

Parents make bad call with mobile phone use

November 20 2014, by Sandra Hutchinson



Researcher Cassandra Gauld is studying the contemporary road safety issue facing young drivers - Smartphones.

Hypocritical parents who tell their children not to dial and drive but use their mobile phones behind the wheel are setting a bad example for young drivers, according to QUT road safety researchers.

Cassandra Gauld, from QUT's Centre for Accident Research & Road Safety - Queensland (CARRS-Q), said preliminary results of a study into young people's use of Smartphones while [driving](#) suggested parents were ignoring their own safety warnings.

"Young [drivers](#) perceive their parents as hypocritical when they tell them

not to text and drive but do it themselves and that in turn may lead to mixed messages and cloud their beliefs about [mobile phone](#) use and driving," she said.

Ms Gauld said with Smartphone ownership doubling in Australia in the past three years, socialising on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram while driving was set to be the next big distraction facing [young drivers](#).

"We know that some young drivers think staying connected to their friends via their mobile phone is more important than safe driving and obeying the road rules and with the growing popularity of Smartphones in Australia, staying connected is becoming even easier," she said.

Ms Gauld said research had shown young drivers were twice as likely to make a phone call and four times more likely to text than drivers over 50, and they were also more likely to use their Smartphones to read emails and log on to Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

"Young drivers are inexperienced yet more likely to use Smartphone social technology than older drivers and therefore the risk of severe injury is heightened among drivers aged 17 and 25," she said.

"When drivers are distracted using their Smartphones they are more at risk of lane wandering, increased reaction time, missing traffic signals and reduced situational awareness."

The preliminary results of the study also found:

- Young drivers believe mobile phone use is distracting
- Young drivers are more likely to use their Smartphone in slow moving traffic
- Young drivers are more likely to use their mobile phones if they perceive themselves as good drivers

In a bid to address this contemporary [road safety](#) issue, Ms Gauld has launched an online survey to find out what prompts young drivers to use their Smartphones behind the wheel.

"Enforcement and public education are two countermeasures that, in combination, have been shown to reduce other risky road user behaviours such as drink driving and speeding," Ms Gauld said.

"But police face unique challenges when attempting to enforce laws banning the use of handheld mobile phones while driving such as drivers concealing use of their phones and tinted windows.

"Driver distraction from Smartphones is a relatively new phenomenon, and as such little is known about the types of persuasive approaches likely to be effective in stopping young drivers from socialising behind the [wheel](#).

"This study aims to understand more about the motivations underpinning Smartphone use while driving.

"That information can then be used to inform the content of public education messages targeting this risky behaviour and help young drivers stay safe on the roads."

More information: To take part in the study you must be a young driver aged 17-25 years, own a Smartphone, have a current driver's licence, and live in Queensland. The survey is available survey.qut.edu.au/smartphone

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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