Headline: More than half of drivers threats on highways

Deckhead: AAA survey finds speeding is a bad habit that is hard to break

A report by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety identifies six types of drivers by analyzing risky driving behaviors.

Speeding, distracted driving and aggressive driving were the most common dangerous behaviors. The annual Traffic Safety Culture Index (TSCI) survey developed these six driver profiles by examining patterns of self-reported risky driving behaviors among a large group of drivers. Only four in 10 surveyed fell into the category of “safe drivers.”

“Despite acknowledging the dangers, some drivers continue to engage in potentially deadly behaviors, particularly speeding,” said Dr. David Yang, AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety President and Executive Director. “Understanding the different types of risky driving behaviors and the characteristics of drivers who engage in them is crucial for developing targeted interventions to achieve safe mobility.”

As daily driving patterns and traffic rebound from pandemic lows, traffic fatalities remain alarmingly high. Evidence points to fewer traffic stops, while fatal crashes, involving risky behaviors like impaired driving and speeding remain an epidemic on our roadways.

“This study highlights a near-term and important opportunity to concentrate on enforcement that makes an immediate safety impact,” said Jake Nelson, AAA’s director of traffic safety advocacy. “Many risky drivers in this study were classified into profiles that involved speeding behavior. Focusing on speeding drivers will deter other risky driving behaviors like impaired driving and red-light running. This traffic safety measure will have the greatest impact on safety.”

The new TSCI report reads that fewer drivers perceive speeding as dangerous, and speeding behaviors have the lowest perceived social disapproval of all examined unsafe behaviors.

It’s worth noting that a motorist’s need for speed consistently fails to deliver shorter travel times. It would take driving 100 miles at 80 mph rather than 75 to shave five minutes off a trip.

The six profiles identified by the most recent TSCI are:

***Safe Drivers (41.2%) –*** Few in this group reported engaging in any risky driving-related behaviors, and more women (57%) composed the Safe Drivers group.

***Speeding Drivers (22.7%) –*** These drivers reported driving 15 mph above the speed limit on freeways and/or 10 mph above on residential streets but did not engage in most other dangerous behaviors.

***Distracted and Aggressive Drivers (17.3%) –*** Reported distracted driving behaviors (texting while driving), speeding and aggressive behaviors like red-light running and switching lanes quickly.

***Distracted Drivers (15.0%) –*** These drivers reported distracted-driving behaviors like reading text messages and texting while driving.

***Most Dangerous Drivers (2.4%) –*** While these drivers consisted of only a small percentage of the drivers, they pose a serious risk to themselves and other road users as they reported engaging in all risky driving-related behaviors.

***Impaired Drivers (1.3%) –*** Most live in nonmetropolitan areas. Interestingly, drivers with a four-year college degree were less likely to report driving while impaired. At the same time, the most “overrepresented” group consisted of those with some college or an associate degree.

The survey asked drivers about their perceived level of danger for various driving behaviors. The majority of drivers perceived unsafe-driving behaviors as very or extremely dangerous, and yet, as in past years, many admitted to doing these behaviors at least once in the previous 30 days.

With a steadfast commitment to examining traffic safety, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety has conducted its annual TSCI survey for more than a decade. As traffic safety concerns have escalated, insights from the most recent TSCI shed light on public perceptions, attitudes and engagement in unsafe-driving behaviors, offering valuable guidance for developing effective countermeasures.

For graphic

Graphic: AAA.