



Lancashire Road Safety Project:

Public Opinion Survey Final Report

Submitted to

Linda Sanderson
Communications Manager
Lancashire Road Safety Project
Guild House
Cross Street
Preston PR1 8RD

Prepared by

Gayle Higginson, Senior Research Executive

ORC INTERNATIONAL

5th Floor City Point
701 Chester Road
Stretford
Manchester M32 0RW

www.orc.co.uk

Tel. 0161 888 8005

Fax. 0161 872 3997

Email gayle.higginson@orc.co.uk

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction and methodology

In 2001 the Lancashire Road Safety Project (the Project) commissioned ORC International to undertake the first of three annual public opinion surveys to gain a better understanding of the views of the residents of Lancashire on road safety issues. In the third survey conducted in 2003 a total of 1190 residents were interviewed using a face-to-face methodology. Results from the survey have been benchmarked against the survey findings from 2001 and 2002.

1.2 Participant profile

Residents of each of the fourteen areas of Lancashire were interviewed and a sampling process was used to ensure that respondents were representative of the overall population of Lancashire based on age, gender and vehicle ownership/non-ownership status.

1.3 Safety cameras

- Over two thirds (67%) of respondents agreed that fewer road accidents are likely to happen where safety cameras are installed. The level of agreement in 2001 was 77% falling to 62% in 2002.
- Sixty-eight percent of participants agreed that safety cameras mean that dangerous drivers are more likely to get caught. This was an increase on the level of agreement in 2002 of 59%, and is more in line with the figure of 66% calculated in 2001. In both 2002 and 2003 the statement was most supported by those aged 60 or over. In all three surveys, the statement received more support from vehicle owners than non-owners.
- Eighty-eight percent of respondents agreed that safety cameras are meant to encourage drivers to keep to the speed limits. This was the same as the figure calculated in 2002, and an increase on the 2001 figure of 85%.
- Some scepticism towards safety cameras remained apparent, and appears to have increased. Sixty-one percent of respondents agreed that safety cameras are an easy way to make money out of motorists. The figure in 2001 was 55% and this increased to 60% in 2002. In all three surveys men were more likely to agree with the statement than women, and in both 2002 and 2003 agreement was more likely to be found amongst those who lived in a household that owned a vehicle.

1.4 Seat belts

- Nineteen percent of residents agreed that people fined for not wearing their seat belts are just unlucky. This was similar to the level of agreement in 2001 (20%), and the same as the level of agreement in 2002. In both 2002 and 2003, men were more likely to agree with the statement than women.
- Three quarters of respondents agreed that they would be happier if seat belt regulations were more strictly enforced. This was a slight increase on 2002 (74%), however it is lower than the figure calculated in 2002 (77%). In both 2002 and 2003 women were more likely than men to agree with the statement.
- The vast majority of participants (92%) agreed that they have a good understanding of the laws relating to wearing seat belts. This was a significant increase on the level of agreement in 2002 (84%).

1.5 Speed limits

- Over half (52%) of participants agreed that speed limits are often set too low with the result that many drivers ignore them. The figure has fallen from that estimated in 2002 (61%) and is closer to the figure of 49% noted in 2001.
- Seventy percent of participants agreed that driving even slightly faster than the speed limit makes you less safe as a driver. The figure has increased annually. In 2001 just over half (52%) agreed, and this rose to 59% in 2002. In the two most recent surveys, women and non-vehicle owners were more likely than men and vehicle owners to see the negative safety implications of breaking the speed limit.
- Over three quarters of participants agreed that stricter enforcement of speed limits on 30mph roads would lead to fewer road accidents. This was a significant increase when compared to 2002 (70% agreement), lying closer to the figure of 80% calculated in 2001. In 2002 and 2003 women were more likely to agree with the statement than men.
- Eighty-five percent of residents agreed that speeding is one of the main causes of road accidents. The amount has not changed significantly over the course of the three surveys.
- Just over half (52%) of residents agreed that sometimes you have to drive in excess of the speed limit just to keep up with the flow of traffic. In 2002 41% agreed and this rose to 55% in 2002.
- Seventy-two percent agreed that the introduction of 20mph speed limits is a good way to calm traffic in residential areas.

1.6 Drink Driving

- Eighty-five percent of participants agreed that the police should start breathalysing a lot more drivers around pub closing time. This is slightly lower than in 2001 and 2002 (88%). In 2002 and 2003 women were more likely than men to agree.
- Just under half (47%) of participants agreed that it is hard to have a good time if everyone else is drinking but you have to limit yourself because you are driving. This is a significant increase on the levels of agreement in 2001 and 2002 (34% and 31% respectively).
- Eighteen percent of respondents agreed that it is acceptable to drive after one or two drinks. The level of agreement has remained fairly consistent over the three surveys (19% in 2001 and 16% in 2002). In 2002 and in 2003, women were more likely to disagree than men.

1.7 Road accidents in Lancashire

- Participants were asked to spontaneously suggest ways to reduce the number of road accidents in Lancashire. Reducing speed limits generally was the most frequently mentioned option (17%) followed by reducing speed limits in built up areas (10%).
- When prompted by a list of suggestions drawn by the Project, the most frequently selected response supported the use of legislation. Thirty-eight percent of residents selected tougher penalties for road users causing danger or serious damage to other people. Although this was the most popular solution, levels of support for legislation have fallen during the course of the three surveys. In 2001 just over half (51%), and in 2002 forty-three percent of participants felt that this was an appropriate solution. The second most popular suggestion was re-training for bad drivers (35%), and this was also the case in 2001 and in 2002.
- Participants were asked for their spontaneous reaction to the phrase 'road safety'. Seventeen percent instinctively thought of speeding / speed cameras and speeding regulations. Twelve percent thought of children and children crossing the road, and 11% thought of awareness, caution and taking care at all times.
- Almost half (45%) of respondents believed that the number of accidents on the roads of Lancashire has increased over the last two years. This was similar to 2002 (48%), and was a significant increase on 2001 (33%). In 2003 sixteen percent felt that the number had remained the same, 9% felt that it had fallen and 30% did not know.

- Many of those who believed that the number of road accidents had increased said that they felt this way because they had read about more cases, or had seen more reports in the news. This response was in line with comments made during the previous two surveys. During each survey it was apparent that women were more likely than men to be influenced by the media.
- Participants who believed that the number of accidents had decreased believed that this was due to the introduction of more safety cameras into the area.

1.8 Publicity

- Participants were shown a still from a recent anti-speeding advertisement, and over three-quarters (77%) of respondents remembered seeing the advert. Exposure to the advert appeared to fall with age. The significant majority of those who had seen the still said that they recognised it from the television (93%).
- Participants were asked if they had been aware of the Project before being interviewed. Over one quarter of participants (27%) said that they had heard of the Project. This was a significant increase on the figure of 18% calculated in 2002. It is not surprising that more vehicle owners than non-owners had heard of the Project.
- Respondents who had heard of the Project were most likely to have read about the organisation in the newspaper.
- Just under one third of participants (32%) who were aware of the Project said that they thought that the main aim of the organisation was to reduce casualties. Thirty-seven percent said that they did not know.
- All participants were shown a card with the Project logo and asked if they recognised the logo. One quarter of participants said that they did, however recognition appeared to fall with age and was lower for non-vehicle owners than for vehicle owners.
- Respondents were asked if they recognised the DfT Think! logo. Three quarters of participants recognised the logo, and again recognition appeared to fall with age.