Evidence Synthesis on Interventions to Reduce Distracted Driving

Background

Despite the large burden of road traffic injuries (RTIs) resulting from distracted driving, there are insufficient studies that examine the effectiveness of legislation related to distracted driving. While 145 countries prohibit the use of hand-held mobile phones while driving, only 64 routinely collect distracted driving data through police reports and a few observational studies.¹

Youth and young adults are the most at-risk groups to be involved in distracted driving, likely due to their risk-taking behavior, influence of social media, and inexperience.²,³,⁴

A study from Alberta, Canada showed that males were 40 times more likely than women to use mobile phones while driving.⁵

Pedestrians and bicyclists are common vulnerable road users that are involved in crashes caused by distracted driving.⁶

We set out to synthesize the data available on distracted driving, types of distraction resulting in road crashes, common risk factors, and recommendations on interventions aiming to reduce distracted driving.

In Australia, about 50% drivers were involved in distracted driving.⁷

In India, the observed use of hand-held mobile phones was 1.78 times higher on non-busy roads than busy roads.⁸
What Our Review Found

Key Findings

• The most common type of distraction among drivers is mobile phone use.\(^9\)
• Mobile phone use while driving, whether hand-held or hands-free, increases the risk of a crash by four times, and texting increases the risk by 23 times. Driver reaction time is 50% slower when using a mobile phone compared to when not using a mobile phone.\(^{10}\)

Recommendations

• Engage and coordinate with stakeholders at all levels of road safety planning and implementation.\(^{11}\)
• Develop data systems for the collection of data on distracted driving indicators.
• Develop mass media and community awareness programs, targeting youth and young adults, to promote healthy driving behaviors.\(^{12-18}\)
• Implement vehicle and mobile communication technologies (e.g., advanced crash warning and driver-monitoring technologies, or mobile applications that temporarily disable mobile devices while a vehicle is in motion) to prevent driver distraction and enhance road safety while driving.\(^{19-22}\)
• Enhance enforcement through visible policing,\(^{21}\) and penalties that result in fines\(^{11,13,23,24,25}\) and/or suspension of driving licenses\(^{24,26}\) and setting high premiums and insurance rates for distracted young drivers.\(^{26}\)
• Automate enforcement through object-detection technologies (e.g., traffic cameras).\(^{27}\)
• Implement graduated driver licensing programs for young drivers before obtaining full driving privileges.\(^{27}\)

In Vietnam, around 10% of students reported talking on a mobile phone on a daily basis while riding a motorcycle.\(^{28}\)
References