



## **Lancashire Partnership for Road Safety Public Opinion Survey**

### **Submitted to**

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# 1 Executive Summary

The following section of the report briefly outlines the aims and objectives of the project and then provides the conclusions and recommendations brought forth from the research.

## 1.1 Background to the survey

ORC International has completed annual public opinion surveys on road safety issues for Lancashire Partnership for Road Safety since 2001. The surveys have helped the Partnership establish an understanding of public attitudes towards road safety issues and assess changes in public perception over time.

## 1.2 Methodology

In 2005, 1105 interviews were completed with residents of Lancashire. Quota guidelines ensured that the participant profile broadly reflected the demographic profile of the County. Interviews were completed at fourteen locations:

- ◆ Blackburn
- ◆ Blackpool
- ◆ Chorley
- ◆ Clitheroe
- ◆ Garstang
- ◆ Great Harwood
- ◆ Kirkham
- ◆ Lancaster
- ◆ Leyland
- ◆ Nelson
- ◆ Ormskirk
- ◆ Padiham
- ◆ Preston
- ◆ Rawtenstall / Haslingden

## 1.3 Conclusions and recommendations

### 1.3.1 Safety cameras

Attitudes towards safety cameras have not changed significantly since 2004. Participants viewed the concept of safety cameras positively but did not believe that cameras were effective. An increasing number of residents believed that cameras were introduced to generate revenue, and a decreasing number of participants believed that the installation of cameras reduced accidents.

- ❖ The Partnership need to increase publicity on the success of safety cameras by providing information on the number of accidents and casualties avoided.
- ❖ Residents still do not understanding the 'netting off' process which must be explained clearly before attitudes will change. However, this may be a misconception best challenged by Central Government on a national basis.

### **1.3.2 Seat belts**

Attitudes towards seat belts have not changed significantly over time. Most participants felt that they had a good understanding of the laws relating to seat belts, and would support the stricter enforcement of these regulations. However, a worrying number believed that those fined for not wearing seat belts were 'unlucky', and that it was acceptable to travel a short distance without wearing a seat belt.

- ❖ The Partnership needs to outline the serious consequences of driving without a seat belt. The physical dangers have been outlined on a national basis, however it should also be made clear to residents that the act may incur a £500 fine.

### **1.3.3 Speed limits**

There has not been a significant shift in attitude towards speed limits across the surveys. Participants understood that speed plays a significant part in causing road accidents, and 70% believed that stricter enforcement of speed limits on 30mph roads would lead to fewer accidents.

Whilst residents understood the dangers of speeding we may assume that many broke the speed limit on occasion. Over half believed that limits were set too low and therefore broken, or that drivers had to break the limit to maintain the flow of traffic.

- ❖ Attitudes towards speeding must change. Residents need to be educated on why lower speed limits are set within certain locations.

Participants knew the speed limits on roads in built up areas and on motorways, however confusion was apparent when participants were asked the speed limits on single and dual carriage-ways.

Public opinion of what constitutes 'speeding' was divided. Approximately one third of participants believed that even driving 1mph over any speed limit constituted speeding, however a similar number felt that drivers had to break the 30mph limit by 5mph before they were speeding.

- ❖ National THINK! campaigns have proven successful with hard hitting images. The Partnership may wish to use similar images to warn of the dangers of speeding. Using a format widely recognised may improve the effectiveness of the message.

### **1.3.4 Drink driving**

There has not been a significant change in public perception of drinking and driving. There was a high level of public support for breathalyser tests and participants

understood that alcohol has a long-term effect that lasts into the next morning. These are admirable attitudes which are somewhat contradicted the fact that some found it acceptable to drive after one or two drinks.

- ❖ The acceptance of driving after one or two drinks implies that residents believe that they will remain within the current legal limit. The Partnership provides information on the limit, however further clarity should be provided which explains that there are variables affecting each individual's capacity for alcohol.

### **1.3.5 The Police**

Attitudes towards the police were evenly split. Approximately half believed that officers dealt with motorists consistently, fairly and respectfully but there was some lack of respect for the authority of the police. Half of the participants believed that officers treated motorists as criminals, and only prosecuted motorists who argued with them.

Participants agreed that the police should concentrate on bad or inconsiderate drivers, and on a more positive note, almost two thirds felt that officers mainly reported drivers where there was danger to other road users.

- ❖ There is still significant scope for improvement in public perception of the police. The results of the survey should be shared with Lancashire Constabulary who is best placed to tackle the issue.

### **1.3.6 Punishment**

Participants allocated a range of punishments with varying degrees of severity to a list of offences. Failing to indicate, having a loud exhaust, incorrectly displaying a number plate and driving inconsiderately justified either an informal warning or a formal caution. Going through a red traffic light, travelling at 80mph on the motorway, travelling at 40mph in a 30mph area or driving using a mobile were deserving of a fixed penalty notice. Reckless or dangerous driving warranted a summons to court. The most serious offence was seen to be using a vehicle to commit a criminal offence, and most felt that drivers committing the offence should be arrested.

### **1.3.7 Reducing road accidents**

Residents supported the use of tougher penalties to reduce the number of road accidents in Lancashire, and this became the most popular suggestion in 2005. Across the surveys residents have recommended reducing speed limits and stricter enforcement of the highway code to reduce the number of accidents.

- ❖ These attitudes are somewhat confusing. Participants claimed that speed limits were set too low and therefore ignored, and yet they suggested reducing speed limits as a way to reduce road accidents. It is again suggested that further clarity is given to why speed limits are set in particular areas.
- ❖ It may be suitable to further publicise the severity of penalties already in place.

### **1.3.8 Responsibility**

Young people were blamed for causing the majority of road accidents, and two thirds of participants agreed that it was suitable for the Partnership to concentrate campaigns towards younger age groups.

Young people accepted responsibility for causing road accidents, however, they did not think that it was suitable for the Partnership to 'target' their campaigns towards young residents.

- ❖ It is suitable for the Partnership to direct campaigns towards younger residents, however care must be taken not to make young drivers feel that they are being 'blamed' or 'targeted'.

### **1.3.9 Pause campaign**

A disappointingly small number of residents were aware of the Pause campaign, and over half thought that the image was ineffective. One positive note was that familiarity was highest amongst the target audience.

- ❖ Although the effectiveness of the campaign was not widely recognised, the Partnership should consider the benefits of continuing with the campaign which was viewed as effective by the target audience.

Suggestions made to help target young drivers included using more 'hard hitting' techniques and improving the standard of road safety training provided by schools.

Residents felt that the police, parents, schools and colleges could also be used to re-educate young drivers.

### **1.3.10 Awareness**

Awareness of the Partnership has increased since 2004 and now stands at 24%. Those aware of the Partnership displayed some lack of understanding of the aims of the organisation, and who comprised the Partnership.

### **1.3.11 Information**

Younger participants tended to listen to the radio, and newspapers were consistently been the best source of information to residents on the Partnership.

- ❖ Many of the recommendations outlined above suggest improving the dissemination of information. Newspapers and the radio may prove effective in this endeavour.

### **1.3.12 Best practice**

Differences in attitude were discovered depending on where the resident lived. In particular residents of Blackburn with Darwen tended to be more positive, and less so the residents of Blackpool.

- ❖ Further investigation is required into the particular problems faced by Blackpool's residents.
- ❖ Further investigation may be also identify why residents of Blackburn with Darwen displayed a more positive attitude. Once identified these areas of best practice can be shared.