



For Immediate Release

Are drivers in denial? Only 43 per cent of Ontarians admit to being distracted drivers

New research finds that highway drivers are the biggest distracted driving offenders

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Thornhill, ON, February 13, 2019 – New research released today by [CAA South Central Ontario \(CAA SCO\)](#) finds an overwhelming majority (91 per cent) of Ontario drivers believe distracted driving has worsened. However, that same poll shows many drivers deny they are part of the problem.

Before being given a comprehensive definition of distracted driving, only 32 per cent identified themselves as distracted drivers. Once distracted driving was defined, the number jumped to 43 per cent.

When it came to pointing out others driving while distracted, 45 per cent of the respondents said they often see others holding a mobile phone. In contrast, only 3 per cent of respondents admitted to holding their mobile phones while driving.

“Distracted driving continues to be a challenge on Ontario's roads, nearly a decade after the initial legislation banning handheld devices was introduced,” says Elliott Silverstein, manager of government relations, CAA SCO. “There continues to be a general lack of understanding by many drivers who don’t realize that distracted driving is more than just holding your phone. It’s anything that diverts your attention away from the road, whether it be your phone, food or the radio.”

According to the survey, the most likely offenders are highway drivers (58 per cent), followed by those who commute 90 minutes or more (54 per cent) and drivers aged 25-34 (59 per cent).

Distracted motorists justified their behaviour in the following circumstances:

- 41 per cent: In case of emergency
- 41 per cent: While stopped at a red light
- 36 per cent: While stuck in traffic

“There is no justification for distracted driving,” says Silverstein. “A moment of distraction can have dangerous, if not fatal consequences. Just because your vehicle isn’t in motion doesn’t mean you can take your eyes off the road.”

The new survey data comes about a month after tougher laws and penalties took effect in Ontario. On January 1, 2019, the province strengthened its distracted driving laws and penalties, making them among the toughest in North America.

- A first conviction for distracted driving carries a three-day licence suspension, three demerit points and a minimum fine of \$615 (up to \$1,000).
- A second conviction will result in a minimum fine of \$615 (up to \$2,000), six demerit points and a seven-day licence suspension.
- For third (or more) convictions, drivers will face a minimum fine of \$615 (up to \$3,000), six demerit points and a 30-day licence suspension.

The increased fines are the first since 2015 when demerit points were added to distracted driving convictions. Eighty-three per cent of those polled support the new measures.



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CAA is dedicated to helping change certain rules and regulations for Ontario's roads that will improve safety for everyone who uses them. Through its road safety efforts, CAA has been helping to educate and bring awareness about distracted driving, Slow Down, Move Over rules and cycling safety laws.

About the Survey

This study was conducted online by Campaign Research between January 10 and 14, 2019 among a panel of 1,504 Ontario residents who were 18 years of age or older. A probability sample of this size would have a margin of error of +/-2.5% 19 times out of 20.

About CAA South Central

As a leader and advocate for road safety and mobility, CAA South Central Ontario is a not-for-profit auto club which represents the interests of 2 million members. For over a century, CAA has collaborated with communities, police services and government to help keep drivers and their families safe while travelling on our roads.

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