

“Everyone else is doing it, why shouldn’t I?” Victorian Drivers and low level speeding

Page-Smith^a, J., Young^b, J. & Gaindhar^b, S

^a Road Safety Research Team, Transport Accident Commission (TAC), Victoria, Australia, ^b Ipsos Social Research Institute, Victoria, Australia

Abstract

Background: The Transport Accident Commission has worked toward changing the attitudes of road users in Victoria since 1987. The TAC’s efforts have contributed to changing the community’s beliefs about drink driving behaviour, with a reduction in acceptability and self-reported levels of drink driving.

Objectives: This report studies how Victorians’ attitudes and behaviour relating to low level speeding have changed over time, and examines the changes in acceptability of speeding behaviour since 2009.

Method: 2,000 Victorian road users completed an online survey to determine the acceptability of a variety of driving and non-driving behaviours, and identify differences in the attitudes and perceptions of various groups based on demographic profiles.

Results: While some driving behaviours including mobile phone use and driving whilst on drugs are rated as very unacceptable by most Victorians, low level speeding is relatively more acceptable. Victorian drivers are generally law-abiding, with around 70% self-reporting travelling at or below the speed limit in 50 or 60km/h zones, and only 18% of drivers stating they would speed if they thought they get away with it. Acceptance of travelling at 50km/h in a 40 km zone has declined from 18% in 2009 to 8% in 2014.

Conclusion: TAC research findings suggest that while low level speeding is more acceptable than some other driving behaviours; most Victorians don’t in fact speed. This study has provided the TAC with direction for future research, particularly in regard to the small minority of drivers who think it is acceptable to speed.

Introduction:

The Transport Accident Commission (TAC) pays for treatment and benefits for people injured in transport accidents. The TAC is a "no-fault" insurance scheme, which means that medical benefits will be paid to an injured person regardless of who caused the accident. A key function of the TAC is “to promote the prevention of transport accidents and safety in use of transport” (Transport Accident Act 1986).

For the last 27 years, the Transport Accident Commission has been working to shift the attitudes of road users in Victoria toward a number of road safety behaviours including drink driving, speeding and restraint wearing, as well as the importance of vehicle safety. The TAC's efforts have contributed to a shift over that time in the community's social norms, particularly in relation to drink driving behaviour. A major challenge for the TAC and its road safety partners is to make speeding behaviour similarly socially unacceptable on the basis that social norms are a powerful motivator of behaviour.

This paper discusses the changes in both perceived acceptability and self-reported speeding behaviour over the last few years, as well as comparing observed speeding related behaviours.

Method

From 2001, the TAC has regularly surveyed Victorian motorists to determine their attitudes and behaviours toward a number of specific road safety behaviours using the Road Safety Monitor. This survey was originally conducted as a CATI survey, and is currently conducted biannually as a multi-mode survey, contacting a minimum of 1,500 Victorian drivers. The Road Safety Monitor collects demographic, attitudinal and behavioural data on a number of road safety issues.

In 2009, in conjunction with another research agency, the TAC developed a survey to help quantify and rank levels of social acceptability and unacceptability of a range of human behaviours including behaviours specifically related to driving. A range of non-driving related human behaviours were included so as to position the level of community acceptance of various driving behaviours relative to these other behaviours. This research was replicated in 2010, 2012 and 2014. One of the objectives of the research was to track changes in the community's attitudes and identify segments within the community that are most resistant to the TAC's public messaging.

The TAC has been looking at 'social norms' in relation to driving behaviours and working on how to change them. It has been recognised that, particularly in regard to certain driving behaviours, it is important that these behaviours are viewed as 'socially' wrong and not just legally wrong in order to cause these behaviours to change. Social Acceptability Research commissioned by the TAC in 2009 found that progress had been made in changing community attitudes toward drink driving, however changing attitudes toward low level speeding needed more work.

The research in 2014 aimed to:

- explore what behaviours are thought to be acceptable or unacceptable and compare the perception of driving behaviours and non-driving behaviours by various community sub-groups;
- identify differences in the attitudes and perceptions of the various community groups based on their demographic profiles and self-reported driving related behaviours; and
- identify any changes since the project was last run.

Ipsos worked with the TAC in 2014 to develop an online quantitative survey to address the specific research objectives outlined above. A total of 2,000 Victorian participants aged between 16 and 75 were recruited via an online panel (hosted by I-view) to complete the Social Acceptability survey in 2014. This survey asked respondents to assess a variety of human behaviours as being acceptable or unacceptable. In addition, the survey also asked participants to report on their actual attitudes and behaviours to a selection of road safety related behaviours and asked respondents opinions regarding a number of road safety technologies (not discussed in this report). A further 3,544 respondents from across Australia were also surveyed as part of this study, but comparisons with non-Victorians will not be considered as part of this report.

Table 1: Victorian participant profile

	% (Unweighted)	% (Weighted)	n
Location			
Melbourne	75	75	1498
Rest of Victoria	25	25	502
Gender			
Male	44%	49%	885
Female	56%	51%	1115
Age			
16-25	22%	18%	446
26-39	37%	27%	748
40-75	40%	55%	806

Base n = 2000

To allow for analysis between sub-groups, participant data was weighted using ABS 2011 Census data to be representative of the distribution of Victorians aged from 16 to 75 years old. The weighted vs. unweighted population figures are compared in *Table 1*.

Earlier iterations of the Social Acceptability Research asked respondents to assess a list of between 60 and 70 human behaviours as being acceptable or unacceptable. The 2014 iteration of this research reduced the list to a series of 41 human behaviours covering a range of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours (as expected in an Australian society), as well as some neutral behaviours. (A full list of the behaviours assessed in 2014, and their relative acceptability can be found in Appendix 1). Both lawful and unlawful behaviours were included in the questionnaire. Each statement was prefaced by “How would you judge another person’s behaviour if they...” Respondents were given a 7-point symmetric scale from ‘very unacceptable’ to ‘very acceptable’ with a neutral mid-point.

The first five behaviours were chosen to introduce participants to the questionnaire and gain their interest, without revealing the road safety focus of the research. The first five behaviours are listed below:

- *Went duck shooting when it was allowed (with a licence and during season)*
- *Didn’t say please/thank you to a waitress/waiter*
- *Lied to an employer about their work experience*
- *Were rude to a door to door salesperson*
- *Stopped to offer assistance to a person with a broken down car*

Of the 41 human behaviours in the questionnaire, ten specifically related to driving behaviours. Five dealt with driving in excess of the speed limit - for example “How would you judge another person’s behaviour if they drove 60km/h in a 50km/h zone?” The other five statements dealt with clear infringements of road rules - for example “How would you judge another person’s behaviour if they sent a text message while driving?”

The specific driving behaviours examined were:

- *Took illegal drugs before driving their car*
- *Drove a car while their licence was suspended*
- *Sent a text message while driving*

- Drove when they had a BAC of 0.06
- Talked on a hand-held mobile phone while driving
- Drove 50km/h in a 40km/h zone
- Drove 60km/h in a 5km/h zone
- Drove 110km/h in a 100km/h zone
- Drove 55km/h in a 50km/h zone
- Drove 65km/h in a 60km/h zone

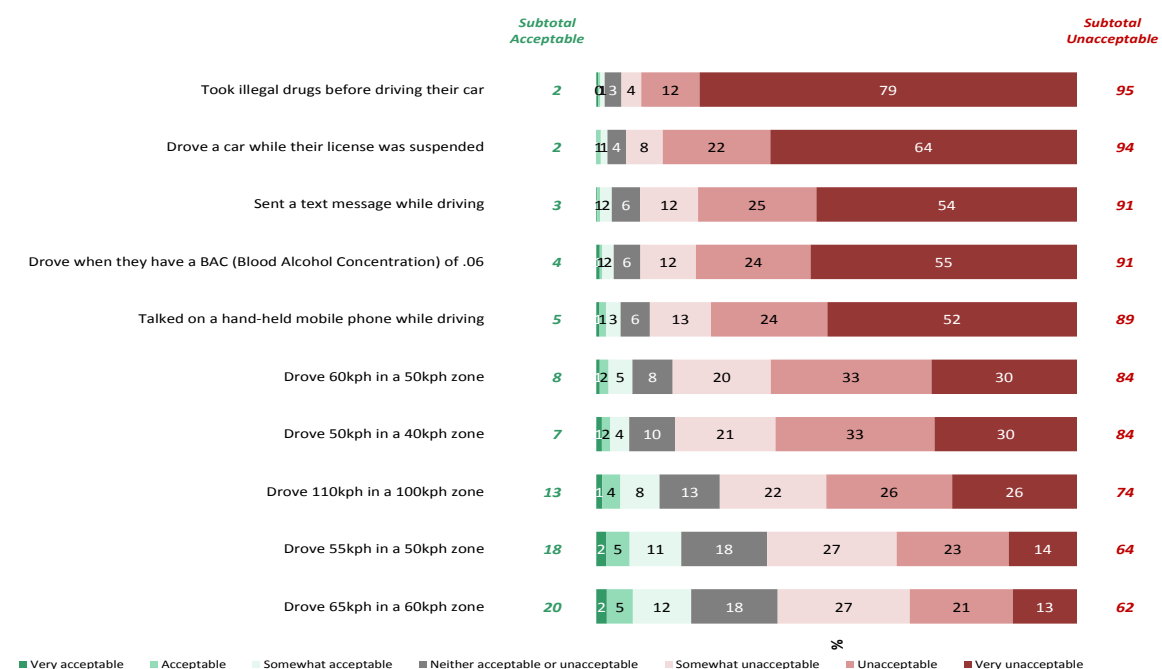
Results:

While only a minority found any of the driving behaviours to be acceptable, speeding was less likely to be judged as unacceptable relative to the other driving behaviours covered in the survey. The driving behaviour most likely to be judged very unacceptable was to drive after taking illegal drugs (79%). The driving behaviour most likely to be thought of as unacceptable in 2014 was to drive under the influence of drugs. Almost all would judge the behaviour as very to somewhat unacceptable (95%). This included close to eight in ten (79%) who thought it was *very* unacceptable to do so.

With regards to the driving behaviours covered in the survey, it is clear from the figure below that all the statements relating to infringements of road rules were skewed towards the unacceptable side of the scale. However, driving over the speed limit is judged as less unacceptable than the other driving behaviours in the survey.

When looking at speeding behaviours specifically, Figure 1 shows that respondents thought going 10km over the limit was relatively more unacceptable than going 5km over the limit across all the nominated speed zones.

Figure 1: Driving behaviours – Total (%)



Q5. How would you judge another person's behaviour if...?
 Weighted; Base n = 2000

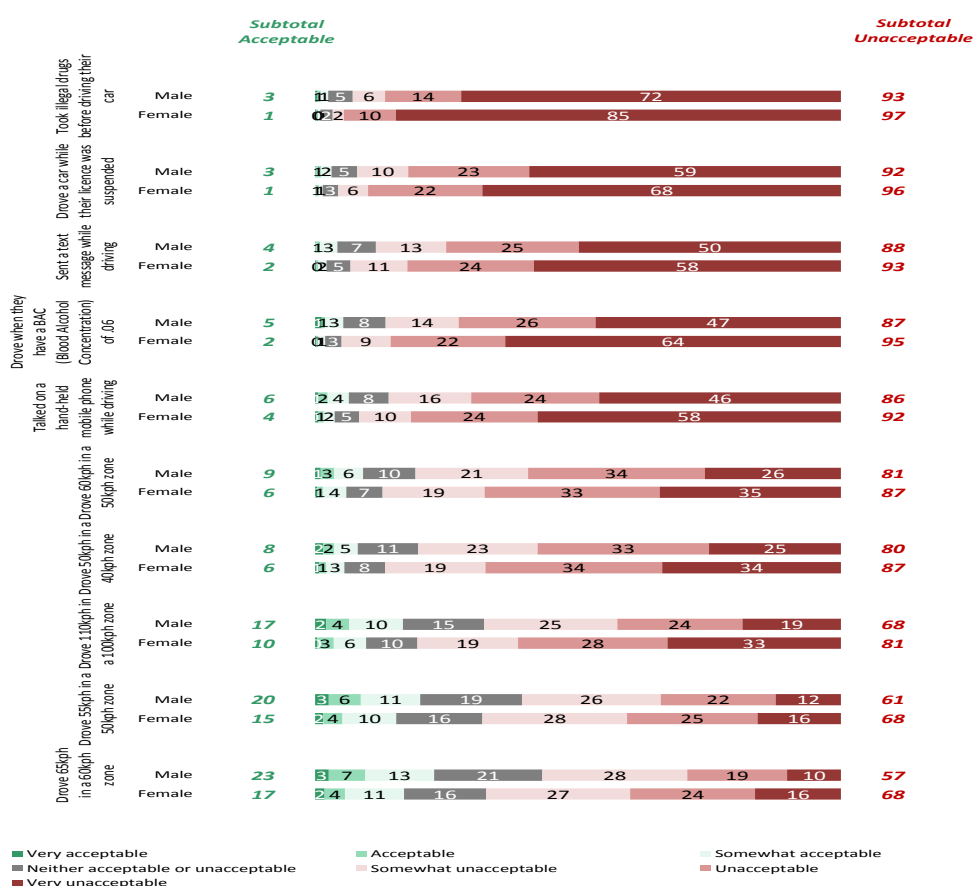
The speed related behaviours that were most likely to be judged unacceptable included driving 60km in a 50km zone and driving 50km in a 40km zone (both 84% very to somewhat unacceptable including 30% who thought it was very unacceptable).

In terms of “low level speeding” there was essentially no difference between how respondents viewed going 5km over the speed limit in a 50km zone or 60km zones. As seen in Figure 1, there was a notable proportion of respondents who thought it was acceptable to go 5km over in a 50 or 60km zone or neither ‘right nor wrong’ to do so (18% reported it would be acceptable to go 5km over in 50km zone; 20% for 5km over in a 60km zone; and 18% reported neither acceptable nor unacceptable for both zones).

One in four (25%) Victorian drivers said it was very to somewhat acceptable to drive over the speed limit in one or more of the scenarios covered in the survey. Acceptance of speeding behaviour is more likely for males (29%, compared to 22% of females), and for those aged under 40 (30%, compared to 21% of those aged 40 or over).

Demographic differences:

Figure 2: Driving behaviours – by gender (%)



Q5. How would you judge another person’s behaviour if they...?
Weighted; Base n = 2000

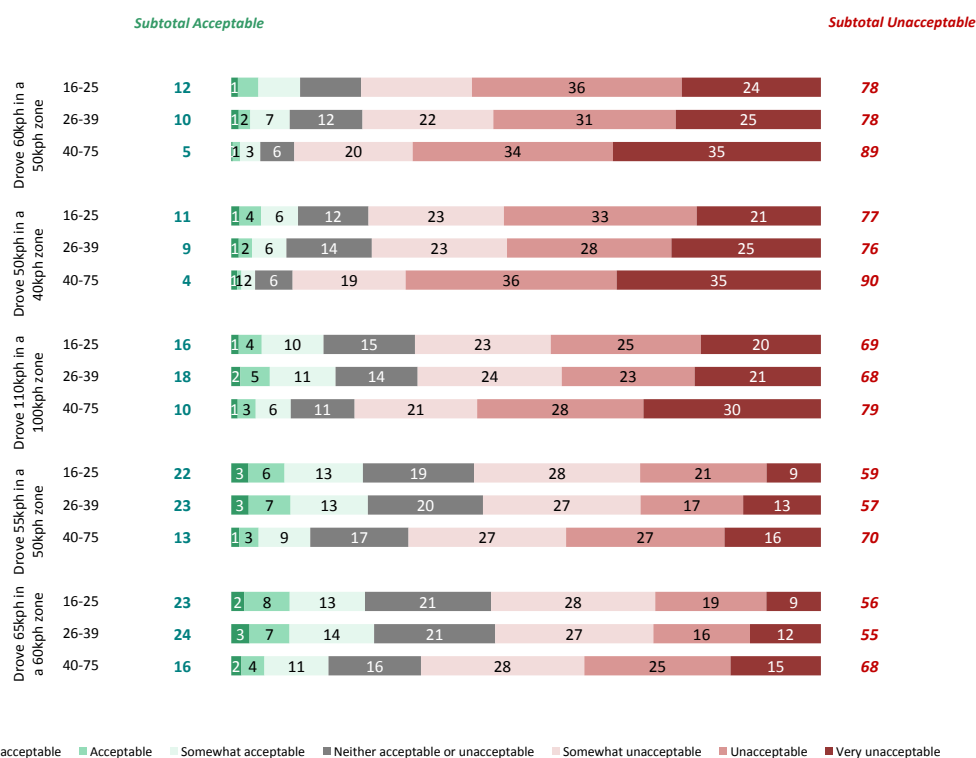
Male respondents were significantly less likely to think the driving behaviours in the 2014 survey were unacceptable. The biggest gap between the views of males and females related to speeding, in particular, in how they judged someone who drove 110 in a 100km zone (81%

very to somewhat unacceptable for females compared to 68% for males). Perceptions also differed significantly with regards to driving 65km in a 60 zone (68% very to somewhat unacceptable for females vs. 57% for males).

This is consistent with males being significantly less likely to report they normally drove at or below the speed limit compared to females (for example, 56% of male respondents said they normally drove below or at the speed limit in a 100km zone compared to 66% of females). Males were also more likely to report they had driven in the last three months when they thought they may have been over the legal BAC (8% compared to 5% of females).

People aged 16-39 were consistently the least likely to think the driving behaviours in general were unacceptable. Younger drivers (aged 39 or under) find driving with a BAC of 0.06 to be much less acceptable (45% *very* unacceptable for 16-25 year olds and 52% for those aged 26-39 years) than using a phone for either talking or texting while driving (33% of 16-25 year olds and 36% of 26-39 year olds find using a phone while driving to be *very* unacceptable); and considerably less acceptable than driving 5km/h over the speed limit – with 9% of drivers aged 16-25, and around 12% of drivers aged 26-39 finding driving 5km/h over the limit to be *very* unacceptable.

Figure 3: Summary of driving related behaviours by age (%)



Q5. How would you judge another person's behaviour if...?
Weighted; Base n = 2000 (VIC)

Changes since 2012:

There were some small methodological differences between the Social Acceptability Research conducted in 2012, compared to 2014, with the prime difference being that in 2012, only respondents aged from 18 - 60 were surveyed. For the purposes of comparison to 2012, only those respondents from the 2014 iteration that were aged from 18 - 60 have been included in analysis between 2012 and 2014. There were also some differences in the

questionnaire content, thus only questions that were asked in both iterations have been compared.

Generally, perceptions have become more polarised between 2012 and 2014, with behaviours that were seen as unacceptable in 2012 becoming *more* unacceptable in 2014; with the reverse also true that acceptable behaviours also became *more* acceptable in 2014. As can be seen in Table 2 below, there has been no movement in the really unacceptable behaviours (driving after taking illegal drugs, and driving while suspended); however there has been a significant shift in perceived acceptability of speeding type behaviours, with all speeding behaviours becoming reciprocally less acceptable and more unacceptable between 2012 and 2014.

While drivers aged over 40 were more likely to have conservative views in regard to acceptability of driving behaviour, changes in acceptability of driving behaviours have been more pronounced among drivers aged 39 years or younger. Even though driving at five kilometres over the posted limit in a 60km/h zone is deemed to be the most acceptable of the speeding related driving behaviours, acceptability of acceptability of driving at 65km/h in a 60km zone has dropped from 35% in 2012, to less than one in four (24%) in 2014, and driving at 110km/h in a 100km/h zone dropping in acceptability from around three in ten people believing it is acceptable to drive ten kilometres over the limit to around one in six.

Table 2: Summary of comparable driving behaviours between 2014 and 2012 (%)

Very to somewhat unacceptable	2012	2014
Took illegal drugs before driving their car	91	94
Drove a car while their licence was suspended	91	93
Sent a text message while driving	81↓	89↑
Talked on a hand-held mobile phone while driving	81↓	87↑
Drove 50km/h in a 40km/h zone	74↓	81↑
Drove 110km/h in a 100km/h zone	58↓	72↑
Drove 65km/h in a 60km/h zone	51↓	59↑
Very to somewhat acceptable		
Drove 65km/h in a 60km/h zone	29↑	22↓
Drove 110km/h in a 100km/h zone	24↑	15↓
Drove 50km/h in a 40km/h zone	13↑	8↓
Talked on a hand-held mobile phone while driving	9↑	6↓
Sent a text message while driving	9↑	4↓
Drove a car while their licence was suspended	4	2
Took illegal drugs before driving their car	3	2

Q5. How would you judge another person's behaviour if they...?

Weighted; Base n = 1643 (2014); Base n = 529 – 531 due to split sampling (2012)

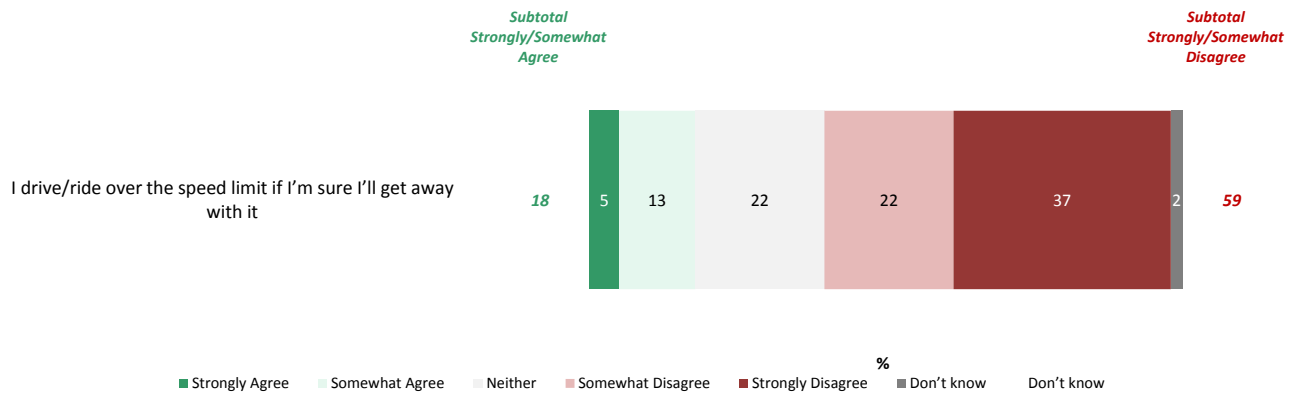
↓↑ Indicates 2014 significantly higher/lower compared to 2012

Self-reported speeding behaviour:

When respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the statement that they would drive over the speed limit if they thought they could get away with it, close to four in ten (37%) said they strongly disagreed, compared to only 5% who said they strongly agreed. Males are significantly more likely to say they will drive over the speed limit if they think

they can get away with it, and also younger drivers (aged less than 40) were more likely to say they would speed if they have the opportunity.

Figure 4: Driving over the speed limit if would get away with it – Total (%)



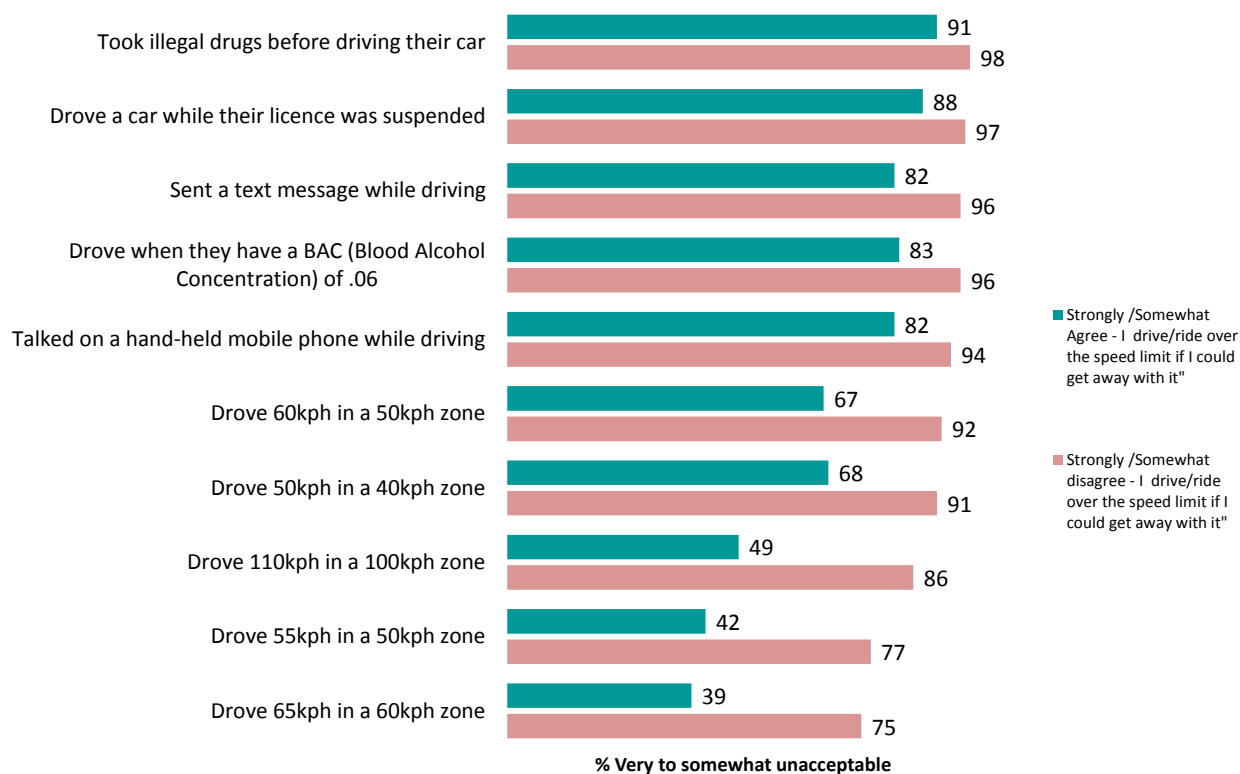
Q46. To what extent do you agree with the following statements...?

Weighted; Base n = 2000 (VIC)

Comparing those who agreed and those who disagreed with the statement, it can be seen that the degree to which respondents felt the driving behaviours in the survey were unacceptable tended to be lower for those who said they would speed if they had the opportunity to do so (Figure 5). For example, only 39% of drivers who agree they will drive over the speed limit if they can get away with it find travelling at 65km/h in a 60km zone to be unacceptable, compared to 75% of drivers who would not drive or ride over the speed limit even if they could get away with it.

Driving 10km/h over the speed limit in lower speed zones is comparatively unacceptable, even for those drivers who say they would speed if they could get away with it, with more than two thirds finding travelling at 60km/h in a 50 zone and 50km/h in a 40 zone to be unacceptable.

Figure 5: Driving behaviours – Very unacceptable to somewhat unacceptable by whether agree/disagree they drive/ride over the speed limit if they can get away with it (%)

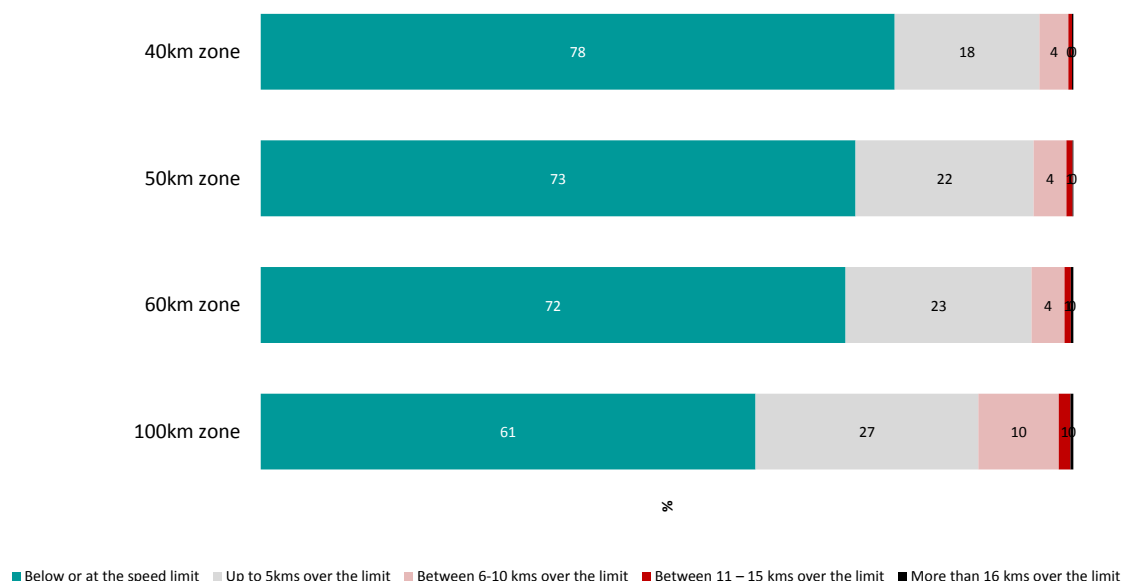


Q5. How would you judge another person's behaviour if they...? Weighted; Base n = 2000

Self-reported driving speeds

Respondents were asked at what speed they usually travelled in various speed zones, with drivers being much more likely to travel at or below the speed limit in lower speed zones than in higher speed zones. Males and younger drivers (aged less than 40) were much less likely to report travelling at or below the speed limit, regardless of the posted limit, compared to both females and older drivers. However, only around 5% of drivers self-report normally driving more than five kilometres over the posted limit in 40km/h, 50km/h or 60km/h zones. These increased to more than one in ten drivers when considering their travel speeds in 100km/h zones; meaning drivers are generally prepared to go faster in higher speed zones.

Regional drivers are generally more conservative in their stated travel speeds on all but 100km/h roads; with metropolitan drivers more likely to self-report speeding behaviour on lower speed roads and regional drivers significantly more likely to travel up to 5km over the limit on 100km/h roads.

Figure 4: Speed normally driven/rode at – Total (%)

Q31. What speed do you normally drive or ride in a ...?
Weighted; Base n = 1845 (VIC and drive car, truck or ride motorcycle)

While respondents were clearly more likely to say they adhered to the limit in the lower speed zones, it should be noted, that those who drove over the sign-posted speed limit, even by a small amount, were also likely to say they did so in other speed zones. In other words, for the most part, those who speed did so regardless of the speed zone. Among those who said they normally drove or rode faster than the sign-posted speed limit in a 60km zone (28% of all respondents),

- 56% of this group reported they also drove above the sign-posted limit in a 40km zone.
- 77% of this cohort reported they drove over the limit in a 50km, and
- 86% reported they drove over the sign posted limit in a 100km zone (compared to only 21% of those who reported they adhered to the limit in a 60km zone).

Drivers who self-report speeding in a 100km/h zone (39% of all drivers) are also more likely to speed in other speed zones:

- 39% reported they drove above the sign-posted limit in a 40km zone.
- 51% reported they drove above the sign-posted limit in a 50km zone.
- 61% reported they drove above the sign-posted limit in a 60km zone.

Acceptability of driving behaviours vs. self-reported speeding behaviour:

Drivers who self-report driving at or below the posted speed limit, regardless of the speed zone, are less likely to consider speeding behaviour to be acceptable, with more than seven in ten drivers finding travelling at 65km/h in a 60 zone (the driving behaviour considered to be the most acceptable of the tested behaviours) to be unacceptable. The higher the speed reported by drivers, the more acceptable they consider their behaviour. This perceived increase in acceptability is not restricted to speeding behaviours, with drivers who speed considering driving after taking drugs or drink driving to be significantly less unacceptable than those drivers who don't speed.

Table 3: Driving related behaviours - Very unacceptable to somewhat unacceptable by speed driven in 50, 60 and 100km zones (%)

	Drive/ride in a 50km zone			Drive/ride in a 60km zone			Drive/ride in 100km zone		
	Below or at the speed limit	Up to 5kms over	More than 6km over	Below or at the speed limit	Up to 5kms over	6+ km over	Below or at the speed limit	Up to 5kms over the limit	6+ km over
<i>n</i> =	1319	428	98	1300	443	102	1108	513	224
Took illegal drugs before driving their car	96↑	93	79↓	96↑	95	72↓	96↑	96	85↓
Drove a car while their licence was suspended	96↑	91↓	78↓	96↑	92	73↓	96↑	95	81↓
Sent a text message while driving	94↑	84↓	65↓	94↑	85↓	65↓	94↑	90	78↓
Drove when they have a BAC (Blood Alcohol Concentration) of .06	94↑	87↓	68↓	94↑	89	60↓	94↑	91	76↓
Talked on a hand-held mobile phone while driving	92↑	81↓	64↓	92↑	85↓	57↓	91↑	88	75↓
Drove 60km/h in a 50km/h zone	90↑	71↓	46↓	90↑	74↓	40↓	90↑	83	57↓
Drove 50km/h in a 40km/h zone	90↑	70↓	48↓	90↑	73↓	40↓	89↑	81	61↓
Drove 110km/h in a 100km/h zone	81↑	56↓	38↓	82↑	55↓	33↓	85↑	66↓	32↓
Drove 55km/h in a 50km/h zone	74↑	37↓	26↓	74↑	42↓	20↓	74↑	54↓	32↓
Drove 65km/h in a 60km/h zone	72↑	34↓	24↓	72↑	38↓	19↓	73↑	49↓	30↓

Q5. How would you judge another person's behaviour if they...?

Weighted; Base *n* = 2000 (VIC)

↓↑ Indicates significantly higher/lower compared to the average of those not in that category

Discussion:

Actual speeding behaviour vs. self-reported speeding behaviour:

The TAC has conducted a number of surveys historically that ask respondents about their self-reported speeding behaviour, including the Road Safety Monitor. In the 2001 iteration of the Road Safety Monitor (Colmar Brunton, 2001), more than 80% of Victorian drivers self-reported speeding at least some of the time. By 2009 (DBM Consulting, 2009), this had declined to around 70%, and in 2014 (The Social Research Centre, 2014) the number of Victorian drivers who self-report driving in excess of the speed limit at least part of the time has reduced to around half. In addition, the proportion of people who define speeding as anything in excess of 65km/h in a 60km/h zone has declined from close to one in three in 2001, to 6% in 2014.

When respondents to the Public Education Evaluation Program survey (Wallis, 2014) were asked to estimate how many of their family and friends would exceed the speed limit, even if only by a few kilometres per hour, 27% state that at least half of their friends and family would speed. This increases to 36% of those who self-report having exceeded the speed limit in the last three months. Drivers who say they don't speed are much more likely to state that their friends and family also don't speed (35%, compared to only 16% of those who do speed).

When considering actual speeding related behaviour - just under one in five (18%) drivers self-reported having received at least one speeding ticket in the previous 12 months, and of

the drivers who say they have received a speeding ticket, they have received an average of 1.25 each in the last year. This figure has remained relatively constant since 2005 (The Social Research Centre, 2014). Data reported in Nieuwesteeg and Alavi (2014) shows that 71% of Victorian drivers have received no demerit points at all in the last three years. In addition, the levels of compliance in 50km/h and 60km/h speed zones as observed from data collected by the Department of Justice (DoJ) from covert speed camera operations indicate that around 90% of drivers travel at or below the speed limit in 60km/h zones and around 75% of drivers are completely compliant in 50km/h zones (Nieuwesteeg and Alavi, 2014). Mean travel speeds as calculated from the VicRoads metropolitan speed zone survey also indicate that actual mean travel speeds in 60km/h zones have declined from close to 60km/h in 2003 to around 58km/h from 2011 (Nieuwesteeg and Alavi, 2014).

Conclusion:

In conclusion, TAC research findings suggest that while low level speeding is considered to be more acceptable than some other driving behaviours; most Victorians don't in fact speed. More than 70% of Victorian drivers say they do not drive over the speed limit in 40, 50 or 60km/h zones, and while travelling at five kilometres over the speed limit is seen as relatively more acceptable; 90% of Victorian drivers consider travelling ten kilometres over the posted limit in lower speed zones to be unacceptable.

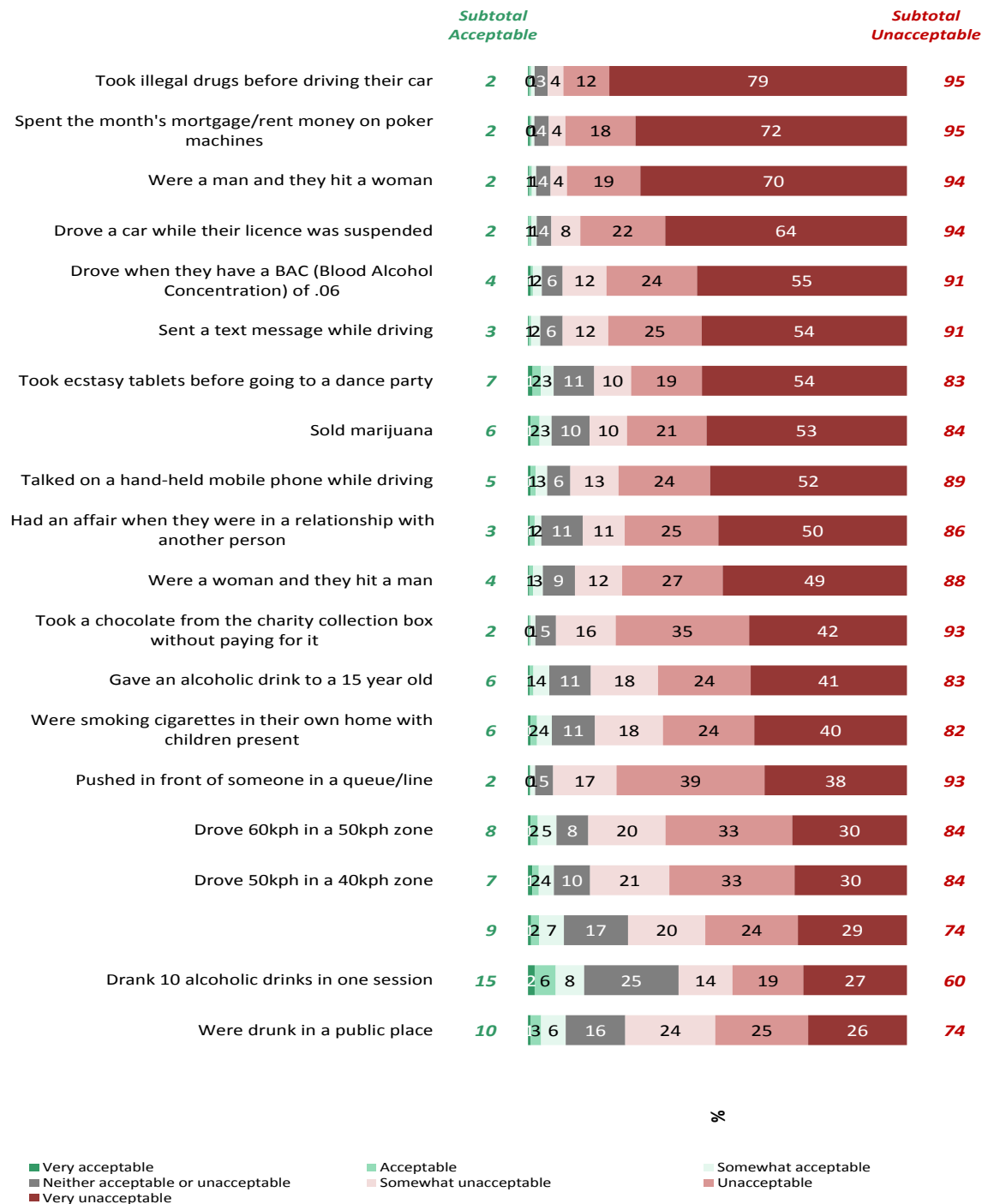
This is supported by data collected by DoJ and also from the VicRoads Metropolitan Speed Survey that both indicate that the vast majority of Victorian drivers don't speed. Drivers who do speed are less likely to think their behaviour is unacceptable and to think that their friends and family also speed, possibly as a way of justifying their own behaviour. It is of interest to note that those drivers who do speed are also more likely to find other driving behaviours including driving while over the BAC limit or to send a text message while driving acceptable than those drivers who do not.

References

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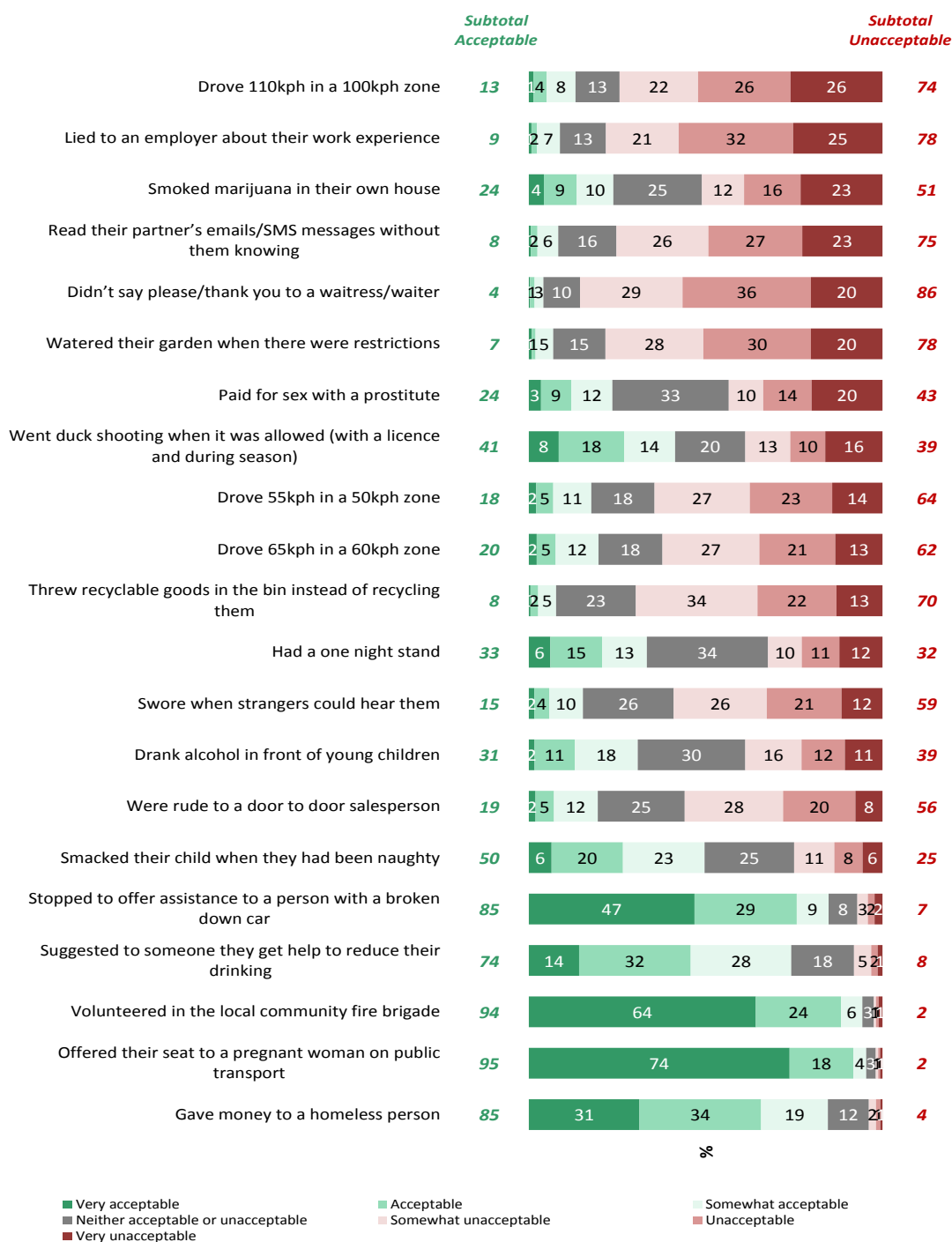
Appendix 1:

Attitudes towards behaviours – highest unacceptability to lowest unacceptability (%) (Part 1)



Q5. How would you judge another person's behaviour if they...?
 Weighted; Base n = 2000

Attitudes towards behaviours – highest unacceptability to lowest unacceptability (%) (Part 2)



Q5. How would you judge another person's behaviour if they...?
 Weighted; Base n = 2000