

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2015 Safety Culture Survey

Background

The concept of traffic safety culture assesses how much traffic safety is highly valued and rigorously pursued by members of a group or society. Based on work already done in other countries, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety (AAAFTS) initiated a safety culture index in the U.S. in 2006 with a nationwide survey to measure traffic safety culture. The TTI survey is modeled after this AAAFTS nationwide survey and is conducted bi-annually.

What the Researchers Did

The survey was conducted in driver licensing offices in 10 cities throughout Texas. Respondents were asked to fill out a questionnaire that was one page front and back with questions about their perceptions of traffic problems, support for countermeasures, whether specific driving behaviors were acceptable or not, and their own driving habits. A total of 1,465 questionnaires with usable data were analyzed.

What They Found

Texans cited texting while driving (89.2%), cell phone use (86.3%), and distracted driving (78.4%) as bigger problems than three years ago. Respondents in the 2015 survey indicated increased concern for speeding and drunk driving over the 2013 survey each with over an 11 percentage point increase. Respondents also reported increased concern for red light running.

Respondents supported a law banning texting or emailing while driving (87.2%), mandatory motorcycle helmet use (77.6%), hand-held cell phone ban (73.7%), and required DWI interlock systems for offenders (73.5%). However, the 2015 survey showed a 12 percentage point increase over the 2013 survey for those strongly opposing a complete cell phone ban while driving. Respondents showed some opposition to speeding ticket cameras on freeways (44.6%), but a similar amount of support for such devices on residential streets (47.2%). When compared to the AAAFTS nationwide survey, Texans' support for safety countermeasures is on par with the rest of the U.S.

Texans self-reported engaging in behaviors that can negatively affect driving at much higher rates compared to the national index. For example texting or emailing while driving was reported by 17.7% of Texas respondents, compared to 13.8% at the national level. Using the internet while driving was reported by 11.7% of Texas respondents, compared to 4.0% at the national level. Regarding driving behaviors that were cited as being acceptable or unacceptable, hand-held cell phone use was cited as unacceptable by 65.3% of respondents, and hands-free cell phone use was deemed unacceptable by less than 25%. Additionally, 94% of Texans cited reading texts or emails while driving as unacceptable, yet 11.5% of respondents reported engaging in this behavior often.

What This Means

The safety culture of Texas continues to evolve as people become more aware of traffic safety issues and show support for countermeasures to combat these issues. However, support for countermeasures to combat speeding are mixed, and the messages regarding texting while driving may have overshadowed the dangers of talking on a phone while driving.

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