



## **NATIONAL MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Mirror, mirror on the wall – who's the best driver of them all?**

According to new research from leading national insurer AAMI, the passionately debated question of who is the better driver, men or women, has been settled – and the results may surprise many people, particularly men.

AAMI claims data shows that women have fewer crashes and the average cost of their crash claims is lower than those lodged by men. AAMI's research also shows that women are less likely to engage in illegal or risky behaviours and that they are generally more courteous on the roads.

The findings are reported with help from Sweeney Research and are based upon a national telephone survey of 2384 licensed drivers conducted in most States and Territories in 2006, as well as an analysis of AAMI claims data.

#### **Men more likely to crash**

According to the AAMI survey, nationally more men than women have experienced a crash – 84 per cent versus 77 per cent.

“Our claims data shows that men's crashes tend to be more serious than women's – they are more likely to be involved in head-on collisions, roll-overs and loss-of-control crashes, as well as crashes involving pedestrians, cyclists and animals,” said AAMI Public Affairs Manager Geoff Hughes.

“Conversely, women are more likely to collide with stationary objects or reverse into other cars.

“It's not surprising then, that men's car accident insurance claims tend to cost more – nationally, men's car crash claims cost 20 per cent more than women's.”

The findings are supported by men's experience of road trauma – nationally, male drivers are three times more likely than women to be killed on Australian roads: 605 versus 168 (source: Australian Transport Safety Bureau). Also, the trend in the road toll is worsening for men while improving for women – for the period April 2006-May 2007, fatalities among male drivers increased by 2.2 per cent on the previous year, whereas fatalities among women drivers decreased by 6.7 per cent.

#### **Men more likely to 'road-rage'**

Men are more likely than women to agree they are an impatient driver (20 per cent versus 15 per cent). They are also more likely to engage in aggressive behaviour.

“Men are more likely than women to exhibit road rage – for example, they are more likely to gesture rudely at another driver (47 per cent versus 38 per cent) and more likely to verbally abuse another driver (46 per cent versus 36 per cent),” said Mr Hughes.

“Men are also more likely to show off with their mates in the car – men are more likely than women to have been a passenger in a car being driven dangerously for the purpose of drawing attention.”

#### **Psychological perspective**

Consulting psychologist John Cheetham says he is not surprised by the findings.

“Self-awareness and social responsibility tends to be higher among women, whereas men are biologically more aggressive, more impatient and more willing to push the boundaries.

“Women use more parts of their brain to undertake tasks and furthermore, differences in men's and women's neurological processing can advantage women.

“However, the female brain is not as good at spatial relationships, so it is not surprising that they strike stationary objects more frequently than men.”

### **Law-breaking**

According to AAMI’s findings, men are more likely to break the law by speeding, driving when under the influence of alcohol or recreational drugs and driving while using a hand-held mobile phone.

- Twice as many men as women speed most of the time (16 per cent versus 8 per cent)
- Men are also more likely than women to ignore restricted speed zones e.g. around schools and roadworks – one in five men (19 per cent) versus one in eight women (13 per cent)
- One in five men (22 per cent) admit they often use their mobile phone without hands-free accessories while driving versus one in six women (15 per cent)

### **Driving while impaired – alcohol, drugs, fatigue**

- Men are more than twice as likely as women to believe that it’s ok for them to drink-drive as long as they feel capable (14 per cent versus 6 per cent)
- More than half of men (55 per cent) admit to having driven when over the legal limit versus three in ten women (30 per cent)
- Men are twice as likely as women to over-estimate the number of drinks they can have in a given period and remain under the legal limit – one in five men versus one in ten women
- Men are more than twice as likely as women to take a different route home to avoid being breathalysed (26 per cent versus 11 per cent)
- Twice as many men as women admit to having driven after using recreational drugs such as cannabis, speed or ecstasy (15 per cent versus 8 per cent).
- Men are twice as likely as women to have actually fallen asleep at the wheel (39 per cent versus 19 per cent)

“Generally, women are more aware of their blood alcohol levels and more accurately assess their fatigue levels – also, they act upon their awareness and make more responsible decisions,” said Mr Cheetham.

“Social compliance in females tends to be higher -- fewer women will drive a car if they are affected by alcohol or fatigue and they more willingly take notice of road signs and speed limits. “

### **Men more easily distracted**

As drivers, men are more likely than women to become distracted by outdoor advertising/billboards when driving: half of men (51 per cent) admitted so versus four in ten women (40 per cent). Also, men are more likely than women to have lost concentration on their driving while changing their car stereo (46 per cent versus 38 per cent).

“Women have a stronger capacity for multi-tasking and it is not surprising that in combination with their higher sense of social responsibility that they maintain better concentration and become less distracted,” said Mr Cheetham.

### **Applying the knowledge**

Mr Cheetham says that women are the clear leaders in keeping our roads safer.

“AAMI’s research shows that women have thrown down the gauntlet to men if we are going to reduce the road toll generally, and address men’s involvement in road trauma.

“Men need to be more aware of how they function and to work harder on their sense of social awareness and social responsibility.

“Women, on the other hand, may benefit from larger rear view mirrors!”

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