



Sep 21, 2012 14:58 BST

Texting at the wheel a bigger risk than driving at legal alcohol limit

Which? has revealed alarming figures for the impact of using social media when driving including a 79% reduction in attention when texting.

The qualitative research follows an RAC study of more than 1,000 motorists which highlighted concerns among motorists of the growing danger of other drivers texting and tweeting at the wheel.

Which? sent three researchers to a test centre in Berkshire, where simulators gauged their driving ability and reaction times in various states of distraction.

They drove while sober (as a control), and while at the legal alcohol limit. On a separate day they drove while using their phone to chat and text.

In all but one of the tests, texting diminished the drivers' abilities more than drinking, or any other type of phone use tested.

For all three researchers, the average time taken to react to hazards when sober and not distracted was just over a second. After drinking, their reaction time rose to 1.2 seconds, and it was fractionally higher still when speaking on a hands-free kit or handheld mobile phone. But when attempting to write a text message, the average reaction time jumped to two seconds.

The results build on concerns raised by RAC's own Report on Motoring 2012 which revealed that three of the top five concerns held by motorists are now about the behaviour of other drivers and only 22% said they feel safer on the roads now than ever before. In particular, respondents highlighted other drivers using mobile phones and using social media as a big fear factor for their own safety.

Key findings of the RAC Report included:

- 21% of motorists admitted to holding a mobile phone while either driving or stationary at the lights, 17 to 44-year-olds are the worst offenders with 28% admitting doing this
- 11% of motorists admitted to accessing social media and emails while driving, rising to 19% for the 17 to 24 age group
- 11% of drivers also accessed other websites while on the move

RAC technical director David Bizley said: "We welcome this study by the Consumers' Association which complements our own findings that texting at the wheel is a significant danger which needs to be addressed by stricter enforcement and a positive public safety campaign.

"New generations of drivers are missing out on vital information about the dangers of driving under the influence of drink and drugs and of using a mobile phone and social media while driving. Similar to Which? we strongly urge the Government to reintroduce a high profile media campaign on the dangers of mobile phone use while driving and to incorporate road safety in the national curriculum."

About the RAC

First formed in 1897, the RAC has been looking after the needs of its members and championing the interests of drivers for more than 120 years.

Today it has more than eight million members and is one of the UK's most progressive motoring organisations, providing services for both private and business motorists. Whether it's [roadside assistance](#), [insurance](#), [buying a used car](#), [vehicle inspections and checks](#), [legal services](#) or up-to-the-minute [traffic and travel information](#) – the RAC offers a solution for all motoring needs. The RAC is committed to making motoring easier, safer, more affordable and more enjoyable for drivers and road users.

The RAC is the motorist's champion and campaigns to support the interests of its members and UK drivers at a national level. This includes voicing concerns about the increasing cost of motoring, particularly the price of fuel and the high level of tax levied on it, advancing levels of road safety, and supporting the needs of all drivers, from young to old.

The RAC's annual [Report on Motoring](#) – first published in 1989 – is one of a kind and provides a clear insight into the concerns and issues facing today's motorists.

For the very latest news on UK fuel prices, check [RAC Fuel Watch](#). It provides a comprehensive guide to the latest UK unleaded petrol and diesel prices – both at the wholesale level and at the pump - and tracks these prices daily to help drivers check if the price they pay to fill up is a fair one.

Contacts



RAC Press Office

Press Contact

press.office@rac.co.uk

Emails monitored during normal office hours. For breakdown queries, call 0330 159 0740

ISDN number on request