

THE VINCI AUTOROUTES FOUNDATION PUBLISHES ITS EUROPEAN BAROMETER ON RESPONSIBLE DRIVING

## Despite improved awareness of risks, European drivers are slow to adopt safer behaviour

The VINCI Autoroutes Foundation is publishing the results of the 2016 European Barometer on Responsible Driving against the backdrop of an increase in the number of road fatalities in several European countries<sup>(1)</sup> in 2015. This vast Ipsos survey of a sample of 13,634 drivers in 11 European Union countries provides a snapshot of European driver conduct with a view to homing in on their risky behaviour and best practices, and to help target safety messages more appropriately in each country.

### European drivers are increasingly fatalistic about road traffic fatalities...

In 2016, only one out of two (49%) European drivers considers that the number of people killed on the road can be reduced to any great extent (compared with 45% in 2015). With the exception of Poland (51%, up 4 points), optimism has fallen in all countries, especially in Greece (down 10 points), Belgium

(down 9 points), and France, Germany and the Netherlands (down 6 points). The most pessimistic are the Slovaks: just 32% think that the number of people who die on the road can be reduced to any great extent.

### ... but without being any more self-critical: it's the others who are dangerous

► **Very accommodating when it comes to assessing their own driving** ((97% use at least one positive adjective), European drivers above all see themselves as careful (75%, and even 82% of Germans), calm (55%, and even 68% of Spaniards) or courteous (27%, and even 54% of British). They are also far less likely to lay the blame at their own door (only 14% use at least one negative adjective to describe their attitude): some do admit to being stressed (10% and even 16% for Greeks) and aggressive (4% and even 7% for Greeks). Indicative of the difficulty they have in being critical of their own driving, fewer than 1% admit that their driving is irresponsible or dangerous.

► **On the other hand, they are far less indulgent when it comes to other drivers**, as 84% use a negative adjective to describe their driving: 47% consider them irresponsible (66% in Greece), 37% stressed (65% in Sweden), 32% aggressive (40% in the UK) and 26% dangerous (40% in France). This negative perception of other drivers translates into the difficulty drivers have in getting behind the wheel with complete peace of mind or experiencing the road a peaceful shared space.

## Swedes and Italians perceived as the best and worst drivers respectively

► **37% of European drivers identify Sweden as the model country** for responsible driving (including the Swedes, as 61% of Swedish drivers rank themselves as the best drivers), ahead of Germany (25%) and well ahead of the 3rd ranking UK (12%) and the Netherlands (4th with 11%).

► **As last year, the Italians are considered the least responsible drivers** (according to 28% of Europeans). They are followed by the Greeks (18%), Poles (15%), French and Spaniards (8%). In fact, these last four place their respective countries at the top of the ranking of the least responsible drivers.

## Drivers continue to be very uncivil to each other

► 80% of Europeans state that they are afraid of the aggressive behaviour of other drivers. This feeling is particularly marked in France, Spain and Greece (85%), but less so in the Netherlands (65%).

► 54% admit to having sworn at another driver. This is notably the case for 70% of Greeks (although down 4 points on 2015), but just 29% of Swedes.

► 47% sound their horn excessively at drivers who annoy them;

a very widespread practice in Spain (66%), but far less so in Germany (29%).

► 30% admit to tailgating (44% of Greeks, down 5 points) or overtaking on the inside lane on the motorway (39% of Spaniards, British and Dutch).

► 16% even get out of their car to argue with another driver (26% in Poland).

## Persistent dangerous behaviour around non-compliance with basic road rules

► **Speeding:** 90% of Europeans admit they sometimes exceed the speed limit by a few kilometres/hour despite 45% believing that speeding is one of the main causes of road fatalities. The Slovaks are the least likely to admit to this infringement (83%), contrary to German and Swedish drivers (94%).

► **Maintaining a safe distance with the car ahead:** 63% fail to comply with this rule; a dangerous practice that is particularly widespread in France (76%) Sweden (75%) and Germany (73%), but far less so in the Netherlands (53%) and Poland (56%).

► **Indicating:** 55% of European drivers forget to indicate when overtaking or changing lanes. Flouting this rule is notably common in France (65%), but far less so in Slovakia and Poland (45%). The British (51%) and Spaniards (55%) have made progress in this area, as both are down 8 points compared with last year.

► **Motorway driving:** 55% of Europeans drive in the outside lane despite the inside lane being free of traffic; this practice is

very widespread in Greece (75% of drivers). 10% of Europeans drive in the emergency stopping lane.

► **Road works:** 53% of Europeans fail to slow down around road works; a practice that is particularly prevalent in Belgium (66%).

► **Seat belts:** 22% of European drivers say they sometimes forget to wear their seat belt when driving. The most lax in this area are the Greeks (52%), and the most rigorous are the French and British (8%).

► **Drink and drug driving:** 11% of European drivers get behind the wheel despite being over the legal limit. As many as 33% do so in Greece, 24% in Belgium and 16% in France; the most sensible are the Slovaks and Swedes (2%). Greek and Belgian drivers only decide not to drive after drinking 2.7 standard drinks on average, compared with the European average of 2.

## Drivers are aware of the risks around distractions but still fail to modify their behaviour

Connected objects, now part of drivers' everyday life, are having an increasing effect on risky driver behaviour, despite Europeans quoting inattentiveness as one of the main causes of fatalities (52% on general roads and 31% on motorways).

► **While 74% of Europeans are in favour of a complete ban on telephoning while driving**, 32% fail to use a hands-free kit. The worst offenders are the Greeks (55%) Slovaks (50%) and Poles (48%, although this figure is down 8 points on 2015).

► **31% telephone using earbuds or headphones.** Greeks top the ranking at 52%, just ahead of the Italians (51%). The British, the most in favour a complete ban on telephoning while driving, are also the most disciplined in this area, as just 12% telephone while driving.

- **42% of drivers use a Bluetooth system with integrated loud-speaker** (55% of Greeks and 48% of Italians).
- **37% adjust their GPS settings while driving.** Germans are most likely to engage in this practice (48%, although down 3 points on 2015), followed by the Poles (46%) and Belgians (45%).
- **One-quarter of all drivers send and/or read texts or emails;** the Italians top the list at 34%. The British continue to be the most sensible drivers in this respect (15%).
- **15% warn others about an event using a smartphone app or driving aid while driving** (25% of Greeks and Slovaks compared with 5% British drivers).

## Riske of drowsiness at the wheel: best practices still not being adopted by European drivers

40% of European drivers see drowsiness as one of the main causes of motorway fatalities, and 9% on roads in general. The French are correct in considering this risk to be the number one cause of deaths on the motorway.

Many Europeans have experienced first-hand the effects of drowsiness: **1 out of 4 (25%) think they may have dozed off for a few seconds while driving**, 14% have encroached on the emergency stopping lane or the hard shoulder because of a moment's inattentiveness or dozing off and 7% admit having had a minor accident because of fatigue.

And yet, too few Europeans are still not adopting measures to prevent this risk. Indeed, 71% think no-one should drive when tired (74% of British drivers but just 47% of Poles), despite this, 42% state they have continued to drive even when tired because they had to: 52% of

Germans compared with 36% of British (down 9 points) and 28% of Dutch.

Europeans suffer from chronic sleep debt, which is evidenced, according to specialist sleep doctors, by a significant difference between weeknight and weekend sleep time. This concerns 16% of drivers who sleep six hours or less on weeknights and then sleep normally on weekends and when on holiday. Prior to setting out on a long road trip, this sleep debt is worsened by certain practices that further eat into sleep time: **80% of Europeans go to bed later or get up earlier than usual, 75% finish getting ready late at night and 67% set off at night.**

This lack of sleep is then compounded by driving with taking breaks at sufficient intervals: **Europeans stop on average after driving for 3 hours and 6 minutes** (a 9 minute improvement on 2015).

While the Dutch, French, Spaniards and British take far more regular breaks (after an average of 2 hours and 48 minutes journey time), **no country's drivers comply with the recommended rest every two hours.**

Although **80% of Europeans believe that having a nap is a good way of combatting driver drowsiness**, there is considerable disparity between countries in how and when drivers stop for a nap. On average **56% of drivers stop to have a nap: 82% of Belgians, the frontrunners in this area, compared with just 37% of Greeks.**

Some drivers have however adopted certain best practices: 84% of Greeks and Germans include rest times in their overall journey times. 70% of Europeans change drivers on a long trip (78% of the French and 77% of Swedes, compared with 59% of British drivers).

THIS IS WHY ON THE EVE OF THE EASTER WEEKEND DEPARTURES, THE VINCI AUTOROUTES FOUNDATION FOR RESPONSIBLE DRIVING IS REMINDING DRIVERS OF A FEW SIMPLE RULES **TO LIMIT THE RISK OF DRIVER DROWSINESS:**

- ▶ **Get a full night's sleep before setting off**
- ▶ **Avoid leaving at night time (between 10.00 pm and 6.00 am)**
- ▶ **Take regular breaks throughout the trip, at least every two hours**
- ▶ **Stop at a rest area as soon as the first signs of fatigue appear**
- ▶ **Do not hesitate to regularly change drivers**
- ▶ **Test your alertness level using the Drive Awake app.**

## Method:

For this overview of European driving habits, Ipsos carried out an Internet survey between 1 February and 7 March 2016, on a sample of over 13,600 Europeans including 3,613 French, 1,002 Germans, 1,001 Belgians, 1,001 Spanish, 1,002 British, 1,003 Italians, 1,001 Swedes, 1,001 Poles, 1,001 Dutch, 1,005 Slovaks and 1,004 Greeks. The quota method was used to ensure the representativeness of each national sample.

## About the VINCI Autoroutes Foundation for Responsible Driving

Created in February 2011, the VINCI Autoroutes Foundation for Responsible Driving is a laboratory, observatory and source of information specifically focused on improving road safety. It aims to help bring about changes in driver behaviour and to encourage drivers to contribute to their own safety and to that of other road users. Its actions include: information campaigns to raise awareness of road risks; funding for innovative scientific research in certain areas of risky driver behaviour that have not been sufficiently explored or are poorly identified by road users; and finally to fund initiatives by non-profit associations or citizen initiatives aimed at encouraging responsible driving.

<http://fondation.vinci-autoroutes.com> (In French only) and <http://roulons-autrement.com>

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