6%) while driving.
- More view drivers texting or emailing while driving as a serious threat (96.8%) than drivers talking on cellphones (87.7%). However, in the past 30 days, 44.9% of drivers read a text message or email while driving and 34.6% of drivers typed or sent a text message or email while driving.
- A majority of respondents (87.6%) support legislation against reading, typing, or sending a text message or email and 73.4% of drivers support having a law against using a hand-held cellphone while driving. However, only 40.9% support an outright ban on using any type of cellphone (including hands-free) while driving.

### Risky and Aggressive Driving Behaviors

- Speeding on freeways and on residential streets is prevalent. Half of drivers (50.3%) reported driving 15 mph over the speed limit on a freeway, and 47.6% reported driving 10 mph over the speed limit on a residential street.

## ABOUT

Founded in 1947, the AAA Foundation in Washington, D.C., is a not-for-profit, publicly supported charitable research and education organization dedicated to saving lives by preventing traffic crashes and reducing injuries when crashes occur. Funding for this report was provided by voluntary contributions from AAA/CAA and their affiliated motor clubs, from individual members, from AAA-affiliated insurance companies, as well as from other organizations or sources.

## MORE INFORMATION

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

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- There is greater social disapproval for speeding on a residential street than on freeways. Only 23.9% of drivers believe that driving 15 mph over the speed limit on a freeway is completely or somewhat acceptable while only 14.0% of motorists deem driving 10 mph over the speed limit on a residential street as acceptable.
- A large portion of drivers (42.7%) admitted to driving through a stoplight that has just turned red when they could have stopped safely in the past 30 days, despite most drivers (92.9%) viewing it as an unacceptable behavior. In conjunction with this, an overwhelming majority (91.4%) of drivers perceive running red lights as a serious or somewhat serious threat to their personal safety.

### Drowsy Driving

- 42.4% of drivers have at least one or more days where they get less than six hours of sleep in a typical week.
- The majority of motorists view drowsy driving as a serious or somewhat serious threat to their safety (87.9%) and an unacceptable behavior (95.2%); yet around 3 in 10 (30.8%) admit to driving when they were so tired that they had a hard time keeping their eyes open at some point in the past month.

### Impaired Driving

- An overwhelming majority of drivers consider driving after drinking alcohol a serious threat to their personal safety (94.3%). However, 13.5% reported driving at least once in the past year when they thought their alcohol levels might have been close to or possibly over the legal limit.
- A majority of drivers (90.8%) perceive people driving after using illegal drugs to be either a very serious threat, or a somewhat serious threat to their personal safety.
- Most respondents supported requiring alcohol-ignition interlocks for drivers convicted of DWI, even for first time offenders (79.9%); requiring built-in interlocks for all new vehicles (73.0%) and having a per se law for marijuana (82.9%).

## METHODS

The 2017 traffic safety culture index is a sample of 2,613 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. Survey participants were asked questions regarding threats of certain behaviors to personal safety, acceptance, engagement to these behaviors, and support for laws and countermeasures. Data from the 2017 Traffic Safety Culture Index was collected between Oct. 14 and Nov. 17, 2017, and used a probability based sampling panel representative of the U.S. population.

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