

## **Why People Text And Drive Even When They Know It's Dangerous 75% of drivers surveyed admit to texting while driving**

If you've turned on the TV or glanced up at a billboard lately, you know that texting while driving is a bad idea. Celebrities are lending their names to public awareness campaigns, and more than 40 states have banned the practice. A new [study](#) surveyed 1,000 drivers and found that 98% of those who text everyday and drive frequently say the practice is dangerous. Still, nearly 75% say they do it anyway.

"There's a huge discrepancy between attitude and behavior," says David Greenfield, a University of Connecticut Medical School professor who led the study. "There's that schism between what we believe and then what we do."

The lure of text messages is actually a lot like the appeal of slot machines, Greenfield explains: both can be difficult compulsions to overcome for some people. The buzz of an incoming text message causes the release of dopamine in the brain, which generates excitement, Greenfield says. If the message turns out to be from someone appealing, even more dopamine is released.

Curbing this compulsion could take years for the text-obsessed, and doing so might resemble efforts to stop drunk driving, Greenfield says. People need to realize they're part of the problem before they change their behavior, he adds.

"In order to really include oneself in a group that has a problem with texting and driving, they have to admit their own fallibility, and we're loath to do that," Greenfield said.

Multiple public awareness campaigns have taken to the airwaves and internet to target the practice, but it's unclear how effective they are, given that the public seems to be largely aware of the issue. There might be more actionable solutions in the very near future, however. AT&T, which sponsored Greenfield's study as part of its "It Can Wait Campaign," has an [app](#) that switches on when a person is driving more than 15 mph and silences incoming text message alerts.