

Public Voices Widespread Concern for Marijuana-Impaired Driving and Broad Support for Laws to Curb Distracted Driving

ENGINE'S CARAVAN SURVEY
Public Opinion Poll

January 2020



Commissioned by Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

Founded in 1989, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates) is an alliance of public health, safety, and consumer organizations, insurers and insurance agents that promotes highway and auto safety through the adoption of safety laws, policies and regulations. Advocates is a unique coalition dedicated to advancing safer vehicles, safer drivers and passengers, and safer roads.

Introduction

Each year motor vehicle crashes kill tens of thousands of people and injure millions more at a cost to society of over \$800 billion. According to the latest statistics from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 36,560 people were killed on our Nation's roads in 2018. Distracted and impaired driving are serious problems that contribute to this needless mortality toll.

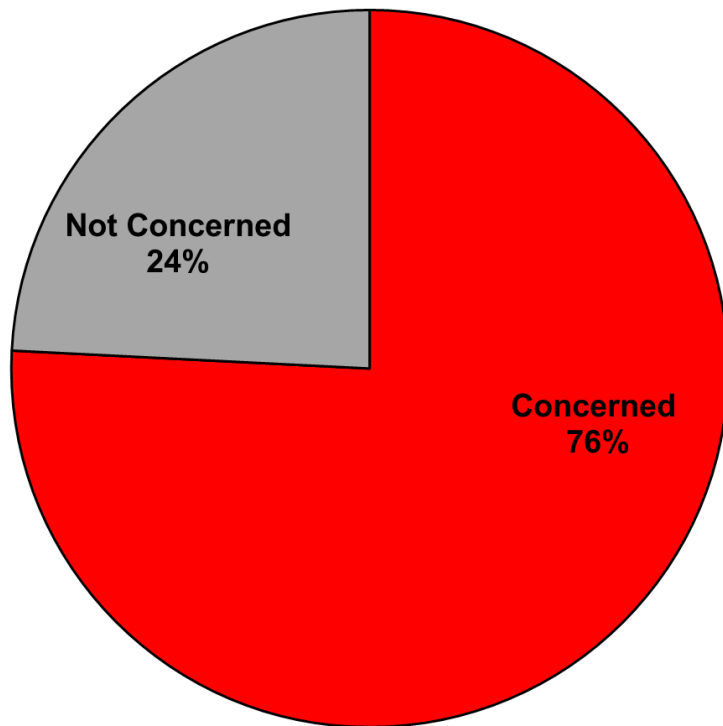
Impaired driving is a serious public health crisis with 10,511 people killed in alcohol-impaired driving crashes in 2018. Adding to this unacceptable amount are concerns about the impact of the widespread legalization of marijuana for medical and recreational use and the prevalence of other potentially impairing drugs on the frequency of drug-impaired driving incidences. According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, nearly 13 million people drove under the influence of illicit drugs in 2017. This includes nearly 12 million people who admitted to using marijuana and driving. Public health, safety and law enforcement agencies today face a myriad of challenges in their efforts to detect and deter drug-impaired driving including the absence of a standard for marijuana impairment, the amplifying effect of polyuse of more than one drug or drugs combined with alcohol, issues with data collection, and the need for efficient, verified roadside testing technology.

At a time when cell phone addiction and multitasking have become the norm, distracted driving has become a plague on our roadways. In 2018, 2,841 people were killed and approximately 400,000 were injured in crashes involving a distracted driver. Crashes in which at least one driver was identified as being distracted imposed an economic cost of \$40 billion in 2010. Moreover, issues with underreporting crashes involving cell phones remain because of gaps in police crash report coding, database limitations and other challenges. It is clear from an increasing body of research, studies and data that the use of electronic devices for telecommunications (such as mobile phones and text messaging), telematics and entertainment can easily distract drivers from the driving task. Crash risk increases dramatically – as much as four times higher – when a driver is using a mobile phone, with no significant safety difference between hand-held and hands-free phones observed in many studies. Currently, 45 states and the District of Columbia (DC) ban text messaging for all drivers subject to primary enforcement. However, given the growth of smart phone capability and usage and the broadening range of distracting electronic communication platforms (apps, social media, gaming, video chatting, etc.), state laws must be updated to reflect the ongoing development of wireless communication technology, the growth of platforms and communication options, and concern about their use while driving. Further, state grant funding is available from the federal government to incentivize states to take action on a range of safety issues. Supplemental incentive grant funding should be available to states that enact laws banning “non-navigational viewing.” This allows drivers to continue using their mobile phones for getting directions but bans all other distracting activities such as watching movies or playing games.

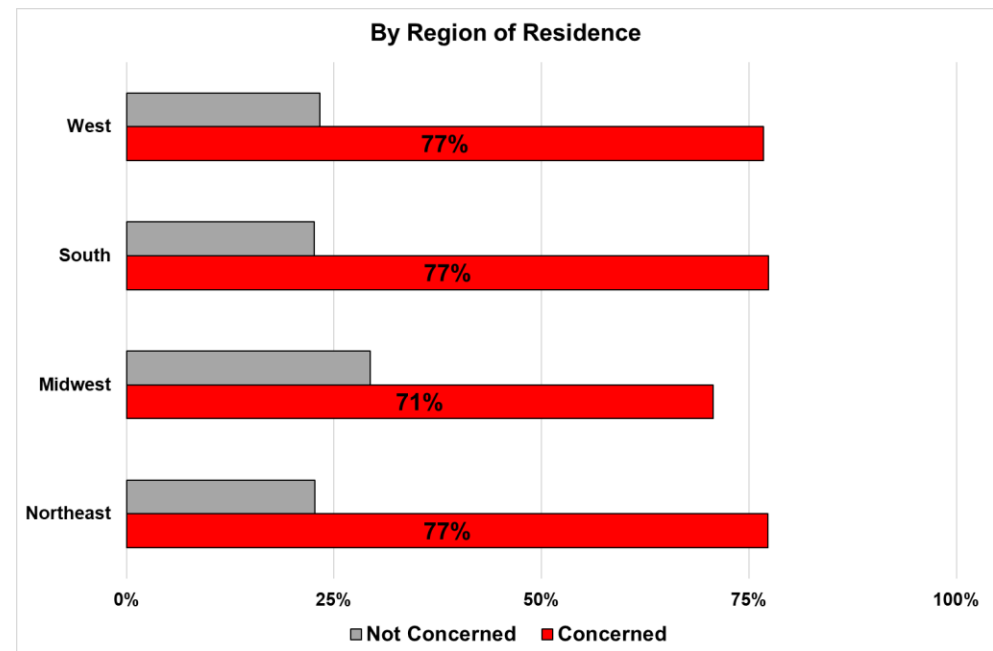
This poll was commissioned to take the pulse of the public regarding these important issues of drug-impaired and distracted driving.

Drug-Impaired Driving

An overwhelming majority of the public is concerned about impaired driving caused by marijuana use.

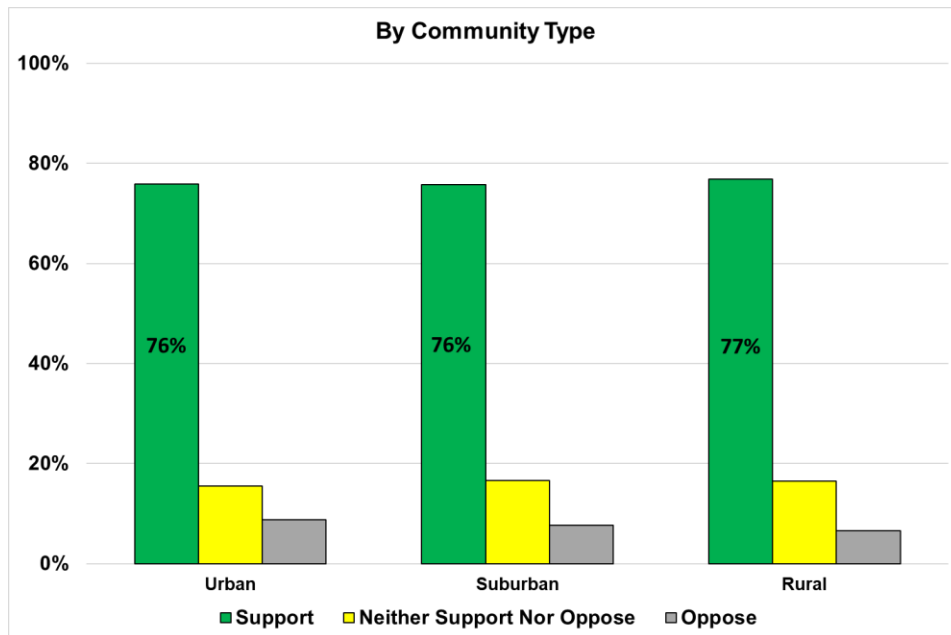
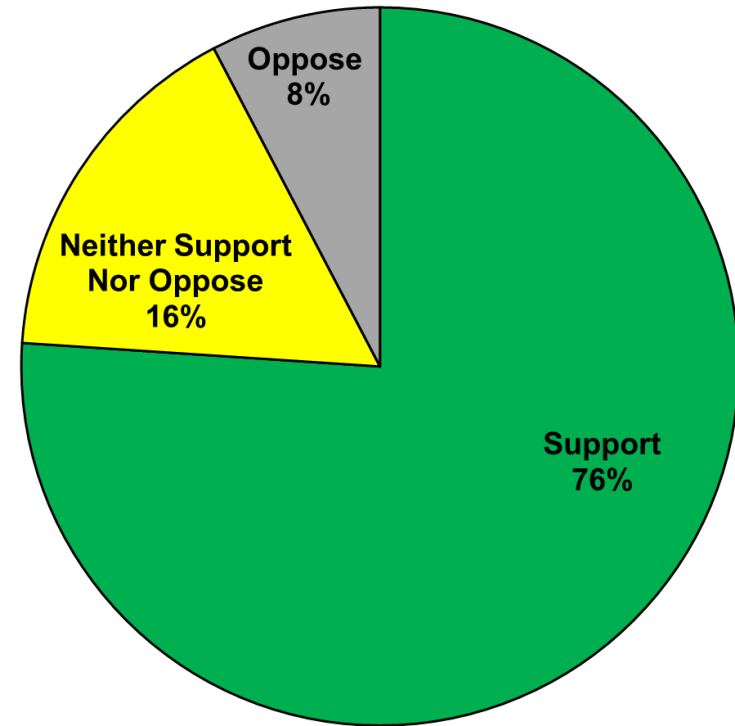


The public has said loud and clear – they are concerned about impaired driving caused by marijuana use. This apprehension is widespread across demographics including gender, generation, region and type of community.



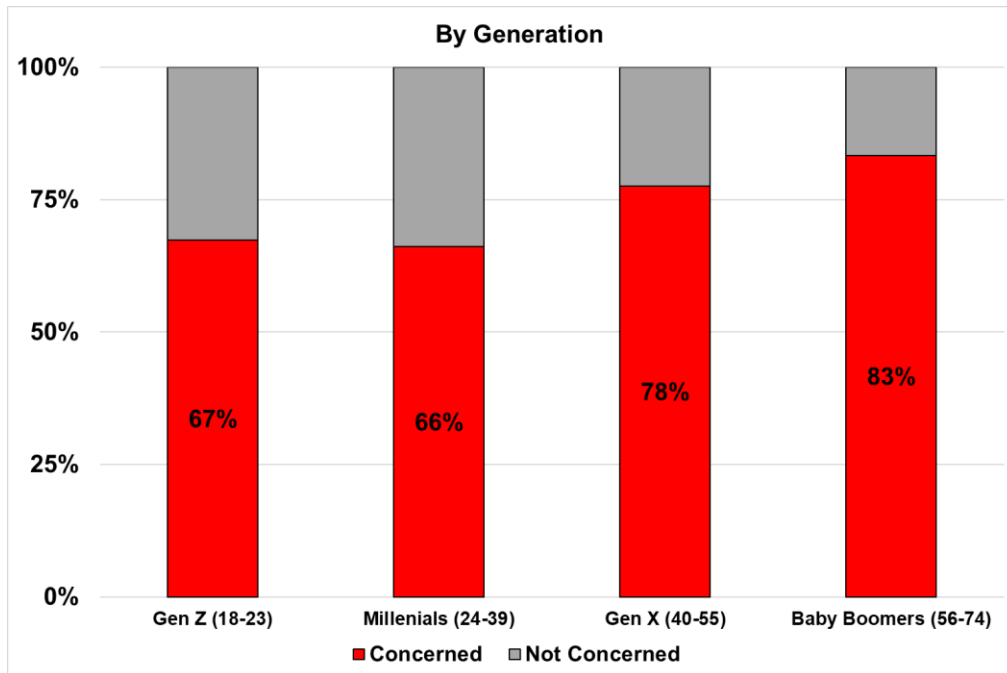
Sweeping support exists for better research and testing for drug impairment detection technology.

Respondents expressed support for research and testing to develop technology to detect drug impairment, akin to technology available today to measure alcohol impairment. This support exists across demographics including gender, generation, region and type of community.

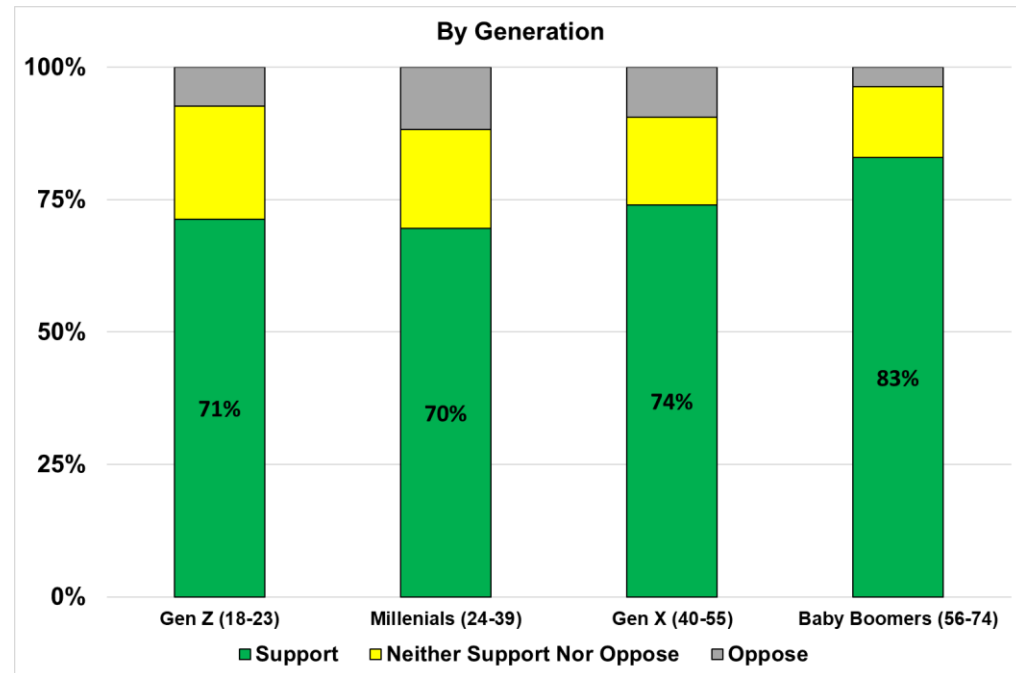


Consistency across generations.

Concern over impaired driving caused by marijuana use.

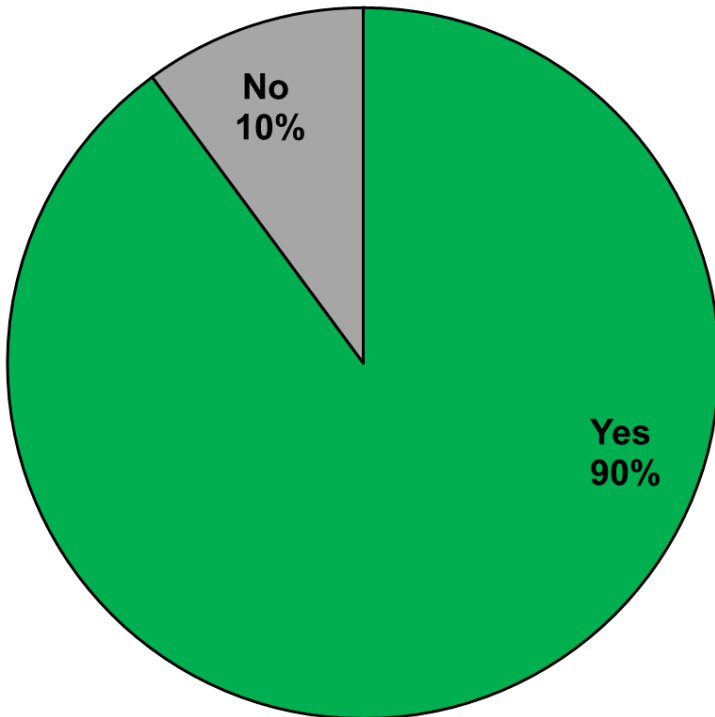


Support for research and testing to develop technology.

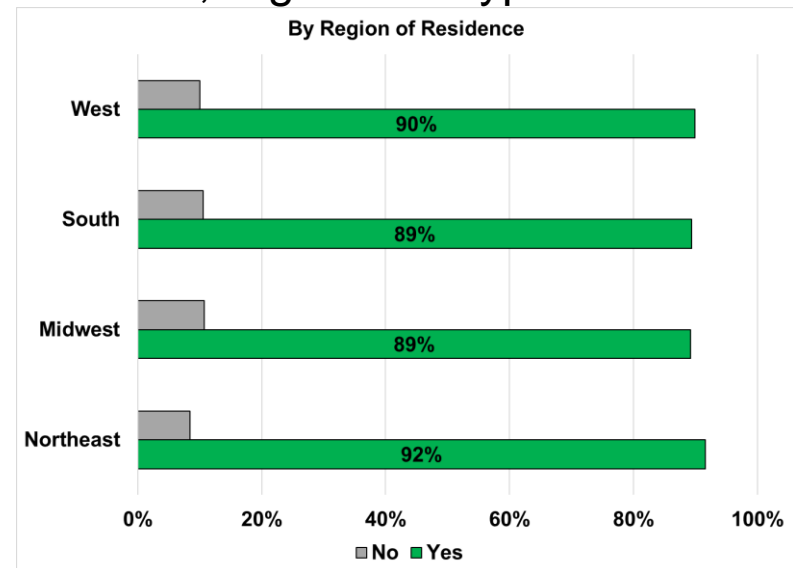


Distracted Driving

The public supports passage of state laws to prohibit distracting activities behind the wheel while still allowing use of phones for getting directions.

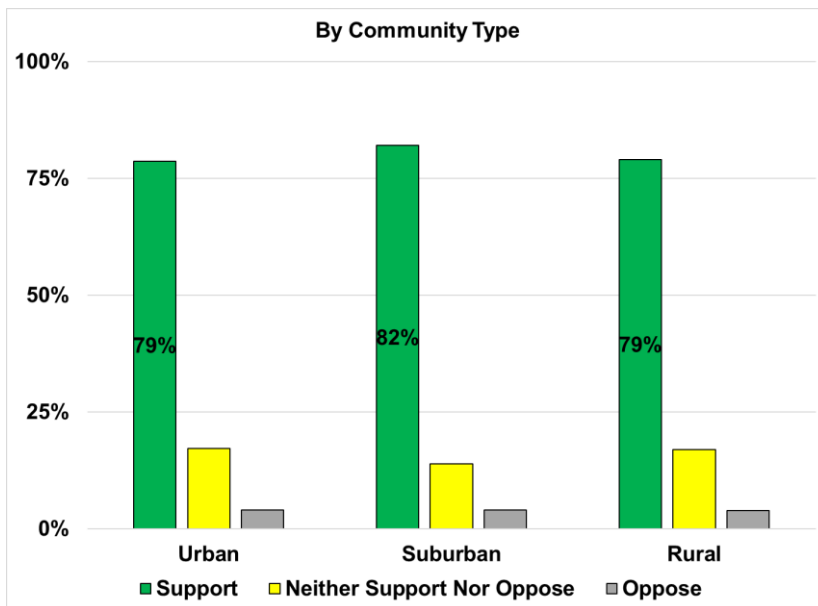
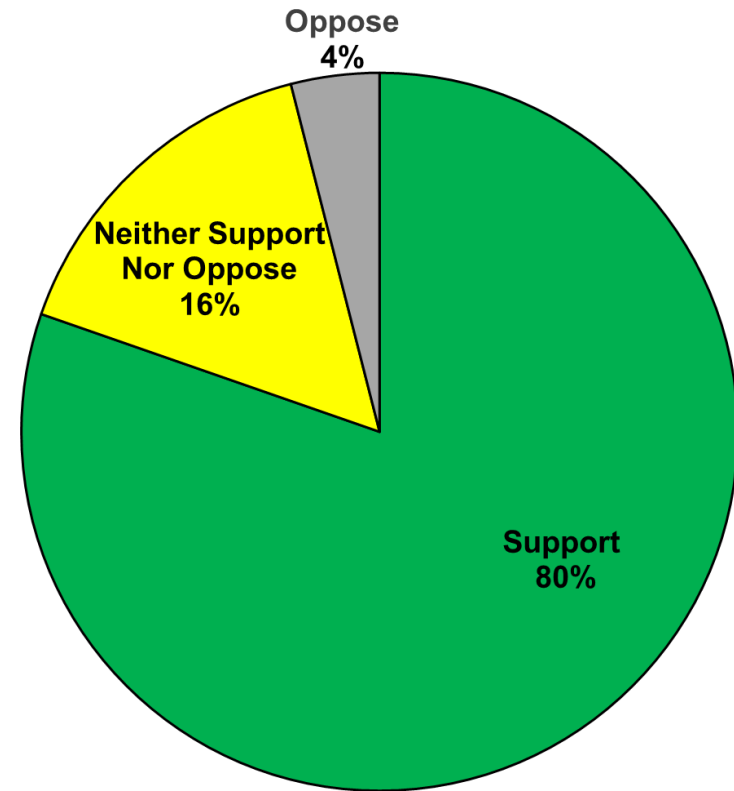


When asked if states should pass traffic safety laws prohibiting distracting activities when driving such as watching movies or playing video games, while still allowing the use of cell phones to get directions, the support was resounding and consistent across demographics including gender, generation, region and type of community.



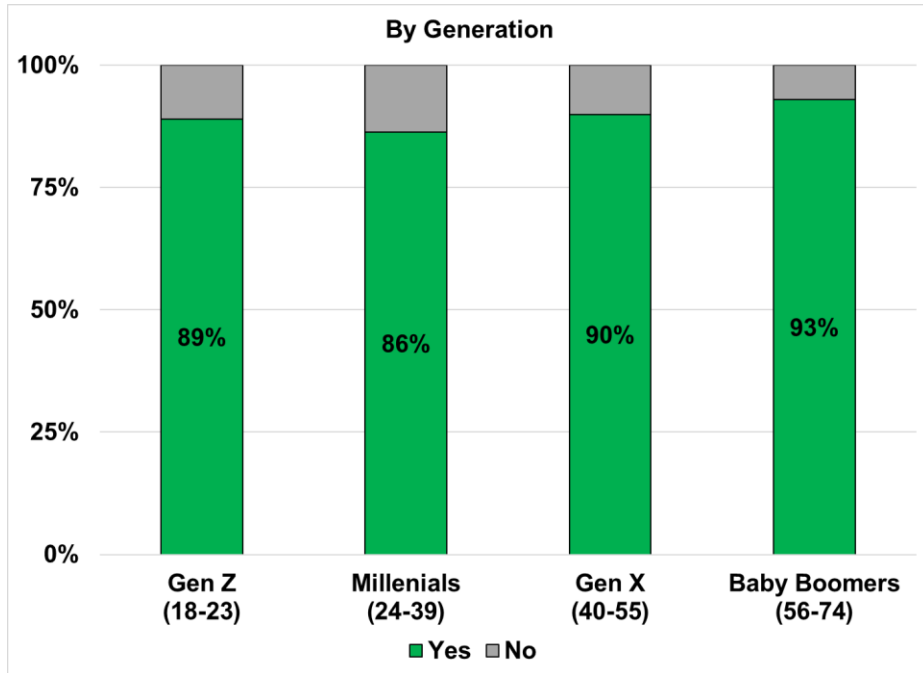
Grant money to incentivize states to pass better laws to curb distracted driving is widely supported.

The federal government has made grant funding available to award states when they pass laws to curb drunk driving, encourage child passenger safety, or address other safety problems. Clear support exists for providing states that pass better distracted driving laws with some grant money to increase public education and improve law enforcement. This support was consistent across demographics including gender, generation, region and type of community.



Consistency across generations.

Support for stronger distracted driving laws.



Support for incentive grant funding.

