

# College kids text on dates, in shower, at funerals: survey

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Most know it's bad behavior but can't help themselves, research shows.

Many college students send or receive text messages more than 100 times each day and at the most inappropriate times and places, a new study finds.

How inappropriate? According to a poll involving more than 150 college-age students, many admit to hitting "send" while on a date, during sex, in the shower, in the middle of religious services or even while at a funeral.

The same poll found that many of those [texting](#) agreed that this "inappropriate texting" was socially frowned-upon bad behavior. But they just couldn't help themselves.

"People are going to text in these situations but they know it isn't the right thing to do," said study lead author Marissa Harrison, an associate professor of psychology at Penn State Harrisburg in Middletown, Penn.

"As an example, most people in our study said that it is wrong to text someone while talking in-person to someone else, but most of them did it anyway," she said. "Similarly, most people said that texting others while on a date is not the right thing to do, but they did that anyway, too."

The findings were published online recently in the *Social Science Journal*.

The new study polled respondents from a mid-sized university in the northeastern United States. Nearly 60 percent of the respondents were women, averaging just under 20 years of age. The 70-question poll asked participants to gauge how much they texted per day, how often they checked their incoming texts, whether or not they had ever texted in 33 different social scenarios, and whether they thought texting in each scenario was appropriate.

The result: More than one-third of the students said they send and/or receive at least 100 texts a day, and check their messages (on average) nearly 16 times an hour.

About 90 percent said they texted while eating, and more than 80 percent said they texted while going to the bathroom. Neither was considered to be an example of "taboo" texting.

Other common texting practices, however, were deemed not socially acceptable. For example, 70 percent of the students said they texted while at the movies—no fun for fellow viewers. Most said they did so even though they knew that texting during films is a social no-no.

Similarly, 75 percent said they texted while at work, and eight in 10 texted while in class, despite knowing that both activities were inappropriate.

Texting while in the shower was also deemed inappropriate, but one-third of respondents said they did it anyway. Texting while a waiter is taking an order was deemed wrong but nearly 40 percent said they'd done it, the findings showed.

Then there were the *really* egregious social texting faux pas. For example, about 7 percent said they texted while having sex, more than a fifth said they'd texted during [religious services](#), and 10 percent said they'd texted during somebody's funeral.

Why do young people do this, even when they know it's bad behavior?

"I would say it is just like other compulsions and impulses—there is something rewarding about sending and receiving a text message," Harrison said. "My guess is that is the immediacy of communication."

The flashy, loud nature of smartphones may also play a role, she suggested, playing on our innate desire to investigate and react to stimuli.

Eli Finkel is a professor of psychology and director of social psychology with the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill.

He believes that inappropriate texting ultimately boils down to a lack of self-control.

"It looks like texting at inappropriate times is like chocolate cake when we're on a diet, or watching 'Game of Thrones' rather than studying," Finkel said. "We know what we're doing isn't good for us. But we do it

anyway."

**More information:** Texting while driving is especially dangerous, according to the [U.S. Federal Communications Commission](#).

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