



Transport for NSW
Centre for Road Safety

2026 Road Safety Action Plan: Community Attitudes

Research Report

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1 Acknowledgements

The Centre for Road Safety commissioned Ipsos Public Affairs to conduct a survey with the NSW Community on road safety attitudes to help inform the development of the 2026 Road Safety Action Plan. This report presents a summary of the findings of the research.

2 Aims and methodology

An online study with NSW road users was conducted this year to provide the NSW community with an opportunity to provide input into the development of the NSW 2026 Road Safety Action Plan. A similar study was conducted in 2017 to inform the NSW Road Safety Plan 2021. This year the study was conducted to obtain information with respect to:

- Road safety issues of most concern to NSW road users;
- Road safety issues that apply to different kinds of road users;
- Views on a range of road safety countermeasures and initiatives, and how they contribute to making our roads safer; and
- Road Safety attitudes and perceptions of NSW road users.

This year's survey was administered to online panel respondents (n=1,246) and an open-link (n=2,438) was placed online on various platforms (including the Centre for Road Safety and Transport for NSW social media channels, and face to face forums) to increase the reach of the survey and provide a greater opportunity for the community to participate in the study. The panel survey was in field from 16 March – 9 April and the open link survey from 29 March – 29 April, 2021.

The online panel survey was structured to reflect the NSW population. Quotas were placed on this survey and data was weighted using the latest ABS census data to account for any discrepancies between the final achieved sample mix and intended quotas. The online panel survey can therefore be considered to be broadly representative of the NSW population. Throughout this report the online panel sample is referred to as the representative sample, or the representative survey.

The open-link sample did not have quotas and the data was not weighted. It is not representative of the NSW population. The sample achieved in this survey differed from the representative sample with females, respondents aged 40-59 years old, motorcyclists, and heavy vehicle drivers over-represented in this sample. This over representation can be further observed through findings from this sample throughout the report. When interpreting the results from the open-link sample, the over-representation of these subgroups in the sample must be considered.

3 Summary of findings

3.1 Road safety issues of most concern to the NSW community

Respondents were asked to select from a list the three road safety issues that were of most concern to them. The representative sample selected **drink driving, speeding and drug driving** as their primary road safety concerns, which is consistent with the 2017 results. Three in five respondents (61%) selected drink driving as one of their top three concerns, with around one in four respondents (24%) saying it was their most concerning issue. Another large proportion of respondents indicated that speeding and drug driving (50% and 43% respectively) are one of their top three concerns. Open-link respondents share these concerns, although distracted driving and unsafe roads were of most concern to them.

Additional comments about road safety issues highlighted concerns around road design and infrastructure. This was the most spontaneously cited issue among both samples, indicating it is another major concern to the community. Under this heading were references to 'road surface', 'signage' and 'traffic lights'.

3.2 Importance of countermeasures

Survey respondents were presented with a series of evidence based countermeasures, including descriptions and images, and were asked to rate the importance of each countermeasure in making roads safer. **All of the countermeasures presented are deemed important to respondents** (between 66% and 87% of the representative sample rated each countermeasure as 'very important' or 'fairly important'). This is a consistent finding across all elements of the safe system, and results were relatively consistent with the 2017 survey. In general, when differences between subgroups from the representative sample were identified, males and metro residents tended to place a higher value on the countermeasures.

3.2.1 Safe roads and safe speeds

Between 66-84% of the representative sample rated each safe roads and safe speeds countermeasure as important.

Countermeasures relating to road design improvements are highly rated by the community. The representative sample most valued making curves safer on high speed roads, with more than eight in ten (84%) rating it as important. Median barriers are another example of the importance of road infrastructure for the community as it is also rated very highly (83%). Controlled turning of vehicles at intersections is also viewed as one of the most important countermeasures (84%).

In line with speeding being rated as the second most cited road safety issue of concern, eight in ten (82%) placed high importance placed on the countermeasure lowering speeds on narrow or high risk roads.

In general the open-link results are similar to the representative sample except for lowering speeds on narrow or high risk roads. This measure tends to be considered less important among the open-link sample compared to the representative sample.

3.2.2 Safe road users

The safe road users countermeasures were slightly more likely to be given higher importance ratings than other countermeasures.

In line with 2017, the vast majority of the representative sample (87%) continue to consider safety of heavy vehicle drivers as a countermeasure of primary importance. Alcohol and drug testing are also perceived as important countermeasures (85% and 83% respectively) which aligns with the results of road safety issue concerns (where drink driving was in first place and drug driving was in third place).

In the open-ended responses, the open-link respondents tend to place more emphasis on greater training and education (32% mentioned) as opposed to law enforcement (15%). Conversely, law enforcement was the most prevalent suggestion spontaneously raised among representative sample, when asked for any other comments about safer roads and safe speeds.

3.2.3 Safe vehicles

A number of new safe vehicle countermeasures were tested in the survey this year. Vehicle technologies that enhance driver's vision and hazard detection capacity, including blind spot detection (86%) and reversing cameras and sensors (84%) are viewed as the most important countermeasures among the representative sample.

There continues to be an emphasis on driver's responsibility within both samples. Open-link respondents raised concerns around an increasing reliance on these safety technologies to the potential detriment of drivers' attention.

3.3 Planning for the future transport system

Respondents were asked to rank what they see as the most important measures to improve road safety over the next 40 years, from a list presented to them.

In line with the countermeasures results, vehicle technologies and road design measures are seen as most beneficial to improve the safety of future transport among the representative sample, including:

- Vehicle technology that monitors drivers and detects fatigue and distraction (49% included this in their top three);
- Measures that separate you from oncoming vehicles (47%); and
- Vehicle technology that ensures the vehicle stays within the speed limit (44%).

3.4 Attitudes towards road safety

The majority of the community shows desirable attitudes towards road safety behaviours, with the vast majority (78% of the representative sample) endorsing driving within the speed limits at anytime and anywhere. Around two thirds of the representative sample (65%) also agreed that using existing cameras to enforce other road rule offences would help to improve road safety.

In addition, there are very high levels of support in the community for the NSW Government in aiming for a zero-road toll by 2056 (84% for the representative sample and 74% for the open-link).

4 Conclusions

Overall, the results show a shared concern among the NSW community for key road safety issues, and strong support for measures to improve safety on NSW roads.

All of the countermeasures presented are deemed important to the NSW community, with between 66% and 87% of the representative sample rating each countermeasure as 'very important' or 'fairly important'. This high level of support for countermeasures is a consistent finding across all elements of the safe system.

Encouragingly, the majority of the NSW community show desirable attitudes towards road safety, and there is strong support for aiming for a zero road toll by 2056.