

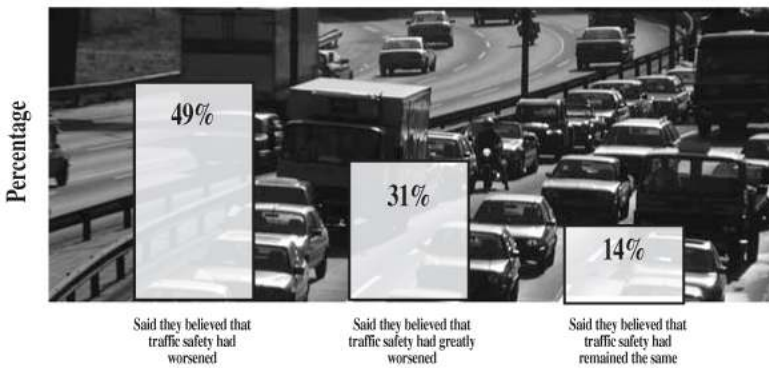


Poll STATION

With Linda Banister

Between road construction season, icy road conditions in the winter, and an increased number of vehicles on the road, traffic safety is becoming an issue for Edmonton drivers and pedestrians alike. We seem to hear about dangerous drivers and hit-and-run accidents on a weekly basis and, with the influx of people moving to Edmonton, this problem may not resolve on its own. This month's *Poll Station* asked Edmontonians about their perceptions of traffic safety in Edmonton, and whether certain groups of drivers face more regulations.

HAS TRAFFIC SAFETY WORSENERD, AND ARE YOU CONCERNED?



To begin, participants were asked if they believed traffic safety in Edmonton had worsened or improved over the past five years. The majority (80 percent) of respondents believed that traffic safety had indeed become worse, 49 percent indicating it had "worsened", and 31 percent believing it had "greatly worsened". Only four percent felt that traffic safety had improved, while 14 percent believed it had neither worsened nor improved.

When asked how concerned they were about dangerous drivers on the streets of Edmonton, the majority—81 percent—were either "concerned" (19 percent) or "very concerned" (62 percent). The habit of dangerous drivers that troubled respondents most was speeding (63 percent), followed by drivers not paying attention (27 percent), and swift lane-changes or cutting off other drivers (21 percent).

HAVE YOU NOTICED A DIFFERENCE BECAUSE OF GRADUATED LICENSING?



In May 2003, the Province of Alberta introduced a graduated license

system for new drivers. Part of this system requires residents over the age of 14 to hold their Class 7 learners license for a minimum of one year, then spend two years as probationary drivers before writing their advanced road tests to become fully licensed.

Respondents were asked whether they had noticed an improvement in overall traffic safety since these regulations have been enacted. More than half (57 percent) of respondents had not noticed any improvements, while 16 percent indicated they had noticed some improvement. Twenty-six percent were unsure.

When asked if there were any regulations for new drivers that would improve Alberta traffic safety, 10 percent suggested older driving ages such as 16 years and 20 years, six percent suggested mandatory driver education courses or having more training in general, and another six percent favoured more enforcement of existing regulations.

SHOULD SENIORS OF 75 YEARS OF AGE BE REQUIRED TO TAKE ROAD EXAMS?

Respondents were then informed that senior citizens over the age of 75 years are required to submit a medical report and provide a vision screening in order to renew their driver's license. When asked if this age groups should also be required to take a road examination, two-thirds (67 percent) were in agreement, while 19 percent disagreed, and 12 percent were neutral. Most respondents (77 percent) indicated there were no additional regulations that should apply to seniors.

WHAT WOULD IMPROVE TRAFFIC SAFETY?

To close the survey, respondents were asked if they had any other ideas to improve traffic safety in Edmonton. The most frequently cited improvement was more enforcement of traffic laws or more police officer patrols (19 percent), followed by more roads to service increased volume and new developments (eight percent), improving the conditions of roads in general (seven percent), and placing harsher fines, penalties or judgments on traffic offenders (seven percent).

The *Poll Station* surveyed 100 City of Edmonton residents on the topic and, while the results of the research are not statistically reliable, they do provide a qualitative indication of what Edmontonians are thinking.

Want a question included in the Edmontonians Poll?

Contact Linda at 780.451.4444 or e-mail at lbanner@edmontonians.com.

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