DISTRACTED DRIVING

In August 2016, the State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company (State Farm®) Strategic Resources Department conducted an online survey with adults 18 and older to examine their attitudes and behaviors regarding distracted driving. This survey was the eighth wave of a study first conducted in August 2009. This report highlights findings from this research. Note: A number of changes were made to the survey research in 2016 such that results in this report should not be compared with the results in the 2015 "Distracted Driving" report also produced by State Farm, except where noted.

Summary

Few distracted driving behavior rates involving cellphones increased significantly this year, even though smartphone ownership continues to increase. More drivers have smartphones than ever before, which enables many distracted driving behaviors. However, after several years of steady increases in self-reported distracting cellphone activities, only two distracted driving behaviors involving cellphones (taking pictures and recording video) increased this year. In fact, rates actually dropped for drivers under the age of 30 in key areas such as talking on a hand-held cellphone and browsing the internet while driving.

Drivers reported engaging in various cellphone activities while driving despite finding these activities distracting and despite thinking that this behavior increases the likelihood of a crash. For example, 29 percent of drivers reported accessing the internet while driving even though 96 percent found it distracting and 77 percent thought it increases the likelihood of a crash. Drivers who reported engaging in these activities were less likely to find them distracting.

Using a cellphone while driving, engaging in other dangerous driving behaviors, and self-reported crash rates were all related to each other. A higher rate of self-reported cellphone activities was related to a higher rate of additional risky driving behaviors including speeding, eating, and driving while drowsy. In addition, drivers who have been in a crash were more likely to report engaging in both dangerous cellphone and non-cellphone behaviors than drivers who have not been in a crash. This relationship holds even when accounting for age.

Among respondents who said they engage in distracted-driving behaviors, common reasons included increased efficiency, as well as the behaviors being a habit. Staying in touch with family and friends were commonly cited reasons for talking, texting, and using social media while driving, whereas searching for an answer to a question was the primary reason drivers browse the internet. Among respondents who refrain from these behaviors, safety appears to be more important than legal consequences.

Many drivers do not know their state laws regarding cellphone use while driving. This is important because perceptions of these laws impact drivers' behavior. Regardless of what respondents' state laws actually say, respondents were significantly more likely to talk and text while driving if they thought it was legal than if they thought it was illegal. This suggests that increased awareness of these laws in states where it is illegal to talk on a hand-held cellphone and/or text while driving may reduce these behaviors.

Nearly all drivers own a smartphone.

Among all drivers with a cellphone, the overwhelming majority of respondents (91 percent) own a smartphone, compared to 52 percent just five years ago and 88 percent in 2015. This increase in ownership provides opportunities for more drivers to take part in several distracted driving behaviors than in the past.

Very few distracted driving behaviors significantly increased this year, and rates actually dropped among young drivers.

While it is true that distracted driving behaviors have been on the rise for the past several years, only two cellphone activity rates had significant increases this year: taking pictures and recording video (see chart on page 2). In fact, when examining drivers of all ages, two changes (talking on a hand-held cellphone and text messaging), although not significant, were in the opposite direction. In addition, self-reported participation rates decreased for young drivers (under the age of 30) for several smartphone behaviors. For example, in 2015, 73 percent of young drivers reported talking on a hand-held cellphone while driving and 54 percent reported accessing the internet on a cellphone while driving. While still common, these rates dropped to 64 percent and 50 percent, respectively, in 2016.

Drivers were also asked about interacting with others in the vehicle while driving (talking with passengers and attending to children or pets). Although not significant, all three interactional behaviors were lower this year than in 2015 (see chart on page 3).

©, Copyright, State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company, 2016

Cellphone Activities Drivers Participate in While Driving

	All Drivers*								Drivers Age 18-29*							
	2009 *n = 851*	2010 *n = 899*	2011 *n = 881*	2012 *n = 872*	2013 *n = 880*	2014 *n = 862*	2015 *n = 856*	2016 *n = 962*	2009 *n = 194*	2010 *n = 202*	2011 *n = 189*	2012 *n = 187*	2013 *n = 181*	2014 *n = 187*	2015 *n = 185*	2016 *n = 212*
Talk on a hand-held cellphone	65%	62%	58%	57%	57%	55%	51%	50%	78%	84%	70%	74%	77%	64%	73%	64%
Talk on a hands-free cellphone	42%	39%	41%	38%	50%	51%	55%	57%	53%	45%	45%	42%	53%	54%	62%	58%
Text message	31%	31%	32%	34%	35%	33%	36%	35%	71%	71%	64%	68%	69%	58%	64%	61%
Access the internet on cellphone	13%	17%	18%	21%	24%	26%	29%	29%	29%	43%	43%	48%	49%	48%	54%	50%
Read email on cellphone	15%	17%	21%	22%	24%	25%	23%	26%	32%	37%	46%	43%	41%	43%	41%	39%
Respond to email on cellphone	12%	12%	15%	16%	16%	18%	18%	21%	27%	26%	28%	29%	31%	31%	33%	32%
Read social media networks	9%	11%	14%	15%	17%	20%	21%	22%	21%	28%	37%	36%	37%	41%	44%	43%
Update social media networks	9%	8%	13%	13%	13%	14%	16%	19%	20%	23%	33%	30%	28%	30%	34%	35%
Take pictures with a cellphone	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	19%	23%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	38%	36%
Record video with a cellphone	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	10%	14%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	23%	24%
Play games on your cellphone	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	10%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	19%

**Of the total respondents, these are respondents who had a valid driver's license, owned a cellphone, and drove more than one hour per week.*

All activities were specified to be conducted on a cellphone.

Not all increases or decreases in percentages over time are statistically significant. This report highlights the most meaningful statistically significant differences between years.

©, Copyright, State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company, 2016

Activities Drivers Participate in While Driving Interactions With Others in Vehicle				
	All Drivers*		Drivers 18-29*	
	2015 *n = 856*	2016 *n = 962*	2015 *n = 185*	2016 *n = 212*
Talk with a passenger	95%	93%	95%	93%
Attend to a child(ren) in the backseat	25%	23%	30%	24%
Attend to a pet that is riding in the vehicle	22%	21%	35%	27%

**Of the total respondents, these are respondents who had a valid driver's license, owned a cellphone and drove more than one hour per week.*
None of the decreases in percentages are statistically significant.

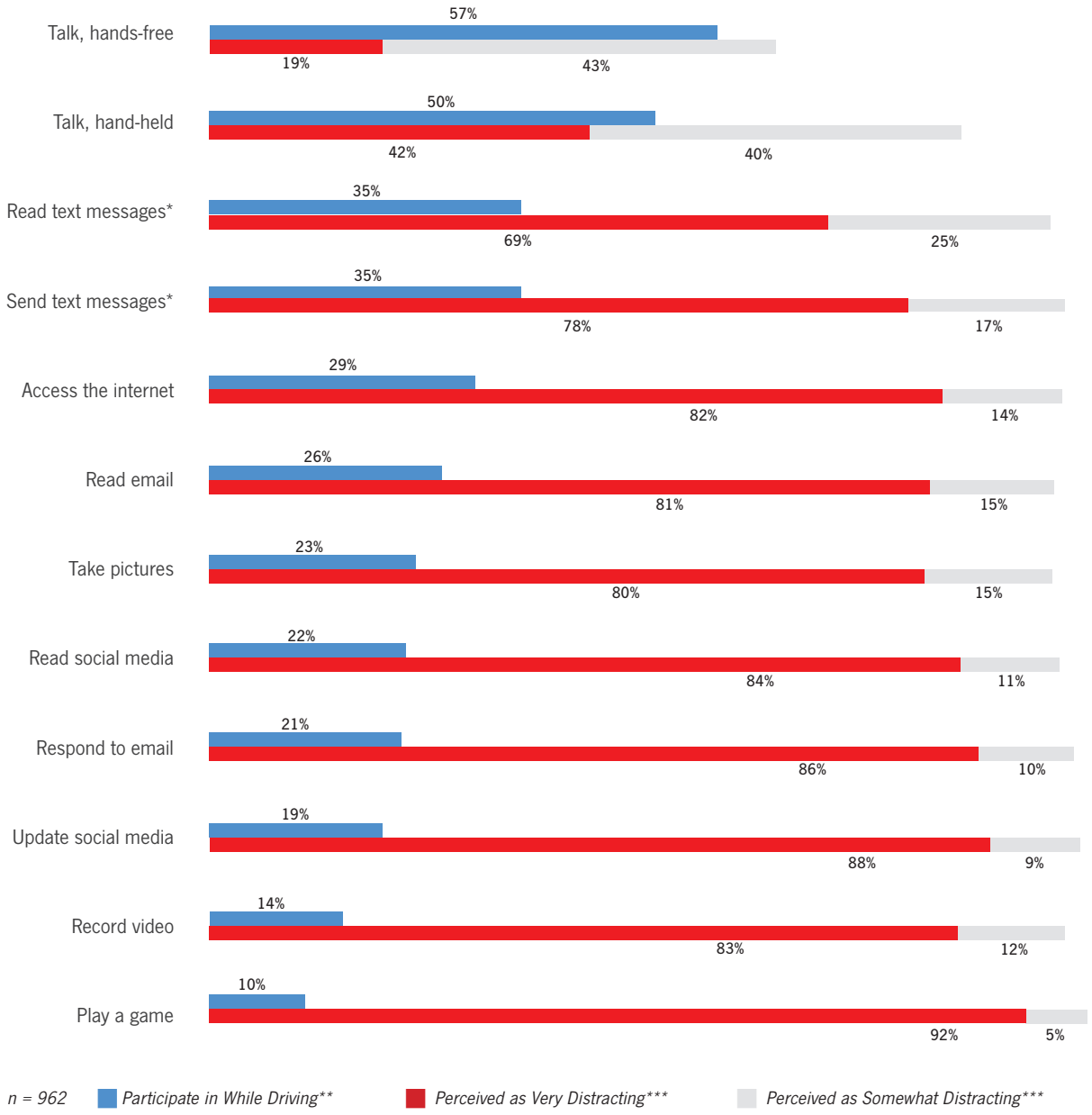
Drivers reported using smartphones while driving despite finding them distracting and despite thinking that this behavior increases the likelihood of a crash.

Eleven of the 12 smartphone activities listed on page 4 were reported as at least somewhat distracting by 80 percent or more of drivers. The one exception was talking on a hands-free cellphone, which only 62 percent of respondents found distracting. Despite finding these activities distracting, many participated in them anyway. For example, half of respondents said they talk on a hand-held cellphone while driving, even though 82 percent find it distracting. Additionally, 29 percent said they access the internet while driving even though 96 percent find it distracting. Not surprisingly, drivers that reported engaging in each activity were somewhat less likely to say they find it distracting than drivers who report refraining from these activities.

Most drivers who participate in distracting driving behaviors realize their behavior increases the likelihood of a crash. For respondents who indicated participating in the activities shown in the graph on page 5, most thought these behaviors are likely to cause a crash. As an example, among those who reported texting while driving, nearly nine in ten (87 percent) thought texting increased the likelihood of a crash.

©, Copyright, State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company, 2016

Percentage of Drivers Who Perceive Cellphone Activities as Distracting and Percentage Who Participate In Them



All activities were specified to be conducted on a cellphone.

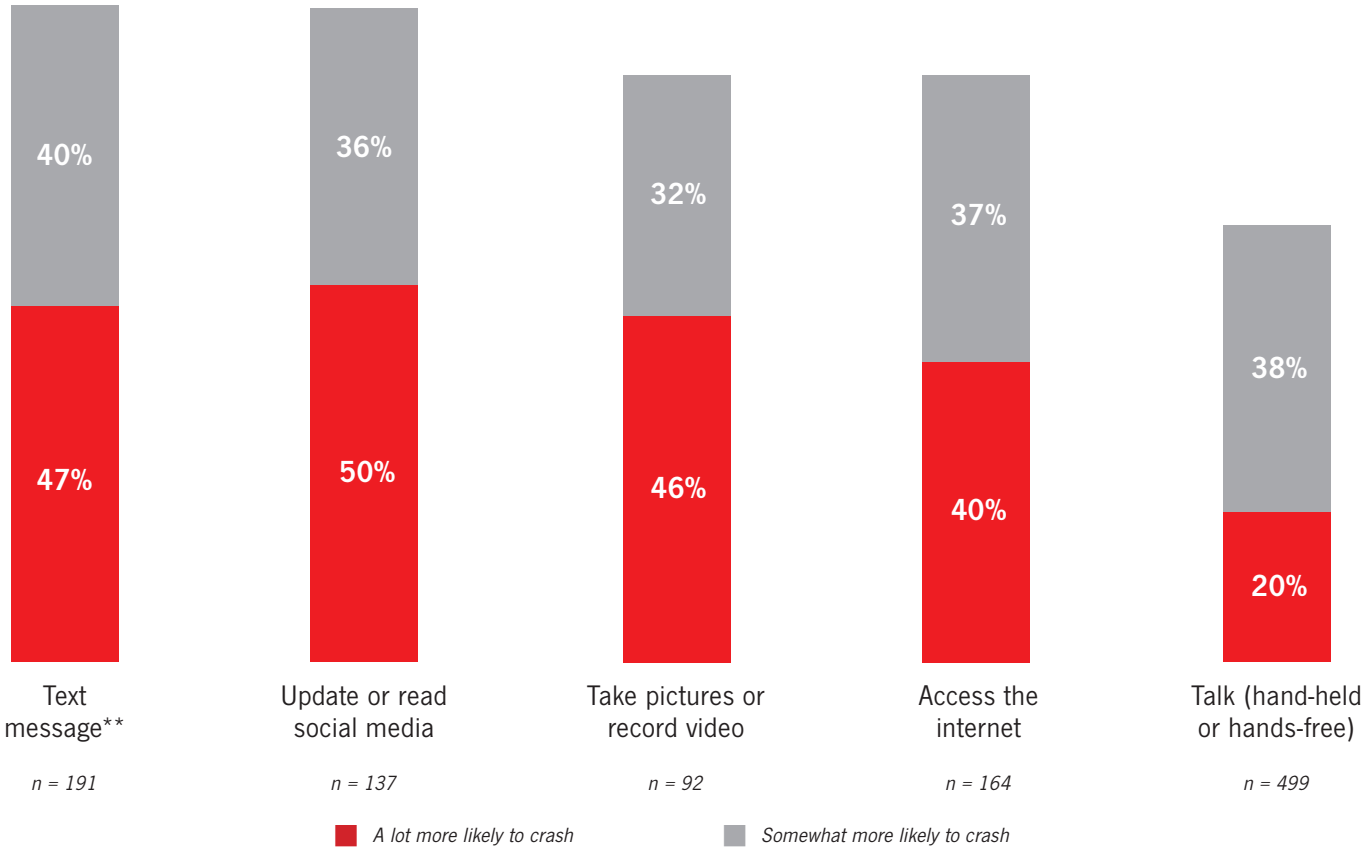
**For the survey item asking respondents if they participated in the activity, the item did not distinguish between reading text messages and sending text messages. Thus, the percentage that participated in "text messaging" is shown for both activities.*

***Of the total respondents, these are respondents who had a valid driver's license, owned a cellphone, and drove more than one hour per week.*

****For the survey item asking how distracting these activities are, other response options included "Not at all distracting" and "Don't know." For each activity, those who chose "Don't know" were excluded from the analysis for that particular activity.*

©, Copyright, State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company, 2016

"In your opinion, how does engaging in this activity affect your likelihood to crash?"
Among Drivers Who Said They Participated in the Listed Activity*



All activities were explicitly labeled as being done on a cellphone.

**Respondents include those who reported participating in the listed activity(ies) while driving 5 percent or more of the time. Other response options included "Likelihood to crash is not affected," "Somewhat less likely to crash," "A lot less likely to crash," and "Don't know."*

***Respondents were asked about text messaging in general; a differentiation cannot be made between sending and reading text messages.*

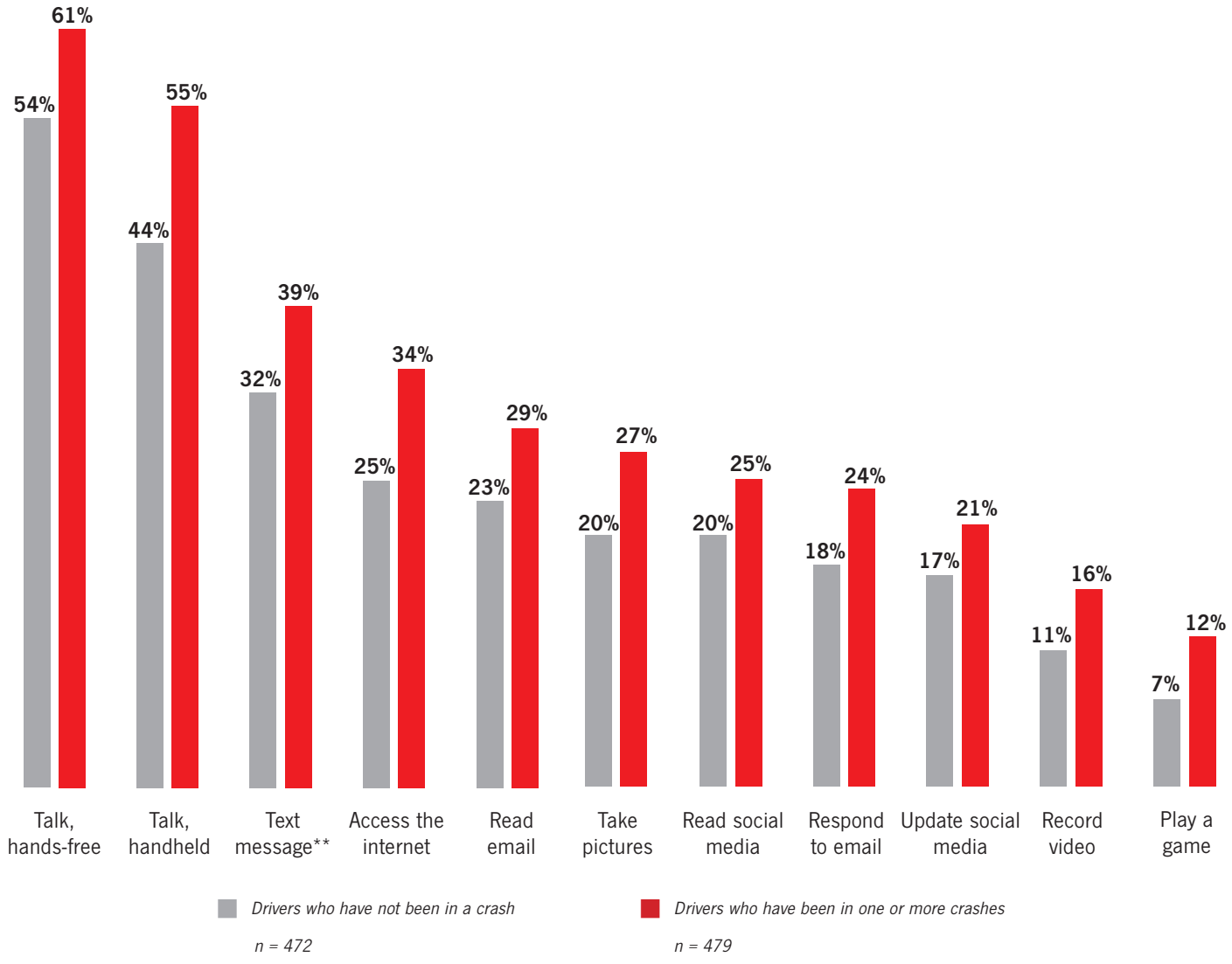
©, Copyright, State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company, 2016

Using a cellphone while driving can increase the risk of a crash.

More than half of the drivers surveyed said they had been involved in at least one crash as a driver in which the crash was determined to be their fault or no fault was established. A clear relationship emerged between self-reported rates of cellphone use while driving and self-reported number of crashes. Respondents who indicated participating in these activities were more likely to report being involved in a crash than those who indicated "rarely" or "never" participating in these activities. This relationship between distracted driving behavior and self-reported crashes remained significant even after accounting for the age of the respondent, and the average number of hours they drive per week.

As shown in the chart below, compared to those who have not been in a crash, those who have been in a crash were more likely to report engaging in every cellphone behavior while driving.

Cellphone Activities Drivers Say They Participate in While Driving By Whether or Not the Driver Has Been Involved in a Crash*



Of the total respondents, these are respondents who had a valid driver's license, owned a cellphone, and drove more than one hour per week.

All activities were explicitly labeled as being done on a cellphone.

**Specifically, respondents were asked "Since you have had a driver's license, how many auto accidents have you been involved in as a driver where you were determined to be at fault or where no fault was established?" Respondents who chose "Don't know/can't remember" were excluded from the analysis above.*

***Respondents were asked about text messaging in general; a differentiation cannot be made between sending and reading text messages.*

©, Copyright, State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company, 2016

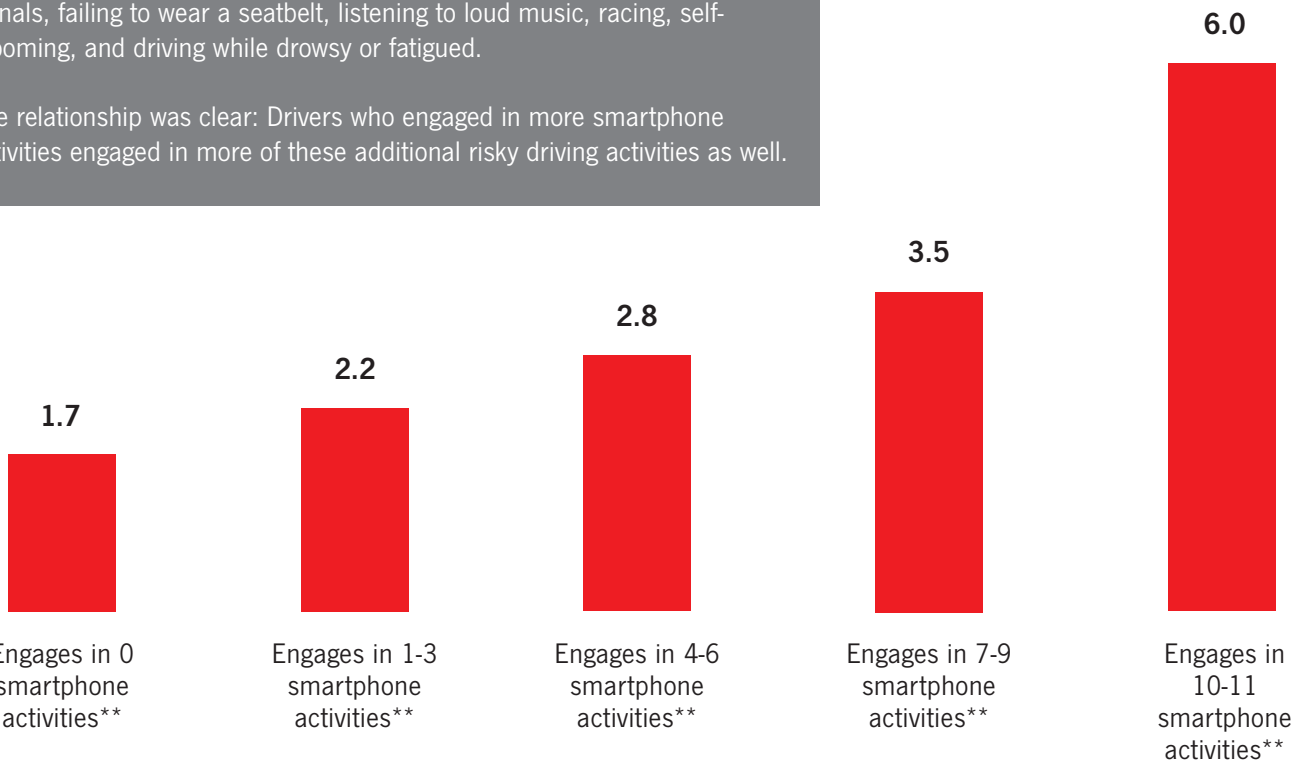
Using a smartphone while driving was related to participating in other dangerous driving behaviors.

In addition to the distracting cellphone activities listed on page 4, respondents were also asked about several other dangerous driving behaviors including speeding, failing to wear a seatbelt, and driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. A strong relationship emerged between the smartphone activities and these additional behaviors. That is, the higher one's self-reported rate of distracting cellphone activities, the more likely a respondent was to report participating in each dangerous behavior reported on page 8. Additionally, similar to the cellphone-related behaviors, these other dangerous driving behaviors were more likely to be exhibited by drivers who have been involved in a crash compared to drivers who have not been involved in a crash.

Average Number of Additional Activities* Drivers Say They Participate in By Number of Cellphone Activities Drivers Participate in While Driving

Drivers were also asked about nine other risky driving activities: speeding, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, eating, failing to use turn signals, failing to wear a seatbelt, listening to loud music, racing, self-grooming, and driving while drowsy or fatigued.

The relationship was clear: Drivers who engaged in more smartphone activities engaged in more of these additional risky driving activities as well.

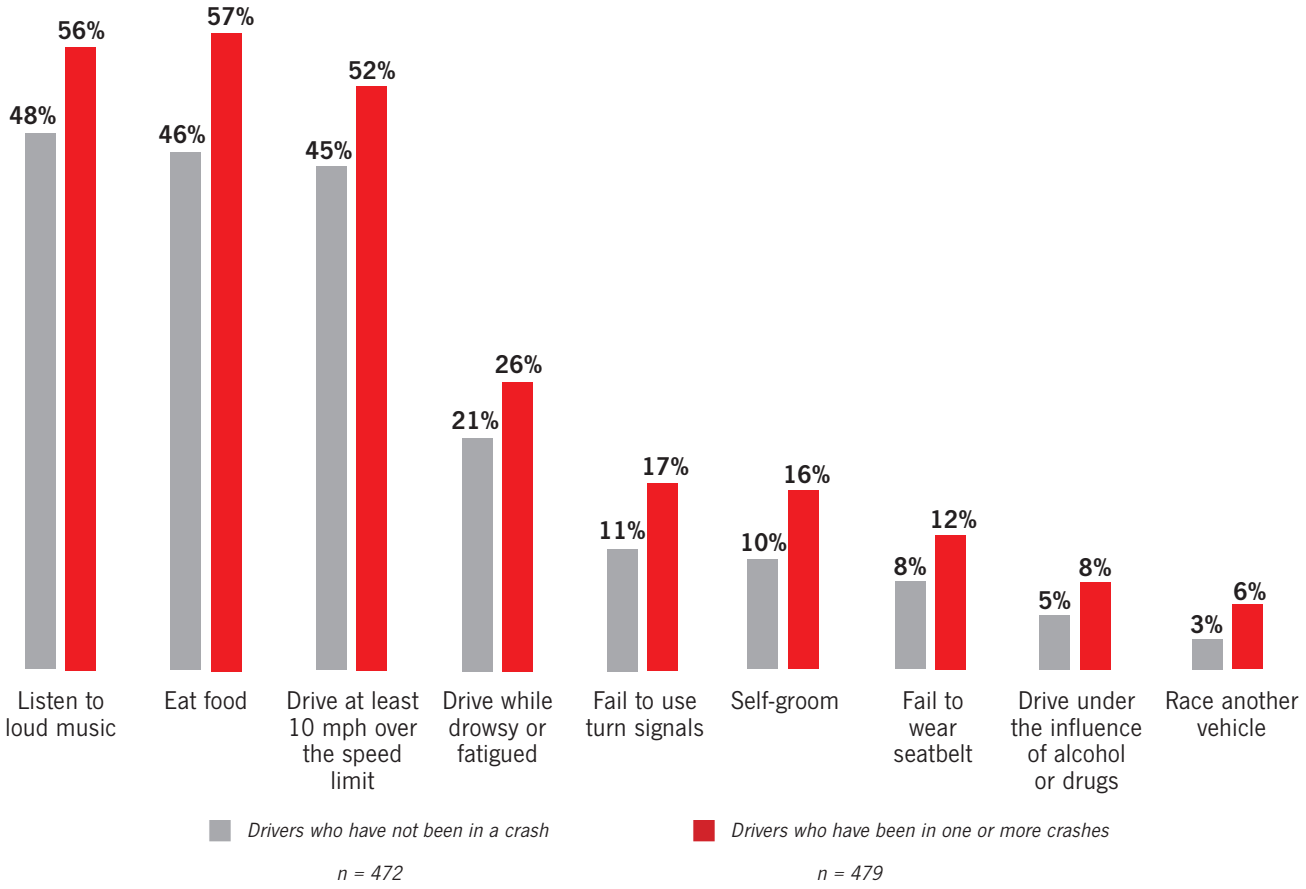


*All activities were specified to be in the context of driving.

**Respondents were considered to participate in an activity if they selected 5% or more of the time (cellphone activities) or "Sometimes," "Often," or "Almost always" (additional risky activities). Other response options included "Rarely" and "Never."

©, Copyright, State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company, 2016

Other Activities Drivers Say They Participate in While Driving*
By Whether or Not the Driver Has Been Involved in a Crash**



Of the total respondents, these are respondents who had a valid driver's license, owned a cellphone, and drove more than one hour per week.

**Participate was defined as respondents selecting "Sometimes," "Often," or "Almost always." Other response options included "Rarely" and "Never."*

***Specifically, respondents were asked "Since you have had a driver's license, how many auto accidents have you been involved in as a driver where you were determined to be at fault or where no fault was established?" Respondents who chose "Don't know" for the number of auto accidents they have been involved in were excluded from the analysis above.*

Drivers who use smartphones while driving realize it's dangerous, yet they still participate in these behaviors. What reasons do they cite for doing this?

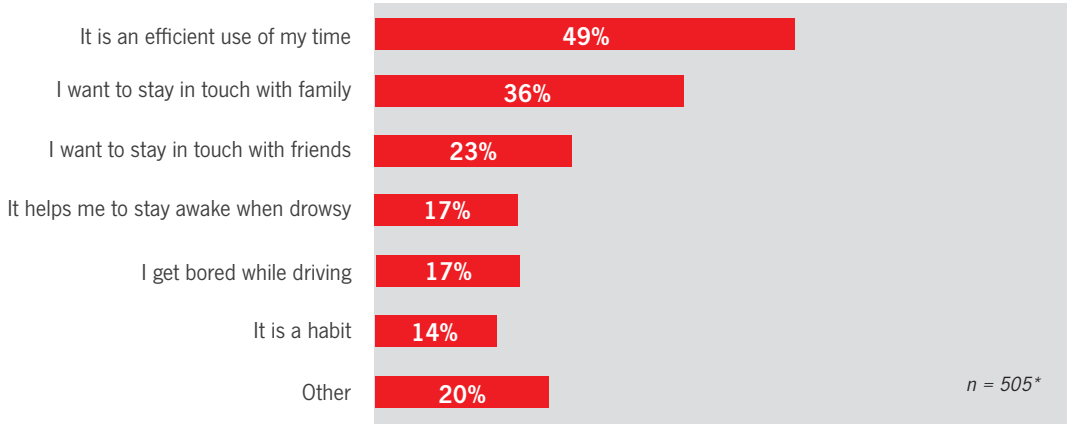
As indicated in the figures on pages 9 and 10, drivers who reported exhibiting distracted driving behaviors cited a number of reasons for doing so. Efficiency was the most common reason cited for talking on a cellphone while driving. When it came to text messaging and social media, the most common reason cited was "It is a habit." The top reason for taking pictures/recording video was "I see something I want to share," while the top reason for accessing the internet was "to search for an answer to a question."

For drivers not exhibiting these distracted driving behaviors, the top reason was safety.

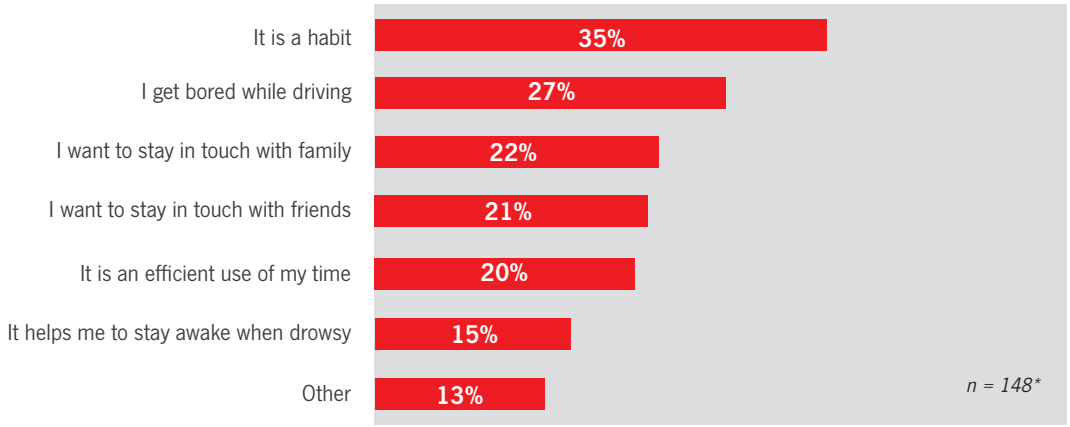
Among drivers who reported rarely or never participating in talking, texting, social media, pictures/video, or browsing the internet while driving, most participants indicated they refrained from this behavior because it is dangerous to themselves, their passengers, and others on the road. Across these same activities, the next most common reasons selected were it was illegal, legal consequences (e.g., fine, losing license), "I rarely have a reason to" and "It never even crosses my mind." The reasons for not participating in each type of behavior listed above were largely the same; it appears safety is a larger concern to drivers than legal consequences.

©, Copyright, State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company, 2016

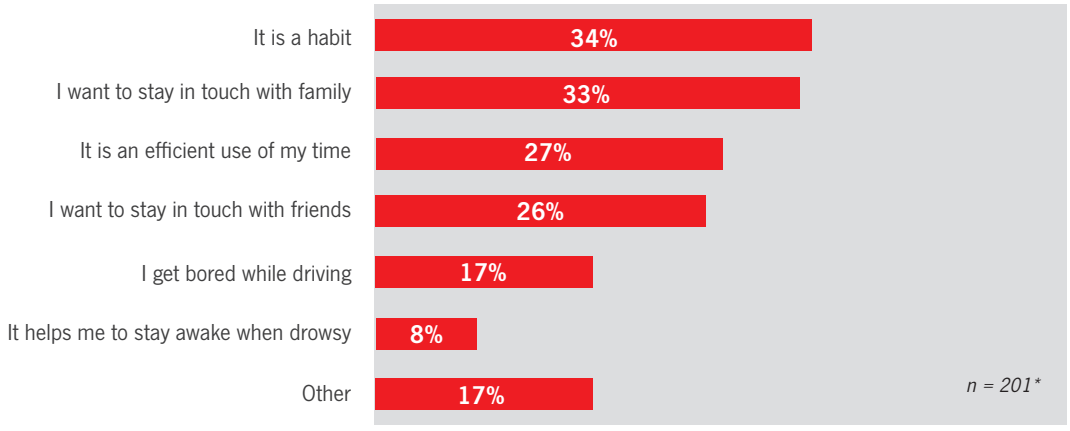
Reasons for Talking on a Cellphone (Hand-held or Hands-free) While Driving



Reasons for Updating or Reading Social Media While Driving



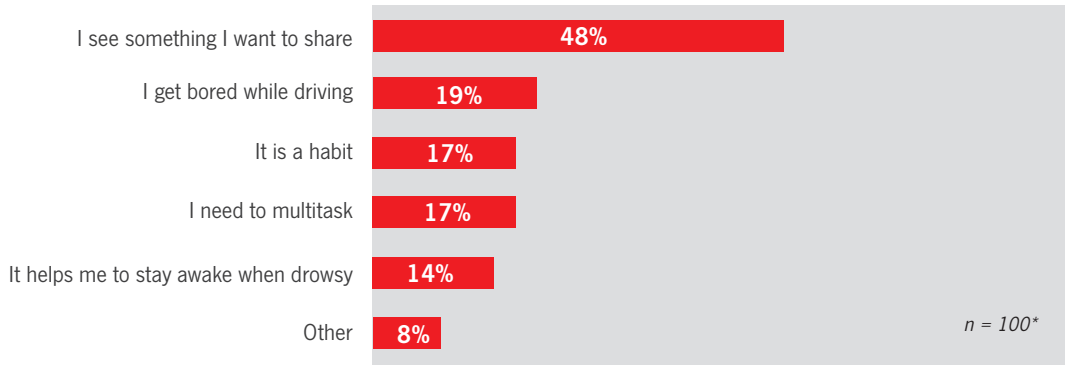
Reasons for Text Messaging While Driving



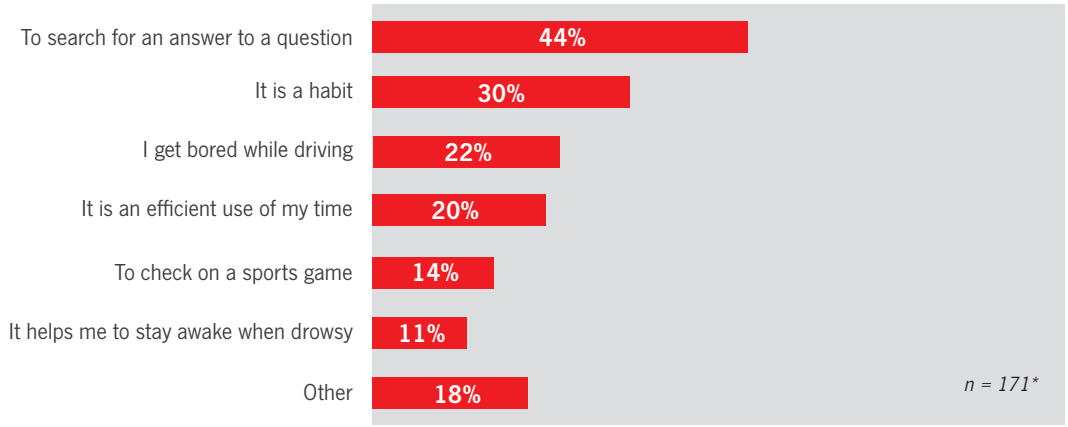
**Respondents include those who reported participating in the listed activity(ies) while driving 5% or more of the time. Respondents were allowed to select multiple response options.*

©, Copyright, State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company, 2016

Reasons for Taking Pictures or Recording Video While Driving



Reasons for Accessing the Internet While Driving



**Respondents include those who reported participating in the listed activity(ies) while driving 5% or more of the time. Respondents were allowed to select multiple response options.*

Many respondents did not know their state laws regarding cellphone use and texting.

More than a dozen states have banned the use of hand-held cellphones while driving for all aged drivers. While the majority of respondents from these states reportedly knew this, one percent thought the law only applied to teen drivers, five percent did not think hand-held cellphone use was banned at all, and seven percent reported they did not know what the law said regarding hand-held cellphone use (see charts on page 11).

Most states, plus the District of Columbia, have banned texting while driving for all drivers. Again, most respondents in these states knew their state laws, but 19 percent did not. Two percent thought the law only applied to teen drivers, five percent did not think texting while driving was banned at all, and 12 percent did not know what their state law said regarding texting while driving.

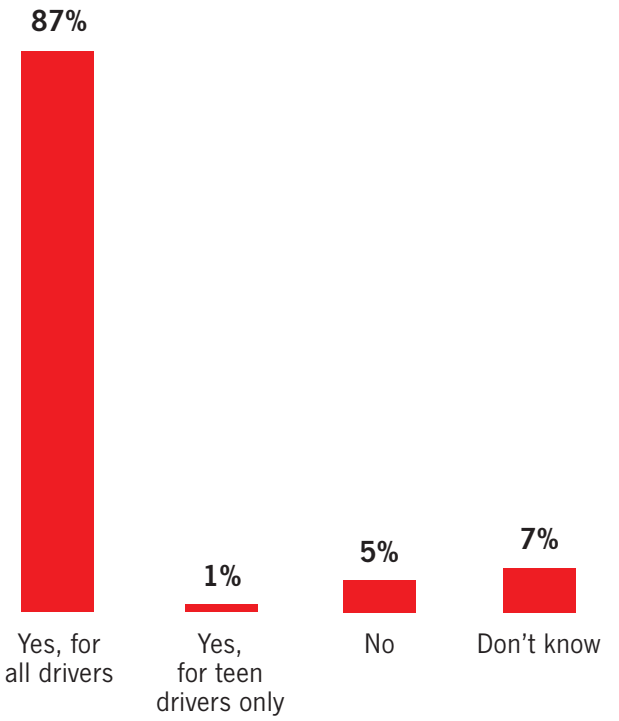
©, Copyright, State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company, 2016

Perceptions of state cellphone laws appear to impact driving behavior.

Regardless of what respondents' state laws actually say about cellphone use while driving, respondents were significantly more likely to report talking on a hand-held cellphone while driving if they thought it was legal (38 percent)* than if they thought it was illegal (22 percent).* Similarly, respondents were significantly more likely to report text messaging while driving if they thought it was legal (32 percent)* than if they thought it was illegal (16 percent).* For both activities, those who reportedly did not know their state laws responded more similarly to those who thought it was illegal than those who thought it was legal.

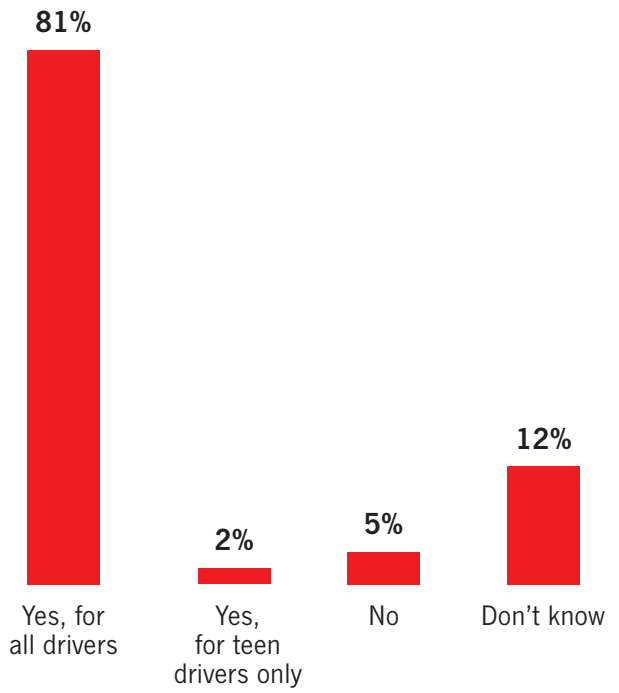
Percent of respondents who reported doing these activities 5% or more of the time while driving.

"To your knowledge, is hand-held cellphone use while driving banned in your state?"*



*Only includes respondents from states in which hand-held cellphone use while driving is banned for all drivers (California, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin). n = 314

"To your knowledge, is texting while driving banned in your state?"**



**Only includes respondents from states in which texting while driving is banned for all drivers (All states except Arizona, Missouri, Montana and Texas). n = 884

Methodology

In August 2016, the State Farm Strategic Resources Department used an outside panel vendor to conduct an online survey of U.S. consumers ages 18 and over. Survey responses were received from approximately 1,000 consumers who reported owning a cellphone, having a valid driver's license and driving at least one hour per week. A number of changes were made to the survey research in 2016 such that results in this report should not be compared with the results in the 2015 "Distracted Driving" report also produced by State Farm, except where noted.

©, Copyright, State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company, 2016