Georgia Traffic Safety Facts

2021 Data

April 2023

Key Findings

- 54 percent of all motor vehicle traffic crashes had at least one confirmed or suspected distracted driver.
- 29 percent of all serious injury crashes involved at least one driver confirmed or suspected of distraction.
- According to the 2022 Georgia Distracted Driving Observational Survey, 16.8 percent of all drivers were observed to have some form of distraction (i.e., talking, texting, dialing, or eating).
- 75 percent 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.

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, can cover 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 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 in 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.

2022 Georgia Distracted Driving Observational Study

The Injury Prevention Research Center at Emory University conducted a roadside observational survey of driver distraction—over 34,000 observations across 400 sites within 20 Georgia counties between May and July 2022. According to the 2022 Georgia Distracted Driving Observational Survey[1], 16.8 percent of all drivers were observed to have 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, at least 1 out of 6 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.

According to the 2022 Georgia Distracted Driving Observational Survey, nearly 17 percent of all drivers were observed to have some form of distraction. In other words, **at least 1 out of 6 drivers at any time and location on Georgia roadways may be distracted.**

The following are key findings from the 2022 Georgia Distracted Driving Observational Survey.

- 16.8 percent of drivers of cars, trucks, SUVs, and vans/minivans were observed to have some form of distraction, such as talking, texting, dialing, or eating.
- The rate of driver distraction was higher among those who were unbelted (23.2 percent) than those who were belted (15.8 percent).
- Driver distraction was higher in Atlanta MSAs (17.6 percent) than in non-Atlanta MSAs (13.5 percent) and rural areas (13.3 percent).
- Distracted driving was higher for women (17.9 percent) than for men (15.7 percent).
- Driver distraction also decreased with increasing age.
- Distracted driving was higher on weekdays (17.9 percent) than on weekends (11.6 percent). This was true for all types of distractions.
- Distraction involving a hand-held device was nearly twice as high on weekdays (6.3 percent) than on weekends (3.4 percent), and texting/dialing on a hand-held device was more than twice as high on weekdays (5.0 percent) than on weekends (2.3 percent).

[1] Rupp, Jonathan. 2023. “Statewide Rates of Driver Distraction: An Observational Survey of Driver Distraction in Georgia, 2022”. The Injury Prevention Research Center at Emory (IPRCE), Emory University: Atlanta, Georgia.

Distracted Drivers Involved in Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes

In 2021, 54 percent 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, 51.93 percent of all crashes involved distracted, non-impaired drivers.[2]

Among the drivers involved in motor vehicle traffic crashes, 2 percent were confirmed to be distracted seconds before the crash, 28 percent were suspected of distraction[3], and 24 percent were *un*distracted drivers—the other 47 percent of drivers were not involved in distraction-related crashes. Most distraction-related crashes involved other vehicles —

- 75 percent of all distraction-related crashes involved at least one other vehicle besides the distracted driver.
- 25 percent of all distraction-related crashes were single-vehicle crashes that only involved the distracted driver's vehicle.

Furthermore, among all single-vehicle crashes, 64 percent involved at least one confirmed or suspected distracted driver. Among all multi-vehicle crashes, 51 percent involved at least one confirmed or suspected distracted driver.

Table 1: **Percent of All Traffic Crashes that were Distraction-Related, 2021**

Traffic Measure	2021
Crashes	
Distraction-Related Crashes	54%
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 2021

54%
of all motor vehicle traffic crashes had at least one ***confirmed*** or ***suspected*** distracted driver in 2021.

Distraction-Related Traffic Fatalities and Serious Injuries

According to CODES preliminary data, 50 fatal crashes involved at least one confirmed distracted driver (3.0 percent of all fatal crashes) in 2021. In these confirmed distraction-related crashes, 56 fatalities occurred (3.1 percent 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 2017 and 2021.

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.

[2] 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

[3] 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, 2017-2021**

Year	Fatal Crashes			Fatalities		
	Total Fatal Crashes	Confirmed Distraction-Related		Total Traffic Fatalities	Confirmed Distraction-Related	
		Number	Percent		Number	Percent
2017	1,440	75	5.2%	1,540	82	5.3%
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	1,670	50	3.0%	1,797	56	3.1%

Source: FARS 2017-2021

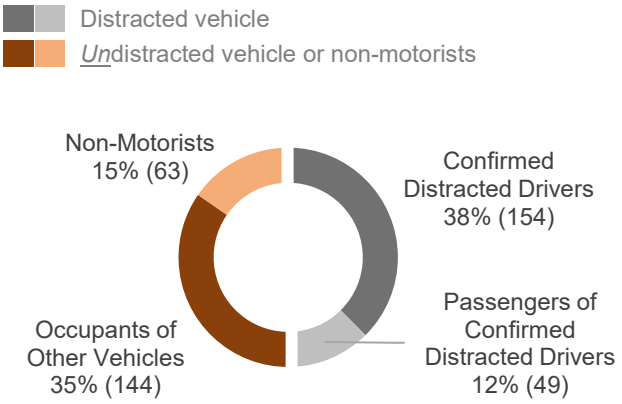
In 2021, **29 percent** of all serious injury[4] crashes involved at least one driver *confirmed or suspected* of distraction. The number of serious injuries that involved a *confirmed* distracted driver increased by 2 percent— from 347 serious injuries in 2020 to 354 in 2021.

Figure 1 shows the percent of fatalities or serious injuries involving at least one confirmed distracted driver by person type in 2021.

- 50 percent were in the confirmed distracted driver's vehicle (represented by gray in Figure 1).
  - 38 percent were distracted drivers themselves.
  - 12 percent were passengers of the distracted driver.
- 50 percent were occupants of other vehicles or non-motorists (represented by brown in Figure 1).
  - 35 percent were occupants of other vehicles *not* operated by the distracted driver.
  - 15 percent were non-motorists (i.e., pedestrians or bicyclists).

Almost two-thirds of *confirmed* distracted drivers involved in motor vehicle crashes did not have passenger occupants with them in the vehicle—64 percent. Thirty-six percent 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, 2021**



56 Fatal Injuries
354 Serious Injuries

Source: FARS 2021, CODES 2021

Based on the *"2022 Observational Survey of Driver Distraction in Georgia,"*[5] **the driver distraction rate was higher among unrestrained drivers than restrained drivers** – 23 percent of unrestrained drivers were observed to be distracted, and 16 percent of restrained drivers were distracted.

[4] 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.
[5] Rupp, Jonathan. 2023. "Statewide Rates of Driver Distraction: An Observational Survey of Driver Distraction in Georgia, 2022". 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 2021.

- The ten counties in the Atlanta region had the highest rates of distraction-related crashes on *principal arterial roads*—1,116.0 distraction-related crashes out of every 100M VMT.
- Other urban counties had the highest rates of distraction-related crashes on *minor arterial roads*—1,203.2 distraction-related crashes out of every 100M VMT.
- Rural counties had the highest rate of distraction-related crashes on *collector roads*—625.6 distraction-related crash rate (per 100M VMT).
- Across all counties in Georgia, *minor arterial roads* had the highest rate of distraction-related crashes—811.6 distraction-related crash rate (per 100M VMT).

Table 3: **Distraction-Related Motor Vehicle Traffic Crash Rate (per 100M VMT) by Region and Roadway Classification, 2021**

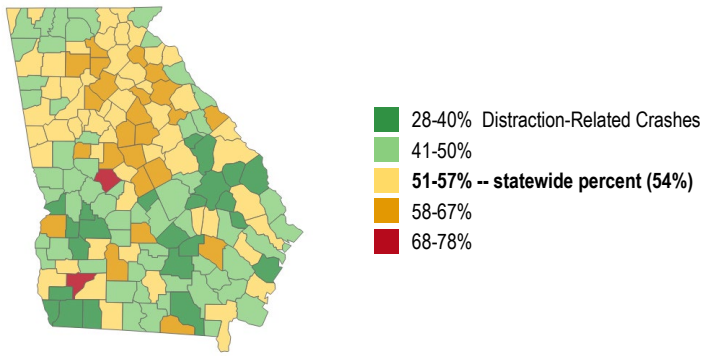
Roadway Classification	Atlanta Region[6] (10 counties)	Other Urban Counties (31 counties)	Rural Counties (118 counties)	Statewide
Interstate	654.2	343.7	83.1	**409.9**
Principal Arterial	1,116.0	1,090.2	276.2	**793.1**
Minor Arterial	1,100.5	1,203.2	256.5	**811.6**
Collectors	750.1	419.3	625.6	**566.6**
Local	416.7	712.6	193.5	**400.8**
All Roadways	**829.0**	**803.5**	**256.3**	**625.8**

Note: The sum of the individual cells may not equal to row or column totals due to rounding error. Total includes freeway/ramp roadway classifications. Source: Roadway data obtained for Numetric, 2021

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 (54 percent). 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 ten counties within the Atlanta Region had a greater percentage of distraction-related crashes compared to the statewide percent.
- Six out of 31 other urban counties and 34 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 Crawford (72 percent) and Baker (70 percent)—which are classified as rural counties.

Figure 2: **Percent of Distraction-Related Traffic Crashes and Deviation from the Statewide Percent by County, 2021**



Source: CODES 2021
Note: Counties that are light to dark green have a lower percentage of distraction-related crashes compared to the statewide percent. Counties that are orange and red have a higher percentage of distraction-related crashes compared to the statewide percent.

[6] The Atlanta Region includes the ten counties that are defined by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC): Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, and Rockdale counties.

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 2012 to 2021.

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 2021, the number of distracted driving convictions and rate per licensed drivers increased by 41 percent and 35 percent, respectively, compared to 2020.

Figure 3 shows the number of distracted driver convictions processed by DDS from January 2017 to December 2021. 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 2021 suggests that the court reporting and processing may have returned to pre-pandemic norms.

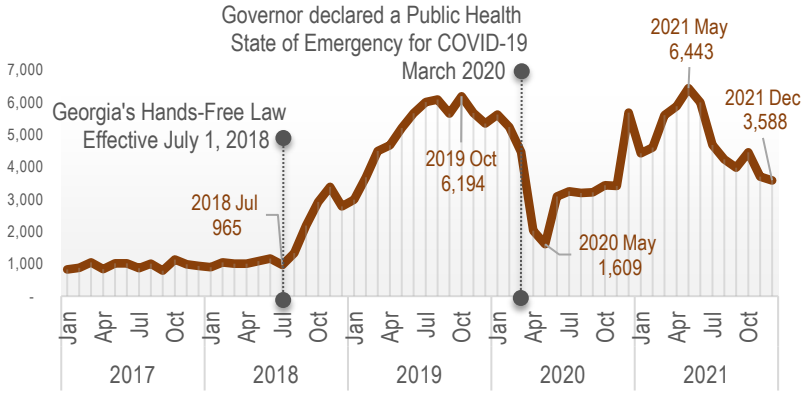
The COVID-19 response caused many Georgia courts to temporarily postpone court hearings, including traffic court, and many traffic safety law enforcement officers were reassigned to other critical and high-priority areas. Therefore, many distracted driving convictions may not have been reported to the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

Table 4: **Distracted Driver Convictions, Licensed Drivers, and Distracted Driver Conviction Rate, 2012-2021**

Year	Distracted Driver Convictions	Licensed Drivers	Distracted Driver Conviction Rate per 100,000 Licensed Drivers
2012	3,594	7,002,114	51.3
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	8,223,689	533.2

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 2012-2021

Figure 3: **Distracted Driver Convictions, Jan 2017 – Dec 2021**



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 2017-2021 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 2021.

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 percent of all distracted driving convictions across the state. In 2021, however, Gwinnett represented 15 percent 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 32 percent of all *distracted driving convictions* (13,920 out of 43,848)—the remaining 154 Georgia counties represented 68 percent of all distracted driving convictions.

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 2021. The top five counties with the greatest number of distracted driving citations issued after a crash represented 32 percent of all *distracted driving citations issued after a crash* (1,328 out of 4,158)—the remaining 154 Georgia counties represented 68 percent of all distracted driving citations after a crash.

Table 5: **Top Five Counties with the Highest Distracted Driver Convictions and Distracted Driver Conviction Rate, 2021**

Number of Distracted Driver Convictions			Distracted Driver Conviction Rate per 100,000 Licensed Drivers		
Rank	County	Number	Rank	County	Rate
1	Gwinnett	6,552	1	Banks	2,687.0
2	Fulton	3,210	2	Jenkins	2,612.7
3	Cobb	1,467	3	Coffee	1,985.1
4	Hall	1,440	4	Liberty	1,848.3
5	Henry	1,251	5	Worth	1,789.1

Note: The distracted driving violations presented in the table occurred in 2019 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.
Source: DDS 2021

Table 6: **Top Five Counties with the Highest Distracted Driver Citations Issued After a Motor Vehicle (MV) Traffic Crash and Distracted Driver Citation Rate, 2021**

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	438	1	Echols	333.3
2	Chatham	282	2	Crawford	309.6
3	Cobb	252	3	Pulaski	214.3
4	Lowndes	188	4	Terrell	156.9
5	Gwinnett	168	5	Lanier	144.7

Source: CODES 2021
Note: Rates were calculated when the number of citations in the county was greater than or equal to five.

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 distraction-related motor vehicle crashes.

Distracted Drivers by Age Group

While drivers aged 15-to-24 years represented 15 percent of all licensed drivers in 2021, 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:

- **27 percent** of all suspected or confirmed distracted drivers involved in crashes;
- **20 percent** of all confirmed distracted drivers involved in fatal crashes;
- **34 percent** of all drivers issued a distracted driver citation after a crash; and
- **22 percent** of all distracted driving convictions.

According to the 2019 High School Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, 30 percent of Georgia high school students texted or e-mailed while driving a car or other vehicle during the 30 days before the survey[7].

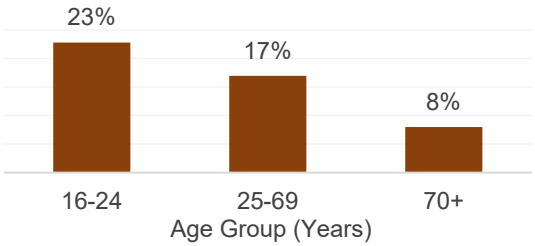
Table 7: **Licensed Drivers, Confirmed or Suspected Distracted Drivers Involved in Types of Motor Vehicle (MV) Crashes, Distracted Driver Citations Issued after a Motor Vehicle Crash, Distracted Driver Convictions by Age Group, 2021**

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%**	**27%**	**20%**	**34%**	**22%**
15-20	*8%*	*14%*	*10%*	*18%*	*9%*
21-24	*7%*	*13%*	*9%*	*16%*	*13%*
25-34	17%	25%	24%	28%	31%
35-44	16%	17%	15%	17%	22%
45-54	16%	13%	15%	11%	13%
55-64	16%	10%	9%	7%	8%
65+	20%	7%	16%	3%	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 2021 data was not available during the time of reporting. Source: DDS 2021, CODES 2021

According to the 2020 Georgia Distracted Driving Observational Survey, observed distracted driving decreases as age increases. In 2022, 23 percent of drivers aged 16 to 24 years, 17 percent of drivers aged 25 to 69 years, and 8 percent of drivers 70 years and older were observed to be distracted while driving.

Figure 4: **Observed Driver Distraction in Georgia by Age Group, 2022**



[7] The YRBS is conducted every two years among a representative group of Georgia public school students.

Other Distracted Driving Studies

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 percent reduction after the first two weeks and a 17.9 percent 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 percent increase compared to February 2020 (CMT, 2022).
- Additionally, in a 2020 observational study conducted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2.8 percent of all drivers were observed holding a cell phone to their ears while driving. This study also estimates that 7.9 percent of drivers were using a handheld or hands-free cellphone device during daylight hours (National Center for Statistics and Analysis, 2020).

Legal Perspective

On July 1, 2018, Georgia's Hands-Free Law furthered 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 talking on their phone and 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, 2012-2021**

Convictions Codes	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
O.C.G.A. 40-6-241 Failure to exercise due care/careless driving	2,460	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
O.C.G.A. 40-6-241(c) Unlawful use of wireless device	-	-	-	-	-	-	16,702	60,729	28,957	39,627
O.C.G.A. 40-6-241(d) Unlawful use of wireless device in Commercial Motor Vehicle	-	-	-	-	-	-	47	94	46	127
O.C.G.A. 40-6-241.1 * Unlawful use of wireless device <18 / using hand-held phone, driving	57	204	278	217	373	491	230	-	-	-
O.C.G.A. 40-6-241.2 * Operating a vehicle while text messaging/texting while driving	1,077	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	**3,594**	**5,162**	**5,837**	**6,883**	**9,148**	**11,505**	**25,593**	**65,625**	**31,173**	**43,846**

Source: Distracted Driver Convictions Reported to Department of Driver Services Summarized by Violation Year, 2021

[8] * 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:

- Appendix: Distracted Drivers Georgia Traffic Safety Facts
- 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.

The suggested APA format citation for this document is:

Crash Outcomes Data Evaluation System. (2023, April). *Distracted Drivers: 2021 Preliminary data.* (Georgia Traffic Safety Facts). Atlanta, GA: Governor's Office of Highway Safety.

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Appendix

Distracted Drivers Georgia Traffic Safety Facts (2021)

This document is the appendix for the **2021 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 26 percent of all distracted driving convictions across the state.
- Some Georgia counties may not have reported all or any distracted driver convictions in 2021. There were ten (10) distracted driving convictions in 2021, where the county of violation was unknown.

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, 2021

County Name	Licensed Drivers	Distracted Driving Citations Issued After a Crash	Distracted Driving Convictions	Percent Distraction-Related MV Traffic Crashes
STATEWIDE	**8,223,689**	**4,158**	**43,846**	**54%**
Appling	14,119	5	46	60%
Atkinson	5,603	8	-	41%
Bacon	8,098	8	16	43%
Baker	2,334	1	-	70%
Baldwin	30,008	10	138	55%
Banks	16,747	5	450	60%
Barrow	72,636	15	154	52%
Bartow	93,016	115	699	55%
Ben Hill	12,374	6	85	50%
Berrien	14,216	27	248	52%
Bibb	108,468	12	171	51%
Bleckley	9,306	3	61	36%
Brantley	14,073	8	-	43%
Brooks	11,328	18	7	44%
Bryan	37,453	7	117	52%
Bulloch	52,657	103	827	51%
Burke	18,406	5	82	54%

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, 2021 *(con't)*

County Name	Licensed Drivers	Distracted Driving Citations Issued After a Crash	Distracted Driving Convictions	Percent Distraction-Related MV Traffic Crashes
Butts	20,778	2	74	51%
Calhoun	3,372	1	14	55%
Camden	43,998	13	183	41%
Candler	8,219	1	66	38%
Carroll	98,134	53	566	51%
Catoosa	55,140	75	421	53%
Charlton	7,687	2	-	51%
Chatham	218,684	282	1,111	49%
Chattahoochee	4,635	2		31%
Chattooga	19,293	10	24	50%
Cherokee	223,816	63	961	58%
Clarke	78,005	47	3	51%
Clay	2,219	1	18	50%
Clayton	200,849	134	781	55%
Clinch	4,808	2	1	37%
Cobb	589,633	252	1,467	56%
Coffee	29,167	30	579	37%
Colquitt	32,839	20	158	47%
Columbia	127,525	15	385	61%
Cook	13,501	-	123	44%
Coweta	123,589	26	1,161	55%
Crawford	10,326	61	19	72%
Crisp	15,089	14	60	46%
Dade	13,753	3	39	55%
Dawson	26,861	25	327	59%
Decatur	20,934	12	55	40%
Dekalb	536,885	102	1,143	58%
Dodge	13,782	6	39	41%
Dooly	7,040	11	47	44%
Dougherty	59,373	32	507	43%
Douglas	112,043	41	257	50%
Early	8,025	3	7	55%
Echols	2,557	8	-	59%
Effingham	56,035	7	258	50%
Elbert	16,259	2	103	47%
Emanuel	16,884	5	122	36%
Evans	7,624	3	25	33%
Fannin	23,791	10	124	50%
Fayette	104,153	34	1,023	57%
Floyd	75,842	38	649	54%
Forsyth	205,799	40	613	58%
Franklin	19,669	15	177	56%
Fulton	777,984	438	3,210	52%

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, 2021 *(con't)*

County Name	Licensed Drivers	Distracted Driving Citations Issued After a Crash	Distracted Driving Convictions	Percent Distraction-Related MV Traffic Crashes
Gilmer	27,772	10	64	49%
Glascock	2,279	-	-	35%
Glynn	67,843	23	1,082	51%
Gordon	46,971	33	189	49%
Grady	17,877	7	279	37%
Greene	17,267	5	17	57%
Gwinnett	716,264	168	6,552	60%
Habersham	37,335	32	224	53%
Hall	168,257	133	1,440	55%
Hancock	6,243	-	2	53%
Haralson	26,372	6	15	45%
Harris	30,408	17	198	48%
Hart	22,308	8	1	53%
Heard	9,984	2	6	57%
Henry	198,244	58	1,251	57%
Houston	128,960	88	734	52%
Irwin	7,240	9	18	45%
Jackson	66,890	21	205	52%
Jasper	13,246	2	11	58%
Jeff Davis	10,982	3	36	30%
Jefferson	12,220	-	67	28%
Jenkins	5,703	6	149	38%
Johnson	6,144	2	-	45%
Jones	23,902	1	114	66%
Lamar	16,283	4	39	56%
Lanier	6,754	11	25	46%
Laurens	38,636	21	263	43%
Lee	26,943	11	213	51%
Liberty	46,963	81	868	47%
Lincoln	6,926	-	-	46%
Long	12,969	5	99	56%
Lowndes	83,472	188	425	47%
Lumpkin	26,634	14	121	55%
Macon	7,714	9	124	41%
Madison	25,910	7	-	61%
Marion	5,926	2	26	46%
McDuffie	16,948	6	37	48%
McIntosh	10,394	3	35	36%
Meriwether	18,738	5	76	48%
Miller	4,316	1	-	33%
Mitchell	15,485	11	36	53%
Monroe	28,277	3	308	58%
Montgomery	6,315	-	31	54%

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, 2021 *(con't)*

County Name	Licensed Drivers	Distracted Driving Citations Issued After a Crash	Distracted Driving Convictions	Percent Distraction-Related MV Traffic Crashes
Morgan	18,365	4	117	59%
Murray	31,017	20	293	44%
Muscogee	138,626	74	21	48%
Newton	97,272	28	274	57%
Oconee	35,605	16	129	67%
Oglethorpe	13,148	2	79	66%
Paulding	139,211	113	780	54%
Peach	20,351	11	88	45%
Pickens	31,363	8	92	51%
Pierce	16,116	3	6	44%
Pike	17,465	1	253	66%
Polk	34,485	9	50	47%
Pulaski	6,656	15	56	50%
Putnam	19,304	1	73	64%
Quitman	1,740	-	9	44%
Rabun	15,541	6	37	48%
Randolph	4,716	-	2	46%
Richmond	139,348	49	373	53%
Rockdale	71,903	22	494	56%
Schley	3,613	4	16	37%
Screven	11,268	3	22	33%
Seminole	7,322	2	79	33%
Spalding	56,296	20	638	49%
Stephens	22,351	12	29	42%
Stewart	2,868	5	10	58%
Sumter	20,552	14	226	39%
Talbot	4,868	2	46	48%
Taliaferro	1,308	2	-	67%
Tattnall	15,092	6	18	46%
Taylor	6,157	4	3	41%
Telfair	7,317	-	82	32%
Terrell	6,750	8	102	33%
Thomas	36,002	28	274	51%
Tift	29,779	38	530	43%
Toombs	20,487	9	192	51%
Towns	12,112	4	106	52%
Treutlen	4,822	4	11	40%
Troup	54,313	69	80	51%
Turner	6,511	18	104	52%
Twiggs	6,724	6	45	61%
Union	24,434	4	62	54%
Upson	22,737	9	233	41%
Walker	54,686	30	93	45%

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, 2021 *(con't)*

County Name	Licensed Drivers	Distracted Driving Citations Issued After a Crash	Distracted Driving Convictions	Percent Distraction-Related MV Traffic Crashes
Walton	86,764	16	296	51%
Ware	26,016	12	47	49%
Warren	4,145	5	9	49%
Washington	14,851	1	52	56%
Wayne	23,026	1	53	46%
Webster	1,936	2	14	37%
Wheeler	3,768	2	17	42%
White	25,263	12	76	57%
Whitfield	77,646	91	541	49%
Wilcox	5,523	4	-	67%
Wilkes	7,734	7	52	55%
Wilkinson	7,346	2	2	60%
Worth	15,315	7	274	59%