

The Buzz Driver Stress Study* :

A Report by The Buzz Insurance

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Introduction

Australian drivers are stressed. They are constantly witnessing bad driving and being subjected to disrespect and hostility from other drivers. Their safety and the safety of other drivers, passengers and pedestrians is often disregarded.

The Buzz Insurance has conducted its first annual study to find out how pressured Australian drivers feel, and to understand what is causing their anxiety. **The Buzz** aims to raise awareness of the potential devastating consequences that can come about from dangerous driving, and offer suggestions on how drivers can keep their stress levels to a minimum.

Research methodology

The Buzz commissioned Newspoll to undertake a national online survey among 1101 drivers aged 18-64.

To help reflect the overall population distribution, results were post-weighted to Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area.

The Buzz Driver Stress Study Findings:

Drivers are stressed. Over half (51%) of Aussie drivers experience stress on our roads. Younger drivers tend to be more likely to get anxious with 60% of drivers aged 18-34 feeling the strain, compared to 38% of drivers aged 50-64. Capital city dwellers are more likely to be tense than those from other parts of the country - 58% and 41% respectively.

Dangerous driving the norm. Almost all (99%) Australian drivers have witnessed hazardous driving which is risking tragedy on the road. The most commonly experienced bad driving habits are; driving too closely behind others (experienced by 96%), talking on the mobile or listening to an iPod with earphones in (96%), changing lanes without indicating (97%), cutting in on other lanes (95%) and holding other drivers up by driving too slowly (95%).

Impatience is causing risky behaviour. Too many drivers are getting impatient on the road and risking their own safety and the safety of others. 88% have seen other drivers queue jumping and 87% have spotted drivers running a red light. However it isn't just the drivers who are in too much of a hurry – 91% have noticed pedestrians crossing the road in a dangerous manner.

Rudeness on our roads. Most drivers have been subjected to rudeness on the roads. 78% have been sworn at or forced to endure offensive gestures from other drivers. Numbers climb even higher for women (81%) and older drivers aged 50-64 (81%). Similarly the vast majority

(91%) feel that some drivers don't acknowledge when they've done something wrong, and 89% claim they're not always thanked when they themselves have done something nice such as allowing another driver to cut in. Overall, around one in five (21%) believe other drivers in their local area are generally rude.

Risking road rage. Young drivers aged 18-34 are risking violence and hostility on the roads with more than one in 10 in this age group (12% compared to 5% of older drivers aged 50-64) actively retaliating by making a rude gesture or yelling at the other driver when confronted with bad driving.

The Buzz Tips to Keep Stress Levels Low

- Avoid distractions. Turn your mobile phone off or put it on silent before starting the trip so you're not distracted by incoming calls or texts. Refrain from changing the radio station, opening/closing the sun roof or windows and anything else that might serve as a diversion from the road.
- Avoid engaging with rude motorists. If another motorist is making things stressful or difficult for you, try not to engage in any ongoing communication with them. If they are driving too closely behind you, change lanes so they can go past. If they beep their horn at you for some reason, try to ignore them. Getting involved in arguments or disputes on the road can lead to unnecessary stressful situations.
- Common courtesy goes both ways. If another motorist is slowing you down or generally driving badly, try not to become impatient and make sure you abstain from making rude gestures or verbal attacks. This not only amplifies your own stress and risks your personal safety, but creates an unpleasant driving environment for everyone.
- Obey the laws. Instead of stressing about getting a speeding ticket or a parking fine, slow down and park legally! Complying with the traffic laws will help eliminate many causes of stress and will help keep your bank balance in check as well.
- Know where you're going. Be sure to check the map or street directory before you start your journey, and write down simple instructions with street names. Trying to figure out where you are going while you are driving can significantly raise stress levels.
- Leave early. Make sure you begin your journey in plenty of time to ensure you aren't feeling rushed. Running late can cause stress and tempt you to make risky and impatient decisions that can ultimately lead to an accident.
- If you are traveling with kids, keep them entertained with DVDs or word games so they aren't hassling you and causing additional stress. You can get further advice on how to keep kids entertained on the road from The Buzz Kiddy Distraction Survey at www.thebuzzinsurance.com.au.