



Safety Culture

2013 Drowsy Driving Fact Sheet

More than One in Four American Motorists Admits to Drowsy Driving, Despite Near-Universal Disapproval

Latest Safety Culture Index Findings Released for National Drowsy Driving Prevention Week (November 3 – 10, 2013)

Each year, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety surveys Americans ages 16 and older about their driving behaviors and attitudes. The goal of this annual *Safety Culture Index* is to foster a social climate in which traffic safety is highly valued and rigorously pursued. For this year's National Drowsy Driving Prevention Week, the AAA Foundation has released 2013 survey data, showing that the social climate in the U.S. is still best characterized by the phrase, "do as I say, not as I do," as high numbers of people condemn drowsy driving, yet admit to doing it nonetheless.

Drowsy Driving in 2013*

"Do As I Say, Not As I Do"

- Nearly all (94.9%) American drivers believe it is somewhat or completely unacceptable for somebody to drive when they're so sleepy they have trouble keeping their eyes open.
- Roughly nine out of ten (88.4%) drivers believe that "where [they] live, most other people" think drowsy driving is somewhat or completely unacceptable.
- More than eight in ten (82.9%) believe that sleepy drivers pose a somewhat or very serious threat to personal safety.

Despite the above findings:

- More than a quarter (28.3%) of licensed drivers reported having driven when they were so tired that they had a hard time keeping their eyes open in the past 30 days.
- Nearly one fifth (19%) admitted to doing this more than once, and two percent reported having done this fairly often or regularly.

Age as a Factor

- Young drivers ages 19-24 were the most likely to admit to drowsy driving, with nearly one third (32.9%) saying they'd done so in the previous 30 days, and 23.6 percent saying it had happened more than once.
- The oldest drivers (ages 75 and over), and the very youngest (ages 16-18), were the least likely to report having driven drowsy, with 22.4 percent in each case saying they'd done so in the past month.

**Note: All numbers reported in this document refer to licensed drivers, ages 16 or older, who reported driving in the past 30 days, weighted to reflect the U.S. population.*



Car crashes rank among the leading causes of death in the United States.



Key Findings from Prior AAA Foundation Research

[Asleep at the Wheel: The Prevalence and Impact of Drowsy Driving \(2010\)](#)

- Roughly one in six (16.5%) fatal crashes, one in eight (13.1%) crashes resulting in hospitalization, and one in fourteen (7%) crashes in which a passenger vehicle is towed involved a drowsy driver.
- Two out of five drivers (41%) reported ‘falling asleep or nodding off’ while driving at least once in their lifetime; more than one in ten (11%) reported having done so within the past year, and four percent said they did so in the past month.
- Men (52%) were much more likely than women (30%) to report having ever fallen asleep while driving.

[Temporal Trends in Indicators of Traffic Safety Culture among Drivers in the United States \(2013\)](#)

- For the past four years (including 2013), the percentage of licensed drivers admitting to drowsy driving (in the previous 30 days) has remained essentially constant, hovering around 30 percent.
- The percentage of people believing drowsy drivers pose a “very serious threat” to safety decreased dramatically between 2009 and 2013 (from 71% to 48%); however, it’s unclear if this is because people believe fewer motorists are driving when extremely sleepy, or if fewer people think drowsy driving is dangerous.

Alert and Attentive Driving: Tips for Staying Safe

Warning signs of sleepiness include, but are not limited to:

- Rubbing your eyes, struggling to keep them open and focused, and/or having heavy eyelids;
- Yawning repeatedly and/or having difficulty keeping your head up;
- Drifting from your lane, swerving, tailgating, and/or hitting rumble strips;
- Missing traffic signs or your intended exit, and/or struggling to remember the last few miles driven; and
- Feeling irritable or restless.

Tips to remain alert and prevent a crash:

- Get plenty of sleep (at least seven hours) the night before a long trip;
- Stop driving if you become sleepy – fatigue impacts reaction time, judgment, and vision, causing drowsy drivers to behave in similar ways to impaired drivers;
- Travel at times when you are normally awake, and stay overnight along the way if needed;
- Schedule a break every two hours or every 100 miles; and
- Have caffeine, and find a safe place to rest while waiting the 30 minutes or so for it to take effect.

For more information on drowsy driving, including the Foundation’s brochure, [How To Avoid Drowsy Driving](#), visit www.AAAFoundation.org and the National Sleep Foundation’s website, www.sleepfoundation.org. The complete 2013 *Traffic Safety Culture Index* will be released in January 2014.

Established in 1947 by AAA, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety is a not-for-profit, publicly funded, 501(c)(3) charitable research and educational organization. The AAA Foundation’s mission is to prevent traffic deaths and injuries by conducting research into their causes and by educating the public about strategies to prevent crashes and reduce injuries when they do occur.

This research is used to develop educational materials for drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists and other road users. Visit www.AAAFoundation.org for more information.