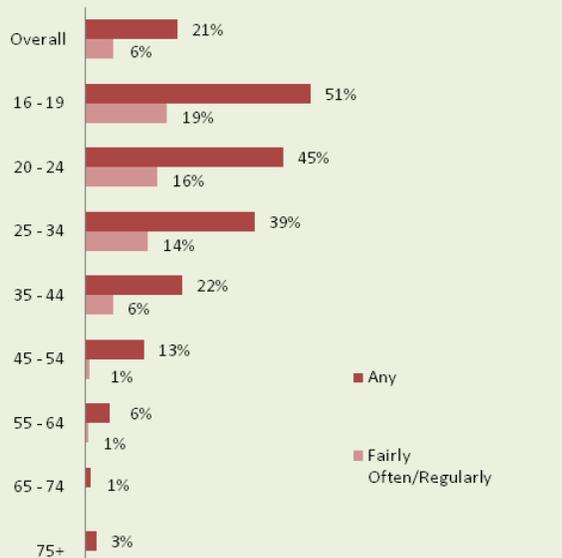
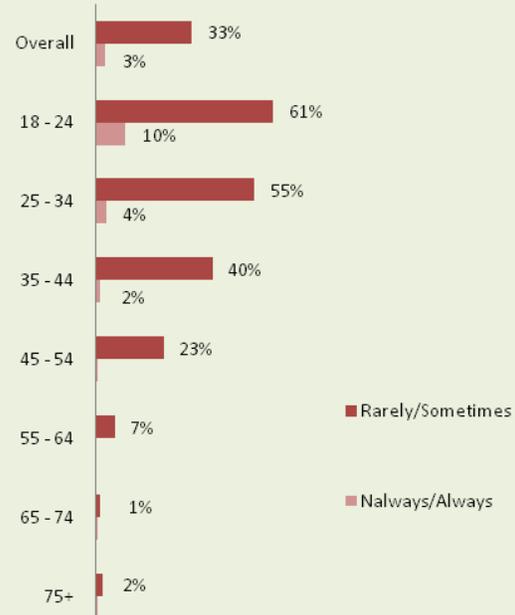


Figure 1: Percent of drivers who report texting/emailing while driving in the past 30 days



Source: Safety Culture, AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety

Figure 2: North Dakota Driver Survey

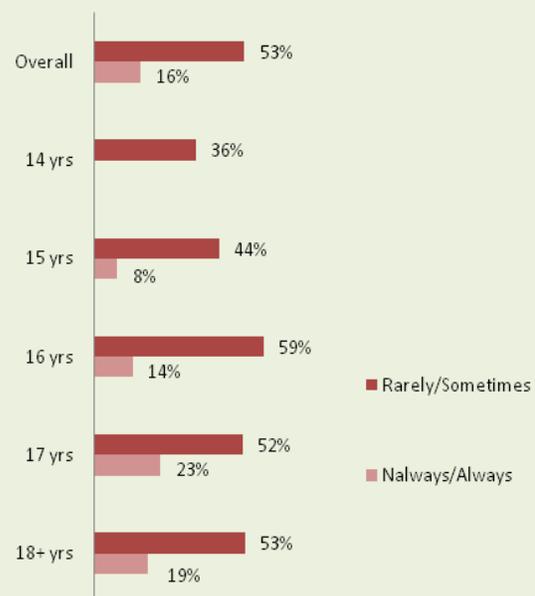


Source: UGPTI/NDDOT ND Driver Survey - 2010

In October, 2009, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety reported findings on a phone survey conducted the previous spring. The survey found that “over one in five (respondents) admit reading or sending text messages or emails while driving”, and overall, 6.4% classify their TWD as “Fairly Often/Regularly” (Figure 1).

An assessment of the texting behavior of drivers in North Dakota can be made using data from surveys administered by the UGPTI in 2010 on behalf of the NDDOT Traffic Safety Office. The ND Driver Survey sampled the general driving population, ages 18 to 75+, while the Teen Driving Questionnaire targeted young drivers (14 - 18+ years) from a number of participating high schools in North Dakota. Both surveys consisted of questions regarding driving practices and traffic safety awareness. Data for TWD was captured in the responses to the following question, “How often do you text message on a cell phone while driving?” The responses of “Rarely” and “Sometimes” were grouped for this analysis, as were “Nearly Always” and “Always.” The results are illustrated in Figures 2 and 3. ND adult drivers demonstrate lower TWD rates when comparing high frequency behavior to AAA Foundation’s findings (3% versus 6.4% overall) and this holds true through age stratifications. However, the results for ND teen drivers, 16 - 18+ years, with higher TWD frequency are equivalent to AAA Foundation’s survey results for 16 - 19 year olds

Figure 3: North Dakota Teen Driving Questionnaire



Source: UGPTI/NDDOT Teen Driving Questionnaire - 2010

(18.7%). Note the 18 - 75+ driver information can be generalized to the state’s population, however, the 14 - 18+ teen survey is a convenience sample that is not statistically representative of the younger population.

North Dakota Initiatives

Steps are being taken in North Dakota, by traffic safety officials and stakeholders, to raise awareness about the inherent dangers of TWD and the crash implications.

- Since June, 2009, North Dakota has included additional elements of driver distraction in the crash report (GHSA 2010).
- North Dakota State Fleet Policy forbids text messaging and other types of electronic communication while operating fleet vehicles.
- Although a statewide texting ban has not met with legislative approval, Grand Forks City Council passed the first citywide texting ban in September 2010. Bismarck followed with a TWD ban the end of October. Violators are issued \$15 and \$50 citations respectively.
- The Fargo Police Department is implementing a texting ban and limiting cell phone use for all Fargo police employees.
- Anti-texting public service announcements and advertising campaigns have been developed. Newman Outdoor Advertising has billboards on display in the Fargo-Moorhead area and other locations across the state with the graphic “DNT TXT & DRV.” The billboards were designed as a public service campaign to encourage the public to refrain from TWD. (Rathjen 2010).
- NDDOT expanded their *Click It or Ticket* campaign and renamed it Click It Quick with supplemental efforts towards educating area youth on the hazards of TWD.
- The NDDOT offers a webpage specifically geared to the hazards of cell phone use and texting while driving, TNT-KABOOM. <http://www.ndteendrivers.com/tnt-kaboom/distracted.php>

Recommendations made by the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA)

- The federal government should fund research to develop effective methods for enforcing texting and cell phone bans.
- States should ban text messaging for all drivers.
- The private sector should ban cell phone use/texting by all employees driving for business purposes.
- Parents should set a good example by not using a cell phone while driving.

Summary

Distracted driving is becoming synonymous with cell phone use and texting in the minds of the public. Every year, TWD is more commonplace among drivers. While some young drivers express concern about the dangers of TWD (Pew 2009), there are drivers within this demographic who feel capable of both tasks and if in a crash, tend to blame other factors. While the IIHS studies do not support wide-spread cell phone and texting bans, other studies do show cognitive, manual, and visual impairment when TWD. Public awareness of the risks of all types of distracted driving would seem germane to policy and education considerations during all TWD discussions.

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