

October 2008

AAMI



YOUNGdrivers

annual road safety index

www.aami.com.au



**CRASHING THROUGH THE
GENERATION GAP**

This is the eighth 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 the role technology plays in contributing to young drivers poor driving habits. In 2008, the *AAMI Young Drivers Index* focuses on how generational differences can influence driver behaviour. In this Index, the term 'young drivers' refers to drivers aged 18-24 and the term 'other drivers' refers to those aged 25 or older.

The Generation Gap

Since the *AAMI Young Drivers Index* began eight years ago, it has consistently shown young people are more inclined to experiment, take more risks and push the boundaries of acceptable behavior on our roads, than other drivers.

While young drivers' attitudes to speed, drink driving and drugs can largely be attributed to their inexperience on our roads, the generation to which they belong can also influence how they behave and what they think about these issues.

The current group of young drivers is part of Generation Y ('Gen Y') and they are characterised as impatient, confident, tech-savvy and socially responsible. Many of these Gen Y attributes are reflected in the results of this year's *AAMI Young Drivers' Index*.

Speed limits young lives

Generation Y typically doesn't like waiting; whether it's for coffee, a promotion or a traffic light.

This year's *AAMI Young Drivers Index* research shows young drivers are more impatient than other drivers on our roads, with 35 per cent describing themselves as quite impatient drivers compared with one in five other drivers (20 per cent).

Speed remains one of the major factors causing young drivers to be disproportionately represented in the road toll, with young people 30 times more likely to die in transport accidents than people aged 25 and over¹.

While 14 per cent of young drivers say they never exceed the speed limit,

almost half of all young drivers say they speed some of the time (49 per cent) and more than half of all young drivers (52 per cent) say they sometimes speed to get to work or home sooner.

Young drivers are also more likely than other drivers to break speed limits by up to 10 km/h. One-third of young drivers said going five or 10 km/h over the speed limit wasn't really speeding compared to 28 per cent of drivers aged 25 years and over.

Almost four in five (79 per cent) drivers aged 18 – 24 said they had been a passenger in a vehicle where the driver drove dangerously to show off, compared to less than two-thirds of other drivers (59 per cent).

Alcohol and drugs – a lethal combination

The other major contributing factor to the high number of young driver deaths is alcohol; drink driving remains one of the biggest killers on our roads.

The *AAMI Young Drivers Index* shows Generation Y's confident nature is reflected in their attitudes to how alcohol and drugs can impact on their driving.

More than one in five (21 per cent) young drivers said they sometimes took a different route to avoid being breathalysed when they had been drinking (21 per cent) compared to 15 per cent of other drivers.

More than half (56 per cent) of all young drivers said they have been concerned they were over the limit when driving the next day after a heavy night of drinking, compared with 44 per cent of drivers aged 25 years and over.

And it's clear some young drivers

MORE THAN ONE IN FIVE YOUNG DRIVERS SAY THEY SOMETIMES TAKE A DIFFERENT ROUTE TO AVOID BEING BREATHALYSED WHEN THEY HAVE BEEN DRINKING

remain unaware of the dangers of driving after taking drugs.

More than one in 10 young drivers (12 per cent) believe a small amount of recreational drugs doesn't really affect their driving and 16 per cent of drivers aged 18 – 24 said driving after using recreational drugs was safer than driving after drinking. Only six per cent of other drivers supported both these statements.

Driven to distraction

Technology plays a big part in the lives of Generation Y. Mobile phones, MP3 players and computers are essential tools used by many every day.

According to Social Researcher Mark McCrindle, almost three quarters of text messages are sent by Gen Ys, so it is inevitable some have been sent while driving.

The *AAMI Young Drivers Index* shows 71 per cent of young drivers said they have sent or read a text message while driving. While slightly fewer than last year (75 per cent), the number of young drivers engaging in this dangerous behaviour is still alarmingly high.

	2007	2008
I have become distracted while using my MP3 while driving	20%	27%
Sometimes I have lost concentration while changing music	58%	56%
Sent or read a text message while driving	75%	71%

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics



Young drivers are also becoming increasingly distracted by their MP3 players while driving, with 27 per cent agreeing with this statement compared with 20 per cent last year.

Temper Temper

Gen Ys are often in a rush and in their haste to get to their destination, it appears they are more likely to be aggressive towards other drivers.

This year's research shows that while almost half (44 per cent) of young drivers say signaling an apology is the best response to road rage, they are the least likely of all drivers to respond in this way (25 per cent compared with 39 per cent) and most likely to retaliate with a rude signal or verbal abuse (24 per cent versus 12 per cent).

Other drivers say they are most likely to respond to road rage by ignoring the other driver completely.

Awake at the wheel

The AAMI *Young Drivers Index* revealed young drivers are less likely to doze off while driving. However, the research showed they are also less

inclined than other drivers to rest when needed.

Around one in six (16 per cent) drivers aged 18 – 24 admitted to momentarily falling asleep at the wheel compared with around one in four (27 per cent) of other drivers.

Almost half (48 per cent) of young drivers agreed they would be unlikely to stop and have a power nap when tired whereas almost a third (30 per cent) of drivers aged 25 and over agreed with this statement.

Don't fence me in

This year's Index revealed significant attitudinal differences between young drivers and the rest of the population about policy initiatives specifically targeted at them.

Most young drivers saw some driver safety initiatives as beneficial but were less supportive of other ideas that were likely to curb their social activities.

Almost three quarters (70 per cent) of drivers aged 18 – 24 supported compulsory safe driving courses for young drivers and more than nine in 10 (92 per cent) other drivers thought the initiative was a good idea.

ALMOST THREE QUARTERS OF YOUNG DRIVERS SUPPORT SAFE DRIVING COURSES

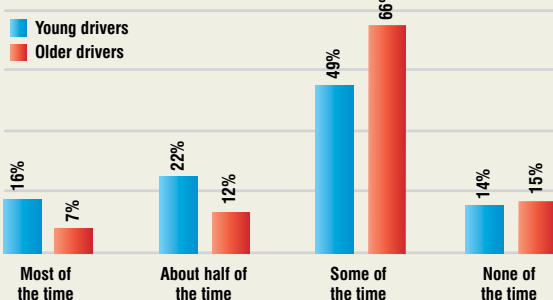


A zero-tolerance policy for probationary drivers caught speeding was supported by almost two thirds (63 per cent) of young drivers, with 86 per cent of other drivers endorsing this initiative.

Less than a third (30 per cent) of young drivers supported a late night curfew for young drivers whereas more than twice as many other drivers wanted to see it introduced (70 per cent).

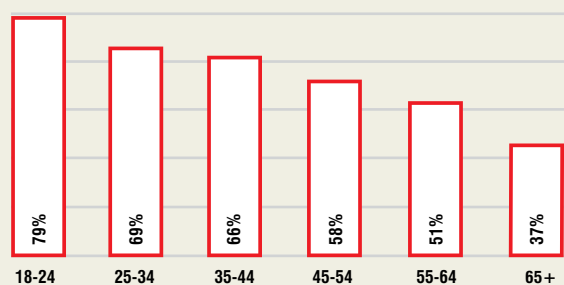
Similarly, around a third of young drivers (32 per cent) wanted passenger restrictions for young drivers between 11pm and 5am, while 72 per cent of other drivers said young drivers shouldn't be able to carry more than one passenger in their car between these times.

ADMIT TO SPEEDING



Source: Sweeney Research, 2008

BEEEN A PASSENGER WHEN A DRIVER DROVE DANGEROUSLY

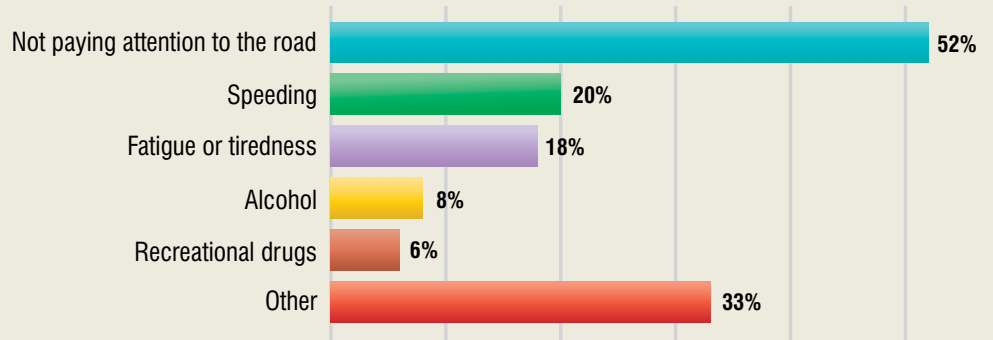


Source: Sweeney Research, 2008

COSTLY CLAIMS

AAMI's claims data show that younger drivers' car accidents tend to be more serious and cause more damage to their own cars and other people's property, so that when they do make a claim, the cost is far more than for older drivers. In 2007, the average cost of a car accident claim was \$2022 for a driver over 25, but his figure rose to \$3031 for a driver aged under 25.

YOUNG DRIVER CRASHES – WHAT CAUSES THEM?

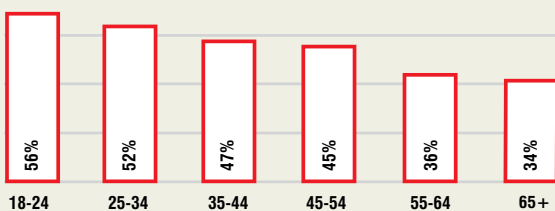


Source: Sweeney Research, 2008

**FOUR IN FIVE
YOUNG DRIVERS
SAID THEY
HAD BEEN A
PASSENGER
IN A VEHICLE
WHERE THE
DRIVER DROVE
DANGEROUSLY
TO SHOW OFF**

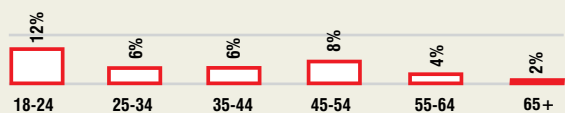


CONCERNED ABOUT BEING OVER THE LIMIT WHILE DRIVING, AFTER A NIGHT OF HEAVY DRINKING



Source: Sweeney Research, 2008

A SMALL AMOUNT OF RECREATIONAL DRUGS DOESN'T AFFECT MY DRIVING



Source: Sweeney Research, 2008

Young and green

Generation Ys are known for their social awareness and this is reflected in young drivers' attitudes to 'going green'.

The 2008 AAMI *Young Drivers Index* shows they are leading the way to a greener future, with environmental factors increasingly influencing young drivers' habits and shaping their decisions about how they drive, how they travel and what cars they buy.

Young drivers are more willing to pay money to organisations to plant trees which offset greenhouse gases produced by cars. Almost one in five (18 per cent) young drivers said

they participate in programs to offset emissions produced by their car, while only 12 per cent of other drivers take the same steps to reduce their impact on the environment.

And despite young drivers generally earning less than other drivers, one-third (33 per cent) said they would pay up to \$50 to offset emissions, compared with 23 per cent of other drivers.

While the research shows drivers 25 years and over are more likely to consider environmental factors when buying a car (53 per cent), almost half of young drivers (47 per cent) said they also factor the environment into their purchase.

**ALMOST
ONE IN FIVE
YOUNG DRIVERS
SAID THEY
PARTICIPATE
IN PROGRAMS
TO OFFSET
EMISSIONS
PRODUCED BY
THEIR CAR**

Green alternatives

Rising petrol prices are hitting young drivers particularly hard but it appears some are turning their economic loss into a win for the environment.

According to this year's AAMI *Young Drivers Index*, almost two thirds of young drivers (62 per cent) said the increasing cost of petrol was forcing them to drive less, a figure slightly higher than for other drivers (60 per cent).

And 64 per cent of drivers aged 18 – 24 said the rising cost of fuel had lowered their overall standard of living, compared with 58 per cent of drivers aged 25 years and over.

The research also showed young drivers were more likely to choose an environmentally friendly transport option.

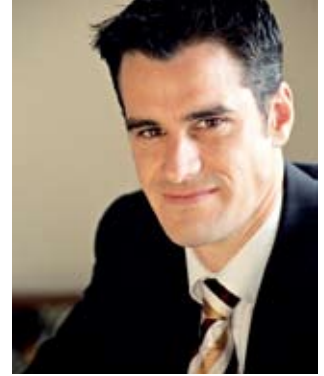
Half of drivers aged 18 – 24 said they shared trips whenever possible, whereas only one-quarter (26 per cent) of other drivers said they carpooled when they could, and more than a third (41 per cent) of young drivers said they used the car when necessary and walk or cycle where possible, compared with 40 per cent of other drivers.

Young drivers are slightly more likely (28 per cent) to buy ethanol or ethanol-blend fuel than other drivers (25 per cent).



THE CLICK'N'GO GENERATION

MARK McCRINDLE, SOCIAL RESEARCHER



Today's young people are the most formally educated, materially endowed, and technologically literate generation in history. Yet for all of this opportunity they are a generation overly represented in driving accidents.

When it comes to the driving behaviour of those aged under 25, it must be remembered that much of this is an issue of life stage. Many of the attitudes and behaviours of today's young drivers mirror that of young drivers of a generation ago. As they mature to different life stages they will move beyond some of these negative behaviours, just as previous generations of young drivers have.

New challenges

However being a young driver in the 21st century does present some new driving problems not experienced before. Distractions like mobile phones, MP3 players, DVD players and other portable electronic devices have become ubiquitous over the last few years. Generation Y are savvy media consumers and active, rather than passive, in their entertainment consumption. Therefore even listening to the radio or CDs often involves constant station or song changing. They are very adept multi-taskers and so may access the web via their mobile phones

from the classroom or the car, or text while eating, studying or driving.

The instant generation

Gen Ys have grown up in a world where they are only a few clicks away from almost anything. Unfortunately for road safety they are prone to transfer their online experience to the off-line world. Therefore patience in heavy traffic and defensive driving in road situations do not come naturally to a generation shaped by fast-moving technology. Whether it is on-the-job or behind-the-wheel there is often a confidence-competence gap. Empowerment has created confidence which is not yet matched with the competence that only comes with experience. This confidence, combined with still-developing socialisation skills creates aggressive responses to other drivers, and higher incidents of road rage.

Generation why?!

Increased levels of road legislation and regulations are now clashing head on with a generation well-skilled to question rules and boundaries. Generation Y are articulate negotiators yet their pragmatism can lead to low compliance with regard to road rules. While some of the poor attitudes toward

road safety are due to a lack of awareness of the rules, much of it (particularly in regard to driving after consuming alcohol, taking drugs and speeding) is a sign of their skepticism to the road safety message. They also show strong push-back on regulations such as curfews and passenger restrictions which they view as punitive and restrictive.

Social connection and social validation

Generation Y are more likely to spend their recreational time with their friends than any other age group. Therefore they are more likely to be carrying peer-group passengers on non-work trips, and more likely to seek social approval by their peers. For Generation Y, the opinion of peers to road safety can be a powerful restrainer of dangerous driving, or alternatively a key cause of it.

The bubble wrap generation

One outcome of an overly supported, protected upbringing as evidenced in many Gen Y lives is that rather than internalise their control mechanism they have an external locus of control. Therefore a message to "think about the consequences" has less impact to a generation who

are used to looking out for help. A consequence of providing a perpetual parental safety-net is that when something goes wrong they will often look for the "undo button".

Strengths and weaknesses

Generation Y are the least likely to power nap – not only because of their youthful energy, but also because of the social context in which their lives are lived; defensive driving and power naps are often viewed as a sign of weakness and an inability to handle a situation.

Global, mobile and green

Generation Y are Australia's most multicultural generation ever with more than one in four of them born overseas. They are a global generation – and a mobile one. Their travel takes them not only overseas but around the suburbs. And they travel in groups. Generation Y are twice as likely to share trips whenever possible. When it comes to their green credentials Generation Y have turned platitudes into action. They see dealing with climate change as the defining challenge for their generation and they are curbing their behavior accordingly. They are prepared to pay more, drive less and offset their greenhouse gasses at a greater rate than the over 25s.

Sweeney Research conducted a telephone survey of 2503 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 and Launceston
- Melbourne
- Newcastle and Gosford
- North Queensland
- Perth
- Regional South Australia

- Regional Western 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 2007 by AAMI customers in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria.