# **Distracted Driving**

Distracted driving is any form of activity that diverts a person’s attention away from their primary task of driving, including texting, eating and drinking, grooming, talking on the phone or to passengers, and listening to loud music. Distracted driving may lead to other dangerous behaviors including speeding, risk-taking behaviors, and drowsy driving. Some reasons why drivers engage in distracted driving including stressful jobs, busy lifestyles, and easy access to technology. The three main types of distraction are: Visual, manual, and cognitive, but not all three have to occur for a driver to be dangerously distracted. Texting while driving is especially dangerous because it involves all three types of distraction at the same time. A distraction-affected crash or collision is any event in which a driver was identified as distracted at the time of the crash.

**How does distracted driving affect the United States?**

*Fatal Data*

* The number of people who died due to distracted driving crashes was 3,166 in 2017, which is a decrease from 3,450 deaths in 2016 and 3,477 in 2015.6
* In 2017, there were 2,935 fatal crashes that involved distraction, which accounts for 9% of all fatal crashes. These crashes involved 2,994 distracted drivers, as some crashes involved more than one distracted driver. 6
* The top distraction while driving is the use of a cellphone, and cellphones were involved in 401 fatal crashes in 2017, which accounts for 14% of distraction-affected fatal crashes. However, cellphone use may not be indicated in the crash report, so the true burden is underreported. 6
* Each day, nearly nine people are killed in crashes that involve a distracted driver.6
* In 2017, 81% of the fatalities in distraction-affected crashes involved motor vehicle occupants or motorcyclists.6
* In 2017, 599 non-occupants such as pedestrians and bicyclists were killed in distraction-related crashes.6
* Drivers in their 20s make up 27 percent of the distracted drivers in fatal crashes.6

*Non-Fatal Data*

* Each day, 1,070 people are injured in crashes that involve a distracted driver. 1
* There were 265,000 distraction-affected injury crashes in 2015, which represents 15 percent of all crashes. In these crashes, 272,000 drivers were distracted at the time of the crash, indicating more than one driver could be distracted during a crash incident. 1
* In 2015, an estimated 391,000 additional people were injured in motor vehicle crashes involving a distracted driver. 1
* An estimated 30,000 people were injured in 2015 in crashes specifically involving cellphones. 1
* In the U.S., 31 percent of drivers ages 18 to 64 reported that they had read or sent text messages or email messages while driving at least once within the last 30 days. Additionally, 69 percent of drivers in the U.S. in the same age group reported that they had talked on their cellphone while driving within the last 30 days. 1

**How does distracted driving affect Indiana?**

* In 2017, there were 10,738 motor vehicle collisions in Indiana due to distraction. Of these collisions, 1,272 involved a driver who was distracted by a cellphone. This is a slight increase from 2014 with 1,071 cellphone-distracted collisions. 7
* There were eleven fatal collisions due to distraction in 2017, in which all fatalities were the drivers in the collision.7
* The highest number of distraction-related collisions in 2017 occurred during June and August between noon and 5:59 p.m. each day. 7
* In 2016, there were 4.6 percent of young drivers engaged in distracted driving, compared to 2.9 percent of drivers aged 21 and older. While cellphone use reported as a factor in collisions is rare (e.g., less than 1 percent of all drivers in any age category), young drivers had twice the rate of cell phone use in collisions than drivers 21 and older.3

**How do we address the problem?**

*Data Collection*

* The Indiana State Police maintain the Automated Reporting Information Exchange System (ARIES), which captures vehicle crash data, including distracted driving related crashes. The data are used as the analytical foundation for traffic safety program planning and design in Indiana.

*Policy*

* Primary laws allow law enforcement to stop vehicles simply because occupants for a specific traffic violation, and are more effective than secondary laws, which require that a vehicle be stopped for some other traffic violation.
* Graduated Drivers Licensing (GDL) implementation in 2009 and 2010 led to a 29% decrease in teen driver (15 to 17 year old) collisions between 2009 and 2012. The GDL law seeks to reduce the number of young driver collisions by reducing driver distractions and building driver experiences through supervision.

*Programs*

* The Indiana Criminal Justice Institute (ICJI) Traffic Safety Division manages federal funds that are allocated throughout Indiana to support programs designed to fulfill its mission: “To reduce death, injury, property damage and economic cost associated with traffic crashes on Indiana’s roadways.” The ICJI Traffic Safety Division publishes an annual Indiana Highway Safety Plan, which includes programs and resources to prevent distracted driving injuries and fatalities. The Rule the Road Teen Driving program educates young drivers and their parents about the GDL law, basic car maintenance, seat belt safety, and the dangers of distracted and impaired driving.

*Education*

* The American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons and the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers teamed up to launch the national public service campaign of “Decide to Drive” in 2011, which aims to affect behavior changes relating to driver distractions that pose a threat to drivers, passengers, and pedestrians.5
* The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) designates April as National Distracted Driving Awareness Month. The paid media campaign focuses on the primary message of U Drive. U Text. U Pay.
* NHTSA and the U.S. Department of Transportation created a pledge to end distracted driving by driving phone-free. Website: <https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/distracted-driving#take-pledge>.
* Employers can foster a culture of workplace safety and health by discouraging use of cell phones while driving by developing a motor vehicle safety policy. INSafe, the Indiana Department of Labor’s OSHA consultation program, provides employers with free onsite consultation, outreach, training and education. INSafe’s resources are designed to assist employers to further advance the safety, health and prosperity of Hoosiers in the workplace.
* The Indiana Department of Labor encourages employers to declare vehicles as “text-free zones.” As of July 1, 2011, texting and emailing, including reading and/or responding while driving, is against the law and violators may face fines.

*Measures: Healthy People 2020*

* While not included as objectives in Healthy People 2020, there are several emerging issues in injury and violence prevention that need further research, analysis, and monitoring. For unintentional injuries, there is a need to better understand the trends, causes, and preventions strategies for motor vehicle crashes due to distracted driving.
* Related Healthy People 2020 Goals

**Additional Resources**

1. Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety: <http://www.saferoads.org>
2. American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons Decide to Drive: <http://www.decidetodrive.org/>
3. CDC Distracted Driving <http://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/distracted_driving/>
4. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA): <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov>
5. National Safety Council: Distracted Driving: <http://www.nsc.org/safety_road/Distracted_Driving/Pages/distracted_driving.aspx>
6. Official U.S. Government Website for Distracted Driving: <http://www.distraction.gov/index.html>

**References**

1. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (2018). Distracted Driving 2016. DOT HS 812 381. Retrieved from <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812517>.

2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Mobile Device Use While Driving — United States and Seven European Countries, 2011. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6210a1.htm?s_cid=mm6210a1_w>.

3. Nunn, S. Indiana traffic safety facts: Young drivers 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.in.gov/cji/files/Highway_Safety_Young_Drivers_2016.pdf>.

4. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. State Laws. Retrieved from DISTRACTION.GOV: Official US Government Website for Distracted Driving: <http://www.distraction.gov/stats-research-laws/state-laws.html>.

5. Decide to Drive. American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons. Retrieved from <http://www.decidetodrive.org/>.

6. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (2019). Distracted driving in fatal crashes, 2017. DOT HS 812 700. Retrieved from <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812700>.

7. Sapp, D., Thelin, R., & Nunn, S. Indiana crash facts 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.in.gov/cji/files/Highway_Safety_Fact_Book_2017.pdf>.