

Majority of Kenyans do not take personal responsibility for road safety

A new poll on road safety has revealed that majority of Kenyans do not take personal responsibility for their own safety on the road, leaving that role to police. 64% of Kenyans indicated that the police have the responsibility of ensuring road safety through enforcement of the law, 44% mention motorists whilst only 22% indicate pedestrians have a role to play. The same survey indicates that careless driving and substance use are blamed for road accidents in Kenya. The poll conducted by Ipsos Synovate in July 2012 also showed that road safety campaigns driven by popular brands or embedded in entertaining programmes have more impact than those sponsored by government agencies.

Perceived causes of road accidents in Kenya

The causes of road accidents in Kenya fall into five broad categories. There are those related to irresponsible motorists, poor enforcement of traffic rules, pedestrian related causes, poor road conditions and use of unroadworthy vehicles.

However, the study found that majority of Kenyans attributed the causes of road accidents to motorist factors such as speeding (71 per cent) and driving while drunk (58 per cent). Only 7 per cent feel that pedestrians have a responsibility to be careful on the roads.

Q: "What are the causes of road traffic accidents?" (By Total sample)



71% speeding



58% Under influence of alcohol



16% Roads in poor conditions



8% Using mobile phones while driving



7% Pedestrians not using the road carefully



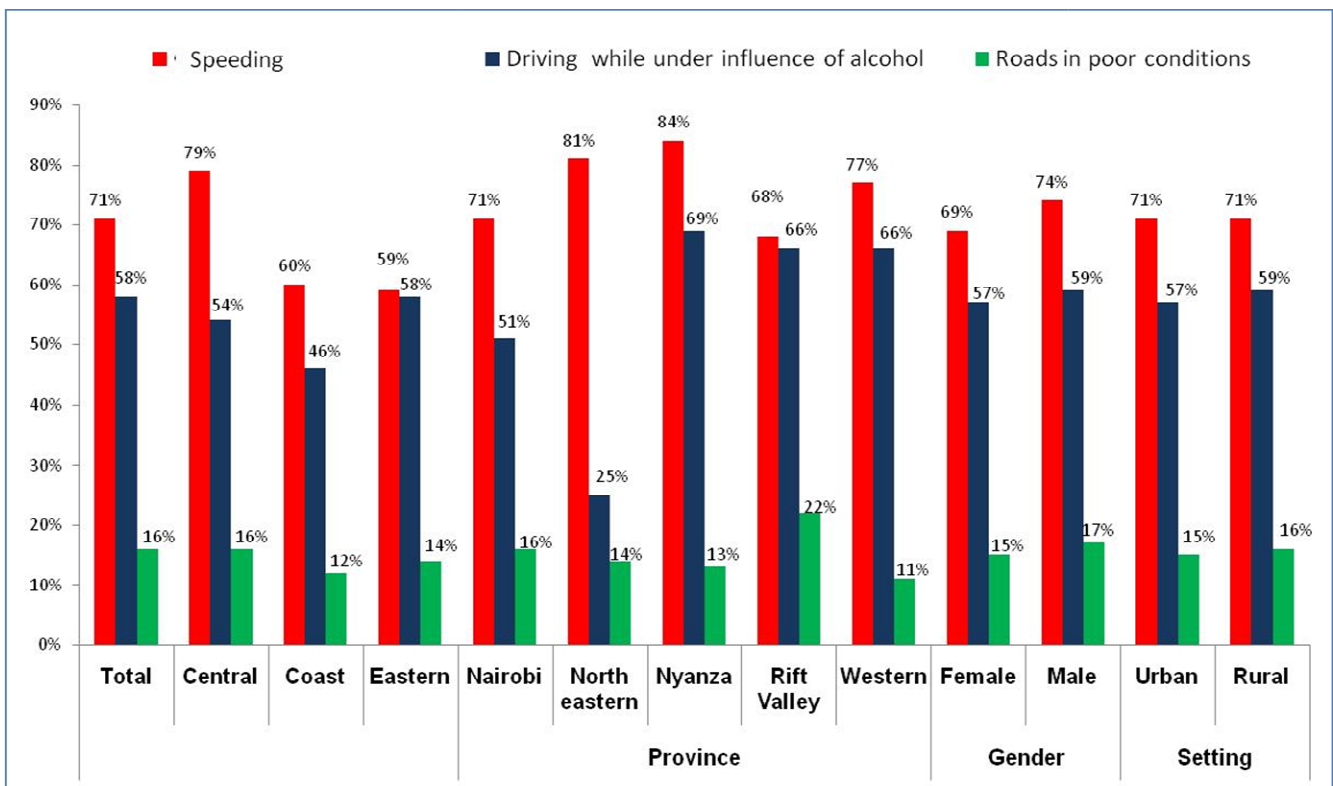
4% Corrupt practices



3% Unroadworthy vehicles

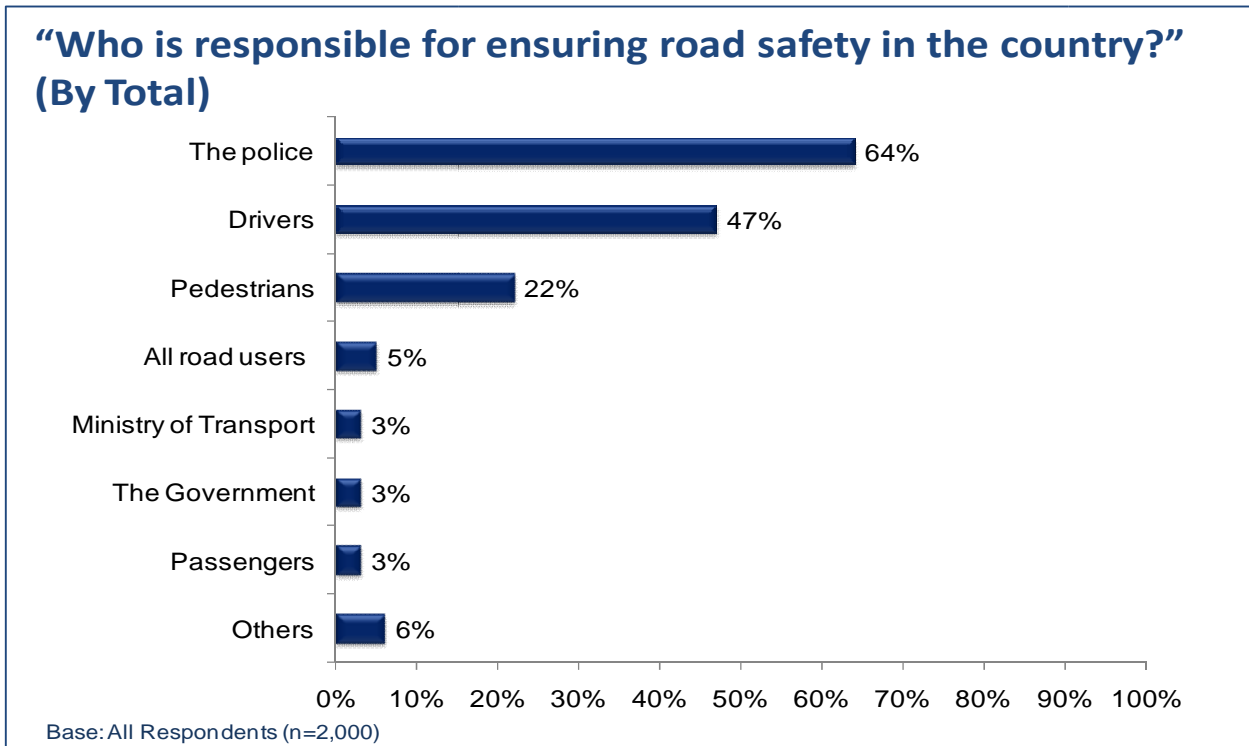
“Our findings support anecdotal evidence after many accidents where passengers say that the driver was driving at high speed and yet they often don’t request them to slow down until it is too late. The tendency by Kenyans to leave road safety to the police instead of taking personal responsibility for their own safety is the reason people continue to die on our roads,” says Margaret Ileri, Managing Director, Ipsos Synovate Kenya.

2,000 Kenyans aged 18 and above were interviewed in the survey across all eight regions. 16 per cent blamed poor road conditions for road accidents, 8 per cent attributed them to drivers using mobile phones while driving while 7 per cent blamed careless pedestrians. 4 per cent said corruption was the cause, for instance, where police take bribes instead of arresting traffic offenders, while 3 per cent blamed accidents on unroadworthy vehicles. These findings were consistent across all the eight regions.



Road safety – whose responsibility?

Close to two thirds of Kenyans (64 per cent) believe that the police are responsible for ensuring road safety. This rose to 78 per cent in Coast province, 73 per cent in Western and 72 per cent in Rift Valley. Slightly under half (47 per cent) believe that drivers are responsible for ensuring road safety. It was highest in North Eastern (58 per cent), Rift Valley (56 per cent) and Nyanza (54 per cent).

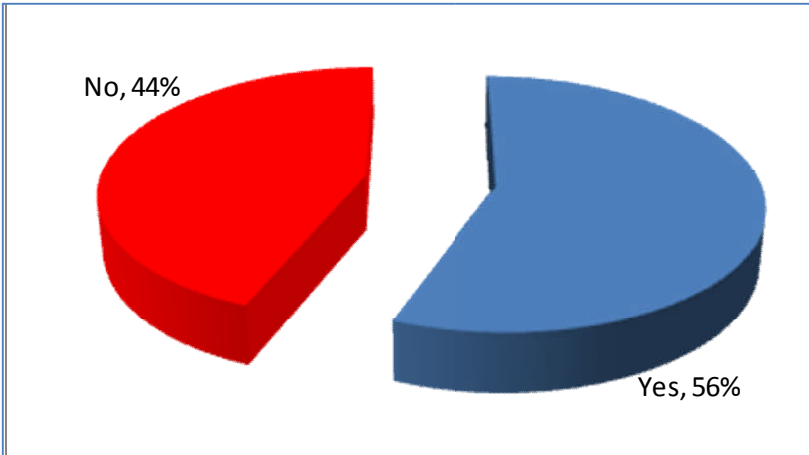


“The fact that only 47 per cent of Kenyans believe that drivers are responsible for road safety is telling. It means that our road safety campaign messages need to be more compelling. Relying on the police to enforce discipline on the roads will not reduce accidents because they are too few to cover the whole country. Road safety should be everyone’s responsibility including drivers, passengers and pedestrians. Until Kenyans understand that, people will continue to die needlessly on our roads,” says Ms Ileri.

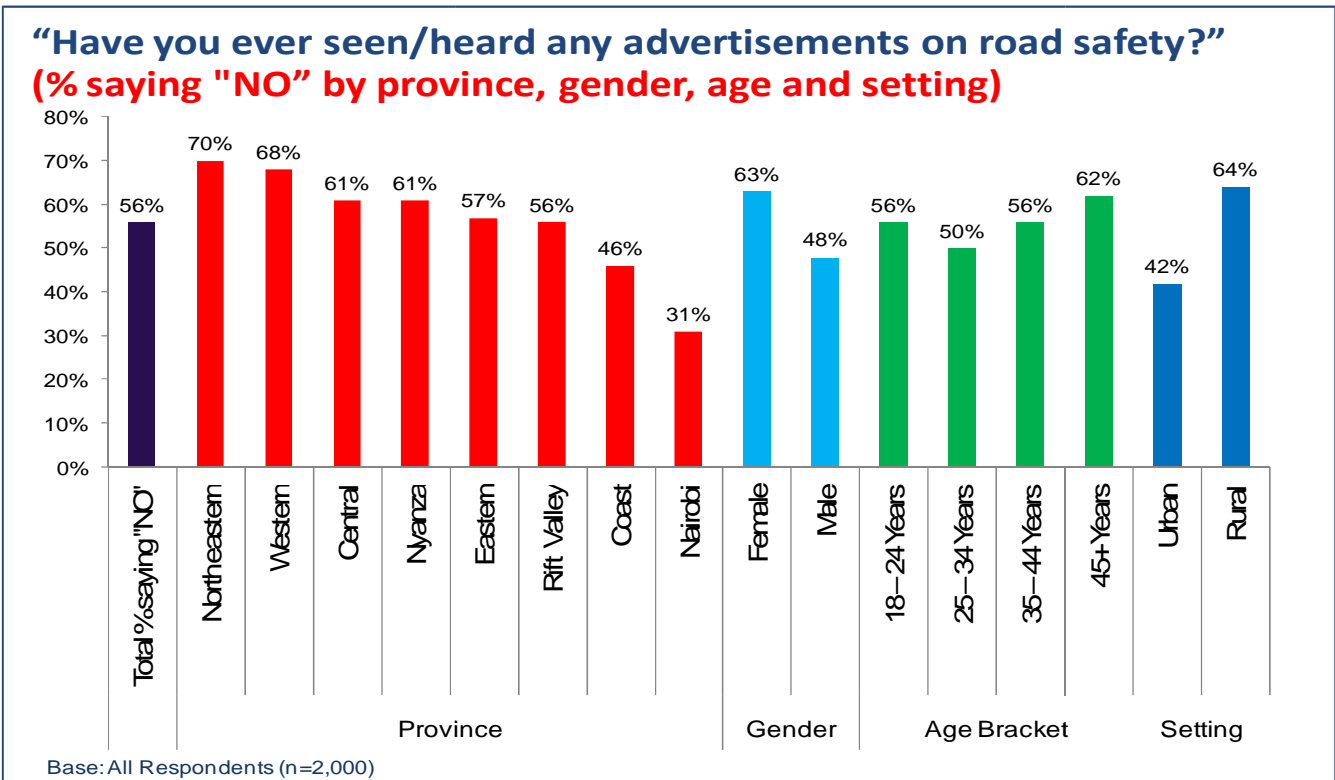
Exposure to road safety advertising campaigns

Less than half (44 per cent) of Kenyans have seen or heard an advertisement on road safety.

“Have you ever seen/heard any advertisements on road safety?” By Total



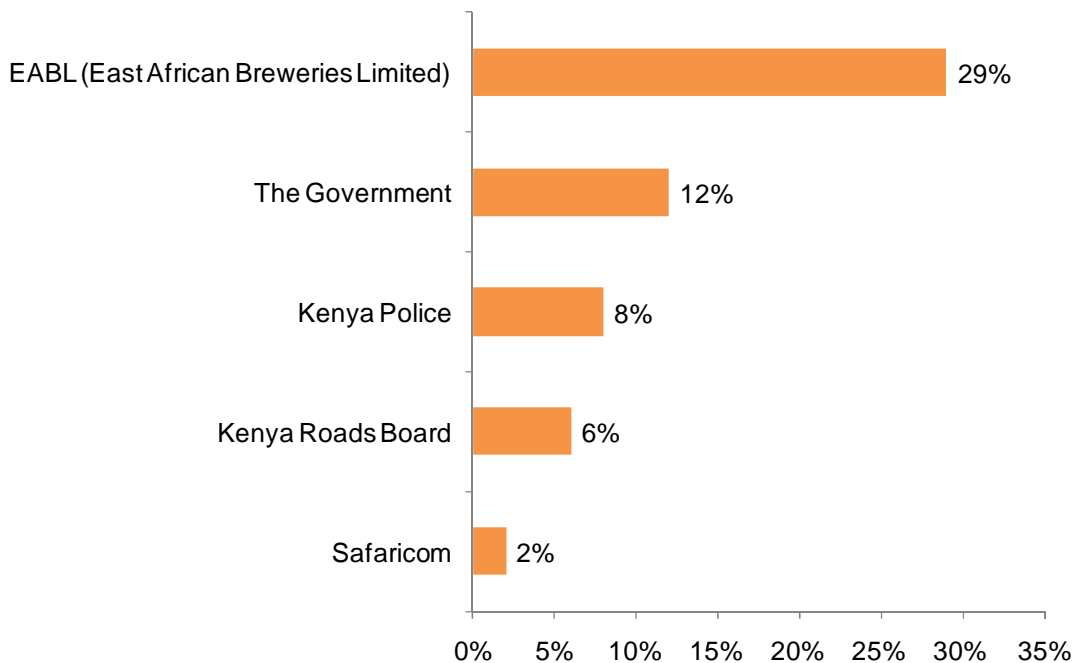
Nationally, 56 per cent had not with the highest proportion being in North Eastern (70 per cent), Western (68 per cent), Central (61 per cent) and Nyanza (61 per cent). 63 per cent of women had not seen a road safety advertisement compared to 48 per cent of men. 64 per cent of people in rural areas had not seen any compared to 42 per cent in urban areas. In terms of age, people over 45 years comprised the highest proportion of those who hadn't seen any road safety advertisement (62 per cent).



Awareness of messages on road safety

The Ipsos Survey found that East African Breweries Limited’s road safety advertisements had the highest awareness level at 29 per cent, more than double those of government (12 per cent). Road safety campaigns by the Kenya Police were third at 8 per cent and Kenya Roads Board was ranked fourth at 6 per cent awareness levels.

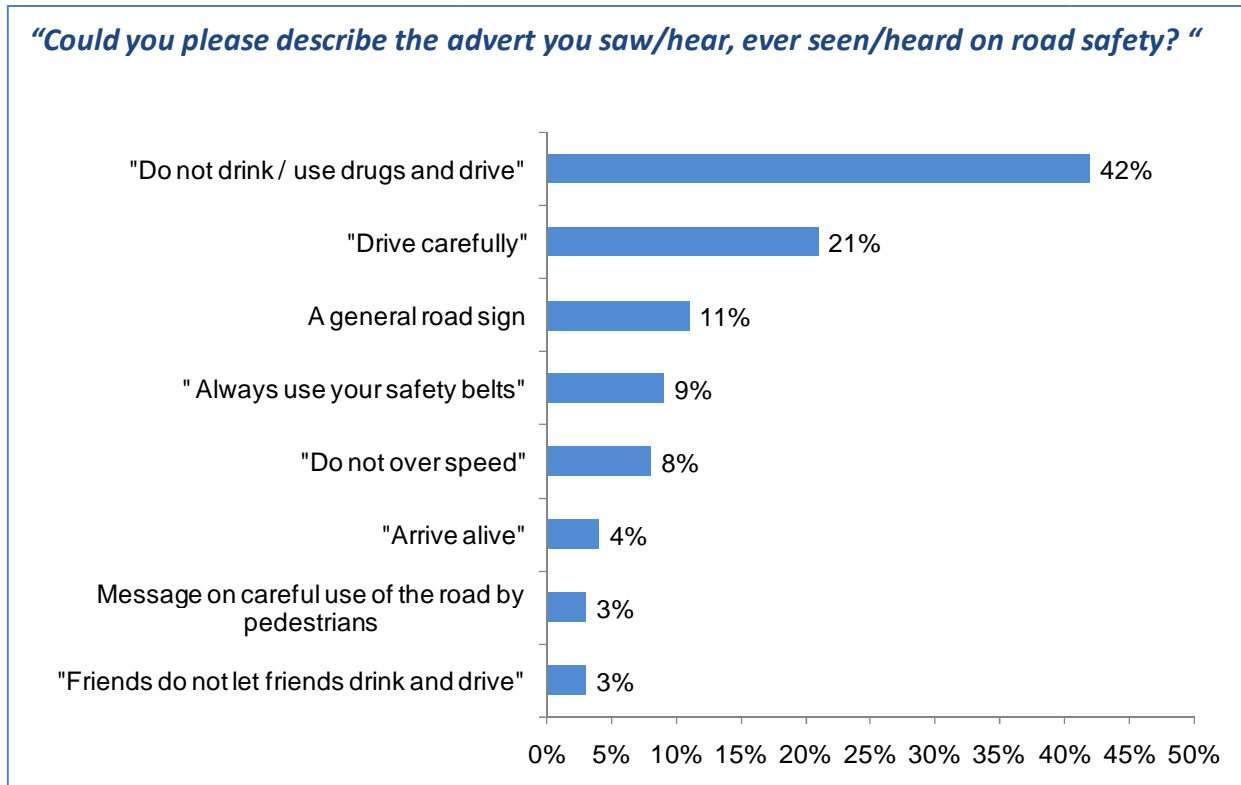
“Could you please describe the advert you saw/hear, ever seen/heard on road safety giving the name of the sponsor? “



Base: Those who had seen an advert on road safety (n=879)

“More effort needs to be put into making road safety campaigns for government agencies more visible to increase their impact,” says Ms Ireri. “EABL campaigns revolve around celebrities who have influence such as musician Nameless. Use of celebrities has been proven to enhance awareness levels of public campaigns all over the world,” says Ms Ireri.

The key messages that Kenyans have been getting from these road safety campaigns are: “Don’t drive under the influence -alcohol or drugs” (42 per cent), “drive carefully” (21 per cent), “always use safety belts” (9 per cent).



Base: Those who had seen an advert on road safety (n=879)

Current initiatives to curb road accidents

Notably, there is a Traffic Amendment Bill (2012) that seeks to have stiffer penalties for traffic offenders. The proposed penalty for drunken driving includes a long prison term of not less than 10 years or a fine which could go over Kshs 500,000. In addition, the Bill proposes that motorists who drive above a speed limit should have their driving licences suspended, a 3 month jail term and/or a fine of Kshs 20,000. The Bill also seeks to have every driver of a public service vehicle undergo compulsory road tests every two years to determine his or her competency. There are also stringent penalties recommended for unauthorised drivers of public service vehicles.

Some organizations in the private sector in Kenya have taken up road safety as part of their CSR programmes. Safaricom Ltd has formed a partnership with the Media Owners Association to form the National Road Safety Trust which to address the alarmingly high rates of road carnage.

Conclusion

Addressing the problems of road safety in Kenya will require an integrated approach that would cover the following;

- Motorists and pedestrian sensitisation
- Enforcement of traffic rules
- Road safety data management,
- Use of technology (speed guns, installation of speed governors etc)
- Improvement of road infrastructure

It is critical to put in place an effective transparent and corrupt free mechanism that will enable enforcement of traffic rules. There will be a need to continuously capture traffic statistics in a uniform and timely to order to enable the identification of emerging crash/victim trends/issues, or for the development of new or revised motor vehicle safety regulations. Road infrastructure includes initiatives that strengthen the infrastructure element in road safety e.g. signage, pedestrian walks, drainages, speed bumps, speed limits, road markings, street lighting/illumination etc.

About the survey

The target population for this survey was all Kenyan adults aged 18 and above. The sample size was 2,000 respondents living in urban and rural areas. The margin of error attributed to sampling and other random effects of this poll's sample size is +/- 2.2 with a 95 per cent confidence level. This sample size is large enough to make reliable estimates on the opinions of the target population at a national level. The fieldwork for this survey was conducted between 22nd and 28th July 2012. Data was collected through face to face interviews at the household level.

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