



New Jerseyans go fast, multi-task, but say NY drivers are worse

A majority of young drivers in New Jersey admit to sending text messages while they drive, but older drivers go over the speed limit and talk on their phones while driving as well. These findings are among the most striking from a recent study by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind Poll, co-sponsored by the New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety. Drivers also say that the effective speed limit in New Jersey is substantially higher than the posted limit, and support the use of cameras to enforce some traffic regulations. Despite their own driving behaviors, a majority of New Jerseyans say New York drivers are worse.

Half (51%) of drivers under 30 years of age say they have sent a text message while driving in the past three years. That compares to less than 10% of drivers over 30. However, that doesn't mean other drivers aren't using their cell phones when behind the wheel. While the majority of all drivers (59%) claim they "never" use a hand-held cell phone while driving, four out of five (79%) say they see other drivers holding phones and talking "very often." The talking and driving goes on despite 9 in 10 drivers (91%) knowing that using a hand-held cell phone is a primary offense in New Jersey and that nearly as many (88%) support the law.

"The fact that people blame everyone else for holding their phones while driving tells us that people at least recognize that it's a bad thing," said Pam Fischer, Director of the New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety. "But we need every motorist to not only know the law, but to adhere to it and put down their phones."

A third (34%) of all drivers and a majority (55%) of drivers who commute more than 20 miles say they "sometimes" or "very often" use a *hands-free* cell phone while driving. Two-thirds (67%) also say that driving and using a hand-held phone is more dangerous than driving while using a hands-free device. "Hands-free conversations are simply not safer," said Fischer. "That's because your brain is processing the information you're hearing in your ear and your eyes are no longer scanning the road. To be truly safe, get off the phone" said Fischer. "If you have to take or make a call, do it in compliance with the law and as quickly as possible. The only thing you should be doing when you're behind the wheel is driving."

New Jersey drivers also don't seem to mind taking their hands off the wheel for other reasons: more than a quarter (27%) say that they've made a rude gesture at another driver in the past few years. Women are just as likely as men to have done so.

--more--

Garden State drivers take other liberties as well. One in four (25%) say they go over the 65 mph speed limit on the highway “most of the time”; another one in five (20%) say that they exceed the 65 mph highway speed limit “often.” A majority of drivers under 30 (63%) say they drive over 65 mph “often” or “most of the time.” Just one in six (17%) drivers say they never speed on the highways.

Jerseyans don’t think that they’ll be ticketed for speeding. Three in four (74%) say that the effective speed limit on New Jersey highways – the speed at which you can go without getting a ticket – is 70 miles per hour or higher. A quarter (25%) think the real limit is 75 mph or higher. Still, 9% of drivers, including a quarter (24%) of those under the age of 30, report having received a speeding ticket in the past three years.

“There seems to be the perception that speeding isn’t a serious traffic offense, that everyone does it,” said Fischer. “But speed is dangerous. Speed-related crashes in New Jersey have nearly doubled since 2002 and with more than half of these crashes occurring on municipal and county roads, motorists have to slow it down for their sake and everyone else.”

Despite their behaviors, most New Jersey drivers support the use of automated enforcement tools to catch drivers behaving badly: 77%, including majorities in all age groups, support the use of cameras to catch drivers running red lights, and 62% say they support using cameras to catch speeders.

Regardless of what New Jersey drivers are doing, there is wide agreement among them that New Yorkers are worse drivers. Fifty-four percent say that our neighbors across the Hudson are the worst drivers on the road. This disdain for New York drivers could come from New Jerseyans’ assessment of their own skill: 69% rate themselves as “above-average” drivers, while 30% rate themselves “average.” Nearly two-thirds of married drivers also rate their spouses as “above average” drivers.

“No one rates themselves as being a below-average driver,” noted Peter Woolley, Director of the FDU poll. “Perhaps they think all the bad drivers moved to New York.”

“As for the number of young drivers text messaging,” said Woolley, “I’m glad I live close enough to campus that I can walk.”

The PublicMind survey was co-sponsored by the New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety and carried out by telephone from April 17 through May 26 using a randomly selected sample of 1,004 New Jersey residents aged 17 and over who report they drive regularly. It has a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points.

Tables, questions, and methodology available on the web at:

<http://publicmind.fdu.edu>

Radio actuality line: (201) 692-2846.

Methods and Tables

This study was conducted by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind and co-sponsored by the New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety. The survey was conducted by telephone from April 17 through May 26 using a randomly selected sample of 1,004 New Jersey residents aged 17 and over who report they drive regularly. The sampling error for 1,004 randomly selected respondents is +/-3 percentage points at the 95 percent level of confidence. Survey results are also subject to non-sampling error. This kind of error, which cannot be measured, arises from a number of factors including, but not limited to, non-response (eligible individuals refusing to be interviewed), question wording, the order in which questions are asked, and variations among interviewers. All interviews were conducted by professionally trained interviewers using a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system. Random selection is obtained through computerized random-digit dialing. This technique gives every person with a land-line phone number an equal chance of being selected, including those with unlisted numbers. Results may be weighted to match known demographics. A complete questionnaire, all tables, and descriptive narrative will be issued in the document: *2008 Survey of Driver Attitudes and Behavior: Summary of Findings*.

In the past three years have you personally, sent a text message while driving?											
	All	Age				White	Non-White	HS or less	Some College	College	College Plus
		17-29	30-44	45-60	60+						
Yes	15%	51	20	7	1	13	22	8	19	19	14
No	84%	49	80	92	98	86	77	90	80	80	86
Don't Know	1%	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Refused	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0

Now let me ask about driving and cell phones. How often do you personally drive your car and at the same time hold your cell phone and talk into it ... ?											
	All	Age				White	Non-White	HS or less	Some College	College	College Plus
		17-29	30-44	45-60	60+						
Very Often	5%	10	8	4	0	5	6	2	4	7	6
Sometimes	11%	26	14	8	3	9	16	10	14	10	8
Rarely	22%	22	26	28	14	23	21	14	23	24	30
Never	59%	41	52	58	76	60	55	70	55	57	54
Don't Know	0%	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Don't Have Cell Phone	3%	0	0	2	7	3	2	4	3	2	2

How often do you see people driving a car while holding a cell phone and talking....?										
	All	Age				HS or less	Some College	College	College Plus	
		17-29	30-44	45-60	60+					
Very Often	79%	75	77	83	78	84	82	75	77	
Sometimes	15%	21	17	12	16	12	12	19	18	
Rarely	3%	3	5	2	3	1	4	4	3	
Never	2%	1	1	2	2	3	1	1	1	
Don't Know	1%	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	

Do you think that driving and talking on a hand-held phone is more or less dangerous than driving and using a hands-free phone?										
	All	Age				HS or less	Some College	College	College Plus	
		17-29	30-44	45-60	60+					
More Dangerous	67%	60	68	67	70	64	64	67	74	
Less Dangerous	10%	16	10	11	8	9	11	13	9	
Don't Know	23%	24	22	22	22	27	25	20	17	

Now, let me ask. How often do you personally drive your car and at the same time talk into a hands-free cell phone?

	All	Don't Drive to Work	All Commuters	Drive Less than 20 miles	Drive more than 20 miles
Very Often	19%	12	24	20	33
Sometimes	15%	12	18	16	22
Rarely	15%	13	17	18	14
Never	46%	55	39	42	28
Don't Know	1%	1	0	1	0
Don't Have Cell Phone	4%	7	2	3	1

To the best of your knowledge, can police stop and ticket drivers just for talking on a hand-held phone?

	All	Age				HS or less	Some College	College	College Plus
		17-29	30-44	45-60	60+				
Yes	91%	89	93	93	88	87	89	94	92
No	4%	9	4	3	2	5	7	3	2
Don't Know	5%	2	3	4	10	8	4	3	6

Police in New Jersey can now stop and ticket drivers just for talking on a hand-held phone. Do you support or oppose this law?

	All			Age				Married		Never Married
		Men	Women	17-29	30-44	45-60	60+			
Support	88%	84	92	81	86	87	94	89	83	
Oppose	10%	13	6	16	12	10	4	8	14	
Don't Know	2%	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	3	

In the past three years have you personally, made a rude gesture at another driver?

	All			Age				HS or less	Some College	College	College Plus
		Men	Women	17-29	30-44	45-60	60+				
Yes	27%	28	26	37	38	24	18	23	30	27	31
No	73%	72	74	63	62	75	82	77	70	73	69
Don't Know/ Don't Remember	0%	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0

When you're driving on a New Jersey highway, how often would you say you drive over 65 miles an hour?

	All			Age				Married		Never Married
		Men	Women	17-29	30-44	45-60	60+			
Most of the time	25%	24	26	43	26	21	19	22	33	
Often	20%	22	19	20	29	22	12	20	21	
Just once in a while	37%	37	37	22	30	43	43	40	26	
Never	17%	16	18	15	14	13	25	17	20	
Don't Know	1%	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	
Refused	0%	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	

[Excluding those who "Never" drive over 65]: And how often would you say that you drive over 70 miles an hour?									
Most of the time	8%	8	7	15	8	7	5	6	14
Often	12%	13	11	26	13	11	6	10	19
Just once in a while	46%	50	42	37	50	46	44	49	34
Never	33%	28	38	21	28	35	44	34	32
Don't Know	1%	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
Refused	0%	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0

[Excluding those who "Never" drive over 70 And how often would you say that you drive over 75 miles an hour?									
Most of the time	3%	4	2	9	2	1	2	2	7
Often	4%	5	4	9	2	5	2	4	6
Just once in a while	43%	46	39	56	40	42	34	40	55
Never	49%	45	54	24	55	50	62	54	31
Don't Know	0%	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Refused	1%	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1

The posted speed limit is 65 on most highways in New Jersey, but what would you say is the actual speed limit-the speed at which you can go on a New Jersey highway without getting a speeding ticket?									
	All	Men Women		Age				White Non-White	
				17-29	30-44	45-60	60+		
65 to 69	18%	16	19	15	13	16	23	16	24
70 to 74	48%	49	47	48	50	55	42	48	48
75 to 79	21%	22	20	27	26	16	18	22	18
80 to 85	4%	6	4	5	5	6	3	6	1
85 plus	1%	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0
Don't Know	8%	6	9	4	6	6	13	7	9

In the past three years have you personally, received a speeding ticket?									
	All	Men Women		Age				White Non-White	
				17-29	30-44	45-60	60+		
Yes	9%	11	7	24	9	9	2	6	17
No	90%	88	92	76	91	90	97	93	81
Don't Know/ Don't Remember	1%	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	2

Some towns will be using cameras to help enforce stopping at red lights. Do you support or oppose towns using cameras to catch red-light runners?									
	All	Men Women		Age				White Non-White	
				17-29	30-44	45-60	60+		
Support	77%	72	81	76	78	74	81	77	78
Oppose	19%	25	13	19	17	23	15	19	17
Don't Know	4%	3	6	5	5	4	4	4	5

And what about using cameras to help enforce speed limits. Do you support or oppose towns using cameras to catch speeders?											
	All	Men	Wom	Age				HS or less	Some College	College	College Plus
				17-29	30-44	45-60	60+				
Support	62%	57	66	53	60	57	75	73	61	60	50
Oppose	32%	38	26	40	34	37	18	21	34	33	42
Don't Know	7%	5	8	7	6	6	7	6	5	7	8

Thinking about drivers from the states around us. which state would you say has the worst drivers...?							
	All	Age				White	Non-White
		17-29	30-44	45-60	60+		
Pennsylvania	15%	17	15	15	13	17	9
Maryland	1%	0	1	2	2	1	1
Delaware	1%	0	1	1	1	1	1
New York	54%	61	59	54	48	50	66
Connecticut	2%	4	3	1	2	3	0
New Jersey	8%	4	11	8	6	7	9
Other	3%	3	2	4	4	4	3
Don't Know	15%	11	8	15	23	16	11
Refused	1%	0	0	0	1	1	0

How would you rate your own driving skills compared to most other drivers on the road? Would you say that your skills are ...									
	All	Men	Women	Age				Married	Never Married
				17-29	30-44	45-60	60+		
Above Average	69%	75	64	55	70	77	65	71	63
Just Average	30%	24	36	45	30	23	32	28	37
Below Average	0%	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Don't Know/Refused	1%	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0

[Only Married Respondents]: How would you rate your spouse's driving skills?											
	All	Men	Women	Age				HS or less	Some College	College	College Plus
				17-29	30-44	45-60	60+				
Above Average	63%	61	64	47	59	67	66	55	52	68	74
Just Average	28%	28	28	29	34	25	25	31	40	25	20
Below Average	3%	3	3	19	1	3	2	4	2	4	1
Don't Know	5%	7	4	5	5	4	7	10	5	2	4
Refused	1%	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1

[Only Married Respondents]: And would you say your spouse is a better or a worse driver than you?											
Better	34%	22	46	33	42	32	30	29	35	36	35
About the Same	28%	32	23	36	27	28	30	31	32	20	34
Worse	31%	37	24	26	28	34	30	27	30	37	27
Don't Know	5%	7	6	5	2	5	9	12	3	5	3
Refused	2%	2	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	2	1