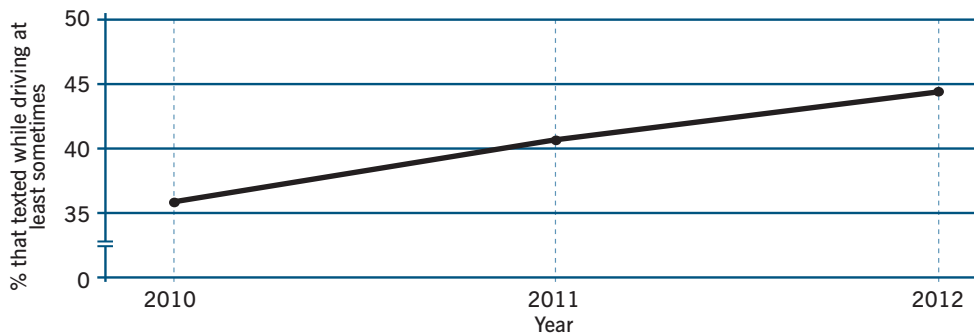


TEXTING AND DRIVING AMONG MISSOURI COLLEGE STUDENTS

Partners in Prevention, a coalition of 21 colleges and universities across the state, is dedicated to reducing high-risk behaviors among Missouri college students. One of the ways that students put themselves at risk is using their cell phones while driving.

Texting while driving encompasses the three main types of distraction – visual, manual and cognitive. It also reduces the driver's focus from the road more frequently and for longer periods of time than other distractions, which makes it more dangerous than many other forms of driver inattention (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration).

Results from the Missouri College Health Behavior Survey (MCHBS) indicate frequent and increasing rates of texting and driving behaviors among Missouri's college students. Partners in Prevention implements this online survey annually at 21 colleges and universities across the state.



The reported percentages are of students reporting texting while driving "Sometimes", "Most of the time", and "Always".

If these trends continue, in 2013 one out of every two will be engaging in this behavior.

DISCUSSION

According to a December 2011 survey measuring cell phone use and distracted driving conducted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 6% of all respondents (ages 18-34) had been in a crash in the past year. When looking specifically at young drivers (ages 18-20), 17% had been involved in a crash, which was the highest rate compared to all other age groups. Young drivers also reported the highest level of phone involvement (13%) compared to the entire surveyed population (6%).

While certain traffic safety behaviors - such as safety belt usage - of Missouri College Students has improved in recent years, the texting and driving rates among students has increased significantly since PIP began measuring these issues on the MCHBS in 2007. When it comes to Missouri's usage rates, the MCHBS shows that as of 2012, 44% of students are text messaging while driving at least sometimes. Missouri has seen a growth of 22% in texting and driving rates over the past three years, and if the current trend continues, approximately one out of every two Missouri college students will be engaging in this dangerous behavior in 2013. Since

traffic crashes are the leading cause of death among individuals aged 15 to 20, and distracted driving-related crashes have increased to 11% of all traffic fatalities, it is a topic that should be addressed among college students. Partners in Prevention has resources available to help campuses address texting and driving as well as other traffic safety issues through the Drive Safe. Drive Smart. program, funded by the Missouri Department of Transportation's Highway Safety Division.

SUMMARY

Research on the topic indicates a growing problem with texting-related behaviors and traffic crashes, particularly among young drivers. If the recent rate of growth continues, beginning the conversation about texting while driving on Missouri campuses and implementing education on safe driving behaviors is a first step in changing the mindset of our young drivers.

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