

Nebraska Annual Traffic Safety Study 2012

THE NEBRASKA POLL

FINAL REPORT

For Nebraska Safety Council
and Nebraska Highway Safety

August 2012



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STUDY DESCRIPTION
(N=900)

The purpose of this edition of The Nebraska Poll was to measure the attitudes of Nebraskans relative to highway safety issues, including but not limited to the issues of drinking and driving, seat belt safety, speed and driving while distracted (using cell phones and other electronic devices while driving).

Research Associates designed the survey instrument with input and final approval from Nebraska Safety Council staff and the Nebraska Office of Highway Safety.

The instrument designed to meet the purpose of this study was administered by telephone to a total sample of 900 randomly selected Nebraskans during July 23 – August 5, 2012. The sample was geographically representative by Nebraska Congressional district.

A sample of 900 randomly selected respondents provides results that are statistically accurate within an expected maximum error range of plus or minus 3.3% at a 95% confidence level. In other words, if this survey were administered to the entire population studied, the results would vary no more than plus or minus 3.3% from the results reported here, 95 times out of 100. The actual expected maximum error ranges vary based on the specific percentage results obtained for each response, as shown below.

Expected Maximum Error Ranges at a
95% Confidence Level for a Sample of 900 (Statewide Data)

10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%
+/-2.0%	+/-2.6%	+/-3.0%	+/-3.2%	+/-3.3%	+/-3.2%	+/-3.0%	+/-2.6%	+/-2.0%

Expected Maximum Error Ranges at a
95% Confidence Level for a Sample of 300 (Congressional District Data)

10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%
+/-3.4%	+/-4.5%	+/-5.2%	+/-5.5%	+/-5.7%	+/-5.5%	+/-5.2%	+/-4.5%	+/-3.4%

The figures in this report represent percentages unless specifically stated otherwise. Columns may not always total exactly 100% due to rounding.

Terminology: the mean score is the same as the average score. The "N" is the number of cases (respondents) in the study. An open ended question is one in which no response choices were provided to respondents and actual responses were then categorized.

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NARRATIVE SUMMARY

(N=900)

Impaired Driving

The first question was open ended and asked respondents to name the biggest problem in Nebraska today. Roads and safety-related responses included drunk drivers (7%), distracted drivers (7%) and general road and traffic conditions (6%). The distracted driving response was a significant increase from last year's rate of 2%.

Respondents were next asked to rate three specified problems on a 1 to 5 scale, with 5 as very important and 1 as not at all important. Both drunk driving (with a mean score of 4.51) and distracted driving (with a mean score of 4.39) were named as bigger problems than the fuel tax situation (3.60).

Respondents were then asked an open ended question about what is the best way to solve the drunk driving problem. More severe penalties (36%) led the list, followed by stricter law enforcement (24%), education (10%), high visibility law enforcement and mandatory sentences for convictions (9% each), and others (13%).

A majority of respondents (62%) indicated Nebraska penalties for drunk driving are not tough enough, while 35% indicated they are about right and 3% indicated they are too tough.

Respondents were next asked whether they favor or oppose each of six specific penalties for drunk driving. All six were favored by a majority of respondents. Leading the list of those favoring was jail terms for previous offenses (82%); followed closely by mandatory treatment for offenders (80%); then mandatory interlock ignition for all first-time offenders (72%); mandatory sentencing for offenders (71%); eliminating plea bargaining for drunk driving offenses (62%); and losing license for first offense (55%).

Seven percent (7%) of respondents indicated they had driven while impaired by alcohol but still under the legal limit in the last 60 days.

CORE QUESTION: Just over one in five respondents (22%) indicated they had driven within two hours after drinking alcoholic beverages at least once in the last 60 days.

CORE QUESTION: Nearly half the respondents (48%) indicated the chances of getting arrested if they drive after drinking are likely, while another 40% indicated somewhat unlikely.

CORE QUESTION: A majority of respondents (56%) indicated they had seen or heard something about drunk driving enforcement by police in the last 30 days. (This is a slight decrease from 61% in the 2011 Annual Traffic Safety Study, but still a slight increase over the 51% reported in the 2010 Study.)

Seat Belts

CORE QUESTION: Just over three-fourths of the respondents (77%) indicated they always wear safety belts when they drive or ride.

CORE QUESTION: A slim majority (52%) of respondents thought the chances of getting a ticket for not wearing a seat belt were unlikely (33% somewhat unlikely and 19% very unlikely).

CORE QUESTION: Less than a third of respondents (29%) indicated they had seen or heard something about seat belt law enforcement by police in the last 60 days. This was the same percentage reported in the 2011 study.

For the third straight year, a majority of respondents (68%) indicated that law enforcement officers should be allowed to stop drivers and ticket them for not wearing a seat belt.

Just less than one in five respondents (18%) indicated they have children weighing between 40 and 80 pounds, and of those 71% indicated they use a booster seat for their child in the car.

In a question that was new to the survey this year, respondents were asked what level of fine would be most effective to get people to wear their seat belt all the time. A plurality (30%) indicated \$25-50, 28% indicated \$51-100, 18% each indicated \$101-150 and over \$200, and 6% indicated \$151-200.

Speed

CORE QUESTION: A majority of respondents (53%) indicated they rarely drive faster than 35 mph on a road posted at 30 mph, while 22% indicated never, 15% indicated half the time and 10% indicated most of the time.

CORE QUESTION: A plurality of respondents (45%) indicated they never driver faster than 70 mph on a road posted at 65 mph. This was down significantly from 56% in last year's study. Another 45% indicated they rarely drive faster than 70 on those roads, while 6% indicated half the time and 4% indicated most of the time.

CORE QUESTION: Two in five respondents (40%) indicated they had heard anything about speed enforcement by police in the past 30 days.

CORE QUESTION: A plurality of respondents (41%) indicated the chances of getting a ticket if you drive over the speed limit are somewhat likely, with 26% indicating likely, 14% very likely, 14% somewhat unlikely and 5% very unlikely.

Distracted Driving Laws

More than two-thirds of respondents (68%) indicated they would support a law banning drivers from talking on a cell phone while driving. Less than a third (29%) opposed that idea and 3% didn't have an opinion.

About two-thirds of respondents (65%) also supported a law that allows law enforcement to stop a driver and ticket them solely for talking on a cell phone while driving. About a third (32%) opposed that while 3% again had no opinion.

Most of the respondents (89%) indicated support for a law that would allow law enforcement to stop a driver and ticket them solely for texting while driving, while 10% opposed that and 1% had no opinion.

Miscellaneous

Most respondents (83%) indicated that Nebraska's law requiring motorcycle helmets should be continued, while 14% said it should be repealed and 3% had no opinion.

Nearly two-thirds (62%) indicated that drivers over the age of 70 should be required to drive as part of their test every time they renew their license.

Demographics

Most respondents (97%) indicated they have a driver's license.

Respondents indicated distribution in the following age categories: 16-20, 4%; 21-34, 8%; 35-49, 27%; 50-64, 35%; 65 up, 25%.

Respondents indicated distribution in the following annual household income categories: under \$20,000, 10%; \$20,000-40,000, 21%; over \$40,000, 69%.

Cell phone numbers were included in the sample; 94% of the respondents spoke from traditional land lines while 4% spoke from cell phones.

Respondents were distributed among Nebraska's three congressional districts as follows: District One, 30%; District Two, 35%; District Three, 35%.

By control, respondents were 48% male and 52% female.

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TABULAR SUMMARY

(N=900)

	Percentage			
	State N=900	Dist One N=270	Dist Two N=315	Dist Three N=315
<i>General</i>				
1. First, what do you think is the biggest problem in Nebraska today? (open ended)				
Economy/drought/water/jobs/wages, etc.	40	44	31	48
Taxes/spending/budget, etc.	16	13	23	11
Crime/drugs/gangs/vandalism, etc.	8	8	11	6
Drunk drivers	7	6	6	8
Distracted driving (texting, cell phone use)	7	9	6	6
Roads/streets/traffic, etc.	6	5	6	5
Others (government/politicians; social issues like Immigration & health care; and a variety of other assorted responses)	16	15	16	18
Mean				
2-4. On a 1-5 scale, with 5 as very important and 1 as not at all important, how would you rate the following problems in Nebraska:				
How important is the problem of driving while intoxicated or drunk driving?	4.51	4.46	4.50	4.57
How important is the problem of distraction caused by drivers using cell phones or other electronic devices?	4.39	4.43	4.40	4.36
How important is the fuel tax situation?	3.60	3.66	3.49	3.67

	Percentage			
	State	Dist One	Dist Two	Dist Three
<i>Drinking and Driving</i>				
5. What do you think is the best way to solve the drunk driving problem? (open ended)				
More severe penalties	36	38	34	36
Stricter law enforcement	24	25	25	23
Education	10	12	10	8
High visibility law enforcement	9	5	11	10
Mandatory sentences for convictions	9	7	10	9
Other	13	13	11	15
6. Do you think the Nebraska penalties for drunk driving are:				
Too tough	3	3	2	3
About right	35	37	33	35
Not tough enough	62	60	65	62
7-12. Would you favor or oppose each of the following penalties for drunk driving: (rotated)				
Jail terms for previous offenses				
Favor	82	82	84	81
Don't know	4	5	4	4
Opposed	13	13	12	15
Mandatory treatment for drunk driving offenders				
Favor	80	81	81	79
Don't know	3	4	2	3
Opposed	17	15	17	18
Mandatory interlock ignition for all first-time offenders				
Favor	72	74	72	69
Don't know	4	3	3	5
Opposed	25	23	26	26
Mandatory sentencing for drunk driving offenses				
Favor	71	70	73	71
Don't know	7	9	4	8
Opposed	22	21	23	21
Eliminating plea bargaining for drunk driving offenses				
Favor	62	59	63	63
Don't know	7	7	4	9
Opposed	32	34	33	28
Lose license for first offense				
Favor	55	52	54	59
Don't know	3	3	4	3
Opposed	42	45	42	39

	Percentage			
	State	Dist One	Dist Two	Dist Three
13. In the last 60 days, have you ever driven while impaired by alcohol, but still under the legal limit?				
Yes	7	5	9	6
No	93	95	92	94
14. What do you think the chances are of someone getting arrested if they drive after drinking? (Core Q. A-3)				
Very likely	4	4	4	3
Somewhat likely	7	7	7	7
Likely	48	52	43	49
Somewhat unlikely	40	37	44	39
Very unlikely	1	1	2	1
15. In the past 60 days, how many times have you driven a motor vehicle within 2 hours after drinking alcoholic beverages? (Core Q. A-1)				
Never	78	80	76	79
Once	12	10	11	12
2-5 times	9	9	11	8
More than 5 times	1	1	2	1
16. In the past 30 days, have you read, seen or heard anything about alcohol impaired driving (or drunk driving) enforcement by police? (Core Q. A-2)				
Yes	56	59	52	58
No	44	41	49	42

		Percentage			
		State	Dist One	Dist Two	Dist Three
<i>Seat Belts</i>					
17.	How often do you use safety belts when you drive or ride in a car, van, sport utility vehicle or pickup? (Core Q. B-1)				
	Always	77	82	86	64
	Nearly always	13	11	6	21
	Sometimes	6	4	4	9
	Seldom	3	2	3	4
	Never	2	2	1	3
18.	Should law enforcement officers be allowed to stop drivers and ticket them for not wearing a seat belt?				
	Yes	68	73	73	59
	Don't know	1	1	1	2
	No	30	26	26	39
19.	What do you think the chances are of getting a ticket if you don't wear your safety belt? (Core Q. B-3)				
	Very likely	5	6	4	6
	Somewhat likely	25	29	24	21
	Likely	18	17	14	25
	Somewhat unlikely	33	33	36	30
	Very unlikely	19	16	22	18
20.	What level of fine do you think would be most effective to get people to wear their seat belt all the time?				
	\$25-50	30	32	27	32
	\$51-100	28	30	26	30
	\$101-150	18	20	17	16
	\$151-200	6	5	7	6
	Over \$200	18	14	23	17
21.	Do you have children weighing between 40 and 80 pounds?				
	Yes	18	13	22	17
	No	82	87	79	83
22.	(IF YES) Do you use a booster seat for your child in the car?				
	Yes	71	67	70	75
	No	29	33	30	26
23.	In the past 60 days, have you read, seen or heard anything about seat belt law enforcement by police? (Core Q. B-2)				
	Yes	29	26	25	34
	No	71	74	75	66

		Percentage			
		State	Dist One	Dist Two	Dist Three
<i>Speed</i>					
24.	On a local road with a speed limit of 30 mph, how often do you drive faster than 35 mph: (Core Q. S-1a)				
	Most of the time	10	8	14	8
	Half the time	15	12	19	14
	Rarely	53	55	50	54
	Never	22	26	18	24
25.	On a local road with a speed limit of 65 mph, how often do you drive faster than 70 mph: (Core Q. S-1b)				
	Most of the time	4	2	5	3
	Half the time	6	5	8	5
	Rarely	45	45	49	42
	Never	45	48	38	50
26.	In the past 30 days, have you read, seen or heard anything about speed enforcement by police? (Core Q. S-2)				
	Yes	40	42	35	42
	No	60	58	65	58
27.	What do you think the chances are of getting a ticket if you drive over the speed limit? (Core Q. S-3)				
	Very likely	14	15	11	19
	Somewhat likely	41	43	43	37
	Likely	26	26	25	26
	Somewhat unlikely	14	13	15	13
	Very unlikely	5	3	7	4

		Percentage			
		State	Dist One	Dist Two	Dist Three
<i>Distracted Driving</i>					
28.	Would you support or oppose a law banning drivers from talking on a cell phone while driving?				
	Support	68	70	71	65
	Oppose	29	28	27	31
	Don't know	3	2	3	5
29.	Would you support or oppose a law that allows law enforcement to stop a driver and ticket them solely for talking on a cell phone while driving?				
	Support	65	67	65	61
	Oppose	32	30	32	34
	Don't know	3	3	3	4
30.	Would you support or oppose a law that allows law enforcement to stop a driver and ticket them solely for texting while driving?				
	Support	89	94	89	86
	Oppose	10	5	11	12
	Don't know	1	1	--	2

		Percentage		
	State	Dist One	Dist Two	Dist Three
<i>Miscellaneous</i>				
31. Should the Nebraska law requiring motorcycle helmets be repealed or continued?				
Repealed	14	11	14	15
Don't know	3	2	3	5
Continued	83	87	83	80
32. Should drivers over age 70 be required to drive as part of their test every time they renew their license?				
Yes	62	59	66	60
Don't know	3	7	2	2
No	35	35	32	38

	Percentage			
	State	Dist One	Dist Two	Dist Three
<i>Demographics</i>				
33. Which of these age groups are you in:				
16-20	4	2	5	4
21-34	8	8	9	8
35-49	27	21	32	27
50-64	35	38	36	33
65 up	25	31	19	28
34. Do you have a driver's license?				
Yes	97	98	96	98
No	3	2	4	2
35. Which of these annual household income groups are you in?				
Under \$20,000	10	10	9	10
\$20,000-40,000	21	20	17	27
Over \$40,000	69	71	74	63
36. (NOTE CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT):				
One	30	100	0	0
Two	35	0	100	0
Three	35	0	0	100
37. (NOTE PHONE TYPE):				
Land line	94	96	95	94
Cell phone	6	4	5	6
38. Gender				
Male	48	45	51	46
Female	52	55	50	54

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Study Notes on the Longitudinal Report

Research Associates has conducted a statewide study on Nebraskans' attitudes toward highway safety issues periodically for more than two decades.

The following section presents the results of those studies, wherever similar questions were asked.

A similar methodology was employed in all the studies: households were randomly selected proportionate to population within each of Nebraska's three congressional districts. A total of 900 telephone interviews were completed for each study.

Longitudinal comparisons are based on the statewide database of 900 completed interviews per study.