

The AAA has now released the latest round of ANOP national polling of drivers' attitudes to a range of driving issues. This is the eighth round of ANOP polling in the past ten years. ANOP used a re-interview method of drivers who had participated in the 2004 *SaferRoads* survey (see Newsletter 5, August 2004).

The polling shows that the *SaferRoads* project is striking a chord with motorists. There has been a marked increase in drivers' perception of roads and cars as a major influence in road trauma - as has the perceived importance of *better roads* and *safer cars* in reducing deaths and injuries.

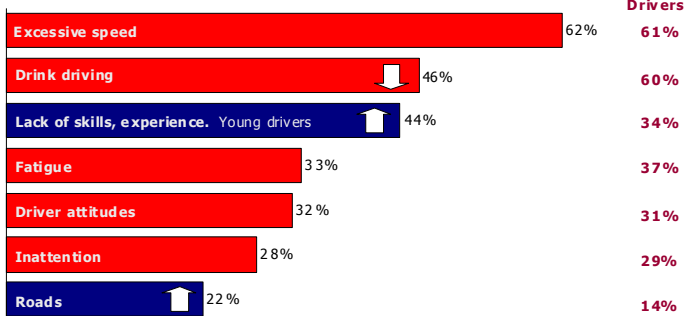
In motorists' eyes, the main culprit for road crashes is the 'other' driver (48% - up from 37% in 2003). For a number of years governments have gone to great lengths to educate motorists about the link between behavioural issues—like speeding, drink driving and fatigue—and road crashes. Hence, it is not surprising that motorists now have a high level of awareness about these issues, though it is interesting that for many it is the 'other' driver that is the problem.

But what is now also becoming apparent is that road condition has now entered the consciousness of drivers as a contributing factor in road crashes. In 2004 this figure stood at 14%, in 2005 it has risen to 22% - a rise in opinion of one third.

Perceived Causes of Road Crashes



What Causes Road Accidents? (Unprompted responses)



AAA National Survey of Motorists' Attitudes, 2005

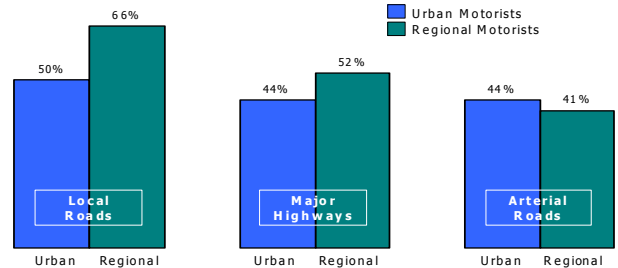
The concern over the state of roads was greater in regional areas, with 66% saying they 'should be better'. Nearly three in four motorists believe the Federal Government should be spending more on infrastructure – like roads and transport movements – rather than maintaining the current substantial surplus.

On being asked whether roads are as good as they should be, different patterns emerged for different roads. Just under six in ten said their *local roads* are not good enough - rising to nearly seven in ten (66%) in regional areas (see following graph).

Roads: Urban vs Regional Differences



2005 Urban & Regional Differences 'Should Be Better'



AAA National Survey of Motorists' Attitudes, 2005

The main problem in most cases cited was poor upkeep and maintenance followed by concerns over design and safety.

Nearly five in ten motorists said major highways "should be better" with the main concerns being the perceived need for more lanes, poor maintenance, followed by the call for more divided highways.

Four in ten perceived *major arterial roads* to fall short in standard with similar concerns expressed as for major highways.

Motorists in regional areas are considerably less happy with their local roads and major highways, whereas arterial roads are marginally more an issue in urban areas.

Motoring clubs have always been concerned about the 'roads' factor as the cause of many crashes. The ANOP survey has shown that 'roads' has increased markedly as a perceived indicator in crash causation. But it also reveals that while registering with motorists, the *SaferRoads* project has a way to go before 'safer roads' are rightfully accepted in being the most significant element in reducing road trauma, as shown by the National Road Safety Strategy (NRSS).

The NRSS study undertaken by the Federal Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics (BTRE) and endorsed by the Federal Government, has shown that of all the actions that can be taken by the community to reduce road deaths, such as driver behaviour, safer vehicles, new technology and improved roads, **safer roads had the potential to save the most lives – 332 per year** compared to 175 for safer vehicles, 158 for safer drivers and 35 with the introduction of new technology.

The community's view, expressed in this poll, is moving in the right direction but has a long way to go. While 'roads' has now entered the list of concerns that motorists have, it is still low in their priorities. The reality is that the 'road' is the biggest factor of all.