

It's Mars versus Venus on the roads

Men confident of driving abilities despite regular risk-taking

Auckland – 19 May 2010 – Men take more risks behind the wheel, whether it's after drinking, speeding or driving under stressful conditions, according to AA Insurance. The company surveyed 4,336 New Zealand drivers aged 18-65 for the 2010 AA Insurance Drivers Index.

Some 32 percent of men say they have driven when they were probably over the drink drive limit, compared with 24 percent of women.

Asked if it's ok to drive after a few drinks as long as they feel capable, some 19 percent of men said yes, compared with only 9 percent of women. Likewise, 19 percent of men say they have sometimes altered their driving route to avoid being breathalysed after drinking, compared with 11 percent of women.

“Given everything we know about the effect of alcohol consumption on driving, these figures are cause for real concern,” says Martin Fox, Deputy General Manager, AA Insurance. “In addition to all the real risks of death and injury caused by drink driving, many people still seem surprised to learn that if you're over the legal limit it usually voids your insurance.”

Different behaviour, different triggers

The AA Insurance Drivers Index also shows that men and women think and behave differently when it comes to speed.

Almost a quarter of men surveyed (24 percent, compared with only 16 percent of women) say they break the speed limit most of the time, but 90 percent of those say they exceed it by 5-10 km/h only.

When asked why they kept to the speed limit, women were most likely to say safety (47 percent, compared with only 36 percent of men). Men are more likely to stick to the speed limit because of the potential to lose demerit points (9 percent compared with 5 percent of women).

“Our claims data shows that women make slightly more claims than men but women's claims also cost less,” says Martin. “Our survey does suggest some contributing factors for this, because when people take risks they are more likely to have bigger accidents. However, men not only take more risks but also spend more time behind the wheel.”

Some 83 percent of men said they were the main driver in the household around town and this increased to 92 percent for long trips. This compared with 75 percent of women describing themselves as the main driver around town and this decreased to 45 percent on long trips.

Stress levels on the road

Some 47 percent of men say they have gestured or yelled at another motorist for doing something dangerous or rude, compared with 43 percent of women. Further, 24 percent of men say they have become so angry with the behaviour of another motorist that they have tailgated the motorist, compared with 17 percent of women.

“It’s up to us as individuals to recognise our own stress level and take extra care when driving so that feeling under pressure doesn’t result in more risk for ourselves, our passengers and other drivers,” says Martin.

Asked if they had the expertise to teach someone else to drive, 75 percent of men said yes, compared with 60 percent of women. However, this confidence may reflect how people themselves were taught to drive: women were more likely to have learned to drive with a driving instructor (49 percent), and men were more likely to have been taught by a parent (44 percent). A surprising 7 percent of men surveyed said they had taught themselves to drive.

“Despite being the gender that takes more risks on the road, men are clearly more confident in their driving abilities both in time spent behind the wheel and confidence in their abilities to teach others to drive”, says Martin. “This result suggests that risk-taking driving patterns will be passed on to the next generation of drivers.”

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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 and 2009, 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 2010. For further information visit www.aainsurance.co.nz.

About the 2010 AA Insurance Drivers Index

The 2010 AA Insurance Drivers Index is an independent internet survey of 4,336 drivers aged 18 to 65 from around New Zealand.

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