Georgia Traffic Safety Facts

2022 Data

March 2024

Key Findings

- 53% of all motor vehicle traffic crashes had at least one confirmed or suspected distracted driver.
- 30% of all serious injury crashes involved at least one driver confirmed or suspected of distraction.
- According to the 2023 Georgia Distracted Driving Observational Survey, 19.6% of all drivers were observed to have some form of distraction (i.e., talking, texting, dialing, or eating).
- 76% of all distraction-related crashes involved at least one other vehicle besides the distracted driver.
- Since the Hands-Free Law took effect, the number of distracted driving convictions processed by the Department of Driver Services continues to increase. Additionally, statewide and national studies show that distracted driving remains a growing traffic safety concern.
- Drivers aged 15-to-24 years had the highest proportion of drivers involved in distraction-related motor vehicle crashes and received more distracted driving citations after a crash compared to any other age group.

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Distracted Driving

For the purposes of this fact sheet, a **distraction-related crash** is any crash in which a driver was reported as a confirmed distracted driver or identified as a suspected distracted driver.[1]

Driver distraction occurs when drivers divert their attention from the driving task to focus on some other activity. Often discussions regarding distracted driving center around cell phone use and texting; however, distracted driving also includes other distraction-related activities that are manual, visual, or cognitive. Activities, particularly cell phone use, may involve multiple types of distraction.

MANUAL	VISUAL	COGNITIVE
involves touching something within the vehicle	involves looking at something other than the road	involves thinking about something that occupies your mind
▪ Holding or touching a phone ▪ Eating, drinking, or smoking ▪ Moving things in the vehicle, such as pets, insects, or objects ▪ Changing the radio or climate controls ▪ Adjusting other vehicle devices or controls ▪ Grooming or personal hygiene	▪ Looking at a phone or infotainment display ▪ Reading or typing a text, email, or message ▪ Looking at a billboard ▪ Looking at an event, object, or person outside the vehicle	▪ Conversations ▪ Daydreaming ▪ Thinking about an argument ▪ Worrying about something or someone ▪ Loud noises inside or outside the vehicle, such as ringing mobile devices, loud music, or ambulance sirens

It is important to note that the Georgia Department of Transportation and the Crash Outcomes Data Evaluation System (CODES) at the Georgia Department of Public Health may revise the definitions of confirmed or suspected distraction-related crashes. It is also important to acknowledge the inherent limitations in the data collection within the police crash reports for distraction-related crashes and the resulting injuries and fatalities. *As such, there are challenges and limitations in comparing and interpreting distraction-related crashes over time.*

From a law enforcement perspective, confirming a distraction as a contributing factor in a crash is challenging. Most often, distraction is self-reported by the driver for non-injury, non-fatal, single-occupant crashes and is likely biased. Subsequently, *distraction-related crashes are underreported.*

[1] See Data Considerations for more information on the suspected-distracted driving definition established by the GDOT and CODES

2023 Georgia Distracted Driving Observational Study

The Injury Prevention Research Center at Emory University conducted a roadside observational survey of driver distraction—nearly 30,000 observations across 400 sites within 20 Georgia counties between May and August 2023. According to the 2023 Georgia Distracted Driving Observational Survey[2], 19.6% of all drivers exhibited some form of distraction while operating a motor vehicle (i.e., talking, texting, dialing, or eating). This suggests that at any point in time or location on Georgia roadways during daytime hours, at least 1 out of 5 drivers may be distracted. Unlike seatbelt observations, drivers are not constantly distracted throughout their travel time—each distracted driving observation is a snapshot of time and place. The following are key findings derived from the 2023 Georgia Distracted Driving Observational Survey.

According to the 2023 Georgia Distracted Driving Observational Survey, nearly **20%** of all drivers were observed to have some form of distraction. In other words, **at least 1 out of 5 drivers at any time and location on Georgia roadways may be distracted.**

All Distractions

- Distracted driving decreased with increasing age and was higher for women (22.3%) than for men (17.7%).
- Driver distraction was higher in Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) (20.2%) than in non-Atlanta MSAs (19.3%) and rural areas (17.8%).
- Distracted driving was higher on weekdays (20.5%) than on weekends (13.1%). This was true for all types of distractions, including texting or dialing on hand-held devices.

Distractions Involving Hand-Held Devices

- The proportion of drivers observed to be talking or texting/dialing on a hand-held device in Georgia was higher than national observation data (6.8% in Georgia vs. 5.2% nationally[3]).
- The rate of hand-held device distractions (talking or texting/dialing) was greater for drivers who were unbelted (8.5%) than those who were belted (6.1%).

According to the World Health Organization…

"**Drivers using mobile phones** are approximately **4 times more likely to be involved in a crash** than drivers not using a mobile phone. [Using a phone while driving impacts the driver's reaction time (notably braking reaction time and reaction to traffic signals). Using a phone also makes it difficult to maintain the correct lane and appropriate following distances.]

Hands-free phones are not much safer than hand-held phone sets. Texting considerably increases the risk of a crash."[4]

[2] Rupp, Jonathan. 2023. "Statewide Rates of Driver Distraction: An Observational Survey of Driver Distraction in Georgia, 2023". The Injury Prevention Research Center at Emory (IPRCE), Emory University: Atlanta, Georgia.
[3] National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2024, January). Driver electronic device use in 2022 (Traffic Safety Facts Research Note. Report No. DOT HS 813 531). National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Available online: https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813531
[4] World Health Organization. (2023, December). Road traffic injuries: Fact sheet. WHO. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/road-traffic-injuries

Distracted Drivers Involved in Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes

In 2022, 53% of motor vehicle traffic crashes fit the criteria of having at least one confirmed or suspected distracted driver. This finding aligns with naturalistic driving studies that used video cameras and sensors installed in vehicles to determine driver risk factors seconds before a crash. According to a multi-state naturalistic study, 51.9% of all crashes involved distracted, non-impaired drivers.[5]

Among the drivers involved in motor vehicle traffic crashes, 2% were confirmed to be distracted, 28% were suspected of distraction[6], and 24% were *un*distracted drivers involved in a distraction-related crash—the other 47% of drivers were not involved in distraction-related crashes. Most distraction-related crashes involved other vehicles —

- 76% of all distraction-related crashes involved at least one other vehicle besides the distracted driver.
- 24% of all distraction-related crashes were single-vehicle crashes that only involved the distracted driver's vehicle.

Furthermore, among all single-vehicle crashes, 63% involved at least one confirmed or suspected distracted driver. Among all multi-vehicle crashes, 51% involved at least one confirmed or suspected distracted driver.

Table 1. **Percent of All Traffic Crashes that were Distraction-Related, 2022**

Traffic Measure	2022
Crashes	
Distraction-Related Crashes	53%
Confirmed distraction-related crashes	*4%*
Suspected distraction-related crashes	*49%*
Not distraction-related crashes	47%
Drivers	
Drivers involved in distraction-related crashes	54%
Confirmed distracted driver	*2%*
Suspected distracted driver	*28%*
*Un*distracted driver (in another vehicle)	*24%*
Drivers *not* involved in distraction-related crashes	47%

Source: CODES 2022

53%
of all motor vehicle traffic crashes had at least one ***confirmed*** or ***suspected*** distracted driver in 2022.

Distraction-Related Traffic Fatalities and Serious Injuries

According to CODES preliminary data, 74 fatal crashes involved at least one confirmed distracted driver (4.4% of all fatal crashes) in 2022. In these confirmed distraction-related crashes, 76 fatalities occurred (4.2% of all traffic-related fatalities).

The true number of distraction-related fatal crashes and fatalities is likely much higher. Table 2 shows the number and percent of confirmed distraction-related fatal crashes and traffic fatalities between 2018 and 2022.

Although it is challenging for law enforcement to determine whether distraction is a contributing factor in a fatal crash, the police crash report may be the only source available for this information. Therefore, the number of confirmed distraction-related fatalities and serious injuries is usually underreported.

[5] Dingus, T. A., Guo, F., Lee, S., Antin, J. F., Perez, M., Buchanan-King, M., & Hankey, J. (2016). Driver crash risk factors and prevalence evaluation using naturalistic driving data. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 113(10), 2636-2641. doi:10.1073/pnas.1513271113

[6] See Data Considerations for more information on the suspected-distracted driving definition established by the GDOT and CODES

Table 2. ***Confirmed*** **Distraction-Related Fatal Crashes and Traffic Fatalities, 2018-2022**

Year	Fatal Crashes			Fatalities		
	Total Fatal Crashes	Confirmed Distraction-Related		Total Traffic Fatalities	Confirmed Distraction-Related	
		Number	Percent		Number	Percent
2018	1,408	59	4.2%	1,505	65	4.3%
2019	1,378	43	3.1%	1,492	43	2.9%
2020	1,522	55	3.6%	1,664	61	3.7%
2021	1,681	52	3.0%	1,809	58	3.2%
2022	1,678	74	4.4%	1,797	76	4.2%

Source: FARS 2018-2022

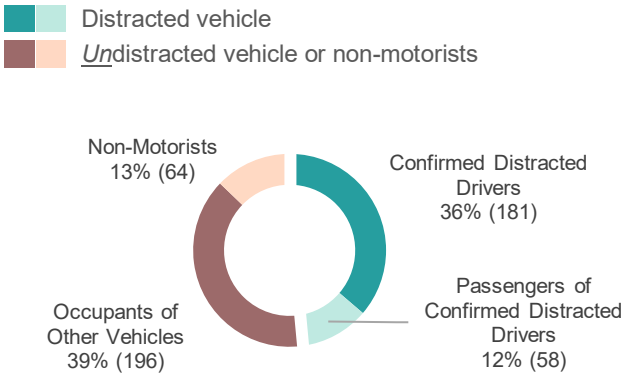
In 2022, **30%** of all serious injury[7] crashes involved at least one driver *confirmed or suspected* of distraction. The number of serious injuries that involved a *confirmed* distracted driver increased by 20 percent— from 354 serious injuries in 2021 to 423 in 2022.

Figure 1 shows the percent of fatal or serious injuries involving at least one *confirmed* distracted driver by person type in 2022.

- 48% were in the confirmed distracted driver's vehicle (represented by teal in Figure 1).
  - 36% were distracted drivers themselves.
  - 12% were passengers of the distracted driver.
- 52% were occupants of other vehicles or non-motorists (represented by brown and peach in Figure 1).
  - 39% were occupants of other vehicles *not* operated by the distracted driver.
  - 13% were non-motorists (i.e., pedestrians or bicyclists).

Eighty-one percent (81%) of *confirmed* distracted drivers involved in motor vehicle crashes did not have passenger occupants with them in the vehicle. Nineteen percent (19%) of *confirmed* distracted drivers had other passenger occupants riding with them.

Figure 1. **Percent of Persons Fatally or Seriously Injured in *Confirmed* Distraction-Related Crashes by Person Type, 2022**



76 Fatal Injuries
423 Serious Injuries

Source: FARS 2022, CODES 2022
Note: Undistracted vehicles were not reported to be confirmed distracted.

According to the *"2023 Observational Survey of Driver Distraction in Georgia,"*[8] **the proportion of drivers handling a phone** *(talking, texting, or dialing)* **was higher among unrestrained drivers than restrained drivers** – 8.5% of unrestrained drivers were observed to be handling a phone, and 6.1% of restrained drivers exhibiting similar distraction patterns.

[7] Suspected serious injuries are reported by law enforcement and used when any injury, other than fatal injury, prevents the injured person from walking, driving, or normally continuing the activities the person was capable of before the injury occurred.
[8] Rupp, Jonathan. 2023. "Statewide Rates of Driver Distraction: An Observational Survey of Driver Distraction in Georgia, 2023". The Injury Prevention Research Center at Emory (IPRCE), Emory University: Atlanta, Georgia.

Crash Characteristics

Table 3 below shows the rate of distraction-related motor vehicle traffic crashes (per 100M VMT) by region type and roadway classification in 2022. Distraction-related crashes occur more frequently and at greater rates on roadways with higher functional classifications compared to non-distraction related crashes.

- For the eleven counties in the Atlanta region, *principal arterial roads* were the road type with the highest rate of distraction-related crashes —1,675.5 distraction-related crash rate (per 100M VMT).
- For other urban counties, *principal arterial roads* were the road type with the highest rate of distraction-related crashes—975.5 distraction-related crash rate (per 100M VMT).
- For rural counties, *collector roads* were the road type with highest rate of distraction-related crashes—414.8 distraction-related crash rate (per 100M VMT).
- Across all counties in Georgia, *principal arterial roads* had the highest rate of distraction-related crashes—972.0 distraction-related crash rate (per 100M VMT).

Table 3. **Distraction-Related and Non-Distraction-Related Motor Vehicle Traffic Crash Rate (per 100M VMT) by Region and Roadway Classification, 2022**

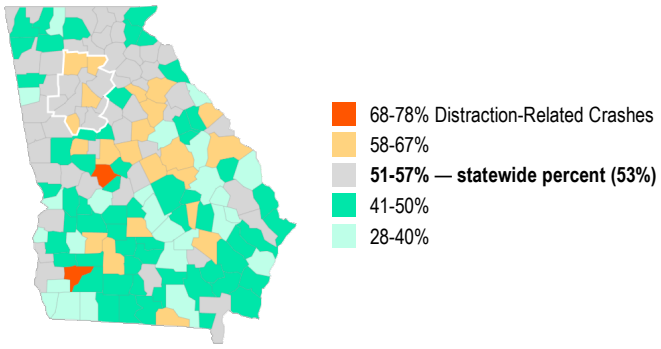
Roadway Classification	Atlanta Region[9] (11 counties)		Other Urban Counties (30 counties)		Rural Counties (118 counties)		Statewide	
	Distraction-Related	Non-Distraction	Distraction-Related	Non-Distraction	Distraction-Related	Non-Distraction	Distraction-Related	Non-Distraction
Interstate	612.4	203.3	194.8	99.4	108.6	79.9	**374.9**	**144.7**
Principal Arterial	1,675.5	1,190.9	975.5	751.4	349.5	346.6	**972.0**	**745.2**
Minor Arterial	1,319.6	1,330.9	749.7	759.1	381.8	397.8	**870.7**	**882.5**
Collectors	1,030.2	1,201.3	601.8	779.3	414.8	386.0	**609.4**	**687.2**
Local	388.4	549.0	329.7	511.2	287.5	413.7	**347.2**	**508.1**
All Roadways*	**895.9**	**718.3**	**549.4**	**521.2**	**326.2**	**324.2**	**627.6**	**547.3**

*Total includes freeway/ramp roadway classifications. Note: Principal arterials include freeways, and multilane highways (e.g., Buford Highway in DeKalb County and SR-520 & US-82 in Atkinson County). Minor arterials are other important multilane roadways that supplement the highways (e.g., Spring Street in Fulton County and SR-56 in Richmond County). Collector roads are roads that connect local roads and streets with arterials.
Source: 2022 Numetric Roadway Function Class, 2022 GDOT 445 Mileage by Route Type and Functional Classification (VMT unadjusted)

Figure 2 shows the proportion of all motor vehicle crashes that were distraction-related by county and their deviation from the statewide percent of distraction-related crashes (53%). For additional information, see the Appendix for the percent of distraction-related crashes by county. Generally, there are lower proportions of distraction-related crashes among all crashes in the coastal plain and South Georgia region.

- Eight out of the eleven counties within the Atlanta Region had a greater percentage of distraction-related crashes compared to the statewide percent.
- Two out of 30 other urban counties and 19 out of 118 rural counties had a greater percentage of distraction-related crashes compared to the statewide percent.
- The counties with the highest proportion of distraction-related crashes are Baker (76%) and Crawford (71%)—which are classified as rural counties.

Figure 2. **Percent of Distraction-Related Traffic Crashes and Deviation from the Statewide Percent by County, 2022**



Source: CODES 2022. Note: Counties that are light to dark teal have a lower percentage of distraction-related crashes compared to the statewide percent. Counties that are light to dark orange have a higher percentage of distraction-related crashes compared to the statewide percent.

[9] The Atlanta Region includes the ten counties that are defined by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC): Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, and Rockdale counties. In July 2021, Forsyth County officially joined ARC, becoming the 11th county member.

Distracted Driver Convictions (Crash and Non-Crash)

On July 1, 2018, Georgia's Hands-Free Law (O.C.G.A. § 40-6-241) furthered the "no texting while driving" law and made it illegal for drivers (including young drivers) to physically hold or support a wireless communications device while driving. Under this law, drivers can be cited and convicted for distracted driving that may or may not have resulted in a motor vehicle traffic crash. Amendments to the law also provided the point system for suspension or revocation of license for habitually negligent or dangerous drivers. While first-time offenders of Georgia's Hands-Free Law can be excused if they provide evidence that they have obtained a device that allows them to use hands-free communication technology, the increase in enforcement and convictions for distracted driving indicates a growing traffic safety concern. See the "*Legal Perspective*" section for more information regarding how the legal codes for distracted driving citations and convictions have changed over time in Georgia.

Table 4 presents the number of distracted driver convictions (that may or may not have resulted in a motor vehicle traffic crash), licensed drivers, and distracted driver conviction rates from 2013 to 2022.

While the number of distracted driving convictions increased steadily over the 10-year period, the number of convictions reported to DDS more than doubled from 2017 to 2018 (2.2 times) and from 2018 to 2019 (2.6 times). In 2022, the number of distracted driving convictions and rate per licensed drivers increased by 7% compared to 2021.

Figure 3 shows the number of distracted driver convictions processed by DDS from January 2017 to December 2022. After the law took effect, the number of convictions processed by DDS increased 5.5 times during the first 18 months, from 965 distracted driver convictions in July 2018 to 5,344 in December 2019. However, the number of distracted driving convictions processed by DDS decreased significantly during the 2020 year during the COVID-19 public health emergency response in Georgia. The higher number of distracted driving convictions processed in 2022 suggests that the court reporting and processing may have returned to pre-pandemic norms.

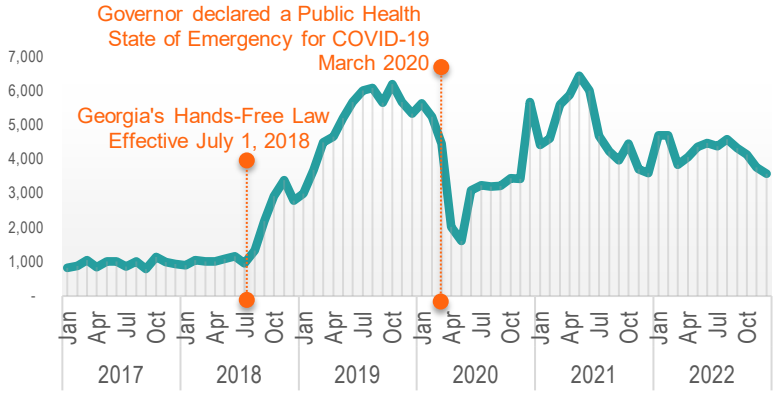
The COVID-19 response caused many Georgia courts to temporarily postpone court hearings, including traffic court, and many traffic safety law enforcement officers were reassigned to other critical and high-priority areas. Therefore, many distracted driving convictions may not have been reported to the Department of Driver Services.

Table 4. **Distracted Driver Convictions, Licensed Drivers, and Distracted Driver Conviction Rate, 2013-2022**

Year	Distracted Driver Convictions	Licensed Drivers	Distracted Driver Conviction Rate per 100,000 Licensed Drivers
2013	5,162	7,043,349	73.3
2014	5,837	7,099,538	82.2
2015	6,883	7,263,758	94.8
2016	9,148	7,337,619	124.7
2017	11,505	7,414,323	155.2
2018	25,593	7,512,197	340.7
2019	65,625	7,616,176	861.7
2020	31,173	7,891,390	395.0
2021	43,846	8,007,599	547.6
2022	48,776	8,341,774	584.7

Note: Distracted driver convictions may or may not have resulted in a motor vehicle traffic crash. The distracted driver convictions are summarized by the year the violation occurred. License totals include individuals with permits/provisional licenses and unexpired, suspended licenses.
Source: DDS 2013-2022

Figure 3. **Distracted Driver Convictions, January 2017 – December 2022**



Note: Distracted driver convictions may or may not have resulted in a motor vehicle traffic crash. The distracted driver convictions are summarized by the year DDS processed the conviction. Source: DDS 2017-2022 Distracted Driver Report by *Process Month*.

Table 5 shows the counties with the highest number of distracted driving convictions processed by DDS and the rate of distracted driver convictions per 100,000 licensed drivers in 2022.

Gwinnett County has consistently had the highest number of distracted driving convictions compared to any other county. From 2011-2017 (before the Hands-Free Law), Gwinnett represented 26% of all distracted driving convictions across the state. In 2022, however, Gwinnett represented 11% of all distracted driving convictions reported across the state—indicative of Gwinnett's consistent enforcement of distracted driving laws and other counties increasing their distracted driving enforcement. The top five counties with the greatest number of distracted convictions processed by DDS represented 26% of all *distracted driving convictions* (12,561 out of 48,766) and 148 Georgia counties represented 74% of all distracted driving convictions. In 2022, six counties did not have any distracted driving convictions processed by DDS.

Of all drivers issued one or more citations involved in a motor vehicle traffic crash, nearly two out of every 100 drivers received a distracted driving citation. Table 6 shows the counties with the highest number of distracted driver citations issued after a motor vehicle traffic crash incident and the rate of distracted driver citations for every 1,000 distraction-related motor vehicle crashes in 2022. The five counties with the greatest number of distracted driving citations issued after a crash represented 32% of all *distracted driving citations issued after a crash* (1,416 out of 4,335) and 146 Georgia counties represented 68% of all distracted driving citations after a crash. In 2022, eight counties did not have any distracted driving citations issued after a crash.

Table 5. **Top Five Counties with the Highest Distracted Driver Convictions and Distracted Driver Conviction Rate, 2022**

Number of Distracted Driver Convictions			Distracted Driver Conviction Rate per 100,000 Licensed Drivers		
Rank	County	Number	Rank	County	Rate
1	Gwinnett	5,365	1	Liberty	3,583.7
2	Henry	2,242	2	Jenkins	3,524.5
3	Clarke	1,684	3	Banks	3,224.5
4	Liberty	1,683	4	Turner	2,948.9
5	Chatham	1,587	5	Cook	2,473.9

Note: The distracted driving violations presented in the table occurred in 2022 and may or may not have resulted in a motor vehicle traffic crash. While first-time offenders of Georgia's Hands-Free Law can be excused if they provide evidence that they have obtained a device that allows them to use hands-free communication technology, the increase in enforcement and convictions for distracted driving indicates a growing traffic safety concern. Rates were calculated when the number of convictions in the county was greater than or equal to ten.
Source: DDS 2022

See the "*Additional Information*" to access the **Appendix** for this document. The appendix includes the following information by county: Licensed drivers • Distracted driver citations issued after a motor vehicle traffic crash incident • Convictions processed by the Department of Driver Services • Percent and rank of distraction-related motor vehicle crashes.

Table 6. **Counties with the Highest Distracted Driver Citations Issued After a Motor Vehicle (MV) Traffic Crash and Distracted Driver Citation Rate, 2022**

Number of Distracted Driver Citations Issued After a MV Crash			Distracted Driver Citation Rate per 1,000 Suspected or Confirmed Distracted Driving Crashes		
Rank	County	Number	Rank	County	Rate
1	Fulton	437	1	Pulaski	189.7
2	Chatham	356	2	Turner	162.8
3	Gwinnett	242	3	Dooly	144.7
4	Cobb	236	4	Dade	109.2
5	Hall / Paulding	145	5	Taylor	106.8

Source: CODES 2022
Note: Rates were calculated when the number of citations in the county was greater than or equal to ten. Hall and Paulding counties have equal number of citations issued after a motor vehicle crash in 2022. The resulting convictions of citations issued after a motor vehicle crash is not known.

Distracted Drivers by Age Group

While drivers aged 15-to-24 years represented **15%** of all licensed drivers in 2022, they were more involved in distraction-related motor vehicle crashes and received more distracted driving citations after a crash compared to any other age group (Table 7). Compared to drivers in other age groups, drivers aged 15-to-24 years represented:

- **26%** of all suspected or confirmed distracted drivers involved in crashes;
- **28%** of all confirmed distracted drivers involved in fatal crashes;
- **32%** of all drivers issued a distracted driver citation after a crash; and
- **21%** of all distracted driving convictions.

According to the 2021 High School Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, 29% of Georgia high school students texted or e-mailed while driving a car or other vehicle during the 30 days before the survey[10].

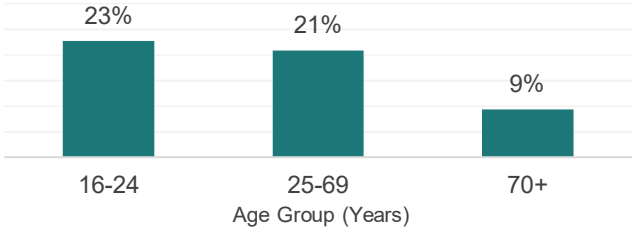
Table 7. **Licensed Drivers, Confirmed or Suspected Distracted Drivers Involved in Types of Motor Vehicle (MV) Crashes, Distracted Driver Citations Issued after a Motor Vehicle Crash, Distracted Driver Convictions by Age Group, 2022**

Age Group	Licensed Drivers	Confirmed or Suspected Distracted Driver Involved in a Crash	Confirmed Distracted Driver Involved in a Fatal Crash*	Distracted Driver Citations Issued Post-Crash	Distracted Driver Convictions (Crash or Non-Crash)
15-24	**15%**	**26%**	**28%**	**32%**	**21%**
15-20	*8%*	*13%*	*18%*	*17%*	*8%*
21-24	*7%*	*12%*	*10%*	*15%*	*13%*
25-34	17%	24%	24%	28%	32%
35-44	16%	18%	22%	18%	22%
45-54	16%	13%	18%	10%	13%
55-64	16%	11%	4%	8%	8%
65+	20%	8%	4%	4%	3%
TOTAL	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Note: Distracted driver convictions may or may not have resulted in a motor vehicle traffic crash. Percents are calculated using records with known age over 15 years. * FARS 2022 data was not available during the time of reporting. Source: DDS 2022, CODES 2022

The Georgia Distracted Driving Observational Survey estimates the statewide prevalence of driver distraction during the daylight hours. According to the 2023 survey, observed distracted driving decreases as age increases, with younger drivers exhibiting higher rates of distraction compared to older drivers. In 2023, 23% of drivers aged 16 to 24 years, 21% of drivers aged 25 to 69 years, and 9% of drivers 70 years and older were observed to be distracted while driving.

Figure 4. **Observed Driver Distraction in Georgia by Age Group, 2023**



Source: 2023 Georgia Distracted Driving Observational Survey

The differences in the proportion of *convictions* processed by the Georgia Department of Driver Services (DDS) and the proportions of drivers *observed* to be distracted can be attributed to several factors. These factors may include differences in citation procedures, enforcement priorities, court processes, technological factors, legislative factors, and other systems of influence.

[10] Source: 2021 CDC (The YRBS is conducted every two years among a representative group of Georgia public school students.)

Other Distracted Driving Studies

National Distracted Driving Report

As of July 2020, Georgia is one of a few states that banned the handheld use of cell phones and text messaging while driving. According to a Cambridge Mobile Telematics (CMT) study, distracted driving reduced after Georgia's Hands-Free Law was enacted on July 1, 2018. The study showed a 23.7% reduction after the first two weeks and a 17.9% reduction after the first three months the Georgia law took effect (CMT, 2020). Despite these immediate reductions in distracted driving after the law was enacted, other national studies (including crash data and attitudinal surveys) show that the change in driver behavior was not sustainable, especially with the growth of new technologies.

- The CMT study estimates that drivers spent 1 minute and 38 seconds on average distracted on their phones for each hour of driving in February 2022 – a 30% increase compared to February 2020 (CMT, 2022).
- Additionally, in a 2020 observational study conducted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2.8% of all drivers were observed holding a cell phone to their ears while driving. This study also estimates that 7.9% of drivers were using a handheld or hands-free cellphone device during daylight hours (National Center for Statistics and Analysis, 2020).

In-Vehicle Infotainment Systems

AAA study of in-vehicle infotainment systems (modern integrated systems within motor vehicles that provides information, entertainment, and connectivity features) can cause additional distraction for drivers operating a motor vehicle. These systems create a medium to heavy cognitive load in drivers and need to be engineered to reduce that load on drivers. Audio, calling, texting, and navigation were the activities studied. AAA found that in-vehicle infotainment created potentially unsafe distraction for all drivers, but particularly older drivers. Older drivers (55 to 75 years of age) experience slower times to complete in-vehicle tasks while driving compared to younger drivers (25 to 40 years of age)—18 to 31 seconds versus 25 to 40 seconds, respectively.

Legal Perspective

On July 1, 2018, Georgia's Hands-Free Law further expanded the "no texting while driving" law and made it illegal for drivers (including young drivers) to have a phone in their hand or for a phone to touch any part of their body while driving. *This policy change provided greater specification for a distracted driving offense and clarification of the Hands-Free Law for law enforcement to further address distracted driving on Georgia roadways.*

The number of convictions processed by DDS more than doubled from 2017 to 2018 (2.2 times) and from 2018 to 2019 (2.5 times).

- The most common code used before the Hands-Free Law was O.C.G.A. 40-6-241 "Failure to exercise due care/careless driving."
- After the Hands-Free Law became effective, O.C.G.A. 40-6-241(c) "Unlawful use of wireless device" is the most commonly used legal code in distracted driving convictions.

Table 8. **Distracted Driver Convictions Reported to Department of Driver Services by Legal Code and Violation Year, 2013-2022**

Convictions Codes	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018*	2019	2020**	2021	2022
O.C.G.A. 40-6-241 Failure to exercise due care/careless driving	2,601	2,756	3,895	5,231	7,175	3,818	-	-	-	
O.C.G.A. 40-6-241(b) Failure to exercise due care	-	-	-	-	-	2,778	4,802	2,170	4,092	5,702
O.C.G.A. 40-6-241(c) Unlawful use of wireless device	-	-	-	-	-	16,702	60,729	28,957	39,627	42,841
O.C.G.A. 40-6-241(d) Unlawful use of wireless device in Commercial Motor Vehicle	-	-	-	-	-	47	94	46	127	223
O.C.G.A. 40-6-241.1 * Unlawful use of wireless device <18 / using hand-held phone, driving	204	278	217	373	491	230	-	-	-	
O.C.G.A. 40-6-241.2 * Operating a vehicle while text messaging/texting while driving	2,357	2,803	801	-	-	-	-	-	-	
O.C.G.A. 40-6-241.2(b)(1) Operating a vehicle while text messaging/texting while driving	-	-	1,943	3,432	3,702	1,938	-	-	-	
O.C.G.A. 40-6-241.2(b)(2)(A) Holding wireless device for voice communication/using hand-held phone, driving	-	-	26	109	131	76	-	-	-	
O.C.G.A. 40-6-241.2(b)(2)(B) Using >1 button on wireless device for voice comm./using hand-held phone, driving	-	-	1	3	6	4	-	-	-	
O.C.G.A. 40-6-241.2(b)(2)(C) Reaching for wireless device/using hand-held phone, driving	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
TOTAL	**5,162**	**5,837**	**6,883**	**9,148**	**11,505**	**25,593**	**65,625**	**31,173**	**43,846**	**48,766**

Source: Distracted Driver Convictions Reported to Department of Driver Services Summarized by Violation Year, 2022
*On July 1, 2018, Georgia's Hands-Free Law (O.C.G.A. § 40-6-241)
**Governor declared a Public Health State of Emergency for COVID-19 March 2020

[11] * O.C.G.A. § 40-6-241.1 and O.C.G.A.§ 40-6-241.2 repealed by 2018 Ga. Laws 298,§ 6, eff. 7/1/2018.

Data Definitions and Considerations:

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) defines confirmed distraction-related activities as anything that takes a driver's eyes off the road (visual distraction), mind off the road (cognitive distraction), or hands off the wheel (manual distraction).

Police crash reports are reviewed in a post hoc analysis by the Governor's Office of Highway Safety, Georgia Department of Public Health, and the Georgia Department of Transportation using a jointly developed definition of suspected distracted driving based on multiple factors. The imputation of suspected distracted drivers includes drivers that indicate emotional distress and evidence of driver inattention and distraction. The imputation removes driver contributing factors that include drug/alcohol impairment, sleepiness/drowsiness, aggressive/reckless driving, and speeding. The definition also excludes roadway and vehicle contributing factors. The CODES Analytical Reference Guide is available upon request.

A traffic crash is defined as an incident that involved one or more motor vehicles where at least one vehicle was in transport, and the crash originated on a public trafficway, such as a road or highway. Crashes that occurred on private property, including parking lots and driveways, are excluded.

Fatal crashes are defined as crashes that involve a motor vehicle traveling on a trafficway customarily open to the public and that resulted in the death of a motorist or a non-motorist within 30 days of the crash.

Suspected serious injuries are reported by law enforcement and used when any injury, other than fatal injury, prevents the injured person from walking, driving, or normally continuing the activities the person was capable of before the injury occurred.

The Department of Driver Services licensing database is a live database system and represents the information at a point-in-time on the date of extraction.

The Georgia's Hands-Free Law (House Bill 673 (O.C.G.A. § 40-6-241)) of 2018 introduced new legal codes to enforce the "no texting while driving" law. Some Georgia counties may not have reported distracted driver convictions in 2019.

Additional Information:

Other general information on distracted driving may be accessed at:

- https://dds.georgia.gov/distracted-driver-data-reports
- https://www.gahighwaysafety.org/highway-safety/shsp/

Other fact sheets available at the Governor's Office of Highway Safety and Crash Outcomes Data Evaluation Systems (CODES) are Older Drivers, Young Drivers, Motorcycles, Non-Motorists (Pedestrians & Bicyclists), and Occupant Protection.

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Appendix

Distracted Drivers Georgia Traffic Safety Facts (2022)

This document is the appendix for the **2022 Distracted Drivers Georgia Traffic Safety Facts**.
Visit https://www.gahighwaysafety.org/highway-safety/shsp/ to access the full report.

Distracted Driver convictions are convictions processed at the Georgia Department of Driver Services. The total convictions include the following codes based on the county where the violation occurred.

O.C.G.A. 40-6-241(b)	Failure to exercise due care
O.C.G.A. 40-6-241(c)	Unlawful use of wireless device
O.C.G.A. 40-6-241(d)	Unlawful use of wireless device in CMV

Data Considerations:

- On July 1, 2018, Georgia's Hands-Free Law furthered the "no texting while driving" law and made it illegal for drivers (including young drivers) to physically hold or support a wireless communications device while driving. Under Georgia's Hands-Free Law, drivers can be cited and convicted for distracted driving that may or may not have resulted in a motor vehicle traffic crash. While first-time offenders of Georgia's Hands-Free Law can be excused if they provide evidence that they have obtained a device that allows them to use hands-free communication technology, the increase in enforcement and convictions for distracted driving indicates a growing traffic safety concern.
- Gwinnett County has consistently had the highest number of distracted driving convictions compared to any other county. From 2011-2017 (prior to the Hands-Free Law), Gwinnett represented 11% of all distracted driving convictions across the state.
- Some Georgia counties may not have reported all or any distracted driver convictions in 2022. There were 578 distracted driving convictions in 2022, where the county of violation was not known.

Licensed Drivers, Citations Issued after Motor Vehicle Crash, Distracted Driving Convictions, and Percent Confirmed or Suspected Distracted Drivers (Distraction-Related) Involved in Motor Vehicle Crashes by County, 2022

County Name	Licensed Drivers	Distracted Driving Convictions	Distracted Driving Citations Issued After a Crash	MV Traffic Crashes		
				Percent Distraction-Related		Total Crashes
				Percent	Rank	
STATEWIDE	**8,223,689**	**48,766**	**43,335**	**53%**		**383,633**
Appling	14,119	94	<10	58%	(18)	537
Atkinson	5,603	<10	<10	41%	(132)	122
Bacon	8,098	14	<10	54%	(40)	253
Baker	2,334	--	--	77%	(1)	82
Baldwin	30,008	311	<10	56%	(27)	1,817
Banks	16,747	540	<10	51%	(62)	564
Barrow	72,636	80	12	53%	(59)	3,090
Bartow	93,016	1,146	113	54%	(40)	4,057
Ben Hill	12,374	50	<10	42%	(123)	464
Berrien	14,216	101	15	52%	(62)	501
Bibb	108,468	117	18	50%	(78)	6,731
Bleckley	9,306	65	<10	38%	(138)	167
Brantley	14,073	42	<10	47%	(97)	210
Brooks	11,328	<10	13	46%	(110)	348
Bryan	37,453	162	<10	54%	(40)	1,236
Bulloch	52,657	801	119	51%	(62)	2,424
Burke	18,406	154	11	59%	(13)	593

Licensed Drivers, Citations Issued after Motor Vehicle Crash, Distracted Driving Convictions, and Percent Confirmed or Suspected Distracted Drivers (Distraction-Related) Involved in Motor Vehicle Crashes by County, 2022 *(con't)*

County Name	Licensed Drivers	Distracted Driving Convictions	Distracted Driving Citations Issued After a Crash	MV Traffic Crashes		
				Percent Distraction-Related		Total Crashes
Butts	20,778	180	<10	50%	(78)	632
Calhoun	3,372	22	<10	42%	(123)	45
Camden	43,998	258	21	41%	(128)	1,114
Candler	8,219	75	<10	40%	(136)	278
Carroll	98,134	161	43	53%	(51)	4,014
Catoosa	55,140	898	80	54%	(51)	2,188
Charlton	7,687	<10	<10	51%	(62)	156
Chatham	218,684	1,587	356	49%	(78)	14,461
Chattahoochee	4,635	<10	<10	36%	(149)	42
Chattooga	19,293	41	<10	44%	(116)	446
Cherokee	223,816	817	75	60%	(10)	6,771
Clarke	78,005	1,684	119	51%	(62)	5,267
Clay	2,219	34	--	54%	(51)	54
Clayton	200,849	1,203	103	54%	(40)	14,242
Clinch	4,808	15	<10	38%	(138)	94
Cobb	589,633	796	236	56%	(27)	28,141
Coffee	29,167	352	25	38%	(138)	1,024
Colquitt	32,839	282	34	49%	(91)	1,230
Columbia	127,525	423	10	60%	(13)	4,701
Cook	13,501	334	17	48%	(91)	532
Coweta	123,589	918	82	57%	(27)	4,726
Crawford	10,326	12	<10	71%	(2)	279
Crisp	15,089	64	11	48%	(97)	769
Dade	13,753	166	13	54%	(40)	220
Dawson	26,861	335	17	56%	(27)	1,038
Decatur	20,934	64	10	36%	(145)	608
Dekalb	536,885	1,030	113	58%	(18)	38,651
Dodge	13,782	42	<10	36%	(149)	332
Dooly	7,040	104	23	48%	(91)	328
Dougherty	59,373	468	43	45%	(110)	3,450
Douglas	112,043	481	51	51%	(74)	5,612
Early	8,025	11	<10	57%	(27)	277
Echols	2,557	<10	<10	59%	(13)	32
Effingham	56,035	168	<10	48%	(91)	1,469
Elbert	16,259	76	<10	45%	(110)	343
Emanuel	16,884	226	<10	38%	(138)	410
Evans	7,624	35	<10	35%	(149)	141
Fannin	23,791	160	<10	53%	(51)	785
Fayette	104,153	1,380	24	59%	(13)	3,649
Floyd	75,842	1,066	37	52%	(62)	3,481
Forsyth	205,799	464	29	58%	(18)	6,334
Franklin	19,669	344	<10	55%	(37)	836

Licensed Drivers, Citations Issued after Motor Vehicle Crash, Distracted Driving Convictions, and Percent Confirmed or Suspected Distracted Drivers (Distraction-Related) Involved in Motor Vehicle Crashes by County, 2022 *(con't)*

County Name	Licensed Drivers	Distracted Driving Convictions	Distracted Driving Citations Issued After a Crash	MV Traffic Crashes		
				Percent Distraction-Related		Total Crashes
Fulton	777,984	1,518	437	52%	(59)	56,618
Gilmer	27,772	66	10	47%	(97)	896
Glascock	2,279	<10	--	47%	(97)	34
Glynn	67,843	1,170	35	50%	(74)	2,574
Gordon	46,971	422	24	45%	(110)	1,773
Grady	17,877	160	12	40%	(136)	317
Greene	17,267	<10	<10	59%	(18)	645
Gwinnett	716,264	5,365	242	57%	(27)	32,511
Habersham	37,335	642	50	50%	(78)	1,216
Hall	168,257	1,587	145	53%	(51)	8,023
Hancock	6,243	<10	--	37%	(143)	51
Haralson	26,372	42	<10	40%	(132)	535
Harris	30,408	234	23	52%	(62)	580
Hart	22,308	<10	<10	54%	(51)	881
Heard	9,984	<10	<10	54%	(40)	222
Henry	198,244	2,242	45	57%	(27)	10,780
Houston	128,960	680	83	52%	(62)	4,176
Irwin	7,240	11	<10	50%	(78)	206
Jackson	66,890	292	19	52%	(59)	2,743
Jasper	13,246	21	<10	56%	(27)	345
Jeff Davis	10,982	110	<10	36%	(149)	262
Jefferson	12,220	67	--	34%	(155)	205
Jenkins	5,703	201	<10	40%	(132)	94
Johnson	6,144	54	<10	63%	(5)	125
Jones	23,902	115	<10	60%	(10)	673
Lamar	16,283	59	<10	52%	(62)	471
Lanier	6,754	10	<10	46%	(110)	127
Laurens	38,636	241	13	42%	(128)	1,559
Lee	26,943	293	<10	59%	(18)	480
Liberty	46,963	1,683	54	50%	(78)	1,785
Lincoln	6,926	--	--	37%	(145)	38
Long	12,969	90	<10	47%	(97)	268
Lowndes	83,472	455	104	47%	(105)	3,697
Lumpkin	26,634	57	14	56%	(27)	842
Macon	7,714	94	<10	36%	(149)	151
Madison	25,910	--	<10	57%	(24)	728
Marion	5,926	35	<10	41%	(128)	75
McDuffie	16,948	47	<10	44%	(116)	634
McIntosh	10,394	80	<10	34%	(156)	107
Meriwether	18,738	131	<10	50%	(78)	371
Miller	4,316	<10	<10	36%	(145)	97
Mitchell	15,485	38	<10	49%	(78)	493

Licensed Drivers, Citations Issued after Motor Vehicle Crash, Distracted Driving Convictions, and Percent Confirmed or Suspected Distracted Drivers (Distraction-Related) Involved in Motor Vehicle Crashes by County, 2022 *(con't)*

County Name	Licensed Drivers	Distracted Driving Convictions	Distracted Driving Citations Issued After a Crash	MV Traffic Crashes		
				Percent Distraction-Related		Total Crashes
Monroe	28,277	315	<10	58%	(24)	1,301
Montgomery	6,315	48	<10	61%	(8)	185
Morgan	18,365	170	<10	56%	(37)	830
Murray	31,017	248	20	36%	(149)	790
Muscogee	138,626	50	112	49%	(78)	6,759
Newton	97,272	641	32	55%	(40)	3,189
Oconee	35,605	151	<10	66%	(3)	1,542
Oglethorpe	13,148	165	<10	65%	(3)	314
Paulding	139,211	583	145	51%	(62)	3,940
Peach	20,351	89	15	47%	(105)	1,144
Pickens	31,363	43	16	51%	(74)	928
Pierce	16,116	33	<10	50%	(78)	403
Pike	17,465	183	<10	63%	(5)	322
Polk	34,485	63	10	47%	(105)	1,007
Pulaski	6,656	54	11	46%	(105)	126
Putnam	19,304	99	--	64%	(5)	742
Quitman	1,740	12	<10	36%	(145)	36
Rabun	15,541	76	13	50%	(78)	491
Randolph	4,716	--	<10	41%	(132)	88
Richmond	139,348	339	36	54%	(40)	8,780
Rockdale	71,903	766	29	54%	(51)	3,884
Schley	3,613	20	<10	49%	(91)	41
Screven	11,268	21	--	34%	(156)	182
Seminole	7,322	18	<10	39%	(138)	98
Spalding	56,296	971	18	46%	(105)	1,983
Stephens	22,351	69	18	44%	(121)	648
Stewart	2,868	15	<10	55%	(40)	75
Sumter	20,552	295	18	42%	(123)	781
Talbot	4,868	71	<10	54%	(40)	98
Taliaferro	1,308	--	<10	51%	(62)	133
Tattnall	15,092	69	<10	38%	(143)	293
Taylor	6,157	32	11	54%	(40)	190
Telfair	7,317	109	<10	29%	(158)	125
Terrell	6,750	91	<10	26%	(159)	147
Thomas	36,002	153	25	48%	(97)	1,517
Tift	29,779	425	35	44%	(121)	1,474
Toombs	20,487	129	<10	50%	(78)	929
Towns	12,112	77	<10	56%	(37)	239
Treutlen	4,822	16	<10	43%	(123)	155
Troup	54,313	69	64	53%	(51)	2,985
Turner	6,511	192	14	42%	(128)	206
Twiggs	6,724	104	<10	57%	(24)	500

Licensed Drivers, Citations Issued after Motor Vehicle Crash, Distracted Driving Convictions, and Percent Confirmed or Suspected Distracted Drivers (Distraction-Related) Involved in Motor Vehicle Crashes by County, 2022 *(con't)*

County Name	Licensed Drivers	Distracted Driving Convictions	Distracted Driving Citations Issued After a Crash	MV Traffic Crashes		
				Percent Distraction-Related		Total Crashes
Union	24,434	35	12	56%	(27)	673
Upson	22,737	159	20	45%	(116)	703
Walker	54,686	407	37	45%	(116)	1,179
Walton	86,764	242	18	48%	(91)	2,562
Ware	26,016	33	<10	48%	(97)	1,160
Warren	4,145	<10	<10	42%	(123)	166
Washington	14,851	71	<10	59%	(13)	528
Wayne	23,026	59	12	48%	(97)	674
Webster	1,936	28	<10	45%	(110)	40
Wheeler	3,768	22	<10	45%	(116)	74
White	25,263	273	11	51%	(74)	759
Whitfield	77,646	825	97	50%	(78)	3,493
Wilcox	5,523	--	<10	60%	(10)	86
Wilkes	7,734	92	<10	51%	(62)	131
Wilkinson	7,346	<10	<10	59%	(18)	214
Worth	15,315	52	<10	61%	(8)	651