

# Mindfulness Predicts Driver Engagement in Distracting Activities

Mindfulness

pp 1–10 | Cite as

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## Abstract

Distracted driving is a major public health concern because of its potential costs of injury, mortality, and property damage. Understanding the psychological factors that underlie drivers' willingness to engage in distracting activities despite the clear safety risks can help to identify interventions to mitigate this dangerous behavior. This study examined if mindfulness, defined as one's attention to and awareness of oneself and the present situation, predicts driver engagement in a wide range of distracting activities, including in-vehicle technology and non-technology-based distraction sources, daydreaming/mind wandering, and distractions external to the vehicle. A total of 312 drivers completed an online survey assessing levels of mindfulness and the frequency with which they engaged in a range of potentially distracting activities. The results showed that while engagement in distracting activities is common, mindfulness was negatively associated with the frequency of driver engagement in all distraction sources studied, apart from passenger interaction. Our results suggest that a single mindfulness intervention could potentially reduce driver engagement in multiple distracting activities at once, and therefore have significant utility as a distraction mitigation technique.

# Keywords

Driver distraction Mindfulness Driving Attention Road safety

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## Notes

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### Author Contributions

KLY: collaborated with the design of the survey, analyzed the data, and wrote the paper. SK: designed and executed the survey and assisted with editing of the final manuscript. ANS: collaborated with the design of the survey, assisted with data analysis and editing of the final manuscript. RO: wrote part of the introduction. RC and CH: collaborated with the design of the survey and editing of the final manuscript.

### Compliance with Ethical Standards

### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

### Ethical Approval

All procedures in the current study were approved and in accordance with the ethical standards of the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval No.: 2017-7955).

### Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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