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AAMI



YOUNGdrivers

annual road safety index

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Speeding, drinking, fatigue—

still biggest threats to
young Australian drivers



**Young drivers less likely
to have driven when
over drink-drive limit**

**Most young drivers
support compulsory
safe-driving courses**



This is the sixth 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 drug driving, mobile phone use while driving, and learner driver training. This year, the Index focuses on the basic and key

issues contributing to road crashes in Australia – speeding, drink driving and fatigue. Sweeney Research conducted a telephone survey of 2384 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

This research is supported by an in-depth analysis of car insurance claims lodged in 2005 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.

	2005	2006
Trends in findings		
In the past 12 months, most aspects of young drivers' behaviour and attitudes have remained fairly constant with only slight variations. *Some comparisons from the 2005 Index include: <small>* Variances of less than 5% are not considered to be a significant change.</small>		
Proportion of young drivers who:		
Have sent or read a text message while driving	68%	70%
Ignore restricted speed limits on local and suburban roads, outside schools and near roadworks	27%	25%
Are concerned they would be over the limit the day after a night of heavy drinking	67%	52%
Say they have driven when probably over the drink-drive limit	39%	38%
Say they have momentarily fallen asleep at the wheel	22%	23%
Have been a passenger in a vehicle when the driver was driving dangerously	66%	70%

Young less likely to drive when over the limit

Drink-driving is dangerous at any age. For young drivers, the legal rights to drink alcohol and attain a driver licence come into effect at a similar time. This means that young drivers generally take on two important and large responsibilities – two responsibilities that if not respected can be a lethal combination. However, even with these new responsibilities, young drivers are less likely than other drivers to believe they have driven when probably over the drink-drive limit (38% versus 43% of other drivers). They are also more likely to believe they have been over the limit the 'morning after' – half of young drivers (52%) say that after a night of

heavy drinking they have been concerned that they have been over the limit when driving the following day, compared to less than one-third of other drivers (31%).

While some young drivers are behaving responsibly, young drivers are more likely to admit that sometimes when they have been drinking, they have taken a different route to avoid being breathalysed (25% compared to 17% of other drivers).

A similar proportion of young drivers as other drivers believe that it is 'OK for me to drink and drive after a few drinks so long as I feel capable' (12% of young drivers compared to 10% of all other drivers).

Young drivers are less likely than other drivers to believe they have driven when probably over the drink-drive limit

Young drivers support fines

More than half of young drivers believe that high speeding fines make the roads safer, and they are more likely to hold this belief than other drivers (55% versus 48% of other drivers). However, young drivers are more likely to admit they ignore restricted speed limits, such as on local, suburban roads, outside schools and for roadworks (25% versus 15% of other drivers).

An equal proportion of young drivers and other drivers agree that sometimes they are unsure of the speed limit because the zones vary so much (both 77%). This view is most common in New South Wales and Victoria.



31%

Young drivers are almost twice as likely to admit to being an impatient driver

Need to change actions on distractions

Inexperienced drivers can be at risk of a crash if distracted while driving. Their experience of knowing how to cope and deal with unexpected distractions is not as strong as people who have been driving for many more years.

Young drivers are more likely to say they have been distracted by billboards located on busy roads while driving (52% versus 45% of other drivers) and most young drivers believe that rowdy or intoxicated passengers can be a real distraction for young drivers (89%).

Do u tlk or txt n drve?

Mobile phones have been the centre of both police and legislative attention in recent years, as the rapid growth of this now not-so-new technology has implications for drivers around Australia. Although mobile phone providers produce hands-free kits for mobile phones, many drivers continue to insist on driving and using a mobile phone without a hands-free kit. Young drivers are twice as likely to admit they often use their mobile phone without a hands-free kit while driving (35% versus 16% of other drivers).

Pump up the volume

Like many drivers, young drivers enjoy listening to music while they drive. However, young drivers are 50% more likely to admit they have sometimes lost concentration while changing the CD, tape, or radio station while driving (60% of young drivers compared to 40% of all other drivers). Young drivers are also three times more likely to admit their car stereo would often be loud enough for other drivers to hear it even if they had their windows up (30% versus 10% of other drivers). This is a real issue, as it is important that drivers not only see what is happening around them on the road (other vehicles, pedestrians, traffic lights, signs etc) but they need to be able to hear other traffic around them too.

Young drivers are more likely to say they have been distracted by billboards

Raging from inside the machine

Young drivers are almost twice as likely to admit to being an impatient driver (31% versus 16% of other drivers) but less likely to think that drivers are becoming more aggressive (77% versus 87% of other drivers). Young drivers are also more likely to believe that traffic congestion is a major cause of road rage (88% versus 76% of other drivers).

Young drivers are more likely to have witnessed a road rage incident between other motorists (78% versus 65% of other drivers). Young drivers are more likely to admit to having yelled or sworn at another driver for doing something they thought was rude or dangerous (46% versus 40% of other drivers). One in seven young drivers (15%) admit they have become angry at the actions of another motorist and tailgated them, compared to one in ten drivers aged 25 or older.

As pedestrians, young people experience the same amount of aggression from drivers as people aged 25 years or older. A similar proportion of young drivers, as other drivers, admit they have had a close call with a pedestrian or cyclist – 31% and 33% respectively.

15%

One in seven young drivers admit they have become angry at the actions of another motorist and tailgated them

Ruling on the road

In light of recent tragic accidents on Australian roads involving young drivers, there has been much discussion and debate surrounding road rules and laws that apply to probationary (P-plate) drivers.

Young drivers are more likely to support the learner driving they receive: they are less likely than other drivers to believe the learner training new drivers receive is almost worthless (33% versus 41%). This is a shift from the 2005 *AAMI Young Drivers Index*, where 44% of young drivers said the training new drivers receive is almost worthless.

Most young drivers (83%) believe that it should be compulsory for all young

drivers to complete a safe-driving course. However, a higher proportion of other drivers believe compulsory driving courses should be introduced (92%).

Young drivers are half as likely as other drivers to believe drivers shouldn't be able to carry more than two passengers in their car (27% compared to 56% of other drivers). However, young drivers are more than twice as likely to admit they sometimes have more people in their car than there are seatbelts (15% versus 6% of other drivers).

Half as many young drivers agree they should not be able to drive on the roads at times when fatalities are more likely to occur, such as between midnight and 3 am (39% versus 20% of young drivers).

YOUNG DRIVERS MORE LIKELY TO SUPPORT THE LEARNER DRIVING THEY RECEIVE

Young drivers still ignoring fatigue

Young drivers are still risking their lives by driving while fatigued.

Young drivers are less likely to have momentarily fallen asleep at the wheel than other drivers (23% versus 30% of other drivers). However, young drivers are more likely to admit that if they are tired when driving, they will be unlikely to stop and take a power nap (40% versus 25% of other drivers).

Proportion of people who think young drivers shouldn't carry more than two passengers in their car

State/Territory	People who agree (%)
National	53
NSW	57
VIC	55
SA	51
TAS	49
ACT	45
NT	45
QLD	45

Proportion of people who think young drivers should not be able to drive on the roads at times when fatalities are more likely to occur, such as between midnight and 3 am

State/Territory	People who agree (%)
National	37
QLD	44
SA	40
TAS	38
NSW	37
NT	37
VIC	32
ACT	31

The *AAMI Young Drivers Index* is prepared with the help of a nationally recognised independent research company, Sweeney Research, which ensures the validity of the survey methodology and findings. The study is based upon a national telephone survey conducted in 2006 using a representative and

statistically valid sample* of approximately 2400 Australian adults in major population centres and regions across Australia. Except where stated, they survey explores respondents' experiences of crashes over their lifetime. AAMI's research may differ from government and police sources, which

typically examine a 12-month period. Also, smaller or unreported incidents may be captured in AAMI's research and not by others.

* The confidence interval for this sample size is plus or minus 2 per cent, which means that for the survey sample of 2400, if the observed percentage result is 50 per cent, the chances are 95 in 100 that the range – 48-52 per cent – includes the true percentage of the total population.