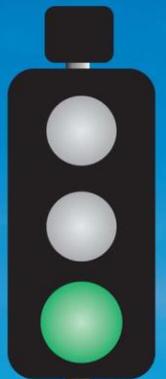


# COURTESY ON THE ROAD

A survey conducted by TNS opinion upon the request of  
Responsible Young Drivers Foundation, Belgium  
November 2007 - January 2008



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## INTRODUCTION

This study was carried out by TNS opinion on behalf of "Responsible Young Drivers", a foundation promoting road safety particularly among young drivers and aiming at reducing the number of traffic accident victims to a maximum. To fulfill this mission, "Responsible Young Drivers" want to draw the public's attention to courtesy on the road by organising the "European Day of Courtesy on the Road" on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 2008<sup>1</sup>.

It is in this framework that this survey regarding road courtesy among the public at large and car drivers' perceptions and experiences with aggressive behaviour on the road was conducted. Its principle objective is to increase our understanding of aggressive behaviour on the road. A key factor in this is to analyse the relation between drivers' self-perceived courtesy, their level of 'irritability' towards fellow drivers and the offensive behaviour that they have been subjected to in the recent past.

This survey's third wave was carried out in twelve EU countries between the 4<sup>th</sup> of December 2007 and the 29<sup>th</sup> of January 2008 among 6366 Austrian, Belgian, Bulgarian, Czech, Estonian, Greek, French, Irish, Luxembourger, Dutch, Polish and Portuguese citizens. The interviews have been conducted either by telephone or face-to-face. A technical note that describes the method used for conducting interviews, details on confidence intervals and weighting factors applied can be found in the very end of this document.

Previous waves of this survey were carried out in May 1999 and December 2002 / January 2003. Since the sample of countries has changed over this period, analysis of overall trends has been avoided. The evolution of results has however been presented for those nine countries that were covered in all three waves of this survey<sup>2</sup>.

This report presents the main results obtained for the overall average of countries polled, a country level analysis and a breakdown by the following socio-demographic variables:

- ✓ Gender
- ✓ Age
- ✓ Education
- ✓ Road user categories
- ✓ Car driver's self-perceived level of courtesy
- ✓ Accident history as a driver
- ✓ Experience with aggressive behaviour by other drivers

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1 <http://www.ryd.be/>

2 Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Portugal

The following issues should be kept in mind when reading this report:

Firstly, in order to determine drivers' self-perceived level of courtesy a re-calculation of the results for Q2E<sup>3</sup> has been made. Throughout the report the following classification has been used:

- Very high (++) (Score 1 on the 'courtesy scale')
- High (+) (Score 2 on the 'courtesy scale')
- Low (-)(Score 3-4 on the 'courtesy scale')
- Very low (--)(Score >4 on the 'courtesy scale')

Secondly, to facilitate the analysis, the road user categories have been re-defined as 'vehicle driver' (car, van or truck driver and motor cyclist) and 'weak road user' (pedestrian, cyclist or roller blader). Additionally, there is a category consisting of users of both kinds.

Thirdly, as regards the part of the survey concerning car drivers who have fallen victim to aggressive behaviour by fellow drivers, we see that respondent bases remain relatively low in the Czech Republic, Estonia and Bulgaria<sup>4</sup>. It should be taken into account that one should be careful with drawing conclusions upon these results since they are only indicative.

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3 Q2E. Using the following scale, as a car driver, how would you assess your behaviour towards other road users, where 1 means that you are 1 very courteous and 10 means that you are very aggressive?

4 Q6. Amongst drivers, which of the following types of aggressive behaviour have you been subject to in the last 12 months?

## 1. Assessing one's own behaviour on the road

In order to measure road users' perceptions of *their own* behaviour on the road, respondents were asked to position themselves on a scale from 1 to 10 (where 1 means very courteous and 10 means very aggressive) for the situations that they experience on the road.

The table below gives an overview of the *self-perceived* levels of courtesy, ranging from the most courteous type of road user to the least courteous type of road user<sup>5</sup>. It shows that road users without a (motor) vehicle, who are generally most vulnerable in traffic, estimate their level of courtesy on the road higher than drivers of vehicles.

TYPE OF ROAD USER	Average
Pedestrian	2,71
Cyclist*	2,88
Van/ mini bus driver*	2,94
Truck/ lorry driver*	3,05
Car driver	3,17
Motor cyclist*	3,48

\*These figures should be considered only as indicative since the bases for these groups are small.

<sup>5</sup> 'Roller bladers' have not been presented here due to an insufficient respondent base for this item.

Comparing the self-perceived level of courtesy among car drivers by country reveals that there are interesting differences between the countries.

The table below first of all shows the countries' average score on the 'courtesy scale' (as described in the first paragraph). In principle, low scores indicate courteous behaviour on the road, while higher scores refer to more aggressive behaviour<sup>6</sup>. Thus the Irish, Austrian, Belgian and Luxembourg car drivers give themselves a 'better' score than the Poles and the French.

Secondly, the level of courtesy<sup>7</sup> gives us an idea of how the scores are distributed by country. Here we see that in those countries where the averages are relatively low (IE, AT, BE & LU), the largest segment of drivers consider their courtesy to be optimal (++). By way of contrast, in the countries where the averages were high (FR & PL), a relative majority of drivers put themselves at the least courteous end of the scale (--).

CAR DRIVERS	TOTAL	AT	BE	BG	CZ	EE	EL	FR	IE	LU	NL	PL	PT
<b>Average behaviour</b>	<b>3.17</b>	<b>2.46</b>	<b>2.67</b>	<b>2.95</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>3.01</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.38</b>	<b>2.34</b>	<b>2.75</b>	<b>3.06</b>	<b>3.39</b>	<b>2.91</b>
<b>Level of courtesy as a driver</b>	++	25%	33%	34%	22%	17%	26%	25%	43%	29%	16%	17%	40%
	+	19%	28%	18%	13%	27%	27%	16%	20%	21%	24%	24%	11%
	-	19%	19%	25%	19%	22%	29%	15%	17%	16%	24%	31%	15%
	--	36%	19%	22%	35%	26%	26%	41%	41%	18%	25%	26%	40%

### Socio-demographic analysis

To facilitate the analysis, the different road-user categories have been re-defined as 'vehicle driver' (car, van or, truck drivers and motor cyclists) and 'weak road user' (pedestrian, cyclist or roller blader). Additionally, there is a category consisting of users of both kinds.

First of all, those who use the road *both* as drivers of vehicles and as 'weak road users' position themselves much more at the 'courtesy' end of the scale than those who mainly use the road by vehicle. This could probably be explained by the fact that the former category of drivers also appears on the roads in more vulnerable situations – on foot, bike or skates – and thus is more aware of the risks that go with aggressive behaviour in traffic.

Secondly, there is a notable variation in 'courtesy levels' between age categories on the one hand, and respondents' levels of education on the other. Regardless of which type of road user they are (vehicular or weak), self-perceived courtesy is stronger among older road users (age 55+) and the less educated than among younger and more educated ones. More precisely, the self-perceived levels of courtesy consequently increase with respondents' age, while they decrease as the educational levels rise.

<sup>6</sup> It is important to bear in mind that these figures are based purely on respondents' self-perception

<sup>7</sup> The levels of courtesy as a driver are calculated on the basis of the results for Q2E. It distinguishes very high (++; Q2E= 1), high (+;Q2E=2), low (-; Q2E=3) and very low (--; Q2E=4-10) self-perceived levels of courtesy

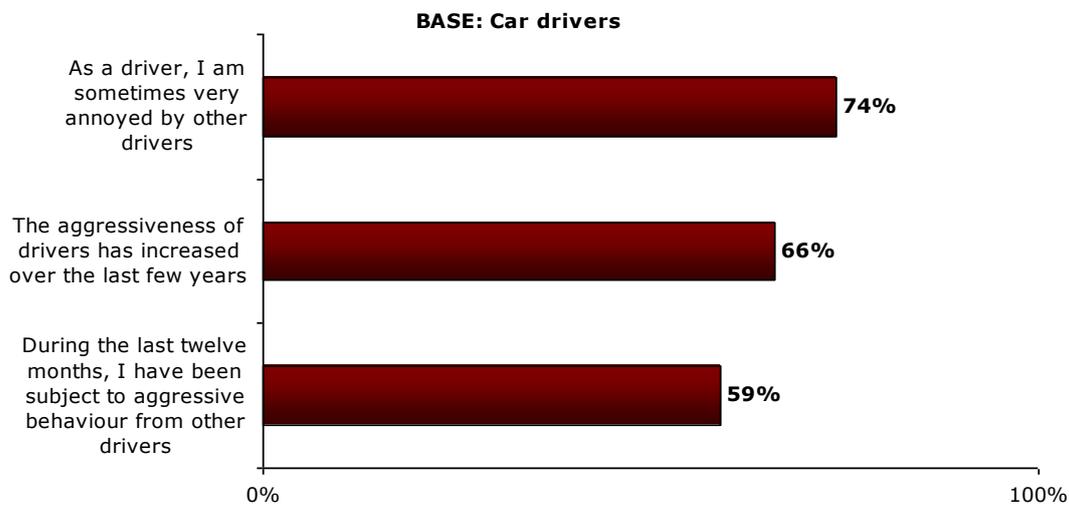
Thirdly, in the case of car drivers, experiences of aggressive behaviour influence perceptions of their own behaviour on the road: lower levels of self-perceived courtesy were recorded for those who were subjected to aggressive behaviour in the last twelve months than for those who were not.

Finally, there is a link between respondents' accident history and their self-perceived level of courtesy as car drivers: those who report not having had accidents over the last three years consider themselves to be significantly more courteous road users than those who say they have had any type of accident as a driver.

## 2. Attitudes of car drivers behind the wheel

On average, around three-quarters of car drivers are sometimes very annoyed by other drivers and two-thirds feel that aggressiveness on the road has increased over the last few years. Moreover, a clear majority (59%) have been subjected to aggressive behaviour in the last twelve months.

**Q5. Here are few opinions expressed by car drivers. For each of these, I would like you to tell me to which extent you agree or disagree?**  
**-Total "Agree"**



## Annoyance towards other drivers

*-An overwhelming majority of car drivers sometimes feels annoyance towards other drivers-*

Irritation towards other drivers appears to be most widespread in Estonia and Ireland, with more than eight in ten respondents declaring that they are sometimes very annoyed by other road users behind the wheel. In France, respondents tend to be more inclined than the average of countries polled to agree with this.

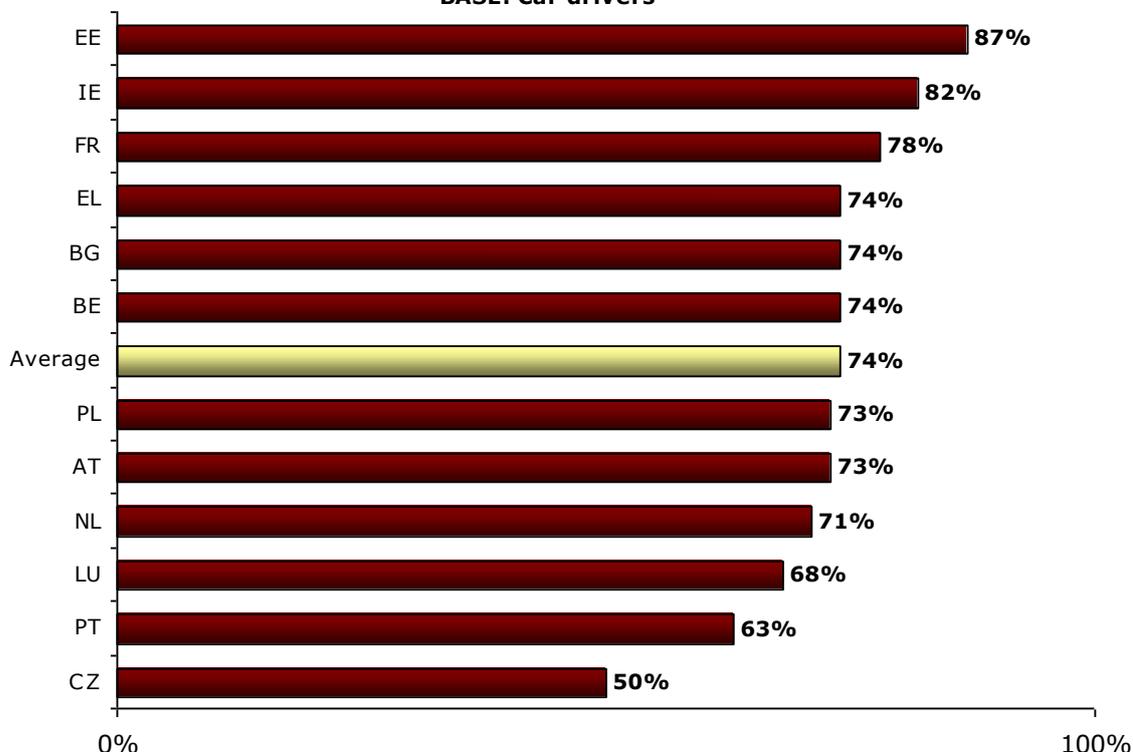
Meanwhile, results from the Czech Republic are far below the average, with only half of the population sometimes being irritated by other drivers. That these results are outstanding in a broader European context is shown by the significant difference between this figure and the Portuguese one which follows in the ranking.

The proportions of car drivers agreeing that they are annoyed by other drivers from time to time are furthermore slightly below the average in Luxembourg and the Netherlands. This is true for just under three-quarters of Austrians, Poles, Belgians, Bulgarians and Greeks, which is broadly in line with the average for the countries polled.

### Q5.1 Here are few opinions expressed by car drivers. For each of these, I would like you to tell me to which extent you agree or disagree?

**"As a driver, I am sometimes very annoyed by other drivers"**  
-Total "Agree"

BASE: Car drivers



It seems that car drivers in most of the countries polled tend to feel less irritable behind the wheel than in winter 2003, when this question was posed in a previous study<sup>8</sup>. Dutch, Portuguese, Luxembourg and Austrian car drivers even appear to be significantly less annoyed by their fellow drivers than previously. This trend was noticeable earlier in two of these countries, though: since 1999, car drivers in Luxembourg and Portugal have gradually become less likely to agree that they feel very annoyed by other drivers from time to time. Such a pattern can also be observed in Greece.

Conversely, there has been an overwhelming rise in the number of Belgian car drivers feeling that other drivers sometimes annoy them very much. Over the period of the three different waves, Belgian car drivers' tolerance towards other drivers behind the wheel appears to fluctuate somewhat, and is now close to the level seen in 1999.

Q5.1 Here are few opinions expressed by car drivers. For each of these, I would like you to tell me to which extent you agree or disagree?

*"As a driver, I am sometimes very annoyed by other drivers"*

-Total "Agree"

	AT		BE		CZ		EL		FR		IE		LU		NL		PT	
<b>Nov / Dec 2008</b>	73%	-6	74%	+19	50%	+1	74%	-2	78%	-4	82%	0	68%	-7	71%	-15	63%	-9
<b>Dec 2002 / Jan 2003</b>	79%	+13	55%	-23	49%	-	76%	-4	82%	+6	82%	+13	75%	-2	86%	0	72%	-2
<b>Nov / Dec 1999</b>	66%	-	78%	-	-	-	80%	-	76%	-	69%	-	77%	-	86%	-	74%	-

+/- Difference to previous results

<sup>8</sup> In this study, there were nine countries that were also included in the previous study: Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Greece, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Portugal.

From a socio-demographic point of view, we see that female car drivers are slightly more inclined than their male counterparts to be very annoyed by other drivers and the oldest group of drivers (aged 55+) seems to be less irritable behind the wheel than younger respondents.

The results furthermore show that the levels of 'irritability' rise along with the respondents' levels of education: the longer they have studied, the more likely they are to agree that they are sometimes very annoyed by other drivers.

Q5.1 Here are few opinions expressed by car drivers. For each of these, I would like you to tell me to which extent you agree or disagree?

"As a driver, I am sometimes very annoyed by other drivers"

	Totally agree	Inclined to agree	Inclined to disagree	Totally disagree	Don't know	Total "Agree"	Total "Disagree"
<b>Average</b>	28%	45%	17%	8%	1%	74%	25%
<b>Gender</b>							
Male	26%	47%	18%	8%	1%	72%	27%
Female	31%	44%	16%	8%	1%	75%	24%
<b>Age</b>							
18-29	27%	47%	15%	10%	1%	74%	25%
30-39	33%	47%	17%	3%	0%	79%	20%
40-54	27%	46%	18%	7%	2%	73%	25%
55 +	26%	43%	18%	11%	1%	69%	30%
<b>Education (End of)</b>							
15-	26%	41%	20%	12%	1%	66%	32%
16-19	27%	45%	18%	9%	1%	73%	27%
20 +	30%	45%	18%	6%	1%	75%	24%
Still studying	20%	61%	5%	14%	1%	81%	18%
<b>Occupation</b>							
Self-employed	28%	37%	21%	12%	2%	65%	33%
Employee	31%	46%	17%	5%	1%	76%	23%
Manual worker	27%	44%	19%	8%	1%	71%	27%
Without professional activity	27%	49%	16%	8%	1%	75%	24%

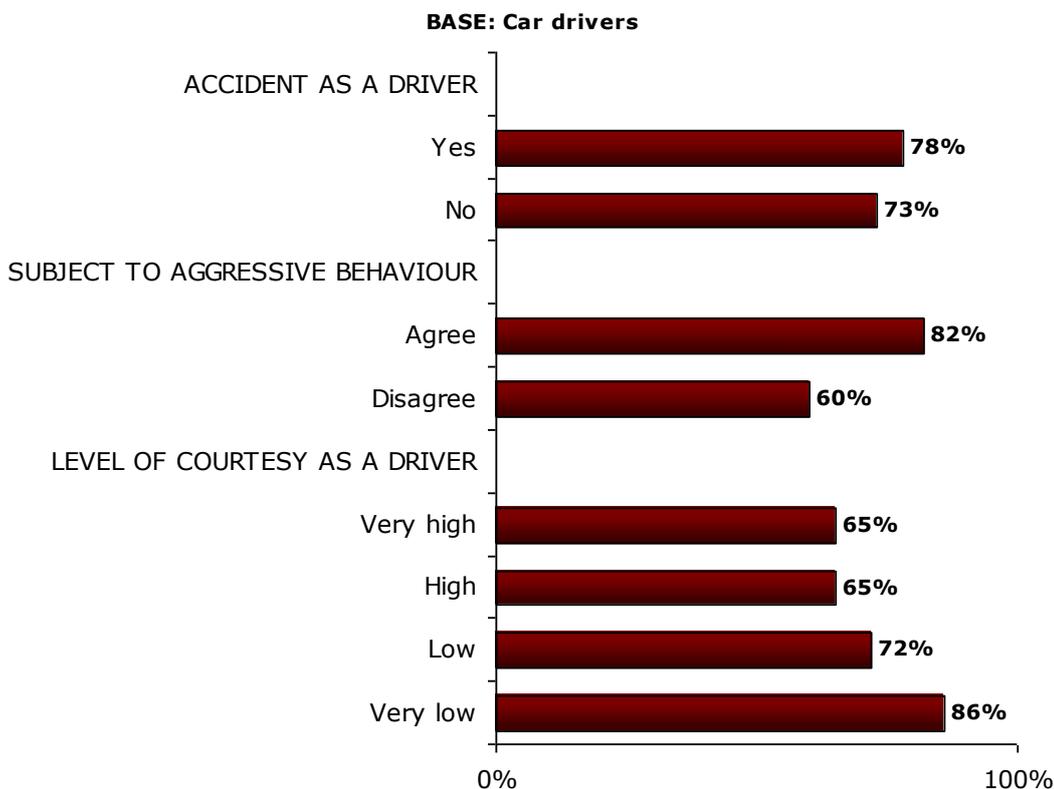
When analysing the 'irritability' of drivers, four important variables appear to play a key role: their accident history in the last three years, their experience of aggressive behaviour in the past twelve months and their self-perceived level of courtesy behind the wheel.

We see that those who perceive themselves as very courteous drivers are considerably less likely to say that they sometimes get very annoyed by other drivers, than drivers who put themselves at the more 'aggressive' end of the scale. While 65% of courteous drivers sometimes feel very annoyed by other drivers, up to 86% of drivers with low levels of courtesy behind the wheel state that they do so.

Moreover, feelings of annoyance towards other drivers are significantly more widespread among drivers who *have been subjected to* aggressive behaviour by fellow drivers in the last year than among those who have not. Also, respondents with a history of accidents appear to be slightly less 'tolerant' in this respect than those who have not experienced any accidents.

**Q5.1 Here are few opinions expressed by car drivers. For each of these, I would like you to tell me to which extent you agree or disagree?**

**"As a driver, I am sometimes very annoyed by other drivers"**  
**-Total "Agree"**



## Changes in aggressiveness

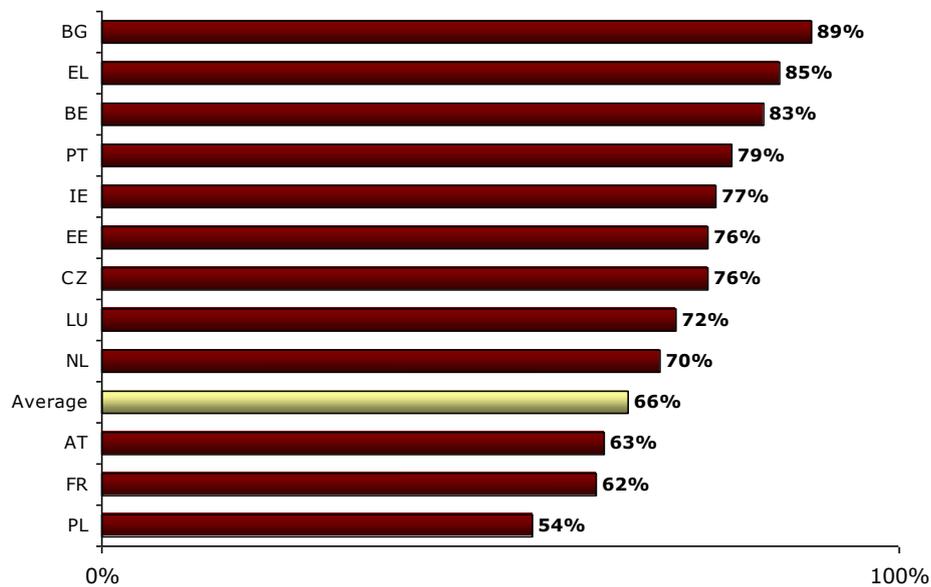
-Majorities in all countries polled feel that drivers are more aggressive -

The opinion of car drivers varies greatly from country to country when estimating whether aggressive behaviour among drivers has increased over the last few years. The results vary from just over half of respondents in Poland feeling that aggressiveness on the road has increased, to nearly nine in ten in Bulgaria. It is noteworthy that the contrary opinion was not held by a majority in any of the countries polled.

**Q5.3 Here are few opinions expressed by car drivers. For each of these, I would like you to tell me to which extent you agree or disagree?**

**"The aggressiveness of drivers has increased over the last few years"**  
-Total "Agree"

BASE: Car drivers



Compared with winter 2003, significantly fewer Dutch and French car drivers now feel that aggressiveness on the road has increased over the last few years. In Austria, too, perceptions of drivers' behaviour have become more positive, but this fall follows a negative change that was seen between the two previous surveys.

In Greece, we see that the trend over three waves points in a rather negative direction: here car drivers successively felt that aggressive behaviour among drivers increased over the last years. A similar pattern can be observed in Belgium.

Results obtained in winter 2003 showed a significant increase of Portuguese and Irish drivers feeling that aggressiveness was on the rise. Current figures might indicate that the trend has now reversed.

Q5.3 Here are few opinions expressed by car drivers. For each of these, I would like you to tell me to which extent you agree or disagree?

*"The aggressiveness of drivers has increased over the last few years"*

-Total "Agree"

	AT		BE		CZ		EL		FR		IE		LU		NL		PT		
<b>Nov / Dec 2008</b>	63%	-8	83%	+2	76%	+5	85%	+4	62%	-13	77%	-2	72%	-6	70%	-14	79%	-3	
<b>Dec 2002 / Jan 2003</b>	71%	+9	81%	+3	71%	-	81%	+6	75%	+3	79%	+8	78%	-2	84%	+1	82%	+14	
<b>Nov / Dec 1999</b>	62%	-	78%	-	-	-	75%	-	72%	-	71%	-	80%	-	83%	-	68%	-	
	+/-		Difference to previous results																

The perception that aggressive behaviour among drivers has increased over the last few years seems to be only marginally influenced by the gender and age of the driver.

A driver's educational background does, however, play an important role in this respect: the less time a driver has spent in education, the more likely he is to feel that aggressiveness behind the wheel is on the rise. In line with this, manual workers, who normally spend a relatively short time in education, are more inclined than any other occupational group to believe that this is the case.

Furthermore, drivers who have themselves experienced aggressive behaviour in the last twelve months are – not very surprisingly – significantly more likely to agree that aggressiveness among drivers has increased the last years, than those who have not been subjected to such behaviour.

It is also noteworthy that those who use the road *both* as vehicle drivers *and* as pedestrians, cyclists and / or roller bladers are more inclined to feel that aggressiveness has increased in recent years than those whose road use is mainly by vehicle, but also compared to those who define themselves only as weak road users.

Q5.3 Here are few opinions expressed by car drivers. For each of these, I would like you to tell me to which extent you agree or disagree?

*"The aggressiveness of drivers has increased over the last few years"*

	Totally agree	Inclined to agree	Inclined to disagree	Totally disagree	Don't know	Total "Agree"	Total "Disagree"
Average	34%	32%	21%	7%	5%	66%	29%
<b>Education (End of)</b>							
15-	45%	31%	11%	7%	6%	76%	18%
16-19	35%	36%	18%	7%	3%	71%	25%
20 +	32%	29%	25%	7%	6%	61%	33%
Still studying	25%	31%	25%	10%	10%	56%	34%
<b>Occupation</b>							
Self-employed	33%	29%	20%	12%	5%	63%	32%
Employee	32%	33%	20%	8%	7%	65%	28%
Manual worker	39%	33%	19%	4%	5%	72%	23%
Without professional activity	35%	31%	23%	7%	4%	66%	29%
<b>Subject to aggressive behaviour</b>							
Agree	44%	31%	17%	5%	3%	74%	22%
Disagree	20%	34%	28%	11%	7%	54%	38%
<b>Type of road user</b>							
Vehicle driver only	31%	31%	26%	7%	6%	62%	32%
Weak road user only	28%	38%	21%	5%	7%	67%	26%
Both	41%	31%	15%	9%	4%	71%	25%

## Victims of aggressive behaviour

*-The proportion of drivers that have been subjected to aggressive behaviour varies greatly from country to country-*

In terms of falling victim to the aggressive behaviour of other drivers, there are major discrepancies between the countries polled. Belgium and Austria top the list, with around seven in ten drivers reporting that they have experienced aggressive behaviour on the road over the year. In France around two-thirds have experienced aggressiveness from other drivers in the last twelve months.

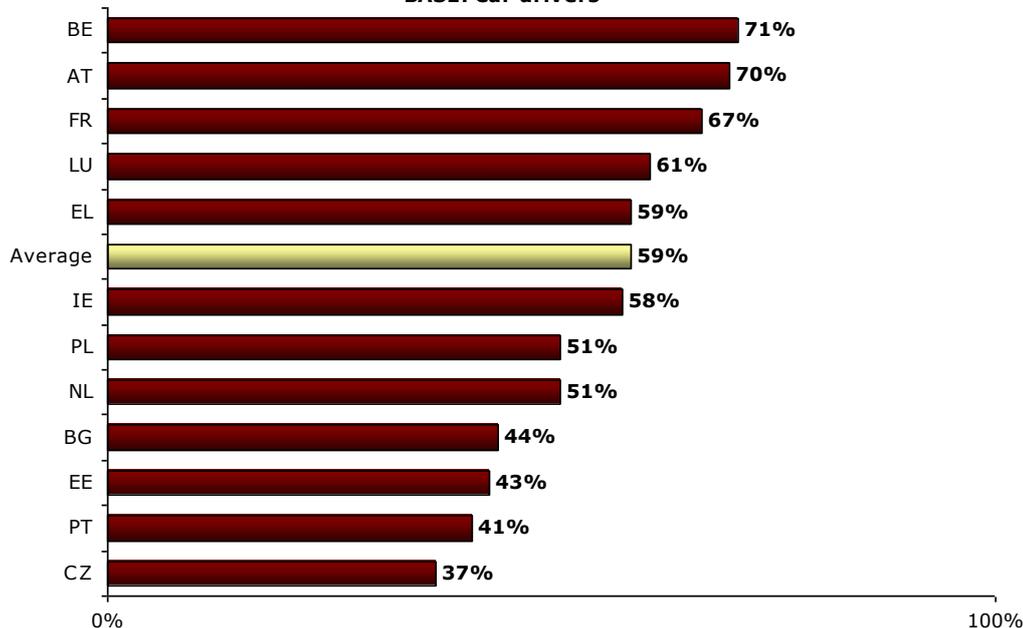
However, it seems that more 'gentle' behaviours behind the wheel can be found in the Czech Republic, where a clear majority of drivers (60%) had not been exposed to the aggressive behaviour of other car drivers in the last twelve months. Moreover, a clear minority of Bulgarian, Estonian and Portuguese respondents claim that they were subjected to aggressive behaviour during this period. Falling victim to aggressive behaviour on the road thus seems to be less common in the four new EU Member States polled here than on average.

**Q5.2 Here are few opinions expressed by car drivers. For each of these, I would like you to tell me to which extent you agree or disagree?**

***"During the last twelve months, I have been subject to aggressive behaviour from other drivers"***

**-Total "Agree"**

**BASE: Car drivers**



Comparing these figures with results previously obtained enables us to conclude that car drivers in most of the nine countries polled in all surveys are *more* likely to say that they have been subjected to aggressive behaviour from other drivers than in winter 2003.

This trend is pronounced in Ireland and Greece and milder increases are observed in Belgium, Portugal and the Czech Republic. Moreover, in Belgium and Ireland the proportion of car drivers claiming that they have fallen victim to aggressiveness from others behind the wheel has increased by 25 and 22 percentage points respectively, since the first time this question was asked (1999).

A clearly positive trend since 1999, meaning that there has been a fall in the proportion of car drivers who have been subjected to aggressive behaviour by fellow drivers, was observed only in the Netherlands. The situation seems to have remained fairly stable in Luxembourg and France over the three survey waves.

Q5.2 Here are few opinions expressed by car drivers. For each of these, I would like you to tell me to which extent you agree or disagree?

*"During the last twelve months, I have been subject to aggressive behaviour from other drivers"*

-Total "Agree"

	AT		BE		CZ		EL		FR		IE		LU		NL		PT	
<b>Nov / Dec 2008</b>	70%	-1	71%	+8	37%	+4	59%	+18	67%	0	58%	+20	61%	-1	51%	-4	41%	+6
<b>Dec 2002 / Jan 2003</b>	71%	+12	63%	+17	33%	-	41%	-8	67%	+3	38%	+2	62%	-1	55%	-5	35%	-7
<b>Nov / Dec 1999</b>	59%	-	46%	-	-	-	49%	-	64%	-	36%	-	63%	-	60%	-	42%	-

+/- Difference to previous results

Experience of aggressive behaviour from other drivers appears to be more widespread among drivers who have spent a relatively long time in education (at least until the age of 20) than among those with shorter educational careers (63% vs. 47% for those who studied until the age of 15 or lower).

Conversely, those in the oldest age band are significantly less likely to say that they have been subjected to aggressive behaviour in the last twelve months than their younger counterparts.

No significant differences between the genders or between occupational groups were recorded.

Q5.2 Here are few opinions expressed by car drivers. For each of these, I would like you to tell me to which extent you agree or disagree?

*"During the last twelve months, I have been subject to aggressive behaviour from other drivers"*



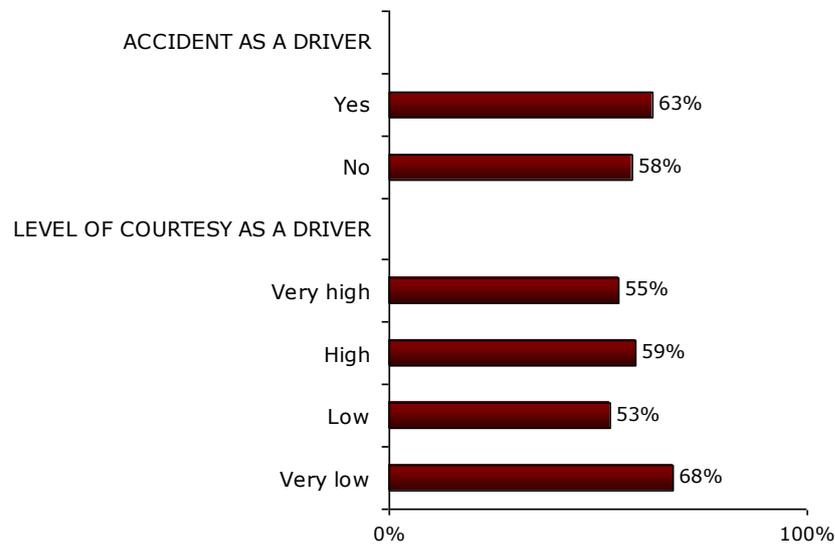
	Totally agree	Inclined to agree	Inclined to disagree	Totally disagree	Don't know	Total "Agree"	Total "Disagree"
Average	30%	29%	22%	18%	1%	59%	40%
<b>Age</b>							
18-29	33%	27%	23%	16%	0%	60%	40%
30-39	28%	32%	26%	14%	1%	60%	39%
40-54	33%	30%	20%	15%	2%	63%	35%
55 +	28%	26%	20%	24%	2%	54%	44%
<b>Education (End of)</b>							
15-	27%	21%	20%	32%	1%	47%	52%
16-19	31%	28%	21%	19%	1%	60%	39%
20 +	32%	31%	23%	13%	1%	63%	36%
Still studying	23%	27%	26%	24%	0%	50%	50%

Drivers who have had an accident in the last three years are also more likely to have been subjected to aggressive behaviour by fellow drivers in the last twelve months (irrespective of whether there exists a correlation between these events). The results furthermore reveal that drivers who see themselves as very courteous were less frequently exposed to aggressiveness from others than those who position themselves at the less courteous end of the scale (55% vs. 68% were subjected to aggressive behaviour).

**Q5.2 Here are few opinions expressed by car drivers. For each of these, I would like you to tell me to which extent you agree or disagree?**

***"During the last twelve months, I have been subject to aggressive behaviour from other drivers"***

**-Total "Agree"  
BASE: Car drivers**



## 3. Experiences of aggressive behaviour

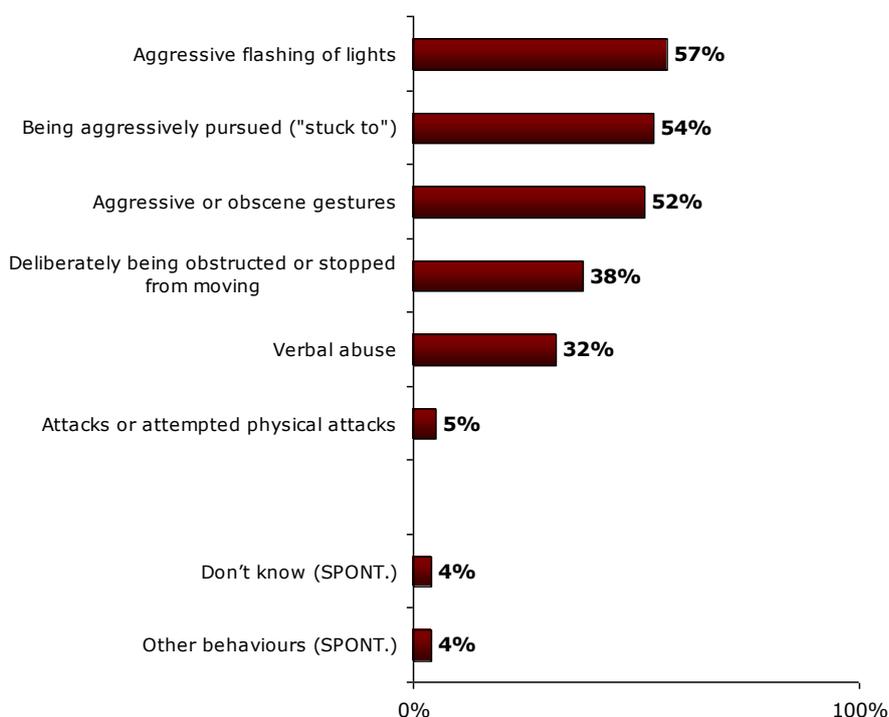
### 3.1 Most common types of aggressive behaviour

As we saw in the previous paragraphs, on average nearly six in ten car drivers (59%) have experienced some kind of aggressive behaviour from other drivers. Here we will examine what kind of aggressive behaviour they have been subjected to in the last year.

The aggressive flashing of lights is the most common form of offensive behaviour behind the wheel (experienced by 57% of the drivers who were subjected to aggressive behaviour), followed by aggressively pursuing or 'tailgating' (54%) and aggressive or obscene gestures (52%). 38% of those who experienced aggressive behaviour from other drivers said they had been deliberately obstructed, while 32% had been subjected to verbal abuse. Only very marginal proportions were physically attacked.

**Q6. Amongst drivers, which of the following types of aggressive behaviour have you been subject to in the last 12 months?**

**Base: Those who were subject to aggressive behaviour from other drivers**



## Most common types of aggressive behaviour by country

Among the different types of aggressive behaviour drivers have experienced, the offensive flashing of lights is by far most widespread in Luxembourg, France and Belgium, while it appears to be relatively rare in Estonia and Portugal.

Tailgating appears to be another form of aggressiveness that is very common in France, though Polish, Czech and Dutch drivers also seem to be very familiar with this phenomenon.

Obscene gestures are furthermore the most common type of offensive conduct by other drivers in the Czech Republic and Bulgaria, while Estonian drivers have mainly experienced obstruction. In Greece, verbal abuse appears to be the most common form of aggressive behaviour. Moreover, over half of respondents in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic who experienced aggressiveness of any type on the road were victims of verbal abuse.

Q6. Amongst drivers, which of the following types of aggressive behaviour have you been subject to in the last 12 months?  
Base: Those who were subject to aggressive behaviour from other drivers

	Aggressive flashing of lights	Being aggressively pursued ('tailgating')	Aggressive or obscene gestures	Deliberately being obstructed or stopped from moving	Verbal abuse	Attacks or attempted physical attacks	Other behaviours (SPONT.)	Don't know (SPONT.)
Average	57%	54%	52%	38%	32%	5%	4%	4%
AT	<b>56%</b>	46%	45%	49%	36%	3%	3%	3%
BE	<b>64%</b>	50%	60%	55%	22%	3%	2%	5%
BG	40%	1%	<b>61%</b>	27%	57%	6%	0%	1%
CZ	59%	60%	<b>67%</b>	57%	54%	4%	17%	1%
EE	29%	5%	23%	<b>61%</b>	4%	1%	13%	7%
EL	51%	22%	50%	47%	<b>58%</b>	9%	2%	1%
FR	<b>66%</b>	<b>62%</b>	52%	35%	37%	5%	2%	3%
IE	<b>52%</b>	29%	48%	16%	30%	2%	2%	2%
LU	<b>69%</b>	31%	44%	45%	15%	4%	3%	2%
NL	51%	<b>56%</b>	39%	28%	11%	2%	18%	4%
PL	40%	<b>60%</b>	54%	41%	17%	8%	2%	3%
PT	37%	13%	<b>38%</b>	23%	28%	6%	4%	17%
		Highest % per item		<b>XX</b>		Highest % per country		

## Changes in most common types of aggressive behaviour

### Aggressive flashing of lights

Since this question was asked in winter 2003, exposure to the offensive flashing of lights has become more widespread in Greece, Ireland and France and, conversely, less common in the Netherlands, Portugal and Belgium.

Q6. Amongst drivers, which of the following types of aggressive behaviour have you been subject to in the last 12 months?  
"Subjected to aggressive flashing or lights"

Base: Those who were subject to aggressive behaviour from other drivers

	AT		BE		CZ*		EL		FR		IE		LU		NL		PT	
Nov / Dec 2008	56%	-3	64%	-4	59%	+2	51%	+22	66%	+10	52%	+17	69%	+1	51%	-11	37%	-5
Dec 2002 / Jan 2003	59%	-	68%	-	57%	-	29%	-	56%	-	35%	-	68%	-	62%	-	42%	-

\*This figure should be considered only as indicative since the bases for these groups are small.

### Tailgating

Tailgating – or the aggressive pursuit of another car – is a phenomenon experienced by a significantly increasing proportion of drivers in Ireland, the Czech Republic and Greece, compared with the results from winter 2003. In fact, this type of aggressive behaviour has become more widespread in six out of the nine countries polled. Nevertheless, a significant fall in the proportion of drivers subjected to tailgating was recorded in Belgium and the Netherlands.

Q6. Amongst drivers, which of the following types of aggressive behaviour have you been subject to in the last 12 months?  
"Being aggressively pursued ('stuck to')"

Base: Those who were subject to aggressive behaviour from other drivers

	AT		BE		CZ*		EL		FR		IE		LU		NL		PT	
Nov / Dec 2008	46%	+6	50%	-15	60%	+16	22%	+13	62%	+10	29%	+21	31%	+3	56%	-11	13%	-3
Dec 2002 / Jan 2003	40%	-	65%	-	44%	-	9%	-	52%	-	8%	-	28%	-	67%	-	16%	-

\*This figure should be considered only as indicative since the bases for these groups are small.

### Aggressive or obscene gestures

There has been a remarkable decrease in the numbers of Dutch, Austrian and Portuguese drivers falling victim to aggressive and obscene gestures by other drivers. This pattern is also visible overall, which indicates that this type of offensive conduct towards other drivers is losing popularity. Only Czech drivers are now significantly more likely to have been exposed to aggressive gestures than in winter 2003.

Q6. Amongst drivers, which of the following types of aggressive behaviour have you been subject to in the last 12 months?

"Aggressive or obscene gestures"

Base: Those who were subject to aggressive behaviour from other drivers

	AT		BE		CZ*		EL		FR		IE		LU		NL		PT	
Nov / Dec 2008	45%	-15	60%	-3	67%	+9	50%	-3	52%	-6	48%	-2	44%	+3	39%	-20	38%	-15
Dec 2002 / Jan 2003	60%	-	63%	-	58%	-	53%	-	58%	-	50%	-	41%	-	59%	-	53%	-

\*This figure should be considered only as indicative since the bases for these groups are small.

## *Socio-demographic analysis*

The following table shows that certain socio-demographic characteristics influence the type of aggressive behaviour that drivers experience – or at least their perception of the type concerned.

Males were consistently subjected more frequently than females to all kinds of aggressive behaviour, although the gender difference is most pronounced in the case of obstruction (11 percentage points difference), being subjected to the aggressive flashing of lights (5 points) and obscene gestures (4 points).

Moreover, drivers aged 55 or older were consequently the least likely age group to have experienced any of the offensive behaviour types listed in the questionnaire – with the exception of physical attacks. The age variable furthermore reveals no significant differences between groups below the 55+ age level.

Those who were subjected to the aggressive flashing of lights, tailgating or obstruction were generally more likely to have studied at least until the age of 20 than to have finished school earlier. It should however be noted that the relatively low scores for the group of respondents with the shortest education (until age 15 or under) partially can be explained by the high proportion of this group answering that they 'do not know'. Conversely, the group with the shortest education is more likely to have experienced verbal attacks than these that studied longer.

Focusing on the way that the respondents use the road enables us to conclude that those who use the road *both* as vehicle drivers and 'weak road users' were more likely to have fallen victim to all forms of aggressive behaviour than vehicle drivers. This is an interesting result since the former group is more frequently in a vulnerable position on the road. The widest gap between the two groupings is found in the proportions of drivers that were subjected to deliberate obstruction (10 percentage points difference), obscene gestures (8 points), aggressive flashing of lights and verbal abuse (both 7 points).

The self-perceived level of courtesy as a driver seems to play a key role when it comes to past experiences of different types of offensive behaviour by others on the road. Those who regard themselves as very courteous car drivers were in all cases less likely to have been subjected to any form of aggressive behaviour by others than those who rather position themselves at the less courteous end of the scale. The latter category is thus significantly more likely to have fallen victim to 'tailgating' (+17 points), deliberate obstruction (+15) and aggressive flashing of lights (+11) in the last twelve months. It seems reasonable to conclude that aggressive behaviour behind the wheel also provokes aggressive behaviour from others and vice versa.

Car drivers who have had a car accident in the past three years were more likely than those without such an accident history to have been obstructed by others on the road, exposed to verbal abuse and exposed to the aggressive flashing of lights.

Q6. Amongst drivers, which of the following types of aggressive behaviour have you been subject to in the last 12 months?

Base: Those who were subject to aggressive behaviour from other drivers



	Subjected to aggressive flashing or lights	Being aggressively pursued ('Tailgating')	Aggressive or obscene gestures	Deliberately being obstructed or stopped from	Verbal abuse	Attacks or attempted physical attacks	Other behaviours (SPONT.)	Don't know (SPONT.)
<b>Average</b>	57%	54%	52%	38%	32%	5%	4%	4%
<b>Gender</b>								
Male	59%	54%	53%	43%	32%	7%	3%	3%
Female	54%	53%	49%	32%	31%	3%	5%	4%
<b>Age</b>								
18-29	61%	58%	57%	43%	34%	3%	1%	1%
30-39	65%	60%	48%	42%	33%	6%	4%	1%
40-54	55%	52%	55%	42%	33%	8%	4%	4%
55 +	52%	47%	46%	27%	26%	3%	5%	7%
<b>Education (End of)</b>								
15-	41%	32%	56%	22%	37%	1%	5%	12%
16-19	57%	51%	49%	36%	31%	6%	3%	5%
20 +	60%	58%	54%	42%	31%	5%	5%	2%
Still studying	48%	68%	47%	40%	39%	6%	0%	1%
<b>Type of road user</b>								
Vehicle driver	54%	53%	49%	34%	29%	5%	3%	4%
Both vehicle driver and weak road user	61%	54%	57%	44%	36%	7%	5%	3%
<b>Level of courtesy as a driver</b>								
Very high	49%	43%	49%	27%	30%	4%	3%	9%
High	56%	52%	43%	40%	28%	4%	6%	4%
Low	59%	53%	50%	37%	28%	3%	6%	2%
Very low	60%	60%	58%	42%	36%	9%	3%	2%
<b>Accident as a driver</b>								
Yes	61%	54%	49%	49%	40%	3%	3%	1%
No	56%	54%	52%	36%	30%	6%	4%	4%

### 3.2 Prevalence of accidents

The results show that the prevalence of accidents remains very limited in the countries polled. On average 14% report that they have had accidents in the last three years while driving a car.

Depending on their own perception of what to define as an 'accident', respondents in Greece, Estonia and Portugal most frequently reported that they had had an accident in this period. Conversely, the fewest accidents appeared to have occurred in Poland, France and Bulgaria.

Turning to the socio-demographic factors that influence respondents' accident history, we see that men are more likely than women to have had an accident in the past three years and that young drivers (age 18-29) significantly more frequently claim to have had an accident in this period than older drivers. In fact, the chance of having accidents sequentially decreases as age levels rise. Another pattern can be observed for the level of education: the number of accidents increases along with respondents' educational levels.

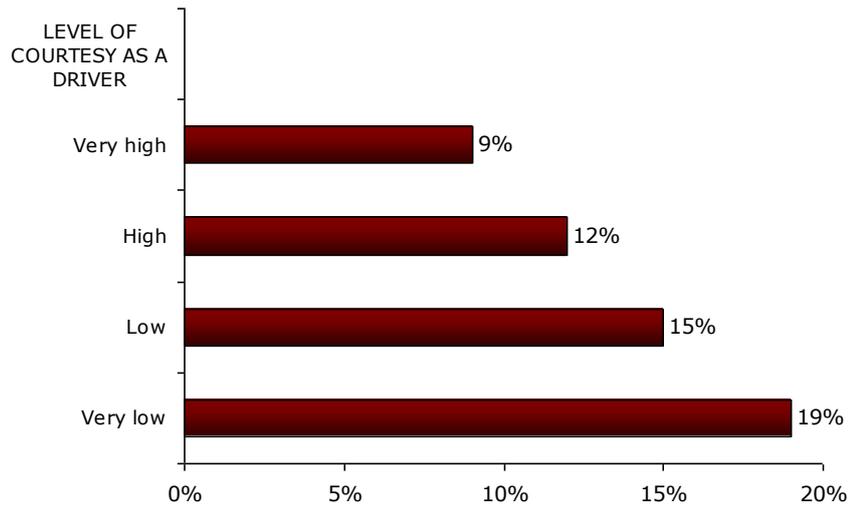
Q8. Over the last 3 years, how many accidents have you had as a driver?

	None	> 1 accident
Average	86%	14%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	84%	16%
Female	88%	12%
<b>Age</b>		
18-29	79%	21%
30-39	81%	19%
40-54	89%	11%
55 +	92%	8%
<b>Education</b>		
15-	89%	11%
16-19	87%	13%
20 +	84%	16%
Still studying	82%	18%



Respondents' accident history is also linked to their self-perceived level of courtesy, and not surprisingly; those who regard themselves as very courteous drivers have had fewer accidents in the past three years than those who consider themselves less courteous. It could well be that their accident history determines their perception of their behaviour behind the wheel.

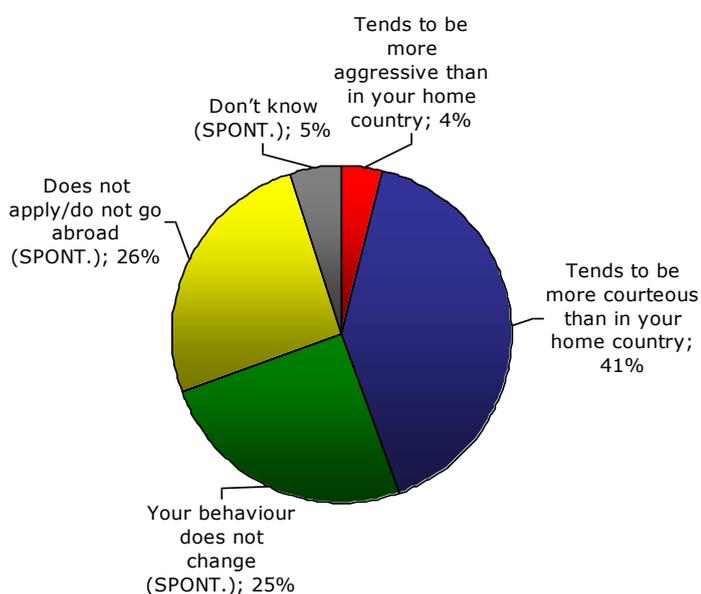
**Q8. Over the last 3 years, how many accidents have you had as a driver?  
-At least one accident**



## 4. Courtesy abroad

When asked whether using roads abroad – whether as a vehicle driver or as a weak road user - would affect their behaviour, a relative majority of respondents (41%) say that this tends to make them more courteous, while a quarter spontaneously answer that their behaviour does not change. Meanwhile, only 4% say that they are more aggressive on the roads abroad. Another quarter (26%) do not go abroad.

**Q3. As a road user abroad, would you say that your behaviour...**



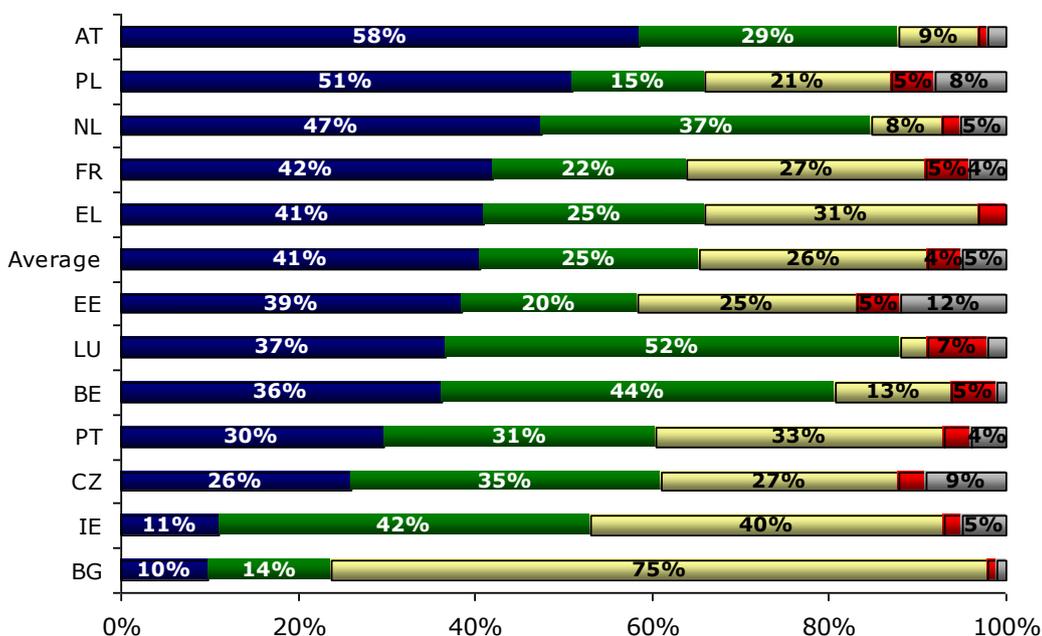
We can distinguish two major groups of countries: one where road users' courtesy increases while abroad and one where no particular behavioural change takes place. Austria tops the list for this first group of countries, with nearly six in ten respondents (58%) saying that being abroad makes them more courteous on the road than they are in their home country. An absolute majority of Poles and relative majorities of Dutch, French, Greek and Estonian respondents share this view.

Unchanged behaviour on the roads abroad is most common among Luxembourgers, where just over half of respondents (52%) hold this opinion. Given the size and the (central) geographical location of this country, it may be assumed that Luxembourg road users are very used to driving on foreign roads and that this might have an effect on their opinion. Other countries where the largest segment of road users do not change their behaviour abroad are Belgium, Ireland and the Czech Republic.

In the two countries not mentioned here, Bulgaria and Portugal, relative majorities (spontaneously) say that they do not go abroad.

### Q3. As a road user abroad, would you say that your behaviour...

- Tends to be more courteous than in your home country
- Your behaviour does not change (SPONT.)
- Does not apply/do not go abroad (SPONT.)
- Tends to be more aggressive than in your home country
- Don't know (SPONT.)



### Socio-demographic analysis

It seems that most remarkable socio-demographic differences can be attributed to the variation for the spontaneous item 'not going abroad'. This is mainly reflected in the results for 'increasing courtesy abroad', while results for non-changing or more aggressive behaviour abroad are more stable.

Although there are hardly any significant socio-demographic differences with respect to increasing aggressive behaviour while using the roads abroad, one point might be noteworthy: the youngest road users (age 18-29) are considerably more likely than their older counterparts to say that their actions on the road tend to be more aggressive abroad than in their home countries.

Finally, in terms of the self-perceived courtesy of car drivers, those drivers who position themselves in the least courteous group are significantly more likely to say that their behaviour tends to be more courteous abroad than those who see themselves as courteous drivers. Conversely, those in the latter group tend not to change their behaviour abroad, although a third say that they will act even more politely behind the wheel when travelling abroad.

Q3. As a road user abroad, would you say that your behaviour...

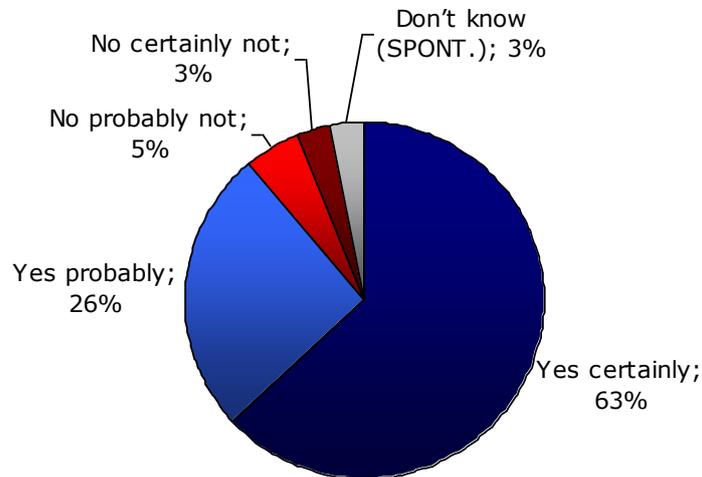
	Tends to more courteous than in your home country	Your behaviour does not change (SPONT.)	Does not apply/do not go abroad (SPONT.)	Tends to be more aggressive than in your home country	Don't know (SPONT.)
Average	41%	25%	26%	4%	5%
<b>Gender</b>					
Male	46%	26%	21%	3%	4%
Female	36%	25%	29%	4%	5%
<b>Age</b>					
18-29	45%	22%	21%	8%	4%
30-39	48%	26%	19%	4%	3%
40-54	41%	27%	24%	3%	5%
55 +	35%	25%	33%	2%	5%
<b>Education</b>					
15-	28%	20%	43%	3%	5%
16-19	41%	24%	27%	3%	4%
20 +	45%	30%	17%	4%	4%
Still studying	44%	16%	25%	9%	6%
<b>Occupation</b>					
Self-employed	44%	28%	23%	1%	5%
Employee	45%	28%	19%	4%	4%
Manual worker	39%	25%	27%	5%	4%
Without a professional activity	39%	22%	29%	4%	5%
<b>Type of road user</b>					
Vehicle driver only	45%	26%	20%	4%	5%
Weak road user only	35%	23%	31%	4%	7%
Both	43%	26%	26%	4%	2%
<b>Level of courtesy as a driver</b>					
Very high (++)	32%	32%	28%	4%	4%
High (+)	41%	31%	22%	4%	3%
Low (-)	48%	28%	17%	3%	4%
Very low (--)	50%	19%	23%	5%	3%
<b>Accident as a driver</b>					
Yes	42%	32%	19%	4%	3%
No	45%	25%	22%	4%	4%
<b>Subject to aggressive behaviour</b>					
Agree	48%	25%	20%	4%	3%
Disagree	40%	27%	25%	3%	5%

## 5. Environmentally friendly driving

Overall, there is a strong readiness among car drivers to contribute to the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions and fuel consumption by using environmentally friendly driving techniques. On average, a vast majority of respondents would *certainly* be willing to change their driving behaviour (63%) and another 26% *probably* would be - this makes a total of nearly nine in ten drivers.

**Q7. Are you prepared to change your day-to-day driving behaviour to a more ecological attitude using these techniques, which would result in the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub>-emission and fuel consumption?**

Base: Car drivers

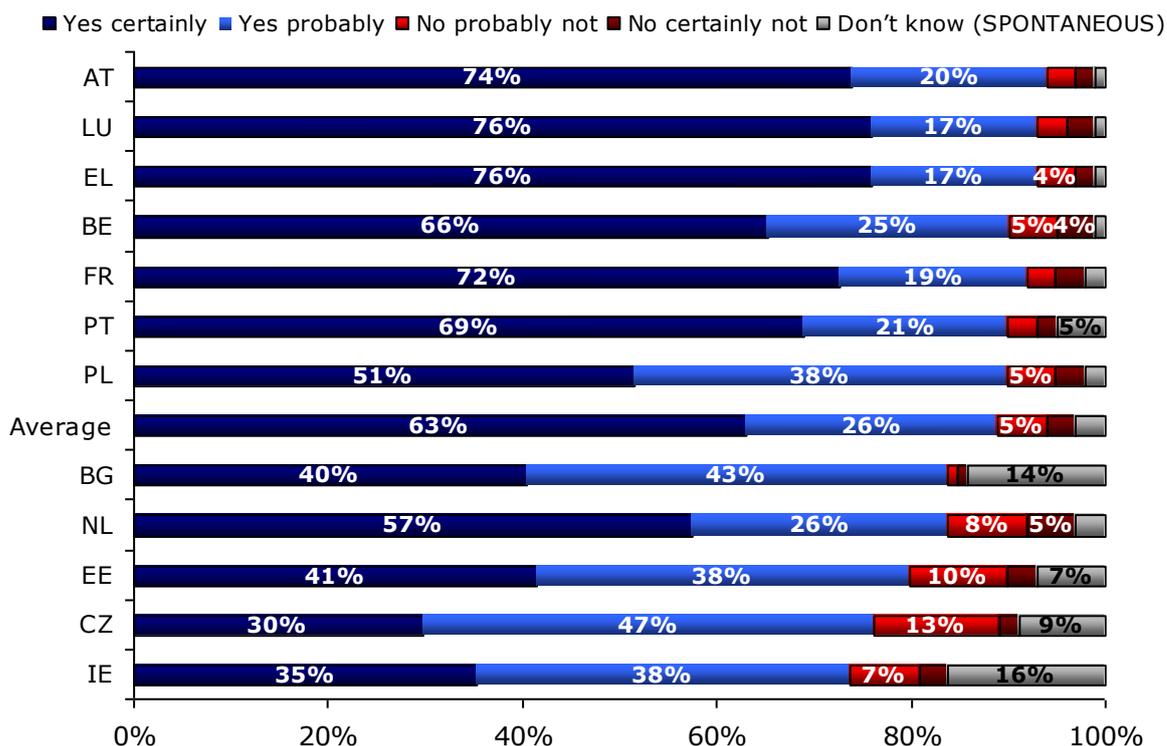


Turning to an analysis by country, it is first of all noteworthy that this readiness to adopt environmentally friendly driving receives strong support in all the countries polled. It is most pronounced in Austria, Greece, Luxembourg, France and Belgium, where in total more than 90% of drivers share this view and overwhelming majorities would *certainly* be prepared to contribute to a better environment in this way.

A country-by-country analysis however also reveals some variations in these results. Czechs, the Dutch and Estonians are relatively reluctant to change their driving behaviour, with 15% (for CZ) and 14% (for NL and EE) respectively saying that they would *not* be prepared to do so.

### Q7. Are you prepared to change your day-to-day driving behaviour to a more ecological attitude using these techniques, which would result in the reduction of CO2-emission and fuel consumption?

Base: Car drivers



Readiness to switch to environmentally friendly driving techniques is at its highest among drivers whose education ended at a relatively late age (20+), while those with the shortest educational careers (age 15-) are significantly more unwilling to give up certain driving behaviours.

Moreover, middle-aged drivers (between 40 and 54 years) show more willingness to contribute to CO2 reduction by changing their behaviour behind the wheel, than younger and older drivers.

Q7. Certain driving techniques can have an impact on the Environment. For example, the way in which a car accelerates when the light goes green, braking etc... Are you prepared to change your day-to-day driving behaviour to a more ecological attitude using these techniques, which would result in the reduction of CO2-emission and fuel consumption?

Base: Car drivers



	Yes certainly	Yes probably	No probably not	No certainly not	Don't know (SPONT.)	Total "Yes"	Total "No"
Average	63%	26%	5%	3%	3%	89%	8%
<b>Age</b>							
18-29	49%	39%	8%	3%	2%	87%	11%
30-39	62%	27%	6%	2%	3%	89%	8%
40-54	68%	25%	3%	2%	2%	93%	5%
55 +	70%	17%	4%	6%	4%	87%	10%
<b>Education</b>							
15-	57%	21%	6%	9%	7%	78%	15%
16-19	63%	26%	5%	3%	3%	89%	8%
20 +	67%	25%	4%	2%	2%	92%	6%
Still studying	44%	39%	15%	1%	1%	83%	16%

## CONCLUSION

Courtesy on the road is not always self-evident. The results of this study show that a clear majority of car drivers fell victim to aggressive behaviour over the last twelve months. Also, nearly two-thirds feel that aggressiveness on the road has increased and around three-quarters of drivers confirm that they are sometimes very annoyed by other drivers.

On the whole we see that the results vary greatly from country to country. While annoyance towards other drivers appears to be particularly prevalent in Estonia and Ireland, experiences with aggressive behaviour seem to be most widespread in Belgium and Austria. In the Czech Republic both experience of aggressive behaviour and annoyance appear to be relatively rare.

In the light of analysing factors underlying aggressive behaviour among car drivers we see that **car drivers are more likely to be annoyed by other drivers if...**

- ...they have been subjected to aggressive behaviour on the road
- ...they have had an accident in the past three years
- ...if they position themselves in the less courteous end in the scale measuring their self-perceived level of courteousness

Similar links can be made between these factors and the likelihood of being subjected to aggressive behaviour, i.e. **car drivers are also more likely to have been subjected to aggressive behaviour if...**

- ...they are likely to be irritated by other drivers
- ...they have had an accident in the past three years
- ... if they perceive themselves to be relatively less courteous drivers

In summary, as already established in the previous survey, there is a clear link between drivers showing aggressiveness on the road and in turn being subjected to aggressiveness on the road themselves. Unfortunately, we cannot determine which of these factors is the cause and which is the effect.

The aggressive flashing of lights is the most common form of offensive behaviour behind the wheel (experienced by 57% of the drivers who were subjected to aggressive behaviour), followed by aggressive pursuing or 'tailgating' (54%) and aggressive or obscene gestures (52%). 38% of those who experienced aggressive behaviour from other drivers said they had been deliberately obstructed, while 32% had been subjected to verbal abuse. Only very marginal proportions were physically attacked.

The results furthermore reveal that those who use the road *both* as a vehicle driver and as a 'weak road user' were more likely to have been subjected to all forms of aggression than vehicle drivers only. The former group more frequently appears in a vulnerable position on the road than the latter which might partly explain their greater "sensitivity" towards aggressive behaviour on the road.