



**ADVOCATES  
FOR HIGHWAY  
AND AUTO SAFETY**  
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## **HIGHLIGHTS OF FINDINGS**

### **State and Local Issues**

**A Survey of the Attitudes of the American People on Highway & Auto Safety**

*Wave Five of a Periodic Tracking Survey*

*A Public Opinion Poll conducted by*

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*For*

**ADVOCATES FOR HIGHWAY AND AUTO SAFETY**

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Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates), an alliance of consumer, health, safety and insurance groups working together to advance highway and auto safety, recently sought to determine how Americans feel about specific highway and auto safety issues in their state, especially as they relate to public policy inventions that will improve safety. To do so, Advocates commissioned a well-known national pollster, Louis Harris, to survey a cross-section of 1,003 adults between May 14 and June 3, 2004. This is the fifth poll Harris has conducted for Advocates.

These surveys have dealt with the basic parameters of public consent in America for state government action to improve highway safety. As with earlier waves, this year's survey covers a broad spectrum of issues, including how important Americans feel the role of state governments should be in adopting highway safety laws. Highlights of the findings of the latest public opinion survey are:

#### **Strong Support for Seat Belt Enforcement**

The public appears to recognize the importance of buckling up to save lives and is ready to accept the idea that stronger enforcement is required to get more passengers to use their seat belts. 29 states still need primary enforcement seat belt laws.

- *Better than a 4-to-1 majority (80% to 19%) feels that "seat belt laws should be enforced just like any other traffic law."*
- *69% of Americans want public safety officials to give enforcing seat belt laws more attention.*

#### **Enforcement of Laws to Protect Children in Motor Vehicles**

Motor vehicle crashes continue to be the leading cause of death for our children. With more than 50% of the public saying that they transport children between the ages of one and eight years old, the safety of these children is clearly on the minds of Americans.

- *By a wide margin of 84% to 14%, the public is strongly in favor of a law in every state to require children between the ages of four and eight to be in a booster seat.*
- *By an even greater margin of 90% to 10%, nine of ten Americans favor state laws that would make it illegal to leave children unattended in motor vehicles.*

### **Cracking Down on Drunk Drivers**

Clearly, the American people are ripe and ready for another major crackdown on drunk driving.

- *An 80% to 18% majority now favors “police checkpoints to spot drunk drivers.”*
- *A 92% to 6% majority nationwide favors “impounding the cars of repeat drunk drivers.”*
- *Another substantial majority of 82% to 15% favors “installing in cars owned or driven by repeat offenders ignition devices that measure the level of alcohol in the blood before the driver can start the motor vehicle.”*
- *87% of Americans feel that drunk driving should receive more attention by public safety officials. This number is up from 82% in 2001.*

### **Mandatory Use of Motorcycle Helmets**

Since 1997, motorcycle deaths have increased 72%, and are at the highest levels since 1988. This past year, with 3,661 deaths reported, motorcycle deaths are up 12% from 2002, the second largest percentage increase since 1988. Thirty states still do not have all-rider helmet laws.

- *An 80% to 17% majority favors their state “requiring that all motorcyclists wear helmets.”*
- *Women favor mandatory wearing of helmets by motorcycle drivers by 91% to 7%, while men support such a measure by a substantially lower 68% to 28% margin.*

### **Controlling Reckless Driving in City and Town Neighborhoods**

The survey asked about five specific concerns affecting local safety:

- **Using Cell Phones while Driving.** *82% say that “cell phones used by drivers” needs more attention, including 65% who want it to receive much more attention. Several states and localities have passed laws that prohibit people from using cell phones while driving unless they use a hands-free device.*
- **Red Light Running.** *80% report that the problem of drivers running red lights should receive more attention, including 57% who want it to receive “much more attention,” up from 46% three years ago*
- **Speeding on Local Streets.** *79% say “speeding on local streets” needs more attention by public safety officials, including 59% who say it needs “much more attention.”*
- **Safety of Intersections.** *79% feel that “improving the safety of intersections” is a problem in need of more attention, including 50% who want it to receive much more attention, up from 43% in 2001.*
- **Pedestrian Crossings.** *71% feel that “making it safer for pedestrians to cross the street” is in need of more attention, including 46% who say it needs much more attention, up from 43% three years ago.*