



OHIO CITIZEN SURVEY 2007 - 2008

OHIOANS' ATTITUDES and BEHAVIORS
related to TRAFFIC SAFETY ISSUES and
THE OHIO STATE HIGHWAY PATROL

QUARTERLY REPORT #4
JULY 2008

Prepared by
the Ohio State Highway Patrol

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INTRODUCTION

In June, 2007 the Ohio State Highway Patrol's Office of Strategic Services began administering a written survey through Driver Examination (DX) Stations across the state. The Ohio Citizen Survey project, which is ongoing, is aimed at eliciting citizens' attitudes related to traffic safety and the Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP). Information from the survey is compiled and analyzed quarterly, and used to direct public information and education programs for improving traffic safety and services in Ohio.

Survey Development: Questions on the Ohio Citizen Survey were developed to meet a number of organizational needs and goals, and focus on three areas: *Perceptions about OSHP*; *Contact with OSHP*; and *Traffic Safety Opinions*. Respondents' demographic information was collected and used to compare responses. Zip code data collected on the survey were linked to a "primary" county, that is, the county in which the majority of the population having the zip code resides. Counties were then linked to OSHP Districts in order to examine responses at the District level.

In order to help encourage citizen participation in the survey, the survey was divided into four versions. Several questions appear on all versions, while other questions appear on one or two of the versions. Therefore, the total number of responses for a survey question varies by the particular question.¹ Surveys were printed on 5-inch by 8-inch card stock paper. Both the form's size and weight (i.e., in the absence of tables or clipboards) were chosen by OSHP staff to further encourage citizen participation. Survey questions were primarily closed-ended and categorical. The survey was designed for coordination with optical mark reader (OMR) scanning software and equipment, eliminating the need for manual data entry of the large volume of completed surveys.

¹ The total number of responses ("N") is provided for each item in the *Results* section.

INTRODUCTION

Survey Distribution: There are currently 89 active OSHP Driver Examination Stations operating statewide in Ohio (some operate part-time). Cumulatively, those stations administered over 260,000 driver exams in 2007, for an average of nearly 3,000 examinations per DX Station.² The majority of DX Stations (67%) administered 1,000 or more exams last year. An initial set of 5,000 survey cards was distributed among the 89 active DX Stations in June, 2007, and replacement cards were provided as needed thereafter.

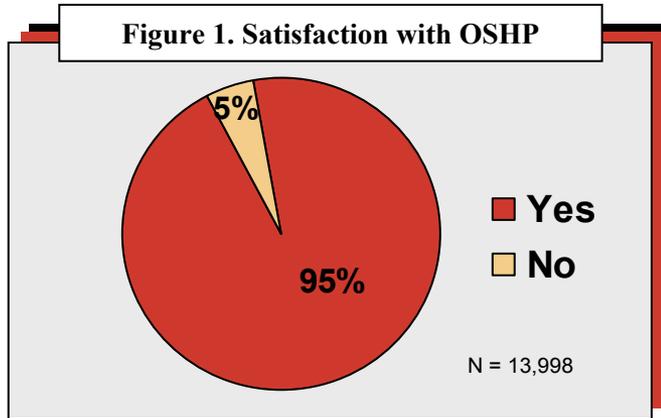
Data and Analysis: At the end of the fourth quarter of data collection (06/12/2008), 14,793 completed surveys of respondents 16 years of age or older were received and scanned into a database by OSHP staff. A continually growing response set will provide OSHP increasingly improved confidence in the reliability of the findings: as the number of survey responses in the database continues to grow through 2008, so will the accuracy of the analysis results in representing the attitudes and behaviors of Ohio citizens.

The following pages communicate results of the analysis of survey responses at the close of the fourth quarter of data collection. The report also identifies some points of comparison with a previous OSHP telephone survey of Ohio citizens. Concluding remarks are provided and, finally, selected comments from Ohio citizens. OSHP Staff will continue to administer the survey, collect and analyze data, and disseminate results through 2008.

² Standard Deviation = 3,249; Median = 1,903

PERCEPTIONS of OSHP

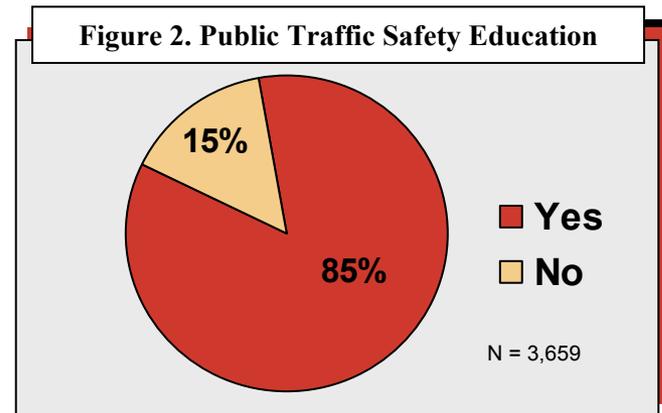
Q: ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH OSHP IN THE AREA OF TRAFFIC SAFETY ENFORCEMENT?



Nearly all (95%) respondents reported being satisfied with the Highway Patrol in terms of traffic safety enforcement. Responses differed slightly by gender (96% of females versus 93% of males responded “yes”). Respondents age 35 to 54 had the highest percentage reporting satisfaction with OSHP (96%), while 21- to 24-year-olds had the lowest percent reporting satisfaction (90%).

Q: DO YOU FEEL OSHP DOES ENOUGH TO EDUCATE THE PUBLIC ABOUT TRAFFIC SAFETY?

Most respondents felt that the Highway Patrol provides a sufficient level of traffic safety education to the public. Some differences were identified among respondents. Females responded “yes” more frequently than males (87% compared to 84%). Respondents between the ages of 21 and 24 responded “yes” less frequently than other age groups (76% for 21- to 24-year-olds compared to an average of 86% for other age groups).



PERCEPTIONS of OSHP

Q: IN WHAT TRAFFIC SAFETY AREAS WOULD YOU DESIRE TO SEE OSHP DO MORE ENFORCEMENT & EDUCATION?

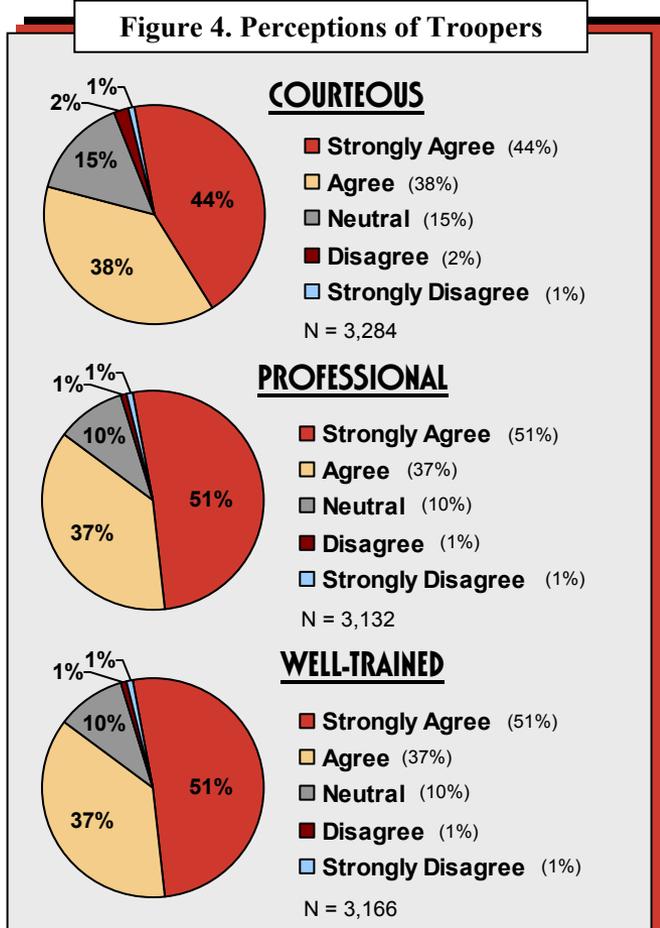
Figure 3. Areas in which More Enforcement & Education are Desired

	Of the 6,749 respondents who gave at least one answer:	
	# of Responses	% of 6,749
Reckless or aggressive drivers	4,497	67%
Drunk- or drug-impaired driving	4,188	62%
Distracted driving (cell phone use, eating, reading)	3,288	49%
Child safety seat violations	2,855	42%
Moving violations, like speeding & following too closely	2,613	39%
Unsafe equipment in cars and trucks	1,911	28%
Seatbelt violations	1,273	19%
Other	458	7%

Two-thirds (67%) of those responding reported that they would like to see more enforcement and education related to reckless or aggressive drivers and sixty-two percent (62%) desired more education and enforcement for impaired driving. Many respondents also reported the desire for increasing enforcement and education related to distracted driving (49%) and child safety seat violations (42%). Of the respondents who felt that the Ohio State Highway Patrol does *not* do enough to educate the public about traffic safety (see previous page), nearly three-quarters (74%) identified their desire for OSHP to increase enforcement and education related to reckless/aggressive driving; almost two-thirds (63%) felt there should be more education and enforcement related to drunk- or drug-impaired driving; and over half (55%) expressed a desire for more education and enforcement related to distracted driving behaviors.

PERCEPTIONS of OSHP

Q: OVERALL, I FEEL THAT TROOPERS ARE...

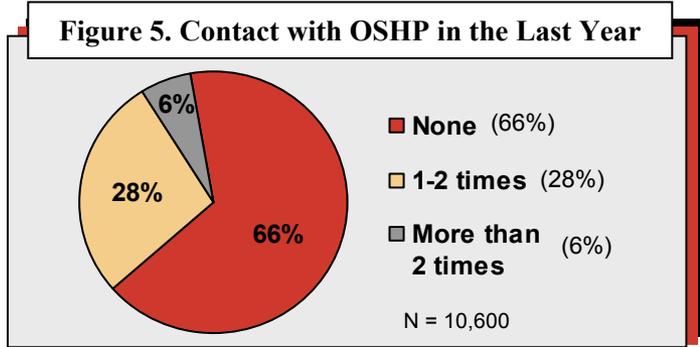


Most respondents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that Troopers are courteous (82%), professional (88%), and well-trained (88%). The percents were substantially lower for respondents who reported being *not satisfied* with OSHP in the area of traffic safety enforcement (52%, 65%, and 64%, respectively).

A higher proportion of female respondents than male respondents *strongly agreed* that troopers are courteous (45% versus 42%) and professional (51% versus 50%). More than half of both females and males (51% and 52%, respectively) *strongly agreed* that troopers are well-trained.

CONTACT with OSHP

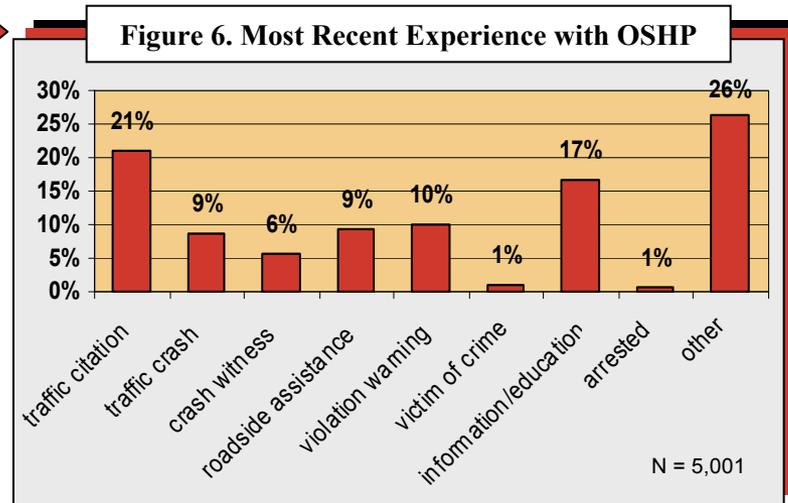
Q: HOW MANY TIMES DID YOU HAVE CONTACT WITH OSHP IN THE LAST YEAR?



← Nearly two-thirds (66%) of respondents reported having no contact with the Ohio State Highway Patrol in the last year. An additional twenty-eight percent (28%) of respondents had 1-2 contacts in the last year.

Q: WHAT WAS YOUR MOST RECENT EXPERIENCE WITH OSHP?

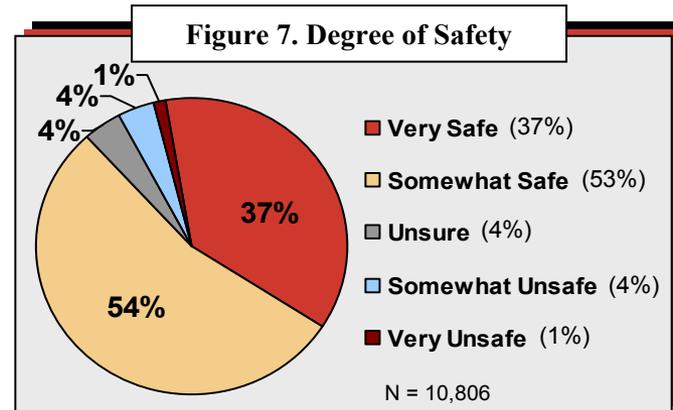
→ More than one in five (21%) respondents reported that their most recent contact with OSHP involved a traffic citation; an additional 17% requested information from OSHP or attended an educational program given by OSHP; verbal or written traffic violation warnings accounted for ten percent; roadside assistance and traffic crashes each accounted for nine percent of the total. More than one-quarter (26%) of respondents marked the “other” category. These responses were largely comprised of the answers “N/A” or “None.”



TRAFFIC SAFETY OPINIONS

Several questions were included in the survey for the purpose of eliciting traffic safety opinions among Ohioans. Respondents were asked to indicate the degree of safety they generally feel when traveling on Ohio roadways, and to rate the level of importance of key traffic safety issues. They were also asked more specific questions about their degree of support for a primary safety belt law in Ohio, and about their willingness to change travel plans in an effort to avoid coming in contact with drunk drivers. The following pages provide the results of these general traffic safety questions.

Q: GENERALLY, HOW SAFE DO YOU FEEL TRAVELING ON OHIO ROADWAYS?



Over half (54%) of respondents reported that they feel *somewhat safe* when traveling on Ohio roadways, while an additional thirty-seven percent (37%) reported feeling *very safe*. Only five percent of Ohioans reported feeling *somewhat* or *very unsafe*.

TRAFFIC SAFETY OPINIONS

Q: HOW DO YOU RANK THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FOLLOWING TRAFFIC SAFETY ISSUES?

Figure 8. Traffic Safety Importance

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Little or No Importance	N =
Drunk- or drug-impaired driving	93%	5%	2%	14,045
Reckless or aggressive drivers	85%	13%	2%	13,984
Child safety seat violations	84%	14%	2%	13,937
Distracted driving (cell phone use, etc.)	62%	30%	8%	13,890
Moving violations (speeding, etc.)	58%	36%	6%	13,980
Seatbelt violations	47%	35%	18%	13,921

All of the traffic safety issues surveyed were generally regarded as important (the majority of responses fell in either the *very important* or *somewhat important* categories). Several distinctions among responses are also noted. Drunk- or drug-impaired driving was the issue most widely regarded as being *very important* (93%). Reckless or aggressive drivers were second (85% responded *very important*), followed by child safety seat violations (84% responded *very important*). There was less agreement regarding the relative importance of the remaining traffic safety issues. Less than two-thirds (62%) considered distracted driving practices like talking on a cell phone to be *very important* traffic safety issues. Fewer still considered moving violations like speeding or following too closely to be *very important* (58%), and fewer than half (47%) regarded seatbelt violations to be a *very important* traffic safety issue.

TRAFFIC SAFETY OPINIONS

Differences in the levels of importance given to traffic safety issues were noted among demographic groups:

AGE

Respondents aged 21-24 expressed less concern than other age groups for each of the surveyed traffic safety issues. Respondents 21-24 years of age gave especially low importance ratings to safety belt and distracted driving issues, compared to other groups. Cumulatively, the older age groups (35 and older) placed greater importance on many of the surveyed traffic safety issues compared with the younger age groups (34 and younger). See Figure 9 below.

GENDER

Female respondents placed greater importance than males on each of the traffic safety issues mentioned in the survey. Overall, a greater percentage of females rated traffic safety issues as *very important* – an average of ten percentage points higher than males (See Figure 9 below). When the *very important* and *somewhat important* responses are combined, the gender differences are less striking.

Figure 9. Percent of Respondents Answering *Very Important*

Age	Impaired driving	Reckless or aggressive	Child seats	Distracted driving	Moving violations	Safety belts
16 to 20	91%	77%	78%	48%	47%	49%
21 to 24	86%	70%	77%	47%	44%	40%
25 to 34	93%	80%	85%	58%	52%	48%
35 to 54	94%	88%	87%	65%	60%	47%
55 to 64	90%	87%	83%	71%	69%	51%
65 or older	92%	89%	84%	78%	74%	55%
Female	96%	89%	89%	66%	63%	54%
Male	89%	80%	79%	57%	51%	39%

TRAFFIC SAFETY OPINIONS

Figure 10. Drunk Drivers and Safety Belt Laws

	YES	NO	N =
Q: Research shows that wearing a safety belt is the best defense against death or serious injury in a traffic crash. If it meant saving more lives on Ohio roadways, would you be in favor of law enforcement being able to stop motorists for not wearing a safety belt?	62%	38%	3,290
Q: Your chances of coming in contact with a drunk driver are greatest between 1:00 a.m. and 3:00 a.m. Knowing that, would you be likely to change your travel plans to a time when you are less likely to come in contact with a drunk driver?	69%	31%	3,514

Slightly less than two-thirds (62%) of respondents expressed approval for a primary safety belt law in Ohio. Respondents age 35 to 54 responded least favorably to this prospect (58% responded “yes”), while respondents age 16 to 20 showed the greatest level of support (75% responded “yes”). Females showed greater support than males for a primary safety belt law (66% versus 56%).

More than two-thirds of respondents (69%) indicated they would be likely to change travel plans to avoid drunk drivers, knowing that drunk drivers are most prevalent from 1:00 to 3:00 a.m. Respondents aged 21 to 24 were least likely to change travel plans (62% responded “yes”), while respondents 55 or over were most likely to change travel plans to a time when contact with a drunk driver is less likely (71% responded “yes”). A considerably greater proportion of females (77%) than males (60%) reported that they would change travel plans.

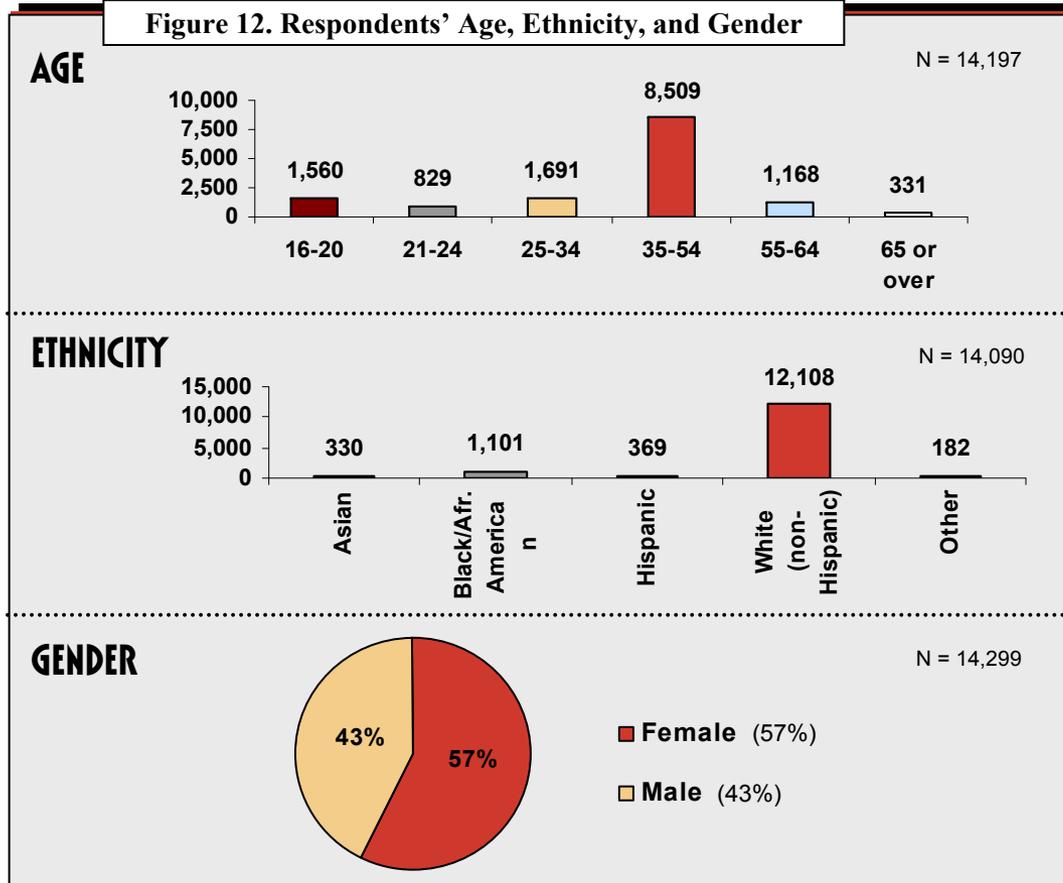
TRAFFIC SAFETY OPINIONS

Figure 11. City/Metropolitan Enforcement & Aggressive Drivers

	YES	NO	N =
Q: One out of every five traffic deaths in Ohio occurs in and around Ohio’s large cities and metropolitan areas. Would you be in favor of the Highway Patrol working traffic enforcement in these areas if it meant an additional 200 lives could be saved each year?	93%	7%	3,216
Q: Aggressive drivers racing at unsafe speeds, weaving through traffic, passing on the berm, tailgating, etc., are creating dangerous situations on our roadways. Would you be willing to immediately report aggressive drivers to the Highway Patrol if you knew the information would be forwarded to Troopers working in the area?	94%	6%	3,390

Most (93%) respondents reported that they would be in favor of increased Highway Patrol enforcement activities in cities and metropolitan areas if it would contribute to saving more lives on Ohio roadways. Similarly, most (94%) respondents indicated that they would be willing to report aggressive drivers to the Highway Patrol. There were notable differences in responses between gender and age groups. Respondents aged 21 to 24 supported increasing metropolitan enforcement less than other age groups (88% answered “yes,” compared to an average of 94% for other age groups). Similarly, 21- to 24-year-olds showed less support for the idea of reporting aggressive drivers (85% answered “yes,” compared to an average of 94% for other age groups). Females showed greater support for increased metropolitan enforcement (95% answered “yes,” compared to 90% for males) as well as for reporting aggressive drivers (96% answered “yes,” compared to 91% for males).

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS



More than half (57%) of respondents were females and sixty percent (60%) were between 35 and 54 years of age. Eighty-six percent (86%) of respondents reported their ethnicity as White (Non-Hispanic).

2004/2008 COMPARISON

Research staff from the University of Miami in Ohio contracted with the Ohio State Highway Patrol in 2004 to conduct a telephone survey of Ohio citizens. Several interesting points of comparison between responses from the 2004 survey and the current project are identified:

- A substantially larger proportion of current respondents (34%) reported having had at least one contact with OSHP in the last year, compared to 2004 respondents (8%).
- Respondents of both surveys had generally positive impressions or sentiments regarding OSHP Troopers: in 2004, most (85%) reported their contact with Troopers as “good” or “excellent”; in 2007/2008, the majority of respondents considered Troopers to be courteous (82%), professional (88%), and well-trained (88%). Moreover, satisfaction with OSHP appears to have increased: in 2004, 89% of respondents gave a general rating of OSHP as either “good” or “excellent,” while 95% of 2007/2008 respondents reported being satisfied with OSHP in the area of traffic safety enforcement.
- Drunk (or drug-impaired) driving was rated as the most important traffic safety issue identified by Ohio citizens in both the 2004 and 2007/2008 surveys. Interestingly, reckless/aggressive driving rose from the 5th most important traffic safety issue in 2004 to 2nd most important in 2007/2008; child safety seat violations rose from 7th to 3rd most important; and distracted driving behavior such as cell phone use rose from 6th most important in 2004 to 4th most important in 2007/2008.
- Support for increasing OSHP enforcement in city/metropolitan areas grew considerably in 2007/2008 (93% of respondents) compared to 2004 (80% of respondents supported).

CONCLUSION

Ohio citizens have expressed a variety of opinions on the Ohio Citizen Survey. Impaired driving remains a strong concern for Ohioans, while issues such as aggressive driving and child seat safety appear to be gaining importance as traffic safety issues, compared to previous years. Ohioans felt less strongly – and are perhaps more divided – when it comes to the issues of seat belt laws and distracted driving. Overall, Ohioans feel relatively safe traveling on Ohio roads.

Ohioans reported generally positive impressions of the Ohio State Highway Patrol. Most respondents reported being satisfied with OSHP, in terms of traffic safety enforcement; most felt that OSHP Troopers are courteous, professional, and well-trained; and most felt that OSHP is currently doing enough to educate the public about traffic safety.

OSHP staff will continue to collect and monitor citizen feedback in the coming months in order to provide relevant and timely information for assisting the Division in recognizing and addressing organizational needs and goals.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

OSHP Office of Strategic Services would like to express their gratitude for the efforts of staff and supervisors, at both the District and Station/Post level, in directing survey cards to their proper destinations; in helping to get the cards completed and returned in a timely manner; and for facilitating the project in numerous other ways. Their continued assistance is greatly appreciated.

The quotations below were selected from the Citizen Survey's *Comments* section:

Traffic Safety Concerns:

- “Drunk drivers should not be driving or have a license.”
- “I think that people who get DUI’s get too many chances. They should be off the road!”
- “There needs to be more enforcement of aggressive drivers in heavy traffic areas.”
- “We need more efficient ways of reporting road rage or aggressive driving.”
- “No one comes to a complete stop at traffic lights and stop signs anymore.”
- “I think motorcycle awareness should be promoted more.”
- “Motorcycle safety classes should be required for every motorcycle rider.”
- “People need to pay attention and slow down when approaching farm machinery.”
- “I’d like to see more trucks inspected for safety/weight violations.”
- “Large truck speed enforcement should be looked at more closely.”
- “It bothers me to see children frequently riding without restraints.”
- “I would like to see more of a crackdown on speeders in construction zones.”
- “Talking on cell phones and texting should be against the law while driving.”

Praise for Ohio State Highway Patrol Troopers and Examiners:

- DX Staff possess “very good people skills and knowledge of the position,” and are very “courteous,” “helpful,” and “kind.”
- “OSHP was very helpful when I had trouble on the road. I was glad they were there!”
- “We are very blessed in Ohio...with the quality and integrity of our troopers!”
- “I think OSP does a great job – I have encouraged my son to go to the Academy.”
- “[Staff are] very helpful and nice to work with at the exam station and on our highways.”
- “Troopers are not recognized for the lives they save or honored enough by the citizens of Ohio.”
- “Too few do so much.”



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