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Research Report:

Taxi Driver Security Survey

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1. Executive Summary

The Taxi Industry Safety and Security Taskforce has investigated a number of initiatives to improve safety in the taxi industry and reported on these in an Interim Report. The Taskforce also recommended that a representative sample of taxi drivers be surveyed on their views regarding safety in the industry, the initiatives put forward in the Report and their impact on the working environment. As such, Taverner Research conducted a telephone survey with 1,208 taxi drivers and operators in July and August 2007.

A brief summary of the finding follows.

- Taxi drivers feel safer driving during the day than at night with 83% saying they feel 'safe' or 'very safe' driving during the day compared to only 26% saying the same for driving a taxi at night. Most notably 59% of Sydney drivers and 55% of Wollongong drivers say they feel 'unsafe' or 'very unsafe' driving at night.
- Risk of physical attack (46% day, 45% night) and robbery (29% day, 28% night) are the main reasons for feeling unsafe either during the day or at night. However, passengers being under the influence of alcohol and drugs and verbal attacks are more frequently mentioned as reasons for feeling unsafe at night than during the day. In particular 74% of drivers who say they feel unsafe driving at night mentioned passengers under the influence of alcohol as a reason compared to 28% of drivers feeling unsafe during the day.
- Few drivers regularly drive taxis with security screens (8%) and only a minority (30%) want security screens to be mandatory. Sydney (34%) and Wollongong (35%) drivers are most likely to agree with mandatory security screens. One third (31%) of taxi drivers would be 'very keen' to use a better designed security screen, however 40% of drivers are 'not at all keen' to use a better designed screen.

- Nine in ten drivers consider fare evasion to be a 'major' (42%) or 'minor' (49%) problem. Wollongong (52%) and Sydney (45%) drivers are most likely to say fare evasion is a 'major problem' while drivers in other areas tend to say it is a 'minor problem'. 77% of NSW taxi drivers have experienced at least one incidence of fare evasion in the last year with drivers reporting an average of 8 fare evasion incidents in the last year.
- 22% of drivers have been robbed in the last year and 16% had experienced a physical assault.
- Sydney drivers (78%) are most likely to have experienced fare evasion, however drivers from Wollongong are most likely to have been robbed (27%) and physically assaulted (22%).
- Drivers from non-English speaking background (NESB) are more likely than English speaking drivers to have experienced fare evasion, robbery and physical assault and have experienced a higher average number of each incident.
- Taxi drivers confirmed that taxi crime is severely under-reported with 77% of drivers experiencing fare evasion and 78% drivers being robbed in the last year not reporting the occurrence to police. Additionally 56% of drivers who were physically assaulted did not report the incident.
- In considering the reasons for not reporting crimes, 90% of drivers who reported a fare evasion say they lost time or money from their shift to report the incident. This increased to 95% for reporting robbery and 96% for reporting a physical attack.
- Taxi drivers also tend not to be satisfied with the police response to reporting crimes with only 34% saying they were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with how their most recent report of fare evasion, robbery or physical assault was handled by the police.
- Two-thirds of drivers would be 'much more' (48%) or 'a little more' (17%) willing to report fare evasion if the process were made easier. The main suggestion for improving reporting procedures was to enable reporting over the phone in line with the Taskforce recommendation to adapt the Police Assistance Line (PAL) to better record taxi crime.

- The majority of taxi drivers supported each of the Taskforce initiatives. The percentage of drivers saying they 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with each initiative is as follows:

	% Strongly agree and agree
Public education campaign	94
Regular improvement of technology	92
Regular police meetings	91
Improved driver training	88
Pre-pay laws	83
More secure taxi ranks	78
Two M13 alarm switches	76
More taxi voucher schemes	75
Camera screens	72
Implement police stop schemes	70

2. Discussion and Conclusions

The survey results confirm many of the Taskforce's Interim Report findings. In particular:

- Alcohol and drugs are major factors in taxi related crimes. As such, the Taskforce's support of Government initiatives aimed at reducing the impact of alcohol abuse and efforts to place greater responsibility on owners of licensed venues are justified and should be pursued.
- Taxi drivers feel they are not supported by police and are reluctant to report crimes due to loss of income and a perception that nothing will be done about the crime. Efforts to increase cooperation between local police and the taxi industry will be widely supported by drivers.
- Ethnic drivers are at greater risk, with drivers who speak a language other than English at home reporting a higher incidence of all taxi related crimes than English speaking drivers. These drivers are more likely to report taxi related crimes and are stronger supporters of security measures such as

security screens, two M13 switches, camera screens and the police stop scheme.

The Interim Report did not discuss the difference in security issues for drivers in various areas of NSW, although differences in regulations in some areas are discussed. The survey clearly shows that taxi drivers in Sydney and Wollongong experience a higher level of crime than other areas. This may be related to driver ethnicity as 61% of Sydney drivers and 27% of Wollongong drivers speak a language other than English at home. However we suspect crime statistics would indicate that these areas experience a higher level of crime in general. Due to the higher incidence of taxi crime, drivers in these areas are more supportive of most initiatives and in particular mandatory and improved security screens, more secure taxi ranks, camera screens and police stop schemes.

The survey findings do not support the premise that physical attacks on taxi drivers are handled as a priority by police. Over half of drivers who had been physically assaulted did not report the incident to police and two-thirds of those who had reported a physical assault were dissatisfied with the police response. The discrepancy between what the Taskforce heard from stakeholders and what drivers report may be related to the severity of attacks. The Interim Report refers to victims of 'serious physical assault or homicide' while the survey asked drivers if they had been 'physically assaulted in the last year'. We do not doubt that police treat serious assaults as a priority, however it is possible that less serious assaults against taxi drivers are treated as minor crimes. We suggest that the issue of driver experience of physical assault, the reporting of assaults and police response should be investigated further.

With the exception of regularly improving and updating technology, the initiatives that are most strongly supported involve education and communication. It appears drivers recognise it is better to prevent the crime in the first place than to have measures in place to deal with it when it happens. As such, they strongly support educating the public, improving police cooperation and driver training.

3. Background and Methodology

The Taxi Industry Safety and Security Taskforce was announced in June 2006 by the Premier, Morris Iemma, and the Deputy Premier and Minister for Transport, John Watkins to assess the risks faced by taxi drivers, research and review existing safety initiatives, and to develop new strategies.

The Taskforce conducted five formal meetings between June and October 2006, in addition to meetings between the Chair and individual members. At its formal meetings, the Taskforce discussed and assessed reports and research data from NSW, and the rest of Australia, as well as international jurisdictions, along with information from the Taskforce members' knowledge and expertise.

In its work to date, the Taskforce has found that, through better coordination, cooperation and targeted initiatives, taxi industry safety can be improved and enhanced. The Interim Report proposes options for updating the current taxi driver safety and security framework and a range of possible initiatives to ensure safety issues are addressed in an informed, coordinated and comprehensive manner.

In addition, to ensure taxi driver engagement, it was proposed that a representative sample of drivers be surveyed on their views of safety in the industry, the initiatives put forward in the Interim Report and their impact on the working environment. This will ensure that the Final Report has been validated by the relevant members of the industry themselves.

Taverner Research was commissioned to conduct the driver survey in July 2007. The aim of the survey is gather information from taxi drivers on:

- Driver experiences with crime and reporting crimes
- Attitudes to safety initiatives including:
 - Safety training programs
 - Secure taxi ranks
 - Taxi voucher schemes
 - Pre-payment of fares
 - Police stop schemes
 - Public education programs
 - Placement of 2 M13 alarm switches
 - Camera screens
 - Regular meeting with police and taxi industry representatives.

A total of 1,208 interviews were conducted with taxi drivers and operators across NSW. Please note that all respondents are referred to as 'drivers' in this report. A draft questionnaire was provided by the Ministry of Transport, refined by Taverner Research and approved by the Taskforce Chair before the commencement of interviewing. A copy of the questionnaire is provided in the Appendix II of this report.

The Ministry provided contact details of all authorised drivers and operators in NSW. A random sample of drivers and operators were sent a letter of introduction from the Ministry advising them of the survey. A total of 1,208 quantitative telephone interviews were completed between 27 July and 14 August 2007. The detailed demographics of the survey sample are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Survey sample

	Survey Sample	
	#	%
Driver or operator*		
Authorised taxi driver	859	71
Owner operator	222	18
Accredited operator	127	11
Area of operation		
Sydney	795	66
Newcastle/Hunter/Central Coast	182	15
Wollongong/Illawarra	116	10
Other NSW	115	10
Gender		
Male	1158	96
Female	50	4
Age		
18 – 24	22	2
25 – 44	448	37
45 – 64	652	54
65+	86	7
Preferred language at home		
English	687	57
Total NESB	521	43
Arabic	89	7
Punjabi	63	5
Bangali	66	5
Mandarin	48	4
Urdu	49	4
Other	206	17
Level of education		
Primary school	42	3
Secondary school	508	42
Vocational/Trade diploma/apprenticeship	178	15
Undergraduate diploma/associate diploma	113	9
University degree	267	22
Post-graduate degree/diploma	94	8
(Refused / Don't Know)	6	<1
TOTAL	1208	100%

* All drivers and operators are referred to as 'drivers' in this report.

The response rate for the telephone survey was 68%, this rate was calculated by the total number of interviews completed divided by the total of all contacts within the survey sample frame, or in other words, all respondents we have spoken to, which includes total interviews completed, refused at introduction and language barrier.

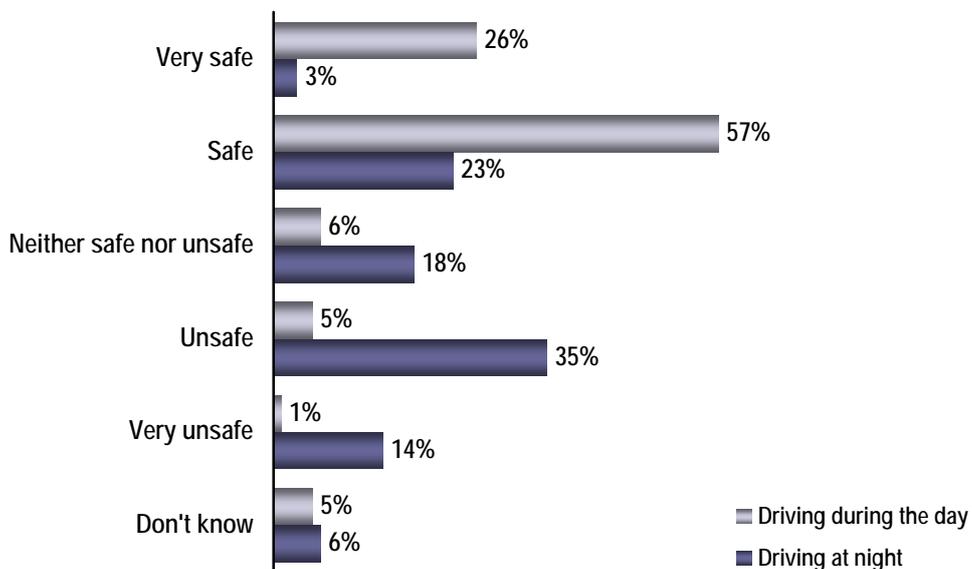
4. Findings

Taxi drivers and operators were asked how safe they felt when driving a taxi, how often they had encountered problems when driving and their opinion on several security options being considered by the Taskforce. The results of the survey are detailed below.

4.1. How safe is driving a taxi?

In general drivers feel safe driving during the day and less safe at night. However only one quarter of drivers (26%) feel 'very safe' during the day, while one in six (14%) feel 'very unsafe' at night (Figure 1).

Figure 1: How safe do drivers feel?



Q6: In general, how safe do you believe driving taxis is during the day?

Q8: In general, how safe do you believe driving taxis is at night?

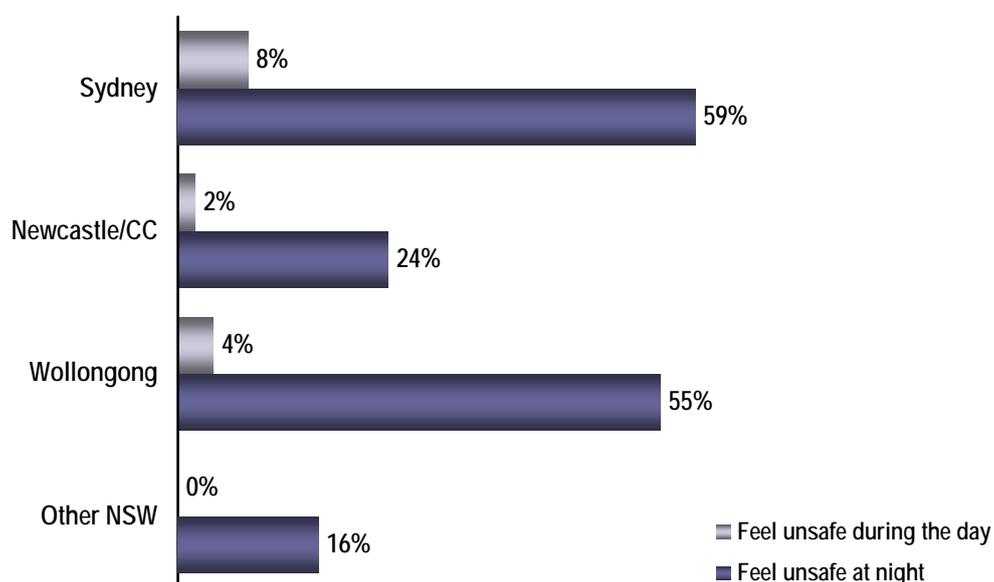
Base: All respondents, n=1208

Older drivers are more likely to feel safe, particularly at night, with 31% of 45 to 65 years and 33% of drivers over age 65 saying they feel safe at night compared to 20% of 25 to 44 year old drivers.

Drivers who speak English at home are also more likely to feel safe (86% during the day and 35% at night) compared to drivers who speak other languages (NESB) at home (79% during the day and 15% at night)

Figure 2 shows that Sydney drivers are most likely to feel unsafe, both during the day and at night. Interestingly, only 2% of Sydney taxi drivers say they feel 'very safe' driving at night while the same proportion of drivers in non-urban areas (2%) say they feel 'very unsafe' driving at night.

Figure 2: Where drivers feel unsafe



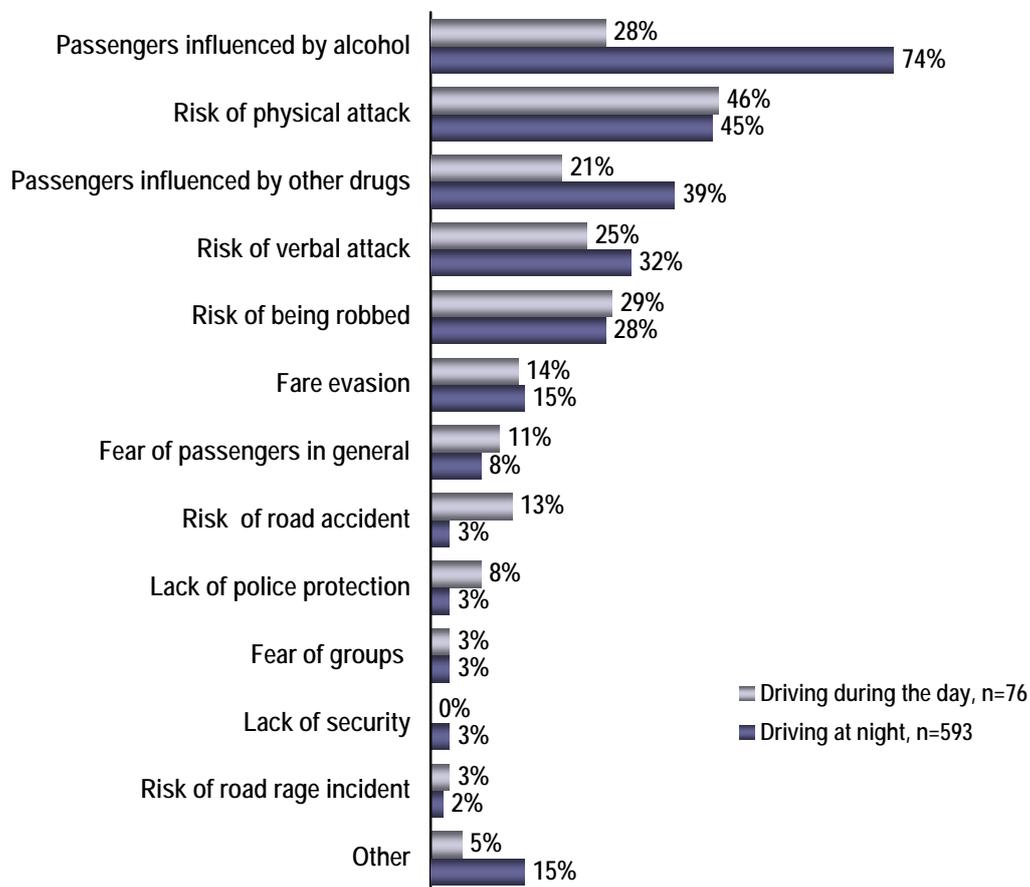
Q6: In general, how safe do you believe driving taxis is during the day?

Q8: In general, how safe do you believe driving taxis is at night?

Base: All respondents, n=1208

The reasons drivers give for feeling unsafe, particularly at night, confirm the Taskforce conclusions that passengers under the influence of alcohol and drugs are a serious issue for drivers. Figure 3 shows that three of four drivers (74%) who say they feel unsafe driving at night cite passengers influenced by alcohol as one of the reasons. Alcohol and drugs are cited more frequently as reasons for feeling unsafe driving at night than during the day. However, the risk of physical attack, robbery and fare evasion are mentioned in nearly equal proportion by drivers who feel unsafe during the day or at night.

Figure 3: Why drivers feel unsafe



Q7&9: If unsafe, why?
Base: Drivers or operators who feel unsafe

In terms of driving at night, Sydney drivers are more likely to say they fear physical attack (48%) and being robbed (31%) than are Newcastle and Wollongong drivers. Drivers from non-English speaking backgrounds are more likely to fear physical attack (49%), verbal attack (36%) and fare evasion (17%) than are English speaking drivers (39%, 26% and 11% respectively).

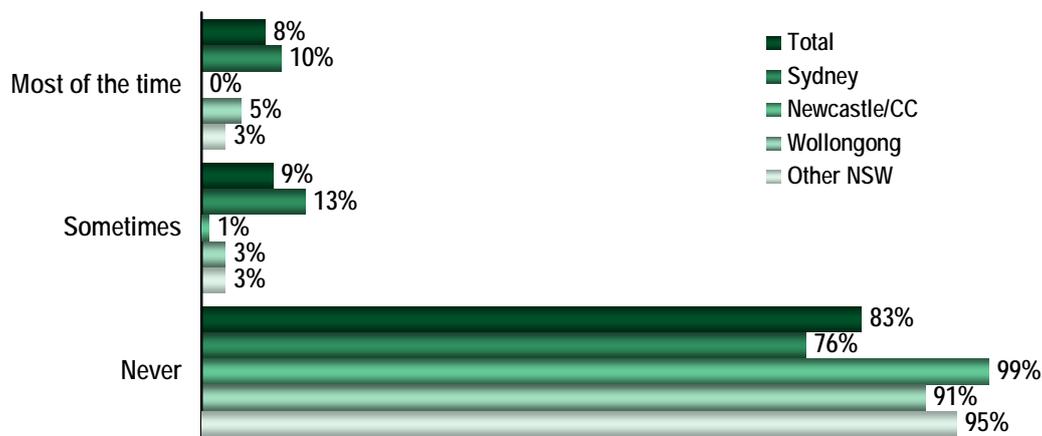
4.2. Security Screens

Specifications for driver protection security screens in Sydney, Newcastle, Wollongong and the Central Coast were published in March 1997 and the screens installed in August 1998. In February, 2000, taxi operators were given the option of installing a surveillance camera instead of a driver security screen.

Figure 4 shows that the majority of drivers (83%) have not driven a taxi with a security screen in the last year. Sydney drivers are the most likely to have a security screen, however only one in ten Sydney drivers have a security screen 'all of the time' (8%) or 'more than half the time' (3%).

In line with where drivers feel safest, security screen are least prevalent in Newcastle/Central Coast and other areas of NSW.

Figure 4: Frequency of driving with security screen

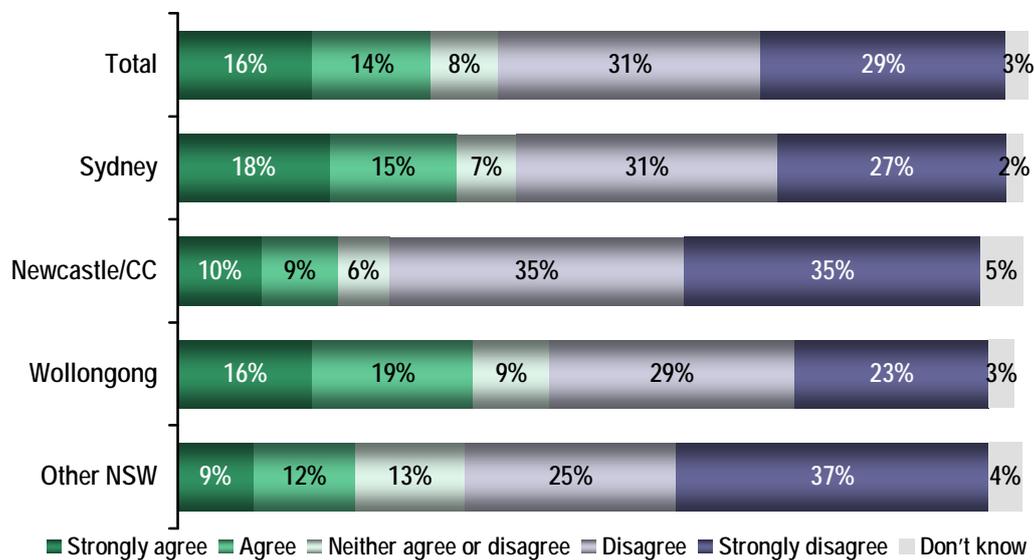


Q10: How often in the last 12 months have you driven a taxi with a driver security screen?
 Base: All respondents, n=1208
 Note: Totals may not sum to 100 due to rounding

In general drivers are not eager to see the introduction of mandatory security screens with nearly two-thirds (59%) disagreeing that should be required. Sydney (34%) and Wollongong (35%) drivers are most likely to agree with mandatory security screens.

Additionally 41% of drivers from non-English speaking backgrounds agree that security screens should be mandatory compared to 22% of English speaking drivers.

Figure 5: Do drivers want security screens to be mandatory?



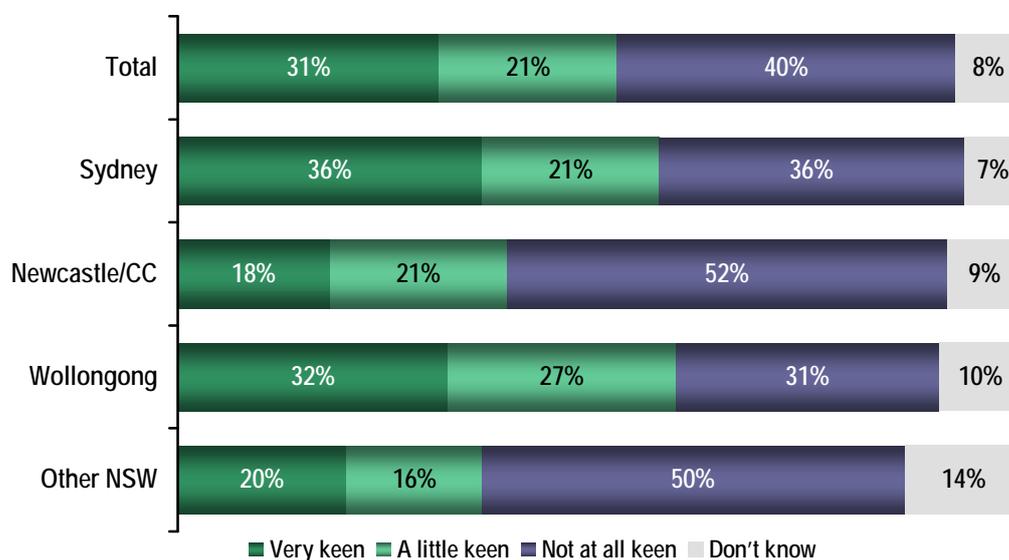
Q11: How strongly do you agree or disagree that driver security screens should be mandatory?

Base: All respondents, n=1208

Note: Totals may not sum to 100 due to rounding

The design of security screens appears to be a deterrent to drivers wanting to use them. While only 8% regularly drive taxis with security screens at present, 52% of drivers say they would be at least a little keen to use better designed security screen. However, a third of drivers in Sydney (36%) and Wollongong (31%) and half the drivers in Newcastle/CC (52%) and other NSW (50%) would not welcome better designed security screens.

Figure 6: Would drivers use better designed security screens?



Q12: If driver security screens were a better design, how keen would you be to use them?

Base: All respondents, n=1208

Note: Totals may not sum to 100 due to rounding

The drivers most likely to be 'very keen' to use a better designed security screen are:

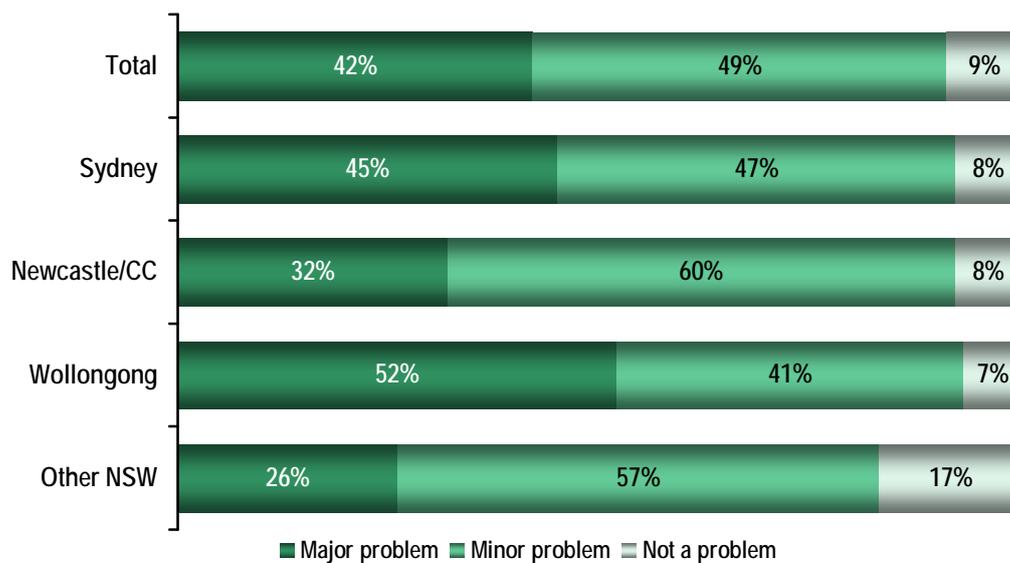
- Aged 25 to 44 (38% very keen)
- Those who speak a language other than English at home (42%)
- Those who feel very unsafe driving during the day (53%) and at night (41%).

4.3. Incidence of crimes against taxi drivers

Only 9% of drivers say that fare evasion is not a problem, with drivers in non-urban areas of NSW (17%) most likely to take this view. Wollongong (52%) and Sydney (45%) drivers are most likely to say fare evasion is a 'major problem' while drivers in other areas tend to say it is a 'minor problem'.

Half of drivers (50%) from non-English speaking backgrounds say fare evasion is a 'major problem', while English speaking drivers are more likely to say fare evasion is a 'minor problem' (56%).

Figure 7: Is fare evasion a problem?



Q13: In general, do you believe that fare evasion is ...

Base: All respondents, n=1208

Note: Totals may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Drivers were asked how many cases of fare evasion, robbery and physical assault they had experienced in the last 12 months. Table 2 shows 77% of drivers had experienced at least one fare evasion in the last year, with drivers reporting an average of 8 fare evasion incidents in the last year. 22% of drivers have been robbed in the last year and 16% had experienced a physical assault.

Sydney drivers (78%) are most likely to have experienced fare evasion, however drivers from Wollongong are most likely to have been robbed (27%) and physically assaulted (22%).

Drivers from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) were more likely than English speaking drivers to have experienced fare evasion, robbery and physical assault and to have experienced a higher average number of each incidents. This is in line with the finding of the 1995 Keatsdale Report¹ cited in the Taskforce Interim Report which demonstrated a link between assault rates and the ethnicity of taxi drivers.

Table 2: Incidence of crime against taxi drivers in last year

	Fare evasion		Robbery		Physical Assault	
	% ²	Mean	% ²	Mean	% ²	Mean
Area of operation						
Sydney	78	8	24	.8	19	.4
Newcastle/CC	76	8	17	.4	9	.2
Wollongong	74	11	27	1.5	22	.6
Other NSW	70	5	16	.4	3	.04
Preferred language at home						
English	74	7	19	.9	12	.2
NESB	80	9	26	.7	21	.5
TOTAL	77	8	22	.8	16	.3

Q14: How many cases of fare evasion did you have of the last 12 months?

Q15: In the last 12 months has anyone stolen or tried to steal anything from you while driving a taxi?

Q16: In the last 12 months have you been physically assaulted while driving a taxi?

Base: All respondents, n=1208

¹ Taxi Driver safety – A Report to the NSW Department of Transport. December 1995

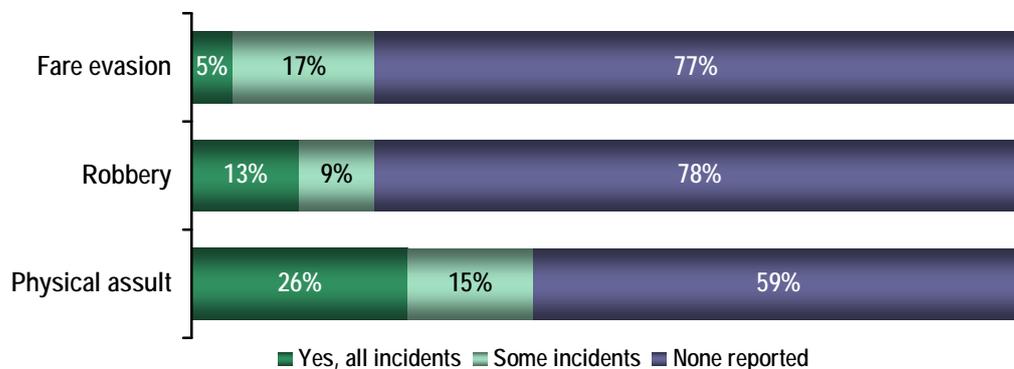
² percentage of drivers experiencing crime at least once in last 12 months

4.4. Reporting of crimes against taxi drivers

When asked about reporting incidents of crime, taxi drivers admit to not reporting the majority of incidents, confirming the Taskforce’s conclusion that under-reporting of taxi related crime is common. Three-quarters of drivers who experienced at least one fare evasion (77%) and robbery (78%) in the last year had not reported the incidents to police.

Interestingly, even though the Taskforce has been informed by stakeholders that the NSW Police’s response to serious physical assault against taxi drivers is excellent, 59% of drivers who had experienced physical assault had not reported the event to police. It is possible that drivers are less likely to report minor physical assault, which is consistent with Taskforce findings that a gap exists between what crimes are considered ‘serious’ and ‘minor’ offences.

Figure 8: Reporting of crimes against taxi drivers



Q17: Did you report any incidents of fare evasion/robbery/assault to the police in the last 12 months?

Base: Respondents experienced each type of incident

Note: Totals may not sum to 100 due to rounding

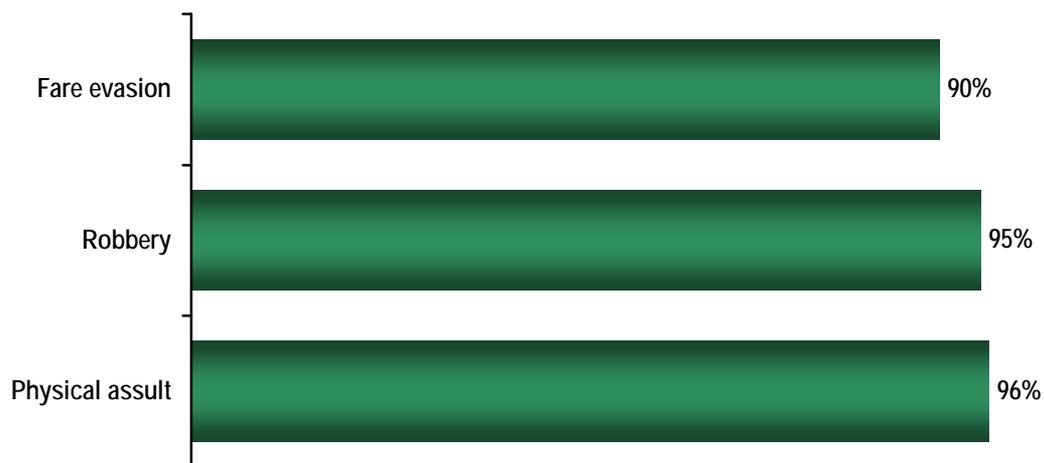
Table 3 shows that drivers from non-English speaking backgrounds are more likely than English speaking drivers to have reported one or more incident of each type of crime to the police.

Table 3: Percent reporting one or more incidents

	Fare evasion %	Robbery %	Physical Assault %
Sydney	21	22	41
Newcastle/CC	24	29	47
Wollongong	27	16	36
Other NSW	25	17	50
English	20	15	39
NESB	25	29	43
TOTAL	23	22	41
Base	927	268	194

A higher proportion of drivers reported losing time or money with reporting robbery (95%) and physical assault (96%) than when reporting fare evasion (90%). This finding helps confirm the Taskforce supposition that drivers are reluctant to report crimes because it disrupts their shift and reduces earning time.

Figure 9: Loss of time or money from reporting crimes



Q: In order to report [fare evasion /robbery /assault] to police did you lose any time or money from your shift?

Base: Respondents who reported incidents to police

Newcastle/Central Coast drivers are somewhat less likely to report losing time and money when reporting crimes to police than are drivers in other areas. Although the difference is not statistically significant it may be worthwhile to investigate possible differences in police procedures in the Newcastle area.

Table 4: Percent losing time or money from reporting crime

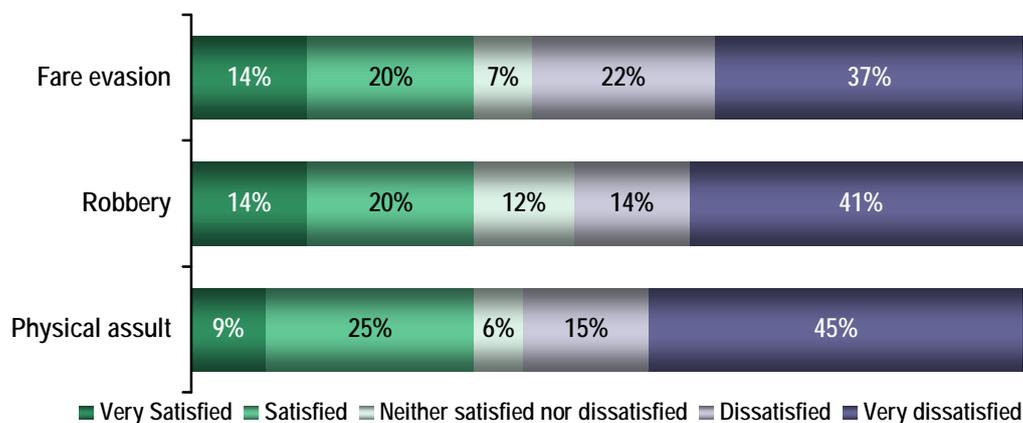
	Fare evasion %	Robbery %	Physical Assault %
Sydney	92	95	97
Newcastle/CC	85	89*	88*
Wollongong	91	100*	100*
Other NSW	85	100*	100*
English	88	95	94
NESB	92	95	98
TOTAL	90	95	96
Base	209	59	80

* Small base of 10 or fewer respondents

Another possible reason for under-reporting of taxi related crimes is dissatisfaction with how the police respond to reporting of the crimes. Only 34% of drivers report being 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with how their most recent report was handled by police. This is the same for fare evasion, robbery and physical assault.

Contrary to reports that police's response to reports of physical assault are handled better than report of fare evasion, 45% of drivers reporting a physical assault were 'very dissatisfied' with response from police. This compares with 37% being 'very dissatisfied' with the response to a reported fare evasion.

Figure 10: Satisfaction with police response



Q: How satisfied were you with the police response to your reporting of the most recent fare evasion incident/ robbery incident/ assault incident?

Base: Respondents reported all or some incidents

Note: Totals may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Table 5 shows there is little difference in level of satisfaction with police response between drivers from English and non-English speaking backgrounds.

Table 5: Percent satisfied³ with police response

	Fare evasion %	Robbery %	Physical Assault %
Sydney	34	43	33
Newcastle/CC	30	22*	25*
Wollongong	30	0*	33*
Other NSW	45	0*	100*
English	38	25	39
Other	30	36	30
TOTAL	34	34	34
Base	209	59	80

* Small base of 10 or fewer respondents

³ Percent very satisfied or satisfied

4.5. Improving reporting of fare evasion

Two-thirds of drivers would be 'much more' (48%) or 'a little more' (17%) willing to report fare evasion if the process were made easier.

Sydney drivers appear to be more sceptical, as they are the most likely to have experienced fare evasion (78%) and least likely to have reported it (21%), but the most likely to say easier procedures would not make them more willing to report fare evasion.

Figure 11: Willing to report fare evaders if easier



Q26: If reporting of fare evasion incidents to NSW Police was easier, how much more willing would you be to report an incident of fare evasion?

Base: All respondents, n=1208

Note: Totals may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Table 6 shows the suggestions to improve reporting to police. Half of drivers (49%) did not have any spontaneous suggestions for improved reporting of fare evasion and a further 13% just stated that reporting should be easier and quicker. However, the most frequently mentioned alternative for reporting is to enable reporting over the phone. This is in line with Taskforce recommendation to adapt the Police Assistance Line (PAL) to better record taxi crime.

Table 6: Suggestions to improve reporting to police

	Suggestions	%
Alternative reporting suggestions	Report incidents over the phone/ direct phone line	10
	Report incidents over the internet	2
	Hand/ send in completed incident form to police	2
	Should be able to report incident after shift	2
	Report incidents over the radio	1
Better police support	Faster response time/ police don't respond to calls	7
	Police should take fare evasion/ problems seriously	7
	Police should act/ follow up on report/ charge offenders	6
	Police/ taxi companies need to support/ listen to/ take side of the driver not the passenger	4
	More police available/ police specifically for taxi drivers	2
Reasons for not reporting	Report incident to base/ base sends report/ security camera image to police	2
	No point reporting incidents/ police don't/ can't do anything/ no outcome achieved	5
	Police too busy for small incidents / not worth reporting	1
	Police said only report if want to go to court / fare evasion is a civil / insurance matter	1
Other comments	Should be quicker/ easier/ costs driver time/ money to make report	13
	Emergency button direct to police/ tracking device	2
	Should use images from security camera/ download should be free/ immediate	2
	Offenders should be punished / fined	1
	Other suggestions	1
	Don't know / no suggestion	49

Q27: What suggestions do you have to improve reporting of incidents to the police?

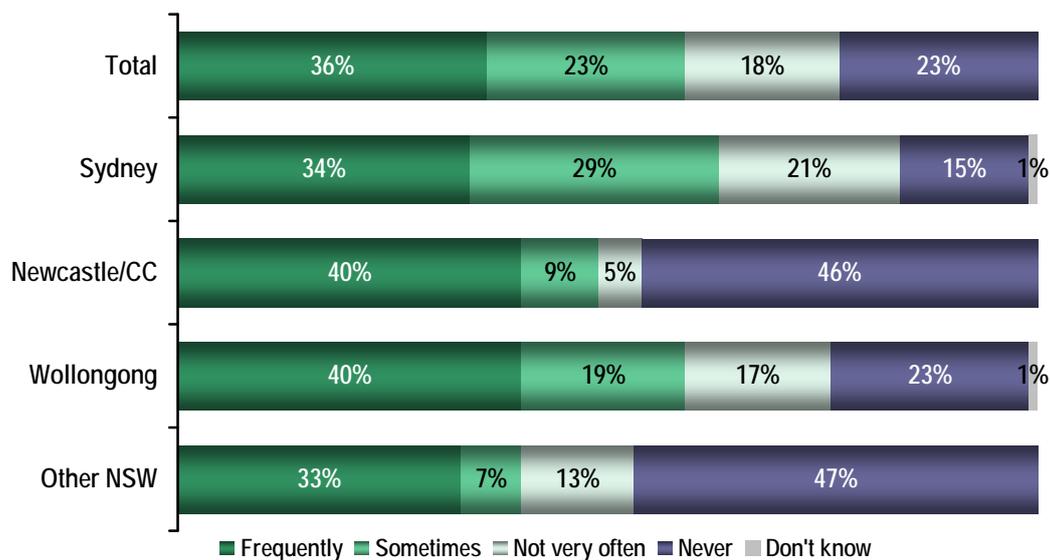
Base: All respondents, n=1208 – Multiple responses accepted

4.6. Use of secure taxi ranks

All respondents were asked their frequency of using secure taxi ranks, with over half (58%) using them at least sometimes. Newcastle/Central Coast and Wollongong drivers (40%) are somewhat more likely to frequently use secure taxi ranks, however Sydney taxi drivers are significantly less likely to say they never use them.

Only 12% of drivers from non-English speaking backgrounds never use secure taxi ranks compared to 32% of English speaking drivers.

Figure 12: Frequency of using secure taxi ranks



Q28: How frequently do you pick up fares at secure taxi ranks?

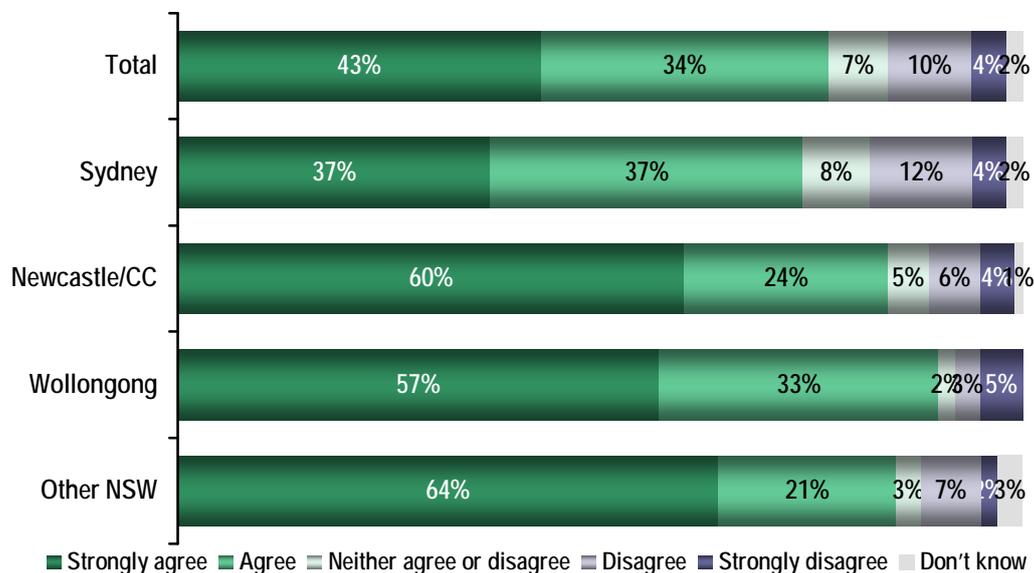
Base: All respondents, n=1208

Note: Totals may not sum to 100 due to rounding

The majority of drivers (77%) agree that secure taxi ranks improve conditions for drivers, however Sydney drivers (37%) are significantly less likely than other drivers to 'strongly agree' with this statement.

Even though drivers from non-English speaking backgrounds are more likely to use secure taxi ranks (87% compared to 68% of English speaking drivers), they are less likely to agree that secure taxi ranks improve conditions (73% compared to 82% of English speaking drivers).

Figure 13: Secure taxi ranks improved conditions



Q29: How strongly do you agree or disagree that the introduction of secure taxi ranks improves conditions for taxi drivers at those locations?

Base: All respondents, n=1208

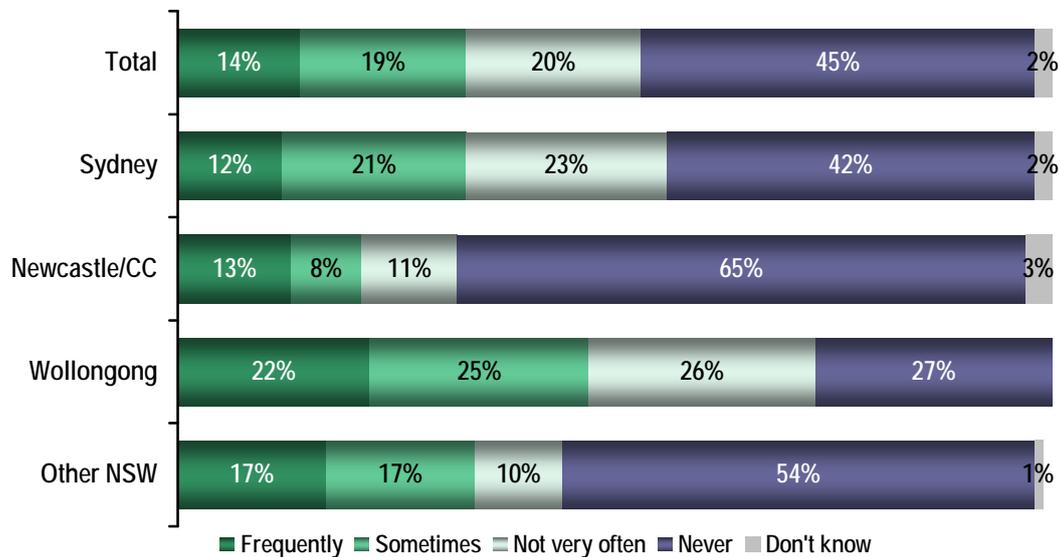
Note: Totals may not sum to 100 due to rounding

4.7. Use of taxi voucher schemes

Taxi voucher schemes are less widely used than secure taxi ranks with 45% of drivers saying they never use them. The taxi voucher scheme is most frequently used in Wollongong with nearly half of drivers (47%) using them at least sometimes.

English speaking drivers (52%) are more likely to have never used taxi voucher schemes than are non-English speaking drivers (36%).

Figure 14: Frequency of using taxi voucher schemes



Q31: How frequently do you pick up fares from clubs or pubs using taxi voucher schemes?

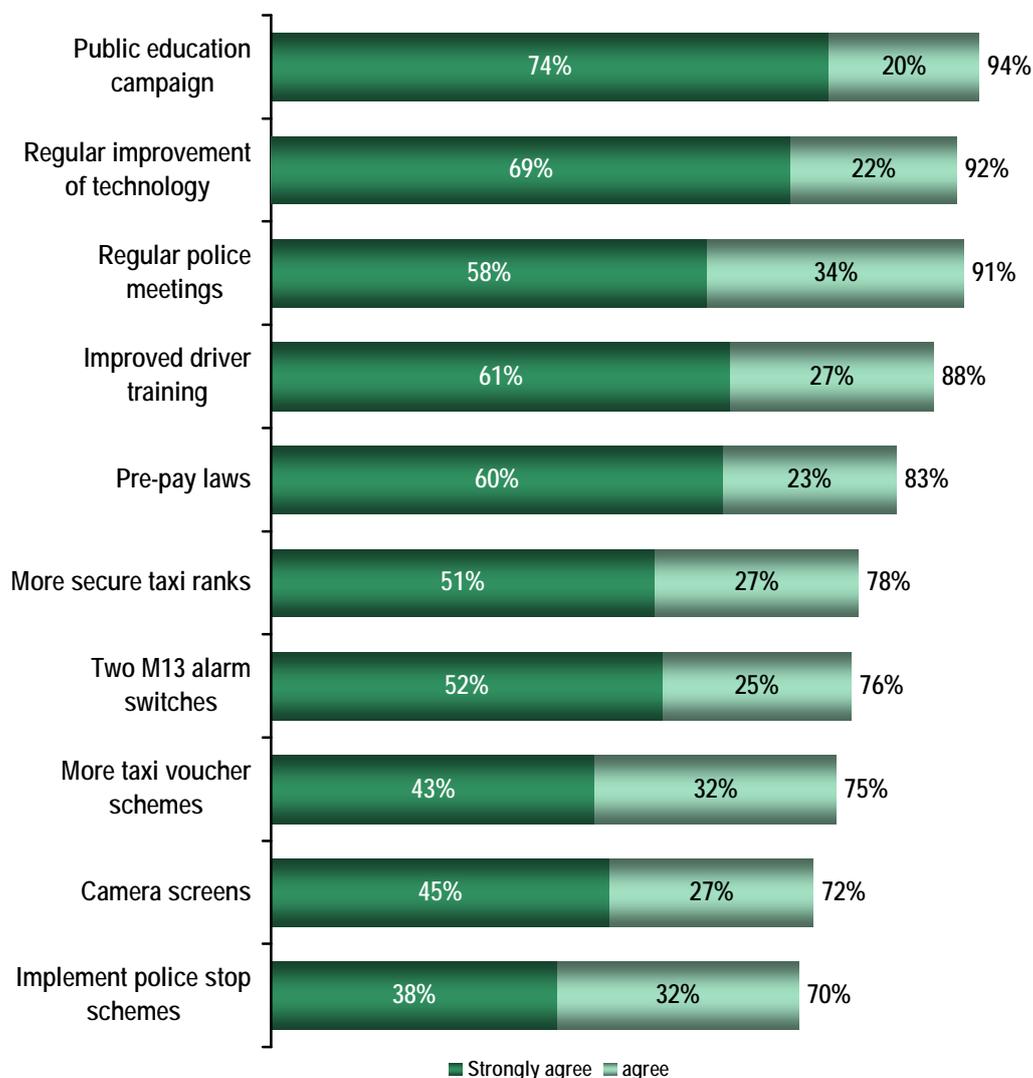
Base: All respondents, n=1208

Note: Totals may not sum to 100 due to rounding

4.8. Do drivers want proposed safety initiatives?

Drivers were asked about a number of safety initiatives currently under consideration by the Taskforce. Some of the initiatives required an explanation before drivers could agree or disagree with each proposal. Appendix I shows the full explanation and the questions drivers were asked about each initiative. Figure 15 shows the majority of drivers agreed that each of the initiatives, with over nine in ten supporting a public education campaign (94%), regular improvement of technology (92%) and regular meeting between local police and taxi industry representatives (91%).

Figure 15: Agreement with proposed safety initiatives



Q: How strongly do you agree or disagree that...

Base: All respondents, n=1208

Note: Percentages may not sum total due to rounding

While all initiatives appear popular with drivers, less than half 'strongly support' more taxi voucher schemes (43%), camera screens (45%) and a police stop scheme (38%).

Table 7 shows the level of agreement with safety initiatives in various locations. Sydney and Wollongong drivers show stronger support for more secure taxi ranks, camera screens and the police stop scheme. There is more support for pre-pay laws and taxi voucher schemes in the urban centres than non-urban areas.

A public education campaign, regular police meetings and improved driver training are strongly supported in all areas.

Table 7: Percent agreeing with proposed safety initiatives - Location

	Sydney %	Newcastle/CC %	Wollongong %	Other NSW %
Public education campaign	94	95	93	93
Regular improvement of technology	93	90	91	88
Regular police meetings	91	92	95	90
Improved driver training	88	88	88	87
Pre-pay laws	82	88	86	79
More secure taxi ranks	79	76	83	70
Two M13 alarm switches	79	69	73	74
More taxi voucher schemes	75	79	76	64
Camera screens	76	58	77	55
Implement police stop schemes	74	63	71	57

Q: How satisfied were you with the police response to your reporting of the most recent fare evasion incident/ robbery incident/ assault incident?

Base: Respondents reported all or some incidents

Drivers from non-English speaking backgrounds show stronger support for regular improvement of technology, two M13 alarm switches, camera screens and the police stop scheme than English speaking drivers.

Table 8: Percent agreeing with proposed safety initiatives - Language

	English %	NESB %
Public education campaign	94	94
Regular improvement of technology	90	95
Regular police meetings	92	91
Improved driver training	88	87
Pre-pay laws	83	83
More secure taxi ranks	79	78
Two M13 alarm switches	74	80
More taxi voucher schemes	74	76
Camera screens	66	79
Implement police stop schemes	64	79

Q: How satisfied were you with the police response to your reporting of the most recent fare evasion incident/ robbery incident/ assault incident?

Base: Respondents reported all or some incidents

4.9. Additional comments

Two in five drivers (42%) had no additional comments as shown in Table 9. However, the comments given indicate that drivers are open to training to change driver behaviour and want better cooperation with police. Additionally drivers had several suggestions for improving safety equipment.

Table 9: Additional comments about safety in the taxi industry and modes of improvement

Comments		%
Driver Issues	Improve driver communication/ dealing with/ avoiding/ problems with passengers	6
	Better driver behaviour/ attitude/ presentation	2
	Improve driver English language skills	2
	Improve driver education/ training ie geographical knowledge	2
	Improve driver education/ training in safety issues	1
Vehicle / Equipment Improvements	Cabs like London or USA/ passenger separated from driver/ purpose built vehicle	4
	Improve bubble/ current security screen	3
	Driver activated door locks to prevent fare evasion/ assault	3
	Light/ siren installed on outside of taxi to show they need help	3
	Taxi owners should improve maintenance of vehicle/ security equipment/ conditions are unsafe	2
	Need security screens/ should be mandatory	2
	Improve radio communication/ M13 technology	2
Police / Enforcement Issues	Better support/ contact with police	6
	Laws to punish fare evaders/ trouble-makers/ advertise laws	5
	Police should take fare evasion/ complaints seriously/ act quickly	3
	Faster response from police	2
	Meetings/ consultation with drivers	1
Camera	Improve security cameras ie video not stills/ include audio	5
	Need security cameras/ display monitor/ should be mandatory	5
	Security camera footage should be easier/ cheaper to view	1
Pick up point Issues	Payment/ part-payment in advance/ advertise advance payment	4
	More secure taxi ranks/ more security/ guards/ CCTV at ranks	2
	Need more places to stop/ allowed to stop in 'no stopping' areas to pick up passengers	1
	Pubs and clubs should close early/ assist with security/ drunk patrons	1
Passenger Issues	Advertising campaign to teach passengers to act respectfully in taxis/ taxi safety	3
	Passengers should present/ swipe ID card	1
	Should be able to refuse passengers if intoxicated/ intimidating	1
Other	Other comment / non safety related comment	9
	Improve security/ safety - general	2
	Different safety requirements for city and country areas	1
	Don't know	42

Appendix I: Questions regarding safety initiatives

Initiative	Question
Public education campaign	How strongly do you agree or disagree that there should be an education campaign to raise awareness that fare evasion is a criminal offence and offenders can be prosecuted?
Improve technology	The Taskforce has looked at the advancements in camera technology including improvement in the quality of images and memory capacity. How strongly do you agree or disagree that standards for taxi security camera technology should be regularly reviewed and updated?
Regular police meetings	The Taskforce is considering establishing regular meetings between Police Local Area Commanders and representative taxi drivers with the aim of sharing concerns and strategies for improved safety. How strongly do you agree or disagree that such meetings should be introduced?
Improved driver training	Many taxi drivers interviewed by the Taskforce said that good communication skills are critical, as is the ability to defuse a minor disagreement before it becomes an argument. How strongly do you agree or disagree that the current taxi driver educational courses should include more information on safety, customer service and communication skills and students should be required to demonstrate good communication and customer service skills?
Pre-pay laws	Victoria and Queensland currently have laws permitting taxi drivers to require passengers to demonstrate an ability to pay or require part-payment of the fare prior to hiring. How strongly do you agree or disagree that similar laws should be introduced in NSW?
More secure taxi ranks	How strongly do you agree or disagree that the number of secure taxi ranks at key locations should be increased?
Two M13 alarm switches	There is currently no standard placement for M13 alarm switches in taxis, some are on the dashboard and some are on the floor. How strongly do you agree or disagree that there should be mandatory fitting of emergency switches on both the dash and floor for all NSW taxis?
More taxi voucher schemes	How strongly do you agree or disagree that taxi voucher schemes should be more widely used?
Camera screens	It is now possible to have the image that the taxi camera is taking projected on a screen so passengers can see what is being recorded. How strongly do you agree or disagree that such screens should be introduced?
Implement police stop schemes	A recent initiative in parts of the USA allows police in vehicles or stationary traffic operations, such as random breath testing stations, to randomly stop taxi vehicles to check the safety of passenger and driver. Under this scheme, taxi operators register their vehicle and have their drivers sign consent forms. Eligible cabs would display a visible decal both inside and outside the cab indicating a taxi can be stopped without establishing need or probable cause. Police are then able to check on the safety of the driver at any time. How strongly do you agree or disagree that a similar initiative should be introduced in NSW?

Appendix II: Questionnaire

SURVEY OF TAXI DRIVERS AND OPERATORS – TRC 2581

Good, could I speak to Hello my name is and I'm from Taverner Research ringing on behalf of the New South Wales Ministry of Transport. A letter was sent to you recently about your selection to take part in a survey about taxi driver security. We would like to talk with taxi drivers about safety issues in the taxi industry. Your answers will of course be treated as confidential.

- 1 Yes / Willing without letter GO TO Q1
- 2 No
(OBTAIN MAILING ADDRESS AND MAKE APPOINTMENT)

IF TIMING IS NOT CONVENIENT, ARRANGE A CALLBACK.

Q1. DRIVER OR OPERATOR

Which of the following applies to you? Are you currently READ OUT SINGLE RESPONSE

- 1 An authorised taxi driver
- 2 An owner operator
- 3 Or an accredited operator
- 4 Other (specify)

Q2. DRIVEN OR OPERATED IN LAST YEAR

Have you driven or operated a taxi in NSW at any time in the last 12 months?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No - **TERMINATE**

Q3. YEARS IN INDUSTRY IN AUSTRALIA OR OVERSEAS

How many years in total have you been involved in the taxi industry in Australia or overseas?

- 1 Less than one year
- 2 1 – 2 years
- 3 3 – 5 years
- 4 6 – 10 years
- 5 More than 10 years
- 9 Don't know

Q4. YEARS IN INDUSTRY IN AUSTRALIA

How many years in Australia?

- 1 Less than one year
- 2 1 – 2 years
- 3 3 – 5 years
- 4 6 – 10 years
- 5 More than 10 years
- 9 Don't know

Q5. AREA OF OPERATION

In what area of NSW are you involved in taxis? SINGLE RESPONSE

- 1 Sydney
- 2 Central Coast
- 3 Newcastle
- 4 Wollongong
- 5 Or elsewhere in NSW (Specify town) _____

Q6. SAFETY DURING THE DAY

In general, how safe do you believe driving taxis is during the day?

- 1 Very safe
- 2 Safe
- 3 Neither safe nor unsafe
- 4 Unsafe
- 5 Or very unsafe
- 9 Don't know)

Q7. REASONS FOR UNSAFE DURING THE DAY

If unsafe, why? DO NOT READ OUT PROBE FULLY – ANY OTHER REASONS

- 1 Passengers influenced by alcohol
- 2 Passengers influenced by other drugs
- 3 Risk of physical attack
- 4 Risk of verbal attack
- 5 Risk of being robbed
- 6 Risk of road accident
- 7 Risk of road rage incident
- 8 Other (Specify) _____

Q8. SAFETY AT NIGHT

In general, how safe do you believe driving taxis is at night?

- 1 Very safe
- 2 Safe
- 3 Neither safe nor unsafe
- 4 Unsafe
- 5 Or very unsafe
- 9 Don't know

Q9. REASONS FOR UNSAFE AT NIGHT

If unsafe, why? DO NOT READ OUT PROBE FULLY – ANY OTHER REASONS

- 1 Passengers influenced by alcohol
- 2 Passengers influenced by other drugs
- 3 Risk of physical attack
- 4 Risk of verbal attack
- 5 Risk of being robbed
- 6 Risk of road accident
- 7 Risk of road rage incident
- 8 Other (Specify) _____

Q10. FREQUENCY OF DRIVING WITH SECURITY SCREEN

How often in the last 12 months have you driven a taxi with a driver security screen?

- 1 All of the time
- 2 Not always but more than half of the time
- 3 Less than half of the time
- 4 Hardly ever
- 5 Never
- 9 (Don't know)

Q11. AGREE WITH MANDATORY SECURITY SCREENS

How strongly do you agree or disagree that driver security screens should be mandatory?

READ OUT IF NEEDED

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Neither agree or disagree
- 4 Disagree
- 5 Strongly disagree
- 9 Don't know

Q12. ACCEPTABILITY OF BETTER SECURITY SCREENS

If driver security screens were a better design, how keen would you be to use them?

- 1 Very keen
- 2 A little keen
- 3 Not at all keen
- 9 (Don't know)

Q13. EXTENT OF FARE EVASION PROBLEM

In general, do you believe that fare evasion is ... READ OUT

- 1 A major problem
- 2 A minor problem or
- 3 Not a problem

Q14. NUMBER OF FARE EVASIONS IN LAST YEAR

How many cases of fare evasion did you have in the last 12 months?

- 1 (Specify number)
- 2 None
- 3 Don't know

Q15. NUMBER OF ROBBERIES IN LAST YEAR

In the last 12 months has anyone stolen or tried to steal anything from you while driving a taxi?

- 1 Yes – how many times?
- 2 No

Q16. NUMBER OF ASSAULTS IN LAST YEAR

In the last 12 months have you been physically assaulted while driving a taxi?

- 1 Yes – how many times?
- 2 No

Q17. REPORTING OF FARE EVASION

IF EXPERIENCED FARE EVASION ASK (1 IN Q14): Did you report any incidents of fare evasion to the Police in the last 12 months?

- 1 Yes, all incidents
- 2 Some incidents
- 3 None reported – **SKIP TO Q20**

Q18. LOSS OF TIME/ MONEY FROM REPORTING FARE EVASION

IF YES OR SOME ASK: In order to report fare evasion to Police did you lose any time/money from your shift?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

Q19. SATISFACTION WITH POLICE – FARE EVASION

How satisfied were you with the Police response to your reporting of the most recent fare evasion incident?

- 1 Very satisfied
- 2 Satisfied
- 3 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- 4 Dissatisfied
- 5 Very dissatisfied

Q20. REPORTING OF ROBBERY

IF EXPERIENCED ROBBERY ASK (1 IN q15): Did you report any incidents of robbery to the Police in the last 12 months?

- 1 Yes, all incidents
- 2 Some incidents
- 3 None reported – **SKIP TO 23**

Q21. LOSS OF TIME/ MONEY FROM REPORTING ROBBERY

IF YES OR SOME ASK: In order to report robbery to Police did you lose any time/money from your shift?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

Q22. SATISFACTION WITH POLICE – ROBBERY

How satisfied were you with the Police response to your reporting the most recent robbery incident?

- 1 Very satisfied
- 2 Satisfied
- 3 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- 4 Dissatisfied
- 5 Very dissatisfied

Q23. REPORTING OF ASSAULT

IF EXPERIENCED ASSAULT ASK (1 IN Q16): Did you report any incidents of assault to the Police in the last 12 months?

- 1 Yes, all incidents
- 2 Some incidents
- 3 None reported – **SKIP TO 26**

Q24. LOSS OF TIME/ MONEY FROM REPORTING ASSAULT

IF YES OR SOME ASK: In order to report assault to the Police did you lose any time/money from your shift?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

Q25. SATISFACTION WITH POLICE – ASSAULT

How satisfied were you with the Police response to your reporting of the most recent assault incident?

- 1 Very satisfied
- 2 Satisfied
- 3 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- 4 Dissatisfied
- 5 Very dissatisfied

Q26. WILLING TO REPORT FARE EVADERS IF EASIER

The Ministry would like to encourage drivers to report fare evaders by making the reporting process easier and less time consuming through the Police Assistance Line. If reporting of fare evasion incidents to NSW Police was easier, how much more willing would you be to report an incident of fare evasion?

- 1 Much more willing
- 2 Somewhat more willing
- 3 The same
- 9 Don't know

Q27. SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE REPORTING TO POLICE

What suggestions do you have to improve reporting of incidents to Police?

- 1 Specify
- 9 Don't know

Q28. FREQUENCY OF USING SECURE TAXI RANKS

How frequently do you pick up fares at secure taxi ranks? IF NEEDED EXPLAIN: "Secure taxi ranks are patrolled by trained security staff late at night at locations busy with patrons from popular entertainment precincts."

- 1 Frequently
- 2 Sometimes
- 3 Not very often
- 4 Never – **SKIP TO Q30**
- 9 Don't know – **SKIP TO Q30**

Q29. AGREE SECURE TAXI RANKS IMPROVE CONDITIONS

IF HAVE PICKED UP AT SECURE TAXI RANKS: How strongly do you agree or disagree that the introduction of secure taxi ranks improves conditions for taxi drivers at those locations?

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Neither agree or disagree
- 4 Disagree
- 5 Strongly disagree
- 9 Don't know

Q30. AGREE WITH INCREASING NUMBER OF SECURE TAXI RANKS

How strongly do you agree or disagree that the number of secure taxi ranks at key locations should be increased? READ OUT IF NEEDED

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Neither agree or disagree
- 4 Disagree
- 5 Strongly disagree
- 9 Don't know

Q31. FREQUENCY OF USING TAXI VOUCHER SCHEME

How frequently do you pick up fares from clubs or pubs using taxi voucher schemes? IF NEEDED EXPLAIN: "Under taxi voucher schemes, a patron seeking a taxi must produce photo id, the venue records the patron's details and books a taxi"

- 1 Frequently
- 2 Sometimes
- 3 Not very often
- 4 Never
- 9 Don't know

Q32. AGREE WITH MORE TAXI VOUCHER SCHEMES

How strongly do you agree or disagree that taxi voucher schemes should be more widely used? READ OUT IF NEEDED

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Neither agree or disagree
- 4 Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- 9 Don't know

READ OUT - The Taxi Industry Safety and Security Task Force is currently considering a number of measures to improve taxi driver safety. I'm going to tell you about some of them and then ask if you how strongly agree or disagree that each initiative should be introduced to improve driver safety.

Q33. AGREE WITH POLICE STOP SCHEMES

A recent initiative in parts of the USA allows police in vehicles or stationary traffic operations, such as random breath testing stations, to randomly stop taxi vehicles to check the safety of passenger and driver. Under this scheme, taxi operators register their vehicle and have their drivers sign consent forms. Eligible cabs would display a visible decal both inside and outside the cab indicating a taxi can be stopped without establishing need or probable cause. Police are then able to check on the safety of the driver at any time. How strongly do you agree or disagree that a similar initiative should be introduced in NSW?

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Neither agree or disagree
- 4 Disagree
- 5 Strongly disagree
- 9 Don't know

Q34. AGREE WITH TWO M13 ALARM SWITCHES

There is currently no standard placement for M13 alarm switches in taxis, some are on the dashboard and some are on the floor. How strongly do you agree or disagree that there should be mandatory fitting of emergency switches on both the dash and floor for all NSW taxis?

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Neither agree or disagree
- 4 Disagree
- 5 Strongly disagree
- 9 Don't know

Q35. AGREE WITH POLICE MEETINGS

The Taskforce is considering establishing regular meetings between Police Local Area Commanders and representative taxi drivers with the aim of sharing concerns and strategies for improved safety. How strongly do you agree or disagree that such meetings should be introduced?

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Neither agree or disagree
- 4 Disagree
- 5 Strongly disagree
- 9 Don't know

Q36. AGREE WITH IMPROVED TRAINING

Many taxi drivers interviewed by the Taskforce said that good communication skills are critical, as is the ability to defuse a minor disagreement before it becomes an argument. How strongly do you agree or disagree that the current taxi driver educational courses should include more information on safety, customer service and communication skills and students should be required to demonstrate good communication and customer service skills?

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Neither agree or disagree
- 4 Disagree
- 5 Strongly disagree
- 9 Don't know

Q37. AGREE WITH PRE-PAY LAWS

Victoria and Queensland currently have laws permitting taxi drivers to require passengers to demonstrate an ability to pay or require part-payment of the fare prior to hiring. How strongly do you agree or disagree that similar laws should be introduced in NSW?

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Neither agree or disagree
- 4 Disagree
- 5 Strongly disagree
- 9 Don't know

Q38. AGREE WITH PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

How strongly do you agree or disagree that there should be an education campaign to raise awareness that fare evasion is a criminal offence and offenders can be prosecuted?

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Neither agree or disagree
- 4 Disagree
- 5 Strongly disagree
- 9 Don't know

Q39. AGREE WITH IMPROVED TECHNOLOGY

The Taskforce has looked at the advancements in camera technology including improvement in the quality of images and memory capacity. How strongly do you agree or disagree that standards for taxi security camera technology should be regularly reviewed and updated?

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Neither agree or disagree
- 4 Disagree
- 5 Strongly disagree
- 9 Don't know

Q40. AGREE WITH CAMERA SCREENS

It is now possible to have the image that the taxi camera is taking projected on a screen so passengers can see what is being recorded. How strongly do you agree or disagree that such screens should be introduced?

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Neither agree or disagree
- 4 Disagree
- 5 Strongly disagree
- 9 Don't know

DEMOGRAPHICS

D1 COUNTRY OF BIRTH

And the last few questions are about yourself. Which country were you born in?

- 1 Australia
- 2 Overseas (Specify) _____

D2 LANGUAGE

What language do you prefer to speak at home?

- 1 English
- 2 Arabic
- 3 Bengali
- 4 Cantonese
- 5 Chinese
- 6 Hindi
- 7 Mandarin
- 8 Persian
- 9 Punjabi
- 10 Turkish
- 11 Urdu
- 12 Other (specify)

D3 AGE

Which of the following age groups are you in? READ OUT

- 1 18-24
- 2 25-44
- 3 45-64
- 4 65 and over
- 9 (Refused)

D4 EDUCATION

What is the highest level of education you have achieved?

- 1 Primary school
- 2 Secondary school
- 3 Vocational/Trade diploma/apprenticeship
- 4 Undergraduate diploma/associate diploma
- 5 University degree
- 6 Post-graduate degree/diploma
- 9 (Refused / Don't Know)

D5 GENDER

- 1 Male
- 2 Female

Q41. OTHER COMMENTS

Finally, are there any other comments you would like to make about safety in the taxi industry and how it might be improved?

- 1 Specify
- 9 Don't know

Thank you for taking part in this study. If you wish to check that my company is listed with the Market Research Society, you can call the Market Research Society Line on _ 1300 364 830 _.

My company name is _ Taverner Research _.

Thank you for your time, we really appreciate your participation in the survey"