

# HAND-HELD MOBILE DEVICE USE WHILE DRIVING

*Policy Considerations in Mississippi*

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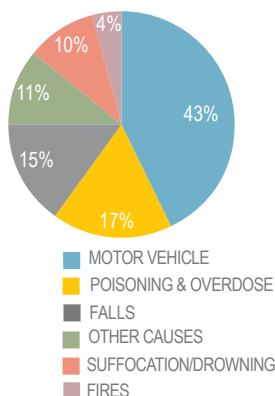
## TYPES OF DRIVER DISTRACTIONS

- Visual- eyes off the road.
- Mental- mind off driving.
- Manual- hands off the wheel.



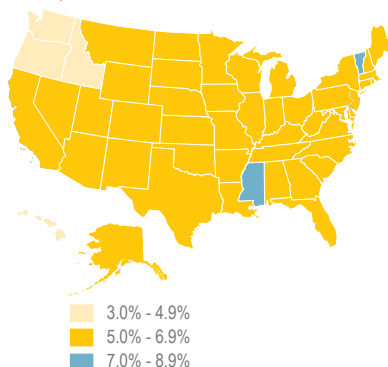
Using a hand-held mobile device while driving increases risk of motor vehicle crash by 400%.

## UNINTENTIONAL INJURY DEATH RATES BY CATEGORY IN MISSISSIPPI, 2015



Source: Mississippi Vital Statistics. (2015).

## CELL PHONE USE AS A PERCENT OF DRIVE TIME, DECEMBER 2016 - FEBRUARY 2017



Source: Zendrive. (2017).

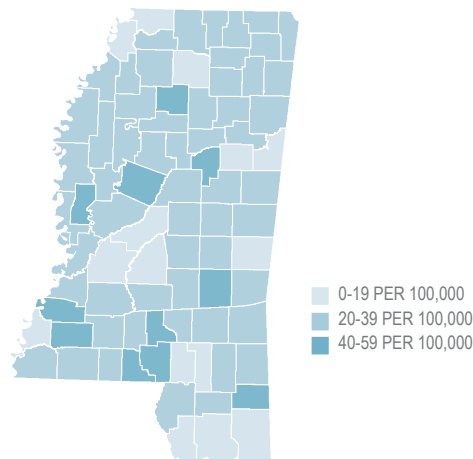
Many lives are lost due to driver distractions from mobile device use. In 2015, Mississippi enacted a ban on all drivers texting and accessing social networking sites in order to address the growing problem. The law will be revisited in 2018. This brief summarizes the available evidence on the use of mobile devices by drivers and outlines policy considerations to inform the debates.

One out of ten motor vehicle crashes is due to driver distraction—one in seven distraction-related crashes is due to mobile device use while driving. Young, able-bodied residents are affected most, since crashes are the leading cause of death for persons under 45 years. Mobile device use when driving limits driver performance to a similar level as driving while alcohol-impaired. Despite the known risks, many drivers continue to use mobile devices while driving.

In 2017, the Center for Mississippi Health Policy commissioned Mississippi State University's Social Science Research Center to survey adults statewide to assess their behaviors, attitudes, and opinions related to driving distracted. Most adults (75%) reported they had talked on a mobile phone while driving and almost half (46%) had texted. Compared to the results of a similar survey done in 2010, mobile device use while driving has grown significantly more common in Mississippi.

Motor vehicle crashes are the top cause of unintentional injury deaths statewide (see sidebar). From 2010 to 2015, the state's crash death rate rose from 22.7 to 25.6 per 100,000—some counties (mostly rural) experienced higher death rates than others as illustrated in Figure 1. Although Mississippi enacted a ban on texting and accessing social networking sites while driving for all drivers in 2015, over 1,500 traffic crashes in 2016 involved drivers using a mobile device. Nationally, Mississippi drivers ranked second highest for the extent of cell phone use while driving as measured by applications capturing actual driver behavior (see sidebar).

FIGURE 1. MISSISSIPPI MOTOR VEHICLE CRASH DEATH RATES BY COUNTY, 2010-2015



Source: Mississippi State Department of Health. (2015).

## Enacted Policies

### MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATION

§63-33-1 prohibits texting and accessing social networking sites while driving for all drivers with a primary enforcement mechanism. Records of citations are required to be reported and maintained by the Mississippi Department of Public Safety. The law expires in 2018, unless reauthorized.

### PRIMARY ENFORCEMENT

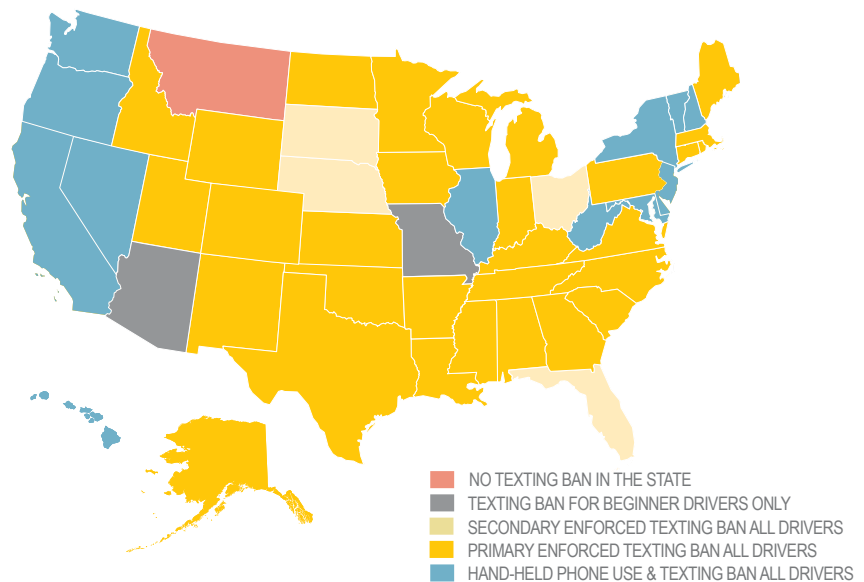
Law enforcement officers can cite drivers directly for texting or using a hand-held mobile device while driving.

### SECONDARY ENFORCEMENT

Law enforcement officers must pull a driver over for another reason before they can cite drivers for texting or using a hand-held mobile device while driving.

States have enacted a variety of policies to curtail the use of mobile devices while driving (Figure 2). All states except Montana have enacted bans that apply to some or to all drivers and include either primary or secondary enforcement mechanisms. Forty-seven states and Washington D.C. ban text messaging for all drivers. Hand-held mobile phone bans for all drivers have been adopted by fourteen states. No state bans all mobile phone use for all drivers.

FIGURE 2. MOBILE DEVICE USE WHILE DRIVING LAWS BY STATE, 2017

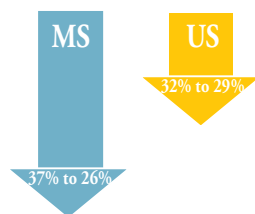


Source: National Conference of State Legislatures. (2017).

## Enforcement

*Only three texting while driving citations were issued in Mississippi in 2016.*

### CHANGE IN ALCOHOL-IMPAIRED DRIVER CRASH DEATHS, 2006 TO 2015



Source: National Highway and Traffic Safety Association. (2017).

### CITATION AMOUNTS (\$)

Fines range from \$20 - \$1,000 among the states banning mobile device use while driving.

The National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) found safety campaigns coupled with aggressive enforcement are effective in reducing distracted driving behaviors. However, officials often cite enforcement as challenging due to difficulty with witnessing the specific type of infraction and proving that it occurred. A fourteen state study examining traffic citations issued from 2007 to 2013 found driver's cell phone use accounted for only 1% of all traffic citations. According to Mississippi Department of Public Safety records, only three texting while driving citations were issued in 2016.

While overall motor vehicle death rates have increased in Mississippi, death rates improved for some traffic safety risks. Mississippi is the top state in the nation for the rate of decline in fatal crashes involving alcohol-impaired drivers (see sidebar). Mississippi's laws related to alcohol-impaired driving have strong enforcement provisions that are comprehensive by national standards.

Some states have begun to enforce distracted driving laws in ways similar to enforcement of impaired driving laws. These laws include increasing the fines for first offenses and graded increases for subsequent offenses. A few states make distracted driving involving injury or death of another a felony offense with steep fines and a prison sentence. In 2017, Mississippi adults rated their perception of risk at an average of nearly 9.8 on a ten point scale for impaired driving followed by texting or emailing (9.3) and hand-held phone conversations (7.2) while driving.

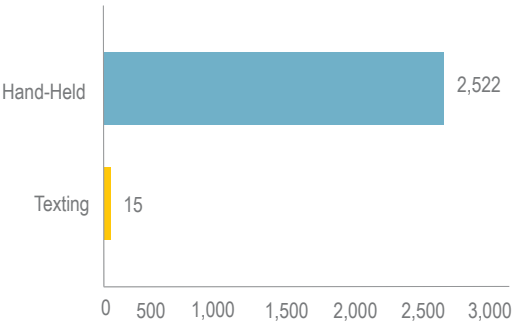
# Effectiveness of Enacted Policies

## AWARENESS OF TEXTING BAN

When surveyed, nearly three out of four adults (75%) reported being aware of the ban on texting while driving in Mississippi.

Collectively, states banning texting while driving for all drivers with primary enforcement provisions had significantly lower motor vehicle death rates compared to states with secondary enforcement provisions or provisions which applied only to select drivers. Research also reveals traffic citations for drivers using hand-held mobile devices are issued more often than for texting as shown in Figure 3.

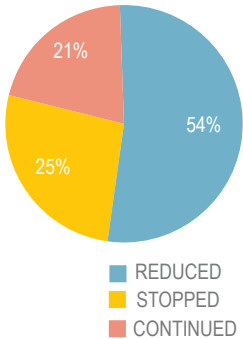
FIGURE 3. MOBILE DEVICE USE CITATIONS ISSUED (IN THOUSANDS) IN FOURTEEN STATES, 2007-2013



Source: Rudisill, T.M. & Zhu, M. (2016).

Another study found states that enacted a hand-held cell phone ban for all drivers had significantly fewer persons observed driving while having a hand-held phone conversation when compared to states without a hand-held cell phone ban for all drivers. This effect was statistically significant across all age groups, genders, and geographic regions (north, south, east, west) examined.

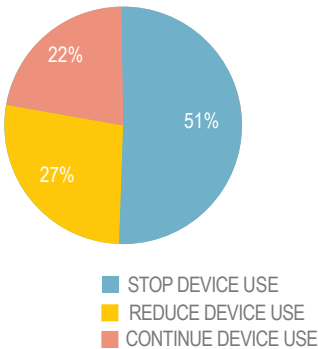
## CHANGE IN MOBILE DEVICE USE REPORTED BY MISSISSIPPI ADULTS POST TEXTING BAN ENACTMENT



Source: MSU Social Science Research Center. (2017).

# Mississippi Opinions

## REPORTED CHANGE IN MOBILE PHONE USE BY MISSISSIPPI ADULTS IF A HAND-HELD DEVICE BAN WERE ENACTED



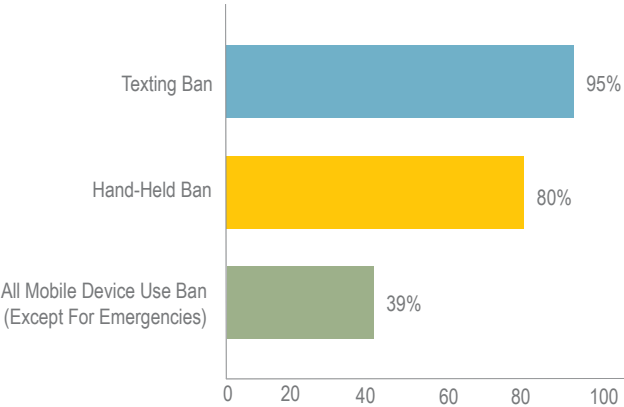
Source: MSU Social Science Research Center. (2017).

## HANDS-FREE DEVICE USE BY DRIVERS

Mississippi drivers reported a significant increase in hands-free device use (15% to 46%) from 2010 to 2017.

When surveyed, most Mississippi adults expressed more support for certain distracted driving bans for all drivers, but not others, as shown in Figure 4. The highest support was shown for laws that ban texting (95%) and hand-held mobile device use (80%) while driving. Fewer adults (39%) favor bans on all drivers' mobile device use except during an emergency situation.

FIGURE 4. SUPPORT FOR DISTRACTED DRIVING POLICIES IN MISSISSIPPI, 2017



Source: Mississippi State University Social Science Research Center. (2017).

## Policy Considerations

Mobile device use while driving—a common cause of driver distraction—contributes to the high burden of injury statewide. Mississippi has enacted some restrictions in an effort to discourage these behaviors, but problems persist, and enforcement has proven difficult. Research indicates distracted driving bans are more effective when they include the following:

- restrict operation of mobile devices to hands-free for all drivers, and
- ensure primary enforcement of the law applied to all drivers through targeted enforcement campaigns.

Enforcement of distracted driving policies is a key factor in reducing crash-related death rates. Laws banning all hand-held mobile device use while driving have been more effective in reducing mobile device use. Four out of five Mississippi adults support hand-held bans.

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