

# DRIVE *for* LIFE

## THE NATIONAL SAFE DRIVING TEST & INITIATIVE

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS - 114 S. DUVAL ST. TALLAHASSEE, FL 32301  
(800)875-4301 RSACHS@RONSACHS.COM WWW.SAFEDRIVINGTEST.COM

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Contact: Michelle Ubben  
or Allison Wharton  
Phone: 800-875-4301

## POLL: DRIVER BEHAVIOR IS GROWING SOURCE OF AGGRAVATION

### *Poll also reveals safety lapses by parents*

America is a nation of aggravated drivers – and they are growing more aggravated by the year. The source of all the stress? Not just bad roads, traffic delays and personal worries. According to a new nationwide poll the top culprit is many of the other drivers on the road.

Forty percent of drivers describe driving as “aggravating” and “more aggravating than two years ago,” according to the poll conducted for Drive for Life, a driver safety awareness initiative of AAA, Volvo Cars of North America, Partners for Highway Safety, the National Association of Police Organizations and the National Sheriffs’ Association.

Both men and women agreed other drivers are the prime source of their aggravation, but the behaviors that set them off divide the genders: Men complain of drivers who talk on cell phones and drive while distracted, while women are more bothered by aggressive behaviors like speeding and tailgating.

Despite the fact that safety experts say children should ride in the back seat until at least age 12, 51 percent of parents polled allow children 10 and younger to ride up front, 40 percent allow children eight and younger to ride in the front, and 24 percent even allow five and six year olds to ride in the front seat. That’s a serious problem

**40% call driving  
“aggravating”**

**37% under age 21 drive  
emotionally upset.**

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because one in three children killed in motor vehicle crashes were in the front seat. The Centers for Disease Control estimates that requiring children to ride in the back seat reduces injuries by 45 percent in cars with front passenger seat airbags and 30 percent in cars with no front airbags.

One in four men admitted to driving while angry, compared to one in five women. All that anger takes a toll: 18 percent of Americans polled said aggressive drivers pose the biggest threat on the road, second only to drunk drivers. Another alarming finding is that 37 percent of teenage drivers, ages 16-20 admit to driving while emotionally upset- more than twice the rate for non-teens.

The all-around angriest, most aggravated, most dangerous age group on the road? Some would guess it is the youngest or oldest drivers, but they'd be wrong. It's the early twenty-somethings who are most likely to describe themselves as fast and aggressive drivers, least likely to wear a seat belt or require a passenger to wear one, and most likely to have received a traffic ticket within the past two years.

“The behaviors that put drivers at the greatest risk are the same ones that are likely to become habit forming,” said Bill Van Tassel, PhD, AAA National Manager of Driver Training Operations. “This initiative is taking an honest look at your daily driving behavior, and making changes that could ultimately help you prevent or survive a crash.”

In other gender divides, the poll also found that men are more than twice as likely as women to admit to driving without using a seat belt, and that men also were much more likely to drive after drinking.

Besides conducting an annual poll of driver behaviors and attitudes, Drive for Life educates through an interactive web site, [www.driveforlife.com](http://www.driveforlife.com), and a special, 30-minute television broadcast, The National Safe Driving Test, to air Labor Day weekend, Saturday, Sept. 4, at 7 p.m. EST on the PAX TV Network. The full poll results and additional driver safety information are available on the web site.

Ironically, the poll also found that Americans say they overwhelmingly choose cars based on safety but don't always drive that way. Ninety-eight percent rate vehicle safety as important, topping performance, appearance, seating or cargo room. Yet, driving behavior often falls short of safety standards, as 26 percent say they

**Men are more likely to drive angry, without a seatbelt and to drive after drinking.**

**23% polled say distracted drivers pose the biggest threat on the road.**

**21-24 year olds are most likely to be fast and aggressive drivers.**

**26% of Americans admit driving after drinking alcohol, 12% don't wear seat belts when driving 20% don't require passengers to buckle up.**

drive after drinking alcohol; 12 percent don't always wear seat belts, and 20 percent don't require passengers to wear seat belts.

"We work hard to engineer safer cars, but, ultimately, the best car is only as safe as the person behind the wheel," said Victor Doolan, President and CEO of Volvo Cars of North America. "Drive for Life is aimed at helping to engineer safer drivers."

Even parents driving with children take some surprising risks, including speeding, distracted driving, and allowing children to ride in the front seat or without a car seat.

Sixty-six percent of parents say they speed with children in the car.

Sixty-five percent of parents polled said they moved their children out of a child safety seat or booster seat at age five or younger, although most children are not big enough to properly use a seat belt until they are much older. According to AAA, 28 states have laws requiring children to use child seats until age 5 or beyond, but it is recommended until children weigh 80 pounds or reach a height of 4'9".

The poll also found that many parents allow young children to ride without a car seat when riding with a friend or relative and no car seat is available (20 percent) or when traveling a short distance (24 percent.) In addition, 15 percent of parents said they allow children to remove seat belts on long car trips so they can lie down.

That's a problem because of the rapid deceleration which occurs at the moment of impact, causing a child's "crash weight" to increase dramatically. "The crash weight of a child weighing 60 pounds at 42 miles per hour can range from 4,500 to 9,000 pounds, which is an astounding 2-4 tons, or about the weight of an elephant, a crushing force indeed", according to Christer Gustafsson, Senior Safety Engineer for Volvo Cars, Sweden.

"Crashes are the leading cause of children's deaths, and no one can predict the day or the hour of a crash," said Paul Burris, chairman of the Drive for Life initiative and President of Partners for Highway Safety. "That's why parents must insist on safety protocols every ride, every time. That means using restraints and using them appropriately, slowing down and focusing on driving."

Parents also admit to distracted driving, with 54 percent talking on a cell phone, 48 percent changing CDs or DVDs, and 51 percent taking their eyes off the road to deal with children – all with children in the

**66% of parents speed with children on board, 65% move children out of car or booster seats too young.**

**\*Parents admit to distracted driving- 54% talk on cell phones, 51% take their eyes off the road to deal with children, 48% change CDs and DVDs- while driving their children.**

car. Yet, 23 percent of Americans polled say distracted drivers pose the biggest threat on the road.

The poll of 1,100 licensed drivers by Mason-Dixon Polling & Research, Inc. was conducted July 29 to Aug. 5 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percent.