

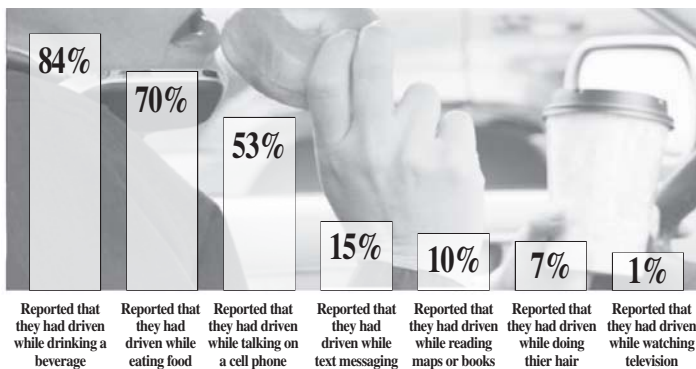


Poll STATION

With Linda Banister

It's time to hang up your phone. Well, at least that may be the case this fall when the provincial government plans to address the issue of driver distraction. To determine how concerned Edmontonians are about driver distraction, this month's *Poll Station* focused on the behaviours that take our eyes off the road.

WHILE DRIVING, DO YOU ENGAGE IN DISTRACTING BEHAVIOURS?



To begin the survey, respondents were asked if they had a driver's license. Ninety-one percent of respondents indicated they did, while nine percent did not. Those with a license were then asked if they have ever engaged in different distracting behaviours while driving. Most commonly, they reported drinking coffee or another type of beverage (84 percent); eating food (70 percent); or talking on a cell phone (53 percent). Fewer admitted to writing, sending or reading text messages (15 percent); reading the newspaper, a book, or map (10 percent); or doing their hair (seven percent), and one percent of respondents were guilty of watching TV while driving. Female respondents with a license were asked if they had ever applied make-up while driving, to which 12 percent reported they had. On the other hand, males with a drivers license were asked if they had ever shaved while driving—all (100 percent) reported they had not.

HAVE YOU SEEN OTHERS ENGAGE IN DISTRACTING BEHAVIOURS?

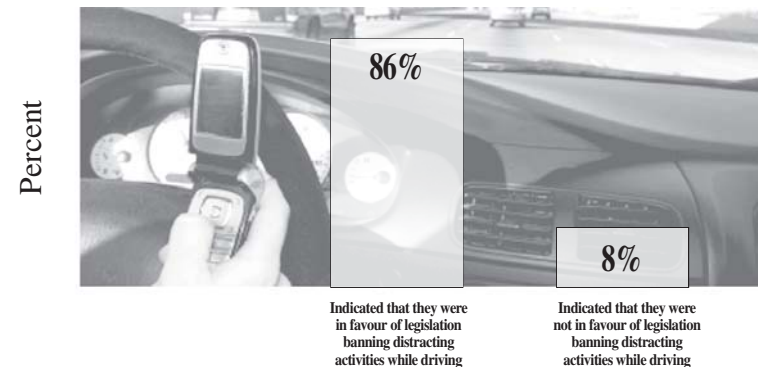
All respondents were then asked if they had ever witnessed any distracting behaviours in other drivers. While 11 percent stated no, 88 percent indicated they had. Respondents who had, frequently mentioned behaviours such as using a cell phone, including texting (75 percent); applying make-up (21 percent); reading (14 percent); and general lack of focus (14 percent). Other responses included distracting passengers (11 percent), eating/drinking (nine percent), and doing their hair (six percent).

HOW SERIOUS IS THE PROBLEM OF DRIVING WHILE DISTRACTED?

When respondents were asked how serious of a problem they believe driver distraction to be, over three-quarters (77 percent) indicated it was very serious (4 or 5 out of 5), while 16 percent indicated it was moderately serious, and five percent reported it was not serious (1 or 2

out of 5). Respondents were then asked if they had been in an accident caused by driver distraction. One-quarter indicated they had. When asked if it was caused by their distraction, or by someone else's, four respondents said they were the ones distracted, while 19 respondents reported it was the other drivers. Respondents who had not been in an accident caused by driver distraction were asked if they had ever come close. Fifty-six percent stated they had, while 43 percent said they had not.

DO YOU FAVOUR LEGISLATION THAT BANS CERTAIN DISTRACTIONS?



Finally, respondents were informed that the government is currently developing legislation that focuses on all types of driving distraction and behaviours, including but not limited to cell phone use and texting. Respondents were asked if they were in favour of a law that will ban distracting activities while driving. The vast majority (86 percent) indicated they were, while eight percent were not. Of those in favour, 58 percent cited safety concerns, while 23 percent believed it would make drivers more aware. When respondents who were not in favour were asked why, they most frequently mentioned too much government restriction on personal freedom.

Monthly Poll Station Online Question

Visit www.edmontonians.com to register your opinion

Want a question included in the Edmontonians Poll?

Contact Linda at 780.451.4444 or e-mail lbanister@edmontonians.com.

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