

Document 8.1 | Top 10 Facts About Cell Phones and Driving

1. Of all adult drivers who own a cell phone, 10 percent say they talk on the phone while driving “all the time,” 62 percent say “sometimes,” and 28 percent say “never.”
2. An Australian study showed that cell-phone use while driving was associated with slightly more than a fourfold increase in crash risk (odds ratio 4:1).
3. Talking on the phone while driving differs depending on the age of the driver. Of the Echo Boomers (age 18–32), 83 percent report that they at least sometimes talk on the phone while driving. Of the Gen X (age 33–44), 85 percent. Of the Baby Boomers (age 45–63), 70 percent. Of the Matures (64+), 42 percent.
4. Sending and receiving text messages while driving is relatively rare: only 5 percent of all drivers who have a cell phone report that they do so “all the time,” 22 percent report “sometimes,” and 74 percent report “never.”
5. A review of 84 studies of the impact of cell-phone use on driving performance concluded that whereas cell-phone use has only a small or moderate impact on driving-performance measures such as driving speed, lane position, and various other measures of vehicle control, it significantly slows the driver’s speed of reaction to critical events (by 0.23 second).
6. In 1990, there were 5 million wireless subscribers. Today, there are more than 270 million wireless subscribers in the United States.
7. Of those drivers who use cell phones while driving, most think that doing so is dangerous (26 percent “very dangerous,” 24 percent “dangerous,” 33 percent “somewhat dangerous,” 16 percent “slightly dangerous”). Only 2 percent think it is “not dangerous at all.”
8. The #1 outlandish multitasking episode reported by a driver (a Gen Y female from Texas): she reported that she had shaved her legs, eaten a taco, put on make-up, and drunk alcohol at the same time as driving.
9. According to an insurance poll, 78.8 percent of people said they have been a passenger in a car that was being driven by a driver who was not giving his or her full attention to driving.
10. The states of California, Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, and Washington, plus the District of Columbia, outlaw the use of handheld phones while driving. Alaska, Louisiana, Minnesota, New Jersey, Washington, and the District of Columbia prohibit all drivers from text messaging while driving. Seventeen states also have laws that prohibit young drivers—drivers under the age of 18 in some cases, drivers with learner’s permits or provisional licenses in other cases—from using any kind of cell phone (whether handheld or hands-free) while driving.
11. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimated that at any given time, 6 percent of drivers nation wide were holding a cell phone to their ear.