

This topic is “practice ready.” Yes No

Identification of Teenage and Young-Adult Drivers' Distractions in Kansas Using Survey Data

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Abstract

Young drivers have the highest crash risk on the roadways when compared with other age groups. One of the major causes of traffic crashes by young drivers is due to distracted driving. In Kansas, while the overall traffic crashes have gone down in the last five years (2010 to 2014), distraction-affected crashes and crashes involving cell phone use have gone up. The objective of this study was to evaluate teenage (15-20 years old) and young-adult (21-26 years old) drivers' attitudes and behaviors associated with distracted driving and cell phone use while driving. This evaluation was accomplished through conducting a survey of over 532 teenage and young-adult Kansas drivers.

Based on the survey results, a majority of teenage and young-adult drivers would at least sometimes engage in most distraction activities while driving. In particular, a large portion of the survey participants stated that they talk to their passengers or adjust car radio while driving. Half of teenage and young-adult drivers said that they use their cell phones (i.e., talking, texting, or using for driving directions) while driving. A large majority of these drivers reported that they continue to drive while using their cell phones. Additionally, about 80% of them said that they use their cell phones while driving in school or work zones. However, nearly 50% of them stated that they never use their cell phones while driving when they saw police officers. Also, most of teenage and young-adult passengers said that they felt unsafe if their drivers engaged in the secondary tasks while driving. Nearly, one-fourth of total teenage and young-adult drivers' crashes and near-crashes involved cell phone related distracted driving. The results of this study suggest there is a need to implement hand-held cell phone ban coupled with highly-visible police enforcement to reduce young drivers' distraction-affected crashes. Furthermore, improving young drivers' education will help to understand how distraction while driving influences their driving risk.

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Keywords: Distracted Driving Attitudes and Behaviors — Cell Phone Use — Teenage Drivers — Young-Adult Drivers — Kansas