

What Kentuckians Think about Using Cell Phones while Driving



Results From The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati
and the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky



In 2009, over 5,500 people died on American roadways due to distracted driving,¹ with over 200 deaths occurring on Kentucky roadways.² On January 1, 2011, a new state law took effect in Kentucky that bans texting for all drivers and all cell phone use for drivers under age 18.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation (US DOT), distracted driving is “any non-driving activity a person engages in that has the potential to distract him or her from the primary task of driving and increase the risk of crashing.”³

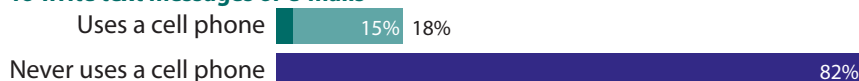
Many things can distract a driver, and cell phone use is just one of them. However, it is a serious one: The US DOT identifies texting as the most alarming road distraction. But drivers just talking on their cell phones are also distracted. Research has shown that drivers who are talking on a cell phone

How often do you use your cell phone while driving?

To talk



To write text messages or e-mails



■ Every time or almost every time ■ Occasionally or almost never

perform similarly to drivers who are legally drunk.⁴

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimated that 9% of drivers in 2009 used some type of phone while driving.⁵ In order to understand how Kentucky adults use their cell phones while driving, the *Kentucky Health Issues Poll* asked a number of questions related to this issue.

Most Kentucky Adults Have Cell Phones

Over 8 in 10 Kentucky adults (81%) have a cell phone, according to the *Poll*. The percentage of people reporting that they have a cell phone increases with income and education level. While 86% of Kentucky adults ages 18–64 have a cell phone, only 59% of adults ages 65 and older have one.

3 in 4 Kentuckians Talk While Driving

Only about 1 in 4 Kentucky adults (28%) reported they never use their cell phone to talk while driving. Over half (56%) reported they talk on their phone occasionally or almost never, and 16% reported they talk on their phone every time or almost every time they drive.

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¹ U. S. Department of Transportation [US DOT]. *Statistics and Facts about Distracted Driving*. Retrieved from www.distraction.gov/stats-and-facts/index.html.

² Governor Steve Beshear's Communications Office, Commonwealth of Kentucky (2010, April 15). *Gov. Beshear signs law banning texting while driving* [Press Release]. Retrieved from www.governor.ky.gov/media/pressreleases/pressreleases_archived.htm.

³ US DOT. *Statistics and Facts about Distracted Driving*. Retrieved from www.distraction.gov/stats-and-facts/index.html.

⁴ Strayer, D.L.; Drews, F.A., & Crouch, D.J. *A Comparison of the Cell Phone Driver and the Drunk Driver*. *Human Factors*. Vol. 48, No. 2, Summer 2006, pp.381-391. Retrieved from www.distraction.gov/research/PDF-Files/Comparison-of-CellPhone-Driver-Drunk-Driver.pdf.

⁵ US DOT, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (September 2010). *Driver Electronic Device Use in 2009*. *Traffic Safety Facts*. Retrieved from www.distraction.gov/research/PDF-Files/Driver-Electronic-Device-Use-2009.pdf.

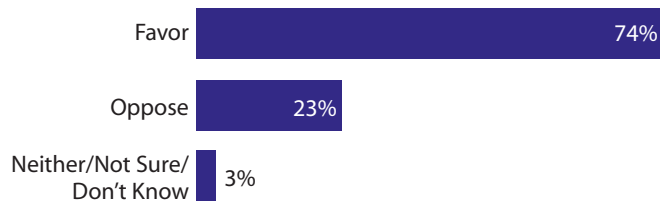
The Majority of Kentucky Adults Do Not Text While Driving

Over 8 in 10 Kentucky adults (82%) reported that they never use their cell phone to write text messages or e-mail while driving. About 1 in 7 adults (15%) reported using their cell phone to text or write e-mail messages occasionally or almost never while driving, and a small minority (2%) reported texting or e-mailing every time or almost every time they drive.

Majority of Kentucky Adults Favor Law to Prevent Cell Phone Use while Driving

Almost 3 in 4 Kentucky adults (74%) favor a law making it illegal to use a cell phone while driving.⁶ About 1 in 4 adults (23%) opposed the law, and the remaining 3% were not sure. The majority of adults in all demographic categories tracked by the *Poll* support a law to prevent cell phone use while driving.

Do you favor or oppose a law making it illegal to use a cell phone while driving?



⁶ Please note that the Poll asked these questions after the state law passed but before it was enacted.