



# Public Awareness Survey Recommendations of The NHTSA-GHSA Working Group

The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration and the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) developed a set of survey questions about seat belt use, impaired driving, and speeding. Using the same core questions in all data collection efforts allows States to track trends and evaluate the efficacy of their countermeasures over time.

The working group summarized public awareness surveys that measure behaviors, media, and enforcement conducted by 38 States, NHTSA, and other organizations since 2004 on traffic safety issues such as alcohol, seat belts, and speeding. Some questionnaires provide survey questions on young drivers, graduated driver licensing (GDL), child passenger safety, aggressive driving, and motorcycles. Some were one-time surveys conducted for a specific purpose, some gauge public opinion on potential law or policy changes such as GDL or seat belt upgrades, and some evaluated programs or recent high-visibility enforcement campaigns. The report includes complete NHTSA telephone and driver licensing office (DMV) survey questions on alcohol, seat belts, and speeding.

## Survey Design

The sample must be representative of the population of interest, including accurate proportions of males and females, races and ethnicities, and age groups. A sample size of 500 generally provides an acceptable accuracy of +/- 5 percentage points for a single question for the State's population.

With DMV surveys, questionnaires are handed out to people requesting new or renewed licenses, so they reach the driving population and have lower refusal rates. However, there is little opportunity to ask open-ended questions or follow-up questions. Telephone surveys tend to be more flexible in the types and

amount of questions they ask but are more costly to administer and tend to have high refusal rates. Further, certain segments of the driving population (e.g., young males) can be difficult to reach by telephone, especially using landline sampling procedures. The report details the benefits, limitations, and costs associated with each design.

## Core Questions

The initial set of public awareness survey questions includes ten core questions:

Impaired Driving	
A-1	In the past 30 days, how many times have you driven a motor vehicle within 2 hours after drinking alcoholic beverages?
A-2	In the past 30 days, have you read, seen or heard anything about alcohol impaired driving (or drunk driving) enforcement by police?
A-3	What do you think the chances are of someone getting arrested if they drive after drinking?
Belt Use	
B-1	How often do you use safety belts when you drive or ride in a car, van, sport utility vehicle or pick up?
B-2	In the past 30 days, have you read, seen or heard anything about seat belt law enforcement by police?
B-3	What do you think the chances are of getting a ticket if you don't wear your safety belt?
Speed	
S-1a	On a local road with a speed limit of 20 mph, how often do you drive faster than 35 mph- most of the time, half the time, rarely, never?
S-1b	On a road with a speed limit of 65 mph, how often do you drive faster than 70 mph- most of the time, half the time, rarely, never?
S-2	In the past 30 days, have you read, seen or heard anything about speed enforcement by police?
S-3	What do you think the chances are of getting a ticket if you drive over the speed limit?

## Standard Question Types

There are three standard question types: quantify, change, and detail. Questions that quantify attempt to measure the frequency and/or intensity of the behavior or media they are asking about. Change questions ask how the respondent's answer compares to that of a previous period. Detail questions give more information for an answer of "yes."

When creating core questions the only type that is relevant is quantifying questions. Questions of change are unnecessary because change can be measured by comparing annual surveys as long as they have the same questions. This type of question may not provide accurate information because, although it is easy to recall recent events, the recall of events six months to a year earlier may be difficult. Detail questions are important to track specific media messages or enforcement activities. However, these messages or activities will most likely differ from State to State or year to year, so they are not appropriate for a core set of questions to be asked by all States each year. This type of question would be helpful to ask on an individual State survey.

## Demographic Questions

In addition to the core questions, NHTSA and GHSA recommend that States include basic demographic questions to help categorize the information when making comparisons in later years. Age (in categories) and sex are asked almost always. Other common demographic questions include the respondent's ethnicity, residential ZIP Code, annual driving mileage, and type of vehicle driven most frequently. States will wish to add appropriate demographic questions to the core subject-matter questions.

## Suggested Survey Schedule

Surveys that monitor media or enforcement awareness are conducted in conjunction with media and enforcement campaigns, sometimes both before and after the

campaign to estimate the campaign's effect. NHTSA and GHSA found that the best time for a single survey that addresses all three subject areas is July. A July survey would be close enough to the May *Click it or Ticket* mobilization for reasonable recall and would fit with summer speeding and aggressive driving campaigns. If States include impaired-driving messages or enforcement in their Memorial Day, Fourth of July, or summer campaigns, a July survey would capture them as well. While the obvious disadvantage of a July survey is that it would not capture the effects of a Labor Day or December impaired-driving campaign, it is the best compromise.

An alternative is for States to conduct two surveys, one in June or July concentrating on seat belts and one in September concentrating on alcohol, with speeding questions in either or both. This would increase costs but would provide more timely information on campaign media and enforcement awareness.

## Conclusions

The NHTSA-GHSA working group identified a core set of survey questions that should be used by traffic safety researchers to measure trends in key attitudes, perceptions, and driving behaviors. Including questions about a State's particular traffic safety programs allows respondents to give feedback about specific campaigns. The full report provides what surveys were used, the rationale behind the questions, and the breakdown of the States' survey histories.

## How to Order

For a copy of *Public Awareness Survey Recommendations of the NHTSA-GHSA Working Group* (17 pages plus appendices), prepared by Preusser Research Group, Inc., write to the Office of Behavioral Safety Research, NHTSA, NTI-130, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Washington DC, 20590, send a fax to 202-366-7394, or download from [www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov).



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