



For release...Monday, July 19, 2010...5 pp.
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Jersey Drivers Text More; Say New Yorkers Are Worse

More New Jersey drivers than ever admit to sending text messages from behind the wheel, with 25% now saying that they have done so in the past few years, a 20% increase from last year, when 21% said that they had done so. In 2008, only 15% of drivers said that they had sent a text while driving. According to a recent study by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind Poll, co-sponsored by the state's Division of Highway Traffic Safety, despite this increase in texting and high levels of speeding among young people and commuters, New Jersey drivers say that their neighbors in New York are the worst behind a wheel.

In previous years, increases in texting were sparked by drivers under the age of 30, but this is no longer the case. While the youngest drivers are more likely to text than any other age group (56% of drivers under age 30 say that they've sent a text while behind the wheel), the increase in this year's study can be attributed to drivers aged 30 to 60. In this year's study, 37% of drivers 30 to 44 years of age say they've sent a text while driving, up 9 points from last year, and 17% of drivers 45 to 60 years of age say they've done so, up from 12% in 2009. Among drivers between 30 and 60 years of age, the number who admit to texting while driving has increased dramatically since 2008.

"These figures reflect how much texting has become part of our lives, so much so that we're even doing it in the driver's seat," said Dan Cassino, the director of experimental research for the PublicMind poll, and a professor of political science at Fairleigh Dickinson University. "As more people get used to texting, more are going to do it while driving, so these numbers are probably going to keep going up for some time."

While texting behind the wheel is on the rise, the use of hand-held phones while driving in the Garden State is on the decline. This year, only 12% of New Jersey drivers say that they "very often" or "sometimes" talk on a hand-held cell while behind the wheel, down from 18% in 2009, and half of the 26% who admitted to doing so in 2007. The biggest contributor to this drop was a substantial decline in the use of hand-held phones by young drivers. This year, only 13% of drivers under age 30 said that they regularly talked on a hand-held phone while driving, compared to 33% last year. Some of this decline can be attributed to the belief that hands-free devices are safer: 79% of New Jersey drivers say that hand-held phones are more dangerous than hands-free devices, up from 67% in 2008.

"Most drivers don't seem to understand that it isn't holding the phone that's the problem, but the mental and visual distraction caused by the conversation," said Pam Fischer, the director of the state's Division of Highway Traffic Safety. "If we're replacing hand-held cell phone use with texting, which is more dangerous than driving drunk, we're certainly not moving in the right direction."

Younger drivers are not only more likely to be texting behind the wheel, they're also more likely to be going over the speed limit while doing so: 35% of drivers under the age of 30 say that they speed on highways "most of the time," compared to 26% of all drivers. And 1-in-3 (31%) of those young drivers admit they regularly go over 70 miles per hour on the highway.

Not surprisingly, these younger drivers also tend to think that they *can* go faster without having to worry about getting a ticket. Only 7% of those under the age of 30 say that the actual speed limit – the speed at which you can drive without getting a ticket – is below 70 mph. A majority (54%) say that it is somewhere between 70 and 74 mph, and nearly a third, 31%, say that it is over 75 mph.

"While younger drivers are more likely to be texting and speeding than any of the other age groups, we just have to hope that they're not doing it at the same time," said Cassino. "Any driver going 75 mph on the interstate while texting is a scary thing."

But these unsafe behaviors are not limited to young drivers. Workers with long commutes are also more likely than others to speed, use hand-held cell phones and text while driving. A majority of drivers who travel more than 20 miles to work each way (58%) say that they regularly go over 65 mph on the highways, and a majority (71%) of those sometimes go over 70 mph. In contrast, only 38% of those who don't drive to work (and 48% of those with shorter commutes) regularly drive over 65 mph. Additionally, 17% of drivers with long commutes talk on hand-held phones while on the road "very often" or "sometimes," compared with just 7% of those who don't drive to work. These same commuters are also 50% more likely than the average driver to text while behind the wheel, with 37% admitting that they've done so (compared to 25% of all drivers). Not surprisingly, they're also much more likely to have received a ticket: 15% of respondents with long commutes have been cited for speeding in the last three years, compared with 9% of all drivers, and just 6% of those who don't drive to work.

"All of this suggests that commuters are much more likely to be multi-tasking behind the wheel," said Cassino. "They're trying to get as much done as they can before they arrive at the office or their home, and they want to get there as fast as they can. It's the combination of the two that's dangerous and potentially deadly."

While this may suggest that Garden State drivers have bad habits, a majority of drivers in New Jersey say that their neighbors in New York are worse. Asked to name which nearby state has the worst drivers, 56% say that it's New York, with Pennsylvania coming in a distant second with 15%. And, even though it wasn't an option on the survey, 14% say that New Jersey has the worst drivers of any state.

The Fairleigh Dickinson University survey was co-sponsored by the New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety and carried out by telephone from May 2 through June 2 using a randomly selected sample of 953 New Jersey residents aged 17 and over who report they drive regularly, including an oversample of drivers under the age of 30. It has a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points.

<p>Tables, questions, and methodology available on the web at: http://publicmind.fdu.edu Radio actuality line: (201) 692-2846.</p>	<p>For more information, please call (973) 443-8756.</p>
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Methods and Tables

This study was conducted by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind and co-sponsored by the New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety. The survey was conducted by telephone from May 2 through June 2 using a randomly selected sample of 953 New Jersey residents aged 17 and over who report they drive regularly, including an oversample of drivers under the age of 30. The sampling error for 953 randomly selected respondents in a statewide survey is +/-3 percentage points at the 95 percent level of confidence. Survey results are also subject to non-sampling error. This kind of error, which cannot be measured, arises from a number of factors including, but not limited to, non-response (eligible individuals refusing to be interviewed), question wording, the order in which questions are asked, and variations among interviewers. All interviews were conducted by professionally trained interviewers using a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system. Random selection is obtained through computerized random-digit dialing. This technique gives every person with a land-line phone number an equal chance of being selected, including those with unlisted numbers. Results may be weighted to match known demographics. A complete questionnaire, all tables, and descriptive narrative will be made available in the document: *2010 Survey of Driver Attitudes and Behavior: Summary of Findings*.

In the past three years have you personally, sent a text message while driving?									
	All	All (2009)	All (2008)	Married	Never Married	HS or less	Some Colleg	College	College Plus
Yes	25	21	15	18	47	27	26	27	18
No	75	79	84	82	52	72	74	73	82
Don't Know/ Don't Remember	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0

In the past three years have you personally, sent a text message while driving?												
	17-29			30-44			45-60			60+		
	2010	2009	2008	2010	2009	2008	2010	2009	2008	2010	2009	2008
Yes	56	57	51	37	28	20	17	12	7	1	1	1
No	43	43	49	63	72	80	83	87	92	98	99	98
Don't Know/ Don't Remember	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1

Now let me ask about driving and cell phones. How often do you personally drive your car and at the same time hold your cell phone and talk into it...?

	All	Age				White	Non-White	HS or less	Some College	College	College Plus
		17-29	30-44	45-60	60+						
Very Often	3	4	4	3	1	3	1	2	3	3	2
Sometimes	9	9	14	9	5	8	10	8	5	13	9
Rarely	26	41	24	28	18	26	28	28	29	23	27
Never	61	47	56	59	74	60	59	60	61	60	60
Don't Know/Refused	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
Don't Have Cell Phone	1	0	0	1	3	1	1	3	2	0	1

How often do you personally drive your car and at the same time hold your cell phone and talk into it ... ?					
	2010	2009	2008	2007	2005
Very Often	3	4	5	9	10
Sometimes	9	14	11	17	13
Rarely	26	27	22	28	23
Never	61	53	59	43	47
Don't Know / Don't Have Cell Phone	1	2	3	3	7

Now let me ask about driving and cell phones. How often do you personally drive your car and at the same time hold your cell phone and talk into it...?													
	All	17-29			30-44			45-60			60+		
		2010	2009	2008	2010	2009	2008	2010	2009	2008	2010	2009	2008
Very Often	3	4	9	10	4	5	8	3	3	4	1	2	0
Sometimes	9	9	24	26	14	20	14	9	12	8	5	6	3
Rarely	26	41	32	22	24	24	26	28	34	28	18	17	14
Never	61	47	35	41	56	49	52	59	49	58	74	70	76
Don't Know/Refused	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Don't Have Cell Phone	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	2	3	5	7

Do you think that driving and talking on a hand-held phone is more or less dangerous than driving and using a hands-free phone?											
	All	All (2009)	All (2008)	Age				HS or less	Some College	College	College Plus
				17-29	30-44	45-60	60+				
More Dangerous	79	70	67	75	82	80	81	82	77	79	78
Less Dangerous	5	7	10	8	4	6	2	4	8	4	6
Same	--	20	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Don't Know/Refused	16	3	23	17	14	15	17	14	15	17	16

When you're driving on a New Jersey highway, how often would you say you drive over 65 miles an hour?											
	All	All (2009)	All (2008)	Age						HS or Less	College Plus
				Men	Women	17-29	30-44	45-60	60+		
Most of the time	26	25	25	32	21	35	28	25	20	24	27
Often	19	22	20	21	17	21	22	21	14	14	21
Just once in a while	40	37	37	37	43	36	34	41	49	45	41
Never	13	15	17	8	18	7	14	13	16	16	10
Don't Know	2	1	1	1	2	1	2	0	2	2	2
[Excluding those who "Never" drive over 65] And how often would you say that you drive 70 miles an hour or more?											
Most of the time	12	4	3	15	8	17	13	10	7	10	14
Often	11	7	4	13	10	14	13	14	6	9	12
Just once in a while	44	36	43	47	42	45	44	44	45	41	46
Never	32	52	49	25	39	24	29	31	40	38	27
Don't Know	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	1	1
Refused	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

The posted speed limit is 65 on most highways in New Jersey, but what would you say is the actual speed limit-the speed at which you can go on a New Jersey highway without getting a speeding ticket?											
	All	All (2009)	All (2008)	Age						White	Non-White
				Men	Women	17-29	30-44	45-60	60+		
65 to 69	14	20	18	14	15	7	12	15	19	14	14
70 to 74	52	49	48	53	50	54	51	52	51	50	57
75 to 79	20	20	21	22	18	23	23	20	15	23	14
80 to 85	4	4	4	4	3	7	5	3	2	3	5
85 plus	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0
Don't Know	10	7	8	6	14	7	8	10	12	9	10

In the past three years have you personally, sent a text message while driving?						
	All	Length of Commute			Drives Over 65	
		Doesn't Drive	0-19 M	20+ M	Most of the time/Often	Rarely/Never
Yes	25	15	30	37	34	17
No	75	85	70	63	65	83
Don't Know/ Don't Remember	0	0	0	0	1	0

Now let me ask about driving and cell phones. How often do you personally drive your car and at the same time hold your cell phone and talk into it...?								
	All	Length of Commute			Ticketed in last 3 yrs		Drives Over 65	
		Doesn't Drive	0-19 M	20+ M	Yes	No	Most of the time/Often	Rarely/Never
Very Often	3	2	2	6	5	3	4	2
Sometimes	9	5	12	11	28	7	14	5
Rarely	26	21	29	30	23	26	33	20
Never	61	70	54	53	41	62	48	71
Don't Know/Refused	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0
Don't Have Cell Phone	1	3	1	0	1	1	1	2

When you're driving on a New Jersey highway, how often would you say you drive over 65 miles an hour?						
	All	Ticketed in last 3 yrs		Length of Commute		
		Yes	No	Doesn't Drive	0-19 M	20+ M
Most of the time	26	47	23	20	28	36
Often	19	24	19	18	20	22
Just once in a while	40	23	42	46	38	30
Never	13	5	14	15	11	11
Don't Know	2	1	2	2	2	1

[Excluding those who "Never" drive over 65] And how often would you say that you drive 70 miles an hour or more?						
Most of the time	12	23	10	8	11	21
Often	11	22	10	8	14	16
Just once in a while	44	38	45	47	45	34
Never	32	15	34	37	28	28
Don't Know	1	2	1	0	2	1
Refused	0	0	0	0	0	0

In the past three years have you personally, received a speeding ticket?						
	All	Length of Commute			Drives Over 65	
		Doesn't Drive	0-19 M	20+ M	Most of the time/Often	Rarely/Never
Yes	9	6	10	15	14	5
No	91	94	89	85	86	95
Don't Know/Don't	0	0	0	0	0	0

Thinking about drivers from the states around us, which state would you say has the worst drivers...?									
	All	All (2009)	All (2008)	Age				Education	
				17-29	30-44	45-60	60+	HS or less	College Plus
Pennsylvania	15	16	15	20	14	13	15	16	13
Maryland	--	1	1	--	--	--	--	--	--
Delaware	--	1	1	--	--	--	--	--	--
New York	56	54	54	56	58	58	52	55	53
Connecticut	--	2	2	--	--	--	--	--	--
New Jersey	14	7	8	14	16	13	12	16	15
Other	4	3	3	2	5	6	3	3	5
Don't Know	11	16	15	7	6	11	19	10	15

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