

# Get tougher on texting while driving, Americans say

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Poll finds support for stricter enforcement, harsher penalties.

(HealthDay)—Many Americans want stricter enforcement of texting-while-driving laws and stiffer penalties for violators, according to a new survey.

The National Safety Council poll found that 73 percent of respondents wanted more enforcement of texting and driving laws, compared with 22 percent who found current enforcement levels satisfactory.

When asked about punishments for violators, 52 percent of respondents favored a point system that could lead to the loss of a driver's license or higher car insurance costs. About half supported large fines, and half said there should be different levels of penalties for first and repeat offenders.

"For years, there has been widespread opposition to texting behind the

wheel," safety council president and CEO Deborah Hersman said in a council news release. "Today, the polls show the public is behind stronger penalties because most people recognize that it will take more than awareness campaigns to stop this dangerous behavior."

The poll findings were released as part of National Safety Month in June.

No state bans all [cellphone](#) use while driving. Thirteen states and the District of Columbia ban the use of handheld cellphones by drivers, and 44 states and the District of Columbia ban texting while driving.

Talking on a cellphone—either handheld or hands-free—is believed to be a factor in 21 percent of crashes. An additional 5 percent of crashes are related to [texting](#), according to the council.

The council offered the following tips to prevent distracted driving:

- Make a personal pledge to not use a cellphone while driving. Turn your cellphone off or put it on silent while driving so that you're not tempted to answer it.
- If you're in a car with a driver who's on a cellphone, ask if you can take the [call](#) instead or if the call can wait.
- On your cellphone's voicemail message, tell callers you're either away from the phone or driving, and you'll call them back when you can do so safely.
- If you're talking to someone who is [driving](#), tell the person to hang up and call you later.

**More information:** The U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has more about [distracted driving](#).

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