

A STUDY OF NEW JERSEY DISTRACTED DRIVING

About this Study

Like an increasing number of states, New Jersey has and continues to pass laws restricting behaviors that distract drivers from focusing on the road. With the rapid development of affordable mobile technology, the use of such devices has become commonplace while operating a vehicle. Of great concern on the roadways is making calls without the use of a hands-free device, texting, and web browsing. Currently, New Jersey law prohibits the following:

- Text messaging and use of video games while driving
- School bus operators using cell phones while driving
- Drivers under the age of 21 with learner's permits or probationary licenses from all cell phone use, texting devices, and other hand-held or hands-free wireless electronic devices while driving (including iPods)

More strident legislation has been passed and is currently awaiting Governor Chris Christie's signature.

Licensed drivers of all ages in New Jersey were surveyed to determine awareness, sensitivity, behavior, and attitudes inclusive of distracted driving associated with mobile technology, as well as other activities not commonly considered as detrimental to road safety. Behaviors such as tuning the car radio, changing a CD, conversing with other passengers, interacting with children, personal grooming, eating and drinking, reading driving directions, and programming a GPS were studied.

This poll, conducted in partnership with online survey provider [Cvent](#), consisted of 1,097 consumers who have valid New Jersey driver licenses and operate a vehicle at least once per week.

Distracted Driving Behaviors

Not surprisingly, behaviors not typically associated with distracted driving were also the most common among drivers (Exhibit 1). Talking with other passengers (86%), tuning the radio (82%), eating and drinking (72%), and reaching for items on the front seat (69%) are the most frequently mentioned behaviors. While the use of mobile technologies are comparatively mentioned less,, accident risk does increase. Nearly three in ten people (28%) say they send or read text messages while driving, 40% speak on the phone without a hands-free device, nearly one-third (32%) interact with children in the backseat, and 27% said they have programmed a GPS while driving.

Exhibit 1

Have you ever done any of the following while you were driving a car?	%
Read driving directions	49%
Reached for items on the front passenger seat	69%
Listened to music wearing headphones	9%
Tuned the radio (changed stations, raised the volume)	82%
Made/received calls without using hands-free technology	40%
Changed CDs or DVDs	51%
Read a newspaper	2%
Ate or drank	72%
Reached for items on the back passenger seat	25%
Browsed the Internet	5%
Talked with passengers	86%
Personal grooming (apply makeup, comb or brush your hair, shaved)	12%
Programmed a navigation system	27%
Interacted with children in the back seat	32%
Drove under the influence of alcohol	9%
Read/send text messages	28%
None of these	5%

Texting While Driving

Younger drivers (17-44) appear to text more than three times as much as older drivers (45+), make calls without a hands-free device, and program GPS units more frequently (Exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2

Have you ever done any of the following while you were driving a car?	Total	Younger (17-44)	Older (45+)
Made/received calls without using hands-free technology	40%	47%	33%
Programmed a navigation system	27%	39%	15%
Read/send text messages	28%	40%	16%

More tellingly, younger drivers say their behavior is recent, as evidenced by more frequent mobile device use over the past six months (Exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3

How often in the past six months have you done any of the following while driving?	Total	Younger (17-44)	Older (45+)
Made/received calls without using hands-free technology	15%	24%	11%
Programmed a navigation system	9%	11%	6%
Read/sent text messages	20%	24%	9%

The rationale for texting while driving appears to be largely personal reasons. Almost six in ten people (59%) cited personal reasons for texting, and more than one-third (34%) say they text for any reason—both personal and work. Older drivers are more likely (11%) than younger drivers (4%) to text for work-only reasons.

Drivers indicate a variety of behaviors to read or send a text. Most frequently (73%), drivers say they send or read texts while their cars are idling at a traffic light or signal. Twice as many younger drivers (34%) as older drivers (17%) say they have sent or read texts while driving. Older drivers are more likely to park in a safe location before sending a text message (Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4

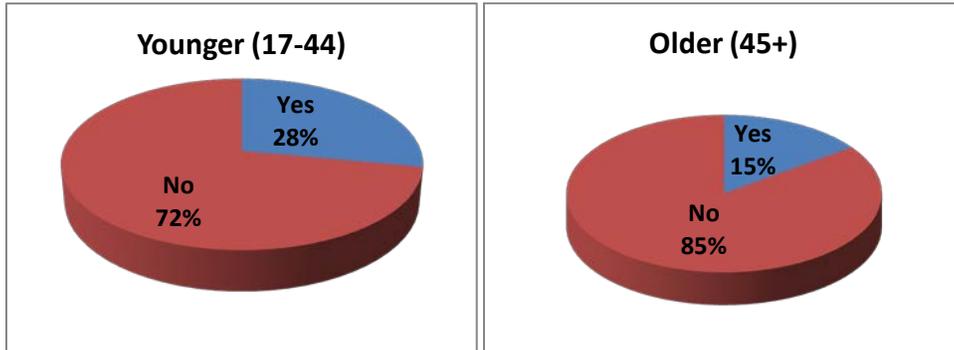
Which of the following describes how you typically send a text message while driving?	Total	Younger (17-44)	Older (45+)
Continue driving while you complete the message	29%	34%	17%
Park your car in a safe location to send the message	27%	23%	38%
Have a passenger send the message for you	34%	35%	32%
Use your device's voice command feature to send the message	23%	25%	19%
While stopped at a traffic sign/light	73%	74%	69%

Texting with Passengers

More than three in four drivers (76%) will not text when children are in the vehicle. Still, younger drivers are about twice as likely as older drivers to text with children in their cars (Exhibit 5).

Exhibit 5

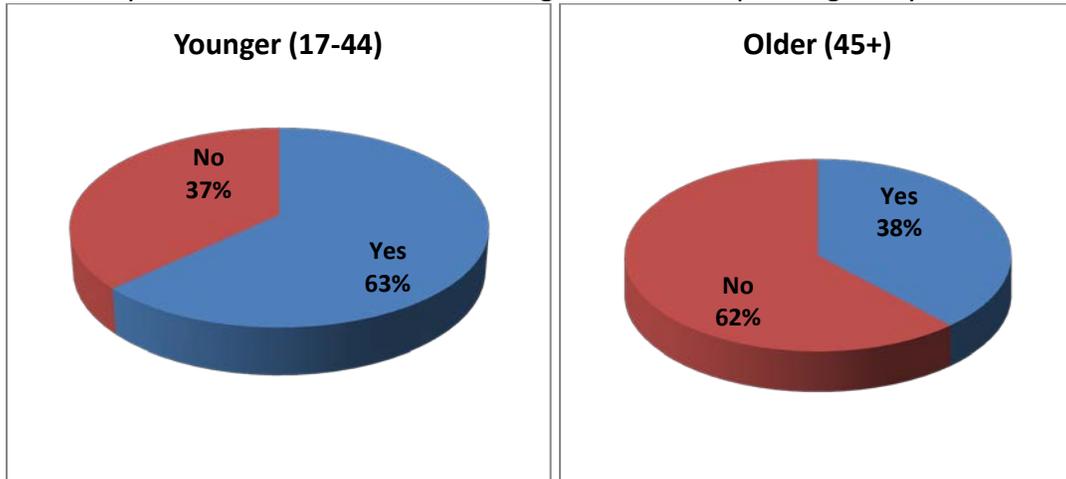
Have you ever sent a text while driving with children in your car?



New Jersey drivers are far less reluctant to text and drive with passengers other than children. More than half (56%) of the total sample say they have texted while riding with passengers in their cars. Younger drivers appear to be more risk averse, as six in ten (63%) will text with passengers riding with them. By comparison, the inverse is true with older drivers—62% say they have never texted with passengers in their cars (Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6

Have you ever sent a text while driving with another passenger in your car?



New Jersey Laws

Nine in 10 drivers presume that New Jersey restricts texting while driving. Further, nearly eight in 10 say they will at least park in a safe location before using mobile technology (Exhibit 7).

Exhibit 7

How will the information you reviewed [NJ law] influence the use of your mobile technology while driving?	Total	Younger (17-44)	Older (45+)
I will stop using my mobile device while driving.	26%	31%	22%
I will use my mobile device only when my car is parked at a safe location.	53%	44%	61%
I will use my mobile device only when my car is stopped at a traffic light or traffic sign.	14%	18%	10%
No change—I will continue to use my mobile device while driving.	7%	7%	7%

It is interesting to note that nearly one-third (31%) of younger drivers, upon presumption of legal restrictions, will stop using their mobile devices while driving. This presents an opportunity to effect a change for safety in the future.

Witnessing Accidents Caused by Mobile Technology Use

Nine in 10 participants say they have observed other drivers using mobile devices. Two in 10 know someone personally who has been in an accident involving the use of mobile devices (Exhibit 8). While this study suggests a seemingly low incident of personal accident experience, there is an underlying sense that New Jersey drivers could be a catalyst for change.

Exhibit 8

Has any of the following happened to you while you were in a car?	Total	Younger (17-44)	Older (45+)
I have witnessed other drivers using a mobile device while their vehicles were in motion.	88%	84%	92%
I have been involved in a near accident while using a mobile device as a driver.	8%	10%	5%
I have been involved in an accident while using a mobile device as a driver.	2%	3%	0%
I have been involved in a near accident while the driver was using a mobile device as a passenger.	7%	12%	3%
I have been involved in an accident while the driver was using a mobile device as a passenger.	2%	4%	0%
I personally know someone who was in an accident involving the use of a mobile device.	20%	23%	18%
None of these situations has happened to me.	9%	11%	8%

How Can Driving Behavior Change?

From the passenger perspective, participants tend to feel less confident and secure while the driver is using a mobile device. Most say they have been vocal in asking the driver to “put it down.” Further, a considerable number of New Jersey drivers have attempted to signal drivers of other cars to stop using their devices, presumably to pay attention to the road (Exhibits 9 & 10).

Exhibit 9

As a passenger, have you ever asked the driver to stop texting while the car was in motion?

Choice	Total	Younger (17-44)	Older (45+)
Yes	47%	56%	38%
No	53%	44%	62%

Exhibit 10

Have you ever attempted to alert the driver of another car to stop texting?

Choice	Total	Younger (17-44)	Older (45+)
Yes	32%	39%	26%
No	68%	61%	74%

Nearly four in 10 younger drivers say they have made efforts to alert other drivers to stop using a mobile device, which is more than the total sample and older drivers. There is an underlying awareness of danger, particularly among younger drivers. Campaigns designed to encourage younger, tech-savvy drivers to be change agents can and 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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