

Young drivers



MOBILE PHONES

Q1: Within the past 12 months, have you driven while sending or reading a text message?

Four in ten young drivers (44%) drive while texting, despite the enormous risk to themselves and other road users. This is a far higher proportion than among older drivers, and many young drivers are distracting themselves in this way weekly or more.

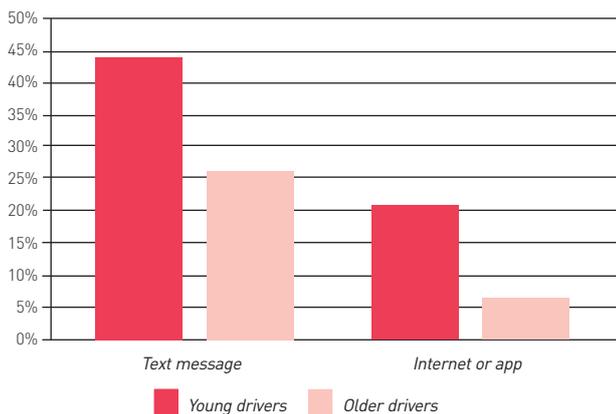
- 44% of drivers age 17-24 have driven while sending or reading a text message, compared to 26% of older drivers
- 12% of young drivers do this weekly or more, compared to 8% of older drivers
- 56% of younger drivers have not driven while sending or reading a text, compared to 73% of older drivers

Q2: Within the past 12 months, have you driven while using the internet or an app on your phone, for example emailing or checking updates on a social networking site (excluding using it as a sat-nav)?

Young drivers are three times as likely to use the internet or an app when driving as an older driver. More than two-thirds of young drivers who go online at the wheel do it every week or more.

- 21% of young drivers have driven while using the internet or an app on their phone, compared to 7% of older drivers
- 8% of young drivers do this weekly or more, compared to 3% of older drivers
- 79% of young drivers do not go online or use apps at the wheel, compared to 91% of older drivers

Figure 1: Drivers who text, go online or use apps at the wheel



THE FACTS: TEXTING AND SMARTPHONES

Texting and using a phone for emailing or going online distracts from driving cognitively, physically and visually. In the United States, death from distracted driving has been increasing and researchers put this down to increases in drivers using smart technology¹. In the UK more than a quarter of adults and nearly half of teenagers own a smartphone and the volume of mobile data transferred over the UK's mobile networks has increased forty-fold between 2007 and 2010².

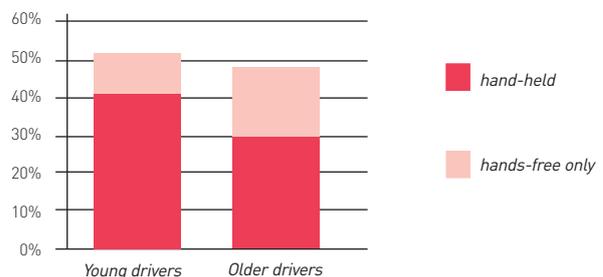
Research into the impact of sending or receiving text messages in young drivers found the amount of time drivers spent with their eyes off the road increased by up to 400%. Drivers made 28% more lane excursions and 140% more incorrect lane changes³. Research using a driver simulator to explore risks drivers face when using phones for emailing found a heightened crash risk⁴. In a large-scale study of commercial drivers, which monitored the impact of them texting at the wheel, their crash risk increased to 23 times that of a driver paying full attention⁵.

Q3: Within the past 12 months, have you driven while talking on a hand-held or hands-free mobile phone?

Just over half of young drivers talk on their phone at the wheel – about the same as among older drivers – but younger drivers are more likely to break the law by using a hand-held phone.

- 52% of young drivers have driven while talking on a mobile phone, compared to 48% of older drivers
- 41% of young drivers have driven while talking on a hand-held phone, compared to 30% of older drivers
- 11% of young drivers have driven while talking on a phone, but only when using a hands-free kit, compared to 18% of older drivers

Figure 2: Drivers who use a mobile phone



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THE FACTS: TALKING ON A MOBILE PHONE

Some drivers are still unaware that talking on a phone is distracting from driving even on a hands-free kit, believing it is the holding of the phone that poses the danger. Research indicates it is the call itself that is the main distraction. Tests have found drivers on hands-free mobile phones take 20% longer to brake when needed. Whether or not the driver is using a hands-free kit, talking on a mobile phone has been found to increase the risk of crashing four-fold⁶. Their crash risk remains higher than normal for up to 10 minutes after the call has ended⁷. In tests, it has been found that driving is impaired more during a phone conversation than by having a blood alcohol level at the current UK limit (80mg/100ml blood)⁸.

ADVICE: PUT YOUR PHONE AWAY

Communications technology is developing at a startling rate and many of us are used to being connected 24/7 via social networking through mobile networks. Increasingly, mobiles act as phone, sat-nav, music player and social media provider all wrapped up in one.

But however much you love your phone, when you are driving you need to put it away. Texting, tweeting, emailing, taking or making a call, inputting details into a GPS application, tapping the screen, repeatedly glancing at or watching the screen: all are major distractions that put your life and the lives of others at risk. Driving is the most dangerous and complex activity most of us do on a daily basis and it requires your full concentration. Your phone can wait.

IN THE PAST FOUR YEARS...

Fewer young drivers are breaking the law by talking on a hand-held mobile phone at the wheel. In 2007 50% of young drivers admitted doing this compared to 41% in 2011.

End notes

1. *Trends in Fatalities From Distracted Driving in the United States, 1999 to 2008*, University of North Texas, 2010
2. *The Communications Market 2011*, Ofcom, 2011
3. *The effects of text messaging on young novice driver performance*, Monash University Accident Research Centre, 2006
4. *Speech-based E-mail and driver behaviour: effects of an in-vehicle message system interface*, The University of Leeds, 2004
5. *Driver Distraction in Commercial Motor Vehicle Operations*, the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, presented at the International Conference on Driver Distraction and Inattention in Gothenburg, 2009
6. *Association between cellular-telephone calls and motor vehicle collisions*, Massachusetts Medical Society, 1997
7. *Association between cellular-telephone calls and motor vehicle collisions*, Massachusetts Medical Society, 1997
8. *How dangerous is driving with a mobile phone? Benchmarking the impairment to alcohol*, Transport Research Laboratory, 2002

