

This document summarizes people’s perceptions and attitudes towards move over laws. Data came from AAA Foundation’s Traffic Safety Culture Index survey*, a nationally representative sample of 2,889 U.S. licensed drivers ages 16 and over. Between October 23rd and November 23rd 2020, respondents completed an online survey, answering a series of questions about their experiences, understanding of, and opinions towards move over laws. Data were weighted to account for differential sampling probabilities and to align the demographic characteristics of the respondents with those of the U.S. population.

Pearson’s Chi-Square (χ^2) tests were used to examine gender differences, and an ordered logistic regression was used to assess age group differences in people’s perceptions and attitudes. Statistical significance was set at 0.05. All analyses have been conducted using weighted data, except sample sizes (n) in Tables 1 and 3, at the 0.05 level of statistical significance.

Table 1 shows that in the past year slightly more than half of the respondents experienced driving past an emergency vehicle with flashing lights stopped on the side of the road. Among them, the majority (93%) reported having changed lanes and/or slowed down (at all times) when they could have (see Table 2). Drivers in the 16-to-18-year-old age group, however, were significantly less likely to change lanes and/or slow down (at all times), compared with the 40-to-64-year-old age group. Respondents reported that the main reason they did not change lanes and/or slow down was not having enough space to do so (see Table 3).

As shown in Table 4, about a quarter of respondents (23%) were unaware of the move over law in the state where they live, even though currently all 50 states and the District of Columbia have move over laws. Older drivers (65 years or older) were more likely to be aware of this law than those in any other age group. Among those who were aware of their state’s move over laws, nearly all of them reported completely or somewhat understanding the law’s requirements. (Table 5). In contrast, about 15% reported not understanding the potential consequences for violating the move over law at all (see Table 6).

Table 7 shows that over 90% respondents reported that they were ‘very comfortable’ complying with move over laws, although 16-to-18-year-old drivers were significantly less likely to report so. Also, in general, 8-in-10 respondents thought that violating the move over law could be ‘very dangerous’ to roadside emergency workers (Table 8). Interestingly, among those who did not comply with move over laws at all times, only 58% thought so (Table 9).

Table 1. Results for the question, “In the past year, have you driven past an emergency vehicle with flashing lights stopped on the side of the road?”

	n (unweighted)	% (weighted)
Yes	1,523	51.72
No	1,009	36.33
I don't remember	353	11.77
Total	2,889	100.00

* The annual Traffic Safety Culture Index (TSCI) identifies attitudes and behaviors related to traffic safety. The survey data are from a sample of 2,889 licensed drivers ages 16 or older who reported driving in the 30 days before the survey, which was administered between Oct. 23 and Nov. 23, 2020. The AAA Foundation issued its first TSCI in 2008, and the latest report is online: AAAFoundation.org

Table 2. Results for the question, “When approaching an emergency vehicle stopped on the side of the road in the past year, how often did you change lanes and/or slow down?”

Row %	All times when I could have	Most times (in about 70% or more of the chances when I could have)	About half the time (in about 50% of the chances when I could have)	Rarely (in less than 10% of the chances when I could have)	Never
Total	92.61	6.22	0.84	0.12	0.18
16-18*	85.39	13.29	0.17	0.61	0.55
19-24	90.04	9.96	0.00	0.00	0.00
25-39	90.66	7.84	1.50	0.00	0.00
40-64	94.24	4.21	0.87	0.23	0.38
65+	93.37	6.49	0.15	0.00	0.00
Male	92.17	6.71	1.09	0.03	0.00
Female	93.09	5.68	0.57	0.22	0.39

* Indicates that the odds of having changed lanes and/or slowed down among this age group were different from those among the reference group (40-64) at a significance level of 0.05.

Table 3. Results for the question, “Why did you NOT change lanes and/or slow down all times, when approaching an emergency vehicle stopped on the side of the road in the past year? Select all that apply.”

	n (unweighted)	% (weighted)
Sometimes there isn't enough space for me to change lanes.	87	79.37
Sometimes reducing my speed might cause another car to hit me, or me to hit another car.	42	38.28
Sometimes there isn't enough time to decide what I should do.	47	42.56
Other*	8	6.56

* “Other” includes “There is a wide enough shoulder,” “There is no additional lane,” and “The emergency vehicle stopped on the opposite lanes.”

This question was asked to all except for those who answered “All times when I could have” for the question in Table 2.

Table 4. Results for the question, “In the state where you live, is there a law that requires drivers to change lanes and/or slow down when approaching an emergency vehicle with flashing lights stopped on the side of the road, also known as a “move over” law?”

Row %	Yes	No	I don't know
Total	76.91	2.91	20.07
16-18	77.58	3.53	18.31
19-24*	63.86	6.11	30.03
25-39*	69.75	4.00	26.26
40-64	79.03	2.67	18.18
65+*	85.31	1.02	13.45
Male	76.49	3.57	19.80
Female	77.31	2.29	20.32

* Indicates the odds of being aware of move over laws among this age group were different from those among the reference group (40-64) at a significance level of 0.05.

Table 5. Results for the question, “Do you understand the requirements of the move over law in your state?”

Row %	Yes, completely	Yes, somewhat	No, not at all
Total	72.85	25.54	1.56
16-18*	70.23	27.85	1.55
19-24	69.88	28.35	1.78
25-39	68.61	27.95	3.45
40-64	73.00	26.06	0.90
65+	77.95	21.11	0.86
Male	75.01	23.66	1.25
Female	70.82	27.30	1.86

* Indicates the odds of understanding move over laws' requirements among this age group were different from those among the reference group (40-64) at a significance level of 0.05.

This question was asked to those who answered “Yes” for the question in Table 4.

Table 6. Results for the question, “Do you understand the potential consequences for violating the move over law in your state?”

Row %	Yes, completely	Yes, somewhat	No, not at all
Total	48.45	36.04	15.34
16-18	51.79	33.49	14.51
19-24	52.10	27.28	20.62
25-39*	41.87	34.76	23.37
40-64	50.28	36.13	13.49
65+	50.51	39.44	9.52
Male†	52.45	32.06	15.15
Female	44.68	39.80	15.51

* Indicates the odds of understanding the potential consequences of violating move over laws among this age group were different from those among the reference group (40-64) at a significance level of 0.05.

† Indicates the proportion from males is different from females at a significant level of 0.05.

This question was asked to those who answered “Yes” for the question in Table 4.

Table 7. Results for the question, “How comfortable are you with complying with the move over law?”

Row %	Very comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Not comfortable at all
Total	90.85	8.10	0.88
16-18*	83.66	16.05	0.29
19-24	86.72	13.28	0.00
25-39	88.71	9.78	0.94
40-64	92.20	6.77	0.96
65+	92.15	6.93	0.92
Male	90.46	8.33	0.93
Female	91.21	7.89	0.83

* Indicates the odds of feeling comfortable complying with move over laws among this age group were different from those among the reference group (40-64) at a significance level of 0.05.

This question was asked to those who answered “Yes” for the question in Table 4.

Table 8. Results for the question, “How dangerous is it for roadside emergency workers when drivers do not comply with the move over law?”

Row %	Very dangerous	Somewhat dangerous	Not dangerous at all
Total	83.49	15.98	0.41
16-18	78.93	20.24	0.83
19-24*	75.87	24.13	0.00
25-39*	79.99	19.68	0.21
40-64	84.44	14.77	0.69
65+*	88.77	10.89	0.12
Male†	79.12	20.22	0.48
Female	87.66	11.94	0.34

* Indicates the odds of considering violating move over laws as dangerous to roadside emergency workers among this age group were different from those among the reference group (40-64) at a significance level of 0.05.

† Indicates the proportion from males is different from females at a significant level of 0.05.

Table 9. People’s perceived danger of violating move over law in relation to their self-reported compliance (cross-tabulation between Table 2 and Table 8)

Row %	Very dangerous	Somewhat or not dangerous at all
Changing lanes/ slowing down all times when I could have	86%	14%
Not all times*	58%	42%

* Indicates the proportion from “Not all times” is different from “All times when I could have” at a significant level of 0.05 based on Pearson’s Chi-Square (χ^2) tests.

For more information, contact:

AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety
 607 14th Street NW, Suite 201
 Washington, DC 20005
 (202) 638-5944
 info@aaafoundation.org