

Northeast drivers are more likely to express their road rage, survey finds

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Northeast drivers are more likely to yell at other motorists, aggressively honk, or make rude hand gestures than drivers from other parts of the country.

The findings were reported in the AAA Foundation's annual Traffic Safety Culture Index. Data was collected from 2,705 licensed drivers who reported driving in the past 30 days.

The study found almost 80 percent of drivers of U.S. drivers have expressed "significant" frustration behind the wheel within the past year. The report suggests roughly 8 million U.S. drivers engage in some kind of "extreme examples of road rage," including honking, yelling, making angry gestures, tailgating or deliberately blocking another vehicle from changing lanes.

According to AAA, Northeast drivers are almost 30 percent more likely to have made an angry gesture than drivers from other parts of the country.

The study also estimates a smaller portion of drivers engage in extremely aggressive behaviors like deliberately bumping or ramming another vehicle or getting out of a vehicle to confront another driver.

"Inconsiderate driving, bad traffic and the daily stresses of life can transform minor frustrations into dangerous road rage," said Jurek Grabowski, director of research for the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. "Far too many drivers are losing themselves in the heat of the moment and lashing out in ways that could turn deadly."

AAA suggests motorists take the following steps to prevent road rage behavior. First, "don't offend." For example, do not do something that forces another driver to alter their speed or direction by forcing them to use their brakes or turn their steering wheel because of something you have done.

Second, AAA recommends being "tolerant and forgiving" of other drivers' behavior and not taking any perceived slights personally.

Finally, AAA says it is important not to respond to other drivers. For example, avoid eye contact, do not make angry gestures and maintain space around your vehicle. If necessary, call 9-1-1.

Jake Nelson, AAA's director of Traffic Safety Advocacy and Research, says drivers should focus on their own safety and the safety of their passengers and do their best to remain calm in a frustrating situation.

"It's completely normal for drivers to experience anger behind the wheel, but we must not let our emotions lead to destructive choices," said Nelson. "Don't risk escalating a frustrating situation because you never know what the other driver might do. Maintain a cool head, and focus on reaching your destination safely."

By: Sanjay Salomon