Putting the Brakes on Distracted Driving

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Distraction is Deadly

- **9% of all fatal crashes** in 2016 in U.S. were due to distracted driving

- It’s even worse in Ohio, there’s been a **35% increase** in distracted driving fatalities over the last 5 years

- Distracted driving crashes account for **18%** of Ohio’s crash fatalities and **16%** of Ohio’s serious crash injuries

- The risk of a DD crash in Columbus is **20% higher** than any other type of crash

**Enough is enough**
Distracted Driving is anything that takes your

- Hands
- Eyes
- Mind

off of driving
The solution to end distracted driving won’t happen in courtrooms or laboratories.

That’s why the Risk Institute takes a four-tiered, cross-disciplinary approach.

Our most recent research examines **driver behaviors and motivations** as well as the impact of **built environments** on distracted driving.
Participants reported the percentage of trips in which they drove and did each behavior. Behaviors are ordered from most to least reported.

- **Adjust music**: 47%
- **Adjust GPS**: 25%
- **Talk on phone**: 13%
- **Read texts**: 12%
- **Send texts**: 8%
- **Other phone use**: 8%
- **Watch movies**: 3%
Self-reported “good” drivers are more likely to be driving distracted.

68% of respondents reported believing they were better-than-average drivers reported more distracted driving behaviors than less confident ones.
Why do people drive distracted?

• Most people won’t admit to driving distracted, however…

• People that drive distracted:
  • Think many other people drive distracted
  • Are overconfident in their DD ability
  • Think distracted driving is NOT risky
  • See more benefits to using phone and driving
  • Are attached to their phones
  • Are high in reactance to attempts to change them (only measured in Survey 2—predicts DD more than risk or gender)
  • Are male (Survey 1 only) or younger (Survey 2 only)
  • Have higher verbal intelligence
Why do people drive distracted?

- **Underestimation of distracted driving**: people just don’t see it as risky

- **Overconfidence in driving ability**: people think risks apply to others, not them

- **Affective reactions**: see phones as beneficial; downplay risk

- **Motivated denial**: people don’t want to see risk; rationalize behavior

- **Perceived norms**: think others do it and/or it’s not a big deal
A lot of time, energy, and money have been spent on tech advancement, legislation, and research, but we're also examining urban planning and the impact of built environments.
The Impact of Built Environments

Our study revealed that built environments such as

- length of roadway,
- number of lanes, and
- urban roadways

have a positive association of distracted driving crash frequency.

Meaning that distracted driving crashes are most likely on an eight-lane, interstate highway in an urban area.
The Impact of Built Environments

- DD crashes tend to be more severe than non-DD crashes — up to **49.4% more severe** on an Interstate Highway

- A DD crash is **2.12x more likely to be fatal** if it occurs in a work zone

- A DD crash is **5.4-10.4x more likely to be fatal rather than a severe injury** if it’s a rear-to-end or angle (lane change, head-on collision)
Roundabouts were found to be the single most effective road design in reducing the rate of crashes and crash severity.

Over the time studied (2013-2017), no severe injury crashes or fatal crashes occurred at a roundabout.
Other effective changes are:

- Medians
- Asphalt shoulders
- Better signage at and near workzones
- Roundabout first policy
So what do we do?

People were generally supportive of methods to reduce distracted driving.

Support differed somewhat based on how the items were framed (e.g., bans vs. fines)
Take Action

Reduce message resistance

• People see DD as a low-risk, with numerous benefits.
• They’re also most likely to be young males who don’t care much for reducing distraction and are most likely to resist changes.

Develop and test more effective messaging

• Less is more; keep it simple
• Evoke emotion
• Present numeric risk information and visual aids

• Improve our built environments
  • Roundabouts
  • Medians
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