

More aggression on roads from both men and women says AA Insurance

Auckland – 14 May 2009 – There's more aggression on the roads this year according to AA Insurance. The 2009 AA Insurance Drivers Index, which surveyed 3,708 New Zealand drivers aged 18-65, shows both men and women reporting an increase in aggression on New Zealand roads compared with last year's survey results.

Male drivers seem to engage in aggressive and dangerous behaviours in greater numbers than women, and both genders report higher levels of aggression compared with the same survey last year.

Some 54 percent of men said that they have gestured rudely or yelled at another motorist who has done something they regarded as dangerous or rude, compared with 49 percent of women. Furthermore, 24 percent of men say they have tailgated another motorist out of anger, compared with 17 percent of women. However, the survey also revealed some self-awareness about driving attitudes; with both 25 percent of men and women identifying themselves as impatient drivers.

"Aggressive driving can occur when drivers are put under pressure, either from the immediate driving environment or personal stress," says Martin Fox, Deputy General Manager, AA Insurance. "However, it is up to individual motorists to recognise when they're feeling stressed and to take particular care behind the wheel so that increased stress levels don't result in safety risks."

Asked about the best way to respond to aggressive behaviour from another driver, 53 percent of men and 56 percent of women said they would signal an apology and concentrate on driving, and 37 percent of both genders said they would simply ignore the other driver.

"We know what to do when faced with aggressive behaviour, but the challenge is to turn that understanding into action," says Martin.

There's also a gender split on attitudes toward speeding and motivations for not speeding.

"Our survey certainly shows that men and women behave differently around speeding, and they reason about it differently too," says Martin. "Women stated they were significantly more motivated by safety, and men are twice as motivated as women by the legal system of demerit points."

While both genders are guilty of knowingly exceeding the speed limit, 40 percent of men said they did so at least half the time, compared with 32 percent of women.

When people do respect the speed limit, they do so for different reasons. Nearly half of men surveyed said they were motivated by safety (45 percent) compared with 58 percent of women. In comparison, 25 percent of men said they were motivated by the law, compared with 23 percent of women, and only 3 percent of women were motivated by demerit points, compared with 7 percent of men.

And risk-taking isn't limited to aggressive behaviours, though men also report more passive risk taking than women. A quarter of men surveyed say they have momentarily fallen asleep at the wheel, compared with 16 percent of women. According to claims received by AA Insurance, reasons for falling asleep while driving are sometimes linked to working longer hours and shift work.

Part of the reason men are more likely to have a serious accident is that they spend more time behind the wheel. Some 82 percent of men say they are the main driver in their household around town, compared with 77 percent of women. The divide is starker for open road driving, with 94 percent of men saying they do most of the long distance driving, compared with only 42 percent of women. Correspondingly, significantly more men than women have had accidents on the open road with 31 percent of men who were the driver in an accident say the accident occurred on the open road, compared with only 18 percent of women.

Analysis of historical claims data from AA Insurance reveals that on average women make slightly more claims than men but their average cost of claim is lower.

Despite these differences in risk-taking behaviour and accident rates men remain more confident in their driving abilities. Three-quarters of men believed they have the expertise to teach someone else to drive, compared with only 60 percent of women.

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About AA Insurance

AA Insurance was launched in 1994 and is a joint venture between New Zealand Automobile Association and Suncorp-Metway Limited.

AA Insurance has over 300 staff servicing 150,000 plus customers and manages over 300,000 policies. Over half of those policies cover motor insurance risks including cars, bikes, caravans and motor homes, and the remainder are house and contents insurance.

In 2008, AA Insurance was a finalist in the unlimited/JRA Best Places to Work Survey in the medium-large workplace category, making it one of the top places to work in New Zealand.

AA Insurance Limited has an A+ (Strong) Insurer Financial Strength Rating given by Standard and Poor's (Australia) Pty Ltd on 8 January 2009. For further information visit www.aainsurance.co.nz.

About the 2009 AA Insurance Drivers Index

The 2009 AA Insurance Drivers Index was conducted by the New Zealand AA and is an independent internet survey of 3,708 drivers aged 18 to 65 from around New Zealand.

For more information please contact:

Amelia Macandrew, AA Insurance, (09) 966 8445 or email amelia_macandrew@aainsurance.co.nz

Victoria Spence, Botica Butler Raudon Partners, (09) 303 3862, 021 403 503 or email victorias@botica.co.nz