



# PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY OF COLORADO STATE PATROL ISSUES AND FUNCTIONS

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Prepared for:

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## INTRODUCTION

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Corona Research was retained by the Colorado State Patrol (CSP) in August of 2003 to conduct, analyze, and summarize a survey of the public regarding the CSP. The goal of the survey was to gather information on a variety of issues related to the CSP, including:

- 1) Overall impressions of the CSP
- 2) Opinions and perceptions of the CSP's public safety responsibilities and activities
- 3) Perceptions of Colorado's motoring environment, and
- 4) Knowledge and opinions about CSP budget and staffing issues.

The surveys were conducted from September 3<sup>rd</sup> through September 25<sup>th</sup> of 2003, and gathered information from 475 randomly selected members of residential households in Colorado. For a survey of this size, the margin of error of the findings is (plus or minus) 4.5 percent at a statistical confidence level of 95 percent. All survey respondents reported that they were 18 years old or older, were not employees of the Colorado State Patrol, and were not elected state legislators.

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## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

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Several patterns and themes can be identified from the survey research. These include:

1. **The Colorado State Patrol is well-regarded by most Colorado residents.** Residents are 21 times more likely to have a positive impression of the CSP than a negative impression, and nearly 15 times more likely to view it as above average versus below average compared to local law enforcement agencies in Colorado.
2. **Most public contact with the CSP is positive.** Even though almost half of the contacts between the public and the CSP are citations or warnings, less than 10 percent of those contacts are rated poorly by the public. Almost 88 percent of the public rated their contact as courteous and professional, and another 4 percent didn't remember or had no opinion.
3. **A majority of residents see a link between CSP presence and traffic safety.** A total of 79 percent of respondents believe that seeing multiple troopers on a stretch of road results in safer behavior by the vehicles around them. Interestingly, 35 percent also said that they themselves drive more safely when they see multiple troopers. (Note that this is not "driving differently," but "driving more safely.")
4. **Other drivers are Coloradans' greatest concern when driving.** Coloradans tend to view other drivers' behaviors as the main threat to their safety when on the road, as compared to poor road design or maintenance. The largest perceived threats are aggressive drivers, drunk drivers, and distracted drivers.
5. **The public has high standards for service.** Over half of survey respondents believe that response times for traffic accidents should be less than ten minutes.
6. **Residents support a greater presence for the Colorado State Patrol.** Respondents overwhelmingly support saturation patrols by the CSP.

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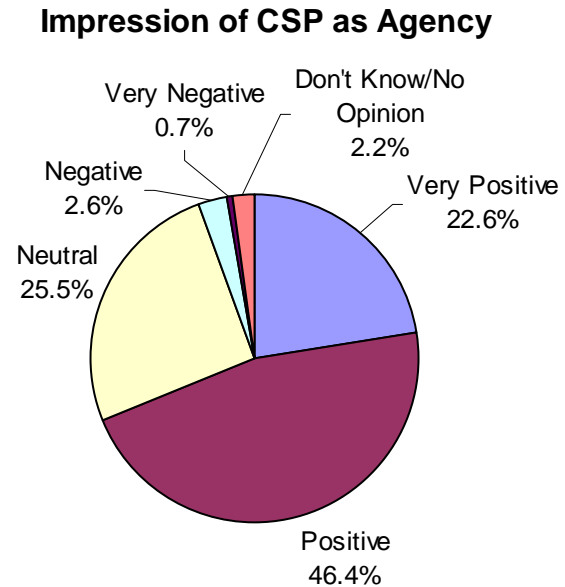
**SECTION 1**  
**OVERALL IMPRESSIONS OF THE COLORADO STATE**  
**PATROL**

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**What is your overall impression of the Colorado State Patrol?**

Almost seventy percent of surveyed respondents had a “very positive” to “positive” impression of the Colorado State Patrol. Over a quarter of the respondents were neutral and over three percent had a “negative” to “very negative” impression of the agency. Just over two percent did not have an opinion.

# OVERALL IMPRESSION OF THE COLORADO STATE PATROL



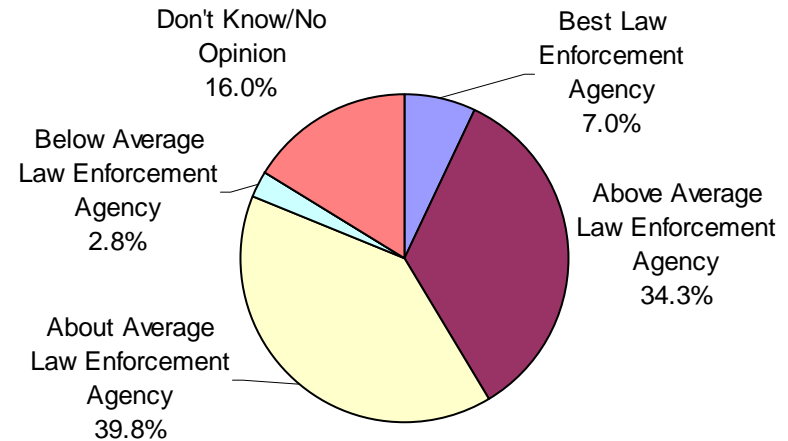
**In your opinion, how does the Colorado State Patrol compare to local law enforcement agencies in Colorado, such as police and sheriff's departments?**

When asked for a comparative assessment of the CSP, just over thirty four percent thought it to be an above average law enforcement agency, and another seven percent rated it the best law enforcement agency in the state. Less than three percent rated the CSP below average, and no respondents selected the potential response that the CSP is the worst law enforcement agency in the state.

Interestingly, almost 40 percent of respondents rate the CSP as an average law enforcement agency, neither better nor worse than other Colorado law enforcement agencies. These respondents represent a large "swing vote" in public opinion.

## IMPRESSION OF THE CSP COMPARED TO LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

**Opinion of CSP as Agency**



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**SECTION 2**  
**COLORADO STATE PATROL**  
**ACTIVITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

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**I'm going to read five functions currently performed by the Colorado State Patrol. Please rank these in terms of their importance to you, with 1 being the most important and 5 being the least important.**

In terms of importance, law enforcement and providing homeland security (and apprehending criminals) emerged as the functions that were the most important. These were followed by assisting motorists, crash investigation and educating the public.

However, this picture changes when the importance of CSP responsibilities are seen by the average ranking of each function. By average ranking, investigating the causes of crashes emerges as the most important activity performed by the CSP (on average) followed by enforcing traffic laws.

It should be noted that, even though rankings from 1 to 5 were requested, many respondents declined to give low rankings to particular services. Mathematical weightings were used to normalize rankings.

## IMPORTANCE OF CSP RESPONSIBILITIES

<b>Ranking</b>	<b>Enforcing Traffic Laws</b>	<b>Investigating the causes of crashes</b>	<b>Educating the public about traffic safety</b>	<b>Assisting motorists who have vehicle breakdowns</b>	<b>Providing homeland security and apprehending criminals</b>
1st	24.5%	19.1%	13.0%	20.4%	24.4%
2nd	19.8%	26.9%	15.1%	23.6%	14.8%
3rd	19.2%	26.0%	21.1%	15.9%	17.3%
4th	18.4%	19.1%	22.5%	22.1%	17.4%
5th	18.1%	8.9%	28.2%	17.9%	26.1%
Don't Know	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
<b>Average Ranking</b>	<b>2.86</b>	<b>2.72</b>	<b>3.38</b>	<b>2.94</b>	<b>3.06</b>

Note: smaller average ranking numbers indicate higher importance.



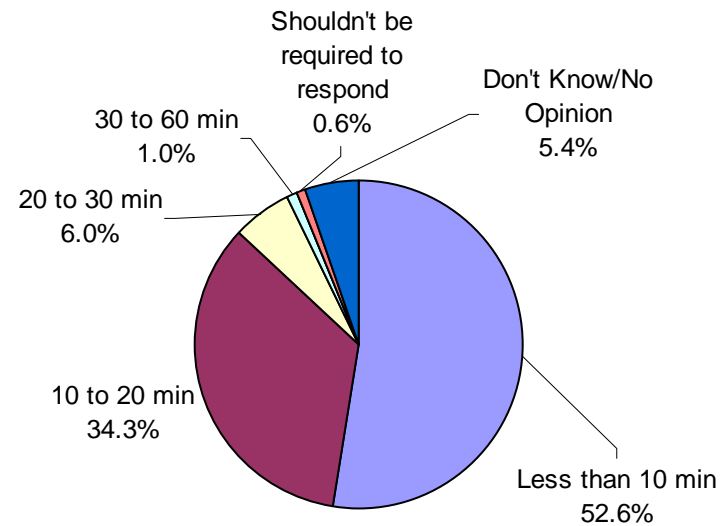
**In your opinion, what is an acceptable period of time for a trooper to respond to a traffic accident where injuries or fatalities have occurred?**

Respondents were asked to pick what they thought was an acceptable period of time for a CSP trooper to respond to a traffic accident where injuries or fatalities may have occurred. Over fifty percent of the survey subjects chose under ten minutes as the acceptable response time. Another thirty four percent chose ten to twenty percent as the acceptable response time.

Of the less than fifteen percent respondents who chose neither of these time frames as acceptable response times, six percent felt that twenty to thirty minutes was an acceptable response time. One percent said that thirty minutes to an hour was an acceptable response time for traffic accidents with injuries and fatalities and less than six percent felt the CSP should not be required to respond at all. Over five percent expressed no opinions.

## PERCEPTIONS OF ACCEPTABLE RESPONSE TIMES

**Response Times for Traffic Accidents**

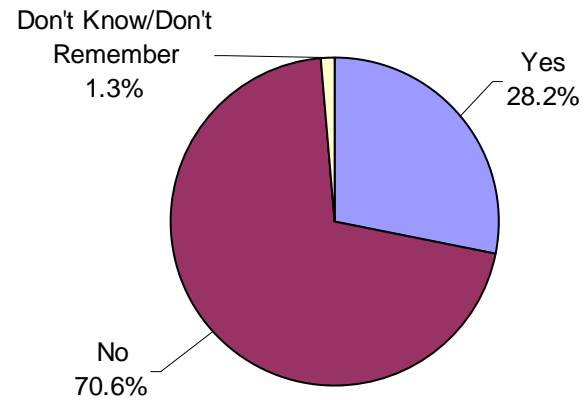


# PAST CONTACT WITH THE CSP

**During the past three years, have you personally had contact with the Colorado State Patrol?**

When asked if within the past three years the respondent had personal contact with the CSP, over seventy percent responded that they had not. About twenty eight percent had personal contact with the CSP and about one percent could not remember or did not know.

**Contact with CSP During Past Three Years**



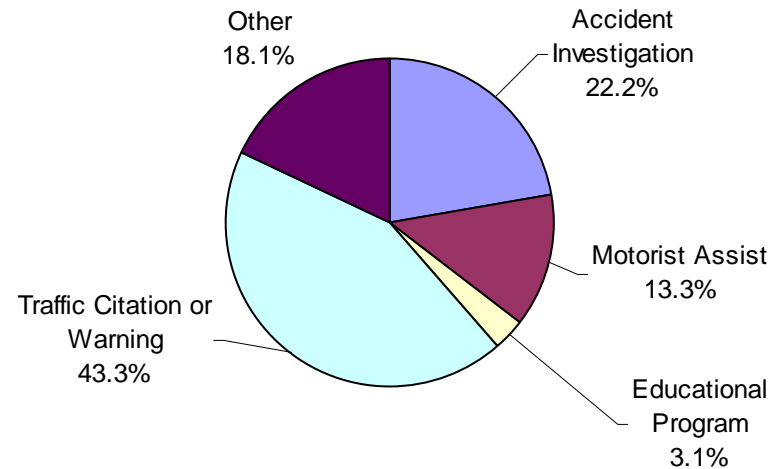
**What was the nature of your contact with the CSP?**

Of those respondents who had had a personal contact with the CSP within the past three years, over forty three percent had the personal contact because of a traffic citation or warning. Over twenty-two percent were involved in an accident investigation during which they had personal contact with the CSP. Over thirteen percent had contact with the CSP during an incidence of motorist assistance. Three percent had their contact due to an educational program and eighteen percent had contact of some other nature with the CSP in the past year.

These findings suggest that Colorado residents are about equally likely to come into contact with the CSP in an undesired manner (e.g., citation or warning) as opposed to a desired manner (assistance, education, or following up on an accident).

# NATURE OF CONTACT WITH THE CSP

**Type of Contact with CSP**

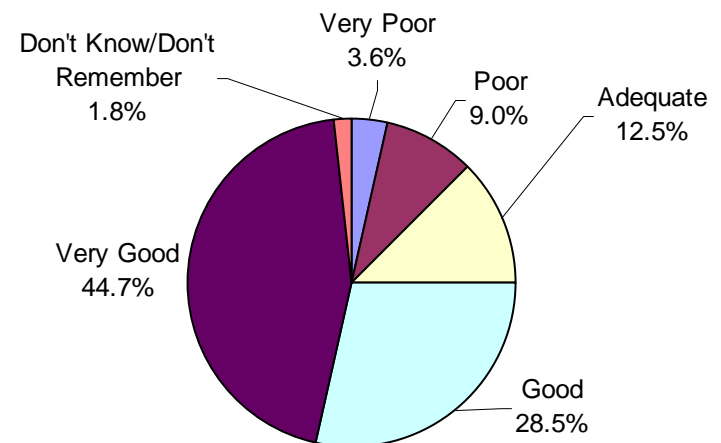


**How would you rate the quality of service you received by the Colorado State Patrol ?**

Over seventy three percent of the respondents who had had personal contact with the CSP in the past three years, rated the quality of service received from the CSP as very good or good. Since almost half of the contacts were for inherently undesirable experiences such as getting a citation, this is a high approval rate.

## THE QUALITY OF SERVICE RECEIVED FROM THE CSP

**Rating of Contact with CSP**



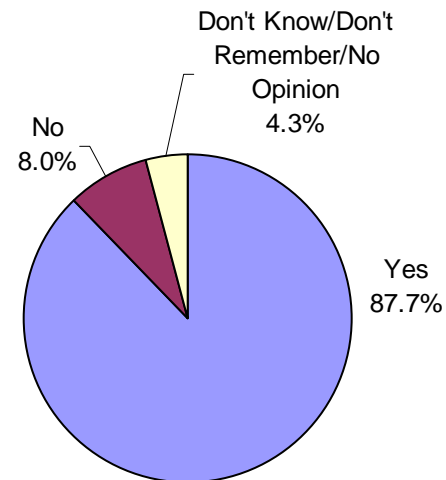
**During your contact with the CSP, did the trooper treat you courteously and professionally ?**

The same respondents who claimed to have had a personal contact with the CSP in the past three years were asked if the trooper treated them courteously and professionally. Almost ninety percent of these respondents said they did receive courteous and professional service from the trooper. Eight percent said that the service was not courteous and professional and four percent did not know or recall.

This suggests that the CSP presents a very professional face to the public.

## THE PROFESSIONAL TREATMENT RECEIVED FROM CSP

**Courteous/Professional Treatment From CSP**

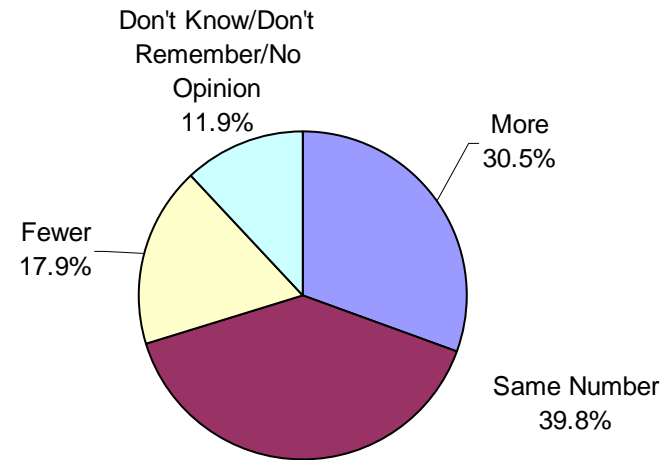


**In your opinion, have you seen more, fewer, or the same number of Colorado State Patrol troopers on the roads in 2003 compared to 2002?**

Respondents were asked if they saw more, same or fewer CSP troopers in 2003 than in 2002. Over thirty percent said that they had seen more troopers this year than in 2002. About forty percent responded that they saw no difference between the two years. About eighteen percent felt that they saw fewer troopers in 2003 than in 2002. About twelve percent could not recall or did not know.

## NUMBER OF CSP TROOPERS ON THE ROADS

**Number of CSP Troopers Observed on the Roads in 2003 Compared to 2002**



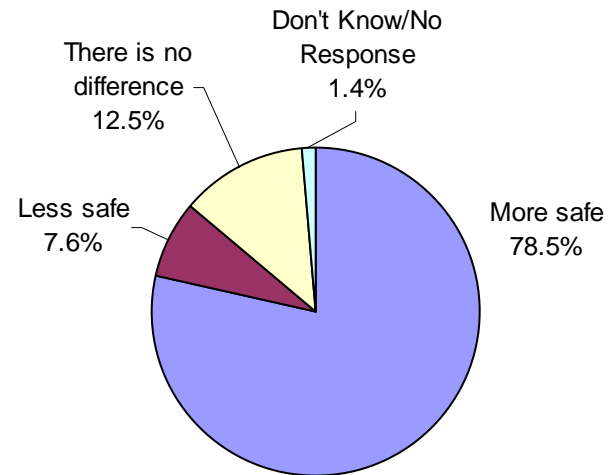
**When you see more than one Colorado State Patrol vehicle on a stretch of road in a short period of time, how do you think it affects the driving behavior of other vehicles around you? Would you say that the driving environment becomes: more safe, less safe, or is there no difference?**

When asked about their perception of the driving environment when the CSP has a strong presence, nearly four out of five respondents felt that other drivers behave in a more safe manner. Only about one in 13 felt it was less safe.

This suggests that the presence of multiple CSP vehicles improves driver behavior, resulting in a more safe driving environment.

## AFFECT OF THE PRESENCE OF CSP VEHICLES

**The Affect of the Presence of CSP to the Driving Behavior of Other Vehicles Around Me**



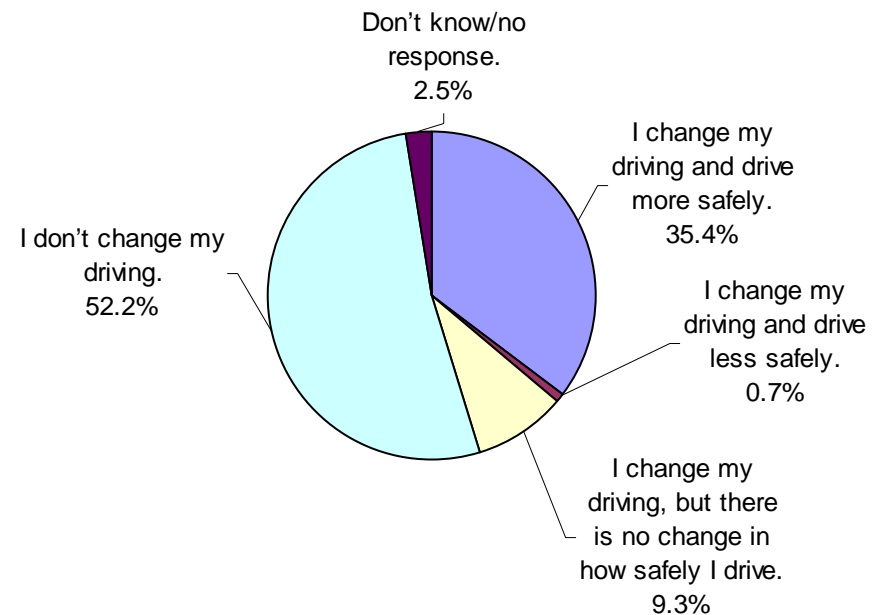
**When you see more than one Colorado State Patrol vehicle on a stretch of road in a short period of time, which of the following statements best reflects how YOUR driving behavior changes?**

This survey question gave drivers four options for responses, as shown in the chart on the left.

Over 45 percent of drivers stated that they change their driving behavior when they observe a strong CSP presence on the roads. Interestingly, a majority of those – and a total of 35 percent of all drivers – admit that they drive in a more safe manner. This presents a very strong case that a CSP presence not only changes behavior, but also influences it in a positive manner.

## PRESENCE OF CSP VEHICLES ON OWN DRIVING BEHAVIOR

**How the Presence of CSP Vehicles Changes My Driving Behavior**



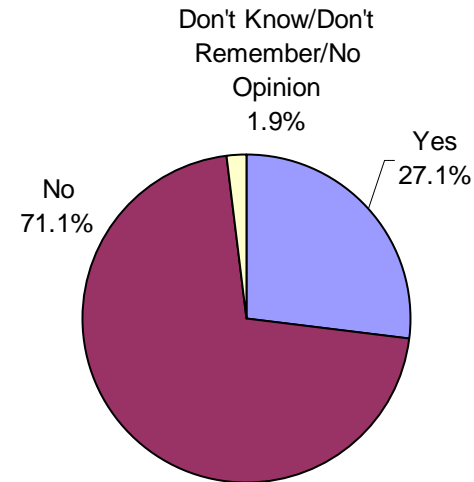


**Have you heard about the Colorado State Patrol's recent effort to reduce the number of fatal and injury crashes on some of the "most dangerous" stretches of state and federal highway by providing more troopers on those highways?**

When asked if they had heard about the CSP's recent effort to reduce the number of fatal and injury crashes on some of the "most dangerous" stretches of state and federal highway by providing more troopers on the highway, over seventy percent of the survey respondents had no awareness of the CSP effort. About twenty seven percent were aware of the effort and about two percent did not know or could not recall.

## AWARENESS OF CSP VISIBILITY EFFORTS

**The Awareness on CSP's Recent Effort**

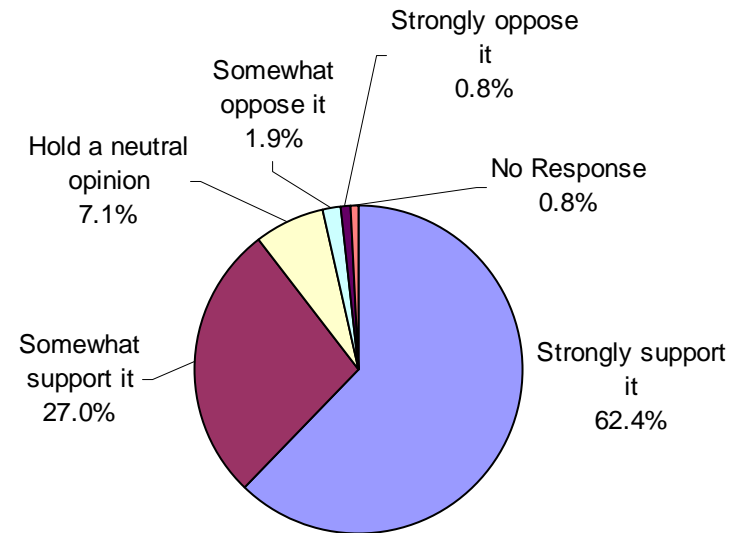


**These efforts are called saturation patrols, where several officers are assigned to patrol a single road at the same time. How do you feel about the Colorado State Patrol conducting saturation patrols on these “most dangerous” stretches of state and federal highway?**

Support for saturation patrols is extremely high. Five of every eight respondents “strongly support” them and almost 90 percent support the patrols to some degree. The ratio of support to opposition is 33 to 1.

## OPINION ON SATURATION PATROLS

**Level of Support to the Saturation Patrols**

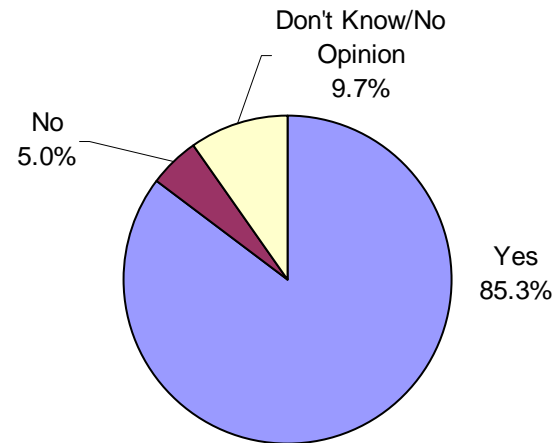


**Do you think that this effort (saturation patrols) will be successful at reducing the number of fatal and injury crashes?**

One potential reason for strong public support of the saturation patrols is a strong public belief that the patrols are effective. Eighty-five percent of survey respondents believe that saturation patrols will be successful at reducing fatal and injury crashes. Only five percent think that they will not be successful.

## THE SUCCESS OF THE SATURATION PATROLS

**Prediction on the Success of the Saturation Patrols**



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**SECTION 3**  
**PERCEPTIONS OF COLORADO'S**  
**MOTORING ENVIRONMENT**

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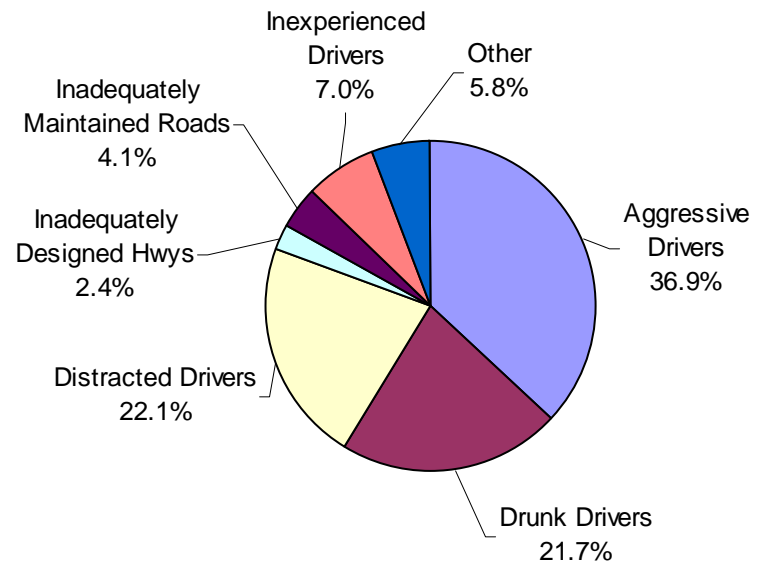
**Of the following list, which is the single greatest hazard on Colorado's roads? If there is a hazard that I do not list that you think is the single greatest hazard, feel free to offer that as your response.**

When asked their opinions regarding the single greatest hazard on Colorado's roads, a majority of respondents (about thirty seven percent) stated that aggressive drivers were the single greatest hazard on Colorado's roads followed by distracted drivers (over twenty two percent) and drunk drivers (almost twenty two percent).

Driving behaviors were far more likely to be cited as the major hazard than were engineering or maintenance issues.

# HAZARDS TO MOTORISTS

**Primary Motoring Risk**



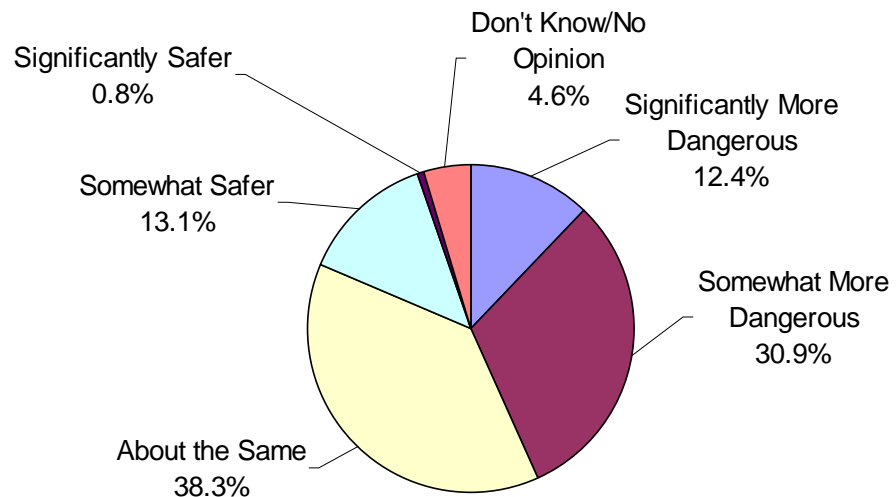
**In your opinion, how has safety on Colorado's roadways changed within the past two years?**

When asked their opinion as to how much safer Colorado's roadways had become in the past two years, there was no consensus. A total of 43 percent believe that roadways are becoming more dangerous, 39 percent believe that there's been no significant change, and 14 percent believe that they're becoming more safe.

While individual opinions may differ, the public is three times more likely to believe that the environment is becoming more dangerous than they are to believe that it is becoming more safe.

# SAFETY TRENDS ON COLORADO HIGHWAYS

**Safety Trend on Colorado Roadways During the Past Two Years**



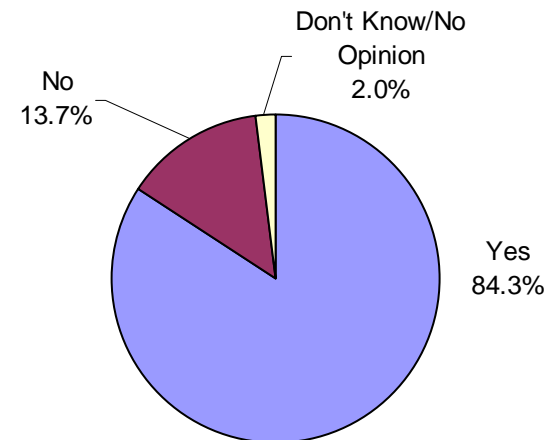
# NEED FOR DRIVER SAFETY PROGRAMS

**In your opinion, should the Colorado State Patrol offer driver safety courses for high school and college students?**

When asked if the CSP should offer driver safety courses for high school and college students, an overwhelming majority of respondents (eighty four percent) answered yes. About fourteen percent thought that the CSP should not offer driver safety courses to high school and college students. Two percent of the respondents had no opinion.

It would seem that the public is largely in favor of the CSP offering driver safety courses to these younger drivers.

**Should the CSP Offer Driver Safety Courses?**



**Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. I'm going to make five statements and please tell me if you strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, or have no opinion about each one.**

## MOTORING ENVIRONMENT STATEMENTS

Survey respondents were asked to respond to certain statements with their agreement or disagreement with the statement. Strong majorities believe that traffic accidents are avoidable and that seat belts save lives. A majority also believes that society should set a goal of no one being killed in traffic crashes, and that educational programs can

A majority of respondents believe that enforcement decreases the chances of accidents, decreases dangerous driving behavior and has other benefits such as reducing other criminal activities. Oddly, a significant minority (27.6 percent) believe that enforcement does not decrease the chance of accidents, even though most of those respondents also stated that enforcement decreases dangerous driving behavior. The only logical conclusion is that some members of the public do not equate dangerous driving behaviors with accidents.

### Agreement or Disagreement to Selected Statements

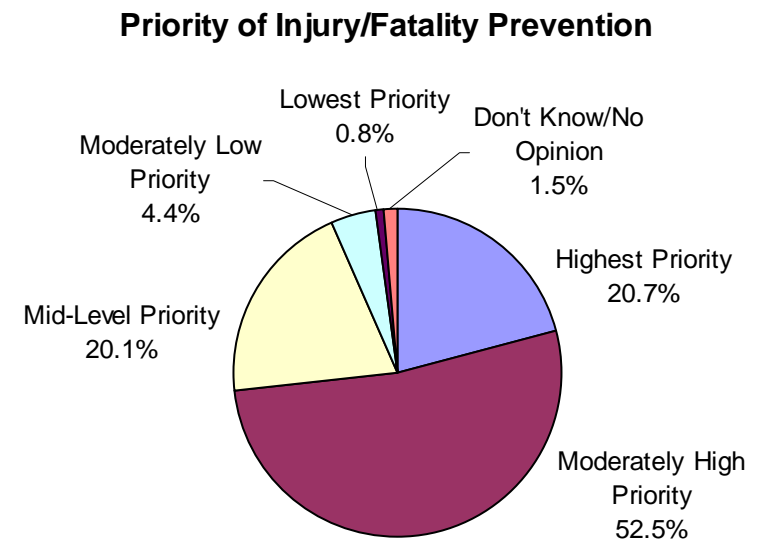
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
Traffic accidents are preventable.	32.5%	56.8%	6.9%	0.9%	2.8%
Enforcement actions (such as citations) decrease the chance of accidents.	13.2%	51.1%	26.0%	1.6%	8.2%
Educational programs decrease the chance of accidents.	26.2%	60.1%	9.1%	0.4%	4.3%
Seeing troopers on the road decreases dangerous driving behavior.	29.8%	57.5%	8.2%	1.1%	3.4%
Seat belts save lives.	59.2%	36.2%	2.5%	0.4%	1.7%
Traffic stops reduce criminal activities such as drug trafficking.	16.0%	46.9%	19.6%	2.1%	15.4%
Society should set a goal of no one being killed in traffic crashes.	23.6%	49.1%	16.8%	2.9%	7.6%



**In 2002, 742 persons died in accidents that involved a motor vehicle in Colorado and over ten thousand were injured. When compared to other services and functions provided by the state government, do you think that the prevention of such fatalities and injuries by the Colorado State Patrol should be the highest state priority, a moderately high priority, a mid-level priority, a moderately low priority, or the lowest state priority?**

When respondents were posed a question regarding the importance of preventing injuries and fatalities in motor vehicle accidents as compared to other state functions, over twenty percent thought it was of the highest priority. Over fifty percent of the respondents thought it was of moderately high priority. Another twenty percent thought it was a mid-level priority when compared with other state functions. Under five percent thought it was a moderately low priority and less than a percent thought it was of the lowest priority. One and a half percent had no opinion.

## PRIORITY OF PREVENTING TRAFFIC FATALITIES AND INJURIES



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