

# Study: What Americans believe is biggest threat on the road

[Micah Walker](#), Detroit Free Press Published 1:00 p.m. ET April 16, 2019

A new study from the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety finds drivers remain distracted after using hands-free technology for calls. Detroit-area drivers say they often see distracted drivers but several believe hands-free is safer. Eric D. Lawrence/Detroit Free Press

A new national study found that more than half of motorists think distracted driving is the biggest threat on the road, while nearly more than 90 percent admitted to talking on their cell phone while driving.

And Gen Xers are the biggest offenders, according to a [survey conducted by The Harris Poll and Volvo](#).

The survey was conducted online by The Harris Poll last June, which included responses from 2,035 U.S. adults aged 18 and older, with 1,665 of them being drivers. A follow-up study included 2,015 adults, including 1,894 drivers to better understand the role of voice commands in vehicles. Volvo said the online surveys are not based on a probability sample, so a theoretical sampling error cannot be calculated.

Fifty-five percent of Americans believe the No. 1 threat motorists face is distracted driving, higher than the more common road threats, such as driving under the influence (31%), driving aggressively (8%), or speeding (3%). Phones were cited as the top source of distraction, at 43%.

The study also revealed which generation is more likely to use their phone behind the wheel. Gen X and Millennials are tied at 81%, while Young Boomers are not far behind, at 72%. Gen Z drivers are more focused on the road than their parents, with 71% of the group using phones while driving.

[At least nine Americans die and 100 are injured nationwide every day in distracted driving crashes](#), according to the National Safety Council. In addition, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute say that [most crashes and near-crashes are the result of inattentive driving](#).

While distracted driving is the result of many car accidents, more people die from drunk driving. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, [almost 30 people died every day in drunk driving crashes in 2017](#), one person every 48 minutes.

Parents with children under 18 are among the most likely to use their phones while driving, with 95% of them using their devices at a stoplight compared to 90% of overall drivers. In addition, 62% of parents are more likely to use their phones with their children in the car compared to 38% all drivers.

When it comes to distracted driving, 93% of Americans admitted to talking on the phone while in their vehicle, while 74% said they'd dialed a number. Sixty percent of drivers said they send texts while driving, or check notifications (56%). Americans also admitted to having easy access to their phones in the car, with 66% of drivers having their devices in arm's reach.

As more Americans are driving with interruptions, some drivers are taking steps to control them. Thirty-three percent of drivers are choosing to drive in silence, while 32% turn on the "do not disturb" mode on their phones.

## Staying focused

To mark Distracted Driving Awareness Month in April, [follow these tips from the Office of Highway Safety Planning](#):

- Get familiar with vehicle features and equipment before pulling out into traffic.
- Preset radio stations, MP3 devices, and climate control.
- Secure items that may move around when the car is in motion. Do not reach down or behind the seat to pick up items.
- Do not text, access the Internet, watch videos, play video games, search MP3 devices, or use any other distracting technology while driving.
- Avoid smoking, eating, drinking, and reading while driving.
- Pull safely off the road and out of traffic to deal with children.
- Do personal grooming at home.
- Review maps and driving directions before hitting the road.
- Monitor traffic conditions before engaging in activities that could divert attention away from driving.
- Ask a passenger to help with activities that may be distracting.
- If driving long distances, schedule regular stops, every 100 miles or two hours.
- Travel at times when you are normally awake and stay overnight rather than driving straight through.
- Avoid alcohol and medications that may make you drowsy.



**Couple driving in car while man is texting and woman is worried** (Photo: KM Photography, Getty Images/iStockphoto)