

CHAPTER VI.

UNSAFE AND AGGRESSIVE DRIVING BY ROAD TYPE

UNSAFE DRIVING BY ROAD TYPE

The traffic speed, flow and driving behaviors will vary by road type. Most drivers regularly drive on a variety of road types. Hence, it is difficult to measure road experiences outside of the context of a specific road type. For this reason, the national sample of drivers was asked whether they drove regularly (at least weekly) on certain types of roads. Subsequently, the drivers were asked about their experiences on one, randomly selected road type from among those on which they regularly drove. This permits us to examine the frequency and nature of unsafe driving reported by road type.

Drivers were asked about the frequency with which they observed other vehicles traveling at unsafe speeds on the roads they regularly drive. The majority of drivers (59%) say that they see vehicles traveling at unsafe speeds either all (31%) or most (28%) of the time when driving on the roads they regularly travel. Another third (35%) say that they see other vehicles traveling at unsafe speed on the roads they travel some of the time. Only a small proportion of drivers report that they see other vehicles traveling at unsafe speeds only rarely (6%) or never (less than 1%) on the roads they travel.

There is some variation in this experience by the type of road being traveled. A majority of those traveling on residential streets, both in mostly urban (53%) and mostly rural (52%) areas, see other vehicles traveling at unsafe speeds all or most of the time when they drive (see Figure 6-1). A slightly larger proportion of those driving on non-interstate highways in urban (59%) and rural (55%) areas report others driving at unsafe speeds all or most of the time. However, more than two-thirds of those driving on interstate highways in urban (70%) or rural (67%) areas say that see other vehicles traveling at unsafe speeds all or most of the time on those roads.

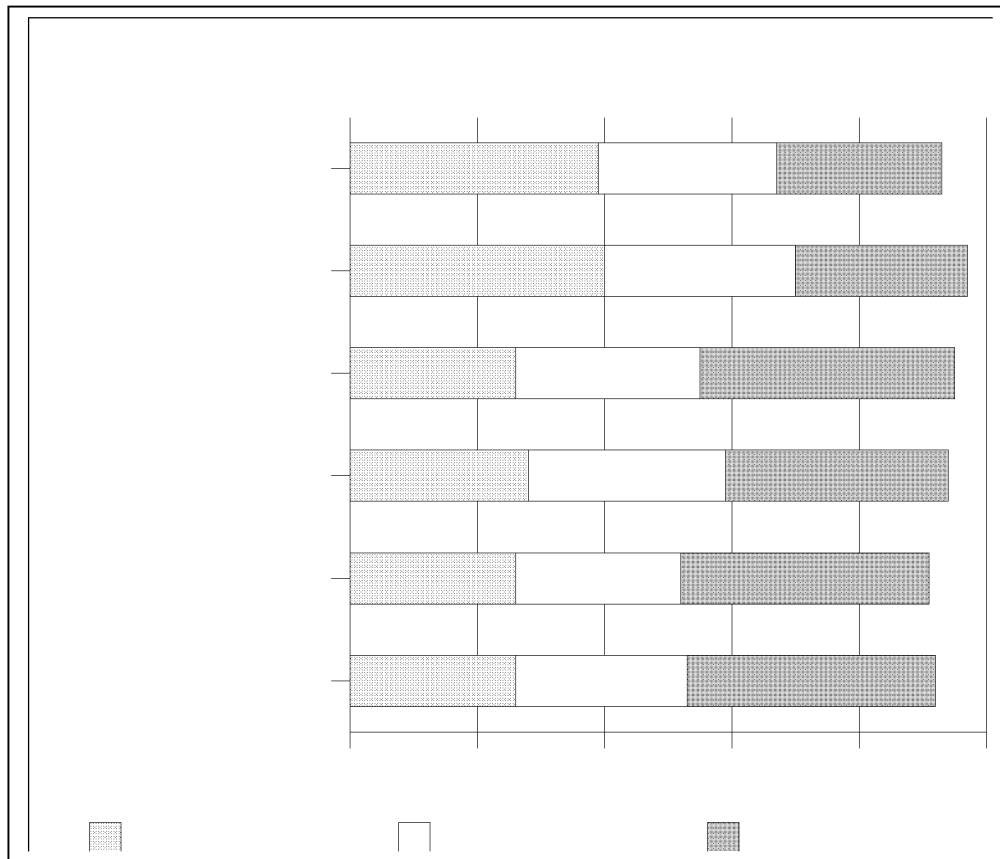


FIGURE 6-1Qx: *How often do you see vehicles traveling at an unsafe speed on [road type]?*
Base: Total population of drivers.
Unweighted N=6,000

The drivers were also asked how often they drive faster than the speed they considered to be the maximum safe speed for these roads. About two-thirds of all drivers (65%) report that they at least occasionally exceed what they consider to be the maximum safe speed on the roads they regularly drive (see Figure 6-2). About one in ten drivers

(9%) say that they exceed what they consider to be the maximum safe speed for the road either everyday or almost every day. Another 12% say that they exceed the maximum safe speed on roads they regularly travel a few days a week. And, another 19% say that they exceed the maximum safe speed a few days a month. Finally, 25% of drivers say that they exceed the maximum safe speed a few days a year.

FIGURE 6-2

Qx: How often do you drive faster than [maximum speed] MPH on that road?
 Base: Mentioned a maximum speed for that road.
 Unweighted N=2,916

There is surprisingly little variation by road type in the proportion of drivers who exceed the posted speed limit. The proportion of drivers who exceed the posted speed limit every day or almost every day varies from 7% of drivers on rural interstates to 10% of drivers on non-interstate rural highways. Similarly, the proportion of drivers who exceed the speed limit at least a few days a week only varies from 18% on interstate highways (urban and rural) to 25% on non-interstate rural highways. However, the proportion of drivers who never exceed the posted speed limits is higher for residential streets (36%-38%) than on non-interstate highways (28%-32%) and urban interstate highways (31%).

Drivers reported that the most common reason they drive at speeds they consider to be unsafe on these roads is being late or behind schedule (44%) (see Table 6-1). This includes being late for work (11%), late for an appointment (7%), and simply running behind schedule (12%), among other things. The second most common set of reasons for driving at unsafe speeds on these roads relates to the traffic flow (12%). Most commonly, this means trying to keep up with the traffic.

TABLE 6-1

Reasons for Exceeding the Safe Speed by Road Type							
Qx: What are the most common reasons that you have driven on [road type] at speeds that you consider to be unsafe?							
Base: Have driven at speeds considered unsafe.							
	Total	Residential		Non-Interstate		Interstate	
		Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
<i>Unweighted N</i>	1,933	420	261	348	299	309	198
Late/behind schedule	44%	50%	46%	44%	42%	43%	38%
Unaware of speed	12%	15%	15%	10%	12%	9%	9%
Traffic flow	12%	4%	3%	10%	9%	20%	27%
Emergency	11%	9%	17%	9%	13%	10%	9%
Good conditions	11%	11%	8%	12%	11%	12%	10%
Comfort/familiarity with speed/road	3%	2%	3%	4%	3%	1%	3%
Speed limit	3%	5%	4%	3%	2%	3%	3%
Safe speed	2%	*	1%	4%	2%	2%	1%
Driver-related factors	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%
Other	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	3%	1%
Not sure/No answer	14%	12%	13%	15%	18%	12%	9%

* Less than 0.5%.

More than one response was permitted, therefore detail adds to more than 100%.

Third, lack of attention to their speed (12%) is given as a common reason for those occasions when they exceed the maximum safe speed. Fourth, good physical

conditions (11%) are given as a reason that drivers exceed what they consider the maximum safe speed for the road. Usually, this means a deserted area with no traffic (8%). Fifth, emergency situations (11%) are given as a reason that drivers sometimes exceed the maximum safe speed. Drivers rarely report that their mood, stress, or enjoying the feeling of speed was a common reason for exceeding what they felt was the maximum safe speed for the road.

There was very little difference between the reasons why males and females give for exceeding the safe speed on all types of roads (see Table 6-2). The same cannot be said for the reasons given by age group. Being late or behind schedule is mentioned by three in five 16 to 20 year old drivers (62%) and declines for each successive age group until it is given by only one driver in five (20%) in the 65 and over group.

TABLE 6-2

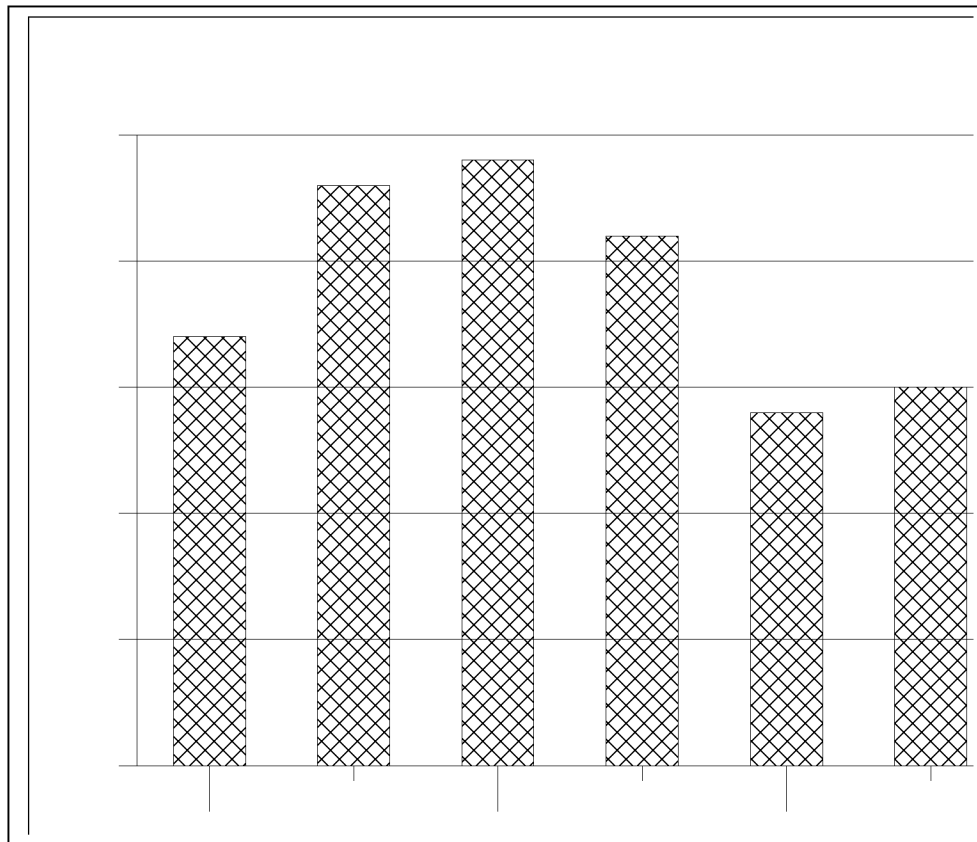
Reasons for Exceeding the Safe Speed by Gender and Age									
<i>Qx: What are the most common reasons that you have driven on [all road types] at speeds that you consider to be unsafe?</i>									
<i>Base: Have driven at speeds considered unsafe.</i>									
	Gender		Age						
	M	F	16-20	21-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
<i>Unweighted N</i>	965	968	150	116	454	449	349	184	218
Late/behind schedule	43%	44%	62%	56%	53%	44%	38%	24%	20%
Unaware of speed									
Traffic flow	11%	12%	10%		11%	15%	15%	10%	
Emergency	11%	12%	13%	8%	11%	14%	11%	15%	13%
Good conditions	11%	12%	4%	13%	11%	14%	11%	15%	13%
Comfort/familiarity with speed/road	11%	12%	4%	13%	11%	14%	11%	15%	13%
Speed limit	9%	12%	9%	8%	10%	11%	11%	15%	12%
Safe speed	9%	10%	9%	8%	9%	11%	13%	13%	10%
Driver-related factors	11%	10%	6%	9%	9%	11%	13%	13%	10%
Other	11%	10%	6%	9%	9%	11%	13%	13%	10%
Not sure/No answer	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%	4%
	4%	3%	2%	2%	1%	3%	6%	4%	6%
	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%
			*						*
	1%	1%		2%	3%	1%	1%	1%	
			3%					*	2%
	2%	1%	11%	1%	2%	1%	1%	25%	32%
	14%	15%	1%			11%	12%	1%	1%
	14%	15%	1%	9%	9%	11%	12%	1%	1%

* Less than 0.5%.

More than one response was permitted, therefore detail adds to more than 100%.

About one driver in four (24%) reported that they are most likely to drive at an unsafe speed between the hours of 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. (see Figure 6-3). Almost equal proportions reported speeding in the morning (6 to 9 a.m.) and evening (3 to 6 p.m.) drive time — 23% and 21 % respectively

FIGURE 6-3



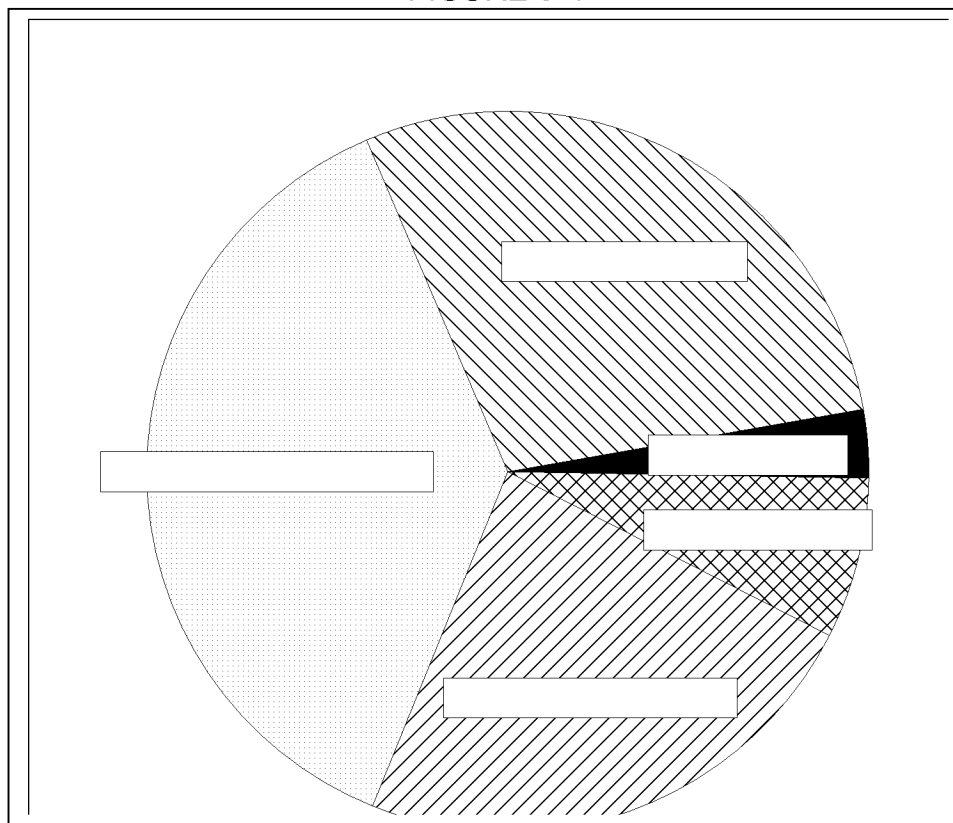
Qx: *What times of the day are you most likely to drive at an unsafe speed?*

Base: *Have driven at speeds considered unsafe.*

Unweighted N=1,933

The national sample of drivers had defined what they considered to be the maximum safe speed for the type of road on which they drive and how frequently they exceed that limit. They were then asked the likelihood of having a crash for someone who exceeded that safe speed limit compared to someone who was traveling at the posted speed for that road. The majority of drivers felt that someone who was exceeding what they considered to be the maximum safe speed for the road would either be a lot more likely (29%) or somewhat more likely (38%) to have a crash than someone traveling at the posted speed (see Figure 6-4). Another quarter (24%) felt that someone driving over the maximum safe speed would be slightly more likely to have a crash than someone traveling at the posted speed. Only 7% felt that those exceeding the maximum safe speed for the road would be no more likely to have a crash than someone traveling at the posted speed.

FIGURE 6-4

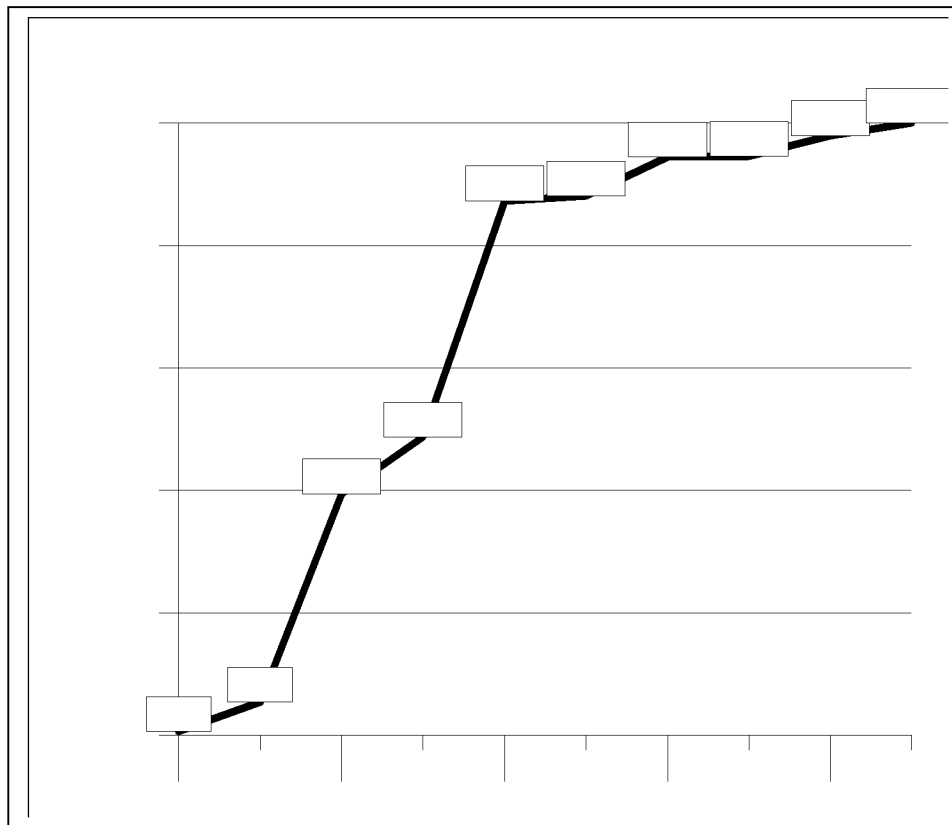


Qx: Compared to someone driving at the speed limit on that road, how much more likely is someone traveling faster than [maximum safe speed] MPH to have a crash? Is it ... ?
 Base: Consider maximum safe speed to be more than the current posted speed limit.
 Unweighted N=845

Another issue that was examined was the speed at which it was felt police will normally give a speeding ticket. Overall, slightly over one in twenty (5.4%) of drivers felt that they could drive at speeds up to 4 miles per hour or less over the speed limit before police

would give them a speeding ticket. A total of three in five (39.4%) said that speeds of 5 miles per hour or more over the limit could result in being ticketed. Slightly less than nine in 10 (87.3%) agreed that speeds 10 miles above the speed limit could result in getting a ticket. This proportion increases 19 in 20 for speeds 15 miles an hours above the speed limit, and 49 out of 50 for speeds 20 miles above the speed limit.

FIGURE 6-5



Qx: In your opinion, how much OVER THE SPEED LIMIT can you go on this road before police will normally give you a speeding ticket (if they see you)?

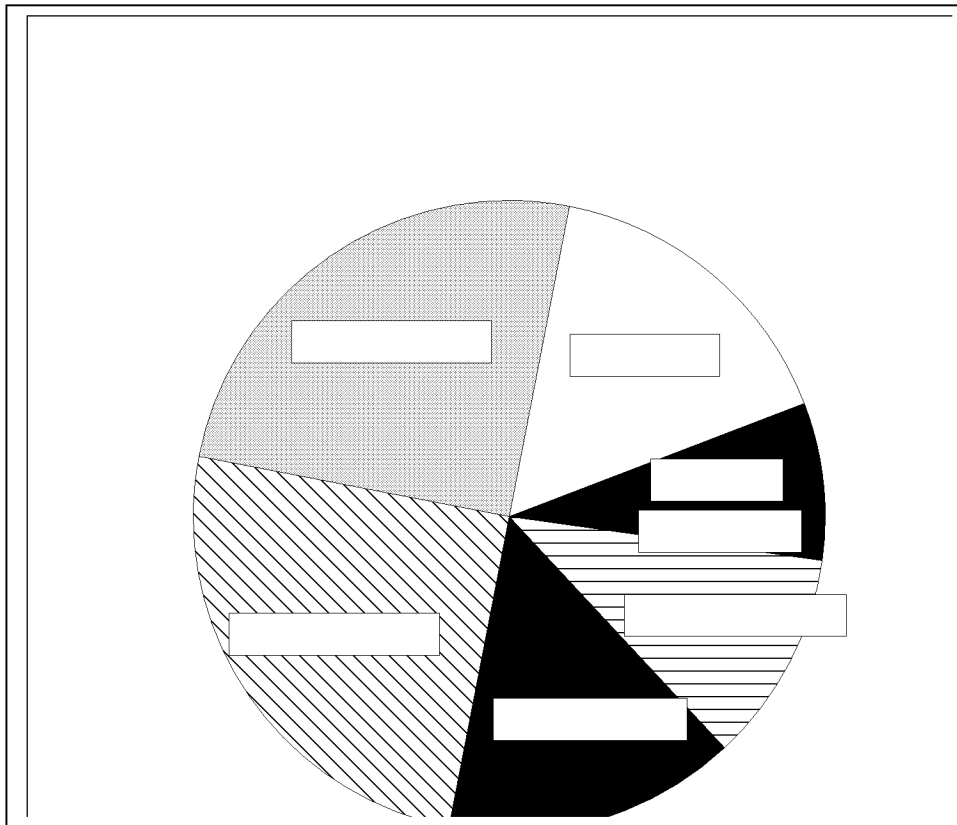
Base: Have driven at speeds considered unsafe and gave a response.
Unweighted N=1,761

The survey also examined the frequency that drivers exceed the posted speed limits at a rate of speed which they believe police will normally give a speeding ticket if they observe it. The question was not asked of drivers who never exceeded a safe speed. It was also not asked of drivers who could not estimate how much over the speed limit they believed drivers could go before police would ticket them.

Nearly one out of six drivers (16%) report that they last exceeded the posted speed, at a rate that would normally get them a speeding ticket if observed by police, on the day of the interview (see Figure 6-6). Another 25% report that they have exceeded the speed at which police normally ticket within the past week. Hence, well over one-third of those who have exceeded the speed limit and gave an estimate of permissible speed before being ticketed exceed, not only the speed limit, but the speed at which police normally ticket drivers at least once a week. Another 25% report that they have done so in the

past month, while another 15% report having exceeded the ticketing speed within the past year. In total, over three-fourths of all drivers report having driven over the posted speed limit in the past year at a rate of speed that would normally get them a speeding ticket if observed by police.

FIGURE 6-6



Qx: When was the last time that you drove [faster than ticketing speed] MPH over the speed limit in [road type]?

Base: Gave an estimate of permissible speed before being ticketed.

Unweighted N=1,748

The reasons that drivers give for driving at speeds at which they are likely to get a ticket are very similar to the reasons given for driving at speeds they consider to be unsafe. On the most recent speeding occasion, the most common reason for going at a speed that they considered themselves likely to get a ticket if seen by police was being late or behind schedule (42%) (see Table 6-3). This includes being late for work (12%), late for an appointment (5%), hurrying home (6%) and simply running behind schedule (8%), among other things. Lack of attention to their speed (14%) is given as the second most common reason for exceeding the ticketing speed on the most recent occasion. The third most common set of reasons for driving over the speed at which police ticket on those roads relates to the traffic flow (13%). Most commonly, this means trying to keep up with the traffic.

TABLE 6-3

Reasons for Exceeding the Ticketing Speed by Road Type							
<i>Qx: Why were you going that fast on that occasion?</i>							
<i>Base: Have driven over speed limit that would result in a ticket.</i>							
	Total	Residential		Non-Interstate		Interstate	
		Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
<i>Unweighted N</i>	1,588	337	202	288	245	273	170
Late/behind schedule	42%	44%	50%	45%	39%	40%	37%
Unaware of speed	14%	17%	17%	15%	12%	7%	14%
Traffic flow	13%	6%	3%	13%	8%	26%	24%
Emergency	5%	6%	9%	5%	5%	4%	2%
Good conditions	7%	6%	5%	6%	8%	9%	11%
Comfort/familiarity with speed/road	4%	3%	2%	3%	5%	4%	6%
Speed limit	2%	3%	*	2%	3%	2%	-
Driver-related factors	2%	3%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Safe speed	2%	1%	1%	2%	4%	3%	-
Other	2%	1%	1%	1%	4%	2%	3%
Don't know/No answer	14%	17%	15%	14%	18%	9%	11%

* Less than 0.5%.

- None.

More than one response was permitted, therefore detail adds to more than 100%.

Good physical conditions (7%) are given as the fourth most common reason that drivers exceed what they consider the ticketing speed for police on the road; usually, this means a deserted area with no traffic (6%). Fifth, emergency situations are given by 5% of drivers as the reason they exceeded the speed at which police normally ticket on their most recent occasion. A handful of drivers (4%) report that their comfort or familiarity with the road was the reason they exceeded the ticketing speed on the most recent occasion. Only 2% of drivers reported driver-related factors, such as their mood or stress, as the reason they exceed what they felt was the speed at which police were likely to ticket on that road.

Drivers were asked, aside from driving at an unsafe speed, what other types of unsafe driving **behaviors they normally encountered** on the (selected) road they drive. Most commonly, about one driver in four (24%) has encountered someone weaving in and out of traffic, most often on interstate highways in both urban (45%) and rural (36%) areas (see Table 6-4). Tailgating was the second most common unsafe driving behavior mentioned by 17%. This, too, occurred most frequently on interstates. The third most mentioned behavior was driver inattention (15%). While this was observed on interstates, it was also observed in relatively similar proportions on other road types. Only one other unsafe behavior, unsafe lane changes, was observed most often on interstate roads in an urban setting by more than 10% of drivers overall. In addition, unsafe passing was observed by 19% of drivers on non-interstates in rural areas and ignoring stop signs was observed by 17% of drivers on urban residential streets.

TABLE 6-4

Types of Unsafe Driving Usually Encountered by Road Type

Qx: *Aside from driving at an unsafe speed, what other types of unsafe driving behaviors do you normally encounter on that road?*

Base: *Total population of drivers.*

	Total	Residential		Non-Interstate		Interstate	
		Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
<i>Unweighted N</i>	6,000	1,320	834	1,016	894	938	606
Weaving in and out	24%	14%	12%	27%	17%	45%	36%
Tailgating	17%	11%	10%	17%	16%	27%	21%
Driving inattention	15%	13%	14%	15%	13%	17%	16%
Unsafe lane changes	10%	8%	6%	11%	9%	14%	11%
Unsafe passing	9%	5%	8%	14%	19%	5%	5%
Ignoring stop signs	8%	17%	10%	6%	4%	1%	1%
Failing to yield	6%	7%	6%	7%	6%	6%	6%
Drinking and driving	5%	5%	5%	4%	9%	4%	6%
Running red lights	5%	7%	4%	9%	3%	2%	2%
Cutting in front	4%	3%	2%	6%	4%	6%	3%
Driving too slow	3%	1%	1%	2%	4%	5%	3%
Only speeding	2%	3%	2%	2%	1%	1%	3%
Other	13%	13%	12%	15%	13%	13%	15%
None	16%	21%	26%	12%	14%	9%	13%
Not sure	5%	6%	6%	5%	5%	4%	4%

More than one response was permitted, therefore detail adds to more than 100%.

If more than one unsafe behavior was reported, drivers were asked which they **encountered most often on that road**. The most often encountered unsafe driving behavior was similar to what was reported in Table 6-3. One driver in six (15%) saw drivers weave in and out of traffic (see Table 6-5). This is most often encountered on interstates in urban (30%) and rural (26%) settings. This was followed by tailgating — reported by 11% of all drivers, but seen most often on interstates (17%). Driver inattention was also mentioned by 11% of drivers overall and was seen mostly on rural residential roads. While no other behavior was mentioned by 10% or more of drivers overall, unsafe passing was encountered by 13% of drivers of rural non-interstates and ignoring stop signs was encountered by 11% of drivers of urban residential roads.

TABLE 6-5

Most Often Encountered Types of Unsafe Driving Behavior by Road Type							
<i>Qx: Which of these behaviors do you encounter most often on [road type]?</i>							
<i>Base: Total population of drivers.</i>							
	Total	Residential		Non-Interstate		Interstate	
		Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
<i>Unweighted N</i>	3000	628	408	521	448	485	295
Weaving in and out	15%	10%	8%	18%	6%	30%	26%
Tailgating	11%	6%	5%	10%	12%	17%	17%
Driver inattention	11%	10%	14%	10%	10%	10%	12%
Unsafe lane changes	6%	6%	4%	8%	7%	7%	6%
Unsafe passing	6%	2%	7%	8%	13%	3%	2%
Ignoring stop signs	5%	11%	7%	4%	2%	-	*
Failing to yield	4%	4%	5%	4%	4%	3%	2%
Drinking and driving	3%	3%	5%	1%	5%	2%	3%
Running red lights	2%	4%	*	3%	3%	*	*
Cutting in front	2%	1%	1%	3%	3%	4%	2%
Driving too slow	3%	2%	1%	3%	3%	4%	3%
Only speeding	2%	4%	3%	2%	3%	1%	2%
Other	9%	9%	11%	10%	9%	9%	11%
None	14%	21%	22%	11%	14%	7%	8%
Not sure	7%	7%	7%	6%	6%	4%	7%

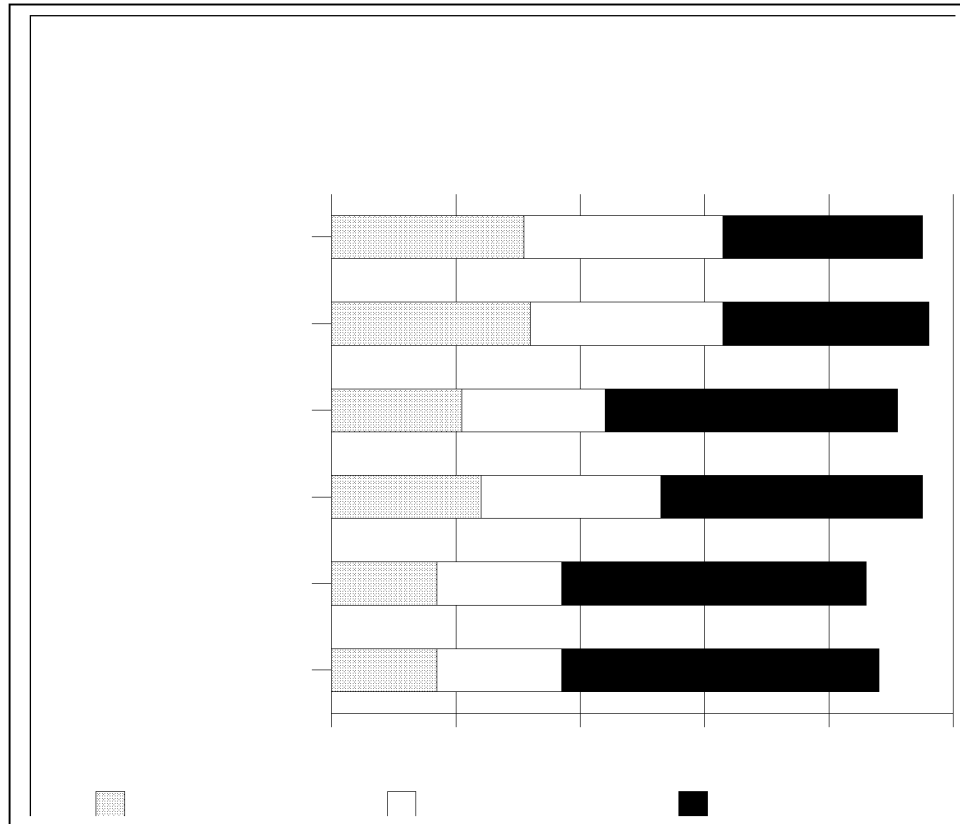
- None.

* Less than 0.5%.

More than one response was permitted, therefore detail adds to more than 100%.

Those who reported that they observed unsafe driving behaviors were asked how often they saw those behaviors on that road. Unsafe driving behaviors are most often encountered on interstate highways. About three drivers in 10 observe these behaviors all of the time (see Figure 6-7). This compares to 21% of rural non-interstate drivers, 24% of urban non-interstate drivers and 17% of drivers of residential streets encountering unsafe behaviors all of the time.

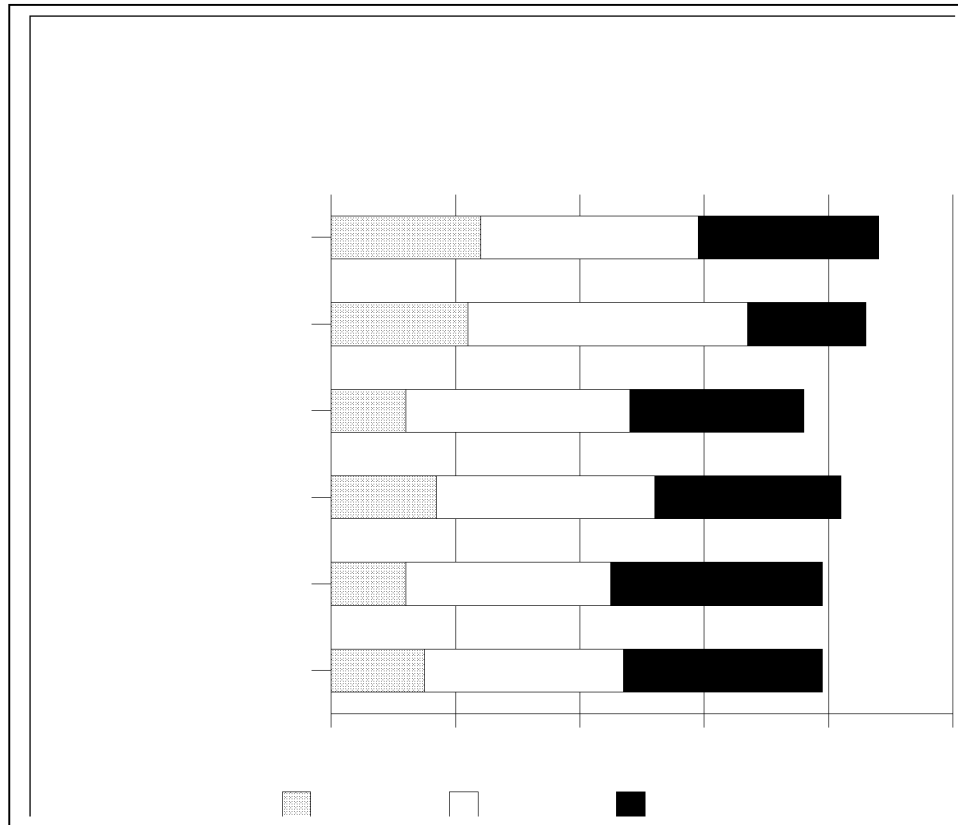
FIGURE 6-7



Qx: How often do you see [unsafe driving behavior] by [road type]?
 Base: Encountered unsafe driving behavior.
 Unweighted N=2,578

Drivers were asked if they observed the unsafe driving behavior they mentioned concurrently with speeding. Over one driver in five (23%) on interstate highways observed unsafe drivers who were also speeding (see Figure 6-8). More than three drivers in five (63%) on interstates encounter speeding and another unsafe behavior together at least most of the time. Speeding and another unsafe behavior were observed at least most of the time by no more than half of the drivers on all other types of roads.

FIGURE 6-8



Qx: How many of the drivers who do this are also speeding?

Base: Encountered unsafe driving behavior.

Unweighted N=2,578

Drivers were asked which unsafe driving behavior mentioned that they considered the most dangerous. Weaving in and out of traffic was cited as the most dangerous overall by one driver in six (16%) (see Table 6-6). Further, it was considered the most dangerous by drivers of interstates in both urban (30%) and rural (26%) areas as well as on non-interstates in urban areas (17%). Driver inattention was the second most dangerous driving behavior and was mentioned by one driver in 10 (11%) overall. This behavior was mentioned by 14% of drivers of residential roads in rural areas. Other behaviors mentioned as being most dangerous by at least one driver in 10 were tailgating on interstates, unsafe passing on non-interstate highways, and ignoring stop signs on rural residential roads.

TABLE 6-6

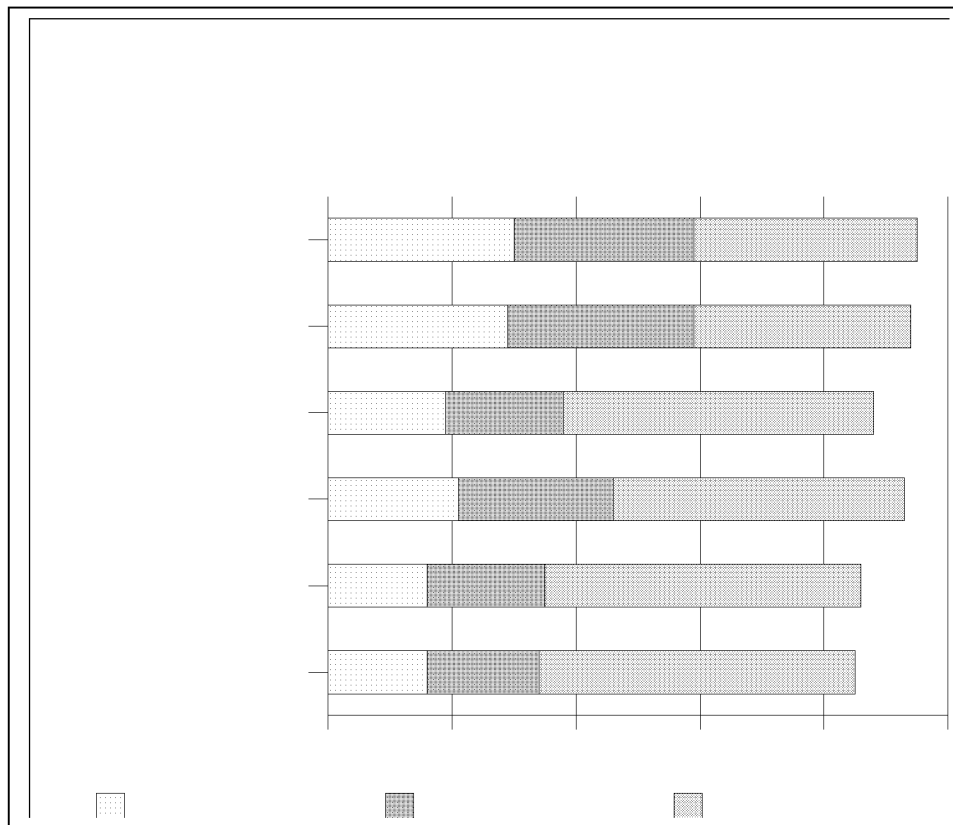
Most Dangerous Type of Unsafe Driving Behaviors Encountered by Road Type							
<i>Qx: Which of these behaviors do you consider the most dangerous on [road type]?</i>							
<i>Base: Total population of drivers.</i>							
	Total	Residential		Non-Interstate		Interstate	
		Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
<i>Unweighted N</i>	3000	628	408	521	448	485	295
Weaving in and out	16%	10%	8%	17%	10%	30%	26%
Tailgating	9%	5%	4%	8%	9%	16%	17%
Driver inattention	11%	11%	14%	11%	8%	11%	12%
Unsafe lane changes	5%	5%	4%	6%	5%	6%	5%
Unsafe passing	6%	2%	7%	10%	13%	2%	2%
Ignoring stop signs	5%	11%	8%	3%	3%	*	*
Failing to yield	3%	4%	4%	3%	5%	2%	1%
Drinking and driving	5%	4%	5%	2%	7%	3%	6%
Running red lights	3%	5%	2%	5%	3%	*	*
Cutting in front	2%	1%	1%	3%	2%	4%	2%
Driving too slow	2%	1%	1%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Only speeding	2%	3%	3%	2%	2%	1%	2%
Other	10%	10%	10%	10%	9%	9%	9%
None	14%	21%	22%	11%	14%	7%	8%
Not sure	6%	7%	7%	5%	7%	3%	6%

* Less than 0.5%.

More than one response was permitted, therefore detail adds to more than 100%.

About three drivers in 10 saw unsafe driving all of the time on interstate highways. An equal number saw unsafe driving most of the time (see Figure 6-9). Taken together, three drivers in five reported observing unsafe driving at least most of the time on interstate highways. About one driver in five on non-interstate highways reported witnessing unsafe driving behavior all of the time. A slightly smaller proportion, one in six, reported seeing unsafe driving all of the time on residential roads. For both non-interstates and residential roads, about half the drivers reported observing unsafe driving behavior only some of the time.

FIGURE 6-9



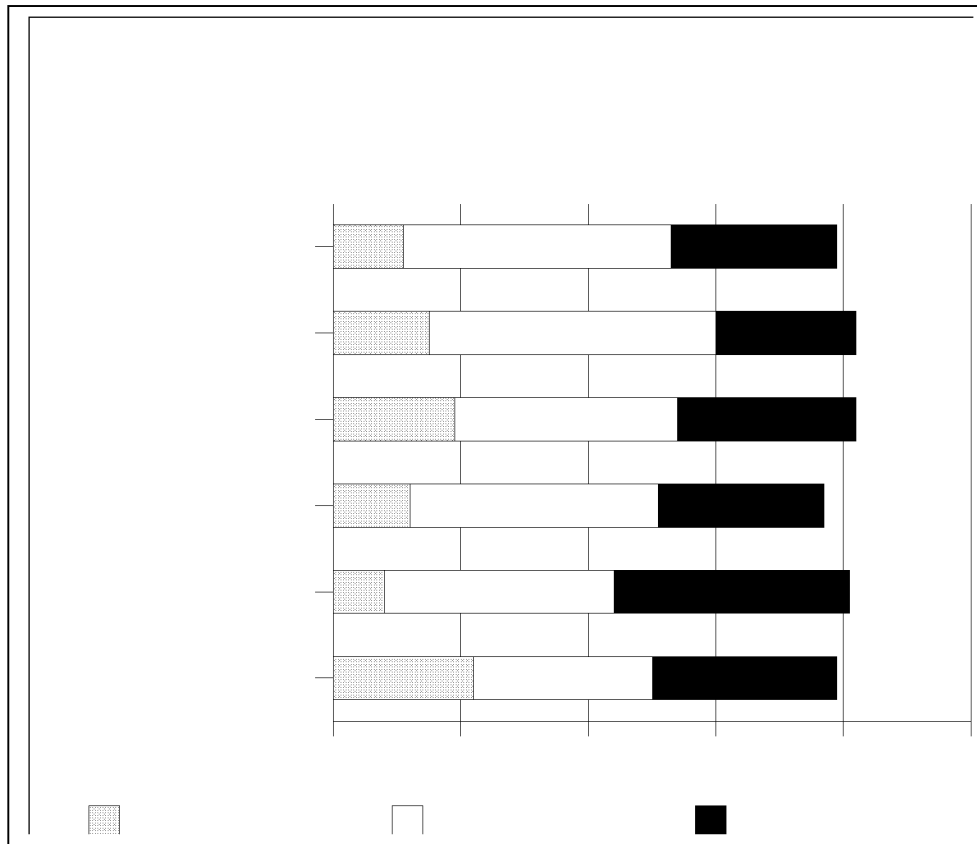
Qx: How often do you see [most dangerous behavior] on [road type]?

Base: Encountered unsafe driving behavior.

Unweighted N=2,578

Drivers who observed an unsafe driving behavior other than speeding were asked if the driver who was driving unsafely was also speeding. Speeding was reported together with another unsafe behavior all of the time by 22% of urban residential drivers and 19% of rural non-interstate drivers (see Figure 6-10). Speeding together with another unsafe behavior was observed all of the time by only 8% of rural residential road drivers. The combination of unsafe driving was observed at least most of the time by 60% of urban interstate drivers.

FIGURE 6-10



Qx: How many of the drivers who do this were also speeding?
 Base: Unsafe driving behavior encountered most often is not speeding.
 Unweighted N=434

SUMMARY

Overall, the majority of drivers said they see vehicles driving at an unsafe speed all or most of the time on all road types, particularly interstate highways. Over two-thirds of the drivers said they had personally exceeded the safe speed some time in the past year, with little variation by road types. The most often mentioned reason for exceeding the safe speed was being behind schedule. Even though many drivers said they had exceeded the safe speed, the majority felt that increasing the speed limit would result in more crashes. More than half of all drivers felt that driving up to 9 miles per hour over the speed limit did not warrant a ticket and three out of five felt there was at least a 5 MPH leeway when enforcing speed limits.

Drivers found unsafe speed and unsafe driving behaviors present on all road types, but more frequently on interstate highways. Aside from speeding, the most often encountered unsafe driving behaviors were other drivers weaving in and out of traffic and tailgating. Drivers felt these behaviors, along with driver inattention, were the most dangerous.