



2022 US Distracted Driving Report



Executive Summary

In May of 2021, CMT published the definitive analysis on distracted driving during the pandemic. We found that pandemic restrictions and new working patterns reduced the number of driving trips by 60%. Dangerous behaviors rose across the board. Speeding skyrocketed by 64 percent. Distracted driving surged by over 18 percent. When we published the report, neither had dropped to pre-pandemic levels.

As the pandemic moves into its third year, driving patterns have shifted in new and unexpected ways in the United States. In short, the distraction trends over the last year are not good. Unlike speeding, which has receded as traffic has returned, distracted driving is worse than ever. In February 2022, the last full month covered by this report, drivers were more distracted than any other month in the last three years.

The amount of time drivers spend on the road has mostly returned to pre-pandemic levels. The key outliers here are the periods during the Delta and Omicron variants, when there were fewer drivers on the road.

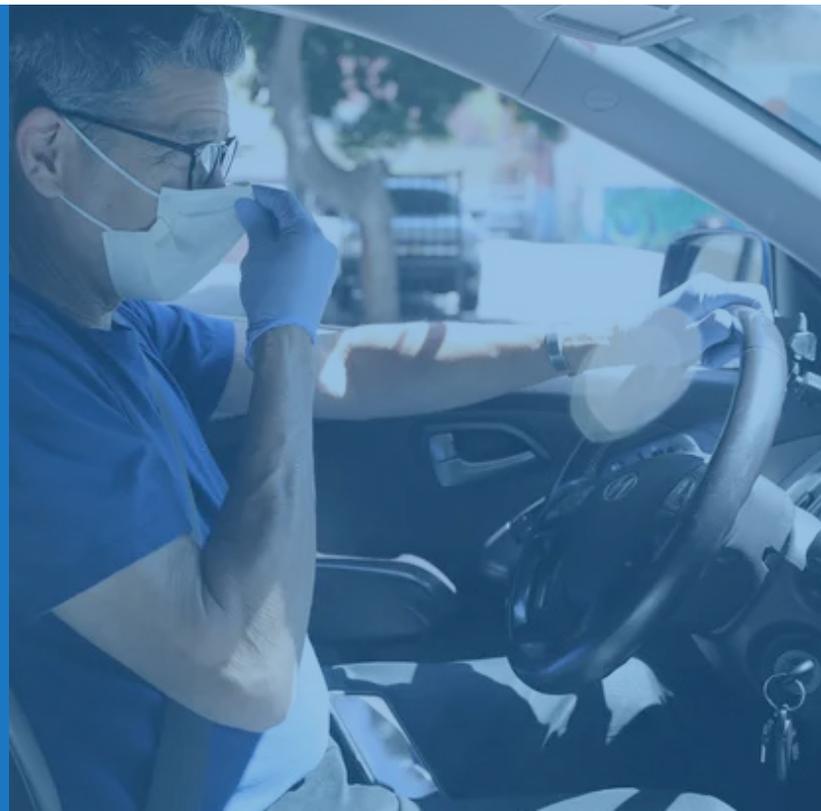
The pandemic has broken a predictable driving pattern. Historically, distracted driving has been seasonal, rising in the summer and falling in the winter. In 2019 and 2020, the summer months saw higher levels of distraction than the winter months. In 2021, distraction remained high year-round.

Evening and late-night distracted driving have also surged compared to pre-pandemic levels. Evening distraction increased by nearly 35 percent from February 2020 to April 2020. Late-night distraction vaulted 40 percent in the same time period. Distraction has remained high during every time period throughout the day.

The analysis for our 2022 US report is based on driving data collected from CMT's DriveWell® platform, which measures the driving behaviors of millions of people every day. The driving audience for this report includes both new and existing drivers on the CMT DriveWell® platform over the past year. Changes in driving behavior could be attributable to driver behavior changes and/or demographic changes across our platform.

Report highlights

- Drivers were 30 percent more distracted in February 2022 than they were in February 2020.
- The Delta and Omicron variants reduced driving activity.
- Speeding is still above pre-pandemic levels, but it is well below the highs of 2020.
- The pandemic has broken seasonal distraction patterns. Instead of falling in the winter, distraction now remains high throughout the year.
- Evening and late-night distracted driving spiked during COVID-19 lockdowns. It has remained elevated above pre-pandemic levels.



A historic disruption

Dive deeper into the driving behaviors during the first year of the pandemic with CMT's 2021 report: "Measuring and Pricing Phone Distraction Risk: A telematics-based analysis of U.S. driver behavior and its impact on the insurance industry."

The United States saw a historic disruption in driving in the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global pandemic on March 11, 2020. By April 15, 2020, driving trips had fallen by 60 percent. At the same time, speeding risk jumped by 64 percent above pre-pandemic averages. Phone distraction risk rose by 18.5 percent.

Driving behaviors since our last report have shown that distracted driving doesn't follow the same patterns as other risky behaviors. As driving patterns have approached pre-pandemic levels, speeding has also fallen, likely as a result of more traffic on the roads.

Phone distraction, on the other hand, has continued to rise. February 2022 was the worst month for phone distraction in the US since the start of 2019. Drivers spent one minute and 38 seconds (1:38) on average distracted by their phones for each hour driving. This is a 30.3 percent increase over February 2020, the last month before the COVID-19 pandemic began.





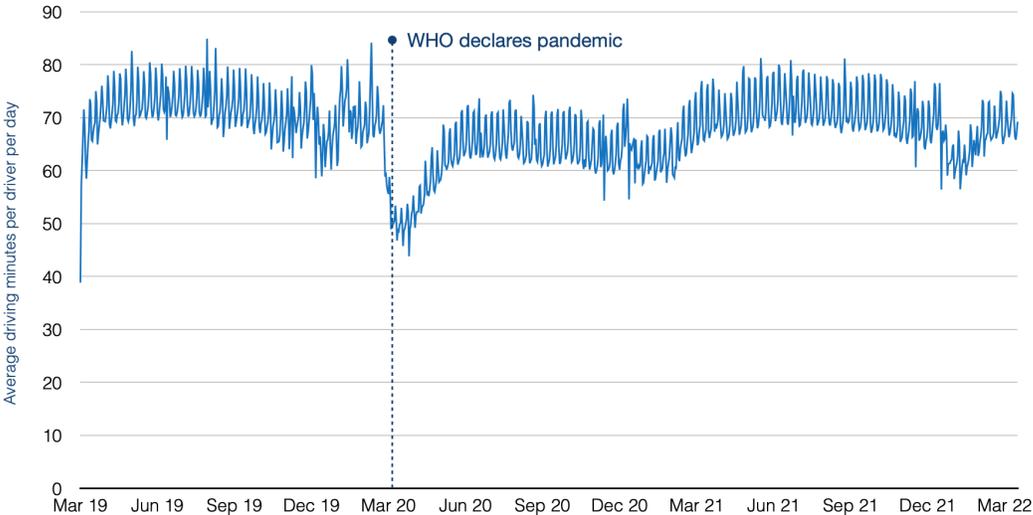
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Total Driving Has Returned to Normal Levels, with Dips during Delta and Omicron

Over the course of 2021, drivers in the US have returned to the roads and resumed more “normal” levels of driving. To understand broader trends in driving behavior, it’s important to compare driving patterns year over year because weather, holidays, daylight, and other factors create seasonal conditions that impact driving behaviors. For example, drivers spent an average of 70 minutes and 13 seconds on the road in April 2021. This was just a 1 percent increase over April 2019, but a significant 35.9 percent increase over April 2020 when initial Covid-19 lockdowns were in full effect.

From April through November 2021, minutes per driver were within 2 percent of their pre-pandemic 2019 totals. The exception for this was August, which saw the peak of the Delta variant disruption. According to the Washington Post, the peak day for new reported cases during the Delta wave was August 30, with more than 260,600 cases. Driving patterns shifted as a result, and August saw a 3.6 percent decrease in minutes per driver compared to pre-pandemic numbers. Driving patterns quickly returned to “normal,” however. September 2021 saw a marginal 0.9 percent decrease compared to 2019. October saw a 0.3 percent increase.

Driving minutes per day



The Omicron variant had more drastic infection rates than Delta. There was also a steeper decline in driving. The peak of the Omicron wave saw 1.35 million new cases reported on January 10, 2022, according to the Post. January 2022 saw a 9.1 percent decrease in minutes per driver compared to 2019, with drivers spending just 62 minutes and 13 seconds behind the wheel. February 2022 saw drivers average 67 minutes and 14 seconds on the road, a 4.3 percent decrease from 2019.



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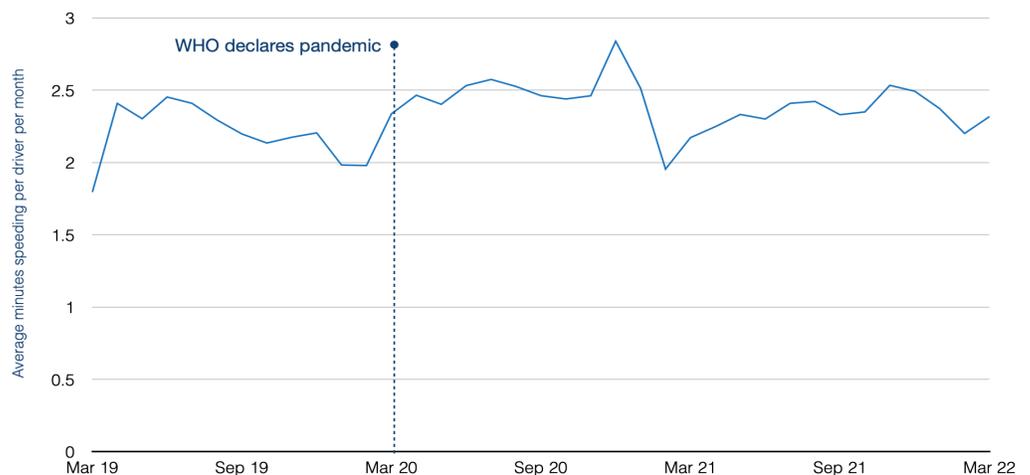
Speeding Dropped as Traffic Returned

In the wake of the initial drop in trips and time on the road after the WHO declared Covid-19 a pandemic in March 2020, we saw speeding spike. The average minutes spent speeding per hour driving surged from an average of 1:59 in February 2020 to 2:28 in April 2020, a 24.9 percent jump. December 2020 saw the highest average time spent speeding each day, at 2:50 speeding per hour of driving.

Since then, as roads have filled with traffic, average minutes spent speeding per hour has decreased. January 2021 still had an elevated average, with 2:30 minutes per hour. Starting in February 2021, however, speeding was lower in nearly every month compared to 2020 – 10 out of 11 months. November 2021 is the outlier, with a 2.9 percent increase year over year.

The relationship between traffic and speeding held true during the Omicron variant. We saw reduced levels of total driving with an uptick in speeding. Drivers sped an average of 2:30 per hour in December 2021. This was a 13.1 percent increase compared to pre-pandemic levels. Compared to December 2020, the highest point in speeding since 2019, it was a 12.2 percent decrease. January 2022 saw a similar pattern, with an average of 2:22 minutes of speeding per hour, a 19.7 percent increase over January 2020, but a 5.6 percent decrease compared to January 2021.

Speeding per month



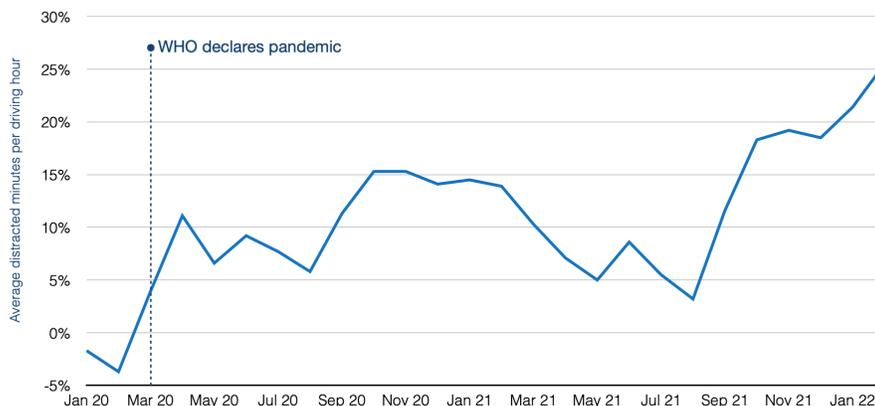


3 Unlike Speeding, Time Spent Distracted is at a Three-Year High

As we reported last year, phone distraction risk skyrocketed in the months after the WHO declared the start of the pandemic. In April 2020, drivers averaged 1:34 seconds of phone distraction per hour of driving, a 7.1 percent increase over April 2019. This distraction peak in April 2020 was the highest point of distracted driving from 2019 through 2021. Distraction reached the same levels in August 2020, but never exceeded 1:34 seconds per hour. The lowest points for distraction were in December 2020 and February 2021, with an average of 1:28 spent distracted per hour of driving.

Unfortunately, phone distraction has spiked in 2022. Drivers in January 2022 averaged 1:35 seconds of distraction, the most in three years. February broke that record with 1:38 seconds of distraction per hour. This high watermark represents a 25.5 percent increase compared to February 2019, and a 30.3 percent increase compared to February 2020, the last month of pre-pandemic driving.

Distraction change vs. 2019



The graph shows the percentage change in distraction for the 7-day rolling average compared to 2019.

The increase in phone distraction is curious. Unlike speeding, it doesn't appear to be related to traffic. When total driving fell in the first half of 2020, speeding spiked along with distracted driving. As traffic returned to normal, speeding somewhat normalized. This pattern has not held for distracted driving.

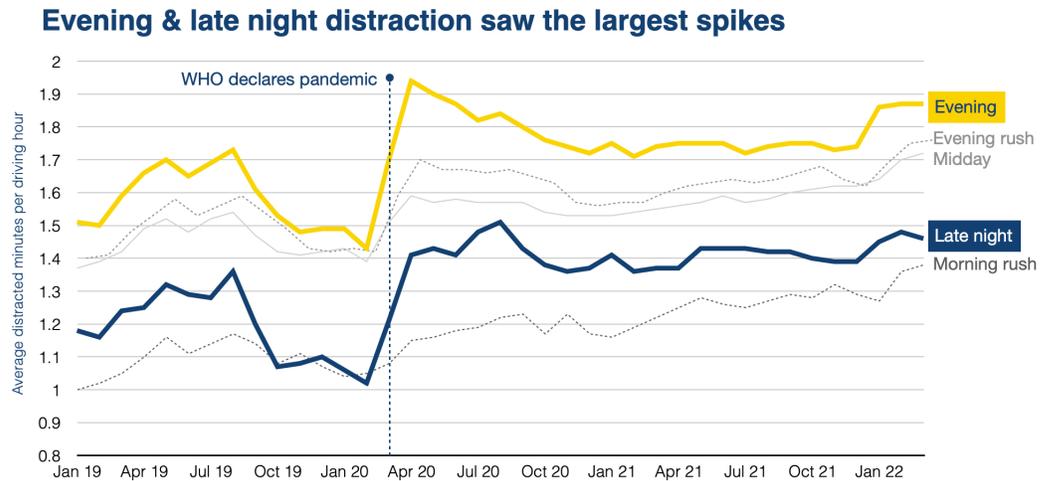
Historically, distracted driving has been seasonal, rising in the summer and falling in the winter. As the pandemic has worn on for over two years, it has disrupted this pattern. In both 2019 and 2020, the pattern held. In 2019, the months April through September saw an increase in distracted driving by 9.1 percent compared to the rest of the year. In 2020, these months saw an 11.4 percent increase. In 2021, these months saw a negligible increase of 0.6 percent.



4 Phone Distraction Spiked at Night

Distracted driving in general rose after the pandemic began, but nighttime driving saw the most significant spike. After-work “evening” hours, between 6:00 p.m. and 10:59 p.m., have been impacted the most. Before the pandemic in February 2020, drivers who started trips during evening hours were distracted for 1:26 per hour on average. By April 2020, minutes of distracted driving per hour spiked to 1:56, a 34.7 percent increase.

- Morning Rush: 6 a.m. to 8:59 a.m.
- Midday: 9 a.m. to 3:59 p.m.
- Evening Rush: 4 p.m. to 5:59 p.m.
- Evening: 6:00 p.m. to 10:59 p.m.
- Late Night: 11 p.m. to 5:59 a.m.



Over that same time period “late-night” trips (started from 11:00 p.m. to 5:59 a.m.) saw a 40 percent increase in average minutes spent driving distracted, from 57 seconds to 1:20 per hour of driving. Late-night distraction has remained at a high level since. In February 2022, the average time distracted rose to 1:29 per hour.

The “morning rush” hours, 6:00 a.m. to 8:59 a.m., saw the smallest increase in that two-month period, rising from 1:04 minutes distracted per hour to 1:08, a 6.6 percent increase.



Conclusion

The United States is still feeling the impact of Covid-19 on the nation's roads. Overall time spent driving dipped as new waves of Covid-19 variants spread across the country, like Delta in August 2021 and Omicron in January 2022.

Fortunately, as traffic has mostly returned for commuting hours, speeding has somewhat normalized.

Unfortunately, distracted driving has not followed this trend. Time spent distracted was higher in February 2022 than at any point in the last three years.

Covid-19 has also changed distraction's predictable seasonality. In 2021, phone distraction did not show seasonal changes. In 2020 and 2019, the summer months had between 9 and 11 percent more minutes distracted per hour.

In the earliest months of the pandemic in 2020, distracted driving skyrocketed during the evening and late-night hours, far outpacing increases during other time periods. Late-night hours still see distraction hours well above pre-pandemic norms.

Methodology: Distraction, speeding, and total driving rates have been calculated based on a cross-section of anonymized data from CMT's DriveWell® platform. Trips started in all 50 U.S. states are included.