

# The perils of texting while driving

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US research reveals that 4 out of 5 college student drivers have used their cell phones to send or receive text messages while driving despite the majority recognizing that the activity represents a risk. Garold Lantz and Sandra Loeb of the McGowan School of Business, at King's College, in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania, found that male drivers are more likely to engage in texting while driving but consider themselves more proficient drivers than others and so less likely to endanger themselves or others while doing so.

Analysis indicates '[texting](#) impulsiveness' is positively associated with people who text frequently and those who text while driving, the team reports in the *International Journal of Sustainable Strategic Management* this month.

Earlier studies have suggested that texting while driving is on a par with driving while intoxicated with alcohol as a significant risk factor for highway accidents. Indeed, some research suggested that texting slows driver reaction times more than being drunk. Other studies reinforce the myth of multitasking and show that very few (2.5%) people can competently undertake two or more tasks at once. Moreover, our brains allow us to focus completely only on a single task at any given time, so those people demonstrated as multitaskers are simply better at switching seamlessly between two activities. Texting while driving is already banned in some countries, including the UK for this reason.

"There seems to be a mentality that use of electronic devices is dangerous for everyone but 'me'," the team says. While the US

government has introduced a public awareness campaign based around the "distraction.gov" web site, the means to correct for such a risky practice as texting while driving is in dispute. The team's study provides useful empirical evidence regarding attitudes to this issue.

"If further research conclusively demonstrates that texting while driving is as dangerous as [driving](#) drunk this study suggests that a promotional campaign should be undertaken to assure that this point is clearly understood," the team suggests. Lantz points out that, "Our study, particularly our measurement of impulsiveness, is exploratory. We have been working to develop that measurement and it is still a work in progress," he says.

**More information:** "An exploratory study of psychological tendencies related to texting while driving" in *Int. J. Sustainable Strategic Management*, 2013, 4, 39-49.

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