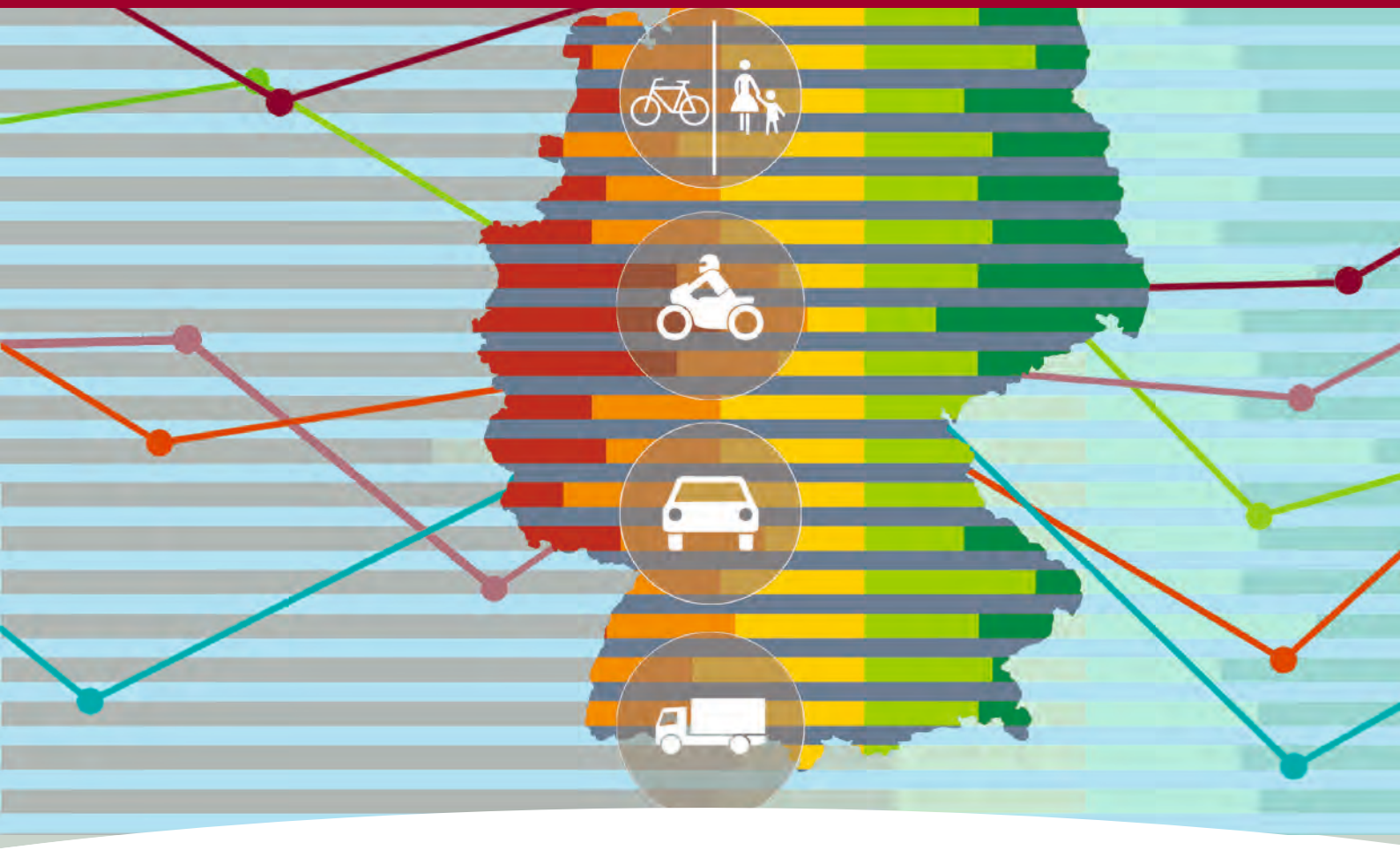

Compact accident research

Traffic Climate in Germany in 2010: 10 Questions About Road Safety

Unfallforschung der Versicherer
GDV

Imprint

German Insurance Association
Insurers Accident Research

Wilhelmstraße 43/43G, 10117 Berlin
PoBox 08 02 64, 10002 Berlin
unfallforschung@gdv.de
www.udv.de

Editor: Dr. rer. nat. Tina Gehlert
Layout: Franziska Gerson Pereira
Photo references: Cover picture ©SVLuma-Fotolia.com

Published: 04/2012

10 questions about the traffic climate in Germany

The UDV (German Insurers Accident Research) commissioned the market research institute TNS Infratest to carry out the survey "Verkehrsklima in Deutschland 2010" (Traffic climate in Germany 2010). The survey was part of the longitudinal study "Traffic climate in Germany", which examines road safety perceptions and self-reported road users' behavior at two-year intervals. The results are published on the website **www.verkehrsklima.de**.

In 2010 a number of additional questions about cycling were included and new aspects such as driving with daytime running lights were investigated. Significant emphasis was placed on investigating the attitudes and self-reported behavior of SUV drivers.

1. How safe do Germans feel on the road?

53 % of the respondents felt safe or very safe on the roads, 12 % felt unsafe or very unsafe, and 35 % felt that the level of safety was average. Compared to 2008, the number of people who felt very safe on the roads dropped 16 percentage points from 69 % to 53 %. The percentage of people who did not feel safe on the roads increased: from 6 % to 12 %. However, in 2010 the majority of respondents did again feel safe on the roads.

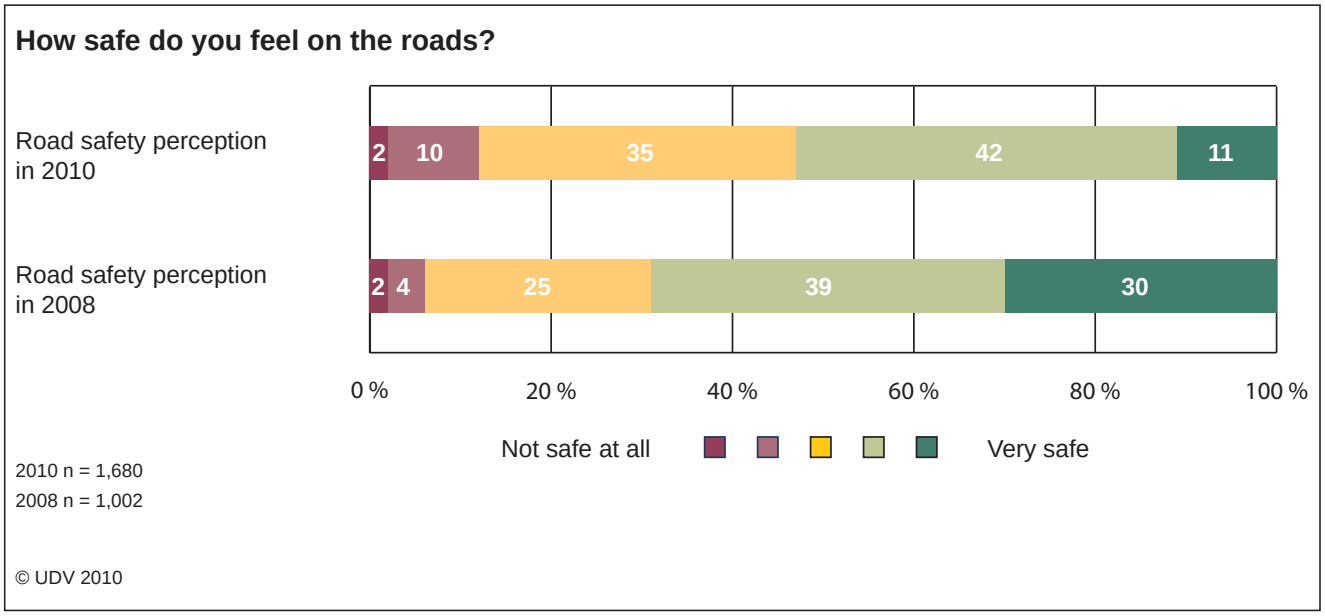

Figure 1:
How safe do you feel on the roads?

There were differences in the perceived safety between transport modes. 62 % of frequent car users felt safe or very safe compared to 55 % of frequent bicyclists, 52 % of frequent pedestrians and 48 % of frequent public transport users.

Table 1:
Perceived road safety by means of transport

User group	N	Not safe at all				Very safe
Pedestrians	1,480	1.6 %	10.6 %	35.3 %	42.3 %	10.2 %
Car drivers	1,360	0.3 %	6.4 %	31.1 %	49.6 %	12.6 %
Cyclists	822	0.8 %	8.7 %	35.7 %	42.4 %	12.4 %
Public transport users	677	3.1 %	10.6 %	38.1 %	41.7 %	6.25 %

Car drivers feel less safe the less often they drive. Only 25 % of people who drove less than once a month said they felt safe or very safe on the roads.

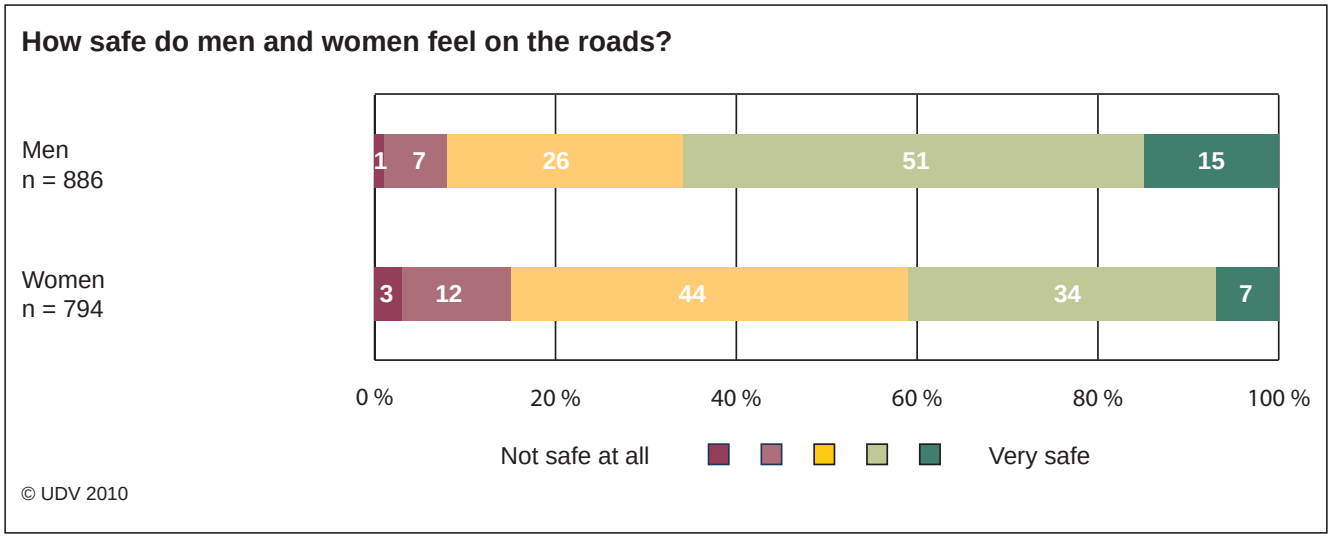

Figure 2:
How safe do men and women feel on the roads?

Women felt less safe than men. 15 % of women said they did not feel safe on the roads, and around half (44 %) felt that the level of safety on German roads was average. By comparison, 65 % of men said they felt safe or very safe on the roads.

2. Where do Germans feel safe?

Car drivers felt safest when driving in residential areas (73 %), followed by driving on rural roads (67 %) and on urban roads (58 %). Around half of respondents said they felt safe or very safe on freeways (autobahns) and tree-lined roads: 57 % and 49 %, respectively. Only one in five car drivers (20 %) said they felt safe in work zones on freeways. Women felt less safe than men in work zones on freeways. 16 % of women felt safe or very safe in work zones on freeways compared to 23 % of men.

This perception is in contrast with the evidence of the accident statistics. In the accident statistics for car drivers in 2009, for example, the least accidents involving personal injury and the lowest number of casualties occurred on freeways (18,394 accidents involving personal injury and 28,873 casualties) compared to rural roads (79,051 accidents involving personal injury and 114,031 casualties) and urban roads (213,361 accidents involving personal injury and 258,919 casualties). In 2009 there were only 1,191 accidents involving personal injury and 1,990 casualties in work zones on freeways compared to 17,203 accidents involving personal injury and 26,883 casualties on other sections of freeway.

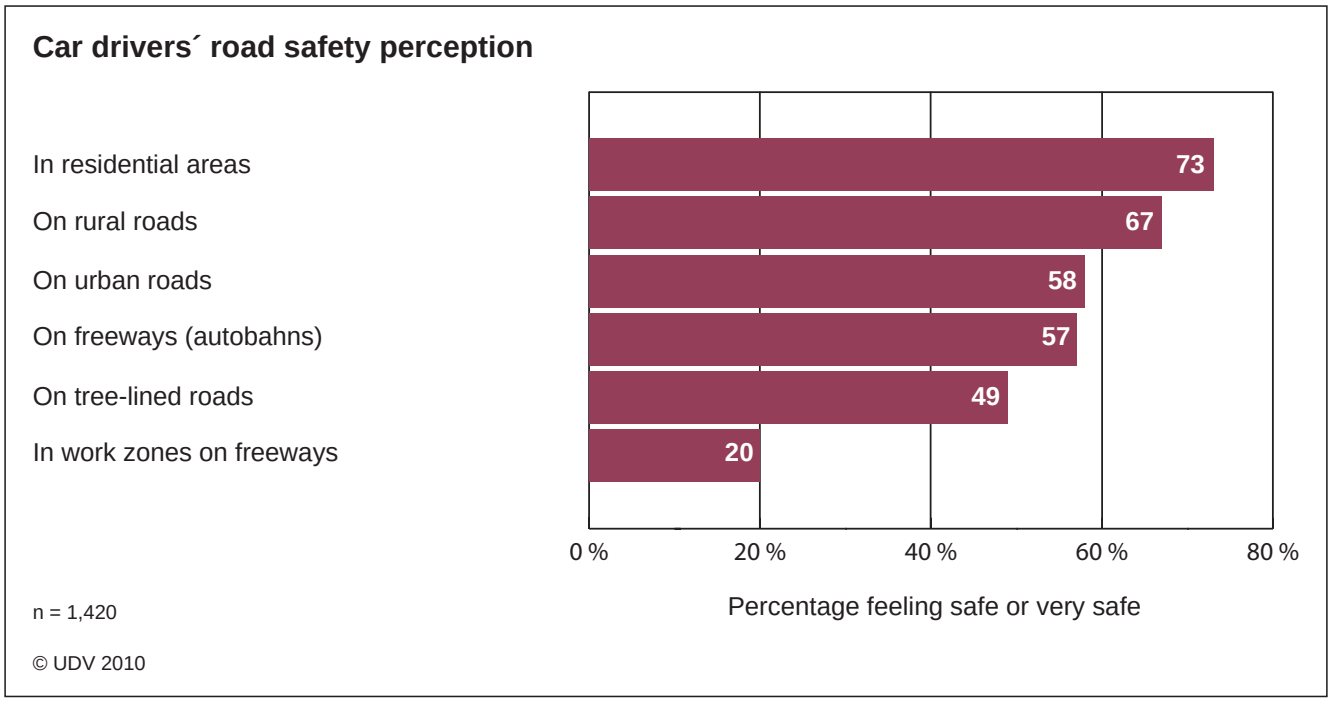

Figure 3:
Car drivers´ road safety perception

Pedestrians felt safest at crossing facilities. Almost ¾ of pedestrians (73 %) felt signal-controlled crossings were the safest form of crossing facility. Older people above the age of 65, in particular, said they felt very safe at signal-controlled crossings. Other kinds of crossing facility (zebra crossings or central islands) were regarded as safe by almost half of the respondents. Yet a study carried out by the UDV (German Insurers Accident Research) in 2006 showed that all crossing facilities, provided they were constructed in accordance with construction guidelines and regulations, worked equally well for keeping pedestrians safe. Paths used as both footpaths and cycle paths or roads without any crossing facilities were felt to be least safe by the respondents.

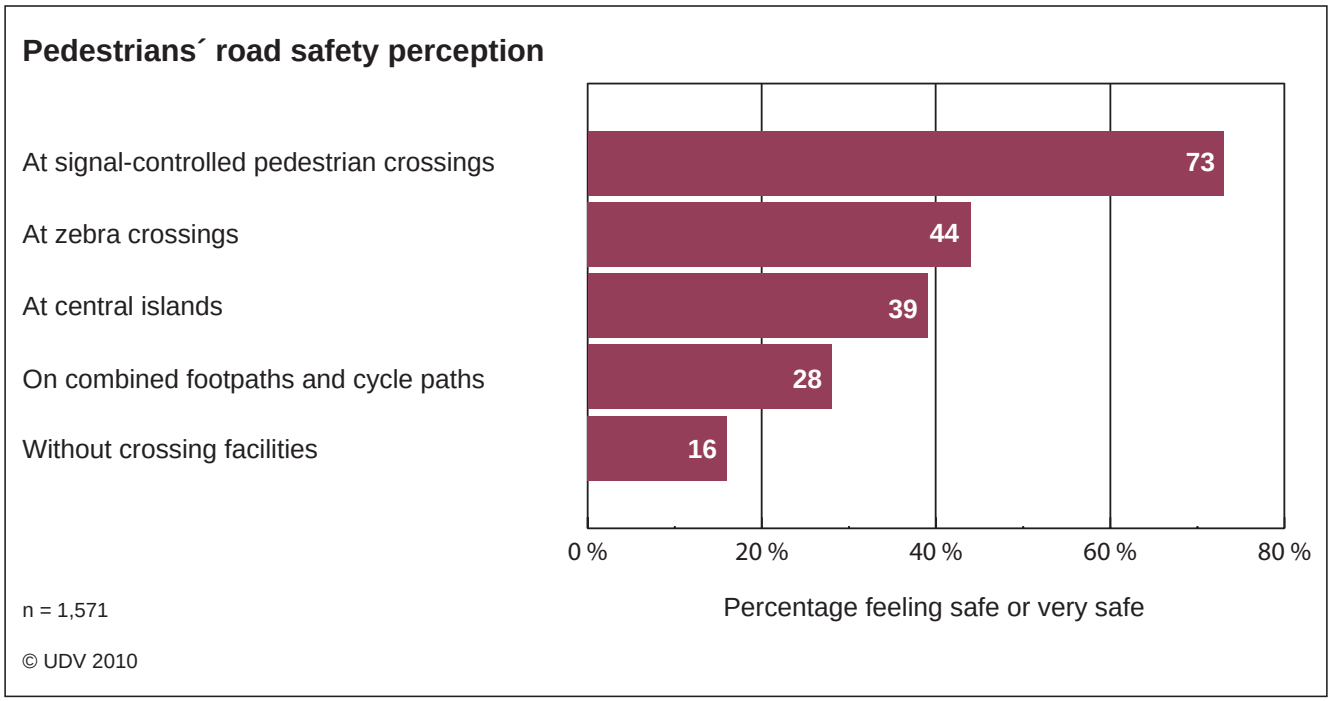

Figure 4:
Pedestrians´ road safety perception

78 % of cyclists said that separate cycle paths were safest for cyclists. Combined footpaths and cycle paths were also felt to be safe or very safe by half of the respondents. Thus, about twice as many cyclists as pedestrians assessed the combined footpath and cycle path as safe or very safe.

The road itself was viewed as being significantly more unsafe for cyclists. Only 14 % of the cyclists felt safe or very safe using a cycle lane and sharing the road with motorized vehicles. And only 10 % of the cyclists, regardless of gender or age, felt that cycling on a road without a cycle line was safe or very safe.

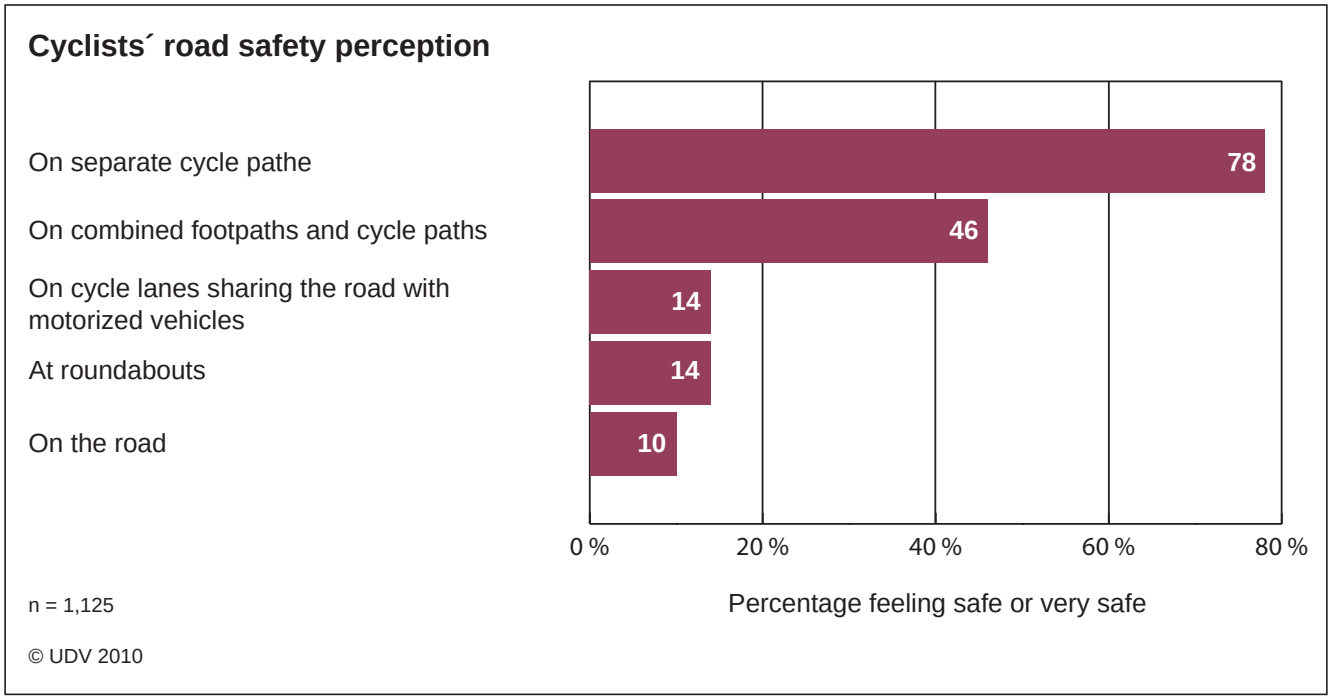

Figure 5:
Cyclists' road safety perception

3. Who has what level of risk on the roads?

In the preceding three months, 39 % of the respondents had experienced at least one risky situation in which an accident was just avoided.

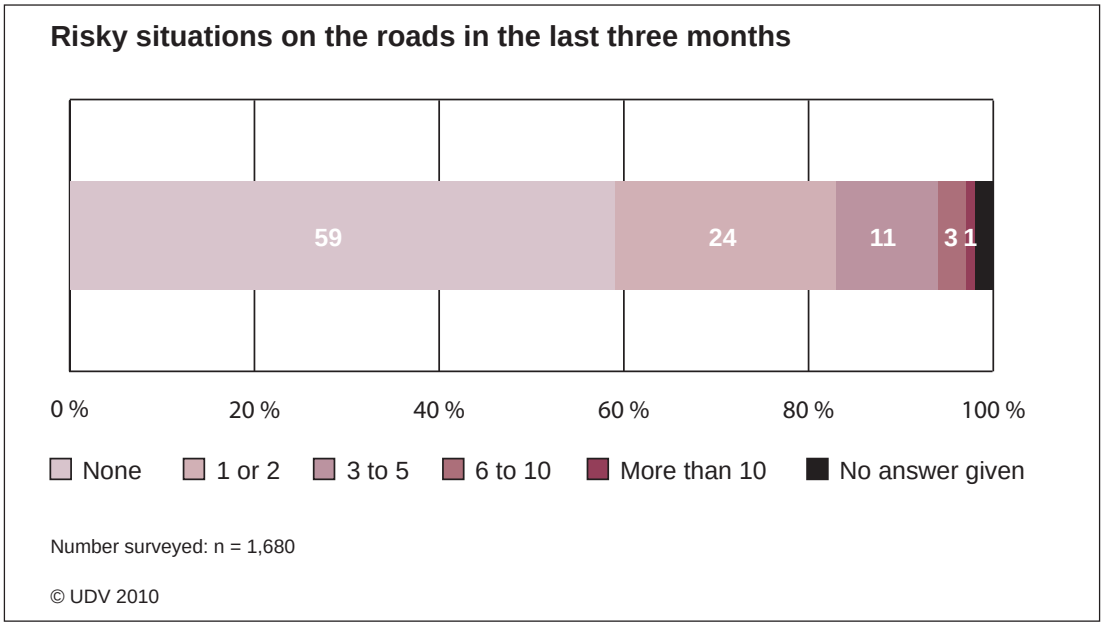

Figure 6:
Risky situations on the roads

Young road users experience risky situations on the roads particularly often. 63 % of respondents aged 18 to 24 said they had experienced a risky situation on the roads in the preceding three months compared to 48 % of respondents aged 25 to 64.

As well as young road users, men find themselves in risky situations more often than women. Almost half of male car drivers (44 %) had experienced a risky situation in the preceding three months. The equivalent percentage for women was 36 %.

4. Who should do more for road safety in Germany?

The majority of the respondents (53 %) said that it was up to other road users do more for road safety in Germany. However, half of the respondents (51 %) believed they themselves had a responsibility to do more for road safety.

47 % believed cities and local authorities should do more to improve safety on the roads, 42 % expected more from the police and 38 % from the government. At the same time, 14 % believed relevant associations and federations should do more, thus indicating that they have a somewhat secondary, but not insignificant, role to play. It was also felt that car manufacturers and the automotive industry should show more initiative with regard to road safety.

Table 2:
Responsibility for road safety

Responsible for road safety	N	%
Other road users	888	53
Me	852	51
Cities and local autohrities	783	47
The police	711	42
The government	642	38
Associations and federations	231	14
Car manufacturers / the automotive industrie	12	1
Nobody	16	1
n = 1,680		

5. To what extent do German road users violate the red light?

Pedestrians

It is common for pedestrians to violate a red light. 5 % of a total of 514 people said they had violated a red light often or very often in the preceding 12 months. A further 14 % said they had occasionally violated a red light at a pedestrian signal, and 25 % said they had rarely violated a red light. 53 % of the respondents had not violated any red lights. In addition, people had often seen others violating red lights. 50 % of the respondents said that they often or very often saw other pedestrians violating red lights, and 38 % of the pedestrians said they saw it occasionally.

Cyclist

1 % of a total of 192 cyclists surveyed said they had violated a red light often or very often in the preceding 12 months, and 17 % said they had done it occasionally. A further 27 % had on rare occasions violated a red light in the preceding year, and 55 % never had. Almost 10 % of them said they often saw cyclists violate red lights, and 50 % said they saw this occasionally.

Car drivers

3 % of a total of 231 car drivers surveyed said they had violated a red light often in the preceding 12 months. 27 % had violated a red light occasionally, and almost half (48 %) had rarely violated a red light. Only 22 % of the car drivers said that they had never violated a red light. They had often observed other car drivers violating red lights. 37 % of them had seen this often or very often, and over half of them (58 %) had seen a red light violation occasionally. Only 5 % had rarely or very rarely seen other drivers violate red lights.

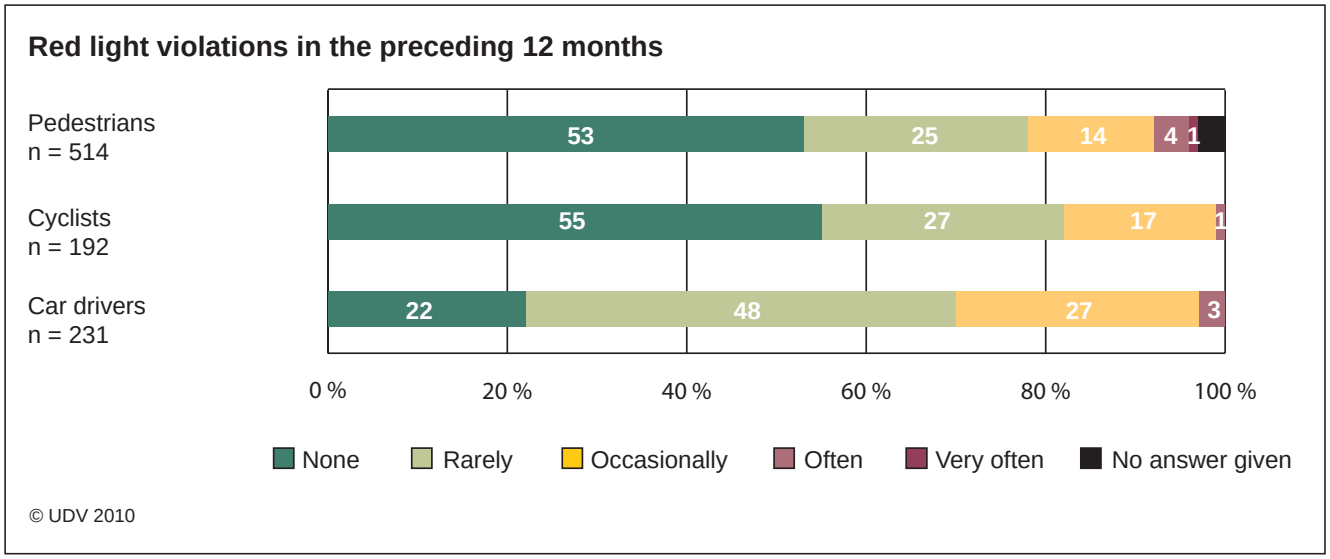

Figure 7:
Red light violations in the preceding 12 months

6. Are there enough police enforcement in Germany, and are the penalties severe enough?

Red light violations:

Pedestrians

69 % of the respondents felt it is unlikely you would be caught violating a red light by the police. Their average estimate of the penalty for red light violations was € 45, 1 point and a 0.5 month ban, which is far above the actual penalty of a € 5 fine. The majority of the respondents (53 %) felt the actual penalty of € 5 was not harsh.

Cyclists

Cyclists are rarely penalized for red light violations. Only 3 % said they had been penalized for a red light violation. The majority (53 %) thought it unlikely they would be caught violating a red light by the police. They also overestimated the penalty for red light violations by cyclists, with an average estimate of € 137, 2 points and a 1.3 month ban. The majority of the respondents felt the actual penalty of € 45 and 1 point was either not really very harsh or not harsh at all, and only 32 % felt it was a little harsh.

Car drivers

Car drivers are rarely penalized for red light violations as well. Only 7 % of the respondents said they had been penalized for a red light violation in the preceding 12 months. Half of the respondents (49 %) felt it was unlikely they would be caught violating a red light by the police. The car drivers overestimated the fine at € 118.73, underestimated the points penalty at 1.8 points, and their average estimate of a ban was 0.6 months. The actual penalty for a red light violation is € 90 and 3 points. About 70 % of car drivers felt this penalty was harsh or very harsh, and only 9 % felt it would hardly affect them or not affect them at all.

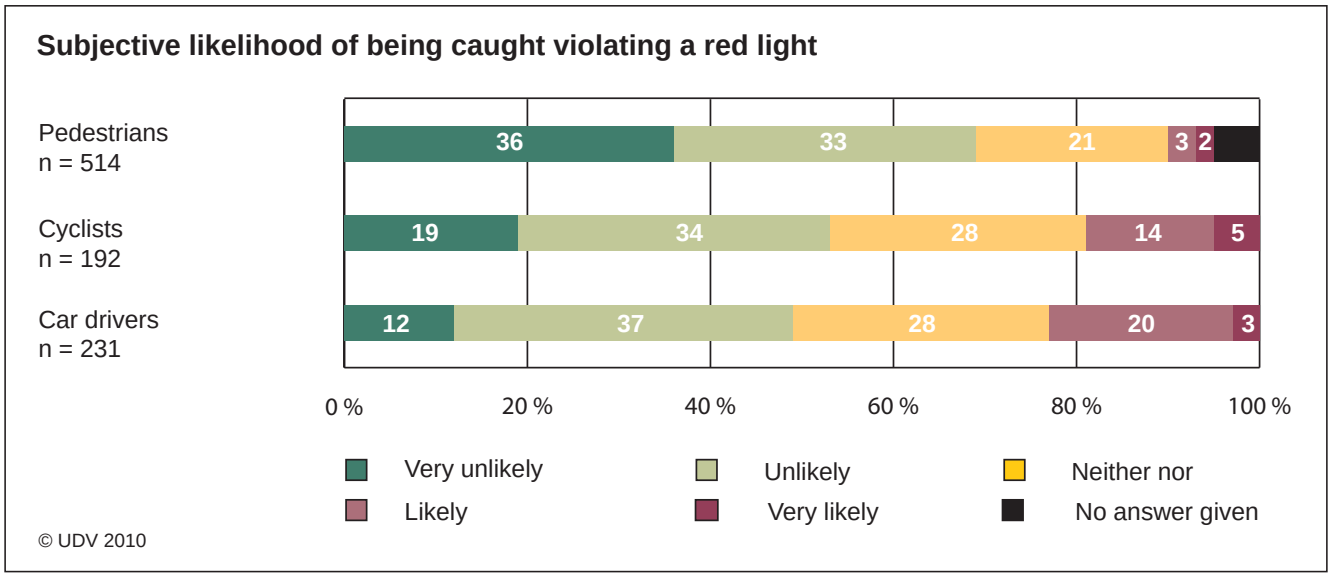

Figure 8:
Subjective likelihood of being caught violating a red light

Speeding:

It was felt there was not enough police enforcement for speeding violations. Only 17 % of the car drivers felt it was likely or very likely that they would be caught exceeding the speed limit, and 40 % agreed with this to a certain extent. In the preceding 12 months, the car drivers surveyed had been penalized for speeding violations an average of 0.27 times. 85 % had not been penalized, 11 % had been penalized once and 4 % more than once. The car drivers overestimated the penalty for exceeding the speed limit in built-up areas by 11 - 15 km/h, estimating a fine of € 31 and 0.2 penalty points, when the penalty is actually € 25. Almost 75 % of the drivers therefore felt the actual penalty of € 25 was not harsh at all, hardly harsh or a little harsh.

Drunk Driving:

15 % of the car drivers felt it was likely or very likely that they would be caught driving under the influence of alcohol by the police, and 53 % agreed with this to a certain extent. The car drivers underestimated the actual penalty for exceeding the legal blood alcohol level, estimating a fine of € 261, 3 points and a 0.8 month ban when the actual penalty is € 500, 4 points and a 1 month ban. 48 % of the drivers felt this penalty was very harsh, and a further 28 % felt it was very harsh.

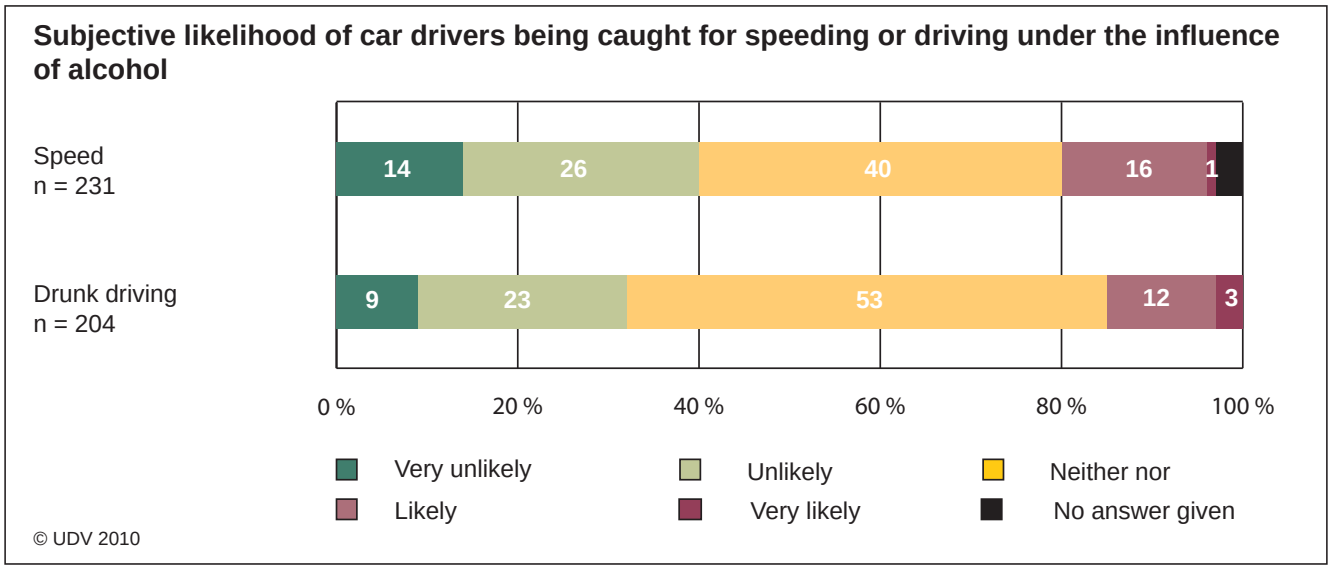

Figure 9:
Subjective likelihood of car drivers being caught for speeding or driving under the influence of alcohol

7. Who are German's SUV drivers?

SUV drivers differ from other car drivers in terms of their age, gender and income. SUV drivers have an average age of 45, and 58 % of them are men. Other car drivers have an average age of 50, and 55 % of them are men. SUV drivers also have a higher household income.

Based on the self-reported vehicle availability and use, SUV drivers tend to use their vehicles more often and their mileage driven is also higher than the average car driver. SUV drivers' average annual mileage was 3,788 km higher than that of other car drivers.

SUV and other car drivers were compared on a number of aspects regarding road safety perception and self-reported driver behavior. The two groups differed only in their road safety perception. SUV drivers felt safer on the roads than other car drivers. The reason why SUV drivers feel safer is likely to be because they use their vehicles more often, and their mileage is higher. All car drivers feel more safe the more often they drive. Both groups – SUV drivers and other car drivers – felt safest in residential areas and least safe in work zones on freeways. SUV drivers generally stated a higher level of safety than other car drivers when answering the question as to where they felt safe. However, both groups ranked the locations in the same way. They both felt safest in residential areas and least safe in work zones on freeways.

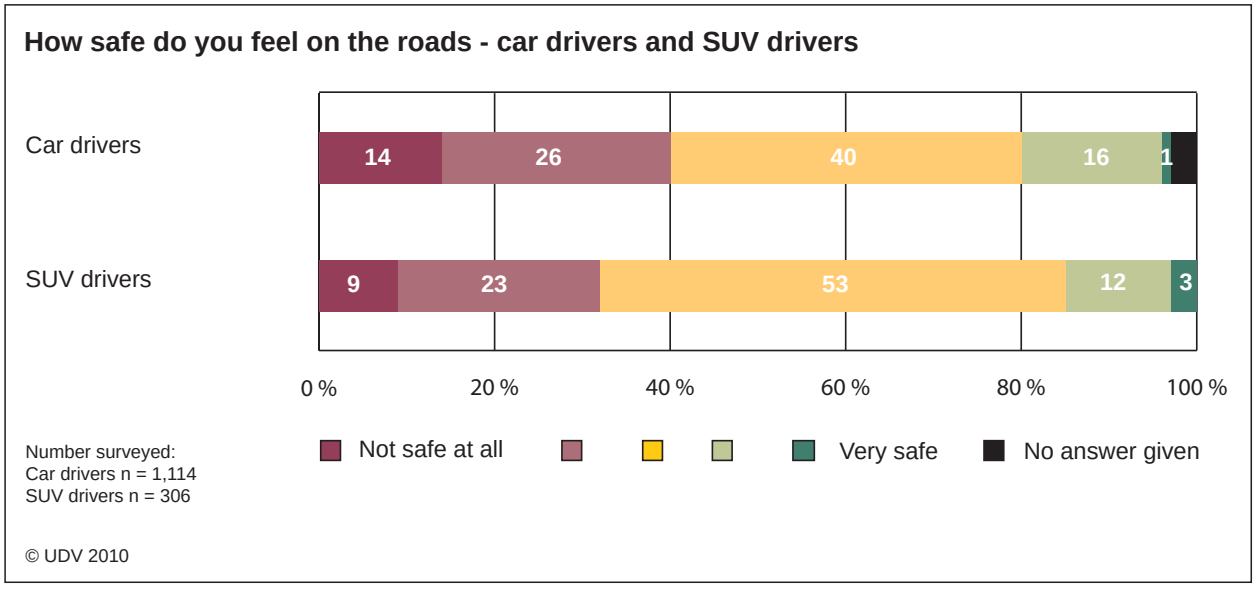

Figure 10:
Road safety perception of SUV drivers compared to other car drivers

8. How do Germany's drivers behave when it comes to...

Using a cell phone?

The majority of car drivers surveyed felt that using a cell phone without a hands-free set was risky or very risky. Nevertheless, 3 % said they often or very often used their cell phone without a hands-free set while driving, and a further 10 % said they sometimes used their cell phone without a hands-free set.

The use of hands-free sets while driving was felt to be less risky, with a quarter of the respondents considering the use of hands-free sets as risky to some extent, and 43 % considering it to be not risky or not at all risky. 12 % of the car drivers surveyed used hands-free sets with their cell phones often or very often. 60 % never used hands-free sets.

There were no differences between men and women in terms of frequency of cell phone usage with or without hands-free sets or in terms of their risk perception.

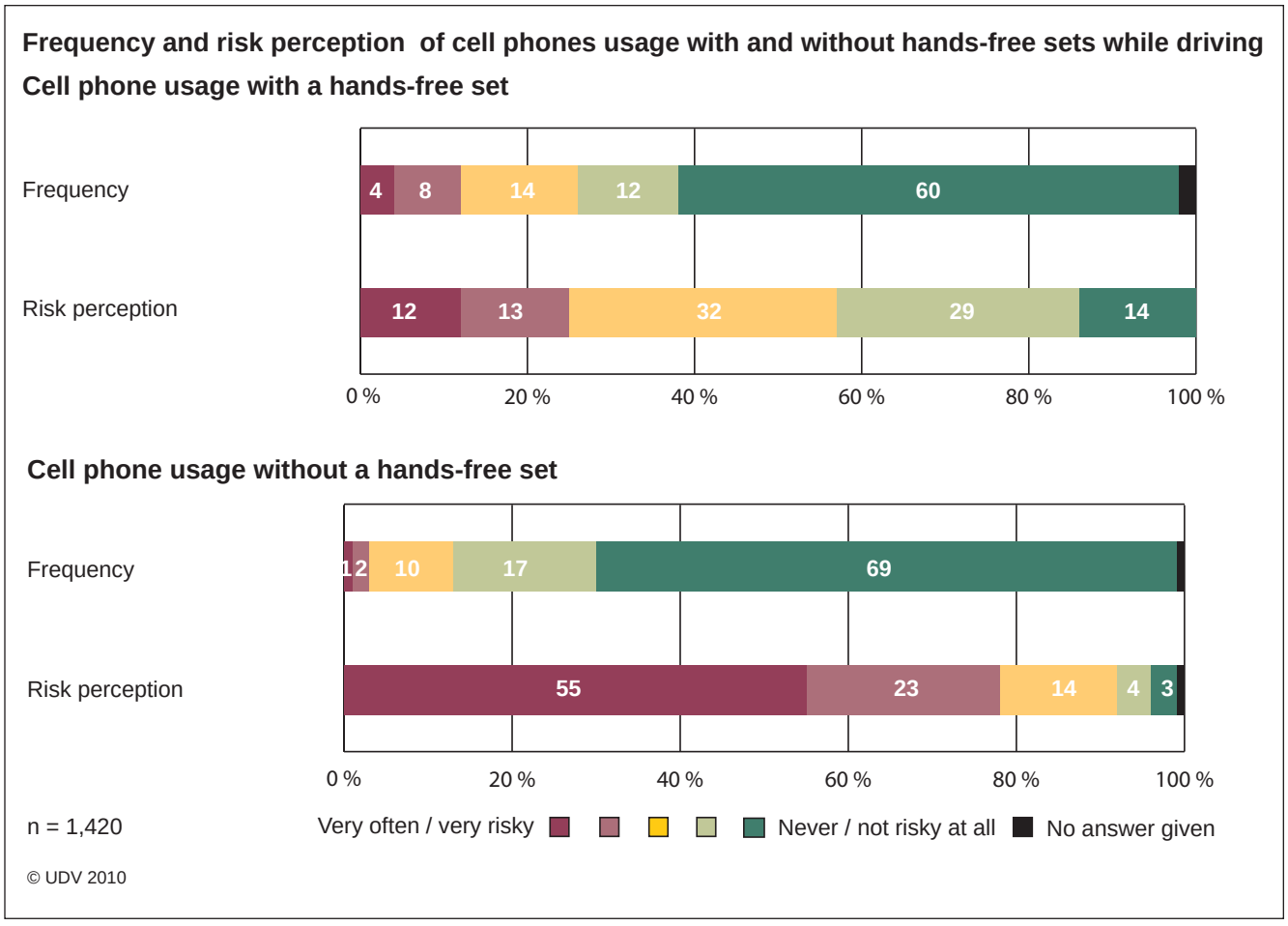

Figure 11:
Frequency and risk perception of cell phone usage with / without hands-free sets while driving

Writing SMS text messages?

Four out of five car drivers said they never wrote text messages while driving, and 5 % said they rarely wrote them. About 3 % of the car drivers said they often or very often wrote text messages while driving.

Most people (87 %) assessed the risk of writing a text message as high or very high. Only a small percentage thought there was no risk or little risk involved (3 %). There was a statistically significant correlation between the frequency of text message writing while driving and the risk perception. People who thought writing a text message while driving was not very risky were more likely to do so.

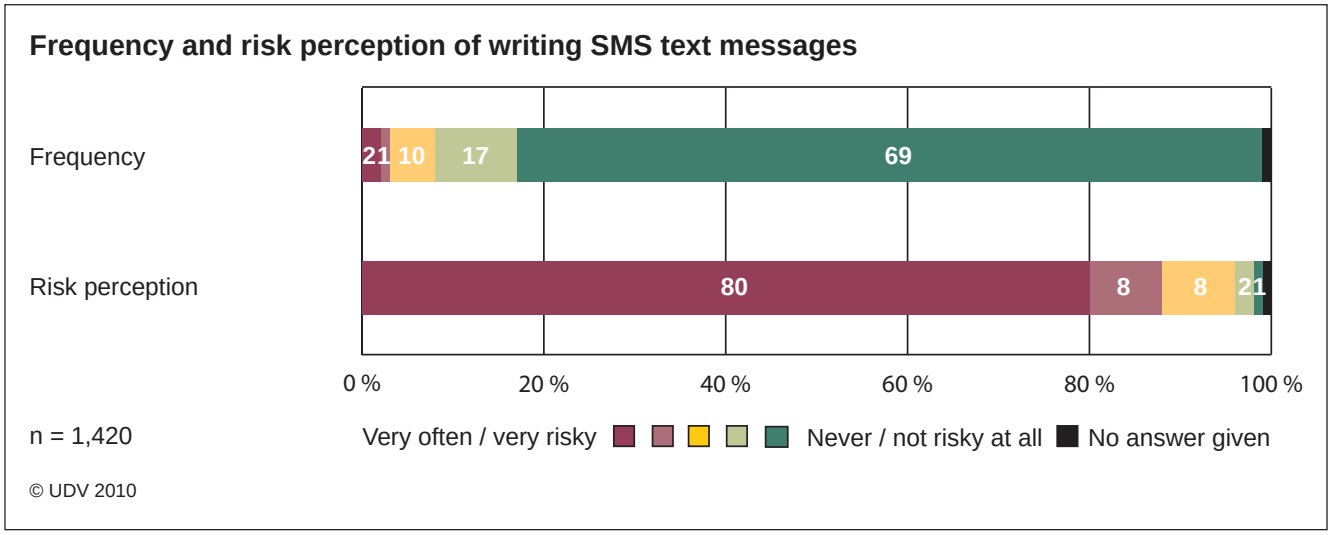

Figure 12:
Frequency and risk perception of writing SMS text messages

9. How safety conscious are German car buyers?

The safety of a car plays an important role in purchase decisions, as do reliability (93 %) and economy (84 %). 87 % of the car drivers said safety was an important or very important criterion for them when choosing a car.

However, only 34 % said that Euro NCAP (European New Car Assessment Programme) ratings, which are based on vendor-independent assessments of a vehicle's safety, were an important or very important criterion in their purchasing decision.

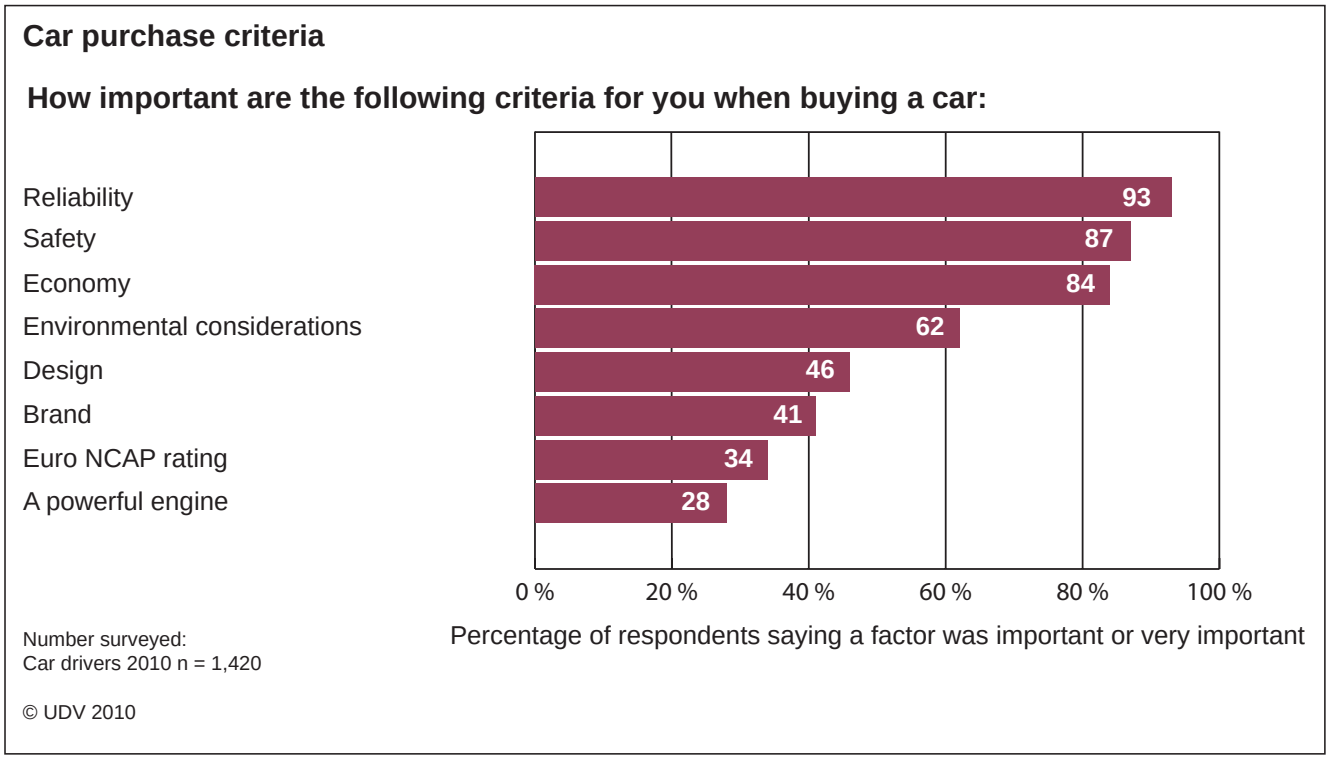

Figure 13:
Ranking of car purchase criteria

There were statistically significant differences in how people assessed the criteria for choosing a car, depending on their age, gender and level of car usage. For women, safety, economy and environmental considerations had a higher priority than a powerful engine. Older drivers considered reliability, safety, economy and environmental considerations to be more important than younger drivers, and frequent drivers tended to rate safety and environmental considerations as more important than lessfrequent drivers.

10. How well do German drivers know advanced driver assistance systems?

The most well-known system is the electronic stability control (ESC) system. 90 % of the car drivers surveyed knew this system. Emergency brake assist systems, lane keeping assist systems and blind spot warning systems were also known to a majority of the respondents (around 65 %).

The cars of respondents were most likely to be equipped with an electronic stability control system. 50 % of the drivers stated that their car was equipped with such a system. Only 14 % of the cars were equipped with an emergency brake assist system. Lane keeping assist systems and blind spot warning systems were hardly in use at all.

Men were significantly more likely to know about emergency brake assist systems, lane keeping assist systems and blind spot warning systems than women. Younger drivers were also more likely to know about ESC and lane keeping assist systems than older drivers. Frequent drivers were more likely to know about emergency brake assistant systems, lane keeping assist systems and blind spot warning systems than lessfrequent drivers. Their cars were also more likely to be equipped with ESC than those of lessfrequent drivers.

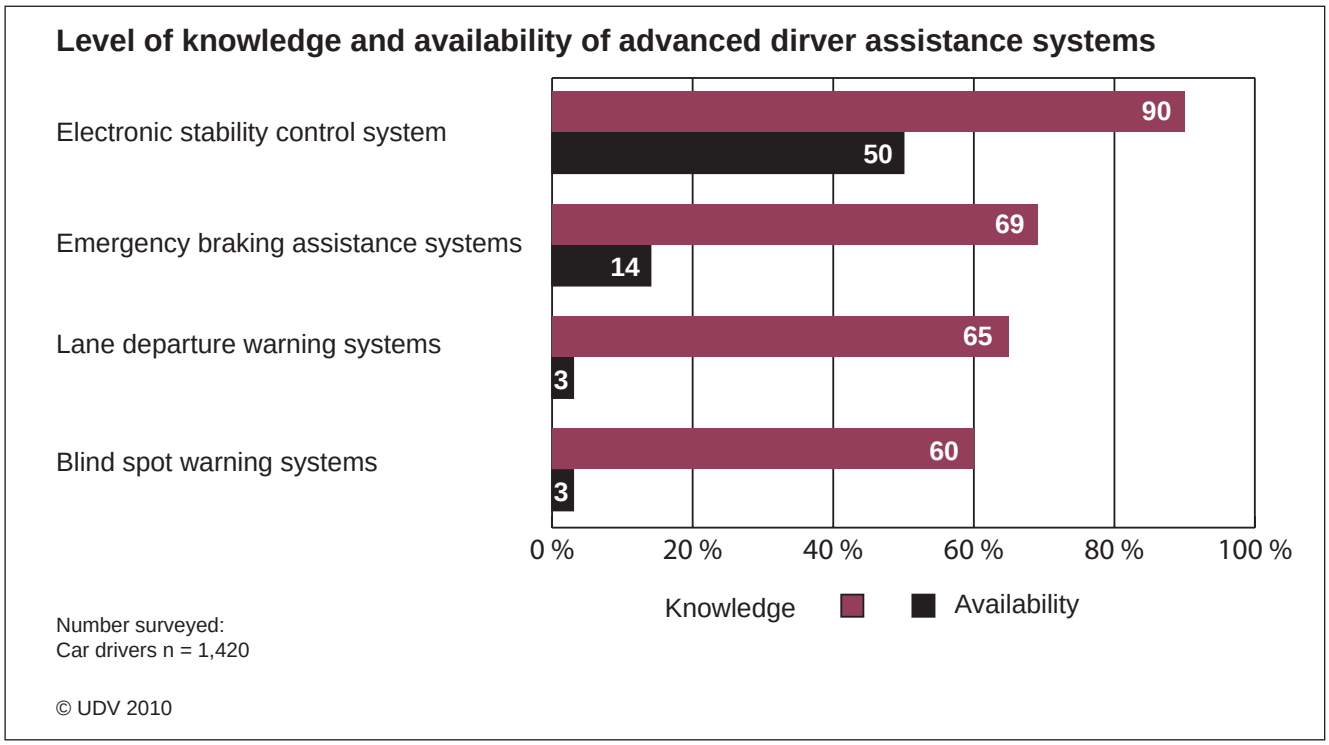

Figure 14:
Knowledge and availability of advanced driver assistance systems

German Insurance Association

Wilhelmstraße 43/43G, 10117 Berlin
PO Box 08 02 64, 10002 Berlin

Phone: + 49 30/2020 - 50 00, Fax: + 49 30/2020 - 6000
www. gdv.de, www.udv.de