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AAMI



YOUNGdrivers

annual road safety index

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**Technology
drives young
people to
distraction**



This is the seventh annual *AAMI Young Drivers Index*. It is published to inform and educate the community about trends and issues related to young drivers. In recent years, the Index has focussed on topics including speeding, drink driving and fatigue. In 2007, the *AAMI Young Drivers Index* focuses on the role

technology plays in contributing to young drivers' poor driving habits. Sweeney Research conducted a telephone survey of 2380 men and women drivers, aged 18 years and older, in the following locations around Australia:

- Adelaide
- Ballarat, Bendigo and Shepparton
- Batemans Bay, Bega and Ulladulla
- Brisbane
- Canberra
- Central Queensland
- Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie
- Darwin
- Geelong
- Gold Coast
- Hobart
- Launceston
- Melbourne
- Newcastle and Gosford
- North Queensland
- Regional South Australia
- Sunshine Coast
- Sydney
- Tamworth
- Toowoomba and Darling Downs
- Wagga Wagga and Griffith
- Wollongong and Nowra

This research is supported by an in-depth analysis of car insurance claims lodged in 2006 by AAMI customers in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria.

Terms of reference: in this Index, the term 'young drivers' refers to drivers aged 18-24 years and the term 'other drivers' refers to those aged 25 or older.

Young drivers sending – but not getting – the message

Australians of all ages have embraced mobile telephones as a means of immediate, convenient communication.

However, one of the flow-on effects of our rapid uptake of this technology has been an increase in the number of people using mobile phones while driving to talk, and increasingly text message. This dangerous practice has the potential to reduce driver reaction times and increase the risk of an accident. But despite severe infringement penalties and widespread publicity of the dangers of using mobile phones while driving, it is still an alarmingly common practice.

With young people adopting technology at a rapid rate, AAMI's research shows they are particularly likely to use their mobile phone while driving a car. While 36 per cent of drivers aged over 25 have sent or received a text message while driving, it seems the message is still not getting through to young

drivers, with three-quarters (75 per cent) admitting to sending or receiving a text message while driving.

Don't take your eyes off the road

Another factor giving young drivers cause to take their eyes off the road is the rise in popularity of MP3 players. With the ability to shuffle and sort thousands of songs, video and photographs, these miniature devices are a distraction waiting to happen.

While only seven per cent of drivers aged over 25 said they had been distracted from driving while fiddling with an MP3 player, more than twice as many (20 per cent) young drivers said they had been distracted while using this technology.

But the more traditional car stereo can also prove a diversion from the task at hand for music-loving young drivers, with 58 per cent admitting they have sometimes lost concentration while changing the CD, tape, or radio station

One-fifth (20 per cent) of young drivers have been distracted by an MP3 player while driving

while driving, compared to 38 per cent of older drivers who have experienced this distraction.

Young drivers – they're fast...

Speed is known to be a major contributor to car accidents, and, as an age group, young drivers are over-represented in our road toll, with drivers aged 15-24 twice as likely to die on our roads as the rest of the population¹. Despite these alarming statistics, almost one in five drivers under 25 (18 per cent) say they exceed the speed limit "most of the time", compared to seven per cent of other drivers who admit to being a regular lead foot.

And although the police and speed cameras would disagree, more than one-third (36 per cent) of young drivers believe that travelling at five or 10 kilometres over the posted speed limit does not actually constitute speeding, and 19 per cent say they often ignore restricted speed limits, such as on suburban roads, outside schools and for roadworks, compared to nine per cent of drivers aged more than 25. So it comes as no surprise that young drivers are more likely to have been fined for speeding in the last two years than older drivers (26 per cent compared to 19 per cent).

75%

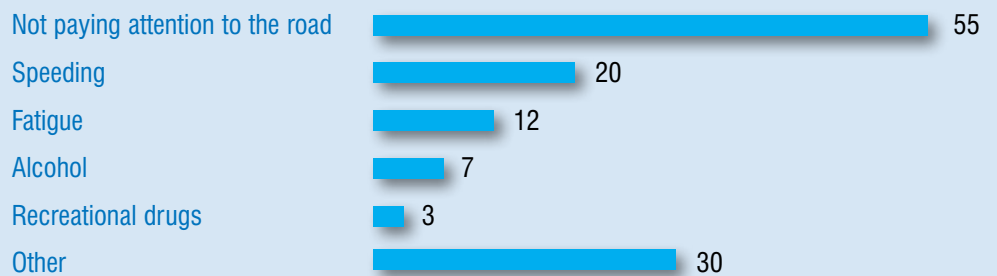
Three-quarters of young drivers admit they have taken their eyes off the road to send or receive a text message while driving

¹Australian Bureau of Statistics



30% One-third of young drivers have been so angry with another driver that they tailgated them

Young driver crashes – what causes them?



...and furious

While speed alone is dangerous, the level of danger increases when speed is coupled with aggression, and it seems young drivers are much more likely than others to exhibit signs of road rage. One-quarter of young drivers (26 per cent) admit to being impatient behind the wheel, compared to 17 per cent of older drivers. This aggression often manifests in the form of verbal abuse or rude gestures – something of which 64 per cent of young drivers say they have been guilty.

While half (50 per cent) of young drivers say the best response to road rage is to signal an apology to the other driver and concentrate on their own driving, only one-third (33 per cent) say they would actually respond in this way, while 20 per cent confess they would be most likely to retaliate with their own offensive gesture or by yelling at the other driver.

But some drivers take their road rage to

the extreme, becoming so angry with the actions of another motorist that they tailgate them, putting both vehicles at high risk of having a rear end crash that causes property damage, injuries and even death. Almost one-third (30 per cent) of young drivers admit to tailgating, compared to 19 per cent of older drivers.

But dangerous driving behaviour is not always the result of driver anger – many young drivers say they have been put in danger by a driver who simply wanted to show off. Almost three-quarters of young drivers (73 per cent) have been a passenger in a car where the driver drove dangerously to show off, as opposed to 60 per cent of older drivers.

Different strokes for younger folks

Most older drivers (94 per cent) believe it should be compulsory for young drivers to undertake a safe driving course, and

it seems young drivers are aware of their own inexperience on the roads, with 80 per cent supporting the need for mandatory driver education.

But when it comes to having restrictions imposed on them during the first few years of their driving experience, young drivers are not always in favour. While 72 per cent of older drivers believe young drivers should be restricted to carrying only one passenger between 11pm and 5am, only 37 per cent of younger drivers supported this concept. And the idea of removing young drivers from the road by implementing curfews between midnight and 5am, when fatalities are more likely to occur, was supported by two-thirds of older drivers (69 per cent) but only one-third of younger drivers (35 per cent).

Young drivers are also less likely to believe that there should be zero tolerance and immediate licence suspension if they are caught speeding, with 59 per cent agreeing, as opposed to 87 per cent of older drivers.

Young drivers would be most likely to think twice about leaving their contact details if they damaged a parked car

