

## **THE PERCEPTION OF DRIVER DISTRACTION AMONG TEENAGE DRIVERS**

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**ABSTRACT**

Teenage drivers have been shown to have some of the highest crash risks. Crash data can provide insights on factors related to crash likelihood. However, these data cannot provide insights on the likelihood of a near crash due to driver distraction. The goal of this study is to assess teenage driver's perception of driver distraction to understand what additional distractions that engage in but may not be captured in crash data. A survey of nearly 1,900 teenage drivers in eastern Iowa was conducted to determine which activities teenage drivers commonly engage in while driving and compare those activities to what they consider distracting. A cluster analysis was conducted based on their indicated engagement in distracting activities and were classified in terms of most risky, moderate risk, low risk, and most safe. From this analysis, four groups emerged based on likelihood to engage in various distracting activities. Text messaging is considered dangerous by 85% of survey respondents. The drivers in the most risky group reported engaging in texting while driving most frequently compared to just 10% in the most safe cluster. The most risky cluster also reported engaging in traditional distracting activities (e.g., tuning the radio, and adjusting the climate control) more often (64%) when compared to the safest group (37%). In general, it would appear from the survey results that a large proportion of teenage drivers often engage in activities they know are distracting, hence putting themselves in danger. This study provides information on teenage perceptions that are difficult to obtain through observation but provide insights on how additional studies can be designed to capture these behaviors more appropriately.

Keywords: Teenage Drivers, Driver Distraction, Survey, Technology