

Road Rage in Ontario

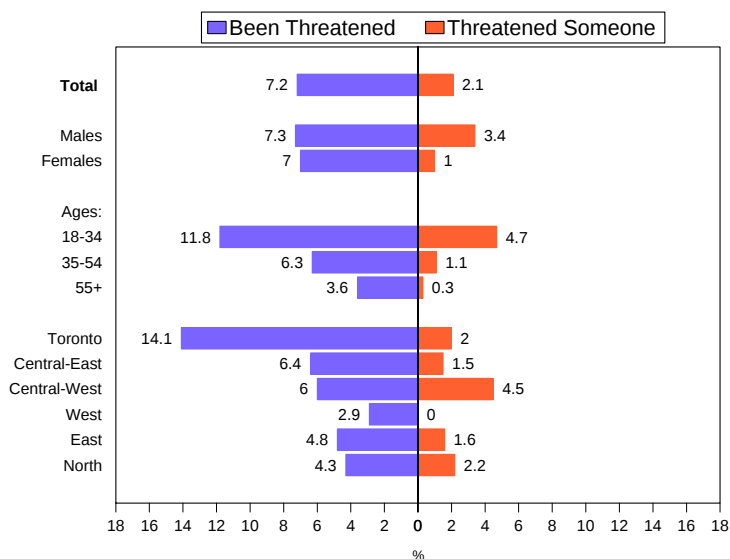
Road rage is increasingly becoming a public health concern, given the potential link to motor vehicle collisions.¹ Supported in part by AUTO21,² researchers at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health recently published a first-ever study on the prevalence of road rage in Ontario.³ Data were derived from the 2001 *CAMH Monitor (CM)*, which is an on-going health survey of adults across Ontario.

The study found that most acts of road rage are in the form of verbal aggression or rude gestures. Among Ontarians, almost half (46.6%) were victimized by someone in another vehicle who had either shouted, cursed, or made rude gestures at them, whereas about one-third (31.7%) admitted to doing such to others at least once during the year before the survey.

A more severe form of road rage involves threats of bodily harm or damage to another's vehicle. As seen in Figure 1, just under one-in-ten (7.2%) Ontarians were threatened in this manner by someone in another vehicle at least once during the past year. Only 2.1% admitted to threatening harm to another driver or passenger or damage to his/her vehicle.

Figure 1 also presents the prevalence of being threatened by, and threatening, someone in another vehicle by selected subgroups. Adjusted for other demographic factors, the results showed that younger adults and those living in Toronto were significantly more likely to be threatened by others on the road, compared to their counterparts. Males and females were equally likely to be victimized. Younger people were significantly more likely to threaten other drivers or passengers, whereas males and females were equally likely to do so. The study also found that those with less education (did not complete high school) were more likely to threaten another, compared to those with higher education (data not shown).

Figure 1. Percentage of Ontario Adults (Aged 18+) Reporting Having Been Threatened by Someone, and Threatening Someone, in Another Vehicle at Least Once During the Past Year, by Subgroup, CM 2001 (N=1,395)



Note: Selected data shown are from the published study by Smart et al. (2003), Table 1, p. 248.

The researchers conclude that road rage is more than an "urban legend." Rather, this phenomenon may be experienced by, and may exert important effects on, a substantial proportion of the Ontario population. Being a victim of road rage is not a rare event, particularly in the Toronto area – the most heavily populated and traffic-congested part of Ontario. Being either a victim or a perpetrator of road rage threats is more common among younger people. While this study provides a first indication of demographic associations with road rage, more research remains to be done to clarify other key social and environmental factors involved.

Methods:

The *CAMH Monitor (CM)* is an addiction and mental health random, anonymous telephone survey of the Ontario population aged 18 and older, administered by the Institute for Social Research, York University. The *CM* is an on-going monthly survey that employs a stratified (region) two-stage (household, respondent) probability sample design. The following 6 regional strata are used: Toronto, Central East, East, Central West, West, and North. The data presented here are based on 6 monthly cycles from July to December 2001. The sample size was 1,395.

All survey estimates were weighted, and variance and statistical tests were corrected for the sampling design.

Terminology:

- **Road Rage** was measured with 4 items:

- 1) During the past 12 months, how many times has someone in another vehicle shouted, cursed, or made rude gestures at you or others with you?
- 2) During the past 12 months, how many times has someone in another vehicle threatened to hurt you or others with you, or threatened to damage the vehicle you were in?
- 3) During the past 12 months, how many times have you shouted, cursed or made rude gestures at a driver or passenger in another vehicle?
- 4) During the past 12 months, how many times have you threatened to hurt a driver or passenger in another vehicle, or threatened to damage their vehicle?

Prevalence is defined as having experienced the behaviour at least once during the past 12 months.

- **Significant Difference** refers to a difference between two percentages that is not likely due to chance. For example, a difference found at the $p < .05$ level of statistical significance is one that is less than 5% likely to occur by chance alone.

Source:

Adlaf, E.M., & Ialomiteanu, A. (2002). *CAMH Monitor eReport: Addiction and Mental Health Indicators Among Ontario Adults in 2001, and Changes Since 1977*. CAMH Research Document Series No. 12. Toronto: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. [electronic document]; available:
http://www.camh.net/research/population_life_course.html

Endnotes:

1. D'Cunha, C. (2003) Road, air rage and violent threats in taxis: Approaches for prevention. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 94(4), 245.
2. AUTO21 is a member of the Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) programme, which is administered and funded by the Natural Health Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).
3. Smart, R., Mann, R.E., & Stoduto, G. (2003). The prevalence of road rage: Estimates from Ontario. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 94(4), 247-250.

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