



Safety Priority Statement Distracted Driving

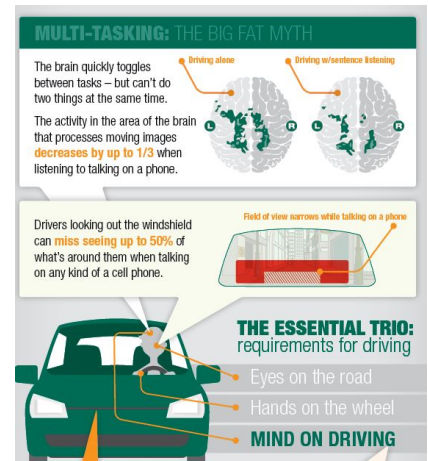
Proposed Position: Legislative action, enforcement, and education on distracted driving should be increased.

Potential Crashes Avoided: 36%, or about 2.3 million police-reported crashes annually.¹

Current Situation: In the U.S., distracted driving took at least 3,450 lives in 2016 alone², and many acknowledge this is underreported. At the time of fatal crashes, teens were the largest age group reported as distracted.³ The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety found in an annual Traffic Safety Culture Index survey that nearly half of respondents reported talking on a hand-held phone in the past 30 days and 45% and almost 35% said they had read or sent a text message or email, respectively.⁴ As a result of these startling figures, 47 States and Washington, D.C. have banned text messaging for all drivers, of which 43 allow for primary enforcement and 16 states have hand-held cell phone use bans.⁵

Opportunity: Research at the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI) has estimated that potentially 36% of crashes occurring in the U.S. annually could be avoided if no distraction was present to the driver. Numerous studies have shown that crashes and resulting injuries would be reduced if drivers did not use mobile phones while operating their vehicle. Texting bans enacted in 47 states and hand-held bans in 16 states are a good start towards combatting distracted driving. However, more can be done to enact additional legislation and promote education and enforcement to reduce distracted driving.

Background: Safe driving requires 100% of a driver's attention at all times. Distracted driving has become all too common today. While distracted driving is a broad term covering any activity that detracts from driver attention, mobile phone use has quickly become the most pressing distraction to address. Texting while driving is an increasing concern because it encompasses all 3 types of driver distraction – cognitive, manual, and visual. The AAA Foundation report found roughly 97% of drivers view texting or emailing while driving as a serious safety threat. Despite this, 45% of drivers report having read a text or e-mail while driving in the past



¹ Dingus, T. A., Guo, F., Lee, S., Antin, J. F., Perez, M., Buchanan-King, M., & Hankey, J. (2016, March 08). Driver crash risk factors and prevalence evaluation using naturalistic driving data.

² NHTSA: 2016 Fatal Traffic Crash Data

³ NHTSA: Distracted Driving

⁴ AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety: 2017 Traffic Safety Culture Index

⁵ GHSA: Distracted Driving

30 days and nearly 35% typed one. These figures highlight that there is a need for much more to be done to curtail the rates of distracted driving, especially mobile phone use.

Supporters of Road to Zero Coalition Priority Statement on Distracted Driving

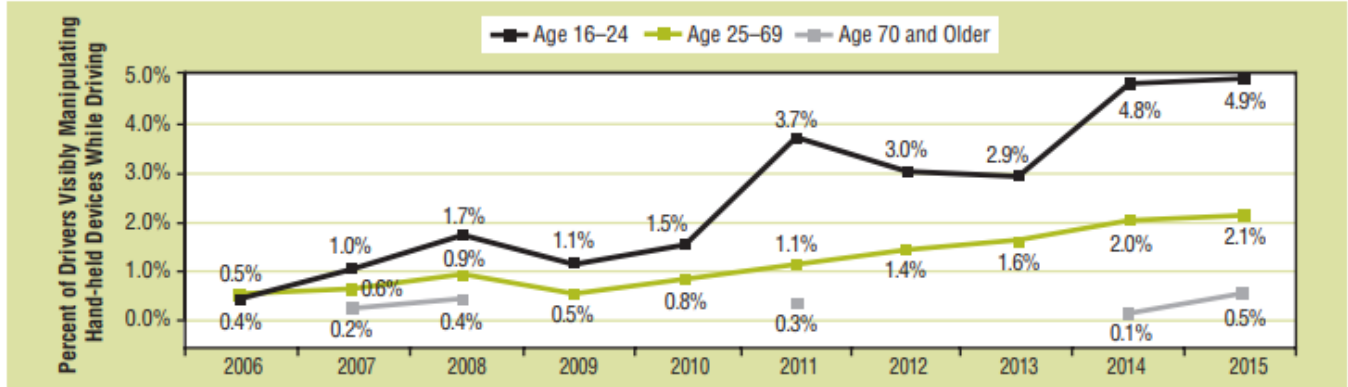
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Federal Sources of Data with Links

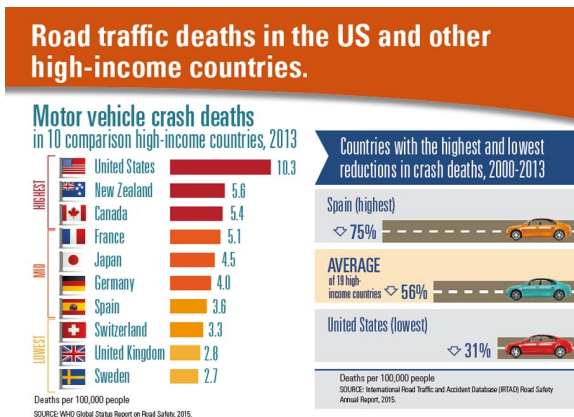
- [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Electronic Device Use](#)

Drivers Visibly Manipulating Handheld Devices, by Age, 2006–2015

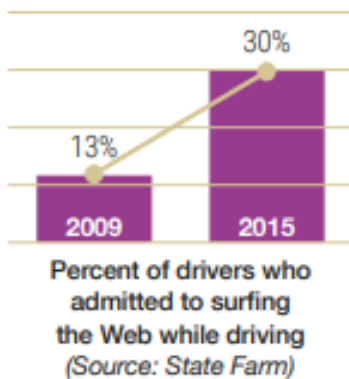


Note: Data not sufficient to produce reliable estimates in 2007, 2008, 2011, 2014, and 2015 for 70 and older.

- [Centers for Disease Control Motor Vehicle Crash Deaths - Vital Signs](#)



- [NTSB Most Wanted List of Transportation Safety Improvements](#)



The following strategies are being pursued by selected members of the Coalition:

Strategy #1: Advance Distracted Driving Legislation at the State Level

Goal #1: Enact Primary Bans on the Use of Texting While Driving

Current Situation: Text messaging is currently banned for all drivers in 47 states and D.C. Naturalistic driving research shows that a driver is 2-6 times more likely to crash when manipulating a mobile phone than when not distracted.^{6,7,8} The AAA Foundation survey reports that public support for a ban on texting is 87.6%, making these laws largely agreeable with the general public. Although most states ban text messaging for all drivers, not all states practice primary enforcement of these laws. Additionally, laws in some states are narrowly defined to only include texting but not other means of manipulating a phone, which can make these laws more challenging to enforce.

Opportunity: Research comparing states nationally has indicated that primary texting bans reduce crash-related hospitalizations and fatalities.^{9,10} Although it is irrefutable that texting increases the risk that drivers will crash, not all studies that have examined the benefits of texting bans have found crash reductions associated with them.¹¹ The lack of reliable benefits found for texting bans could reflect, in part, inconsistent enforcement of such laws among states. States with weaker existing laws should upgrade to allow easier enforcement by changing from secondary to primary enforcement and/or by expanding to cover means of manipulating phones beyond texting. Additionally, those three states – Arizona, Missouri, and Montana – that have not adopted texting bans for all drivers (Arizona and Missouri currently ban texting for some young drivers) should take action to enact strong laws.

Member Actions: Coalition members are working to advance texting while driving legislation in selected states. If you would like to learn more about these efforts and/or express your support for this legislation please contact:

Name:

Email:

Phone:

State	Bill	Legislator	Contact Info

⁶ Dingus, T.A., Guo, F., Lee, S., et al. (2016). Driver crash risk factors and prevalence evaluation using naturalistic driving data. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 113, 2636-2641.

⁷ Kidd, D.G., & McCartt, A.T. (2015). The relevance of crash type and severity when estimating crash risk using the SHRP2 naturalistic driving data. 4th International Driver Distraction and Inattention Conference. ARRB Group Ltd: Sydney, New South Wales.

⁸ Owens, J.M., Dingus, T.A., Guo, F., Fang, Y., Perez, M., & McClafferty, J. (2018). Crash risk of cellphone use while driving: A case-crossover analysis of naturalistic driving data. Washington, DC: AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.

⁹ Ferdinand, A. O., Menachemi, N., Blackburn, J. L., Sen, B., Nelson, L., & Morrisey, M. (2015). The Impact of Texting Bans on Motor Vehicle Crash-Related Hospitalizations. *American Journal of Public Health*, 105(5), 859–865.

¹⁰ Ferdinand, A. O., Menachemi, N., Sen, B., Blackburn, J. L., Morrisey, M., & Nelson, L. (2014). Impact of Texting Laws on Motor Vehicular Fatalities in the United States. *American Journal of Public Health*, 104(8), 1370–1377.

¹¹ McCartt, A.T., Kidd, D.G., & Teoh, E.R. (2014). Driver cellphone and texting bans in the United States: evidence of the effectiveness. *Annals of Advances in Automotive Medicine*, 58, 99-114.

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Resources:

[Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety - 2017 Roadmap Reports](#)

Governors Highway Safety Association State by State [Distracted Driving Safety Laws](#)

[Insurance Institute for Highway Safety - Distracted Driving](#)

[Driver Crash Risk Factors and Prevalence Evaluation using Naturalistic Driving Data \(VTTI\)](#)

[The Impact of Texting Bans on Motor Vehicle Crash-Related Hospitalizations \(Texas A&M and UAB\)](#)

Strategy #1: Advance Distracted Driving Legislation at the State Level

Goal #2: Enact Primary Enforcement Teen Wireless Bans

Current Situation: Currently, 49 states and D.C. have laws restricting teens from using wireless devices while driving. However, only 29 states ban all wireless device use on a primary basis. Laws in other states may be secondarily enforced (six states), allow hands-free use (six states), or only ban texting while driving (eight states). Research by the AAA Foundation¹² has found that distraction, including cell phone use, was a factor in nearly 6 out of ten moderate-to-severe teen crashes, which is four times as many as official estimates based on police reports. A survey¹³ by the AAA Foundation reports that over half of drivers 18 and under have talked on a cell phone, either hands-free or handheld, or read a text or email while driving in the past 30 days. This is especially concerning given that young drivers have spent less time behind the wheel and cannot draw upon their previous experience to manage unsafe conditions.

Opportunity: Research¹⁴ has shown that primary texting bans for novice drivers with primary enforcement reduce traffic fatalities by 11 percent, while the efficacy for laws with secondary enforcement were inconclusive. However, relatively little evaluation has been conducted on the safety impact of teen wireless bans, and the few studies available have mixed results. The lack of definitive benefits of teen wireless bans is due, in part, to the limitations researchers face when evaluating distracted driving laws. The data available on distracted behavior is poor: it is difficult for police to ascertain when distraction is a factor. Drivers will not always admit it -- if they're still able -- wireless records are usually only subpoenaed in serious crashes, and police crash report criteria vary from state to state.

States with weaker laws should reevaluate to allow easier enforcement by changing from secondary to primary enforcement or banning hands-free usage for teen drivers altogether. Additionally, the eight states that only ban texting while driving for teen drivers (Alaska, Florida, Idaho, Mississippi, Missouri, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Wyoming) and the one state (Montana) that has no law restricting teen wireless use should take action to enact strong laws.

Member Actions: Coalition members are working to advance teen wireless ban legislation in selected states. If you would like to learn more about these efforts and/or express your support for this legislation please contact:

Name:

Email:

Phone:

State	Bill	Legislator	Contact Info

¹² Carney, C., McGehee, D.V., Harland, K., Weiss, M. & Raby, M. (2015). Using Naturalistic Driving Data to Assess the Prevalence of Environmental Factors and Driver Behaviors in Teen Driver Crashes. AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.

¹³ AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety (2018). 2017 Traffic Safety Culture Index. AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.

¹⁴ Alva O. Ferdinand, Nir Menachemi, Bisakha Sen, Justin L.Blackburn, Michael Morrissey, Leonard Nelson, "Impact of Texting Laws on Motor Vehicular Fatalities in the United States", *American Journal of Public Health* 104, no. 8 (August 1, 2014): pp. 1370-1377.

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Resources:

Strategy #2: Increase Enforcement of Distracted Driving Laws

Goal #1: Increase Enforcement to Reduce Distracted-Drivers

Current Situation: In 2014, the National Safety Council (NSC) reported that 73% of drivers think more enforcement of texting laws is needed.

Opportunity: Distracted driving laws alone will not solve the distracted driving epidemic. Primary, highly-visible enforcement is a necessary partner for legislative efforts to be successful. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) conducted Distracted Driving Demonstration Programs, including the “Phone in One Hand, Ticket in the Other” enforcement mantra, over one year spanning 2010-2011 in Hartford, CT and Syracuse, NY. This project primarily aimed to increase high-visibility enforcement (HVE) of distracted driving laws. Hand-held cell phone use by drivers dropped from 6.8% to 3.9% in Hartford and from 3.7% to 2.5% in Syracuse. Driver manipulation of cell phones to dial or text dropped from 3.9% to 1.1% in Hartford and from 2.8% to 1.9% in Syracuse. The evaluation showed that the text-only laws were less effective at changing behaviors than hand-held laws. Researchers believe that this is because hand-held laws are easier to enforce. Despite success in reducing driver interaction with smartphones, corresponding reductions in crashes were not observed, suggesting that HVE should be only one element of a more comprehensive approach to solving this public health and safety challenge.¹⁵

Member Actions: Coalition members are working to advance high-visibility enforcement of distracted driving and texting laws in selected states. If you would like to learn more about these efforts and/or express your support for this legislation please contact:

Name:

Email:

Phone:

State	Bill	Legislator	Contact Info

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Resources:

[Distracted Driving Laws, Education, and Enforcement](#)

[NSC – Public ready for stiffer penalties for texting while driving](#)

¹⁵ “Evaluation of U.S. DOT special enforcement campaigns for hand-held cellphone and texting bans” and “Driver cellphone and texting bans in the United States: evidence of effectiveness” by A.T. McCartt et al., email publications@iihs.org.

Strategy #3: Advance Distracted Driving Public Education Programs at All Levels

Goal #1: Conduct Public Education Campaigns to Inform the Public on All Forms of Distracted Driving

Current Situation: Currently there is a national distracted driving enforcement campaign, “U Drive. U Text. U Pay,” run by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and NHTSA. While actively participating in the campaign, local law enforcement aggressively tickets drivers for texting or using their mobile phones when behind the wheel. The campaign effort also provides important funding for national television, radio, and digital advertising educating the public on the consequences of distracted driving. Not only has the federal government taken action, but other organizations, even some cell phone companies such as AT&T, are also pushing nationwide campaigns to reduce distracted driving.

Opportunity: Strong public education campaigns such as this can, and do, help to educate drivers about unsafe driving behavior. The educational challenge is to transform the stigma around distracted driving and help prioritize safety. For example, the public did not give much attention to drunk driving or wearing seatbelts decades ago, but seat belt use is at 90% today and alcohol impaired crashes have declined from 2007-2016. In the same way that drunk driving and seatbelt use were targeted, distracted driving education programs should be tailored towards increasing the awareness of risk and inciting societal change so that distracted driving is viewed as socially unacceptable.

In these campaigns it is also important to highlight that mobile phone use is only one form of distracted driving. Habits such as eating, drinking, grooming, fiddling with the stereo or navigation, and even interacting with other vehicle passengers all take a driver’s attention away from the task of driving. Today, however, the majority of drivers may not currently view these as high risk activities when behind the wheel. Successful education campaigns would successfully convey that any non-driving activity engaged in is a distraction and increases the risk of a crash.

Member Actions: Coalition members are working to promote distracted driving education programs. If you would like to learn more about these efforts and/or express your support for this legislation please contact:

Name:

Email:

Phone:

State	Bill	Legislator	Contact Info

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Resources:

[U Drive. U Text. U Pay.](#)

[Other DOT Campaigns under Distracted Driving](#)

[End Distracted Driving Campaign](#)