

Summary

Road safety in Norway 2016 – A monitor survey of knowledge, behaviour and attitudes

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This report presents the results of a survey carried out in Norway in 2016 to assess attitudes, knowledge, and behaviour relating to different road safety themes. The results are compared with previous surveys in this series. For several behaviours, larger shares of the population report behaving “safely” in traffic, but support for the implementation of a range of road safety measures has not increased since 2011.

Background

The Norwegian Public Roads Administration regularly conduct monitor studies of traffic and traffic conditions in Norway. The present survey studies the population’s knowledge, behavior and attitudes to road safety in Norway. Similar studies have been conducted in 2011, 2008, 2004, 2002, 2000 and 1998. The survey is therefore well suited to investigate changes over time in people's attitudes and behavior.

In the current survey, data has in its entirety been collected using a web survey for the first time. In the report, we make an assessment of the consequences of the transition from phone to web survey, and assess whether this results in systematic differences in the responses.

Knowledge

A large proportion of respondents do not correctly answer questions concerning offences that carry penalty points, and rules for drugs in traffic. However, the level of knowledge seems to have improved slightly from 2011. 22 percent of respondents believe that there are no legislative limits for drivers’ use of drugs other than alcohol.

Self-reported behaviour

For several types of behaviour, the share of respondents who report behaving safely in traffic has increased compared with the survey in 2011. This includes the use of helmets and bike lights for cyclists, use of reflectors among pedestrians, and speed choice among drivers.

Drivers' use of handheld mobile phone while driving has decreased notably since 2011, while the use of hands-free mobile phone has increased. 31 percent of respondents stated that they sometimes or often use the mobile phone for navigation as a driver. Overall, use of mobile phone was more frequent among younger drivers than older ones, and the average use of mobile phone was higher for male than for female drivers.

Three out of four respondents (76.5 percent) stated that they used the seat belt the last time they travelled with a bus that had seat belts installed.

Participants were asked how they use turn signals in roundabouts. One in five respondents report that they nearly always (at least 8 out of 10 times) signal to the right when exiting a roundabout, whereas one in four respondents say that they mostly (at least 8 out of 10 times) signal to the left upon entering the roundabout (when they are going to turn left).

Drivers reported what they felt distracted by in traffic. The most common source of experienced distraction was noticing something outside the car: This occurs “often” for 10 percent of drivers. The second most frequently encountered source of distraction is daydreaming / thinking about things other than driving. Seven percent of respondents report that use of hands-free mobile phone has distracted them (very) often over the past two weeks. Overall, self-reported distraction was more frequent among younger drivers than among older ones, especially for mobile phone use, and other secondary activities (e.g. eating, operating the navigation system). There were no systematic gender differences in self-reported distraction.

Most people who have children secure them according to regulations when driving. However, compliance with the recommendation that children are placed in rear-facing seats until the age of four seems to be lower: Nearly all children aged one to two years were secured in a rear-facing child seat, while the same was true for 28 percent of children aged three to four years old.

Attitudes

Participants expressed their degree of (dis)agreement with statements regarding whether various measures and regulations should be implemented to improve traffic safety. A main trend is that, compared to 2011, people are somewhat less positive about restrictive measures aimed at improving traffic safety.

Still, for about half of the attitude items, answers were unchanged compared with the results from 2011, and most respondents agree with the general statement that authorities should regulate road user behaviour to a greater extent, in order to improve road safety. For some topics, most respondents are in favour of introducing more restrictive measures. This includes all measures directed towards vulnerable road users, and driving under influence.

Support is lowest for measures targeting speed. Most respondents do not think that general speed limits should be lowered, and, accordingly, most respondents do not agree that all cars should be equipped with driver assistance systems that restrict the top speed or the ability to exceed the speed limit. Females, and respondents that vote for parties on the left side of the political spectrum, are more in favour of measures targeting speeds than are males, and respondents that vote for parties on the right of the political spectrum.

For the first time, respondents were also asked to consider the statement “Norway should be a pioneer country in allowing self-driving cars on the roads.” The answers show that a significant proportion of the respondents, 25 percent, are undecided on this. The indecisive participants aside, 67 percent of respondents disagreed (partly or fully) with this statement. Disagreement was somewhat more prevalent among older participants than younger ones, and females were on average slightly less in favour of self-driving cars than were males.

There does not seem to be a clear relationship between changes in population behaviour and attitudes: although use of reflectors and bicycle helmets has increased, respondents' attitudes towards mandatory use of reflectors and bicycle helmets have not changed.

Previous studies in this series have been based on telephone interviews. This year the survey is based on an online questionnaire distributed to a representative sample of the population. This choice of method improves the statistical precision of the results, and the sample was both representative of the Norwegian population and comparable to the samples used in previous years.