

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** FIX OUR ROADS OHIO COALITION  
**FROM:** NEIL NEWHOUSE – PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES  
**SUBJECT:** RECENT POLLING DATA  
**DATE:** FEBRUARY 26, 2021

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The purpose of this memo is to provide a brief review of the recent statewide poll we conducted of Ohio drivers regarding the topic of distracted driving. The online poll was conducted among 1,000 licensed Ohio drivers and interviewing took place between February 17-24. The poll was a representative sample of Ohio adults based on age, education, county, ethnicity and gender. It has a credibility interval of +/-3.53%.

### KEY FINDINGS

**1. *“Distracted driving” is THE major worry for Ohio drivers.***

By a two-to-one margin over “drivers who are under the influence” (48%-22%), Ohio drivers say they worry most about “distracted drivers.” This sentiment is the top concern for Ohio drivers, regardless of age, partisanship, political ideology or region of the state.

**2. *Ohio drivers report more distractions than ever.***

Fully 81% of those Ohio drivers interviewed say there are more distractions while driving today than there were five years ago.

**3. *Eating while driving, talking on a hand-held cell phone, dealing with your car’s navigation system and texting on hand-held cells are the most common distracted driving behaviors.***

Nearly half of Ohio drivers interviewed (46%) said they had eaten while driving in the past week, with 32% saying they had talked on their hand-held cell, 23% dealt with their car’s navigation system and 22% had texted while driving. Younger drivers were far more likely to engage in each of these behaviors than their older counterparts.

**4. *Ohio drivers observe “distracted driving” nearly every time they are on the road.***

More than 50% of Ohio drivers say they see another driver using their hand-held phone while driving “nearly every time they go out” (22%) or “most times they go out” (31%).

**5. *Drivers consider using hand-held phones while driving to be just as dangerous if not more dangerous than “driving under the influence.”***

Fully 75% of Ohio drivers say that using a hand-held cell phone is more dangerous (18%) or just as dangerous (57%) as driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol. This sentiment is shared by Ohio drivers across all age groups.

**6. There is strong support for a new law addressing the issue of “distracted driving.”**

When Ohio drivers are asked about a potential new state law dealing with distracted driving:

*The state legislature is considering passing new legislation dealing with this issue. The new law would prohibit drivers from holding their cell phones while talking or manually using their hand-held cell phones to write an email or text, post on social media, view images or videos, manually enter data or broadcast videos or images. Further, it would allow drivers to use voice commands to make calls and respond to communications.*

*Would you favor or oppose this proposed new law?*

The support is by a wide 78%-15% margin, with fully 45% saying they strongly favor it.

Support for the new law cuts across age groups, media markets, political ideology and partisanship, as well as ethnicity.

**7. The vast majority of Ohio drivers say they would be willing to obey the new law.**

Full 88% of Ohio drivers say they would be willing to obey the new law – that includes at least 80% of all age groups.

**8. Drivers reject the notion that this law is not needed.**

When asked whether they agree or disagree with the following statement:

*This is simply not a serious enough issue to require a new law.*

Ohio drivers disagree by a 71%-22% margin, with sentiment again shared across partisanship, ideology, age, ethnicity and region.

**9. Ohio drivers believe this new law would be effective in decreasing the number of distracted driving accidents.**

Fully 61% of drivers interviewed say that they believe the number of distracted driving accidents in the state would decrease if this new law is passed and enforced.

**BOTTOM LINE**

Distracted driving is clearly the single most important concern among Ohio’s drivers and they overwhelmingly believe there are most distractions now than there were five years ago. They see other drivers use their hand-held cell phones nearly every time they are on the road, a practice three-fourths describe as just as dangerous or more dangerous than driving under the influence.

Ohio's drivers across age groups, party and ideological lines overwhelmingly support passing a new law that prohibits using hand-held cell phones while driving to make or receive calls, texts, watch video or post on social media. The law still allows drivers to use voice commands to make calls/respond to communications.

There is consensus that this issue is serious enough to pass a new law – 71% of Ohio's drivers (across party lines) disagree with the notion that it doesn't merit a new law.

Importantly though, Ohio drivers believe that this new law will cut the number of distracted driving accidents in the state, potentially saving lives.