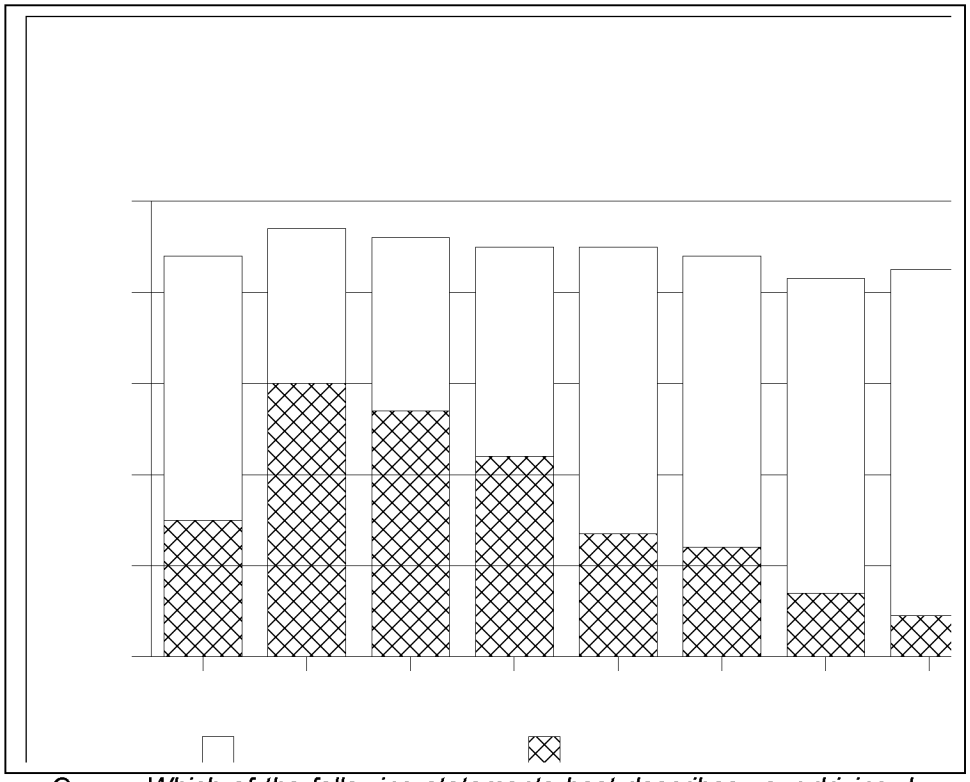
CHAPTER IV.

DRIVERS ATTITUDES TOWARD SPEED AND SPEEDING

BEHAVIOR RELATED TO SPEED

One possible indicator of aggressive driving is the tendency to pass other drivers on the road. Overall, 30% of drivers reported that they tend to pass other cars more than other cars tend to pass them (see Figure 4-1). Almost twice that many drivers (58%) reported that other drivers tended to pass them more often than they pass others. One driver in 10 (10%) said it was about even, as far as passing or being passed, and the remainder did not know or refused.

FIGURE 4-1

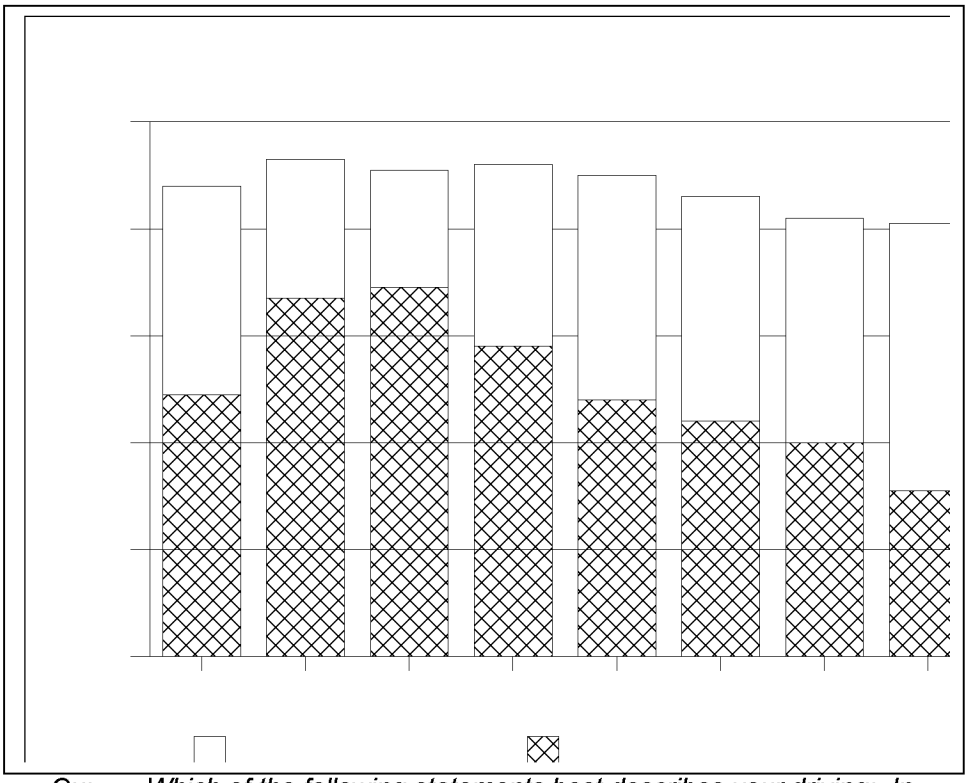


Qx: Which of the following statements best describes your driving: I tend to pass other cars more often than other cars pass me, or other cars tend to pass me more?
Base: Total population of drivers.
Unweighted N=2,956

As might be expected, there is an inverse relationship between the tendency to pass and age, that is, as age increases the tendency to pass decreases. Fully twice the proportion (60%) of 16 to 20 year-old drivers tend to pass as be passed. This proportion dropped steadily across age groups until it reached 9% of drivers 65 and older. Males were more likely to pass other cars than were females — 34% vs. 27%.

Drivers were also asked if they tended to stay with slower moving traffic or keep up with the faster traffic. About half (49%) reported they keep up with the faster traffic and about two drivers in five (39%) reported they stay with the slower moving traffic. One driver in ten (10%) said it was about equal (see Figure 4-2).

FIGURE 4-2

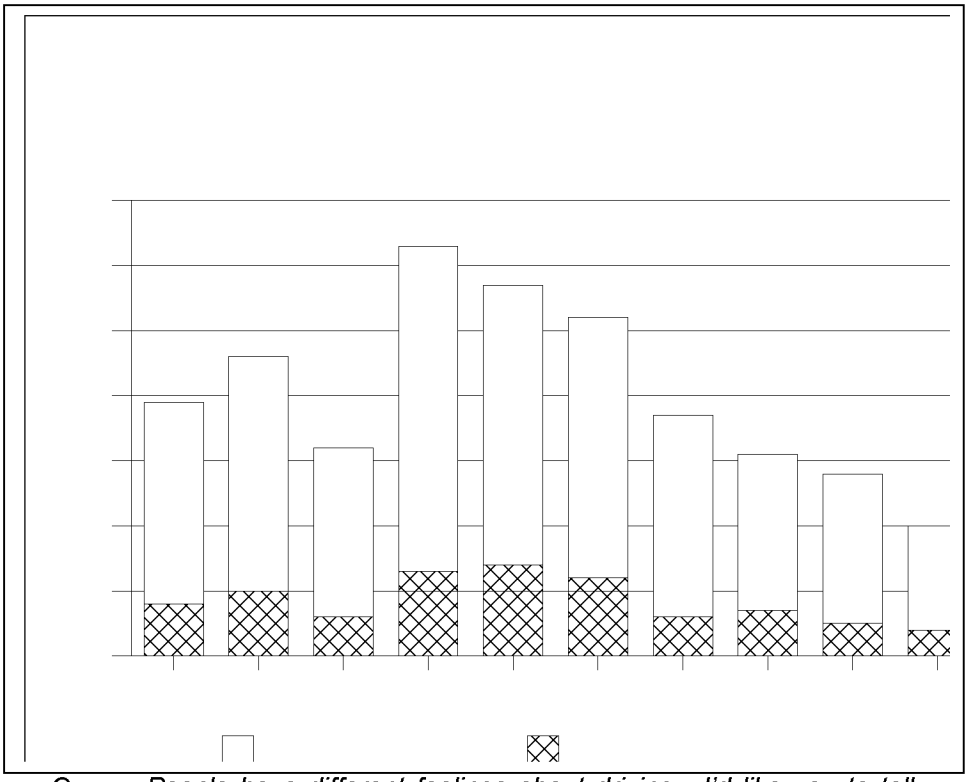


Qx: Which of the following statements best describes your driving: In heavy traffic I tend to stay with the slower moving traffic, or keep up with the faster traffic?
Base: Total population of drivers.
Unweighted N=2,956

As illustrated in the previous discussion of passing, there is also an inverse relationship between age and keeping up with the faster traffic, although it is not as dramatic. Two-thirds (67%) of the drivers in the 16 to 20 age group reported that they keep up with the faster traffic. While this is higher than the proportion that tended to pass, the pattern and ultimate drop off is not as steep. In point of fact, the proportion increases to 69% for the 21 to 24 age group before declining to 31% among drivers 65 and over. Female drivers were more likely to stay with the slower moving traffic (43%) than were male drivers (34%).

Drivers were asked if they agreed or disagreed with a series of five statements dealing with driving and speed. The first of these was "I enjoy the feeling of speed." Overall two drivers in five (39%) either strongly agree (8%) or somewhat agree (31%) with this statement (see Figure 4-3); those who disagree are almost equally split between somewhat disagree (29%) or strongly disagree (31%).

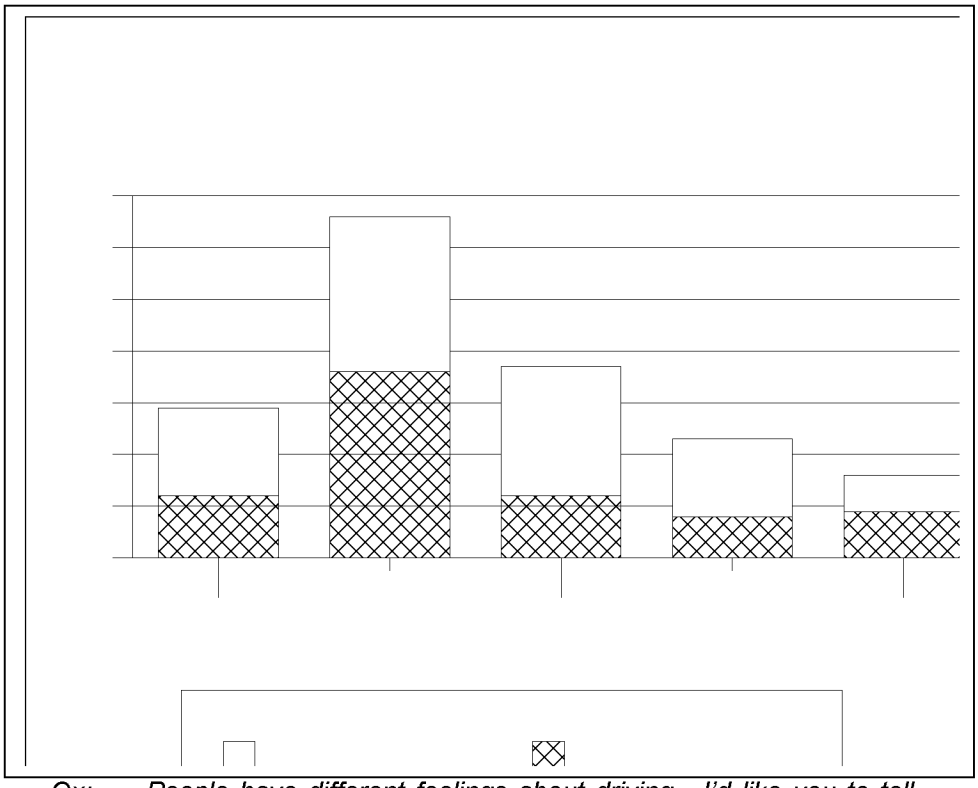
FIGURE 4-3



Qx: People have different feelings about driving. I'd like you to tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement about driving: "I enjoy the feeling of speed."
Base: Total population of drivers.
Unweighted N=3,044

Males and females reported different attitudes toward the statement, "I enjoy the feeling of speed." Slightly less than half (46%) of males agreed with this statement, only about one-third (32%) of females agreed. Agreement with this statement is inversely related to age. While agreement decreased steadily as age increased, there was a sizeable drop after the 25-34 age group. From age 35 on, agreement with this statement is at or below the overall average.

FIGURE 4-4



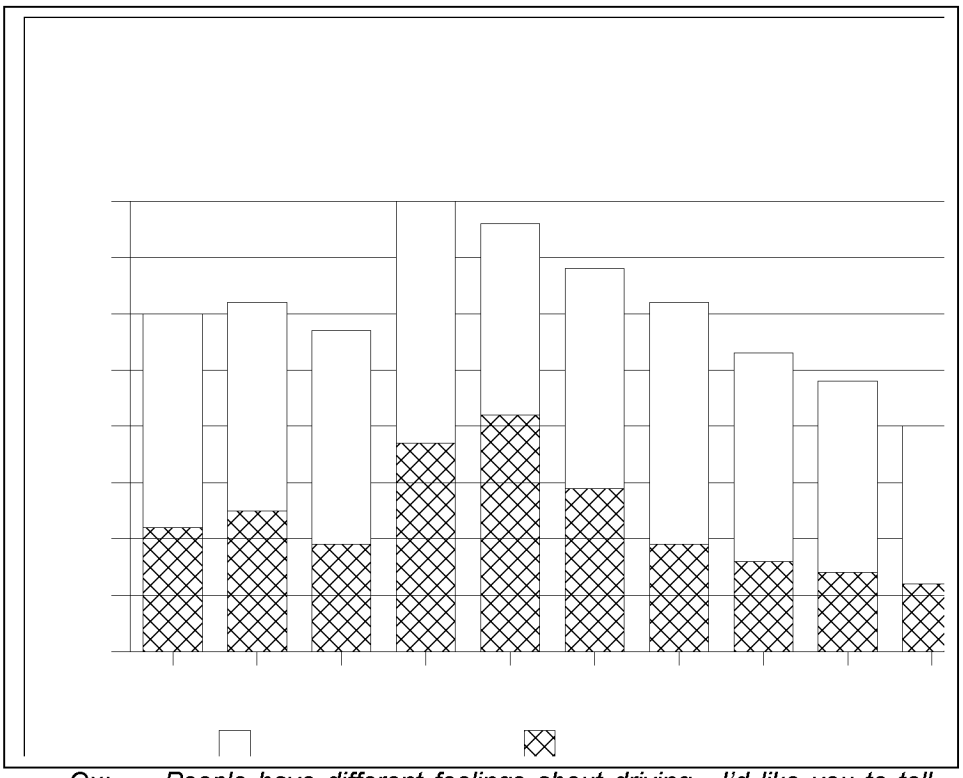
Qx: People have different feelings about driving. I'd like you to tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about driving: "The faster I drive the more alert I feel."
Base: Total population of drivers.
Unweighted N=3,044

Less than one driver in three (29%) strongly agreed (12%) or somewhat agreed (17%) with the statement, "the faster I drive the more alert I am" (see Figure 4-4). There was little deviation from the overall proportions by gender, age or education. Agreement with this statement was most closely related to agreement with the statement, "I enjoy the feeling of speed." More than one driver in three (36%) who enjoy the feeling of speed, strongly agreed that driving fast makes them more alert than driving slow. An additional 30% somewhat agree. Only one driver in eight (12%) who somewhat agreed that they enjoy the feeling of speed, strongly agreed that fast driving keeps them alert. This is one-third the proportion of drivers who felt strongly about enjoying the feeling of speed.

Male drivers were more likely to agree with this statement (14% strongly agree and 19% somewhat agree) than were female drivers (10% and 15% respectively).

The third statement in this series was, "I often get impatient with slower drivers." Fully, three drivers in five (60%) either strongly (22%) or somewhat (38%) agreed with this statement (see Figure 4-5). There is a clear relationship between responses to this statement and age. The only deviation from the pattern was among drivers in the 16 to 20 age group who were in slightly less agreement with the statement than were drivers in the 21 to 24 age group. This could possibly be a reflection that many of the younger drivers are relatively new drivers and may be slow drivers themselves.

FIGURE 4-5

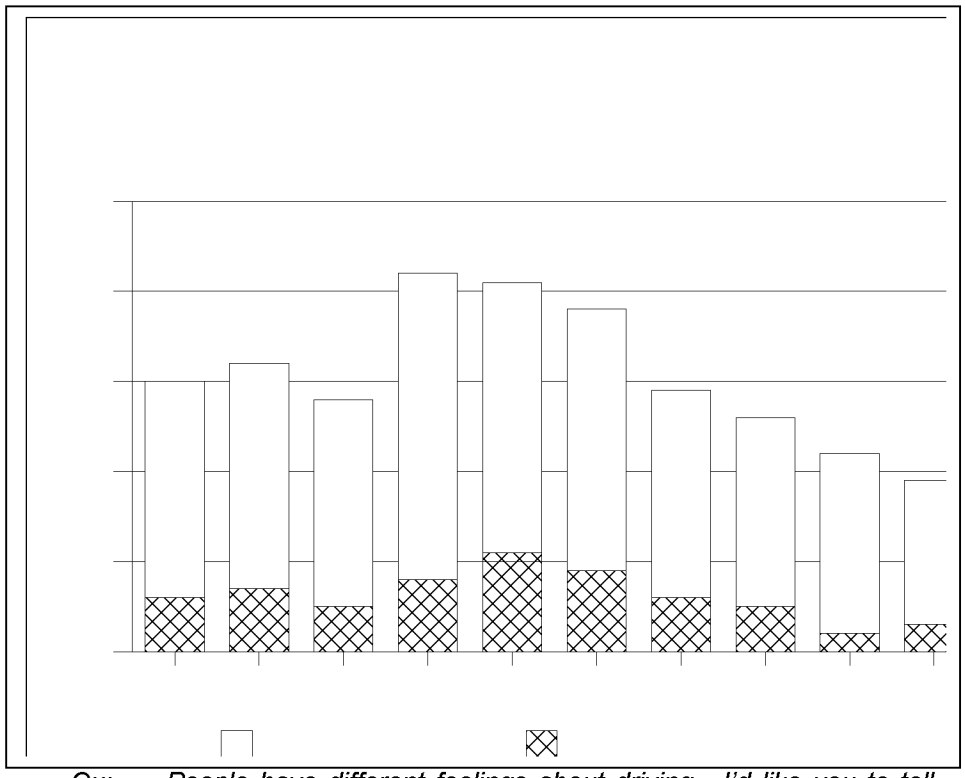


Qx: People have different feelings about driving. I'd like you to tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement about driving: "I often get impatient with slower drivers."
Base: Total population of drivers.
Unweighted N=3,044

Male drivers were more likely to strongly agree with this statement (25%) than were female drivers (19%). There was virtually the same proportion of male and female drivers who somewhat agreed with this statement — 37% and 38% respectively.

One driver in three (30%) either strongly (6%) or somewhat (24%) agreed with the statement, "I try to get where I am going as fast as I can" (see Figure 4-6). Male drivers agreed with this statement only slightly more than did female drivers — 32% vs. 28%. Agreement with this statement decreased as age increased with the largest drop between the 25 to 34 and the 35 to 44 age groups.

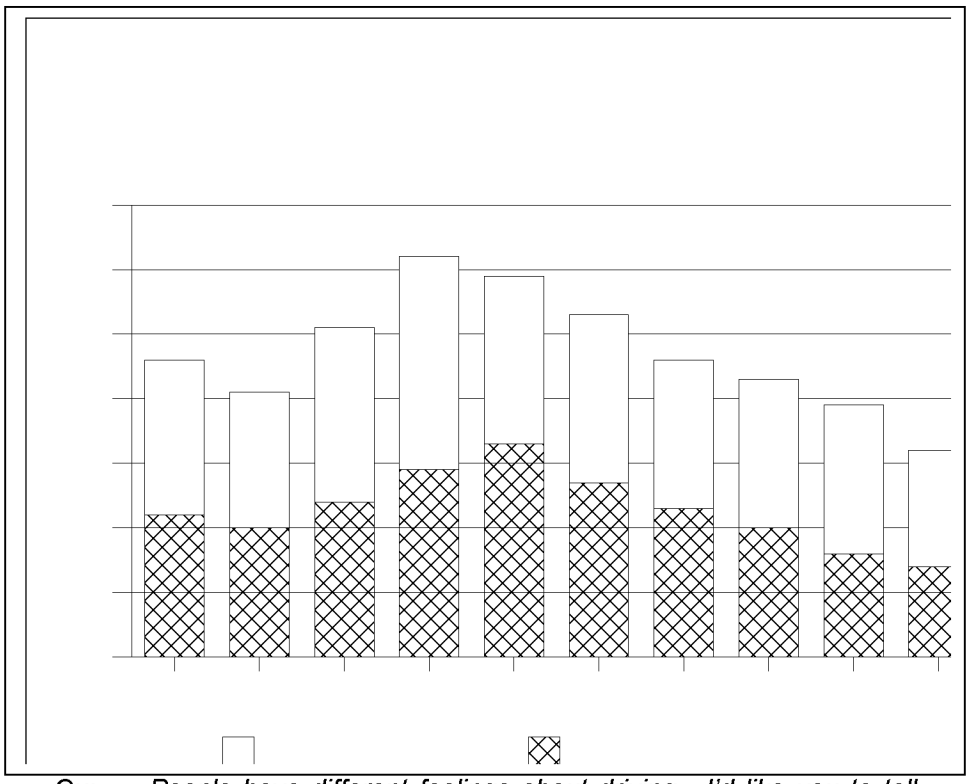
FIGURE 4-6



Qx: People have different feelings about driving. I'd like you to tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement about driving: "I try to get where I am going as fast as I can."
Base: Total population of drivers.
Unweighted N=3,044

The last statement in this series was, "I worry a lot about having a crash." Less than half (46%) of drivers agreed with this statement (see Figure 4-7). There was a fairly even split between respondents that strongly (22%) or somewhat (24%) agreed with this statement.

FIGURE 4-7



Qx: People have different feelings about driving. I'd like you to tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement about driving: "I worry a lot about having a crash."
Base: Total population of drivers.
Unweighted N=3,044

Figure 4-7 shows the familiar pattern of agreement with this statement decreasing with age. However, the same categories of drivers who were most likely to have attitudes condoning speed were also most concerned about being in a crash. This finding is contrary to what might be expected — that those most concerned about getting into a crash would be most likely to behave in ways that could reduce the likelihood of a crash.

A more consistent behavior was seen in regard to gender. Men were in slightly more agreement with the statements about speeding than were women. While the differences were not great, they were consistent. Yet in the responses to this statement, half the female drivers (51%) and only two male drivers in five (41%) reported being worried about being in a crash. For every age group, with the exception of drivers over 65, female drivers worry more about being in a crash than do male.

IMPORTANCE OF FACTORS IN SELECTING DRIVING SPEED

Drivers were asked how important a series of factors were in selecting the speed at which they drive (see Table 4-1, next page). The most important factor was the weather condition. Five out of six drivers (86%) felt weather was extremely important and another 10% felt it was moderately important.

The second most important factor in the minds of drivers is the posted speed limit. This factor was rated as extremely important by slightly more than half (54%) and as moderately important by an additional one-third (35%) of all drivers.

Past experience on the road, the third most important factor, had slightly more than five drivers in six (84%) rating this as extremely important (48%) or moderately important (37%). (The total of these proportions equals more than 100% since drivers were allowed to mention more than one factor).

Overall, the next three factors were rated very similarly. Four drivers in five (81%) felt that traffic density was extremely important (49%) or moderately important (32%). This is followed by chances of being stopped by police. Here, three drivers in four (75%) rated this factor as extremely important (48%) or moderately important (27%). The next factor, the speed of other traffic, was rated as important by 75% of all drivers who were evenly split between thinking this factor was extremely or moderately important.

The least important factor was how much time there is to reach your destination. While three drivers in five (60%) rated this factor as important, it was the only factor where extremely important (27%) had less support than moderately important (33%).

TABLE 4-1

Importance of Various Factors in Selecting Driving Speed by Gender

Q13: How important are the following factors in selecting the speed at which you drive?
Base: Total population of drivers.

Factor	Total	Male	Female
Unweighted N	*3,000*	*1439*	*1561*
Weather conditions			
Extremely/Moderately Important	96%	95%	96%
Extremely Important	86%	83%	88%
Moderately Important	10%	12%	8%
Posted speed limit			
Extremely/Moderately Important	90%	87%	93%
Extremely Important	54%	48%	61%
Moderately Important	35%	39%	32%
Your past experience driving road			
Extremely/Moderately Important	84%	83%	85%
Extremely Important	48%	46%	49%
Moderately Important	37%	37%	37%
How much traffic there is			
Extremely/Moderately Important	81%	80%	81%
Extremely Important	49%	49%	48%
Moderately Important	32%	31%	32%
Chances of being stopped by police			
Extremely/Moderately Important	75%	73%	77%
Extremely Important	48%	44%	53%
Moderately Important	27%	29%	25%
Speed of other traffic			
Extremely/Moderately Important	75%	77%	75%
Extremely Important	38%	37%	39%
Moderately Important	38%	39%	36%
How much time you have to get to destination			
Extremely/Moderately Important	60%	57%	63%
Extremely Important	27%	23%	30%
Moderately Important	33%	34%	33%

Total may not be equal to sum of elements due to rounding.

For the most part, males and females have the same overall ranking of the importance of each of the seven specific factors. For example, both males and females rated weather conditions as the most important factor when "extremely important" is combined with "moderately important" (95% versus 96% respectively). However, for all but one specific factor, females felt the factors were more important in the selection of driving speed than did males. The exception was the "speed of other traffic," which females rated only one point less important overall. One factor, "posted speed limits", was six percentage points more important for females (93%) than males (87%).

Females rated every factor more important than males when only responses of "extremely important" were considered. For one factor, "posted speed limits", the difference was 13 percentage points, 61% for females versus 48% for males.

In addition to the seven specific factors, respondents were asked if there were any other factors which were important in selecting a driving speed. Only one other factor — a combination of familiarity with the vehicle, whose vehicle it was, and if there was a passenger in the car — was mentioned by almost as many as one in ten (9%).

SAFE AND UNSAFE SPEED

Drivers were asked about the speed limits on one of the randomly selected roads they drove on at least weekly. Specifically, they were asked what they considered the maximum safe speed for that type of road (see Table 4-2).

TABLE 4-2

Maximum Safe Speed for Various Road Types

Qx: What do you consider to be the maximum safe speed for [road type]?
Base: Total population of drivers.

Road Type	*Unweighted N*	First Quartile[1]	Median[2]	Third Quartile[3]
Residential Urban	*1,320*	**25 MPH**	**30 MPH**	**35 MPH**
Residential Rural	*834*	**25 MPH**	**30 MPH**	**35 MPH**
Non-Interstate Urban	*1,016*	**45 MPH**	**50 MPH**	**55 MPH**
Non-Interstate Rural	*894*	**50 MPH**	**55 MPH**	**60 MPH**
Interstate Urban	*938*	**65 MPH**	**70 MPH**	**70 MPH**
Interstate Rural	*606*	**65 MPH**	**65 MPH**	**70 MPH**

1 The point at which 25% of the responses fall below and 75% fall above.
2 The point at which 50% of the responses fall above and below.
3 The point at which 75% of the responses fall below and 25% fall above.
The median and one of the quartiles can fall at the same point when a large number of responses are clustered at that point.

There was a great deal of agreement among drivers regarding the maximum safe speed for the six road types. For four of the road types the middle 50%, sometimes called the inter-quartile range, of responses had a range of only 10 miles per hour and in the other two road types the range was only five miles per hour. Drivers felt the maximum safe speed for residential streets, whether in urban or rural settings, was 25 to 35 miles per hour. The maximum safe speed for non-interstate (roads with posted speed limits of 45 to 55 miles per hour) urban roads was 45 to 55 miles per hour, while the same roads in a rural setting were rated at 50 to 60 miles per hour. Interstate highways, regardless of setting, were rated at 65 to 70 miles per hour.

Males and females agreed that the maximum safe speed for residential roads, regardless of their setting, was in the range of 25 to 35 miles per hour (the inter-quartile range) with a median of 30 MPH. In addition, both males and females agreed that the maximum safe speed for non-interstate rural roads, as measured by the median, was 55 miles per hour. For other types of roads, males considered the maximum speed to be slightly higher than did females. Males felt the median maximum safe speed for non-interstate roads should be 55 miles per hour, while females felt 45 miles per hour was more appropriate. For interstate roads, regardless of the setting, males felt the maximum safe speed was 70 miles per hour, while females felt the maximum safe speed was 65 miles per hour.

Drivers on residential roads, regardless of their setting, had very similar reasons for feeling that driving at speeds higher than reported in Table 4-2 would be unsafe (See Table 4-3 on pages 57, 58, and 59). Almost four residential road drivers in five mentioned the presence of people (non-drivers) — primarily children, schools and playgrounds (mentioned by about 70%) — in close proximity to the roads as the primary reason that driving faster would be unsafe. This is twice the proportion who mentioned road conditions on non-interstate rural roads (40%), the next highest mentioned category in Table 4-3.

The second most often cited reasons, mentioned by about one driver in four, concerned individual reaction times and the ability of the vehicle to stop quickly. The most often mentioned reason under this heading related to the fact that it takes longer to stop at higher speeds and that it is harder to stop quickly.

The next most often mentioned concern, cited by about one in six drivers, centered around traffic patterns, primarily heavy traffic and merging. No other category was mentioned by more than 10% of the drivers.

Drivers on non-interstate roads, that is, roads with speed limits in the 40 to 55 miles per hour range, in urban areas were most concerned about traffic patterns and flows (34%), followed by road conditions (25%), people (24%), reaction time and vehicle stopping (17%) and safety(14%).

TABLE 4-3

Why Driving at Speeds Greater than the Maximum Safe Speed is Unsafe by Road Type

Qx: Why do you consider speeds greater than [maximum speed] to be unsafe on [road type]?
Base: Total population of drivers.

	Residential		Non-Interstate		Interstate	
	Urban	**Rural**	**Urban**	**Rural**	**Urban**	**Rural**
Unweighted N	*1,320*	*834*	*1,016*	*894*	*938*	*606*
People	**77%**	**78%**	**24%**	**18%**	**2%**	**2%**
Children/schools/playgrounds	69%	70%	12%	8%	*	*
Pedestrians	13%	12%	8%	5%	1%	*
Animals/pets/animal crossing	11%	9%	6%	7%	1%	1%
Populated areas/people near	4%	5%	5%	2%	1%	*
Bicyclists	3%	5%	1%	*	-	*
Seniors/elderly in area	3%	2%	1%	*	*	*
Joggers	1%	1%	*	*	-	-
Other people mentions	-	1%	-	-	-	*
Traffic patterns/flow	**17%**	**15%**	**34%**	**28%**	**29%**	**26%**
Driver-related factors	4%	2%	11%	10%	19%	17%
High traffic/merge areas	10%	10%	12%	11%	1%	1%
General pattern or flow	2%	2%	8%	6%	8%	10%
Traffic lights/signs	1%	1%	4%	2%	*	*
Stop & go traffic	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	*
Makes passing riskier	*	*	1%	1%	*	*
Reaction time and vehicle stopping	**24%**	**26%**	**17%**	**14%**	**33%**	**28%**
Takes longer/harder to stop	15%	17%	9%	6%	10%	11%
Limits/cuts down reaction time	5%	5%	4%	3%	14%	9%
Harder to react to emergency situations	3%	3%	3%	3%	8%	7%
Harder to react to others' unpredictability	1%	1%	2%	1%	3%	3%
Other reaction time mentions	-	-	-	*	-	-

Table continues on next two pages. Footnotes are at the end of the table.

TABLE 4-3, continued

Why Driving at Speeds Greater than the Maximum Safe Speed is Unsafe by Road Type

	Residential		Non-Interstate		Interstate	
	Urban	**Rural**	**Urban**	**Rural**	**Urban**	**Rural**
Unweighted N	*1,320*	*834*	*1,016*	*894*	*938*	*606*
Safety	**6%**	**7%**	**14%**	**15%**	**34%**	**36%**
Too fast/easy to lose control	3%	2%	6%	8%	22%	25%
Increases accident risks	3%	5%	8%	6%	11%	10%
Increases fatalities/death rate	1%	*	1%	1%	2%	3%
More damage in accidents	*	*	*	*	1%	3%
Other safety mentions	-	-	*	-	*	*
Road conditions	**7%**	**7%**	**25%**	**41%**	**6%**	**6%**
Winding/bending/curvy roads	2%	2%	7%	16%	2%	2%
Narrow/two-lane roads/on-coming traffic	2%	2%	10%	13%	*	*
General road conditions	1%	1%	6%	8%	2%	3%
Roads not built/designed for speed	1%	1%	4%	5%	1%	2%
Poor road surfaces	1%	1%	3%	6%	1%	*
Steep/hilly roads	*	*	1%	3%	-	*
Other road mentions	*	*	1%	1%	1%	-
Weather conditions	**1%**	**1%**	**4%**	**5%**	**3%**	**4%**
General weather conditions	*	*	2%	2%	2%	3%
Poor/limited visibility level	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	*
Snow/ice/rain/drizzle/fog	*	*	1%	1%	*	1%
Presence of other vehicles	**3%**	**2%**	**3%**	**4%**	**1%**	**2%**
Slower moving vehicles	*	*	2%	3%	1%	*
Parked cars	3%	1%	*	-	*	*
Trucks/truck traffic	*	-	*	1%	1%	2%

Table continues on next two pages. Footnotes are at the end of the table.

TABLE 4-3, continued

Why Driving at Speeds Greater than the Maximum Safe Speed is Unsafe by Road Type						
	Residential		**Non-Interstate**		**Interstate**	
	Urban	**Rural**	**Urban**	**Rural**	**Urban**	**Rural**
Unweighted N	*1,320*	*834*	*1,016*	*894*	*938*	*606*
Miscellaneous	**1%**	**1%**	**4%**	**5%**	**10%**	**11%**
General unsafe speed limit	*	1%	2%	2%	3%	5%
Prefer speed I drive	*	*	1%	2%	4%	3%
Other safety mentions	*	*	1%	1%	3%	3%
Nothing	*	-	*	*	*	*
Don't know/no answer	**6%**	**6%**	**10%**	**10%**	**7%**	**9%**

* Less than .5%.
- None.
Individuals responses may not sum to subtotals and subtotals may not add to 100% due to multiple mentions.

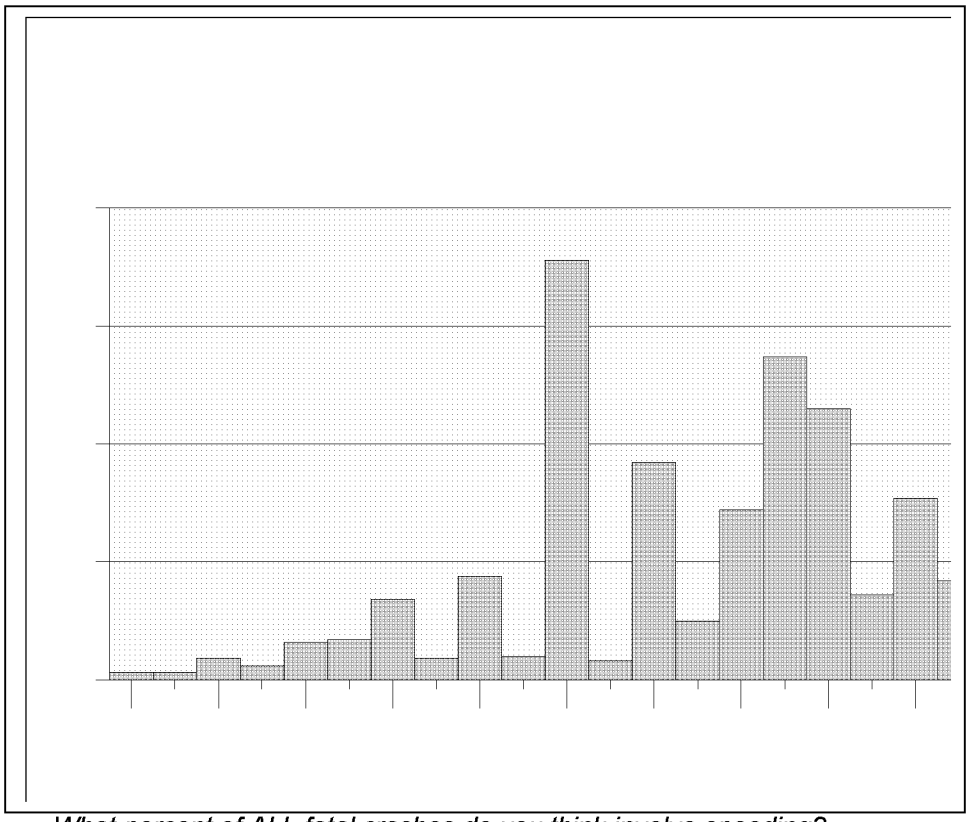
Two in five (41%) drivers of rural non-interstate roads are concerned about road conditions, primarily winding roads (16%) and narrow roads (13%). The second most mentioned reason for not driving faster on these roads was traffic patterns and flows, mentioned by 28% of these drivers. This was followed by people (18%), safety (15%) and reaction time and vehicle stopping (14%).

Like drivers of residential roads, the reasons drivers of interstate highways do not drive any faster is independent of the setting of the highways. The number one reason, mentioned by about one-third of the drivers, concerned safety— primarily that it was too easy to lose control. This was followed by concerns related to reaction time and vehicle stopping, mentioned by about 30%. The third most mentioned concern, mentioned by a little less than 20%, related to traffic patterns and flows.

Drivers were asked what percent of all fatal crashes they thought involved speeding. There are two ways to report the overall results of these questions; the first is the mean, or arithmetic average. Using this measure, drivers felt that 64% of fatal crashes involved speed. However, since the mean can be affected by a relatively small number of responses that are far away from the mean, it is sometimes useful to also report the median, the point at which the responses are split in half, since it reports the clustering of responses. Using the median, drivers felt that 70% of fatal crashes involved speed.

Slightly less than one driver in six (15%) felt that speeding was a factor in less than 50% of all fatal crashes (see Figure 4-8). A slightly larger proportion of drivers (17.8%) felt 50% to 54% of fatal crashes involved speed and about one-third (32.4%) felt speed was a factor in 70% to 85% of fatal crashes.

FIGURE 4-8



Qx: What percent of ALL fatal crashes do you think involve speeding?
Base: Total population of drivers.
Unweighted N=3,000

SUMMARY

Approximately half of all drivers reported keeping up with faster traffic and almost one-third reported being more likely to pass other drivers than to be passed. Both of these driving behaviors decreased with age. In general, positive feelings toward speeding — as measured by agreement with the statements "I enjoy the feeling of speed," "I often get impatient with slower drivers" and "I try to get where I am going as fast as I can" — decreased with age. However, agreement with the statement, "I worry a lot about having a crash" also decreased with age.

Drivers said that the major factors in determining the speed at which they drive were weather conditions, the posted speed limit and type of road. A large proportion of drivers felt it was "safe" to speed in certain situations (not in areas where children, playgrounds or schools were located). Yet three drivers in ten felt speeding was a factor in at least 75 percent of fatal crashes, and two-thirds felt speeding was involved in at least 50 percent of all fatal crashes.