

# A Study of Distracted Driving in New Jersey 2016

Eating while driving; making handheld cellphone calls while driving; personal grooming while driving. The term distracted driving covers a broad range of behaviors. But there is one that stands out in this crowded field: texting while driving.

The New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety specifically calls out texting while driving on its [distracted driving web page](#):

***“... because text messaging requires visual, manual, and cognitive attention from the driver, it is by far the most alarming distraction.”***

The 2016 Plymouth Rock Assurance study of New Jersey distracted driving shows texting while driving is clearly a concerning issue for New Jersey drivers. Nearly three out of four poll respondents (72%) are at least very concerned if they are riding with a driver who is using a mobile device. And, for the second consecutive year, drivers who participated in the Plymouth Rock study rated texting while driving as their top safety concern for New Jersey roads.

There is good reason for drivers to be concerned about all forms of distracted driving, including texting while driving. New Jersey’s Office of the Attorney General [has found](#) that driver inattention has been a major contributing factor in 1.4 million crashes from 2004 to 2013, which is about half of all crashes in the state in that time period.

## **Methodology**

*This poll, conducted between March 9 and 11, 2016, was commissioned by Plymouth Rock in partnership with online survey provider Cvent. It consisted of 1,000 consumers with valid New Jersey drivers’ licenses. The poll sample was provided by eRewards, a service of Research Now Group Inc. Cvent and Research Now are independent research consultants and/or survey providers.*

## Distracted Driving Behaviors

Behaviors not typically associated with distracted driving are the most common among drivers polled. Tuning the radio (80%); reaching for items in the car (78%); and reading driving directions (49%) are the most frequently mentioned behaviors. While uses of mobile devices are comparatively mentioned less, some of those activities rank as top safety concerns. One in four polled (26%) say they send or read text messages; 30% speak on the phone without hands-free technology; and 31% say they have programmed a navigation system while driving.

Have you ever done any of the following while you were driving a car?	2016	2015	2014	2013
Tuned the radio	80%	82%	92%	82%
Reached for items in your car*	78%	77%	--	--
Read driving directions	49%	51%	55%	49%
Changed CDs or DVDs	42%	45%	47%	51%
Interacted with children in the car	38%	38%	32%	32%
Drove while drowsy**	32%	--	--	--
Programmed a navigation system	31%	28%	30%	27%
Made/received calls w/o using hands-free technology	30%	38%	38%	40%
Read/sent text messages	26%	33%	26%	28%
Smoked a cigarette*	21%	19%	--	--
Drove under the influence of alcohol	12%	11%	10%	
Personal grooming	11%	8%	12%	12%
None of these	7%	6%	1%	4%
Listened to music wearing headphones	6%	6%	3%	9%
Browsed the Internet	5%	6%	3%	5%
Took a "selfie" while driving*	4%	4%	--	--
Drove under the influence of narcotics*	3%	3%	--	--
Updated social media*	3%	4%	--	--
Made a video while driving*	2%	3%	--	--
Read a newspaper	1%	0%	1%	2%

\*Not asked in 2013 and 2014

\*\*New response in 2016

## Road Safety Concerns

Texting while driving outranks all other safety concerns for drivers polled, with more than 8 in 10 (81%) identifying it as the top safety issue for New Jersey roads. Other concerns, which have been the target of past safety campaigns, like driving while impaired by alcohol and/or narcotics, or road rage, ranked lower. Additionally, 49% said making or receiving phone calls without hands-free technology is another top concern.

In your opinion, what are the three biggest safety problems on New Jersey roads today?	2016	2015
Texting while driving	81%	82%
Drunk driving	52%	42%
Making/receiving calls w/o using hands-free technology	49%	50%
Road rage	32%	31%
Road conditions	23%	35%
Obeying traffic laws	23%	28%
Browsing the Internet	12%	9%
Drowsy driving*	8%	--
Personal grooming	7%	8%
Making/receiving calls using hands-free technology	6%	7%
Other	4%	4%
Playing loud music	2%	2%
Tuning the car radio/adjusting the stereo	1%	2%

\*Not asked in 2015

## Personal Safety as a Passenger

In keeping with the previous finding, nearly three in four (72%) New Jersey drivers polled said they would be at least “very concerned” for their safety if they were riding with a driver who was using a mobile device for any reason. It’s telling that nearly half (48%), cited they would be “extremely” concerned for their safety.

Which of the following best describe how you feel as a passenger in a moving vehicle whose driver is looking at a mobile device for any reason?	%
Extremely concerned for my safety	48%
Very concerned for my safety	24%
Moderately concerned for my safety	16%
Slightly concerned for my safety	4%
Not concerned for my safety at all	2%
Does not apply — I never had this experience	6%

## Witnessed Behaviors

While some poll respondents indicated they have read or sent text messages while driving a car, respondents seem to witness this behavior far more frequently. Two out of three drivers polled (65%) have witnessed in the past six months a driver texting without any passengers in the car. Drivers appear to text less frequently, or are at least seen less frequently, if there are passengers or children in the car.

Which of the following situations, if any, have you witnessed/experienced in the past six months?	2016
Witnessed another driver texting while alone/no passenger	65%
Another driver texting with at least one adult passenger	48%
Another driver texting with at least one child in a car	38%
Been a passenger in a car while the driver was texting	26%
A commercial driver texting while truck was moving	22%
Have not witnessed any of these situations	20%
A school bus driver texting while transporting children	5%
Other	3%

## Safety Behaviors

Virtually all drivers polled reported they practice some safe driving behaviors, such as wearing a seat belt (96%) and looking before backing out of a parking space (97%). Additionally, 7 in 10 drivers (69%) polled said they never drink alcohol before driving. However, one behavior did stick out: less than half of drivers polled (43%) said they always drive the speed limit.

How often would you say you do the following?	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Wear your seat belts	96%	2%	1%	1%
Check the 'blind spot' before driving	88%	10%	1%	1%
Look before you back out of a parking space	97%	2%	0%	1%
Signal before you make a turn	90%	10%	0%	0%
Signal before you change lanes	85%	13%	1%	0%
Drive the speed limit	43%	51%	5%	1%
Drive a safe distance from the car in front of you	72%	28%	1%	0%
Drink alcohol before driving	1%	5%	25%	69%
Make sure passengers are seat belted	75%	19%	4%	2%
Use your mobile phone while driving	2%	25%	31%	42%
Make hand gestures at other drivers	3%	23%	36%	39%

## Poll Demographics

Please identify your age group:	
Under 17	0%
17-25	5%
26-34	17%
35-44	16%
45-54	19%
55-64	22%
65 or older	21%

How often do you drive?	
Every day	80%
A few days per week	17%
A few days per month	2%
A few days per year	1%
Never	0%

What is your gender?	
Male	46%
Female	54%

Plymouth Rock Assurance is a marketing name used by a group of separate companies that write and manage property and casualty insurance in multiple states. Insurance in New Jersey is offered by Plymouth Rock Management Company of New Jersey on behalf of High Point Property and Casualty Insurance Company, Teachers Auto Insurance Company of New Jersey, Palisades Safety and Insurance Association and its affiliates. Each company is financially responsible for its own insurance products. Actual coverage is subject to the language of the policies as issued by each company. For more information about Plymouth Rock Assurance, visit <http://www.plymouthrock.com>.