

Survey: Driver attitudes going from bad to worse

Almost 90% of South African motorists believe compliance with the laws of the road has worsened over the past two years. And, according to a recent survey by the Automobile Association (AA), nearly 75% of people also believe the attitude of motorists towards one another has deteriorated over this period.



Conducted in April, the results of the survey form part of ongoing research by the AA into driving conditions, driver attitudes, and driver behaviour on the country's roads. Just under 1000 people were polled for this survey.

Nationally the results show 88% of motorists believe adherence to the rules of the road is worse since 2015, which is consistent across provinces with results ranging between 83 to 100%. In Mpumalanga, for instance, 83% of drivers believe non-adherence is getting worse while in the Northern Cape and North West provinces, 100% of drivers hold the same opinion.

“These results are actually quite breath-taking as they seem to indicate, once again, that most motorists believe the problems on South African roads are someone else's fault. Given our country's high Easter road fatality rate, this attitude implies not enough motorists are taking responsibility for their actions, which is worrying,” the AA noted.

Visible policing on the roads

According to the results, just over 55% of motorists nationally believe visible policing on roads has also declined, with only 13% of respondents saying they think it has improved since 2015.

Provincially, the picture looks like this. N/A answers were indicated as ‘I don’t know’, or ‘This does not apply to me’.

Province	Getting Worse	Remained the same	Getting Better	N/A
Eastern Cape	70.73%	24.39%	4.88%	0.00%
North West	70.00%	10.00%	10.00%	10.00%
KwaZulu-Natal	66.93%	29.13%	3.94%	0.00%
Western Cape	61.43%	21.97%	14.80%	1.79%
Free State	60.87%	26.09%	8.70%	4.35%
Mpumalanga	55.56%	33.33%	5.56%	5.56%
Gauteng	51.24%	32.05%	15.80%	0.90%
Northern Cape	40.00%	60.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Limpopo	26.09%	56.52%	17.39%	0.00%

“A more pragmatic approach is needed to deal with the issues on our roads. In addition to having more traffic officers on our roads, law enforcers need to be given the necessary resources to effectively do their jobs. But road safety doesn’t only reside with traffic officials; the entire justice system needs to be involved to ensure offenders are aware there are punitive consequences for their actions. And, road users must also play their part.

“Reckless and negligent driving is something every driver can avoid, but, it seems, too many are shirking their duty to be responsible motorists,” the AA lamented.

Road conditions in some areas also slid

In addition to the overall belief that abiding by the laws of the road has worsened, is a belief road conditions have also slid since 2015. Close on 61% of motorists nationally said overall road conditions have deteriorated over the past two years, with common problems being potholes, missing or damaged road signs, and faulty traffic lights.

Overall road conditions, however, appear to be better in the Western Cape; 29% of respondents in this province said road conditions were getting better, compared to 38% who said they were getting worse. In Gauteng, only 10% said conditions were improving, while 67% said they are getting worse.

Major cause for concern

Faulty traffic lights are also a major cause of concern, especially in metropolitan areas where faulty lights in the morning and afternoon add to congestion, and traffic problems.

Among the respondents, 45% said the situation with faulty traffic lights is worsening, while 40% said the situation remains unchanged. Close on 13% of respondents said the situation is improving.

“This survey again highlights that too many drivers believe road traffic laws don’t apply to them, which, when combined with what is perceived to be lower police visibility, is perhaps part of the reason for our country’s high road fatality statistics. Unless driver attitudes improve, in addition to more effective policing, the carnage on South African roads will continue unabated,” the AA concluded.