

1998 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey

Data Preview V: Emergency Medical Services

Following are results from the 1998 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey conducted for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). The survey employed 2 questionnaires, each administered by telephone to a national sample of approximately 4,000 randomly selected persons age 16 and older. Interviewing began November 5, 1998, and continued through January 12, 1999. The data are weighted to yield national estimates. Detailed results from the survey will be published later in a series of NHTSA reports.

Access To Emergency Care

When asked who they would call first in a medical emergency, 89% of the public said they would call 9-1-1 (see Table on back). This may understate the case as other responses to that question could have been alternative ways of referring to 9-1-1. Therefore, the remaining 11% of the sample were asked if there was a particular telephone number to call for emergencies in their community, and if so, what was the number? This follow-up questioning brought the total percentage of the public who reported having 9-1-1 service to 95%.

Called An Emergency Number

Forty-two percent of the public said they had personally called 9-1-1 or another emergency number for help sometime in the past. Blacks (47%) were more likely to report this than whites (42%) or Hispanics (34%). Usually respondents called for an ambulance (55%) or police (28%).

Confidence In The EMS Response

A plurality of the public (41%) believed it would take an ambulance five minutes or less to respond to a medical emergency in their neighborhood while 29% estimated it would take the ambulance six-to-ten minutes to arrive. Two-thirds (68%) of the public said they were very confident that the ambulance or other emergency workers would know what to do regardless of the medical emergency; 28% were somewhat confident.

As in previous years, the 1998 results showed racial differences in confidence in the EMS system. Fully 72% of whites expected the ambulance to arrive in ten minutes or less compared to 58% of blacks and 69% of Hispanics. Similarly, 70% of whites were very confident that the emergency workers would know what to do compared to 59% of blacks and 67% of Hispanics.

Providing Bystander Care

Interviewers presented a scenario to respondents in which they were driving, saw a crash, and no one was at the scene to help. When asked what concerns they might have about stopping to help, 54% professed no concerns. Almost two-thirds (64%) asserted they definitely would stop in this situation. If respondents were then told it was too dangerous to stop and help at the scene, and asked how likely they would be to call for help from the nearest available phone, 88% said they definitely would call and 10% said they probably would call.

Three-fifths of blacks (60%) and Hispanics (61%) claimed having no concerns about stopping to help compared to 53% of whites. However, concerns about personal safety increased among blacks from 1996 (12%) to 1998 (21%). Hispanics also showed an increase over this time frame (9% to 16%) while whites stayed about the same (16% to 18%). When asked their likelihood of stopping, 61% of blacks, 64% of whites, and 65% of Hispanics contended they definitely would stop.



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		1998	1996	1994
If someone was experiencing a medical emergency and you needed to get help for that person, who would you call first?	9-1-1	89%	88%	84%
	Police	2%	2%	5%
	EMS	4%	4%	4%
	AmbulanceService	1%	2%	2%
	Fire Department	*	1%	1%
	Rescue Squad	*	*	1%
	Other Response	3%	2%	3%
	Don't Know/Refused	1%	1%	1%
Is there a particular telephone number to call for medical emergencies in your community?	Answered 9-1-1 To Above Question or To This Question	95%	93%	91%
	Yes, Gave Another Number	1%	1%	2%
	No	2%	2%	3%
	Don't Know/Refused	2%	3%	4%
If there was a medical emergency in your neighborhood and you called an ambulance, how long do you think it would take for the ambulance to arrive?	1-5 minutes	41%	42%	42%
	6-10 minutes	29%	27%	28%
	11-15 minutes	12%	12%	13%
	16+ minutes	12%	13%	13%
	Don't Know/Refused	6%	5%	5%
Have you, personally, ever called 9-1-1 or another emergency number for help?	Yes	42%	41%	NA
	No	58%	59%	NA
	Don't Know/Refused	*	*	NA
Suppose that you are driving, you see an accident happen, and no one is there at the scene to help. What concerns might you have about stopping to help?	No Concerns/Would Stop*	54%	52%	59%
	Ability To Assist	13%	16%	12%
	Personal Safety	18%	15%	15%
	Lawsuits/Liability	11%	12%	10%
	Victim's Safety	6%	6%	8%
	Other	1%	2%	1%
	Don't Know/Refused	5%	4%	5%
How likely would you be to stop?	Definitely Would	64%	59%	NA
	Probably Would	27%	29%	NA
	Probably Would Not	4%	5%	NA
	Definitely Would Not	2%	2%	NA
	Depends	3%	3%	NA
	Don't Know/Refused	1%	1%	NA
****Do you have a car phone or (ever) carry a cellular phone in the motor vehicle you usually drive?	Yes	44%	31%	17%
	No	56%	69%	83%
	Don't Know/Refused	*	*	*



Numbers may not total to 100% due to rounding. * Less than .5%. ** Numbers total more than 100% due to multiple response. *** Includes those who said they would stop to call. **** Drivers only. The wording was slightly revised in 1996.