

# TRAFFIC SAFETY CULTURE INDEX

## INTRODUCTION

For the last decade, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety has been committed to deepening the understanding of our nation's traffic safety culture. The first *Traffic Safety Culture Index (TSCI)*, a nationally representative survey, was conducted in 2008. Since then, this annual effort has continued to identify and assess key indicators regarding American drivers' attitudes toward and behaviors regarding traffic safety. By revamping the questionnaire, the 2018 *TSCI* once again reveals that people in the United States value traveling safely and support strengthened laws that ensure safer roads.

## 2018 KEY FINDINGS

### Distracted Driving

- More drivers view reading (95.9%) or typing (96.7%) a text/email on a hand-held cellphone while driving to be very or extremely dangerous, compared with talking on a hand-held cellphone (79.8%). However, more respondents believe drivers risk being caught by police for talking on a hand-held cellphone (47.3%) than they do for reading (43.3%) or typing (46.3%) a text/email on a hand-held cellphone.
- More than 17% of drivers personally approve of talking on a hand-held cellphone and about 20% believe that people who are important to them approve of talking on a hand-held cellphone while driving.
- A majority of drivers support laws against distracted driving, with almost 75% supporting laws against holding and talking on a cellphone and about 88% supporting laws against reading, typing, or sending a text or email while driving.
- Nevertheless, more than half of drivers (52.1%) 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 (41.3%) or typing a text/email (32.1%) on a hand-held cellphone while driving.

### Risky and Aggressive Driving Behaviors

- About half of drivers (54.2%) indicate that speeding on a freeway is dangerous, while 64% of drivers perceived speeding on a residential street as dangerous.
- Nearly 66% of respondents felt that the police would catch a person driving 15 mph over the speed limit on a freeway, yet almost 50% reported having done so in the past 30 days.
- Over 85% of drivers consider speeding through a red light to be very or extremely dangerous, and 55% felt that the police would catch a driver for running a red light.

## ABOUT

Founded in 1947, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety in Washington, D.C. is a nonprofit, 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, individual members and AAA-affiliated insurance companies, as well as from other organizations or sources.

## SUGGESTED CITATION

AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety (2019). 2018 Traffic Safety Culture Index. AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.

## MORE INFORMATION

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

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### Drowsy Driving

- Over 96% of drivers identify drowsy driving as very or extremely dangerous. However, only slightly less than 40% thought drowsy drivers risked being caught by the police.
- Less than 2% of drivers personally approve and nearly 3% of drivers think people important to them would approve of drowsy driving.
- Despite high rates of perceived danger and personal/social disapproval regarding drowsy driving, about 27% 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

- Most drivers (95.1%) perceive driving after drinking as very or extremely dangerous. However, almost 11% admitted to having done so in the past 30 days.
- Seventy percent of respondents consider driving shortly (within an hour) after using marijuana to be very or extremely dangerous. However, over 7% of drivers personally approve of driving shortly after using marijuana.
- Most drivers (87.3%) indicate driving after using potentially impairing prescription drugs as very or extremely dangerous. About 45% of drivers consider that people driving after using potentially impairing prescription drugs would be likely to be caught by the police.
- A majority of drivers support laws against impaired driving. Over 81% of respondents support laws making it illegal to drive with a certain amount of marijuana in the body, and 76.3% support laws preventing the transport of a minor by a driver who has had any alcohol.

## METHODS

The 2018 *TSCI* is a sample of 2,582 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, weighted to reflect the U.S. population. Survey participants were asked questions regarding perceived danger, risk of arrest, personal and perceived 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 2018 *TSCI* was collected between Aug. 21 and Sept. 11, 2018 and used a probability-based sampling panel representative of the U.S. population.

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