

A STUDY OF NEW JERSEY DISTRACTED DRIVING

About this Study

Distracted driving poses a significant danger to other motorists and pedestrians, contributing to accidents, crashes and even deaths. New Jersey has sought to combat certain distracted driving behaviors with laws that ban texting while driving and making calls without a hands-free device, along with enforcement initiatives. Certain uses of mobile devices while driving are increasing, despite a high awareness of laws prohibiting many of those activities. The following are currently prohibited in New Jersey:

- Handheld cellphone use/talking for drivers of all ages
- All cellphone use (handheld and hands-free) for bus drivers
- All cellphone use (handheld and hands-free) for novice drivers
- Texting for drivers of all ages

Licensed drivers of all ages in New Jersey were surveyed to gauge awareness, observations and behavior inclusive of distracted driving associated with mobile technology, as well as other activities not commonly considered detrimental to road safety — like tuning the car radio, changing a CD, interacting with children, personal grooming, smoking, reading driving directions and programming navigation systems.

This poll, conducted between March 31 and April 2, in partnership with online survey provider [Cvent](#), consisted of 1,000 consumers with valid New Jersey drivers' licenses who operate a vehicle at least once per week. The 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 (Exhibit 1). Tuning the radio (82%); reaching for items in the car (77%); and reading driving directions (51%) are the most frequently mentioned behaviors. While uses of mobile devices are comparatively mentioned less, some of those activities are growing over time and rank as a top safety concern. One in three polled (33%) say they send or read text messages; 38% speak on the phone without hands-free technology; and 28% say they have programmed a navigation system while driving.

Exhibit 1

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

**Not asked in 2013 and 2014*

Safety Issues on New Jersey Roads

Texting while driving outranks all other safety concerns for polled drivers, with more than eight in 10 (82%) identifying it as an issue (Exhibit 2). Other concerns, which have been the target of past safety campaigns, like driving while impaired by alcohol and/or narcotics, or road rage, ranked significantly lower. Additionally, the second issue of concern is making or receiving phone calls without hands-free technology (50%), which has been a consistent issue over the three-year history of this poll.

Exhibit 2

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

Knowledge of New Jersey laws against texting while driving and speaking on a mobile device without hands-free technology while driving appears to coincide with their rankings as top safety concerns. Virtually all (92%) drivers polled know that texting while driving is illegal in New Jersey, while 84% know that speaking on a mobile device without hands-free technology while driving is banned (Exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3

Does New Jersey have laws that ban the following? - % Yes	2015	2014	2013
Texting while driving	92%	92%	87%
Speaking on a mobile device without a hands-free device	84%	87%	89%
Using an Internet browser on a mobile device while driving	65%	59%	61%

It is encouraging that drivers are choosing more responsible behavior to send their text messages while driving. Albeit small increases, more of the drivers who text park their cars in a safe place before sending a message or ask a passenger to send the message, compared with previous polls (Exhibit 4). Still, there is a need for improvement.

Exhibit 4

Which of the following describes how you typically send a text message while driving?	2015	2014	2013
Park your car in a safe location to send the message	56%	55%	28%
While stopped at a traffic sign/light	40%	41%	73%
Have a passenger send the message for you	39%	37%	34%
Use your device's voice command feature to send the message	11%	12%	23%
While in traffic*	9%	10%	--
Continue driving while you complete the message	7%	5%	29%

*Not asked in 2013

Situations Witnessed and Subsequent Actions

The study shows that every texting while driving situation listed has been witnessed by a greater number of respondents compared with the prior-year poll. The most common situation witnessed by respondents was another driver texting while at least one adult passenger was in the car (Exhibit 5).

Exhibit 5

Which of the following situations, if any, have you witnessed/experienced in the past six months?	2015	2014
Another driver texting with at least one adult passenger	60%	58%
Another driver texting with at least one child in a car	45%	41%
Been a passenger in a car while the driver was texting	28%	20%
Have not witnessed any of these situations	25%	31%
A commercial driver texting while truck was moving	24%	22%
A school bus driver texting while transporting children	6%	3%
Other	4%	5%

When it comes to taking action, nearly half of respondents said they attempted to alert the driver to stop texting when they are a passenger in the car (49%), a segment that has grown from the prior poll (Exhibit 6). Responses from the prior-year poll are shown in Exhibit 7.

Exhibit 6

Which actions, if any, did you take for each situation?	Contacted Police	Attempted to Alert Driver/Stop Texting	Nothing
Another driver texting with at least one adult passenger	1%	14%	86%
Another driver texting with at least one child in a passenger seat	2%	17%	81%
Been a passenger in a car while the driver was texting	2%	49%	51%
A commercial driver texting while truck was moving	4%	12%	84%
A school bus driver texting while transporting children	9%	18%	74%

Exhibit 7

Which actions, if any, did you take for each situation?	Contacted Police	Attempted to Alert Driver/Stop Texting	Nothing
Another driver texting with at least one adult passenger	0%	11%	89%
Another driver texting with at least one child in a passenger seat	1%	16%	84%
Been a passenger in a car while the driver was texting	0%	34%	68%
A commercial driver texting while truck was moving	3%	11%	87%
A school bus driver texting while transporting children	6%	7%	88%

While there has been an increase across all scenarios in the percentage of passengers who at least attempted to take action, there is clearly room for improvement. Drivers should also be mindful of their own actions and campaigns designed to encourage responsible use of mobile devices while driving should be considered. However, creativity with caution must be part of the strategy as enthusiasm to effect change could result in another form of distracted driving.

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