



Aussie drivers struck by ‘storm smugness’ on wet roads

Australian drivers seem to be directing their high beams at others when it comes to poor wet weather driving skills, according to new research from national insurer AAMI.

The findings come as another deluge approaches much of the East Coast of Australia, with the Bureau of Meteorology issuing severe weather warnings for New South Wales^[1], while South East Queensland has been affected by midweek storms^[2] as well as heavy rain in Victoria^[3].

While just 13 per cent of motorists admit their own driving abilities may not be as slick in the wet, almost half of those surveyed (44%) believe other drivers hit the skids with weakened skills in the wet.

Alarming, despite one third (34%) of drivers admitting to having had an accident in the rain, many still admit to not following basic safe wet weather driving behaviours.

Around one in five said they don’t avoid sudden braking (20%) or reduce their speed (18%) and one in six said they don’t drive more cautiously (17%), leave extra distance between the car in front (15%) or put their lights on for better visibility (15%).

Queenslanders appear to be most prone to ‘storm smugness’ with just 10 per cent believing they’re worse off in the wet, while 47 per cent accuse their peers of shoddy skills. The state also tops the charts for the highest number of self-reported incidents in the rain (40%).

New South Welshman were not far behind when it comes to the blame game (16% for self-perception vs 47% perception of others, 30% self-reported incidents), while Victorians may be the more realistic drivers, with 13 per cent rating themselves worse in the wet compared with 40 per cent of other motorists (33% self-reported incidents).

AAMI’s Head of Motor Claims, Matt Pugliese said there are increased challenges to driving in the rain and more Aussie motorists must adopt safe driving behaviours.

“This research suggests there might be a case of Aussie drivers having a blind spot when it comes to their own wet weather driving ability, but when it comes to being safe on the road, there’s no room for egos.

“We all know the roads are more dangerous in the wet as drivers have to contend with slippery roads, poor visibility and longer stopping distances.

“More of us need to take the necessary precautions – the small adjustments are worth it to ensure you don’t become another wet weather crash statistic.”

AAMI’s research identifies young drivers (those under 40 years of age) as the worst culprits of substandard driving behaviours, with 59 per cent admitting to not driving with extra caution and 62 per cent not paying extra attention to other motorists, with their confessed relaxed attitude seeing more than a third of youngsters having an accident.

With wet weather upon us, Australian Road Safety Foundation CEO and Founder Russell White is urging motorists to scrub up on their wet weather driving behaviours.



“It’s alarming that so many Aussies – nearly 20 per cent – admit to not driving more cautiously in the rain,” he said.

“As a driver, you need to remember you have a responsibility to drive safely for yourself, your passengers, other road users and pedestrians.

“Too many Australian lives are impacted each year by road trauma, we want to encourage all drivers to take the time to plan it safe when behind the wheel.

“Reducing the road toll will require a change in our beliefs and our cultural paradigms towards road risk, and we can start this journey by collectively building our wet weather driving resilience.”

AAMI’s Top Tips for driving in the wet:

Before driving

- Test your windscreen wipers to ensure they clear your glass in a single swipe
- Check your lights are working
- Take a look at your tyre tread – there should be a minimum of 1.5mm depth across the whole tyre width
- Check the weather forecast if you’re planning a longer drive, to help you avoid unsafe conditions

When driving

- Reduce your speed, remember the signed speed is the maximum safe speed in normal driving conditions
- Drive with your lights on low beam – rain affects visibility so this way other drivers can see you, and you can see them
- Use your demister to keep windscreen clear of condensation
- Double your distance between you and the vehicle in front
- Accelerate, brake and turn smoothly to avoid skidding
- Don’t use cruise control – this will give you more options if you lose traction
- Don’t drive on roads covered with water

^[1] Bureau of Meteorology - New South Wales Severe Weather Warning 1. [Issued at 4:47 am Thursday, 6 May 2021] Available at: <<http://www.bom.gov.au/products/IDN21037.shtml>>

^[2] ABC News. *BOM forecasts rain and storms for Brisbane and southern Queensland, falling temperatures in the north.* <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-05-05/storms-across-southern-queensland/100116666>

^[3] Lucy Mae Beers. *Victoria to be hit with rain, possible thunderstorms, strong winds after sunny Melbourne weekend.* <https://7news.com.au/weather/melbourne-weather/victoria-to-be-hit-with-rain-possible-thunderstorms-strong-winds-after-sunny-melbourne-weekend-c-2745259>

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For further information or to arrange an interview:



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Notes to Editor

Research conducted by Kantar in August 2020 of 1,501 respondents, nationally representative by gender, age and location of Australians aged 18 years and over.

State specific statistics on wet weather driving compared to normal conditions:

	National	QLD	NSW	VIC
Compared to normal conditions, perceiving other motorists driving as worse in the rain (% agree)	44	47	47	40
Compared to normal conditions, perceiving own driving as worse in the rain (% agree)	13	10	15	13
Self-declared accidents and near misses in wet weather (% of those surveyed)	34	40	30	33