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Distracted Driving on  
the Capital Beltway

*transurban*

**FLUOR.**

**AAA**  
Mid-Atlantic



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# Distracted Driving on the Capital Beltway

Approximately, 210,000 vehicles travel the Capital Beltway (I-495) in Virginia each day.

Unfortunately, more than half are doing so without their focus on the road.

This report, based on a survey of 1,047 Capital Beltway drivers who drive in the HOT Lanes construction zone, examines distracted driving habits in this area, where construction compounds the dangers of distracted driving.



# 56% of Beltway Drivers Are Distracted

- ▶ Distracted driving is a widespread problem on the Capital Beltway

56%

Of respondents use their cell phone to call or read/write text messages while driving, or roughly **117,600** Beltway drivers daily

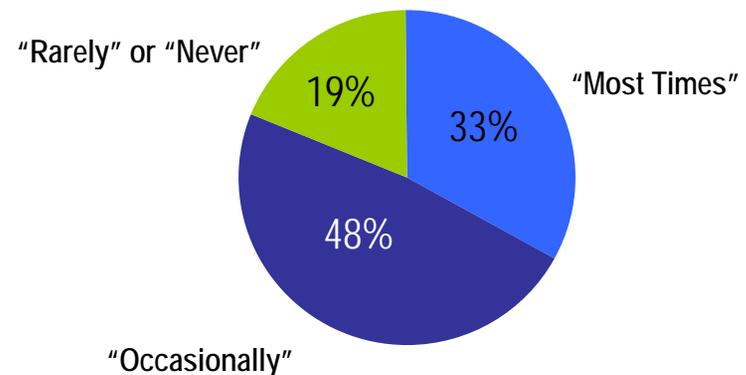
These behaviors are not infrequent. One-third admit to using their cell phones "most times."

Among the cell phone drivers who report using their cell phones at least "occasionally," one-in-five say it is "usually" for work-related items.

25%

Of respondents note they either read or write texts while driving, or roughly **50,000** Beltway drivers daily

How often do you use your cell phone while driving?



# Distracted Beltway Drivers Are Dangerous

- ▶ Cell phone use doubles the odds of a crash or incident

Fewer than one-in-five (18%) Beltway travelers say that they have had an accident or near miss as a result of being distracted while driving.



2x

*But...*

A driver using a cell phone is **2x as likely** to have had an accident or near miss than the non-user. (24% to 11%)

# Texting Beltway Drivers Are Very Dangerous

- ▶ Of the four vehicles directly next to yours, one is likely driven by a texting driver and is dramatically more likely to be involved in a crash

Have you had an accident or near miss as a result of these activities?

Those who read texts

39% Yes

Those who write texts

50% Yes



Drivers reading texts are nearly twice as likely to have had an accident or near miss than those using cell phones for calling.

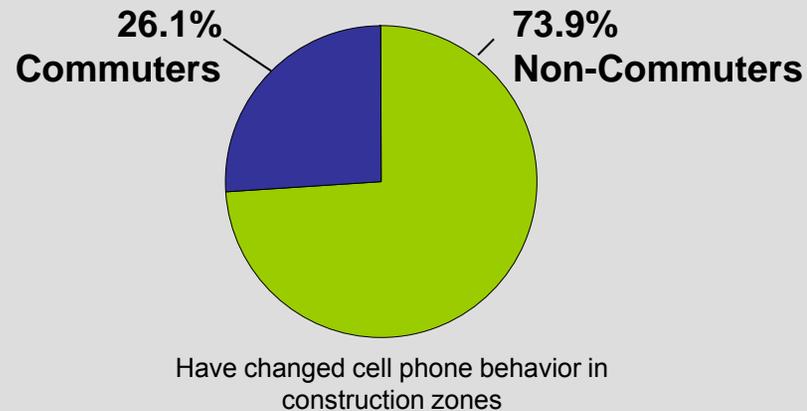
Those who read or write a text while driving are more than three times as likely to have been in a near miss or accident than other drivers on the Capital Beltway.

# No Room For Error In Construction Zones

- ▶ A busy construction area should change everything, but doesn't
  - Nearly half (46%) of cell phone drivers have made **no change** to their cell phone behavior while driving in the Capital Beltway construction zone
  - Just 16% say they make a conscious effort **not to** read/write texts or e-mails in the construction zone

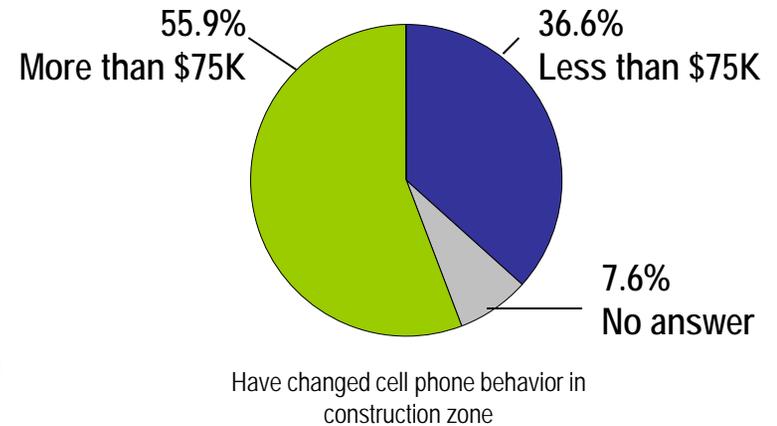
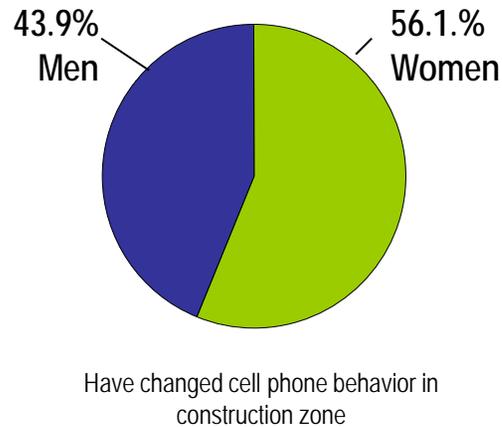


Those who have changed behavior in construction zones are not those on the road the most:



# Changing Habits: Who Leads?

- ▶ Women and individuals with incomes more than \$75K are most likely to be among the few who have altered cell phone behavior in the Capital Beltway construction zone



## Awareness Makes a Difference.

Can't recall seeing or hearing a story on distracted driving **26.1%**

Can recall seeing or hearing a story on distracted driving **73.9%**

# Cell Phone Law Awareness Gap

- ▶ Beltway drivers are not aware of laws pertaining to cell phone use

Many Beltway drivers either:



Think there are no Virginia laws pertaining to cell phones (17%)



Don't know of any Virginia laws pertaining to cell phones (37%)

*In reality, the Commonwealth of Virginia\*:*

Bans text messaging for all drivers

Bans all cell phone use for school bus drivers

Bans all cell phone use for drivers under 18 years of age



Takeaway: One hundred percent of drivers  
need to make changes to their cell phone  
usage while driving in construction zones

# Taking Work (on the Ride) Home

- ▶ Many distracted drivers are addressing work-related issues

When using a cell phone or Blackberry while driving your car, how often are you responding to a work-related issue?

49%

say Usually/Occasionally

vs.

51%

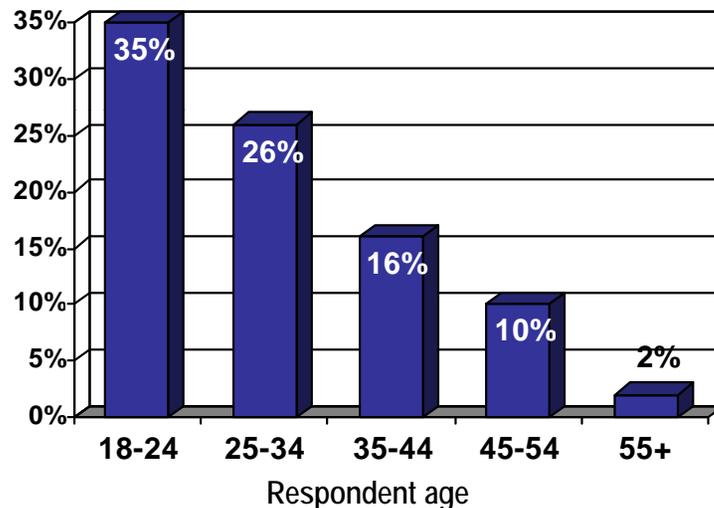
say Rarely/Never



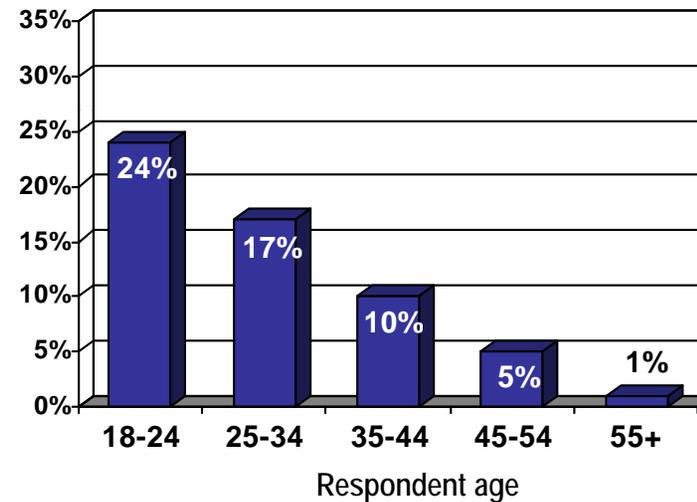
# Young and Distracted

- ▶ Distracted drivers are disproportionately young (inexperienced) drivers

Percent who read texts while driving



Percent who write texts while driving

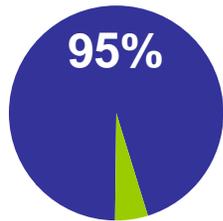


## Why is this a problem?

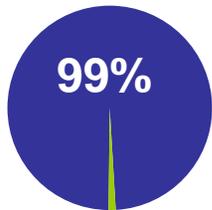
- #1 More than one-in-four (26%) of those who say they write texts while driving say they have had an accident or nearly missed having an accident as a result
- #2 Young drivers are already at a disadvantage. Based on 2005 Census data, there were 26.1 fatalities for drivers aged 21-25 per 100,000 population, compared to 14.4 fatalities per 100,000 population for drivers aged 46-50 (almost double)\*

# We All Know Better

► Drivers are aware their behavior is dangerous



**Ninety-five percent** of respondents believe that reading a text while driving qualifies as distracted driving



**Ninety-nine percent** of respondents believe that drivers reading or writing a text presents a threat to other drivers



What defines distracted driving? Three-in-four (73%) Beltway travelers specifically identify "texting"

Texting

Texting

Texting

Other

# Methodology

## Methodology

Online survey executed September 4-8, 2009, of 1,047 greater Washington, D.C.-area residents who indicated they drive on the Virginia side of the Capital Beltway with some frequency each month.

## Sample Demographics

The sample was created using an outbound balanced design accurately reflecting all adults in the Greater Washington, DC-area based on U.S. Census figures.

# Thank You

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