

Cutting in and weaving irritate drivers the most, new study shows

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Cutting in and weaving, speeding, and hostile displays are among the top online complaints posted by drivers, according to a new study by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) recently published in an online issue of *Accident Analysis and Prevention*.

Driver aggression is a major safety concern and researchers estimate this behaviour is a factor in nearly half of all [motor vehicle collisions](#). Identifying the underlying causes and strategies for preventing driver aggression continues to be a priority.

CAMH researcher Dr. Christine Wickens reviewed thousands of entries posted on RoadRagers.com, a website that invites [drivers](#) to submit complaints about unsafe and improper driving.

Following a previous study evaluating complaints submitted to the Ontario Provincial Police, Dr. Wickens turned her attention towards the crop of new websites that ask drivers to describe the unsafe driving practices they've observed.

"These websites can tell us more about what people are doing out there in the real world," she explained.

Dr. Wickens, a post-doctoral fellow with CAMH's Social and Epidemiological Research Department, and her colleagues evaluated more than 5,000 entries posted on RoadRagers.com between 1999 and 2007. The team sorted the complaints—which consisted mostly of

reports on driving in Canada and the U.S.—into various categories, including: speeding/racing, erratic/improper braking and blocking.

The most common complaints involved cutting in and weaving (54 per cent of all complaints), speeding (29 per cent) and hostile displays (25 per cent).

The research team also discussed how slighted drivers might feel compelled to retaliate or 'teach other drivers a lesson.' In some extreme cases, one reckless action can escalate into a hostile situation between multiple drivers.

The next step in the research will be to examine how slighted drivers perceive the offensive actions of another motorist: Is the other driver in a rush, negligent, or deliberately aggressive? How do these different interpretations affect how we respond?

With this in mind, Dr. Wickens advises drivers to work hard at keeping cool behind the wheel.

"Remind yourself to take a deep breath, stay calm, and do whatever it takes to bring your anger down," she said.

Dr. Wickens suggested that educating drivers during their training on the most common complaints might help them realize the impact of their actions and avoid these types of behaviours. The training could also teach drivers to be aware of their own responses associated with behaviours they are likely to encounter on the road.

Provided by Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

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