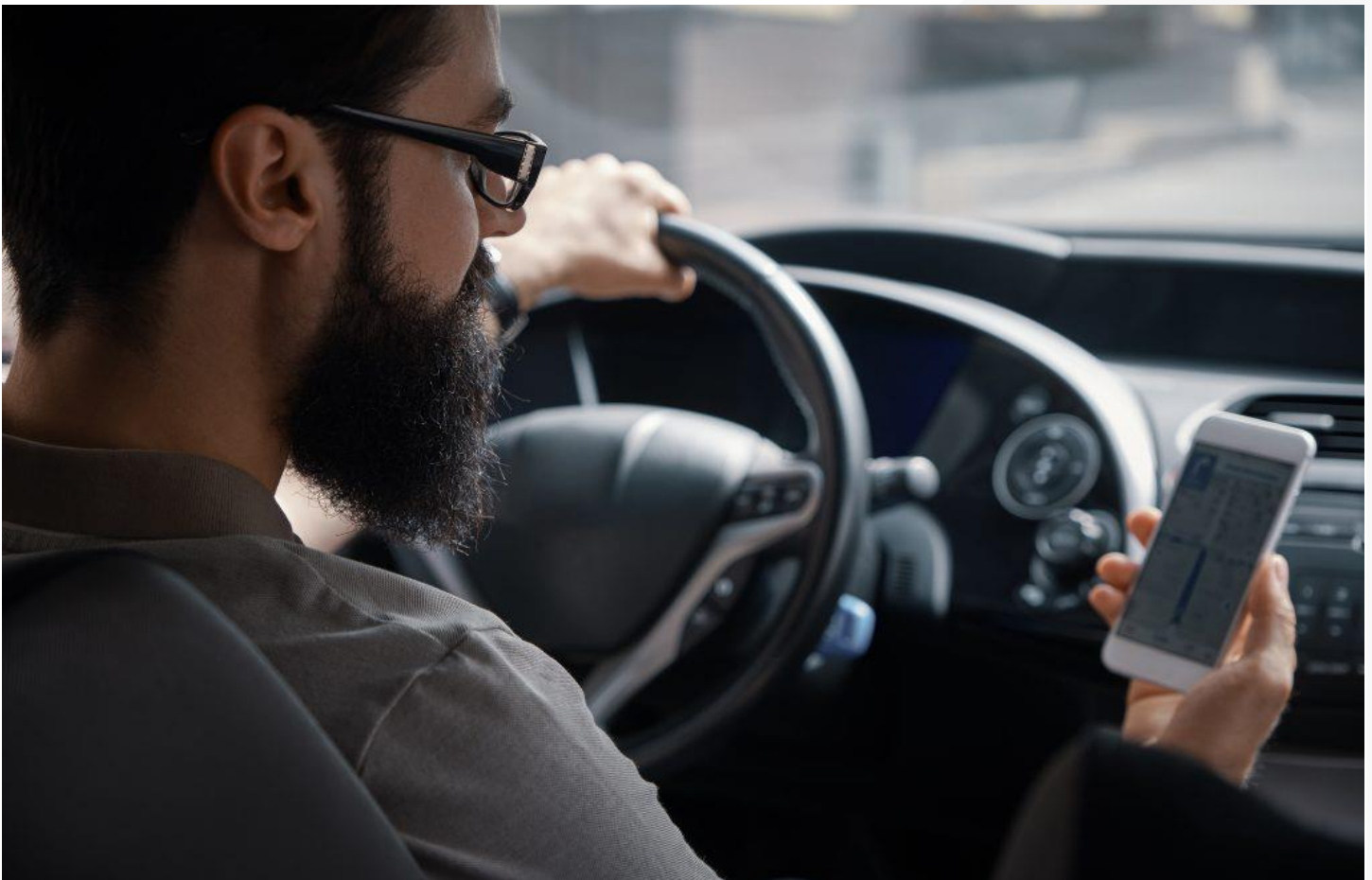


[Distracted Driving Caused by Smartphone Apps](#)

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Gig workers are significantly more prone to using smartphone apps while driving, according to a recent survey conducted by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS). This survey also revealed that parents, particularly those with children under 18, are more likely to engage in various smartphone-related distractions while driving. These behaviors contribute to a growing concern over distracted driving, with over 3,000 distraction-related fatalities reported in 2020, comprising 8 percent of all traffic-related deaths. It's important to note that this figure is likely an underestimate, as it's challenging to determine if distraction played a role in every accident.

Distractions while driving, such as eating, adjusting the radio, and applying makeup, increase the risk of accidents. However, tasks involving mobile phones and electronic devices are especially demanding and tempting. The proliferation of smartphone applications in recent years has amplified this issue.



Concerning Findings

To investigate the impact of these newer applications, the IIHS surveyed over 2,000 drivers across the United States regarding their secondary activities while driving. These tasks were categorized into ordinary activities and device-based activities, with the latter including basic activities like texting and making calls, as well as more complex tasks like programming navigation apps and checking social media. Drivers were also asked whether they used hands-free features for certain device-based activities.

The results revealed that nearly two-thirds of drivers engaged in one or more distracting activities while driving within the past 30 days, with half reporting the use of device-based tasks during most drives. Common device-based activities included making calls, streaming music, and reading texts, with programming navigation apps being the most prevalent. Although fewer people admitted to playing mobile games while driving, 8 percent still acknowledged doing so.

In general, drivers tended to use hands-free features when available for device-based activities. However, research has shown that hands-free systems that require some manual operations are less safe than those solely reliant on voice commands. Certain smartphone-based activities, like scrolling through social media or playing games, aren't compatible with hands-free features.

Distracted Driving Among Young People

Not so surprisingly, the survey found that drivers between the ages of 18 and 34 were more likely to use smartphone apps while driving compared to those aged 35-49. Additionally, parents with children under 18 were more prone to non-device-based tasks (65 percent), device-based distractions (31 percent), and smartphone-related secondary activities (47 percent) compared to other drivers.

Gig workers were more than twice as likely to engage in distracting activities and nearly four times as likely to use smartphone apps while driving. The types of smartphone-based activities they performed extended beyond communicating with customers and navigating to pickup and delivery locations; they often engaged in additional business or entertainment activities while on the road.

How to Address This Problem?

To address this issue, ridesharing and delivery companies should implement or strengthen policies that promote safe practices for essential job tasks and limit non-essential device-based behaviors.

Smartphones are both a cause and a potential solution to distraction while driving. They are essential and addictive, and they have contributed to accidents. Police reports from 2021 indicate that around 3,350 people died in distraction-related crashes, with 382 deaths attributed to cell phone use. However, these numbers are likely underestimates, as drivers often don't admit to using their phones, and police cannot always determine the cause of crashes.

Smartphones also offer features that can help combat distraction, such as the "do not disturb" mode that blocks calls and notifications while driving. Other apps can reduce various forms of distracted driving, promote safer speeds, and provide basic crash avoidance capabilities for all vehicles. Major smartphone industry players are eager to contribute to the solution.

Embracing Modernity on the Road

The speed at which smartphone features can be adopted is a significant advantage. In-vehicle technologies can take decades to become standard in most vehicles, but smartphone apps can quickly reach millions of users. Safety features like "do not disturb" apps for driving have gained popularity rapidly, thanks to smartphone companies like Apple, which integrated these features into their operating systems. Google, along with other tech companies, is working to combat distraction and improve safety through various apps and technologies.

However, more can be done to encourage adoption. Smartphone makers can make the "do not disturb" mode the default setting for users during the initial setup, ensuring calls and notifications are automatically blocked while driving. They can also restrict video players and games on the vehicle's console display, and take quicker action against apps that promote dangerous driving behaviors.

Recap

Smartphones could also help implement safety features in older vehicles that lack them. Apps can provide forward collision warnings and monitor driver gaze to prevent distractions, potentially reducing accidents and improving safety. The promise lies in leveraging smartphone technology to actively enhance safety on the roads.

Distracted driving has long been a problem, with smartphones exacerbating the issue. However, smartphones have the potential to be a tool in combating various forms of distraction and unsafe driving, which would be a significant turnaround for road safety.

This other article provides you with a list of the [Best Cars for Teen Drivers and Safety Tips for Parents](#)