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INTRODUCTION

Conducted on an annual basis since 2006, the Public Attitude Survey was carried out by an independent research firm for the Road Safety Unit of Police Services Division (PSD), Ministry of Justice. The surveys have been used to measure public perception of, and support of, police traffic enforcement in BC. The information collected also informs the Road Safety Unit in its efforts to evaluate, target and determine road safety enforcement priorities and programs. The study has a primary focus on driver attitudes and road safety activities. The 2012 survey built on previous year’s surveys core questions; new questions were added to measure public attitudes toward driving while distracted and the perceived likelihood of distracted driving causing serious accidents; as well as factors impacting driver behaviour.

Respondents were asked to provide feedback on 22 targeted questions relating to a variety of road safety issues and concerns. Speeding, aggressive driving, distracted driving, red light cameras, commercial vehicles and other road safety initiatives were assessed. British Columbia regional representation is ensured, as respondents were from regions such as Vancouver Island/Coastal Regions, the Capital Region of Victoria, Fraser Valley, Metro Vancouver, Southern and Northern BC. Age, gender, years of driving and educational attainment was documented for the sample of 953. Further, only respondents holding a valid BC driver’s licence were asked to complete the survey. A full list of 2012 questions and demographics are provided in Appendix A.

KEY FINDINGS

- Overall self-reported driver behaviour has changed little over the last four years. However, fewer respondents admit they run red lights or stop signs in 2012 than past years. Speeding continues to be the most common driving infraction.
- Driving while tired is a common behaviour (55% stating they occasionally do this), while many admit to texting at a red light and talking on a hand-held cell phone when driving (both 22% occasionally).
- Compared to 2011, drivers believe they are less likely to get caught violating driving laws such as running a red light, driving while over the legal alcohol limit, not wearing a seatbelt, speeding and not stopping at stop signs.
- Police road checks and red-light camera tickets are events considered most likely to change driver behaviour.
- The condition of the road and the weather are the most likely elements to have an impact upon driving behaviour, with 65% and 61% respectively saying this has ‘a very large impact’ on how they drive.
- Use of hand-held cell phones, driving while tired and driving after taking prescription drugs that can cause drowsiness are considered the most likely factors to cause a serious crash.
- The main concern while driving in BC continues to be other drivers - whether speeding, distracted or inexperienced. This is followed by the condition of the road.
Compared to 2011, driver perception of BC’s standing on road safety has improved, from an average rating of 6.4 out of the 13 provinces/territories to 6.1 in 2012.

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS
The 2012 Annual Road Safety Survey was conducted in March 2012 among 953 drivers holding a valid BC driver’s licence. Region, gender and age quotas were set in place to ensure a sample representative of the total population in BC were surveyed. The questions related to a variety of road safety issues/concerns, including speeding, police enforcement, distracted and aggressive driving, red light cameras, and auto crime concerns.

This section focuses on the demographics of respondents, including age, education, regional distribution, years of driving and time spent on the road.

Figure 1 - Age Distribution

- The age distribution above is representative of BC’s driver demographics.
Three-quarters (76%) of respondents have a post-secondary education.

The data was weighted to achieve a regional distribution of respondents proportionate to the actual population.

To obtain a regional sample large enough for sub-group analysis, no fewer than 125 interviews were conducted in each region.
Reflective of the age distribution, the distribution of years driven is also proportionate to the population.

A large proportion (70%) drive between zero and ten hours each week, while 28% spend over 10 hours driving every week.
The vast majority (88%) hold a full driver licence. Just 4% and 8% hold learners and novice permits respectively.

SELF REPORTS

Over the past five years, self-reported driving behaviours have been assessed. In this section, respondents are asked to indicate if they have pursued specific driver behaviours in the last three months. To avoid telescoping, the short period of time is provided to ensure validity of responses. Self reports are important indicators to test if road safety initiatives increase driver accountability. Road activity and distracted driving reported behaviours are documented in this section.

Road Activity Self-Reported Behaviours

Half (49%) admit to occasionally or regularly driving 20 kilometres over the speed limit, while incidence of other infraction is much lower.
• Fewer respondents are saying they run red lights or don’t stop at stop signs in 2012 than past years (from 20% in 2011 to 12% in 2012). A downwards trend in driving without wearing a seatbelt is observable from 2008 to 2012.

• Those in the 25 to 34 year age group are the most likely to have driven 20km+ over the speed limit, driven without a seatbelt and driven when they may have been over the legal alcohol limit.
Drivers in the GVRD are the most likely to occasionally drive 20km+ over the speed limit. CRD and Northern BC drivers are among the most likely to occasionally run red lights and not wear a seatbelt; while drivers on Victoria Island and Coast areas are the most likely to admit to occasionally driving when they may be over the legal alcohol limit or after consuming illegal substances.

**Distracted Driving Activity**

**Figure 11 - Self Reported Behaviours by Distracted Driving**

| Question: How often have you done each of the following in the past 3 months? Total |
|----------------------------------|----------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| Response                        | Never | Occasionally | Regularly | All the time |
| Driven when you were tired       | 38%   | 55%         | 4%        | 2%          |
| Texted while driving             | 91%   | 9%          | 0%        | 0%          |
| Texted while stopped at a red light | 76% | 22%         | 2%        | 1%          |
| Talked on cell phone without a hands-free device while driving | 78%   | 22%         | 0%        | 0%          |
| Talked on a hands-free cell phone while driving | 63%   | 26%         | 7%        | 4%          |
| Set or adjusted your GPS while driving | 85% | 14%         | 1%        | 0%          |

- New questions relating to other forms of distracted driving such as driving while tired or while using technology such as cell phones or GPS were asked in 2012.
- Driving while tired is relatively commonplace, with 59% saying that they do this occasionally or regularly. One-in-five (22%) are occasionally texting while stopped at a red light or talking on a cell phone without a hands-free device while driving. 14% admit to occasionally adjusting their GPS while driving.
Drivers in Northern parts of BC are significantly more likely to occasionally drive when they are tired, while GVRD drivers are the most likely to text at red lights, talk on a hands-free device and adjust a GPS while driving.

Incidence of driving while tired, texting and driving, texting while stopped at a red light and while adjusting a GPS drops sharply with increasing age, with those aged 16 to 24 the most likely to occasionally do this.

However, those 35-44 years old are the most likely to admit to occasionally using cell phones—whether hands free or hand held while driving.
POLICE ENFORCEMENT AND LIKELIHOOD
Police enforcement commitment, likelihood of being caught by the police, traffic enforcement initiatives and police impact on changing driver behaviours are examined in this section. Police resources are limited, and determining best practices to alleviate dangers on the road is a priority.

Figure 14 - Perceived Police Commitment to Enforcing Traffic Laws (Longitudinal)

- Overall, perceived police commitment to enforcing traffic laws is consistent with 2011 results. When comparing to 2008 results, perception of police commitment has increased by approximately 16%.

Figure 15 - Perceived Police Commitment to Enforcing Traffic Laws

- However, perceptions of police commitment vary from region to region within BC. In particular, perceptions of police commitment have improved in the Fraser Valley from 2011 to 2012, while they have declined in Northern BC. CRD drivers are the most likely to rate the police as being ‘very committed’ to enforcing traffic laws followed by FVRD drivers.
Figure 16 - Road Checks driven through in the last 3 months (Region)

- Overall, one-quarter (24%) of drivers went through at least one road check in the last 3 months.
- Drivers in the CRD were significantly more likely to have gone through a road check one or more times (37% vs. 23% other regions).

Figure 17 - Road Checks driven through in the last 3 months (Age)

- Those aged under 35 were more likely to have gone through at least one road check than older drivers (36% vs. 20% aged 35 plus).
In 2012, driving when over the legal alcohol limit (69%), speeding (62%) and running a red light (60%) are the infractions drivers are the most likely to get caught by police. The current trend matches previous years’ trends, with special note toward those being caught for frequent driving after having taken illegal substances, where drivers rate the likelihood of getting caught similarly to 2011.

Generally, younger drivers rate the likelihood of being caught for violating driving laws higher than their older counterparts, in particular, driving while over the legal alcohol limit, speeding and running red lights.
PERCEPTIONS AND DISTRACTED DRIVING

This section focuses on driver perceptions of the likelihood of specific road safety initiatives that affect driving behaviour, the impact of various factors on driving behaviour and the perceived likelihood that various distractions will cause serious crashes on BC’s roads.

Figure 20 - Likelihood of road safety initiatives changing driver behaviour (Region)

Figure 21 - Likelihood of road safety initiatives changing driving behaviour (Age)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question: How likely do you think each of the following are to change behaviours of BC drivers?</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>16 to 24</th>
<th>25 to 34</th>
<th>35 to 44</th>
<th>45 to 64</th>
<th>65+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting a red-light camera ticket</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going through a police road check</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting a ticket from the police</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing or hearing advertising that has a road safety message</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Police road checks and red light camera tickets are the programs drivers believe are most likely to change behaviours of BC drivers. This is relatively consistent across region and age.
- Women are more likely than men to believe an advertising campaign will change driving behaviour (62% vs. 52% men)
Drivers in Northern and Southern BC are significantly more likely to change the way they drive due to road conditions and weather than other regions, while CRD and GVRD drivers are the most likely to change their driving as a result of a police road check.

The condition of the road and weather are the most likely to change driving behaviour, followed by police road checks and red light cameras.

Drivers aged 45 to 64 are likely to change the way they drive due to the greatest range of factors. Young drivers (16 to 24) are significantly less likely to change the way they drive due to weather, however red light cameras are more likely to change driving behaviour among this group than any other age.

General police traffic enforcement, road conditions and weather are more likely to impact the way women drive than men.
Overall, driving while using a hand-held cell, driving while sleepy and driving after taking OTC or prescription drugs which may cause drowsiness are considered the most likely factors to cause a serious crash on BC roads.

While fewer differences in opinion exist regionally, age is a strong determinant of opinion about distracted or impaired driving. The belief that each of the stated factors is likely to cause a serious accident trends upwards with increasing age.
SAFETY, DRIVING, AND AUTO CRIME CONCERNS

As part of assessing public attitudes towards road safety initiatives, it is also equally important to assess how respondents personally feel about intersections and commercial vehicles in British Columbia. British Columbia’s road safety rating was also assessed in comparison to other Canadian Provinces and Territories. It should be noted that number of drivers on the road may influence statistics.

Figure 26- Primary Safety Concerns at Intersections (Drivers)

- The primary safety concern BC drivers have at intersections is being hit by another vehicle, as mentioned by 25%. This is followed by cars not stopping or running through yellow or red lights, at 17% and hitting a pedestrian at 13%.
- Drivers aged 25 and older tend to be more concerned with getting hit by another vehicle than any other single concern. In contrast, those aged under 25 rate hitting a pedestrian as their single biggest concern.

Figure 27 - Primary Safety Concerns at Intersections (Drivers & Region)
Drivers in the GRVD and FVRD more than other regions are likely to be concerned about hitting pedestrians. GVRD drivers are also more likely to be concerned about cars running red lights and making sure other cars have stopped. Not surprisingly, Northern BC drivers are more concerned with wet and icy roads than drivers in other regions of BC (10% vs. 1% total).

As a pedestrian, the primary safety concern at an intersection is being hit by a car, at 26% followed by impaired, inexperienced and inattentive drivers at 22%. One in five (19%) are concerned with crossing intersections, in terms of not having enough time to cross safely and not being visible to drivers.

VI and Coast, FVRD and Northern BC drivers are the most likely to be concerned with other/impaired drivers when they are pedestrians. In contrast, those in CRD and GVRD are more concerned about being hit by a car.
Compared to 2011 findings, BC drivers are significantly more likely to agree that red light cameras stop drivers from running red lights (from 58% to 68%).

Younger drivers (16 to 24) are the most likely to agree that red light cameras punish drivers who run red lights and stop drivers from running red lights in comparison to older drivers; while drivers of all ages share similar agreement that red light cameras create safer road conditions and more awareness of traffic regulations.

Two-thirds of BC drivers feel safe sharing the road with commercial vehicles, while just under one-third feel unsafe. Drivers in mainland BC are significantly less likely to feel safe sharing the road with commercial vehicles than their Vancouver Island counterparts. Women also tend to less feel safe than men.
Figure 32 - Primary concerns about sharing the road with Commercial Vehicles

- Of the respondents who claimed that they felt unsafe while sharing the road with commercial vehicles, unsafe driving, lack of road visibility, difficulty with overtaking and excessive speed are the key reasons.

Figure 33 - Safety of BC Roads compared to 5 years ago

- Overall, 36% of BC drivers feel BC’s roads are safer in 2012 than they were 5 years ago.
- Compared to 2011, there has been a positive shift in impressions of safety on BC roads (from 31% to 36%). In particular, CRD and FVRD drivers are significantly more likely to agree that roads are safer in 2012 than they did in 2011.
Other drivers and the condition of roads (both weather and surface conditions) continue to be the main concern people have when driving on BC roads. Specific mentions of other drivers: speeding, distracted, young and impaired were made, for a total of 47% driver-related concern. This compares to a total mention of 59% in 2011.
In 2012, drivers are rating BC more favourably on its overall road safety rating compared to the other 12 provinces and territories in Canada than in 2011. The average rating in 2012 is 6.1 out of 13 compared to 6.4 in 2011 (Where 1 is the best and 13 is the worst). Southern and Northern BC drivers have the least favourable opinion of BC’s road safety record compared to the rest of Canada, rating an average of 6.7 and 6.5 out of 13 respectively.

Perception of BC’s standing on road safety is inversely correlated with increasing age – younger drivers rate BC’s road safety status significantly more favourably than older drivers.
APPENDIX A – Public Attitude Survey Questions 2012

1. Do you currently drive a vehicle or are you learning to drive a vehicle?
2. Are you currently driving under a learner’s permit or novice license?
3. How many years have you been driving?
4. About how many hours do you drive in an average week?
5. Into which of the following age groups can I place you...
6. In the past 3 months, how often have you done each of the following?
   a. Driven a vehicle 20 kilometres over the posted speed limit?
   b. Run a red light or not stopped at a stop sign?
   c. Driven without wearing a seatbelt?
   d. Driven a vehicle when you thought that you might be over the legal alcohol limit?
   e. Driven a vehicle when you had consumed illegal drugs including marijuana?
7. How often have you done the following in the past 3 months? Please answer as never, rarely, sometimes or all the time:
   a. Driven when you were tired
   b. Texted while driving
   c. Texted while stopped at a red light
   d. Talked on cell phone without a hands-free device while driving
   e. Talked on a hands-free cell phone while driving
   f. Set or adjusted your GPS while driving
8. Overall, how committed do you feel the police are to enforcing traffic laws? Please note, parking tickets are bylaw, and not issued by police.
9. How often have you gone through a road check in the last 3 months?
10. Next, please rate the likelihood of the driver being caught by police while doing any of the following:
    a. Running a red light
    b. Driving when over the legal alcohol limit
    c. Not wearing a seatbelt
    d. Driving more than 20 kilometres over the speed limit
    e. Not stopping at stop signs
    f. Frequent lane changes or unsafe passing
    g. Driving after taking illegal drugs such as marijuana
11. How likely do you think each of the following are to change behaviours of BC drivers?
    a. Red-light camera tickets
    b. Tickets from the police
    c. Seeing or hearing advertising about road safety
    d. A police road check
12. How much of an impact do each of the following have on the way you drive?
    a. General Police Traffic Enforcement
    b. The condition of the road
    c. Advertising and education campaigns, such as messages saying not to speed or drive while drunk
    d. Red light cameras
    e. The weather
    f. Police road checks for impaired driving
13. How likely do you think each of the following is to cause a serious crash on BC roads?
    a. Driving while talking on a hand-held cell
    b. Driving while talking on a hands-free cell
    c. Driving while very tired, sleepy or fatigued
d. Driving after having taken either over-the-counter or prescription drugs that may cause drowsiness

e. Driving while adjusting the car stereo or using other in-car electronics

14. As a driver, what is your primary safety concern at intersections?
   a. Hitting a pedestrian
   b. Hitting a cyclist
   c. Hitting another vehicle
   d. Hitting a motorcycle
   e. Getting hit by another vehicle
   f. Wet/icy roads, can't stop
   g. Heavy rain makes visibility difficult
   h. Dark, poorly lit streets
   i. Being tailgated
   j. Getting a red light camera ticket
   k. Other (Specify__________
   l. Don't know

15. And as pedestrian, what is your primary safety concern at intersections?
   a. Being hit by a car
   b. Not enough time to cross the intersection
   c. Other (Specify_______)
   d. DON'T KNOW
   e. REFUSED

16. Do you believe red-light cameras accomplish any of the following:
   a. Punish drivers who run red lights?
   b. Stop drivers from running red lights?
   c. Create safer road conditions?
   d. Create more awareness of traffic regulations?

17. Do you feel safe sharing the road with Commercial Vehicles?

18. As a driver, when you are on the road with Commercial Vehicles, what is your primary concern?
   a. Slow speed
   b. Excessive Speed
   c. Difficult to overtake?
   d. Lack of Road Visibility
   e. Unsafe driving
   f. Uncovered/unsafe loads

19. Do you feel that B.C. roads are safer now than they were 5 years ago?

20. And can you please tell me overall, what is your main concern when driving in BC?
   a. Other Drivers
   b. Distracted Drivers – (cell phones/radio etc)
   c. Impaired Drivers (Alcohol/Drugs)
   d. Elderly Drivers
   e. Young/Inexperienced drivers
   f. Slow drivers
   g. Speeding Drivers
   h. Trucks/Logging Trucks
   i. Wildlife on roads
   j. Condition of the roads (Potholes, gravel etc)
   k. Condition of the roads (Weather –Snow/Ice/Rain)
   l. Poor road markings/signage/lighting
m. Not signalling  

n. Unsafe Lane changes  

o. Pedestrians  

p. Getting a speeding ticket  

q. Other (Specify __________)  

r. Don’t know  

s. Refused

21. Out of the 13 provinces and territories in Canada, where do you believe B.C. ranks in terms of an overall road safety rating? Please give a rank out of 13, where 1 is the best and 13 is the worst.

22. And finally, what is the highest grade or level of education you have ever attained?