



## American Drivers Happy, But Would Welcome Improvements

***The Hartford 2009 Drivability Survey examines what makes cities 'drivable' and identifies areas of concern for drivers; A spin in George Jetson's flying car might improve the experience for some***

HARTFORD, Conn., Oct 01, 2009 (BUSINESS WIRE) -- Congested freeways. Road construction. Traffic delays. It's enough to make the driving experience unpleasant for anyone.

Yet despite incidents of road rage and complaints from a core group of heavy drivers, Americans generally believe their cities are "drivable," with 70 percent stating that officials in their area do a good job of maintaining city streets. Still, they see room for improvement: 40 percent say that improving the condition of existing roads would be the No. 1 way to boost drivability in their cities.

### **Percentage of Drivers Who Say These Improvements Would Make Their Area More Drivable**

-- Improve road conditions	40%
-- Time traffic signals better	19%
-- Add more lanes to highways	19%
-- Reduce traffic delays from construction	11%
-- Improve signage	5%

According to a new research study conducted by GfK Roper for The Hartford, drivers say that improving the condition of existing roads, such as fixing potholes or repaving streets, is the most effective way to make their communities more drivable - more than building new roads or adding lanes. In fact, bad roads are even less popular than heavy traffic: Three-quarters of American drivers would prefer to sit in stop-and-go traffic on a well-paved road rather than having a road full of potholes all to themselves.

The majority of drivers (66 percent) also believe that traffic is getting worse where they live, and 62 percent acknowledge that the roads in their area were not designed to handle the amount of traffic they currently receive.

"Understanding the driving experience helps us understand how to keep drivers - and their vehicles - moving and safe," said Kathleen Bromage, vice president and chief marketing officer for personal lines at The Hartford. "We know most drivers believe that good roads, good signage and functioning traffic signals are essential to a safe, uninterrupted driving experience. In addition, we believe that a smooth, uneventful drive minimizes stress and disruptions for drivers, and keeps everyone safer - hopefully leading to fewer accidents as well."

### **Lifestyle Factors Affect Attitudes About Driving**

The Hartford 2009 Drivability Survey identified two classifications of drivers - "Easy Riders" and "Hard Travelers" - that have very different attitudes and perceptions about driving based on lifestyle factors. These factors - such as when, where and how much people drive - have a major influence on perceptions of an area's drivability. Those who drive the most overall, during rush hour or in urban areas, are the most critical of their communities' drivability.

Hard Travelers, a sizable minority representing 45 percent of the total population, are less apt to believe their cities are very drivable, and they tend to drive more, get stuck in traffic more, do more of their driving during weekday rush hours, and do more of their driving on city streets than do the larger group of drivers designated as Easy Riders. Members of this larger group of drivers, representing 55 percent of the total population, are more apt to believe their cities are drivable.

Hard Travelers are nearly twice as likely as Easy Riders to experience road rage while driving. Easy Riders also take a middle-of-the-road approach when encountering a typical road hazard, the pothole. Easy Riders prefer to straddle the pothole rather than veer around it, while Hard Travelers take the opposite approach.

## **Satisfying the 'Need for Speed'**

Overall, American drivers want to feel safe, competent and welcome when they leave the comfort of home to hit the road. They believe adequate traffic signs and signals, well-maintained roads, and courteous drivers are the hallmarks of a drivable community. At least seven in 10 drivers nationally rate each of these factors as "very important" measures of drivability.

Some drivers also may feel the "need for speed." More drivers selected the Sammy Hagar song "I Can't Drive 55" as the song that best describes driving in their area. And whether it's the desire for speed or agility, if given the opportunity to trade their cars for a famous fictitious car from television or the movies, more drivers would opt for George Jetson's flying car than any other.

Other drivers may want to re-capture the thrill of driving they felt in their youth, as the driving experience appears to become less pleasurable with additional years of experience. When asked how they felt when they first started driving, American drivers most often said "excited." Later in life, the driver's seat is most associated with a feeling of "responsibility."

For more information about The Hartford 2009 Drivability Survey and The Hartford's Pothole Patrol initiative, aimed at improving road conditions in markets throughout the country, visit [www.hartfordauto.com/potholepatrol](http://www.hartfordauto.com/potholepatrol).

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SOURCE: The Hartford

Michelle Loxton, 860-547-7413  
[michelle.loxton@thehartford.com](mailto:michelle.loxton@thehartford.com)

or

Annette Rogers, 214-379-3705  
[annette.rogers@mm2pr.com](mailto:annette.rogers@mm2pr.com)

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