

2020 Illinois Traveler Opinion Survey Key Findings Report

*Report prepared by the
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for the
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Key Findings

Section I. Roads and Highways

For the second year in a row, all nine aspects of roads and highways were rated higher than the previous year. While all aspects increased in favorability, of note are snow removal, which hit an all-time high rating of 75% and timing of traffic signals, which jumped by 10 percentage points in 2020. Women and those over 60 years of age were the most positive of the roads and highways and the single biggest difference in favorability by demographic groups included: roadside lighting (Chicago +25) and snow removal (60+ +20).

REBUILD ILLINOIS PROGRAM

Awareness of the Rebuild Illinois Program is down slightly in 2020 (41%) from 2019 (45%). However, the majority of respondents said the program's \$33.2 billion budget was "about right" (55%), and fewer respondents said it was "too much" (17%) compared to the 2019 results (22%). This is a 30% change in opinion in just a single year, indicating more support for the large infrastructure spending program.

Section II. IDOT Projects

The most frequently selected capital improvement project was once again "repair/upgrade deteriorating highways and bridges" (80%). Interestingly, the largest loss of support from 2019 year was for "improve mass transit" (-5), even though it was still a common selection. The largest jump in support from last year was for "improve or expand bicycle and pedestrian trails" (+6).

Section III. Passenger Rail and Public Transportation

The vast majority (93%) of respondents rated their overall experience with Amtrak rail services as "very good" or "good", indicating a high level of satisfaction with the service. Support for expanding Amtrak services was also high as most respondents indicated routes should "stay the same" (48%) or "increase" (44%). While support for Amtrak services is high (nine in 10 respondents indicated they support Amtrak rail services), usage is not as universal (just over half (52%) indicated they have ever even used it). Expectedly, those who using Amtrak daily are much more supportive (91%) of Amtrak than those who have never used it (85%).

COVID-19 IMPACT

To assess the impact of COVID-19 on Amtrak usage, respondents were asked if the frequency of their use "since the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic began" had "increased, decreased or stayed the same." For the majority, their usage had stayed

the same (63%) while about a third decreased (32%). The most common reason it had decreased was “not feeling safe due to concern of possible exposure to COVID-19.”

SATISFACTION, SUPPORT AND USE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Satisfaction with public transportation continues to be quite high among Illinois travelers as eight in 10 respondents (84%) rated their experience with public transportation in Illinois as “very good” or “good.” This is up five percentage points from the 2019 results (79%). Additionally, support for public transportation also remains high with a majority of respondents reporting access to public transportation should be “significantly increased” or “modestly increased” (68%).

COVID-19 IMPACT

To assess the impact of COVID-19 on public transportation usage, respondents were asked if the frequency of their use “since the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic began” had “increased, decreased or stayed the same.” For the majority of respondents, usage of public transportation during the COVID-19 pandemic has stayed the same (51%) or decreased (44%). The most common response for decreasing was “not feeling safe due to concern of possible exposure to COVID-19.”

Section IV. Commuting

Six in ten respondents indicated they commuted to work in a typical year, which holds steady from the 2019 results of 59%. The most common mode of transportation was “car/personal vehicle” (76%). Results in 2020 indicate the majority of Illinois travelers commute five days per week (63%) and have a relatively good idea of how long their commute will take each day (91%). In terms of distance travelled, respondents from the Chicago suburbs indicate they may be traveling further than even some of their downstate counterparts. In terms of length of commute, though Chicago respondents indicated they had the shortest commute in miles, they did not indicate spending less time in minutes on that commute compared with the other two regions of the state analyzed.

COVID-19 IMPACT

Overwhelming, respondents indicated the number of days they commute to work has decreased (49%) or stayed the same (43%) since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Chicago (61%) and suburban respondents (57%) were most likely to indicate their commute days had *decreased* compared to those from elsewhere in the state (34%). Working remotely (69%) was overwhelmingly the most common reason respondents indicated their commute days had decreased since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Section V. Traveler Services

REST AREA QUALITY AND FREQUENCY OF USE

Compared to previous years, the 2020 results show a large increase in the importance of rest areas for Illinois travelers (81%), increasing nine percentage points from 2019 (72%). Use of rest areas was also up in 2020 (51%) from 2019 (46%), together indicating not only a growing importance of public rest areas, but also a growing use.

COVID-19 IMPACT

The pandemic has impacted the use of rest areas, as predicted. The majority of respondents indicated their use had decreased (47%) or stayed the same (48%). And of those who indicated their use had decreased, about one third (31%) indicated their use had decreased because of “less travel”, which was followed by “not feeling safe due to concern of possible exposure to COVID.”

IDOT WEBSITE USE AND ACCESSIBILITY

Slightly fewer respondents indicated visiting the IDOT traveler website (51%) than in 2019 (53%), and notably, younger respondents age 18-34 were much less likely to have visited the site (40%), as well as those who had less than a four-year degree (44%), those who identified as non-white (36%), and those in Chicago (42%). The primary reason indicated was that they had not heard about or were not familiar with the site. For those who had visited the site, 92% indicated they could find the information they were seeking, and the most common information they were seeking was traffic or travel updates (32%) and areas of construction (31%).

Section VI. Dangerous Driving Behavior

SELF-REPORTED DANGEROUS DRIVING BEHAVIORS

The most common self-reported dangerous driving behaviors included using a mobile device to make phone calls (42%), not obeying speed limits in work zones (30%) and using a mobile device to text or email (26%). Younger drivers age 18-34 report engaging in dangerous driving behaviors far more often than any other age group by about 10 percentage points across all six behaviors. Additionally, when answering phone calls while driving, the number who answered via Bluetooth (54%) was up about as much as ignoring the call (23%) was down from 2019. This indicates that as Bluetooth technology is more accessible to drivers, they are more often answering phone calls while driving.

PERCEPTION OF RISK FROM DISTRACTED DRIVING

Three-fourths of respondents indicated they felt at risk because of another driver's distracted driving (72%), but only one-third indicated they felt at risk because of their own distracted driving (35%), similar to 2019.

PASSENGER INTERVENTION

Respondents indicated they were slightly more likely to intervene if the driver of the vehicle they were a passenger in was sending texts or emails (70%) over taking a phone call (65%). Both figures are continuing a downward trend in hypothetical passenger intervention during distracted driving. These consistent drops over the past three iterations of the survey indicate more hesitation on the part of passengers to intervene in dangerous distracted driving behaviors. It may also indicate an increased acceptance of dangerous driving behaviors, or technology that may allow for these once dangerous behaviors to be executed in a safer, less distracted manner. Respondents age 18-34 are not only the least likely to intervene as passengers, but they are far less likely than the average to intervene if the driver is sending a text or email.

OTHER DRIVERS' IRRITATING DRIVING BEHAVIOR

"Other drivers not using proper signals" (82%) was the most commonly reported irritating behavior in 2020. Additionally, it was also the most frequently cited irritating behavior with 38% of respondents reporting annoyance with it "five or more times" in the past 30 days." Together, these indicate not only are a higher proportion of respondents experiencing irritation with a lack of proper signaling, they are also experiencing it with a higher frequency than other irritating behaviors.

LIKELIHOOD OF BEING STOPPED BY POLICE FOR DANGEROUS DRIVING BEHAVIORS

The 2020 results are largely unchanged from the 2019 results, both of which indicate the majority of respondents feel it is "somewhat unlikely" or "very unlikely" they would be stopped by police for any of the dangerous behaviors in this section. The most commonly indicated behavior respondents believed they would be stopped for was speeding (34%). Respondents age 18-34 were most likely to report a belief they would be stopped by police across all five dangerous behaviors.

Section VII. Media Awareness

ENFORCEMENT CAMPAIGNS

Respondents reported they had “read, seen or heard anything in the media about alcohol-impaired driving (41%), seat belt law enforcement (32%), cell phone use while driving (38%) and Scott’s Law (30%) by police” far less often than in 2019. The downward trend in awareness of all four campaigns continues a two-year slide in results from their most recent highs in 2018. The largest drop in awareness since 2019 are for the cell phone use (-17) and Scott’s Law (-17) campaigns.

AWARENESS OF SLOGANS

While majorities of respondents said they had “read, seen, or heard” about “Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over” (51%) and “Click it or Ticket” (62%), significantly fewer respondents reported the same for “Life or Death Illinois” (24%) and “Drop it and Drive” (32%). The largest year over year drop was for “Drop it and Drive,” which fell by 13 percentage points since 2019. Even the most recognized slogan “Click it or Ticket” has fallen by over 10 percentage points in two years. The only slogan holding steady in awareness is “Life or Death Illinois,” the least recognized slogan three years in a row.

Section VIII. Rating IDOT

OVERALL IDOT RATING

Eight in ten respondents rated the job IDOT was doing as “very good” or “good,” up 7 percentage point since 2019. This makes the second year in a row with a higher rating than the last for this item. Seven in ten respondents indicated they could trust IDOT to do the right thing “just about always” or “most of the time,” which is similar to 2019.

RATING IDOT EMPLOYEES

While all four areas respondents’ rate IDOT employees on remain high (well over 75% in each category), the “overall conduct of employees on the job” fell slightly by four percentage points in 2020. The most positively rated item was “courtesy and respect shown to motorists” (88%) for the second year in a row. This indicates a high level of satisfaction among Illinois travelers with IDOT employee performance.