

Road rage levels still high

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More than a half (54%) of South African drivers claim to have been on the receiving end of aggressive or threatening driving behaviour in the past 12 months, according to a recent study by Synovate.

This has dropped from a previous survey conducted in August 2005 by Synovate which found that 67% of those interviewed reportedly experienced some aggressive behaviour at them in the most recent 12 months.

At the time, more than one in ten people (11%) reported experiencing aggressive behaviour where the person actually got out of their vehicle to threaten them. This has dropped marginally to 8% in May 2007.

For the current survey, 1986 respondents in Gauteng, Durban and Cape Town were asked about various acts of road rage experienced – ranging from persistent honking of horns to actual physical violence.

Results from the current reading show that drivers from Gauteng experience more road rage than drivers in other metropolitan areas - 57% claim to have experienced aggressive or threatening driving behaviour and 59% have been on the receiving end of rude gestures or verbal insults.

“Gauteng has a very high level of traffic congestion which could easily contribute to the high levels of road rage experienced,” explains Jon Salters, Managing Director of Synovate Sub-Saharan Africa. “In a previous study, Synovate found that over a third (35%) of Gauteng residents spend over an hour, sometimes even over two hours sitting in the traffic everyday. This will no doubt lead to a higher degree of tension and stress on the roads.”

When asked where and when these aggressive behaviours occur, most South African respondents cited that it was on the commute to or from work. Given the delays and stress on the road this may seem inevitable. Again, this sentiment was higher in Gauteng than in Cape Town or Durban.

Females (27%) reported a higher number of experiences while driving for leisure purposes when compared to males (18%).


The bulk of South African motorists tend to demonstrate their aggression from within their vehicle, using flashing lights, rude gestures and hooting to indicate their anger. On a positive note though, this reading (May 2007) shows a sharp decline in rude gestures and verbal insults – dropping to 55% from 71% in August 2005.

In the current reading only 3% claim to have been a victim of road rage which involved physical assault or use of a weapon. Females tend to show their frustration in a less aggressive manner – 30% report persistent hooting at other drivers, compared to 27% of men who do the same.


More South Africans admit to directing aggressive or threatening driving behaviour at other drivers in this reading. 12% confess to doing so compared to 9% in August 2005. Once again Gauteng emerges as the province most riddled with road rage. More than a quarter of Gauteng residents (28%) admit to using rude gestures and verbal insults to show frustration on the roads.

Drivers over 50 years of age appear to be the least hostile drivers. Only one-fifth (20%) claim that they have used rude gestures or verbal insults on the road.

I have experienced from other drivers

Activity	May 2007	August 2005
Persistent flashing headlights	49%	64%
Persistent hooting	45%	49%
Rude gestures / verbal insults	55%	71%
Aggressive / threatening driving behaviour	54%	67%
Threatening behaviour where the person physically got out of their vehicle	8%	11%
Physical assault / use of a weapon	3%	2%
 © Synovate 2007 Source: Synovate Road Rage Study n = 1 986 and n = 301 (August 2005)		

I have directed at other drivers

Activity	May 2007	August 2005
Persistent flashing headlights	28%	33%
Persistent hooting	28%	27%
Rude gestures / verbal insults	26%	31%
Aggressive / threatening driving behaviour	12%	9%
Threatening behaviour where the person physically got out of their vehicle	3%	3%
Physical assault / use of a weapon	1%	1%
 © Synovate 2007 Source: Synovate Road Rage Study n = 1 986 and n = 301 (August 2005)		

More than a third (39%) of South Africans described themselves as being slow and cautious drivers. By their own observation, Durbanites see themselves as the most cautious out of all areas surveyed. Almost half (45%) of those interviewed rate themselves as driving neither particularly slowly nor particularly fast! Very few drivers admit to being extremely fast and reckless drivers (2%).

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