

Most U.S. Drivers Engage in 'Distracting' Behaviors: Poll

Cell phone talk, texting, even applying makeup: Most know it's dangerous, but many do it anyway

NORWALK, Connecticut, USA November 30, 2011 – Whether it's talking on cell phones, fiddling with food and drink, or doing some last-minute grooming, a large majority of adult drivers in the United States admit to being dangerously distracted while behind the wheel, today's Harris Interactive/HealthDay poll found.

Specifically 86 percent of adults admitted to eating/drinking while driving, 59 percent talk on a non-hands-free cell phone, 41 percent set or adjust their GPS device, and 37 percent text. Additionally, a quarter of respondents said they have driven after having two or more drinks, and 44 percent said they've felt sleepy while driving, "sometimes even momentarily dozing off." Smaller percentages (7 and 12 percent, respectively) said they drive this way "sometimes or often."

Today's Harris Interactive/HealthDay poll also uncovered other common driving distractions:

- Reading a map: 36 percent admitted doing so, and 10 percent do it often or sometimes.
- Combing/styling hair: one in five drivers acknowledged doing this at least once; nearly 1 in 10 does it more regularly.
- Applying makeup: 14 percent have done it at least once, 7 percent say they do it frequently.
- Surfing the Internet: 13 percent have done so while driving and 9 percent do it often/sometimes.
- Watching videos (on a mobile device or in-board system): 7 percent say they do this "often or sometimes."

"The number of drivers who engage in potentially dangerous, in some cases extremely dangerous, behaviors while driving is terrifyingly high, particularly when you remember that every 1 percent of drivers polled represents more than one-and-three-quarters of a million people," said Humphrey Taylor, chairman of The Harris Poll.

"While we have some information on how dangerous some of these behaviors are (driving after drinking, talking on cell phones, falling asleep, texting) we can only speculate as to the numbers of accidents and deaths that are caused by the many millions of people who drive while setting their GPS, eating or drinking, surfing the Internet, watching videos, combing their hair, reading or applying makeup," added Taylor.

The survey also turned up a puzzling disconnect: While big percentages of drivers agree that distracting behaviors are dangerous, many still engage in them.

The poll included 2,810 U.S. adults over age 18 who were surveyed online between November 10 to 14, 2011, by Harris Interactive, one of the world's leading custom market research firms, and HealthDay, a leading producer and syndicator of health news.

The complete findings of the newest joint Harris Interactive/HealthDay poll are available [here](#). HealthDay's news report is available [here](#). Full data on the poll and its methodology are available at [Harris Interactive](#).

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About HealthDay

HealthDay is a leading producer and syndicator of evidence-based health news for consumers and physicians and is one of the largest health news syndicators to Internet sites. Its daily consumer health news service <http://consumer.healthday.com/> appears on more than 5,000 websites such as Yahoo!, MSN Health, USNews.com, Everyday Health, and government websites like Healthfinder.gov, and MedlinePlus. A daily video version of the top health news story of the day is featured on HealthDay TV, a 90-second daily news broadcast appearing on several major media and U.S. government websites.

HealthDay also produces Physician's Briefing (www.physiciansbriefing.com), a daily news service for physicians and other medical professionals. This service is licensed to hospitals, managed care organizations, media companies, and point of care providers like ePocrates.

HealthDay's custom content division produces specialized content for a variety of audiences and works with some of the larger health portals in the United States.

About Harris Interactive

Harris Interactive is one of the world's leading custom market research firms, leveraging research, technology, and business acumen to transform relevant insight into actionable foresight. Known widely for the Harris Poll and for pioneering innovative research methodologies, Harris offers expertise in a wide range of industries including health care, technology, public affairs, energy, telecommunications, financial services, insurance, media, retail, restaurant, and consumer package goods. Serving clients in more than 215 countries and territories through our North American, European, and Asian offices and a network of independent market research firms, Harris specializes in delivering research solutions that help us - and our clients - stay ahead of what's next. For more information, please visit www.harrisinteractive.com.

TABLE 1
DRIVERS WHO PERFORM POTENTIALLY RISKY BEHAVIORS WHILE DRIVING

Question: How often, if ever, do you perform each of the following actions while you are driving?

Base: Drives A Vehicle On A Regular Basis (83% of Adults)

		Ever	Often/Sometimes
Eat food and/or drink beverages	%	86	57
Have a long or serious discussion with a passenger	%	81	49
Talk on a cell phone while using the handset, not a hands-free device	%	59	27
Feel sleepy, sometimes even momentarily dozing off	%	44	12
Talk on a cell phone while using a hands-free device	%	43	27
Realize that you've lost concentration and haven't looked at the road for some time	%	43	10
Set or change a GPS or direction finder	%	41	21
Send or receive text messages	%	37	18
Read a map	%	36	10
Drive after having had 2 or more alcoholic drinks	%	25	7
Comb or style hair	%	20	9
Apply makeup or skincare products	%	14	7
Surf the Internet	%	13	9
Read a newspaper or magazine	%	10	7
Watch a video (e.g., on a mobile device, on an entertainment system/device)	%	8	7

TABLE 2

PERCEIVED RISKS OF PERFORMING VARIOUS RISKS WHILE DRIVING					
Question: Approximately how much, if at all, do you feel that each of these increases the risk of being involved in a car accident?					
Base: Drives A Vehicle On A Regular Basis (83% of Adults)					
		A lot	A moderate amount	A little	Not at all
Sending or receiving text messages	%	77	16	5	3
Feeling sleepy, sometimes even momentarily dozing off	%	75	17	5	3
Reading a map	%	54	30	13	3
Realizing that you've lost concentration and haven't looked at the road for some time	%	58	27	12	3
Surfing the Internet	%	84	10	3	3
Reading a newspaper or magazine	%	82	11	4	3
Watching a video (e.g., on a mobile device, on an entertainment system/device)	%	86	8	3	3
Talking on a cell phone while using the handset, not a hands-free device	%	47	27	22	4
Applying makeup or skincare products	%	66	21	9	4
Driving after having had 2 or more alcoholic drinks	%	70	19	7	4
Setting or changing a GPS or direction finder	%	41	32	23	4
Combing or styling hair	%	48	26	22	4
Eating food and/or drinking beverages	%	19	26	48	8
Talking on a cell phone while using a hands-free device	%	24	23	40	13
Having a long or serious discussion with a passenger	%	17	23	42	19

Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the United States November 10 to 14, 2011 among 2,810 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

Full data available at www.harrisinteractive.com

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These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

