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Meesmann, U. & Boets, S. (2014), *Politique criminelle et adhésion sociale aux mesures. Résultats de la mesure d'attitudes en matière de sécurité routière menée tous les trois ans par l'IBSR*. Bruxelles, Belgique : Institut Belge pour la Sécurité Routière – Centre de connaissance Sécurité routière.

Summary

The Belgian Institute for Road Safety (BIVV/IBSR) attitude survey is based on 1,540 interviews with drivers whose principal residence is in Belgium and who had driven a car or delivery van at least 1,500 km in the six months preceding the interview. The interviews were conducted verbally by the research agency Significant GfK in September and October 2012.

In the attitude survey, respondents were asked to provide their opinion on a number of statements. Each attitude statement was examined to determine whether or not there was a correlation between the statement and certain driver characteristics (gender, age and region). The percentages were also calculated for the different categories of answers; where possible the figures were compared with those from previous attitude surveys conducted by the BIVV/IBSR and with results from other sources. The existence of significant differences depending on the respondent's gender, age or region was examined.

The attitude survey 2012 comprised several sections. This report only includes results related to enforcement of and support for measures. With regard to enforcement, we are concentrating in the BIVV/IBSR attitude survey on questions about the personal experiences with roadside checks and punishments (objective chance of being caught/chance of being prosecuted) and the subjective estimate of the chance of being checked or being punished (subjective chance of being caught/chance of being prosecuted). Furthermore, we examined the attitude of the drivers regarding measures that are part of the current traffic safety policy. We asked the respondents for their opinions about the current and potential measures and about what helps them to drive safely at the moment. The most important findings can be summarised as follows.

ENFORCEMENT

Subjective estimate of the chance of being caught

- The subjective chance of being caught concerns the respondent's personal estimate of the chance of being checked for a traffic violation while driving. For each theme studied (speeding, drugs, alcohol and seatbelts), we asked respondents to assess how big the chance was (very little chance to extremely high chance) of being checked during a typical drive.
- Belgian drivers think that the chance of being checked during a typical drive is the highest for speeding violations. 33% of the drivers think that chance is high or extremely high. Moreover, 18% of drivers think that the chance of being checked for wearing a seatbelt is high or extremely high. Significantly fewer drivers (around 7% each time) think that these roadside checks have an influence on driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Compared to 2009, we have seen no significant changes with regard to the subjective chance of being caught for the stated types of violations.
- Just as with the attitude measurements of 2003, 2006 and 2009, fewer than 2% of drivers think that the chance of being caught while driving under the influence of alcohol is "extremely high". This result is far below the objectives of the General Assembly for Road Safety (Staten-Generaal van de Verkeersveiligheid, SGVV).
- The subjective change of being caught for driving too fast and not wearing a seatbelt significantly varies depending on the driver's age and region. Young drivers (18-29) and middle-aged drivers (39-49) estimate the chance of being checked for speeding to be higher than those in other age groups. Middle-aged drivers (39-49) estimate the chance of being checked for wearing a seatbelt to be higher than those in other age groups.
- What is extremely noticeable is that many more Flemish drivers (43%) estimate that the chance of being checked for speeding is high to very high than drivers from Wallonia or Brussels (each representing 15%, just like in 2009). An interesting change in comparison to 2009 is the subjective estimate of the chance of being checked for wearing a seatbelt. This significantly increased in Wallonia and Brussels between 2009 and 2012, while it slightly decreased in Flanders (Wallonia: 10% → 32%; Brussels: 12% → 30%; Flanders: 18% → 11%). There were no significant differences based on gender, age or region regarding the subjective chance of being caught while driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs.

Personal impression of the evolution of roadside alcohol tests

- About half (46%) of the drivers are of the opinion that the number of roadside alcohol tests has increased in the past year. The other half (48%) think that the situation has remained the same. Only 6% of the respondents feel that the number of roadside alcohol tests has decreased in the past year.
- Primarily those living in Brussels (60%), followed by those living in Wallonia (50%), and then lastly those living in Flanders (39%) have the impression that the number of roadside alcohol tests has increased in the last year.

Subjective estimate of the chance of being prosecuted

- The subjective chance of being prosecuted describes the respondent's personal estimate of the chance of actually being punished for an established traffic violation. We asked the respondents: "In your opinion, how high is the chance that a driver who was caught by the police for a traffic violation, such as driving under the influence of alcohol or speeding, will then actually be prosecuted (e.g. have to pay a fine)? This question has nothing to do with whether you yourself occasionally break a traffic rule or your impression about the number of roadside checks."
- Belgian drivers estimate the chance of being prosecuted after an established traffic violation to be fairly high. 64% of respondents are of the opinion that the chance of being prosecuted is high or extremely high. 13% estimate that there is little to very little chance of actually being prosecuted after an established traffic violation. These subjective estimates contrast with the figures from the judicial district of the Court of Appeal in Ghent, for example, indicate that the actual chance of being prosecuted for traffic violation cases is significantly higher than the respondents' subjective estimates (dismissal rates for traffic violation cases from 2005 to 2011 between 3 and 6%).
- Flemings (70%) estimate the chance of being prosecuted after an established traffic violation more often be high or extremely high, unlike drivers from Wallonia (58%) and Brussels (54%). Moreover, 39- to 49-year-olds (68%) are more often of the opinion that the chance of being prosecuted is high or extremely high compared to those aged 63 and older (57%). Just as with the subjective chance of being caught, we also found no significant difference regarding the subjective chance of being prosecuted based on the gender of the driver.

Objective chance of being caught

- The objective chance of being caught concerns the actual amount of checks carried out in a specific time interval. In 2012, we asked the respondents: "How many times during the past 12 months, have you been stopped by the police for a roadside check?"
- In 2012, 27% of the drivers indicated that they have been stopped by the police for a roadside check in the last 12 months.
- In 2012, 14% of the respondents indicated that they had been given a breathalyser test for alcohol one or more times by the police in the last 12 months. This was 12% of the drivers in 2009 and 7% in 2006.
- The percentage of drivers that indicated that they have not been checked at any point in the last 12 months for alcohol has decreased slightly throughout the years (2006: 92%; 2009: 88%; 2012: 86%). With 14% of drivers checked for alcohol use, we are very far from obtaining the objective formulated by the SGVV in 2007 of checking one in every three drivers for driving while under the influence of alcohol.
- Just like in earlier editions, we found that men (17%) significantly more often report having been checked for alcohol than women (11%). The youngest drivers (26%) were also tested significantly more often than other age groups (30-38: 12%; 39-49: 17%; 50-62: 11%; 63+: 8%). We noted a linear decrease in the number of alcohol tests in 2009 with increasing age. The fact that more 39 to 49-year-olds say they were tested in 2012 than 30 to 38-year-olds appears to be a new phenomenon.

Self-reported fines for a traffic violation

- Compared to 2009 and 2006, we have noted a significant increase in the number of drivers who had to pay a fine for a traffic violation (2012: 34%; 2009: 25%; 2006: 22%). In 2012 66% of drivers reported that they had not had to pay a single traffic fine in the past 1 months; 25% reported fines for speeding violations and 11% reported fines for parking incorrectly/obstruction. Only 1% of the respondents reported being fined for not wearing a seatbelt, and also less than 1% each for all the other possible reasons listed, including driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, manually (i.e. not using a hands-free device) making a call behind the wheel or not securing children correctly.

SUPPORT FOR MEASURES***Opinions on the current rules and punishments***

Societal support for stricter rules:

- Belgian drivers believe that primarily the rules on drugs (89% of the respondents) and alcohol (78% of the respondents) while driving should be stricter. The support for making the rules stricter for wearing a seatbelt and especially for speed is much lower (seatbelts: 59%; speed: 53%).
- Women are more often of the opinion than men that the rules should be stricter; this difference is significant for the four types of traffic violations. Furthermore, every type of violation has the least support among the youngest age group (aged 18-29) concerning making the rules stricter and the most support among the oldest age category (63+). The most systematic increase of the support in increasing age is for making the speed limits stricter.

Societal support for intensifying the roadside checks:

- Belgian drivers are above all of the opinion that driving under the influence of drugs (68%) and alcohol (58%) is not checked enough. 51% of the respondents think that the use of a seatbelt should be checked more.
- The support for intensifying the roadside checks is higher among women than men concerning the four types of violations. This difference is significant when it concerns checks for driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs. Furthermore, primarily older drivers (63+) are advocates for more checks. As for speed, we see - just like in previous editions – a linear increase in the support for more checks with increasing age. Flemish drivers (34%) are less often of the opinion that speed is insufficiently checked than their counterparts in Wallonia (44%) or Brussels (48%).

Opinions on stricter punishments:

- Just 5% of respondents were of the opinion that the current sanctions for driving under the influence of drugs are too severe and 10% thinks this about sanction for driving under the influence of alcohol. The number of drivers who feel that the sanctions for not wearing a seatbelt or speeding violations are too severe is significantly higher (seatbelt: 27%; speed: 33%).
- Men are often significantly more of the opinion that the current sanctions for drugs, alcohol and speeding are too severe than women. The youngest drivers (aged 18-29) are most often of the opinion that the sanctions are too severe for each of the four types of violations. We see an (almost) linear decrease according to increasing age in the percentage of drivers that are of the opinion that the sanctions for speeding and driving under the influence are too severe. People in Wallonia are significantly more often of the opinion that sanctions for driving under the influence of alcohol and speeding violations are too severe than people in Brussels (alcohol: Wallonia 14%, Flanders 10%, Brussels 8%; speed: Wallonia 40%, Flanders 34%, Brussels 30%).

Support for potential measures

- We also asked the respondents for their opinions on the following three potential measures (by potential measures, we mean traffic safety measures that do not yet exist in Belgium, but could be implemented in the future): (1) “There should be a driving licence with points for traffic violations that can lead to the licence being taken away when a number of points has been

exceeded”; (2) “Drivers who have been caught driving under the influence of alcohol more than once should be required to install a breath alcohol ignition interlock device”; (3) “Zero tolerance (0.0 percent) concerning alcohol should be implemented for beginner drivers (having a licence for less than two years)”.

- Of the three potential traffic safety measures, the support for zero tolerance (0.0 percent) concerning alcohol should be implemented for beginner drivers (having a licence for less than two years) is the highest. 79% of drivers are in agreement with this. 77% of drivers feel that drivers who have already been caught driving under the influence of alcohol more than once should be required to install a breath alcohol ignition interlock device. Slightly less than half of the respondents agrees with the implementation of a driving licence with points (49%). Compared to 2009, we cannot see any significant difference with regard to support for the stated potential measures.
- More women than men are advocates for the three potential measures, but the difference regarding the breath alcohol ignition interlock device was not significant. As might be expected, the youngest age group (aged 18-29) are significantly less supportive of a zero tolerance for alcohol for novice drivers than all the other age groups. Older respondents (63+) are significantly more in agreement with a breath alcohol ignition interlock device for drivers who have been caught driving under the influence of alcohol more than once than all of the other age groups. Flemish drivers (75%) are significantly less in agreement with the breath alcohol ignition interlock device than drivers from Brussels (82%). The support for a driving licence with points, on the other hand, is significantly greater in Flanders (54%) than in Brussels (37%) and Wallonia (40%).

Subjective evaluation of traffic safety measures.

- Belgian drivers (75%) are primarily of the opinion that safe road design could help to increase traffic safety, followed by police checks (71%), heavy fines (65%), automated cameras (65%), awareness-raising campaigns (55%), and notifications of accidents in the media (54%).
- Generally women more often than men indicate that certain measures currently help them to drive safely. This difference is significant regarding heavy fines, automated cameras and awareness-raising campaigns. As for heavy fines and automated cameras, young drivers (aged 18-29) are much less of the opinion than those aged 39 and over that these measures currently help them to drive safely. Finally, it appears that more people from Wallonia (76%) than Brussels (63%) and Flanders (64%) are of the opinion that automated cameras help them to drive safely. Furthermore, Flemish drivers estimate the effectiveness of awareness-raising campaigns (49%) and notifications of accidents (48%) to be significantly lower than drivers from Brussels (63% and 66%, respectively) and Wallonia (66% and 64%, respectively) do. Significantly fewer drivers from Flanders (48%) than those from Wallonia (64%) and Brussels (66%) are of the opinion that notifications of accidents help them to drive more safely.

CONCLUSION ON ENFORCEMENT OF AND SUPPORT FOR MEASURES

The general conclusion of the BIVV/IBSR attitude survey is that there is still a great deal of effort to be made to achieve a number of the objectives adopted by the General Assembly of 2007. The general attitudes of the Belgian drivers show that there is broad public support for dealing with the issue of traffic safety. The combined approach using enforcement, awareness-raising campaigns and infrastructural measures must be continued, and supported by an extensive study to determine the specific target groups concerning their specific problems (i.e. behaviour and attitudes). Focused actions in the area of enforcement and awareness raising communication and education will contribute to increased traffic safety.

NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

On the basis of the results of this study and the current status of academic research, the BIVV/IBSR calls for further research in the following areas:

- Continue the attitude measurement studies in general, and more specifically when it comes to enforcement of and support for measures.

- Expand the additional objective data concerning the objective chance of being caught based on police data.
- More in-depth research into the relationship between subjective and objective chances of being caught and their relative influence on traffic safety behaviour.
- Further analysis of the objective chance of being caught, the link between driver characteristics and the specifications applying to the checks (e.g. location and time of checks).
- Expand the knowledge of the effects of certain measures, such as the effect of the type and severity of sanctions or the effect of the various types of police checks (e.g. speed cameras, section control, mobile police checks).



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