

21%

STRICT COMPLIANCE ADVOCATES

DISTINGUISHING FACTORS:

Demographics and History

- Less than high school education
- Never been in a crash
- In urban areas

Moral Disengagement

- Low scores, strongly disagree with most items

Risk Perception

- Don't see highway speeding often, but find it extremely concerning
- Assume a high chance of crashes for both highway and residential speeding

Speeding Behavior

- Do not speed and are not influenced by situational factors to speed

ABOUT:

This group felt that speed limits on urban and rural highways were about what they should be (72% and 68% respectively), while closer to half felt that speed limits on residential roads and arterials were appropriate.

These drivers overwhelmingly had a low tolerance for what threshold constituted speeding on rural and urban highways. **Strict Compliance Advocates** had mostly high (55%) and moderate (22%) support for infrastructure- and enforcement-related countermeasures, though 81% indicated that they avoid enforcement; of that 81%, fewer than half also warn other drivers.

Roughly half of this group said they would want an ISA feature that could be overridden in their own vehicle, while 27% said they would only want it in the vehicles of other drivers. About 2/3rds of this group had low to moderate moral disengagement scores.

KEY ATTITUDES:

- **Speed Limits**

Should be lower

- **Defining Speeding**

Low speed thresholds

- **MD Score**

Low

- **Enforcement**

Avoid themselves

Don't warn others

- **Infrastructure/
Enforcement
Countermeasures**

High support

- **Intelligent
Speed Assist (ISA)**

High support

INTERPRETATION:

- It is likely that speed choice for these drivers is most heavily dictated by their comfort level and opinions of what it means to drive safely, rather than by laws, concern about enforcement, or social pressures.
- This group likely has a somewhat absolutist view of safety and see compliance with speed limits as an important component of safe and responsible driving. They view speeding as both unsafe and difficult to justify.
- They likely perceive that drivers should be able to recognize and adhere to safe driving speeds without needing to be told to do so but see speeding as a legitimate target for intervention rather than solely a matter of personal choice.

Steinbach, R., McDonough, J., Hungund, A., Kasha, A., & Bai, X. (2026). *Attitudes Toward Speeding: Insights from Focus Groups and a National Survey of U.S. Drivers* (Technical Report). Washington, D.C.: AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.

14%

SAFETY-FOCUSED REALISTS

DISTINGUISHING FACTORS:

Demographics and History

- Female
- Less than high school education
- Never been in a crash
- In urban areas

Moral Disengagement

- Strong disagreement with the following items:
 - “I speed all the time, and I’ve never been pulled over”
 - “I don’t think that driving faster than the speed limit has much to do with whether I get into an accident or not”
 - “It’s okay to go over the speed limit because speed limits were set with the expectation that people will driver faster than them”

Perceived Risk

- Extremely concerned about both highway and residential speeding
- Believe there is a high chance of getting pulled over or into a crash because of either type of speeding

Speeding Behavior

- Do not speed and are not influenced by situational factors to speed
- Motivated not to speed because:
 - It’s the right thing to do
 - They don’t want to get into a crash
 - They don’t want to put others at risk

ABOUT:

This group had the highest support for infrastructure- and enforcement-related countermeasures and ISA features of any of the other groups by a wide margin. In this group, 94% reported wanting an overridable ISA system in their own vehicle and 75% wanted an ISA feature that could not be overridden. The next

KEY ATTITUDES:

- **Speed Limits**

Should be lower

- **Defining Speeding**

High speed thresholds

- **MD Score**

Low to Moderate

- **Enforcement**

Don’t avoid

Don’t warn others

- **Infrastructure/ Enforcement Countermeasures**

High support

- **Intelligent Speed Assist (ISA)**

Very High support

closest group were **Strict Compliance Advocates**, where 51% and 40% wanted those features in their car, respectively. Despite being the group with the highest responses of not avoiding speeding enforcement (21%), 79% still do avoid enforcement and 41% warn other drivers.

Like **Strict Compliance Advocates**, these drivers felt rural (75%) and urban (83%) highway speed limits were about accurate, though slightly more **Safety-Focused Realists** indicated speeds should be lowered on residential roads. A slightly higher proportion of **Strict Compliance Advocates** reported arterial speeds should be lower than the Safety-Focused Realists. This group had far higher speed thresholds for all road types than the **Strict Compliance Advocates** group.

About 3/4 of this group had low to moderate moral disengagement levels.

INTERPRETATION:

- These drivers appear to make speed choices based on an individual assessment of risk rather than a strict belief that any speed above the speed limit is inherently unsafe.
- Although they may recognize that drivers can safely exceed the posted speed limit under some circumstances, they believe that doing so increases both crash risk and the likelihood of enforcement, making compliance the preferable choice.
- Their motivations suggest a strong sense of shared responsibility for road safety, with compliance driven by a desire to protect themselves and others rather than simply avoid punishment. For these drivers, not speeding appears to be both a responsible and socially desirable behavior.
- High support for enforcement, infrastructure countermeasures, and ISA indicates that they view speeding as a legitimate safety problem and believe systemic interventions can help reduce harm.
- Compared with **Strict Compliance Advocates**, they appear less absolutist about what constitutes speeding and more accepting of some flexibility in speed choice, while still concluding that compliance the safest and most responsible option.

26%

PRINCIPLED PRAGMATISTS

DISTINGUISHING FACTORS:

KEY ATTITUDES:

- **Speed Limits**

Are about right

- **Defining Speeding**

Moderate to High speed thresholds

- **MD Score**

Moderate

- **Enforcement**

Avoid themselves
Don't warn others

- **Infrastructure/ Enforcement Countermeasures**

High support

- **Intelligent Speed Assist (ISA)**

Support for other drivers
Not for themselves

Demographics and History

- Older drivers (60+)
- Female
- Higher education (post-grad)
- In rural areas

Moral Disengagement

- Agreed with the following items:
 - *"It's safer for me to drive with the flow of traffic than to obey the speed limit"*
 - *"No one actually drives the speed limit, it's just the norm nowadays"*
- Disagreed with the following items:
 - *"Regularly checking the speedometer to make sure I'm not going too fast pulls my attention away from driving safely"*
 - *"It's okay to go over the speed limit because speed limits were set with the expectation that people will drive faster than them"*
 - *"Speed limits are targeted at the most inexperienced drivers, to make sure everyone drives safely—once you've been driving for a while, you can drive a little bit over the speed limit"*

Perceived Risk

- See highway and residential speeding often, but not always
- Moderately concerned about highway speeding, very concerned about residential speeding
- Think neither form of speeding is likely to result in a ticket

Speeding Behavior

- Rare speeders—less likely to speed during rush hour, in the dark, in the rain, on unfamiliar roads, or when tired
- Motivated to speed to get around other drivers

- Not motivated to speed by reasons like “it’s fun to bend the rules”, to keep alert, or because their car was designed to go fast
- The consequences of speeding (getting caught, penalized, or into a crash) are key motivations to not speed
- “Not being in a rush” is another reason they may not be motivated to speed

ABOUT:

Though the majority of all groups saw the relative risk of speeding on residential roads and highways about as risky as the comparative behaviors, this group had the highest proportion of drivers who felt highway speeding was less dangerous (30%).

The proportion who felt residential speeding was less dangerous was more on par with the other groups (9%).

This group had fairly high support for infrastructure- and enforcement-related countermeasures (63%), higher support than **Strict Compliance Advocates** (59%), but far less support for having either form of ISA in their own vehicle. However, this group had the highest portion of those who wanted ISA in other drivers' vehicles, at roughly 70% for both configuration types. This group also had the lowest proportion of drivers who report warning other drivers about enforcement (26% do, 65% do not). This group showed some indication that speeds on residential roads could be a bit lower (17%), but roughly 2/3rds or more felt the speeds on the other types were about right.

These drivers had the highest thresholds for residential speeds (98% medium/high) of any other group, by a slight margin, but fewer had high tolerance thresholds for arterials (79%), and far fewer for rural highways (5%) and urban highways (2%).

Most had moderate moral disengagement scores (63%) while 28% had high scores.

INTERPRETATION:

- These drivers generally accept the legitimacy of speed limits and road safety rules, but are willing to make situational exceptions when they believe doing so promotes safety or improves traffic flow.
- Their speed choices appear to be guided by practical considerations rather than sensation seeking, convenience, or enjoyment of rule breaking.

- Unlike more compliance-oriented groups, they view safe speed choice as context-dependent and place considerable weight on surrounding traffic conditions when evaluating appropriate driving behavior.
- Although they support enforcement and other speed-management countermeasures, their comparatively low support for ISA in their own vehicles suggests a preference for driver discretion over automated control.
- Their strong support for ISA in other vehicles may reflect confidence in their own judgement while expressing less confidence in the speed choices made by other drivers.
- Rather than viewing speeding as inherently acceptable, they appear to distinguish between speeding that serves a practical purpose (e.g., moving with traffic) and speeding that is reckless, unnecessary, or self-serving.

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23%

TOLERANT BUT NON-COMPLIANT

DISTINGUISHING FACTORS:

KEY ATTITUDES:

- **Speed Limits**

Should be higher

- **Defining Speeding**

Moderate to High speed thresholds

- **MD Score**

Moderate to High

- **Enforcement**

Avoid themselves
Warn others

- **Infrastructure/ Enforcement Countermeasures**

Low support

- **Intelligent Speed Assist (ISA)**

Support for others
Not for themselves

Demographics and History

- Younger drivers (16—44)
- Feel high levels of time pressure
- Have been in a recent crash
- Have recently received a speed camera ticket

Moral Disengagement

- More Strongly Agreed than **Autonomy-First Drivers** with these statements:
 - “Regularly checking the speedometer to make sure I’m not going too fast pulls my attention away from driving safely”
 - “Speed limits are targeted at the most inexperienced drivers, to make sure everyone drives safely—once you’ve been driving for a while, you can drive a little over the speed limit”

Perceived Risk

- Moderate to low concern about both highway and residential speeding
- Think there is little to no chance either form of speeding will result in a crash

Speeding Behavior

- Sometimes to frequent speeders
- More likely to speed on familiar roads, on sunny days, and when there is no traffic
 - Also more likely to speed when feeling stressed or angry, when listening to upbeat music, and when on long driving trips
- Motivated to speed to get around other drivers, to get to their destination faster, because of habit, or road design
- Don’t avoid speeding for any moral or legal reasons, or to avoid the risk of getting a ticket or getting into a crash

ABOUT:

This group had less support for infrastructure- and enforcement-related countermeasures than **Strict Compliance Advocates**, **Safety-Focused Realists**, and **Principled Pragmatists**, but was still fairly supportive of them (44% high and 31% moderate support). Compared to all the other groups, they gave the greatest indication that they would warn other drivers of enforcement (59%), and the least they only avoid enforcement themselves (34%).

This group was more likely to want ISA in their own vehicle (28% override and 14% non-override) than the **Principled Pragmatists**, but like that group, they wanted these features in other drivers' vehicles at a much higher degree than the **Strict Compliance Advocates**, **Safety-Focused Realists**, or **Autonomy-First Drivers**.

Drivers in this group were more likely to support raising the speed limits of arterials (58%) and rural highways (51%) compared to urban highways (44%) or residential roads (40%). The overwhelming majority of this group had high speed tolerances for residential roads and arterials (96%), with more moderate tolerances on rural and urban highways.

This group had majority high moral disengagement scores (68%) and very few low scores (2%).

INTERPRETATION:

- Drivers in this group likely feel the systems in place are okay as guidelines, but more often believe their situational judgement of appropriate speeds is superior.
- Speeding appears to be highly normalized within this group, with many drivers perceiving it as a routine and acceptable aspect of everyday driving rather than a behavior requiring justification.
- This group stood out in two concerning ways; their speed choice was more likely to be influenced by emotional or reactive reasons, and despite evidence of recent consequences (tickets and crashes), they had poorly calibrated opinions about the risks of speeding.
- Their support for speed-management countermeasures in other drivers' vehicles, combined with more moderate

support for restrictions on their own driving, suggests a tendency to view speeding as more problematic when practiced by other than when practiced by themselves.

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16%

AUTONOMY-FIRST DRIVERS

DISTINGUISHING FACTORS:

Demographics and History

- Male
- In rural areas

Moral Disengagement

- Strong agreement with most of the moral disengagement items

Perceived Risk

- No concern for highway or residential speeding
- Think there is little to no chance either form of speeding will cause a crash and that it's unlikely either would result in a ticket

Speeding Behavior

- Sometimes to frequent speeders
- More likely to speed on familiar roads, on sunny days, when there is no traffic, when on long trips, or when listening to upbeat music
- Motivated to speed to get around slow drivers, because of habit, because they believe the speed limit is too low, and because of road design
- Don't avoid speeding for any moral or legal reasons, or to avoid the risk of getting a ticket, raised insurance premiums, or getting into a crash

ABOUT:

This group had the largest proportion of drivers indicating that speeding on highways was comparatively less dangerous than other risky driving behaviors (26%), however, they had broadly similar perceptions to other groups about residential speeding. These drivers had the lowest levels of support for infrastructure- and enforcement-related countermeasures (24% high and 45% low) and also report that they avoid enforcement themselves (45%) and warn others (43%).

KEY ATTITUDES:

- **Speed Limits**

Should be higher

- **Defining Speeding**

High speed thresholds

- **MD Score**

High

- **Enforcement**

Avoid themselves
Warn others

- **Infrastructure/
Enforcement
Countermeasures**

Low support

- **Intelligent
Speed Assist (ISA)**

Very low support

Drivers in this group overwhelmingly rejected the idea of either ISA configuration (95% for override and 98% for non-override) for any drivers.

The majority of drivers in this group felt current speed limits were about right on all road types. They felt most strongly about raising the speed limit on arterials (40% of drivers in this group) and lowering the speed limit on residential roads (11% of drivers in this group).

Drivers in this group had high speeding thresholds, particularly on residential roads and arterials, though they had a slightly lower tolerance overall than the **Tolerant but Non-Compliant** group.

Like the **Tolerant but Non-Compliant** group, this group had majority high moral disengagement scores (63%) and few low scores (3%).

INTERPRETATION:

- These drivers appear to place a high value on personal autonomy and believe that drivers, rather than external authorities or technologies are best positioned to determine appropriate travel speeds.
- Their speed choices are guided primarily by personal judgement, roadway conditions, and driving goals, rather than by legal requirements, safety concerns, or fear of enforcement.
- High moral disengagement and very low perceived risk suggest that they frequently discount or rationalize the potential consequences of speeding, and are not compelled to comply with speed limits for safety considerations.
- Their strong opposition to both enforcement measures and ISA technologies indicates resistance to external constraints on driver discretion, regardless of whether those are applied through policy, enforcement, or automation.
- Unlike **Tolerant but Non-Compliant** drivers, whose speeding appears partly driven by habit and convenience, **Autonomy-First Drivers** appear to hold a more fundamental belief that speed choice should remain under the driver's control.