Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CDC 24/7: Saving Lives. Protecting People.™

Distracted Driving in the United States and Europe

Distracted drivers are compromising their own and other peoples' safety behind the wheel. Nearly 15 people die each day in the United States in crashes that involve distracted driving, and another 1,200 people are injured.1 (/features/dsdistracteddriving/index.html#References)

Distracted driving involves driving while doing another activity that takes your attention away from driving. Distracted driving activities include things like using a cell phone, texting, eating, drinking, and talking with passengers. Using in-vehicle technologies (such as navigation systems) and portable communication devices can also be sources of distraction while driving. Texting while driving is especially dangerous because it combines visual, manual and cognitive distractions. Driving while distracted is serious and life-threatening, not just to you and your passengers, but also to others on the road.

Self-reported cell phone use while driving in the past 30 days, United States, 2010

Never	35.6%
Just Once or Rarely	34.7%
Regularly Or Fairly Often	25.2%

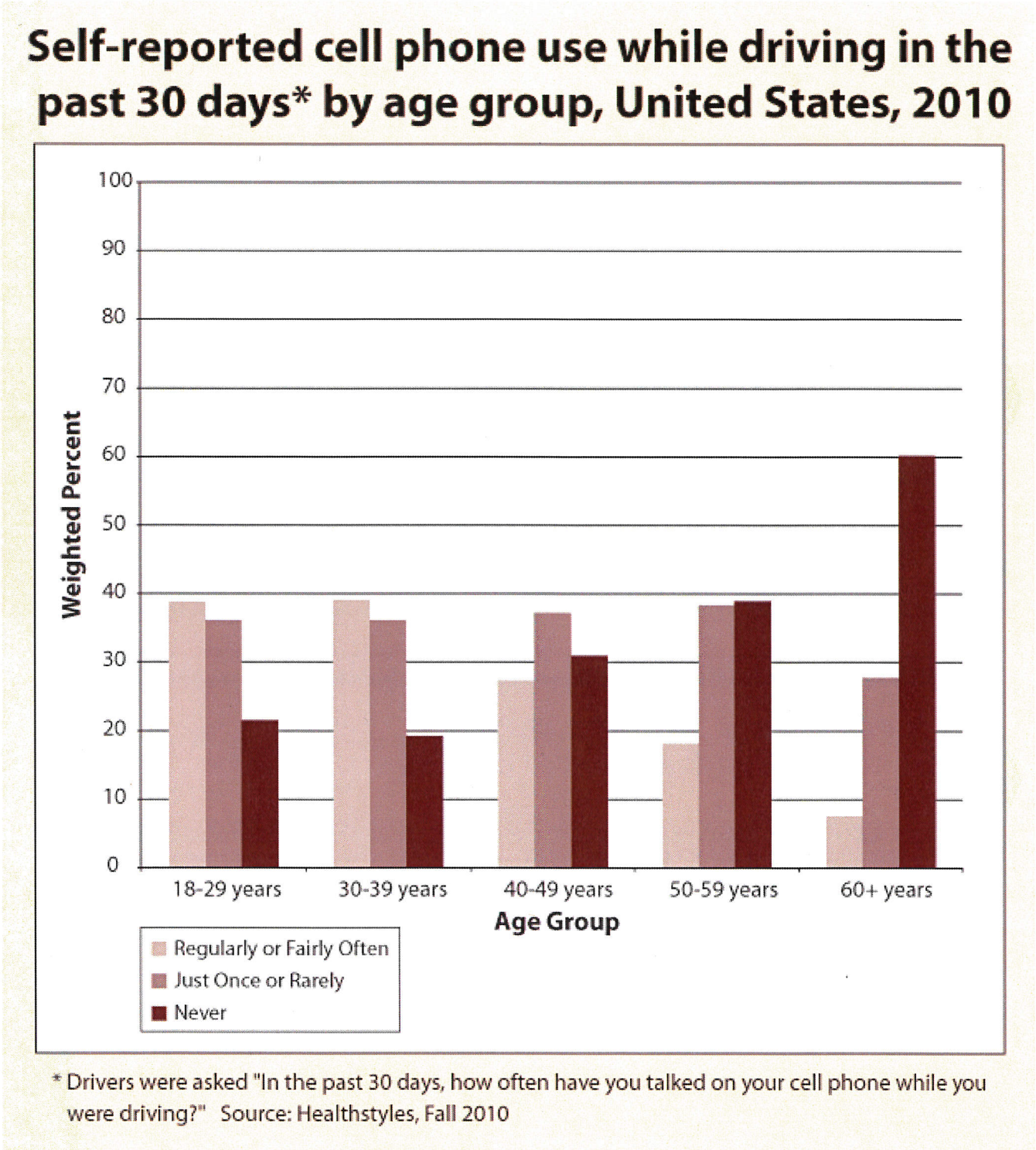
Note: 4.5% of respondents did not respond to this question.

In 2009, more than 5,400 people were killed and an additional 448,000 were injured in crashes that were reported to involve driving while distrated.1 (/features/dsdistracteddriving/index.html#References) Among those killed or injured in these crashes, nearly 1,000 deaths and 24,000 injuries included cell phone use as the major distraction.1 (/features/dsdistracteddriving/index.html#References)

A recent CDC analysis examined the frequency of cell phone use and texting while driving in the United States and several countries within Europe.2, 3 (/features/dsdistracteddriving/index.html#References)

Talking on cell phone:

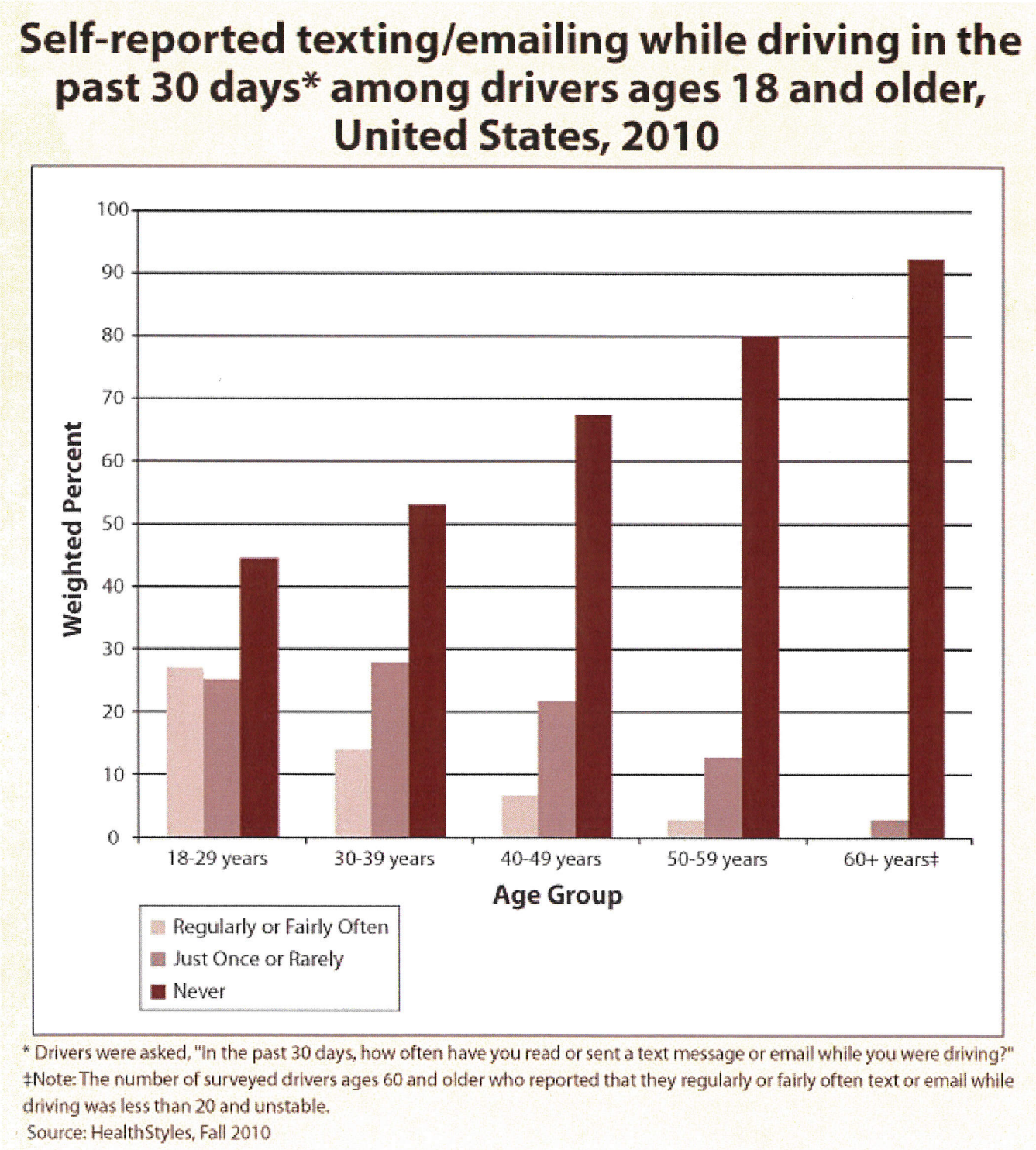
- United States:
  - Overall, 25% of drivers in the United States reported that they talk on their cell phone "regularly" or "fairly often" while driving.2 (/features/dsdistracteddriving/index.html#References)
    - Younger age groups had higher use, with nearly 40% of those ages 18 to 29 reporting that they talk on their cell phone "regularly" or "fairly often" while driving.2 (/features/dsdistracteddriving/index.html#References)
    - Older drivers were less likely to report cell phone use while driving; only 8% of those aged 60 or older reported talking on cell phones "regularly" or "fairly often" while driving.2 (/features/dsdistracteddriving/index.html#References)
- Europe
  - The percentage of European drivers who reported using the cell phone "regularly" or "fairly often" while driving ranged from 21% in the Netherlands to 3% in the United Kingdom.3 (/features/dsdistracteddriving/index.html#References)



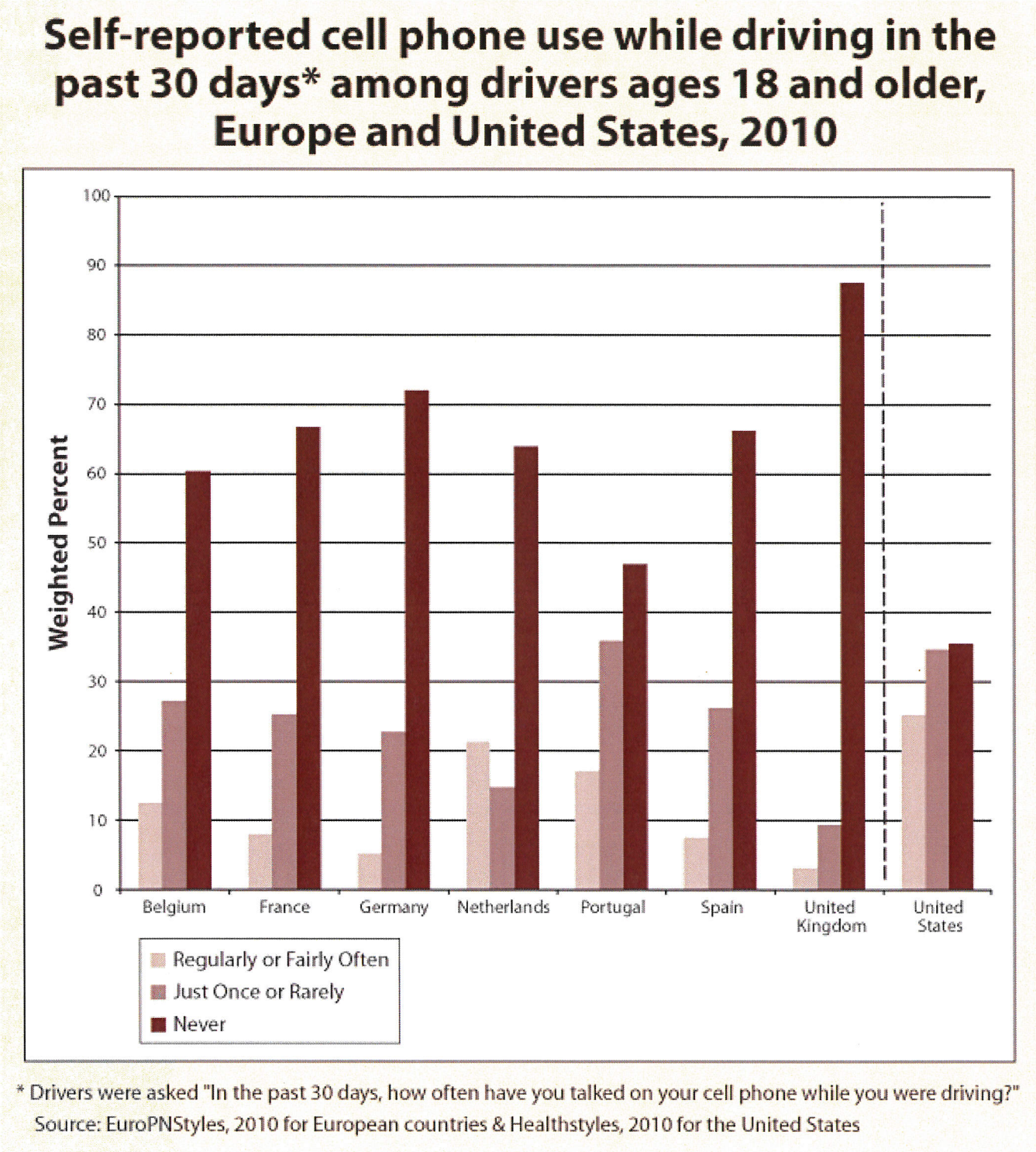
Texting

- United States
  - Overall, 9% of drivers in the United States reported that they "regularly" or "fairly often" text or e-mail while driving.[2 (/features/dsdistracteddriving/index.html#References)]
    - More than a quarter of 18 to 29 year-olds reported texting or e-mailing "regularly" or "fairly often" while driving.[2 (/features/dsdistracteddriving/index.html#References)]
    - Only 3% of drivers aged 60 or older reported ever having texted or e-mailed while driving.[2 (/features/dsdistracteddriving/index.html#References)]

- Europe
  - Overall, the percentage of drivers who reported texting or e-mailing "regularly" or "fairly often" while driving ranged from 10% in the Netherlands to 1% in the United Kingdom.[3] (/features/dsdistracteddriving/index.html#References)
  - The percentage of drivers who text or e-mail while driving was higher among drivers aged 18 to 29 than other age groups—from 13% in Portugal to only 3% in the United Kingdom.[3] (/features/dsdistracteddriving/index.html#References)



Distracted driving is an important and growing public health concern. Some states have enacted laws that ban the use of cell phones while driving, or that ban texting while driving. Regardless of what state you live in, all drivers on the road have a personal responsibility to give their full attention to the driving task when behind the wheel.



References:

1. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Traffic Safety Facts: Distracted Driving 2009. DOT HS 811 379. [PDF - 374KB] (http://www.distraction.gov/research/PDF-Files/Distracted-Driving-2009.pdf) (http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html) Cited May 20, 2011.
2. Porter Novelli. (2010). HealthStyles 2010 Survey. Unpublished raw data. Washington, DC: Adam Burns.
3. Porter Novelli. (2010). EuroPNStyles 2010 Survey. Unpublished raw data. London, England: Melissa Taylor.

More Information

CDC Resources

- Distracted Driving (/Motorvehiclesafety/Distracted_Driving/index.html)
- Motor Vehicle Safety (/motorvehiclesafety/index.html)
- State-based Costs of Deaths from Crashes (/Motorvehiclesafety/statecosts/index.html)
- Prevention Policies (/Motorvehiclesafety/costs/policy.html)
- Teen Drivers (/Motorvehiclesafety/Teen_Drivers/index.html)

External Resources

- U.S. Department of Transportation (http://www.dot.gov) (http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html)
- Official U.S. Government Website for Distracted Driving (http://www.distraction.gov) (http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html)
- World Health Organization - Mobile Phone Use: A Growing Problem of Driver Distraction [PDF - 180KB] (http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/publications/road_traffic/distracted_driving_summary.pdf) (http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html)

CDC works 24/7 saving lives and protecting people from health threats to have a more secure nation. A US federal agency, CDC helps make the healthy choice the easy choice by putting science and prevention into action. CDC works to help people live longer, healthier and more productive lives.

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