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## N.J. Drivers Behaving Badly, but still say they're better than N.Y.

The number of New Jersey drivers who admit to sending text messages while driving increased by 40% this past year. According to a recent study by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind Poll, co-sponsored by the New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety, 21% now say that they have sent a text while driving, up from 15% a year ago. The study also found that one in ten drivers say they can have three drinks and still be "okay" to drive, and the majority say that drivers from New York are the worst on the road.

Young people are still much more likely than their older counterparts to send a text message while driving: 57% under the age of 30 say they've done so, up 6 points from last year. But older drivers are increasingly likely to join them: more than one in four (28%) drivers 30 to 44 years of age (up 8 points from last year) say they have sent a text message while behind the wheel, along with about 1 in 8 (12%) of drivers aged 45 to 60. The only people not sending texts in traffic were those over 60; of whom only 1% sent a message while driving.

"As we embrace new technology, the number of people sending texts while driving continues to increase," said Dan Cassino, the director of experimental research for the PublicMind poll, and a professor of political science at Fairleigh Dickinson University. This is happening despite the fact that 86% support the state's primary cell phone and texting law, and 71% say it should be more strictly enforced. "People seem to have gotten the message about cell phones and driving, but for some reason don't get it about texting."

Texting is just one element in a related group of bad driving behaviors on Garden State roadways. Motorists who text are also more likely to use hand-held phones behind the wheel, regularly drive over the speed limit on highways, and make rude gestures at other motorists. "The results suggest that there is a group of drivers in the state – many of whom have long commutes – who drive faster than the rest of us, and do so while multi-tasking," said Cassino. "But I have to imagine that text messaging while making rude gestures is a bad idea at any speed."

The number of drivers who use hand-held phones while driving has stabilized, after a large decline from 2007 and 2008. Today, four out of five (80%) drivers say they "rarely" or "never" use a hand-held phone behind the wheel, unchanged from last year, and improved from 71% in 2007. Nonetheless, 18% of respondents hold cell phones while driving "very often" or "sometimes." And these numbers do not include people who talk on hands-free phones while driving. Despite research showing that using a hands-free

cell phone while driving is just as risky as holding a cell phone while driving, 70% of New Jersey drivers say that hands-free phones are safer.

“New Jersey crash data clearly shows that motorists are at risk whether they’re talking on a hand-held or hands-free phone,” said Division of Highway Safety Director Pam Fischer. “Any cell phone conversation is distracting and dangerous. The best way to ensure your safety is to hang up and just drive.”

Meanwhile, 84% of New Jersey drivers say they drive over 65 miles per hour at least once in awhile, with 1 in 4 saying that they do so “most of the time.” Nearly half (47%) say they go over 75 miles per hour on occasion. This correlates to the fact, that only one in four (20%) drivers say the real speed limit on New Jersey highways — the speed at which you can go without getting a ticket — is less than 70 mph. One in four (25%) say the real speed limit is 75 mph or greater.

“Unsafe speed was a factor in more than 22, 000 crashes last year,” pointed out Fischer, “a number that has been on the increase since 2001. Couple speeding with other unsafe behaviors like tailgating, running red lights and stops signs, and weaving in and out of traffic, or talking on a cell phone, and you’ve got a recipe for disaster.”

Speeding behavior is strongly correlated to the distance that drivers commute to work: three out of four (74%) drivers who commute more than 30 miles each way to work say they go over 65 mph “most of the time” or “often,” compared to 46% of those who drive less than 10 miles each way to work. Drivers who go over 65 mph “most of the time” or “often” are also more prone to talk on a hand-held cell phone while driving, with one in four (26%) doing so “very often” or “sometimes,” compared to 10% of drivers who speed “just once in a while” or “never.” The same pattern applies to text messaging: drivers who speed regularly are two and a half times as likely as other drivers to have sent a text message while driving.

Despite admitting to such dangerous driving behaviors, the vast majority of New Jersey drivers – 70% – say their driving skills are above average, while only 1% (almost all under the age of 30) admit being below average. A majority of married drivers (62%) also rate their spouse’s skills “above average,” but only 29% of married drivers – and only 1 in 5 men – say their spouse is a better driver than themselves.

Director Fischer believes that it’s time for all motorists to conduct a “personal reality check” of their own driving behaviors. “We have to stop blaming each other for our bad driving practices and take personal responsibility for what we’re doing behind the wheel. If you’re driving faster than the posted speed limit, drinking alcohol and then driving, sending a text message while behind the wheel, or committing some other unlawful and unsafe act, you’re a hazard on the road.”

One in five drivers (21%) also say that they have consumed alcohol and then driven, up 6 points from last year. More educated drivers are actually more likely to drink and

drive: 30% of respondents with a post-college education admit to it, compared to fewer than one in five of those who don't have a college diploma.

While one in four drivers (24%) say they don't drink, half of all drivers (and 77% of just those who do drink) think that they're "okay" to drive after having a drink. One in five say they can have two drinks (and 27% of drinkers), and one in 10 of all drivers (11%, or 16% of those who drink) say that they can have three or more drinks and still be "okay" to drive.

"Just as people overestimate their driving skills – almost everyone says that they're above average—people overestimate their alcohol tolerance," said Cassino. "Men want to say that they can hold their liquor. It's no coincidence that they're twice as likely to drink and drive." Last year in New Jersey, nearly one in three fatal motor vehicle crashes involved alcohol.

According to Jersey drivers, the really bad drivers are from New York: 54% say Empire State drivers are the "worst" in the area, easily beating out the 16% who cite Pennsylvania's drivers as the "worst." Meanwhile, 7% volunteer that their fellow Garden State drivers are the "worst," despite it not being an option on the survey.

"There's a certain kind of logic to these results," said Cassino. "If almost everyone in New Jersey is above average, the bad drivers have to be somewhere."

"We've made tremendous gains in safety, in particular during the past year, when fatalities declined to the lowest number since 1948," added Director Fischer, "and we made these gains, in spite of ourselves, and our often bad behavior behind the wheel. Imagine the even greater impact we could have on traffic safety, if everyone not only owned up to their own safety indiscretions but corrected them."

The Fairleigh Dickinson University survey was co-sponsored by the New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety and conducted by telephone from April 28 through June 1 using a randomly selected sample of 951 New Jersey residents aged 17 and over who report they drive regularly, including an oversample of drivers under the age of 30. It has a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points.

<p><b>Tables, questions, and methodology available on the web at:</b> <a href="http://publicmind.fdu.edu">http://publicmind.fdu.edu</a> <b>Radio actuality line:</b> (201) 692-2846. <b>For more information, please call</b> (973) 443-8756.</p>
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## 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 28 through June 1 using a randomly selected sample of 951 New Jersey residents aged 17 and over who report they drive regularly, including an oversample of drivers under the age of 30. The sampling error for 951 randomly selected respondents in a statewide survey 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 made available in the document: *2009 Survey of Driver Attitudes and Behavior: Summary of Findings*.

In the past three years have you personally, sent a text message while driving?								
	All	All (2008)	Married	Never Been Married	HS or less	Some College	College	College Plus
Yes	21	15	14	43	18	21	25	17
No	79	84	85	56	82	79	75	83
Don't Know/ Don't Remember	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1

In the past three years have you personally, sent a text message while driving?									
	All	17-29		30-44		45-60		60+	
		2008	2009	2008	2009	2008	2009	2008	2009
Yes	21	51	57	20	28	7	12	1	1
No	79	49	43	80	72	92	87	98	99
Don't Know/ Don't Remember	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0

In the past three years have you personally, sent a text message while driving?							
	All	Cell Phone Use		Drives Over 65		Rude Gestures	
		Often or Sometimes	Rarely or Never	Always or Most of the Time	Once in a While or Never	Yes	No
Yes	21	47	15	31	12	33	16
No	79	53	84	69	87	67	84
Don't Know/ Don't Remember	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

In the past three years have you personally, made a rude gesture at another driver?												
	All	All (2008)			Age				HS or less	Some College	College	College Plus
			Men	Women	17-29	30-44	45-60	60+				
Yes	27	27	33	20	32	36	28	14	20	32	30	21
No	73	73	66	79	68	63	71	85	79	67	70	77
Don't Know/Don't Remember	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	2

**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	All (2008)	Age				White	Non-White	HS or less	Some College	College	College Plus
			17-29	30-44	45-60	60+						
Very Often	4	5	9	5	3	2	5	3	5	3	5	4
Sometimes	14	11	24	20	12	6	14	14	11	16	17	10
Rarely	27	22	32	24	34	17	27	26	20	23	33	29
Never	53	59	35	49	49	70	51	57	60	56	44	56
Don't Know	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Don't Have Cell Phone	2	3	0	1	2	5	3	1	4	2	1	1

**How often do you personally drive your car and at the same time hold your cell phone and talk into it...?**

	2009	2008	2007	2005
Very Often	4	5	9	10
Sometimes	14	11	17	13
Rarely	27	22	28	23
Never	53	59	43	47
Don't Know / Don't Have Cell Phone	2	3	3	7

**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	Drives Over 65	
		Always or Most of the Time	Once in a While or Never
Very Often	4	6	2
Sometimes	14	20	8
Rarely	27	34	21
Never	53	39	65
Don't Know	0	0	0
Don't Have Cell Phone	2	1	3

**As you probably know, police in New Jersey can stop and ticket drivers just for talking on a hand-held phone. Do you support or oppose this law?**

	All	All (2008)	Men	Women	Age				HS or less	Some College	College	College Plus
					17-29	30-44	45-60	60+				
Support	86	88	82	90	80	81	87	93	88	85	82	91
Oppose	13	10	17	9	20	17	11	6	11	12	16	9
Don't Know	1	2	2	1	0	2	2	1	2	2	2	0

**When it comes to enforcing this law against holding a cell phone and driving, do you think police should enforce this more strictly than they do, or not?**

	All	Male	Female	Age				Married	Never Been Married
				17-29	30-44	45-60	60+		
Yes, More Strictly	71	68	74	52	66	76	85	75	59
No, Not More Strictly	23	26	21	42	28	20	10	19	37
Less	1	2	0	2	2	0	0	1	2
Don't Know	5	5	5	4	4	3	6	5	3

When you're driving on a New Jersey highway, how often would you say you drive over 65 miles an hour?										
	All	All (2008)	Men	Women	Age				HS or Less	College Plus
					17-29	30-44	45-60	60+		
Most of the time	25	25	29	21	33	34	23	16	18	22
Often	22	20	23	22	27	25	23	16	20	31
Just once in a while	37	37	34	39	27	31	39	42	34	36
Never	15	17	13	18	11	11	13	24	28	10
Don't Know	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	2	1	0
[Excluding those who "Never" drive over 65] And how often would you say that you drive 75 miles an hour or more?										
Most of the time	4	3	6	2	6	8	3	1	5	1
Often	7	4	10	5	13	9	7	4	6	7
Just once in a while	36	43	40	32	49	38	34	29	30	40
Never	52	49	43	60	31	45	56	65	59	51
Don't Know	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Refused	0	1	0	0	0	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	Commuting Distance			
		Less than 10 miles	10 to 20 miles	20 to 30 miles	30 or more miles
Most of the time	25	28	22	40	32
Often	22	18	28	22	42
Just once in a while	37	42	37	33	20
Never	15	12	12	5	6
Don't Know	1	0	1	1	0

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	All (2008)	Men	Women	Age				White	Non-White
					17-29	30-44	45-60	60+		
65 to 69	20	18	18	21	10	19	21	23	18	23
70 to 74	49	48	44	53	51	53	49	47	49	50
75 to 79	20	21	25	14	28	20	20	15	22	17
80 to 85	4	4	5	3	7	5	1	4	4	4
85 plus	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1
Don't Know	7	8	7	7	3	2	8	11	7	5

In the past three years have you personally, driven after drinking alcohol?									
	All Respondents			Men	Women	Age			
	2009	2008	2007			17-29	30-44	45-60	60+
Yes	21	17	23	28	15	25	23	24	16
No	78	83	76	71	85	75	77	76	83
Don't Know/ Don't Remember	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1

<b>In the past three years have you personally, driven after drinking alcohol?</b>					
	All	HS or less	Some College	College	College Plus
Yes	21	10	20	25	30
No	78	89	79	75	69
Don't Know/Don't Remember	1	1	1	0	1

<b>And thinking about yourself and drinking alcohol, in general how many drinks can you have--personally--and still be O.K. to drive?</b>									
	All	Age				White	Non-White	Married	Never Been Married
		17-29	30-44	45-60	60+				
Zero/None	16	17	16	17	14	15	18	16	17
One	23	20	22	27	24	26	17	24	20
Two	19	19	20	23	16	22	14	19	19
Three	6	7	6	6	6	7	5	6	8
Four	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	2	3
Five or More	3	6	3	2	2	3	1	2	6
Never Drink	24	18	26	18	31	20	37	26	17
Don't Know	6	11	5	5	5	6	6	5	9

<b>How would you rate your own driving skills compared to most other drivers on the road? Would you say that your skills are ...</b>										
	All	All (2008)	Men	Women	Age				Married	Never Married
					17-29	30-44	45-60	60+		
Above Average	70	69	76	64	59	71	79	65	71	62
Just Average	30	30	24	35	39	29	21	35	28	37
Below Average	1	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	1
Don't Know/Refused	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

<b>[Only Married Respondents]: How would you rate your spouse's driving skills?</b>												
	All	All (2008)	Men	Women	Age				HS or less	Some College	College	College Plus
					17-29	30-44	45-60	60+				
Above Average	62	63	59	65	50	59	66	64	61	57	66	63
Just Average	30	28	31	29	46	35	26	26	27	33	31	29
Below Average	4	3	6	2	0	4	5	5	5	5	2	5
Don't Know	3	5	3	3	0	2	3	4	7	5	1	1
Refused	1	1	0	1	4	0	0	1	1	1	0	1

<b>[Only Married Respondents]: And would you say your spouse is a better or a worse driver than you?</b>												
Better	29	34	20	38	28	28	30	28	34	24	27	33
About the Same	33	28	35	30	42	29	30	39	33	30	35	31
Worse	32	31	38	25	26	38	34	26	25	34	34	32
Don't Know	4	5	5	4	0	4	5	5	5	9	2	2
Refused	2	2	1	2	4	1	1	2	2	3	1	2

<b>Thinking about drivers from the states around us, which state would you say has the worst drivers...?</b>										
			Age				Education			
	All	All (2008)	17-29	30-44	45-60	60+	HS or less	Some College	College	College Plus
Pennsylvania	16	15	21	13	16	17	16	22	14	13
Maryland	1	1	1	1	0	2	1	0	1	1
Delaware	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1
New York	54	54	58	61	49	50	58	54	58	42
Connecticut	2	2	4	2	2	2	1	4	2	3
New Jersey	7	8	2	6	9	7	6	6	6	10
Other	3	3	3	2	3	3	2	1	4	5
Don't Know	16	15	10	14	18	19	14	12	15	24

<b>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?</b>										
			Age				HS or less	Some College	College	College Plus
	All	All (2008)	17-29	30-44	45-60	60+	HS or less	Some College	College	College Plus
More Dangerous	70	67	73	70	73	65	67	68	70	76
Less Dangerous	7	10	8	7	5	9	9	10	6	4
Same	20	NA	19	19	19	22	18	21	22	18
Don't Know	3	23	0	4	3	3	5	2	2	1

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