

## **CHAPTER III.**

# **DRIVERS' BELIEFS ABOUT UNSAFE DRIVING**



## WHAT IS UNSAFE DRIVING

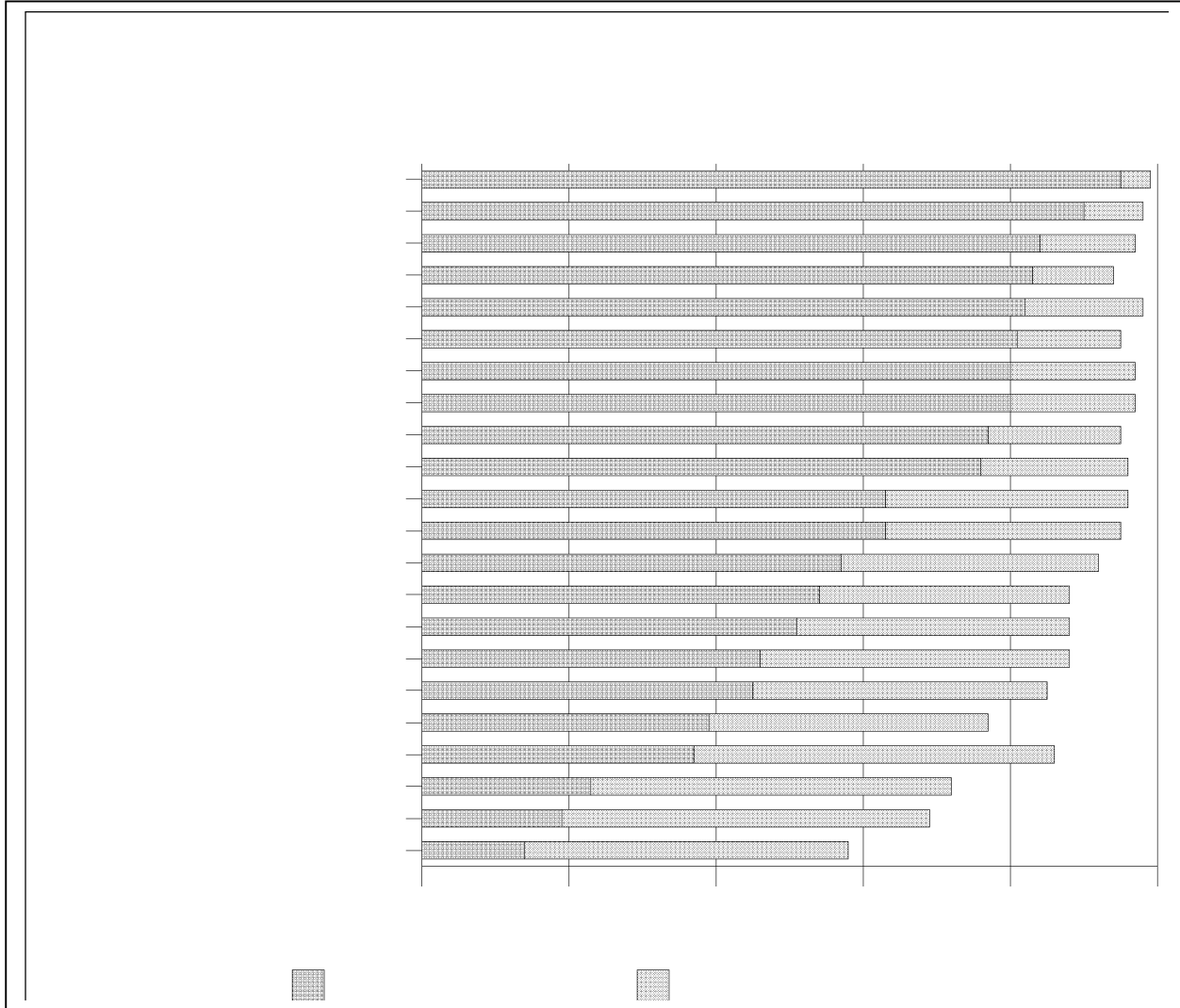
To explore public attitudes and behaviors related to unsafe driving practices, the national sample of drivers was asked how safe or dangerous they felt a set of driving behaviors usually were. The full text of each driving behavior measured as well as the shortened text used in the figures is shown in the following table. The rating of each behavior is shown in Figure 3-1 (next page).

TABLE 3-1

<b>Driving Behaviors</b>	
<b>Full Text</b>	<b>Shortened Text</b>
Pass a school bus that has its red lights flashing and the stop arm in full view.	Pass school bus
Race another driver.	Race another driver
Drive through a stop sign without slowing.	Drive thru stop sign
Drive through a traffic light that was already red before you entered the intersection.	Drive thru red light
Cross railroad tracks when the red light is blinking.	Cross RR when red
Drive when just under the legal alcohol limit.	Just under legal alcohol limit
Cut in front of another car in order to make a turn.	Cut in front to turn
Pass a vehicle in a no-passing zone.	Pass in No Passing Zone
Use the shoulder to pass in heavy traffic.	Pass on shoulder
Tailgate another vehicle on a highway with one lane in each direction.	Tailgate
Drive through traffic by switching back and forth between lanes.	Switch back and forth
Go 10 miles an hour over the speed limit on a two	10 MPH over limit/Residential
Drive 20 miles an hour faster than most other vehicles are going.	20 MPH faster than traffic
Make an angry, insulting or obscene gesture or comment toward another driver such that they hear or see you.	Angry, Insulting gesture
Driving 20 miles an hour over the speed limit on a rural road.	20 MPH over limit/Rural
Make a U-turn where a sign says not to.	Illegal U-Turn
Slow but not completely stop at a stop sign.	Rolling stop at sign
Drive 20 miles an hour over the speed limit on an interstate highway.	20 MPH over limit/Interstate

Enter an intersection just as the light is turning from yellow to red.	Enter as light turns red
Drive 10 miles an hour over the speed limit on a two-lane rural road.	10 MPH over limit/Rural
Drive 10 miles an hour faster than most other vehicles are going.	10 MPH faster than traffic
Drive 10 miles an hour over the speed limit on an interstate highway.	10 MPH over limit/Interstate

FIGURE 3-1



**Qx:** *People feel differently about how safe or dangerous different types of driving behavior are. How safe do you feel it is to ... ?*

**Base:** *Total population of drivers.*

**Unweighted N:** *As discussed in Chapter 1, and shown in Table 1-1 (page 5), the sample for this survey can be thought of as the combination of 4 smaller, nation-wide sample of drivers, denoted as A, B, C, and D with unweighted N's of 1489, 1511, 1467 and 1533 respectively. The combinations of A and C, and B and D have unweighted N's of 2956 and 3044, respectively.*

The survey indicates that the driving public differentiates between a broad list of activities that might be classified as unsafe driving. A majority of drivers agree that each of the 22 behaviors was at least somewhat dangerous. However, the proportion of drivers who consider the act to be at least somewhat dangerous ranges from 58% for driving 10 miles an hour over the speed limit on an interstate highway to 99% for illegally passing a school bus with its lights flashing and stop arm extended. The forty-one point difference in the public perception of the safety of these two driving behaviors pales when focusing on what drivers consider to be extremely dangerous. Only 14% of the driving public considers driving 10 miles an hour over the speed limit on an interstate highway as extremely dangerous, compared to 95% of drivers who rate passing a school bus as extremely dangerous.

In general, the public appears to rate speeding, i.e., exceeding posted speed limits or the average speed of traffic, as less dangerous than most other traffic violations. All of the speeding activities, including driving 20 miles an hour faster than the traffic and exceeding posted limits by 10 miles an hour in a residential area, are in the bottom half of the dangerousness ratings. These are all rated as extremely dangerous by far fewer than those who consider driving when just under the legal alcohol limit as extremely dangerous. By contrast, driving through stop lights, stop signs and railroad crossings with flashing red lights are rated among the most dangerous activities — equal to or worse than driving just below the legal alcohol limit.

There is a fairly consistent difference across age groups in the degree of perceived danger of these driving activities. The youngest age groups consistently rate each of these activities as less dangerous than the older groups. Generally, the ratings of these activities increase toward “extremely dangerous” as the driver’s age increases. For example, when asked how safe they felt it was to go 10 miles an hour over the speed limit on a two-lane rural road, the mean rating increased from 3.38 (3=Neither safe nor dangerous) for 16-20 year-olds, to 3.55 for 21-24 year-olds, to 3.55 for 25-34 year-olds, to 3.72 for 35-44 year-olds, to 3.82 for 45-54 year-olds, to 4.02 (4=Somewhat Dangerous) for 55-64 year-olds, to 4.20 for drivers aged 65 and older. In the case of some other driving activities, the greatest difference in the perceived safety of these activities occurs between the 16-24 year old age groups, on the one hand, and the older age groups, on the other. In any event, the survey demonstrates that younger drivers have lower perceptions of the risk of unsafe driving actions than do older drivers.

TABLE 3-2

## Mean Rating of Safety of Select Driving Behaviors

*Qx: People feel differently about how safe or dangerous different types of driving behavior are. How safe do you feel it is to ...?*

*Base: Total population of drivers*

*Unweighted N: A=1,489; B=1,511; C=1,4567; D=1,533; AC=2,956; BD=3,044*

Mean rating is on a five-point scale where <b>1=extremely safe and 5=extremely dangerous.</b>	Unweighted N	Mean Rating of Safety by Age						
		16-20	21-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Drive through a light that was already red before you enter an intersection	AC	4.55	4.70	4.68	4.72	4.79	4.77	4.78
Drive 10 miles an hour faster than most other vehicles are going	AC	3.39	3.45	3.47	3.79	3.80	3.90	3.88
Drive 20 miles an hour over the speed limit on an interstate highway	BD	3.74	3.86	3.82	4.02	4.08	4.11	4.30
Tailgate another vehicle on a highway with one lane in each direction	AC	4.54	4.66	4.68	4.74	4.74	4.74	4.74
Enter an intersection just as the light is turning from yellow to red	BD	3.74	3.89	4.18	4.16	4.25	4.22	4.17
Drive through a stop sign without slowing	AC	4.65	4.82	4.79	4.83	4.84	4.85	4.76
Slow but not completely stop at stop sign	BD	3.82	3.83	4.09	4.21	4.34	4.42	4.38
Cut in front of another car in order to make a turn	BD	4.57	4.62	4.73	4.77	4.83	4.86	4.78
Race another driver	AC	4.70	4.83	4.90	4.86	4.90	4.90	4.94
Drive when just under legal alcohol limit	AC	4.79	4.75	4.80	4.75	4.78	4.82	4.73
Use the shoulder to pass in heavy traffic	BD	4.37	4.48	4.70	4.72	4.79	4.78	4.73

TABLE 3-2, continued

<b>Mean Rating of Safety of Select Driving Behaviors</b>								
Mean rating is on a five-point scale where <b>1=extremely safe</b> and <b>5=extremely dangerous.</b>	<i>Unweighted</i> N□	<b>Mean Rating of Safety by Age</b>						
		<b>16-20</b>	<b>21-24</b>	<b>25-34</b>	<b>35-44</b>	<b>45-54</b>	<b>55-64</b>	<b>65+</b>
Make an angry, insulting or obscene gesture or comment toward another driver so that they heard or saw it	BD	4.07	3.93	4.27	4.43	4.49	4.53	4.70
Cross railroad tracks when the red light is blinking	A	4.68	4.76	4.82	4.77	4.79	4.86	4.89
Pass a vehicle in a no-passing zone	B	4.58	4.65	4.74	4.76	4.82	4.83	4.86
Drive 10 miles an hour over the speed limit on an interstate highway	A	3.29	3.19	3.21	3.43	3.39	3.66	3.99
Made a U-turn where a sign said not to	A	4.22	3.93	4.13	4.18	4.33	4.48	4.74
Drive 20 miles an hour faster than most other drivers are going	BD	4.32	4.44	4.33	4.47	4.58	4.60	4.49
Drive through traffic switching quickly back and forth between lanes	A	4.16	4.31	4.50	4.58	4.68	4.65	4.79
Pass a school bus that has its red lights flashing and the stop arm is in full view	D	4.86	4.85	4.95	4.95	4.96	4.96	4.94
Going 10 miles an hour over the speed limit in a residential neighborhood	C	4.17	4.34	4.53	4.54	4.62	4.64	4.64
Go 10 miles an hour over the speed limit on a two-lane rural road	D	3.39	3.56	3.55	3.72	3.82	4.01	4.18
Driving 20 miles an hour over the speed limit on a rural road	C	3.84	4.17	4.24	4.40	4.45	4.51	4.45

The information presented in Table 3-2 is presented again in Table 3-2a with some of the mean safety ratings shaded. The mean ratings for “Driving when just under legal alcohol limit” are used as an index of safety. The assumption used in this selection is that it is generally agreed that driving while impaired by alcohol is dangerous. Mean ratings meeting or exceeding the index value for each age group are shaded and appear in bold face type.

Only one other driving behavior — passing a school bus with its red light flashing and the stop arm fully extended — was considered to be more dangerous by every age group. Two other driving behaviors — racing another driver and crossing railroad tracks when the red light is blinking — met or exceeded the index value for all but the youngest age group. One other behavior — driving through a stop sign without slowing — would

have fallen into this group had it not been for the fact that the mean rating for the 25 to 34 age group fell .01 below the index value.

Cutting in front of another driver in order to make a turn met or exceeded the index value for driver age 35 and over.

The number of behaviors considered to be dangerous generally increases by age. As was mentioned above, only two behaviors met or exceeded the index value for those in the 16 to 20 age group. The same is true of four to five behaviors for those in the 21 to 24 and 25 to 34 age groups. The next three age groups, covering ages 35 to 64, had 7 to 9 behaviors met the criterion. Over half of the behaviors — 12 of the 22 considered — met the criterion for drivers age 65 or over.



TABLE 3-2a

**Mean Rating of Safety of Select Driving Behaviors, continued**

Qx: People feel differently about how safe or dangerous different types of driving behavior are.  
How safe do you feel it is to ...?

Base: Total population of drivers

Unweighted N: A=1,489; B=1,511; C=1,4567; D=1,533; AC=2,956; BD=3,044

Mean rating is on a five-point scale where <b>1=extremely safe and 5=extremely dangerous.</b>	Unweighted N	Mean Rating of Safety by Age						
		16-20	21-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Drive through a light that was already red before you enter an intersection	AC	4.55	4.70	4.68	4.72	<b>4.79</b>	4.77	<b>4.78</b>
Drive 10 miles an hour faster than most other vehicles are going	AC	3.39	3.45	3.47	3.79	3.80	3.90	3.88
Drive 20 miles an hour over the speed limit on an interstate highway	BD	3.74	3.86	3.82	4.02	4.08	4.11	4.30
Tailgate another vehicle on a highway with one lane in each direction	AC	4.54	4.66	4.68	4.74	4.74	4.74	<b>4.74</b>
Enter an intersection just as the light is turning from yellow to red	BD	3.74	3.89	4.18	4.16	4.25	4.22	4.17
Drive through a stop sign without slowing	AC	4.65	<b>4.82</b>	4.79	<b>4.83</b>	<b>4.84</b>	<b>4.85</b>	<b>4.76</b>
Slow but not completely stop at stop sign	BD	3.82	3.83	4.09	4.21	4.34	4.42	4.38
Cut in front of another car in order to make a turn	BD	4.57	4.62	4.73	<b>4.77</b>	<b>4.83</b>	<b>4.86</b>	<b>4.78</b>
Race another driver	AC	4.70	<b>4.83</b>	<b>4.90</b>	<b>4.86</b>	<b>4.90</b>	<b>4.90</b>	<b>4.94</b>
Drive when just under legal alcohol limit	AC	<b>4.79</b>	<b>4.75</b>	<b>4.80</b>	<b>4.75</b>	<b>4.78</b>	<b>4.82</b>	<b>4.73</b>
Use the shoulder to pass in heavy traffic	BD	4.37	4.48	4.70	4.72	<b>4.79</b>	4.78	<b>4.73</b>



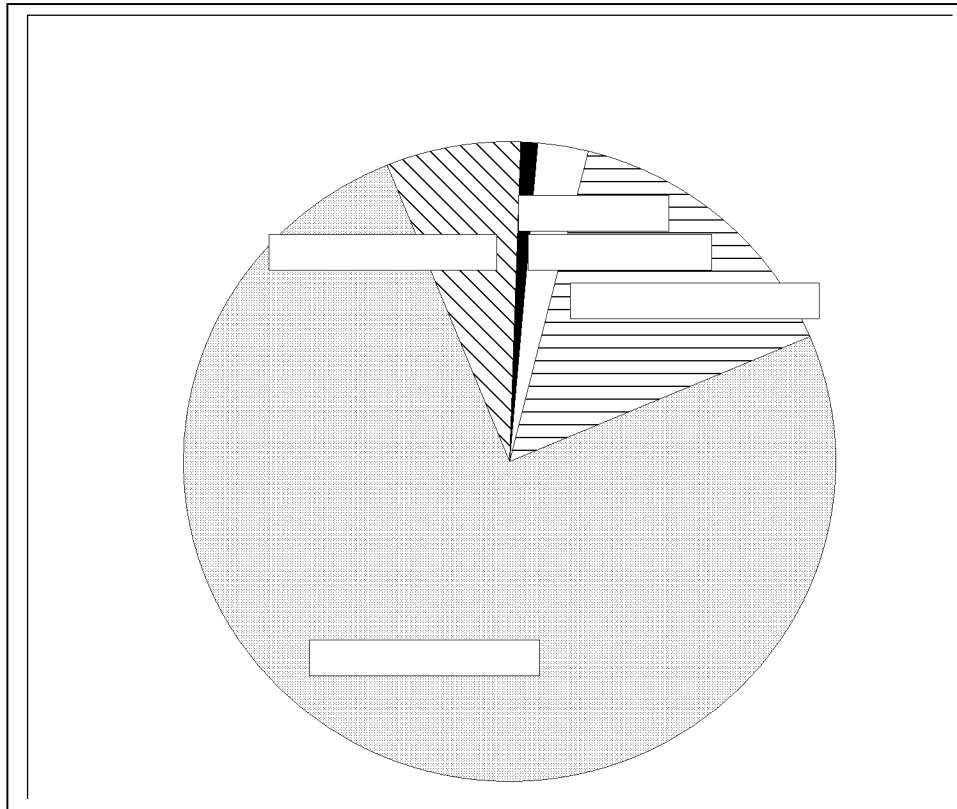
TABLE 3-2a, continued

<b>Mean Rating of Safety of Select Driving Behaviors, continued</b>								
Mean rating is on a five-point scale where <b>1=extremely safe</b> and <b>5=extremely dangerous.</b>	<i>Unweighted</i> N□	<b>Mean Rating of Safety by Age</b>						
		<b>16-20</b>	<b>21-24</b>	<b>25-34</b>	<b>35-44</b>	<b>45-54</b>	<b>55-64</b>	<b>65+</b>
Make an angry, insulting or obscene gesture or comment toward another driver so that they heard or saw it	BD	4.07	3.93	4.27	4.43	4.49	4.53	4.70
Cross railroad tracks when the red light is blinking	A	4.68	<b>4.76</b>	<b>4.82</b>	<b>4.77</b>	<b>4.79</b>	<b>4.86</b>	<b>4.89</b>
Pass a vehicle in a no-passing zone	B	4.58	4.65	4.74	<b>4.76</b>	<b>4.82</b>	<b>4.83</b>	<b>4.86</b>
Drive 10 miles an hour over the speed limit on an interstate highway	A	3.29	3.19	3.21	3.43	3.39	3.66	3.99
Made a U-turn where a sign said not to	A	4.22	3.93	4.13	4.18	4.33	4.48	<b>4.74</b>
Drive 20 miles an hour faster than most other drivers are going	BD	4.32	4.44	4.33	4.47	4.58	4.60	4.49
Drive through traffic switching quickly back and forth between lanes	A	4.16	4.31	4.50	4.58	4.68	4.65	<b>4.79</b>
Pass a school bus that has its red lights flashing and the stop arm is in full view	D	<b>4.86</b>	<b>4.85</b>	<b>4.95</b>	<b>4.95</b>	<b>4.96</b>	<b>4.96</b>	<b>4.94</b>
Going 10 miles an hour over the speed limit in a residential neighborhood	C	4.17	4.34	4.53	4.54	4.62	4.64	4.64
Go 10 miles an hour over the speed limit on a two-lane rural road	D	3.39	3.56	3.55	3.72	3.82	4.01	4.18
Driving 20 miles an hour over the speed limit on a rural road	C	3.84	4.17	4.24	4.40	4.45	4.51	4.45
<b>Items at or above index</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>



Drivers were asked if they felt they were driving faster or slower than they were a year ago (see Figure 3-2). Less than one driver in ten (8%) said they were driving faster while twice as many drivers (17%) said they were driving slower. The vast majority of drivers (75%) said they were driving about the same as they were last year.

FIGURE 3-2



Qx: Compared to a year ago, would you say that you generally drive [faster/slower]?

Base: Total population of drivers.

Unweighted N=1,489

Among drivers in the 16 to 20 age group, those driving faster outnumbered those driving slower by ten percentage points — 27% to 17%. But for the next age group, those 21 to 24, there was almost a two to one advantage in favor of those driving slower — 10% faster to 18% slower.

For drivers with less than a high school education the percentage of drivers who were driving faster was equal to those who were driving slower — 13% for both. For other educational levels drivers who reported driving slower outnumbered drivers who were driving faster by large margins: among high school graduates 6% faster to 18% slower; among drivers with some college 7% to 20%; and among college graduates 7% to 15%.

Drivers who reported that they drove faster now than they had one year ago were asked why they were driving faster. More than half the drivers (52%) said they were driving faster as a result of increased speed limits (see Table 3-3). The second most mentioned reason for driving faster, mentioned by one in five (18%) was the increased experience of the driver. Traffic flow was mentioned by 15%.

TABLE 3-3

<b>Why Drive Faster</b>	
<i>Qx: Why do you drive faster now?</i>	
<i>Base: Drive faster than a year ago.</i>	
	<b>Total</b>
<i>Unweighted N</i>	<i>110</i>
<b>More experience as a driver</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>Traffic flow</b>	<b>15%</b>
Keep up with traffic	14%
Other	1%
<b>Meet schedule</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Other mentions</b>	<b>55%</b>
Increase in speed limit	52%
Other	4%
<b>Don't know, Not applicable, No answer</b>	<b>5%</b>

Totals do not add to 100% since respondents were allowed to give more than one answer.

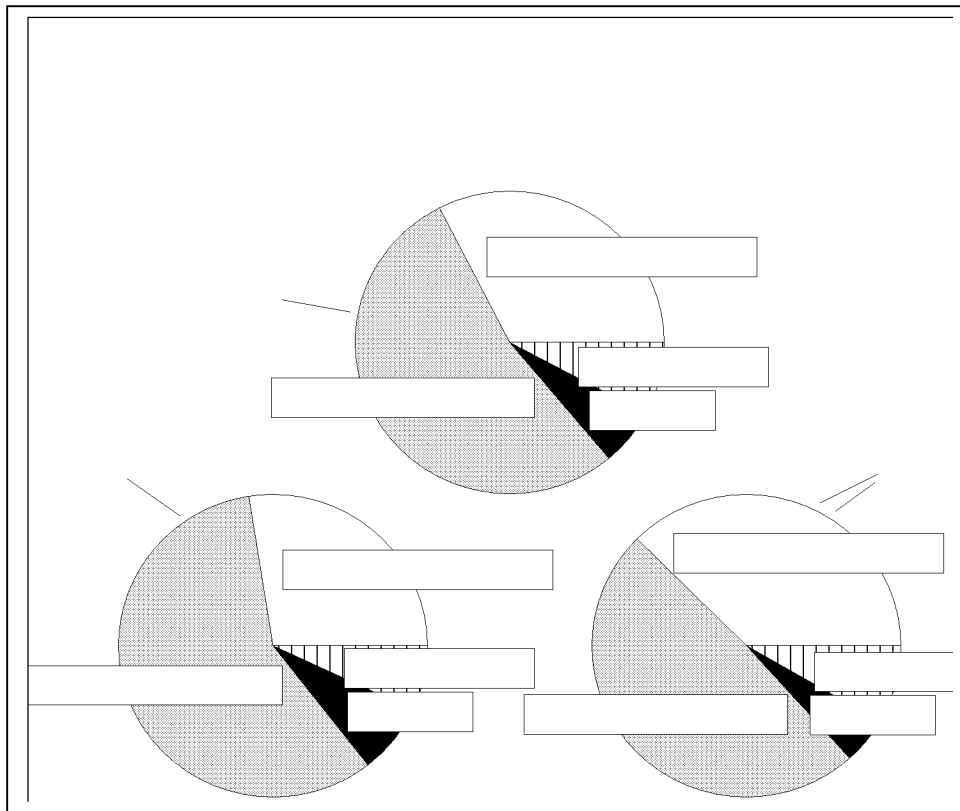
Drivers who reported they were driving slower also were asked to elaborate on the reasons. Two drivers in five (41%) mentioned driver-related issues, primarily the maturity of the driver (see Table 3-4). Safety concerns were the reason for driving slower for one driver in three (33%). About half of these concerns (14%) were related to being more cautious. One driver in 14 (7%) was driving slower to avoid crashes and 6% were driving slower because they had been in a crash. One driver in five (19%), who is driving slower this year than last, reported doing so because of vehicle-related factors, primarily having children or other family members in the car. Lastly, enforcement was mentioned by about one driver in twelve (8%) as the reason for driving slower. However, it is mentioned by twice that many (16%) drivers who admitted to exceeding the speed limit at least a few days a week.

TABLE 3-4

<b>Why Drive Slower</b>	
Qx: <i>Why do you drive slower now?</i>	
Base: <i>Drive slower than a year ago.</i>	
	<b>Total</b>
<i>Unweighted N</i>	263
<b>Driver-related</b>	<b>41%</b>
Driver maturity	34%
Slower reflexes	5%
Other	5%
<b>Safety</b>	<b>33%</b>
More Cautious	14%
Avoid accidents	7%
Been in accident	6%
Other	5%
<b>Vehicle-related</b>	<b>19%</b>
Children/family in the car	17%
Other	2%
<b>Enforcement</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>Other mentions</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>None, No Reason, Don't know, Not applicable, No answer</b>	<b>7%</b>

Totals do not add to 100% since respondents were allowed to give more than one answer.

FIGURE 3-3



Qx: Compared to a year ago, do you feel that driving is more dangerous or safer?

Base: Speeding questionnaire.

Unweighted N=3,000

The national sample of drivers was also asked if, compared to a year ago, they felt driving was more dangerous or safer today. One driver in three (33%) felt that driving was either: a lot more dangerous (13%) or somewhat more dangerous (19%) than it was one year ago. Conversely, only 6% felt it was safer<sup>1</sup>. Over half (54%) of all drivers responded that driving was about the same as last year.

<sup>1</sup> Total may not be equal to sum of elements due to rounding.



While roughly similar proportions of men and women felt driving was safer now than it was a year ago, there is a difference in the proportions who felt it is more dangerous. Where almost three in ten (28%) male drivers felt driving was more dangerous, almost four in ten (38%) female drivers felt the same way.

Not unexpectedly, younger drivers are less likely than older drivers to say driving is more dangerous — 24% of drivers in the 16 to 20 and 26% of drivers in the 21 to 24 age group versus 42% in the 55 to 64 age group and 43% for drivers 65 and over — and more likely to say it is safer — 13% and 7% in the two youngest age groups versus 6% in the two oldest.

About one third (32%) of White drivers felt driving is more dangerous than it was a year ago compared to 39% of Black drivers and 42% of Hispanic drivers (see Table 3-5, next page). These different views of the increased dangerousness of driving are paralleled with regard to the increased safety of driving — 5% of Whites compared to 9% of Blacks and 8% of Hispanics feel driving is safer today than it was a year ago.

Drivers who felt it was more dangerous to drive now compared to a year ago were asked to elaborate. Overall, almost three drivers in five (58%) mentioned driver-related factors. One driver in five (20%) specifically mentioned careless or inattentive drivers. This was followed by faster drivers or speeders (18%); aggressive, reckless and risky driving (14%); young drivers coming of age (10%); and drivers on alcohol or drugs (10%).

The second most commonly mentioned category (33%) dealt with traffic conditions, primarily heavier traffic and more cars. The third most commonly cited factor in making driving more dangerous than last year was increases in the speed limit (16%). No other category was mentioned by more than one driver in 10.

TABLE 3-5

<b>Why Driving is More Dangerous by Race and Ethnicity</b>				
Qx: <i>Why is driving more dangerous?</i>				
Base: <i>Driving is more dangerous than a year ago.</i>				
	<b>Total</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>
<i>Unweighted N</i>	1,012	791	84	95
<b>Driver-related</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>58%</b>
Careless/inattentive	20%	20%	22%	12%
Faster drivers/speed	18%	18%	20%	12%
Aggressive/reckless	14%	15%	9%	11%
Young drivers	10%	8%	19%	25%
Alcohol/drugs	10%	9%	19%	11%
Other	4%	3%	5%	7%
<b>Traffic related</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>19%</b>
<b>Speed limit</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Enforcement</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Safety</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>Meet schedule</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Road conditions</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Don't know, Not applicable, No answer</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>7%</b>

Totals do not add to 100% since respondents were allowed to give more than one answer.

Overall, three drivers in five (58%) who felt driving was more dangerous point to driver-related reasons. This proportion increases to three in four (74%) among Black drivers. The concerns of these drivers focus more attention on young drivers and the use of alcohol and drugs as the causes of the increased danger than do drivers in general. Hispanic drivers also reported higher concern about young drivers. Fully one in four (25%) Hispanic drivers mentioned younger drivers as the reason driving is more dangerous — two and one-half times the overall rate — while at the same time they were less concerned about careless and inattentive drivers or those who speed.

Drivers who said that driving was safer now than it was a year ago were asked why they felt this way. Three drivers in ten (31%) felt public awareness had an impact on making the roads safer (see Table 3-6). Additionally, one driver in five (20%) mentioned increased enforcement. Two drivers in five (40%) mentioned something else.

TABLE 3-6

<b>Why Driving is Safer</b>	
Qx: <i>Why is driving safer?</i>	
Base: <i>Driving is safer than a year ago.</i>	
	<b>Total</b>
<i>Unweighted N</i>	190

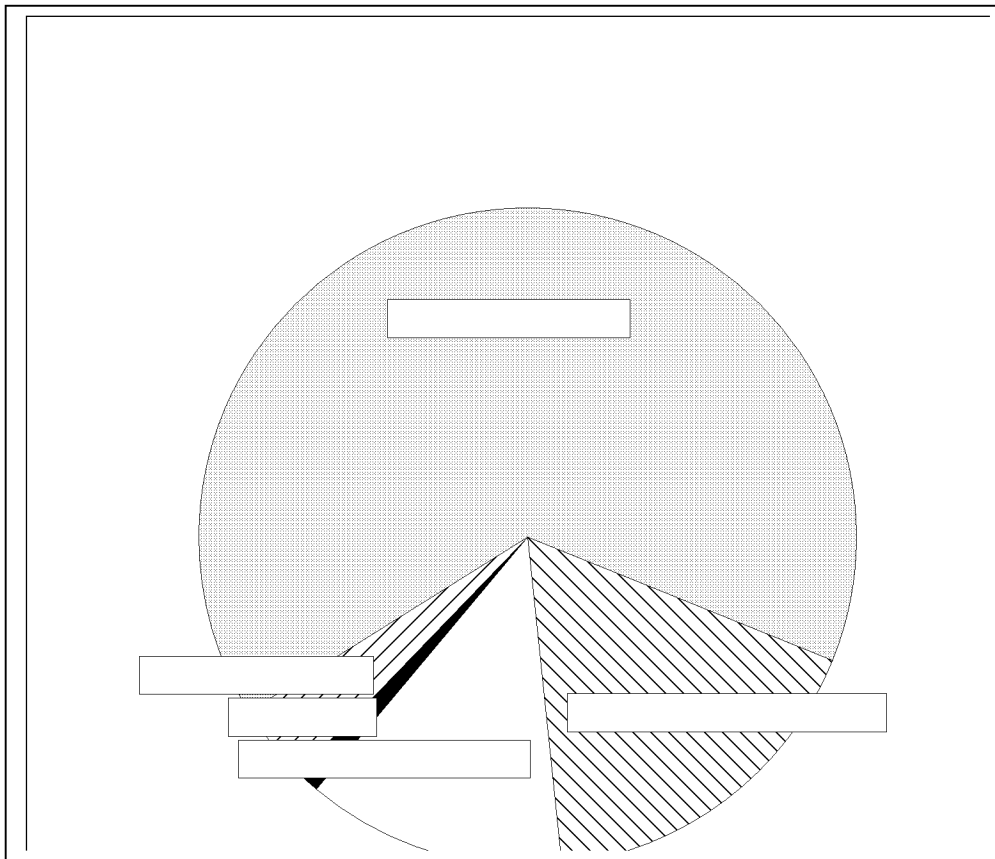
<b>Public Awareness</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>Enforcement</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>Don't know, None, No answer</b>	<b>11%</b>

Totals do not add to 100% since respondents were allowed to give more than one answer.

## AGGRESSIVE DRIVING

The national sample of drivers was asked whether they felt that drivers in their area were **driving more or less aggressively** (self-defined) than a year ago. Most drivers (65%) reported no difference in the aggressiveness of drivers in their area (see Figure 3-4). However, a substantial minority (30%) reported that drivers in their area were driving a lot more aggressively (13%) or somewhat more aggressively (17%) than a year ago. By comparison, very few drivers (4%) reported that drivers in their area were driving somewhat less aggressively (3%) or a lot less aggressively (1%) than a year ago.

FIGURE 3-4



Qx: *Compared to a year ago, would you say that other drivers in your area drive a lot more aggressively now, somewhat more aggressively, about the same, somewhat less aggressively, or much less aggressively?*

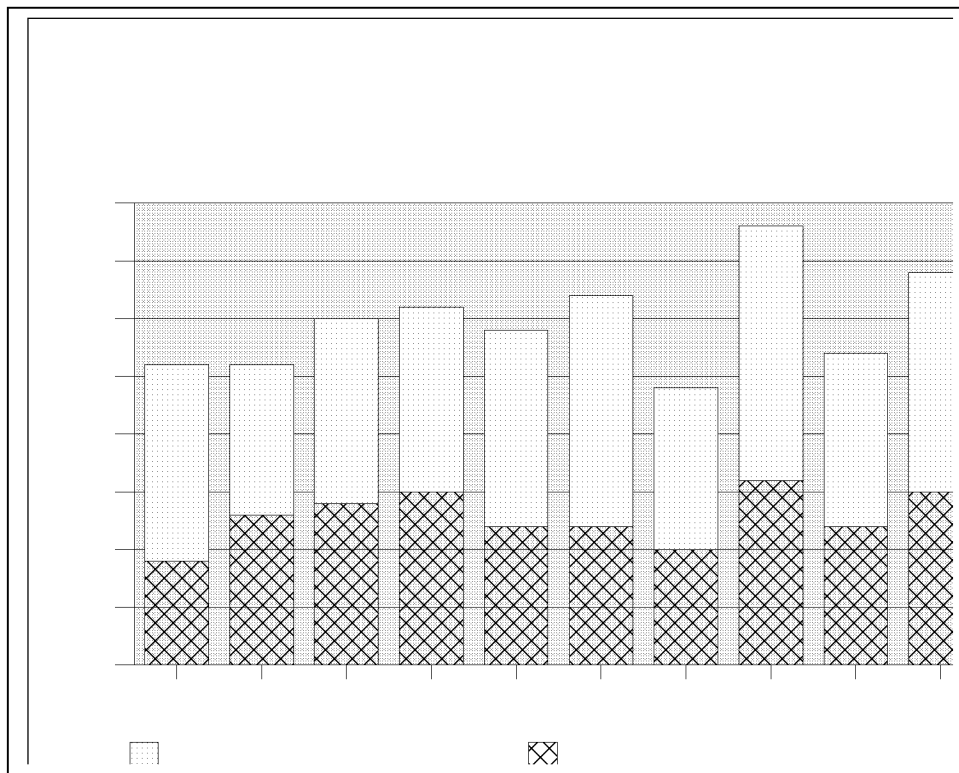
Base: *Total population of drivers.*

*Unweighted N=3000*

Female drivers were more likely to feel that drivers in their area were driving more aggressively (14% a lot more aggressively and 18% somewhat more aggressively) this year compared to last year than were male drivers (11% and 17% respectively). Drivers from urban (30%) and suburban (30%) areas were somewhat more likely than those from rural areas (26%) to feel that drivers in their area were more aggressive than a year ago.

One in four (24%) to two in five (38%) drivers in all NHTSA Regions felt drivers in their areas were driving at least somewhat more aggressively at the time of the interview than they were a year prior to the interview.

FIGURE 3-5



Qx: Compared to a year ago, would you say that drivers in your area drive a lot more aggressively now, somewhat more aggressively, about the same, somewhat less aggressively, or much less aggressively?

Base: Total population of drivers.

Unweighted N=3,000

Almost two drivers in five (38%) in Region VIII (Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming) felt drivers in their area were driving either a lot more aggressively (16%) or somewhat more aggressively (22%) than they were a year ago. One-third (34%) of the drivers in Region X (Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington) also felt drivers in their area were more aggressive. Conversely, drivers in Region VII (Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska) were the least willing to say drivers in their area were driving either a lot more aggressively (10%) or somewhat more aggressively (14%) than they were last year.

Those drivers who reported that other drivers drive more aggressively in their area than a year ago were asked why other drivers are more aggressive now. Nearly a quarter (23%) say that drivers drive more aggressively now because they are hurried, rushed or behind schedule (see Table 3-7). About an equal number (22%) attribute the increased aggressiveness of driving in their areas to traffic flow, particularly increased traffic volume and congestion.

TABLE 3-7

<b>Reasons for Increased Aggressive Driving in Your Area</b>	
<i>Qx: Why do they drive more aggressively now?</i>	
<i>Base: Report other drivers drive more aggressively in their area than they did a year ago.</i>	
	<b>TOTAL</b>
<i>Unweighted N</i>	<i>870</i>
<b>In a hurry/rushed/behind schedule</b>	<b>23%</b>
<b>Traffic flow/increased traffic/congestion</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Careless/inconsiderate drivers</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>Immature/young drivers</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>New drivers coming into area</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Angry/frustrated/hostile drivers</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Higher speed limits</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>Fewer police officers</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Higher stress levels/more stressed drivers</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Overly confident drivers</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Speeding/driving too fast</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>18%</b>

Totals do not add to 100% since respondents were allowed to give more than one answer.

Two groups of drivers are singled out as contributing to increases in aggressive driving — young drivers (12%) and careless or inconsiderate drivers (12%). Higher speed limits are blamed by some drivers (8%) for increases in aggressive driving in their areas. Fewer police (6%) are also seen as a factor in increased aggressive driving by some. New populations with different lifestyles moving into the area (7%) are cited by others as factors in increased aggressive driving in the local area. Nearly one in five (18%), however, do not know why driving in their area has become more aggressive.

## **SUMMARY**

Three drivers in four said they were driving about the same speed as last year. Half of all drivers felt driving was no more dangerous than it was a year ago, and two-thirds of all drivers felt that aggressive driving was about the same as last year. Drivers' perceptions of the risk of speeding and other unsafe driving behaviors varied considerably among specific behaviors. Some behaviors — passing a school bus while it was stopped or racing other drivers — were thought to be extremely dangerous, while others — driving 10 or 20 miles above the posted speed limit, entering an intersection as the light turned red or a rolling stop at a stop sign — were felt to be only somewhat dangerous.