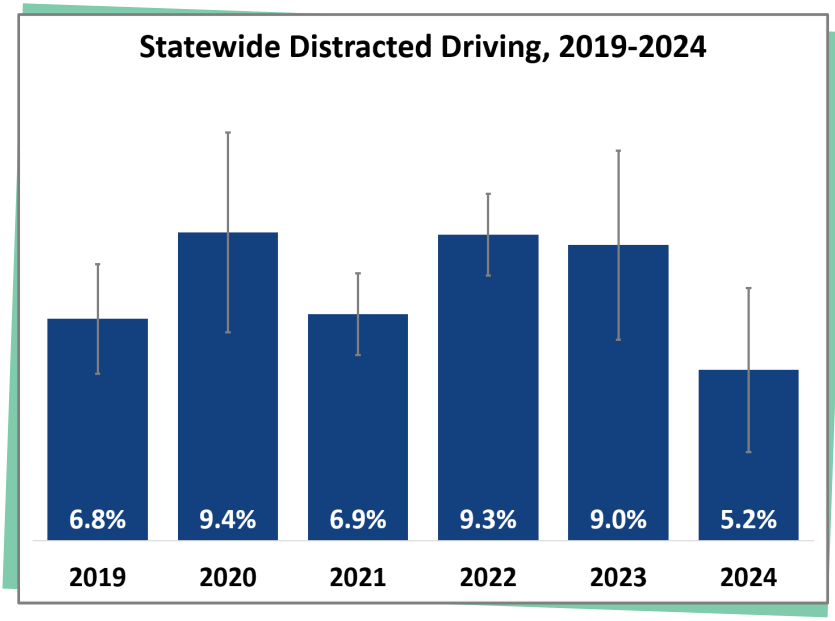
Distracted Driving Observation Survey Results, 2024

Driver distraction includes all activities that divert attention and full engagement from the task of driving. Washington law RCW 46.61.672 bans all hand-held cell phone use while driving, even when stopped in traffic, punishable as a primary traffic offense; RCW 46.61.673 defines "dangerously distracted" as a secondary traffic offense. Since 2019, the Washington Traffic Safety Commission has conducted an annual observation survey of driver distractions to monitor the frequency of this dangerous behavior. Data is collected during the month of June at 375 locations in 26 counties.
The data is weighted based on several time and location factors to derive estimates of distracted driving prevalence in Washington state.

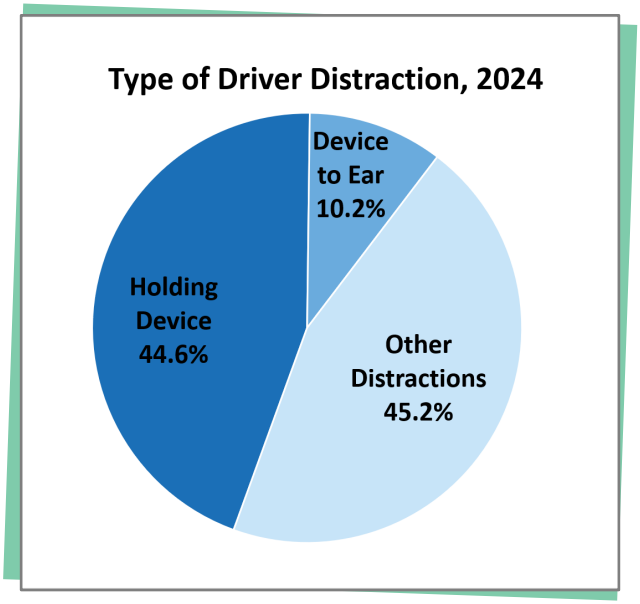


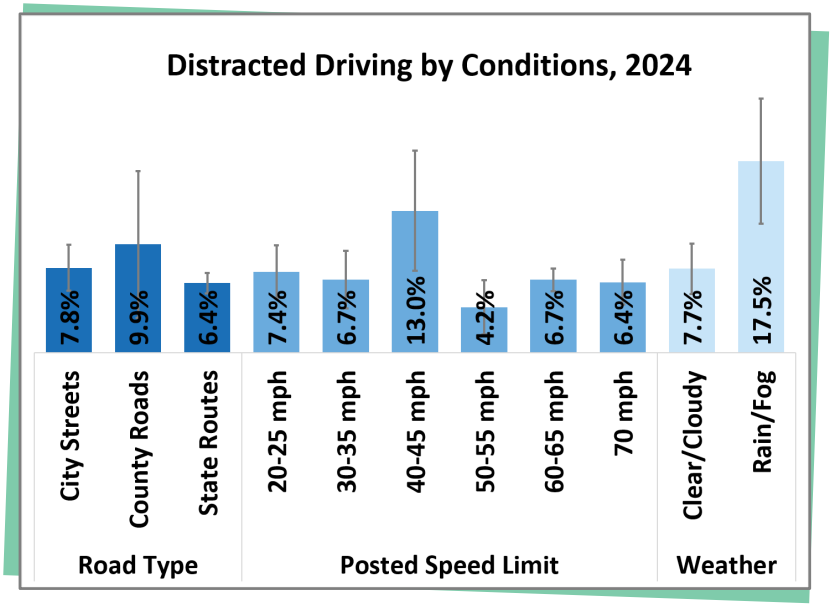
Did you know?

- Most drivers in Washington do not drive distracted.
- In 2024, the rate of distracted driving was 5.2 percent, the lowest distracted driving rate observed since the survey began in 2019.
- More than 80 percent of Washingtonians believe it is very or extremely dangerous for drivers to interact with their cell phones while driving and support enforcement of distracted driving prevention laws [1].
- More than 95 percent of Washingtonians would be comfortable asking a driver using their cell phone or otherwise driving distracted to focus on driving [1].

Drivers were more likely to engage in distracted driving when traveling on city streets or state routes, corresponding with higher rates of distraction on roads with lower (less than 35 mph) and higher (more than 50 mph) posted speed limits. Most counties had distracted driving rates statistically similar to the state rate of 5.2 percent. Two counties, Clark and Kittitas, had distracted driving rates statistically lower than the state rate. Three counties, Grays Harbor, Pierce, and Walla Walla, had distracted driving rates statistically higher than the state rate. Seven counties had rates that were trending up compared to 2023 rates, and five counties had rates trending down.

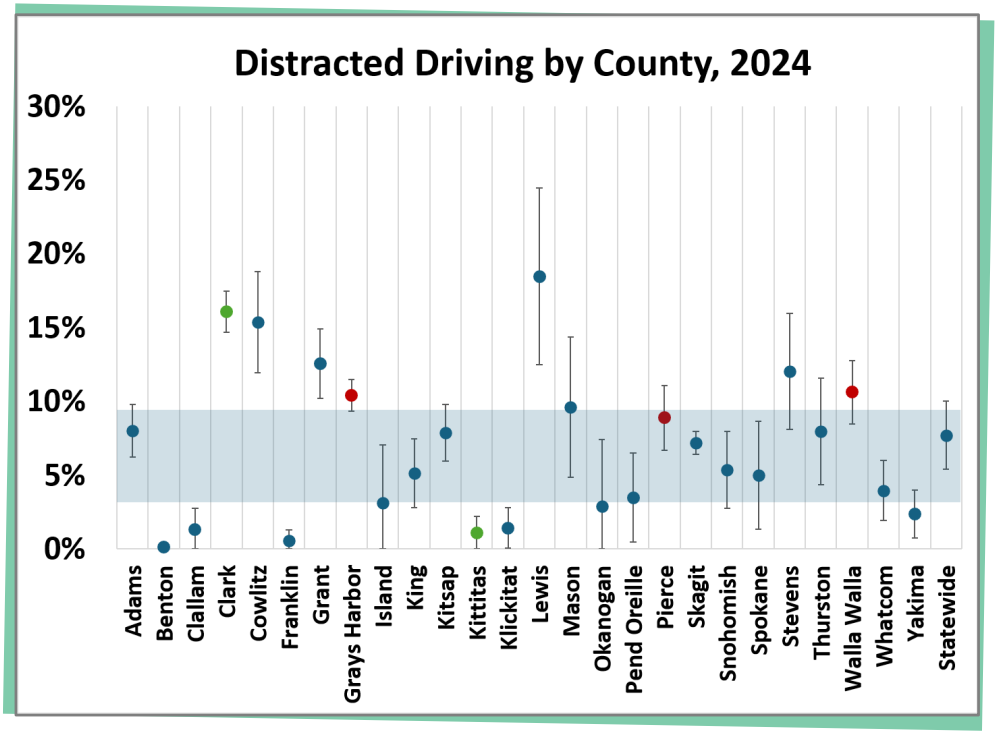
(See chart on next page)





Did you know?

- Up until 2024, the most common type of distraction was from device use. In 2024, other distractions not related to device use were more than half of the distractions observed in the survey. Other sources of driver distractions included eating/drinking, grooming, reading, or interacting with passengers/pets in a way that interfered with driving.
- In 2023, 136 people were killed in distracted driver involved crashes and 478 people were seriously injured[2]. Early estimates for 2024 show 120 deaths and 431 serious injuries, a decline compared to 2023.
- According to data from Cambridge Mobile Telematics[3], in June 2023, 25 percent of the over six million recorded trips taken on Washington roads involved driver cell phone interactions during the course of the trip.



County	Rate	Trend
Adams	8.0%	↑
Benton	0.1%	→
Clallam	1.3%	↓
Clark	16.1%	↑
Cowlitz	15.4%	↑
Franklin	0.6%	↓
Grant	12.6%	→
Grays	10.4%	→
Island	3.1%	→
King	5.1%	↓
Kitsap	7.9%	→
Kittitas	1.1%	→
Klickitat	1.4%	→
Lewis	18.5%	↑
Mason	9.6%	→
Okanogan	2.9%	→
Pend Oreille	3.5%	→
Pierce	8.9%	↓
Skagit	7.2%	↑
Snohomish	5.4%	↓
Spokane	5.0%	↑
Stevens	12.0%	↑
Thurston	8.0%	↓
Walla Walla	10.6%	→
Whatcom	4.0%	↓
Yakima	2.4%	→
Statewide	7.7%	↑

Survey methodology: The Washington State Annual Seat Belt and Distracted Driver Observation Survey is conducted with funding support from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). For more information regarding the survey methodology, see the "Seat Belt Use in Washington State" report available at https://wtsc.wa.gov/traffic-safety-reports/#seatbelt.

Data Sources

[1] Statewide Traffic Safety Survey.

[2] Washington Department of Transportation Crash Data Portal (Accessed February 2025).

[3] Cambridge Mobile Telematics Washington State Driving Behavior Analysis (October 2024).

For more information, please visit the WTSC Data Dashboards at https://wtsc.wa.gov/ dashboards/, or contact the WTSC Research and Data Division at (360) 725-9860.