

Fatal factors on the road

Distraction

When it comes to our roads, distraction is a factor that affects all of us. It is easy to associate distraction with mobile phone use but distraction can come in many forms and affects all road users, whether pedestrian, cyclist or driver.

How else can I be distracted?

Distraction can come in many forms - visual (seeing), auditory (hearing), physical (doing), cognitive (thinking) or a combination of these.

Here are some examples of what this can look like:

Visual

- » A digital billboard
- » Looking away from the road



Auditory

- » Loud music in a car or through your headphones while walking
- » Friends laughing and singing
- » Listening to someone talk while on the road



Physical

- » Eating and drinking
- » Changing the aircon or music settings
- » Applying your make-up in the mirror



Cognitive

- » Stressed or over thinking (e.g. on your way to an exam)
- » Having a deep conversation with a passenger



Did you know?

Behavioural neuroscientist Dr Lucia Kelleher identified the "Busy Brain Syndrome". Kelleher's research suggests that our brains are trying to cope with a lot of stimulation, reducing our ability to focus and pay attention - with our addiction to mobile phones playing a part.

She says, "Driving is a highly cognitive task. It is already loaded up. We have road signs, and different speed limits and watching other cars and then when you put looking at your phone on top of that you are overloaded. People think they can multitask and that they can text and drive, but they absolutely can't."



For the better

Did you know?

If you were travelling at 50 kilometres per hour and became distracted for 2 seconds, you would travel 27 metres without concentrating. In fact, glances totalling more than 2 seconds for any purpose increase crash and near-crash risk.

One of the biggest fines in the nation

As of July 2020, Western Australia has severe financial penalties for anyone caught using a phone behind the wheel. If you are caught using your phone for a purpose other than an audio call while driving, the penalty can cost up to \$1000 and 4 demerit points.

Facts and figures

The RAC 2019 Mobile Phone Distraction Survey found that:



81% of people reported using their phone while driving some of the time, and 37% admitted to doing it regularly.



91% considered holding and using a mobile phone while driving to be either very or extremely risky.



3 in 5 said they were much less likely to use their phone while driving with their parents in the car; and over half said they were much less likely to do so when they had friends in the car.



You are 4 times more likely to crash when using your phone.



From 2014-2018, 120 people were unnecessarily killed in inattention related crashes.

Taking action to fight distraction

- » As the driver, turn your mobile phone off and put it out of sight. If you are a passenger, do not show or distract the driver with your phone.
- » Install the 'do not disturb' function on your phone.
- » Choose the music and adjust other controls in the car before taking off.
- » If you are a passenger, proactively remind the driver to be careful of distractions.
- » Check your GPS or a map before you embark on the journey to know what lies ahead.
- » Make sure your car windows and mirrors are clear.
- » As a passenger, don't distract the driver and try to minimise anything that could distract them (e.g. keep the volume down and keep pets restrained).
- » Finish eating and drinking before you start to drive.
- » Take the extra few minutes to get ready at home rather than in the car - it is better to be late than to not arrive at all.



Did you know?

If you are on your L Plates or Red P Plates and are caught using your phone, you could get up to 4 demerit points. If you get fined 4 demerit points, you will lose your license immediately.

Useful links

Road Safety Commission WA - rsc.wa.gov.au/your-safety/behaviours/distractions

RAC Look Up WA Campaign - rac.com.au/about-rac/advocating-change/initiatives/lookup

RAC Mobile Phone Distraction Survey - rac.com.au/about-rac/advocating-change/reports



RAC Community Education
communityeducation@rac.com.au

RAC Community Education is committed to delivering road safety education in Western Australia. We have designed programs to keep students safe on the roads by influencing risk reduction, increasing resilience and encouraging responsible behaviour. We deliver free interactive road safety workshops in schools and a youth road trauma awareness event in metropolitan Perth (RAC bstreetsmart) and regional WA (Project Road Smart).