

DISTRACTED DRIVING

A Growing Problem

Types of distracted driving

There are many types of distracted driving. These types include: texting, using a cell phone, eating, drinking, talking to other passengers, grooming, reading, using a navigation device, watching videos, adjusting radio, CD player and or MP3 player.

Facts about Distracted Driving

- In 2011, 3,331 people were killed involving a distracted driver.
- An additional 387,000 people were injured involving a distracted driver.
- Distracted driving makes you four times more likely to be in a car crash
- Over four hundred thousand people were ticketed for distracted driving in California in 2012 alone.



Our daily lives are constantly getting busier and we find less and less time to fit what we need to do into the day. Some people try and remedy this by doing some of these tasks while driving. This is a very dangerous mistake that has come to be a big problem for our society today. Although most people agree that it is a problem, not everyone agrees on what we should do about it.

On September 30, 2009, President Obama issued an executive order prohibiting federal employees from texting while driving on government business or with government equipment. On October 27, 2010, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration enacted a ban that prohibits commercial vehicle drivers from texting while driving. In the year 2011, 3,331 people were killed in crashes involving a distracted driver, up from 3,267 in the year 2010. Each day in the United States, more than 9 people are killed and more than 1,060 people are injured in crashes that are reported to involve a distracted driver.

Although laws prohibiting distracted driving may, at times, be hard to enforce, they are in place because of the best of intentions. Many states are enacting laws prohibiting distracted driving. Such laws place bans on texting while driving, as well as using graduated driver licensing systems for teen drivers. All of this is being done in an effort to help raise awareness about the dangers of distracted driving and to keep it from occurring.



Laws Against Distracted Driving

Many states are beginning to pass laws that limit distracted driving. The purpose of these laws is to get driver's eyes and minds off of their cell phones and radios and onto the road. Kentucky recently passed a new set of distracted driving laws that states

- Anyone under the age of eighteen is prohibited from using a mobile device at any time, this includes hands free devices
- Anyone over the age of eighteen may use hands free devices to operate mobile devices while driving.

Although these laws limit young drivers, they continue to allow older drivers to drive distracted. The effectiveness of these laws will undoubtedly be a source of debate for many years to come.

Although everyone generally agrees that distracted driving is bad, some people are opposed to laws that place restrictions on activities while driving. One group of people that oppose these laws is libertarians. Libertarians claim that distracted driving laws are not specific enough. They think that if you ban distracted driving, it will encompass too much. According to some groups of Libertarians if the law is not more specific police could pull people over for just about anything that distracts you from driving such as changing a cd or taking a drink of water. This could be very dangerous when trying to determine the cause of an accident. If someone was to have an accident the police could look through their car to look for anything that could have distracted them at the time of the accident. If they found anything they could blame them for the cause of the accident whether or not they were actually distracted.

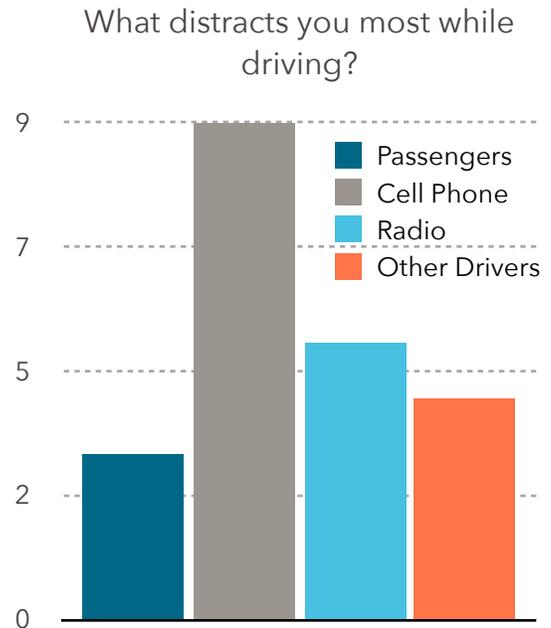
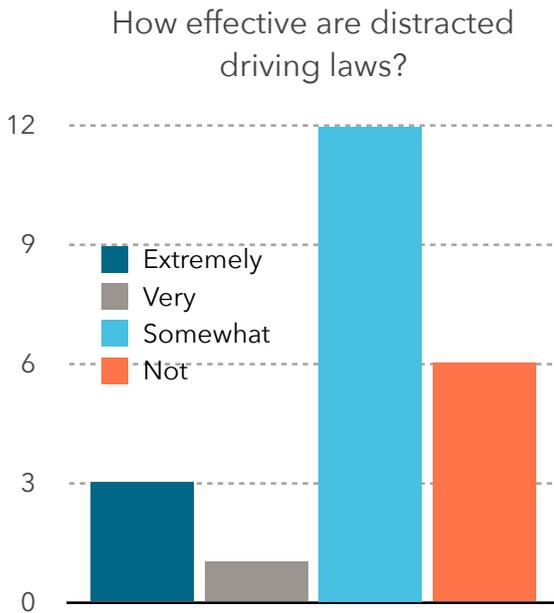
Libertarians also claim that distracted driving is not the root of bad driving, that it is people who do not make good decisions while driving. There are many instruments, gauges and distractions such as CD players and GPS systems that manufacturers expect drivers to be able to do multiple tasks at a time. They claim that modern driver should be able to function and do more than one action at a time. They insist that rather than ban distracted driving, they train drivers to be able to multi task while driving.

Even if some might not want laws against it, almost everyone agrees that distracted driving is bad. It has caused an immeasurable amount of physical, emotional and tangible damage and loss. There is no one perfect way to prevent distracted driving but through awareness and education, we can help prevent it from affecting more people in the future.

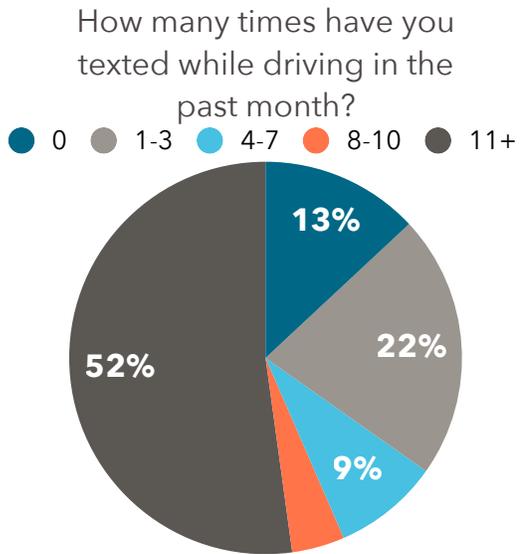


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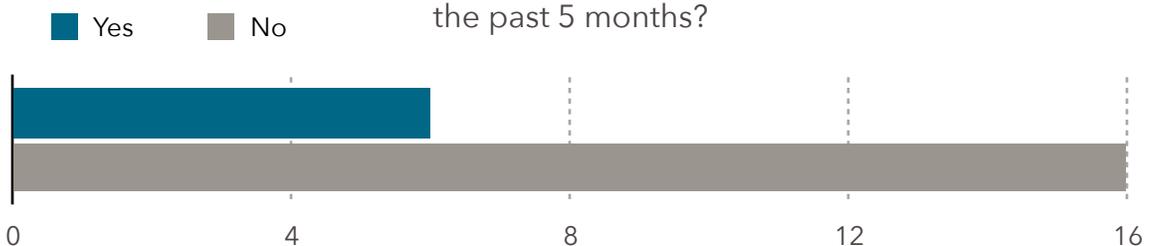
A survey on distracted driving



We recently took a survey of twenty-two Kentucky drivers. Although only nine participants are distracted most by their cell phone, 52% have texted while driving eleven or more times in the past month. Only 13% had not texted behind the wheel at all in the past month. Six people who took the survey had been involved in a crash where distracted driving was to blame some time in the past five months.



Have you been involved in a wreck where distracted driving was to blame in the past 5 months?



DUMB DECISIONS

Don't text and drive

We hear more and more about it every day. We hear about how it is one of the most dangerous and deadly mistakes you can make while driving, about how people that do it are not smart. We also hear about all the laws that are passed against it. In 2012 alone, four hundred thousand people received tickets in California for this offense. No, this offense is not drunk driving, it is not speeding, it is distracted driving.

Distracted driving, across the US, is a huge problem. Although some would like to believe otherwise; distracted driving is a truly dangerous thing. Any type of visual distraction can increase your risk of being in an accident up to three times. This is a huge jump statistically. The average American driver will be involved in a crash severe enough to report about once every eighteen years. If every American drove distracted, the frequency would undoubtedly be greater. The average American wouldn't report one just every 18 years but more like every six years, or worse, even more frequently than that.

Despite laws banning distracted driving and cold hard statistics about the matter that provide the basis on which these laws are made, distracted driving has only increased over time. Since 2010, around six-hundred sixty thousand Americans have texted or used a mobile device while driving at any given moment. A recent survey showed that, of the participants surveyed, over 90% of participants had texted while driving at least once in the past year.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, in 2008 alone, nearly 11% of American drivers, approximately one million individuals, drove and used a mobile device at some time. Because of these rising statistics, laws banning distracted driving are often disputed. Many question their ability to actually control and deter the issue. This rise continuous rise in statistics, though could be blamed on the rising number of new drivers that are on the roads each day in the US. The statistics alone are enough to form a basis for the creation of laws prohibiting the use of cellphones while driving as well as banning the act of driving while distracted.

Although these laws are disputed states have made the push to bring an end to this deadly habit. 39 states and the District of Columbia have already passed laws related to the banning of distracted driving. Additionally, 37 states, as well as the District of Columbia, have banned text messaging for all drivers and 10 states, and the District of Columbia, have gone as far as prohibiting all drivers from using any handheld cell phones while driving. In 2010 alone, 12 of these distracted driving state laws were enacted, thus, illustrating the growing awareness of the dangers of distracted driving.

Although many states are showing their support by creating these laws, there are still some that allow this deadly habit to continue. As an upstanding American citizen you can contact your local representative strongly urging them to take a bill prohibiting distracted driving. If your state already has these laws in place, you can do your part by reporting those driving while distracted to your local police department. If we can cooperate as a nation, we can work to bring an end to distracted driving. Remember, distracted driving is reckless driving, don't be another statistic.

