

## AAA Report: Unsafe Driving Behaviors on the Rise



photo via the Oregon DOT

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A new report by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety finds that unsafe driving behavior – including speeding, red-light running, drowsy driving, and driving impaired on either cannabis or alcohol – increased significantly from 2020 to 2021.

For example, the number of motorists admitting to driving 15 mph or more in a new AAA poll increased by 12.4 percent from 2020 to 2021, while those admitting to driving through a red light jumped 10.4 percent year-over-year.

Image by AAA

Motorists who admitted driving when they believed they were intoxicated climbed by 23.7 percent year-over-year, according to AAA's survey, while those admitting they'd driven within an hour of using cannabis increasing by 13.1 percent.

AAA said those figures represent a major reversal in the steady declines in these dangerous driving behaviors in the three years from 2018 through 2020.



"The reversal in the frequency of U.S. drivers engaging in risky driving behavior is disturbing. While drivers acknowledge that certain activities behind the wheel – like speeding and driving impaired, are not safe, many still engage in these activities anyway," said Dr. David Yang, executive director of the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, in a [statement](#).

"We must be aware of the serious consequences of dangerous driving behaviors and change course," he said.

AAA added that this increase in unsafe driving behaviors corresponds to the increase in traffic fatalities tracked by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration over the last two years.

[In May](#), NHTSA estimated that 42,915 people died in motor vehicle traffic crashes in 2021, a 10.5 percent increase from the 38,824 fatalities that occurred in 2020 – the highest number of fatalities since 2005, according to preliminary agency data.

Though, [in September](#), the agency projected a 4.9 percent decline in motor vehicle crash fatalities for the second quarter of 2022 compared to the same quarter in 2021, it noted that early estimates indicated traffic fatalities for the first six months of 2022 increased 0.5 percent compared to the same period in 2021.

NHTSA also noted that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, a marked increase in fatalities and in the fatality rate began

in 2020 and did not let up until the second quarter of 2022.

Research indicated that speeding became a key factor driving that two-year spike in fatalities.

According to a [study](#) issued by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety [in July](#), speeding by motorists increased during the morning and afternoon commuting hours in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic and never slowed down.

Those findings dovetailed with a report issued by national transportation research nonprofit TRIP [in late June](#), which noted that traffic fatalities in the U.S. surged by 19 percent from 2019 to 2021, even as vehicle travel rates plummeted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

TRIP's report – entitled "[Addressing America's Traffic Safety Crisis: Examining the Causes of Increasing U.S. Traffic Fatalities and Identifying Solutions to Improve Road User Safety](#)" – said that spike in traffic fatalities is largely related to higher rates of "risky driving" behaviors, such as speeding and impairment due to alcohol and/or drug use.



Dr. David Yang. Photo by AAA.



Photo by the Delaware DOT