Georgia Traffic Safety Facts

2023 Preliminary Data

March 2024

Key Findings

- 55% of all motor vehicle traffic crashes had at least one confirmed or suspected distracted driver.
- 34% of all serious injury crashes involved at least one driver confirmed or suspected of distraction.
- According to the 2024 Georgia Distracted Driving Observational Survey, 14.7% of all drivers were observed to have some form of distraction (i.e., talking, texting, dialing, or eating).
- 79% of all distraction-related crashes involved at least one other vehicle besides the distracted driver.
- Since the Hands-Free Law took effect, the number of distracted driving convictions processed by the Department of Driver Services continues to increase. Additionally, statewide and national studies show that distracted driving remains a growing traffic safety concern.
- Young drivers aged 15-to-24 years are overrepresented in confirmed or suspected distraction-relation crashes, post-crash distracted driver citations, and distracted driving convictions.

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Distracted Driving

For the purposes of this fact sheet, a **distraction-related crash** is any crash in which a driver was reported as a confirmed distracted driver or identified as a suspected distracted driver.[1]

Driver distraction occurs when drivers divert their attention from the driving task to focus on another activity. Often, discussions regarding distracted driving center around cell phone use and texting; however, distracted driving also includes other distraction-related activities that are manual, visual, auditory, or cognitive. Activities, particularly cell phone use, may involve multiple types of distraction.

MANUAL	VISUAL	AUDITORY	COGNITIVE
taking hand(s) off the steering wheel	**taking eyes off the road**	**any sound or noise that takes the focus away from the road**	**taking your mind off driving even if eyes/hands are focused**
▪ Holding or touching a phone ▪ Eating, drinking, or smoking ▪ Moving things in the vehicle, such as pets, insects, or objects ▪ Changing the radio or climate controls ▪ Adjusting other vehicle devices or controls ▪ Grooming or personal hygiene	▪ Looking at a phone or infotainment display ▪ Reading or typing a text, email, or message ▪ Looking at a billboard ▪ Looking at an event, object, or person outside the vehicle	▪ Loud noises inside the vehicle, such as loud music or passengers talking loudly ▪ Loud noises outside the vehicle, such as honking, sirens, or alarms ▪ Headsets or noise-canceling devices *(distracted pedestrians / drivers)*	▪ Conversations ▪ Daydreaming ▪ Thinking about an argument ▪ Worrying about something or someone ▪ Modern dashboard controls with touchscreens, complex infotainment systems, or digital displays can lead to visual, manual, and cognitive distractions.

It is important to note that the Georgia Department of Transportation and the Crash Outcomes Data Evaluation System (CODES) at the Georgia Department of Public Health may revise the definitions of confirmed or suspected distraction-related crashes. It is also important to acknowledge the inherent limitations in the data collection within the police crash reports for distraction-related crashes and the resulting injuries and fatalities. *As such, there are challenges and limitations in comparing and interpreting distraction-related crashes over time.*

From a law enforcement perspective, confirming a distraction as a contributing factor in a crash is challenging. Most often, distraction is self-reported by the driver for non-injury, non-fatal, single-occupant crashes and is likely biased. Subsequently, *distraction-related crashes are underreported.*

[1] See Data Considerations for more information on the suspected-distracted driving definition established by the GDOT and CODES

2024 Georgia Distracted Driving Observational Study

The Injury Prevention Research Center at Emory University conducted a roadside observational survey of driver distraction—nearly 23,000 observations across 400 sites within 20 Georgia counties between May and August 2024. According to the 2024 Georgia Distracted Driving Observational Survey[2], 14.7% of all drivers exhibited some form of visible distraction while operating a motor vehicle (i.e., talking, texting, dialing, or eating). Between 2022 and 2024, an average of 17.0% of drivers were observed to have some form of distraction. This suggests that at any point in time or location on Georgia roadways during daytime hours, approximately 4 out of 20 drivers may be distracted. It's important to note that, unlike seatbelt observations, distracted driving observations represent snapshots in time and place, as drivers are not continuously distracted throughout their travel.

Table 1. **Percent of Georgia Distracted Drivers Observed by Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), 2022-2024**

Georgia Region	2022	2023	2024	Average
Statewide	16.8%	19.6%	14.7%	**17.0%**
Atlanta MSA	17.6%	20.2%	16.2%	**18.0%**
Other MSA	13.5%	17.8%	11.2%	**14.2%**
Non-MSA	13.3%	19.3%	9.8%	**14.1%**

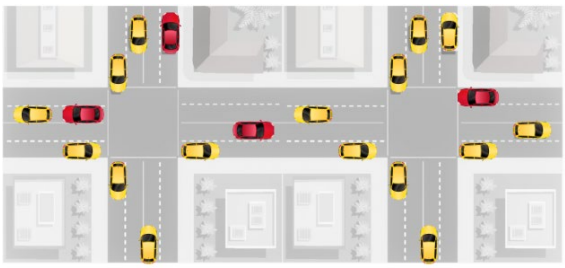
Source: 2022-2024 Observational Survey of Driver Distraction in Georgia

According to the Georgia Distracted Driving Observational Surveys, an average of **17.0%** of drivers were observed to have some form of distraction between 2022 and 2024. In other words, **about 4 out of 20 drivers at any time and location on Georgia roadways may be distracted.**

All Distractions

- The statewide rate of distracted driving decreased by a net 5 percentage points from 19.6% in 2023 to 14.7% in 2024 (Table 1).
- Driver distraction is generally higher in Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) compared to other MSAs and non-MSA (rural) areas. Specifically, in 2024:
  - 16.2% of drivers in the Atlanta MSA exhibited distraction.
  - 11.2% of drivers in other MSAs exhibited distraction.
  - 9.8% of drivers in non-MSA (rural) areas exhibited distraction.
- Distracted driving decreased with increasing age and was higher for women (17.2%) than for men (12.7%).
- Distracted driving was higher on weekdays (15.8%) than on weekends (11.3%). This was true for all types of distractions, including texting or dialing on hand-held devices.

Figure 1. **Georgia Distracted Drivers Observed at Any Point in Time, 2022-2024**



Red cars represent distracted drivers

Source: 2022-2024 Observational Survey of Driver Distraction in Georgia

[2] Rupp, Jonathan. 2024. "Statewide Rates of Driver Distraction: An Observational Survey of Driver Distraction in Georgia, 2024". The Injury Prevention Research Center at Emory (IPRCE), Emory University: Atlanta, Georgia.

Distractions Involving Hand-Held Devices

Hand-held texting/dialing is the most frequent observed form of distraction in the 2024 Georgia Distracted Driving Observational Survey. The proportion of drivers observed talking or texting/dialing on a hand-held device in Georgia was higher than national observation data (6.6% in Georgia vs. 5.2% nationally[3]).

Similar to previous driver distraction observational studies, the rate of hand-held device distractions (talking or texting/dialing) was greater for drivers who were unbelted (11.2%) than those who were belted (6.3%).

According to the World Health Organization…

"**Drivers using mobile phones** are approximately **4 times more likely to be involved in a crash** than drivers not using a mobile phone. Using a phone while driving impacts the driver's reaction time (notably braking reaction time and reaction to traffic signals). Using a phone also makes it difficult to maintain the correct lane and appropriate following distances.

Hands-free phones are not much safer than hand-held phone sets. Texting considerably increases the risk of a crash."[4]

Other Distracted Driving Studies

National Distracted Driving Report

As of July 2018, Georgia is one of a few states that banned the handheld use of cell phones and text messaging while driving. According to a Cambridge Mobile Telematics (CMT) study, distracted driving reduced after Georgia's Hands-Free Law was enacted on July 1, 2018. The study showed a 23.7% reduction after the first two weeks and a 17.9% reduction after the first three months the Georgia law took effect (CMT, 2020). Despite these immediate reductions in distracted driving after the law was enacted, other national studies (including crash data and attitudinal surveys) show that the change in driver behavior was not sustainable, especially with the growth of new technologies.

In-Vehicle Infotainment Systems

A study conducted by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety found that in-vehicle infotainment systems (modern integrated systems within motor vehicles that provide information, entertainment, and connectivity features) can cause additional distractions for drivers operating a motor vehicle. These systems create a medium to heavy cognitive load in drivers and need to be engineered to reduce that load on drivers. The activities of listening to audio, calling, texting, and navigation were studied in these systems and were found to cause a medium to heavy cognitive load for drivers. AAA found that in-vehicle infotainment created potentially unsafe distractions for all drivers, but particularly for older drivers. Older drivers (55 to 75 years of age) experience slower times to complete in-vehicle tasks while driving compared to younger drivers (25 to 40 years of age)— 25 to 40 seconds versus 18 to 31 seconds, respectively.

[3] National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2024, January). Driver electronic device use in 2022 (Traffic Safety Facts Research Note. Report No. DOT HS 813 531). National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Available online: https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813531

[4] World Health Organization. (2023, December). Road traffic injuries: Fact sheet. WHO. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/road-traffic-injuries

Distracted Drivers Involved in Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes

In 2023, 55% of motor vehicle traffic crashes fit the criteria of having at least one confirmed or suspected distracted driver—a net 2-point percentage increase compared to 2022. This finding aligns with naturalistic driving studies that used video cameras and sensors installed in vehicles to determine driver risk factors seconds before a crash. According to a multi-state naturalistic study, 51.9% of all crashes involved distracted, non-impaired drivers.[5]

Among the drivers involved in motor vehicle traffic crashes, 2% were confirmed to be distracted, 35% were suspected of distraction[6], and 20% were *un*distracted drivers involved in a distraction-related crash—the other 44% of drivers were not involved in distraction-related crashes. Most distraction-related crashes involved other vehicles —

- 79% of all distraction-related crashes involved at least one other vehicle besides that of the distracted driver.
- 21% of all distraction-related crashes were single-vehicle crashes that only involved the distracted driver's vehicle.

Furthermore, among all single-vehicle crashes, 58% involved a confirmed or suspected distracted driver. Among all multi-vehicle crashes, 54% involved at least one confirmed or suspected distracted driver.

Table 2. **Percent of All Traffic Crashes that were Distraction-Related, 2022-2023**

Traffic Measure	2022	2023
Crashes		
Distraction-Related Crashes	53%	55%
Confirmed distraction-related crashes	*4%*	*4%*
Suspected distraction-related crashes	*49%*	*51%*
Not distraction-related crashes	47%	45%
Drivers		
Drivers involved in distraction-related crashes	54%	56%
Confirmed distracted driver	*2%*	*2%*
Suspected distracted driver	*28%*	*35%*
*Un*distracted driver (in another vehicle)	*24%*	*20%*
Drivers *not* involved in distraction-related crashes	47%	44%

Source: CODES 2022

55%

of all Georgia motor vehicle traffic crashes had at least one ***confirmed*** or ***suspected*** distracted driver in 2023.

Distraction-Related Traffic Fatalities and Serious Injuries

According to CODES crash data, 41 fatal crashes involved at least one confirmed distracted driver (2.4% of all fatal crashes) in 2023. In these confirmed distraction-related crashes, 41 fatalities occurred (2.6% of all traffic-related fatalities).

The true number of distraction-related fatal crashes and fatalities is likely underreported due to unknown contributing factors at the time of the crash. Table 3 shows the number and percent of confirmed distraction-related fatal crashes and traffic fatalities between 2019 and 2023.

Although it is challenging for law enforcement to determine whether distraction is a contributing factor in a fatal crash, the police crash report may be the only source available for this information. Therefore, the number of confirmed distraction-related fatalities and serious injuries is usually underreported.

[5] Dingus, T. A., Guo, F., Lee, S., Antin, J. F., Perez, M., Buchanan-King, M., & Hankey, J. (2016). Driver crash risk factors and prevalence evaluation using naturalistic driving data. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 113(10), 2636-2641. doi:10.1073/pnas.1513271113

[6] See Data Considerations for more information on the suspected-distracted driving definition established by the GDOT and CODES

Table 3. ***Confirmed*** **Distraction-Related Fatal Crashes and Traffic Fatalities, 2019-2023***

Year	Fatal Crashes			Fatalities		
	Total Fatal Crashes	Confirmed Distraction-Related		Total Traffic Fatalities	Confirmed Distraction-Related	
		Number	Percent		Number	Percent
2019	1,378	43	3.1%	1,492	43	2.9%
2020	1,522	55	3.6%	1,664	61	3.7%
2021	1,681	52	3.0%	1,809	58	3.2%
2022	1,678	74	4.4%	1,797	76	4.2%
2023*	1,562	41	2.6%	1,674	41	2.4%

Source: FARS 2019-2022, CODES 2023, *TSREG Preliminary Data 2023

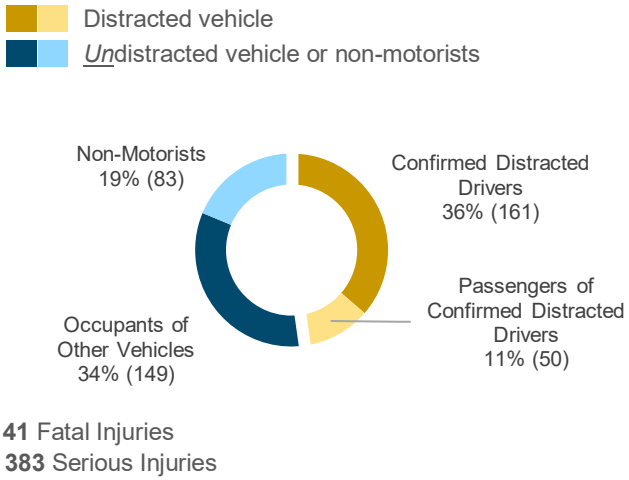
In 2023, **34%** of all serious injury[7] crashes involved at least one driver ***confirmed or suspected*** of distraction. The number of serious injuries that involved a ***confirmed*** distracted driver decreased by 9%— from 423 in 2022 to 383 in 2023.

Figure 2 shows the percent of fatal or serious injuries involving at least one ***confirmed*** distracted driver by person type in 2023.

- 47% were in the confirmed distracted driver's vehicle (represented by yellow in Figure 2).
  - 36% were distracted drivers themselves.
  - 11% were passengers of the distracted driver.
- 53% were occupants of other vehicles or non-motorists (represented by blue in Figure 2).
  - 34% were occupants of other vehicles *not* operated by the distracted driver.
  - 19% were non-motorists (i.e., pedestrians or bicyclists).

Eighty-two percent (82%) of ***confirmed*** distracted drivers involved in motor vehicle crashes did *not* have passenger occupants with them in the vehicle. Eighteen percent (18%) of ***confirmed*** distracted drivers had other passenger occupants riding with them.

Figure 2. **Percent of Persons Fatally or Seriously Injured in *Confirmed* Distraction-Related Crashes by Person Type, 2023**



41 Fatal Injuries
383 Serious Injuries

Source: CODES 2023
Note: Undistracted vehicles were not reported to be confirmed distracted.

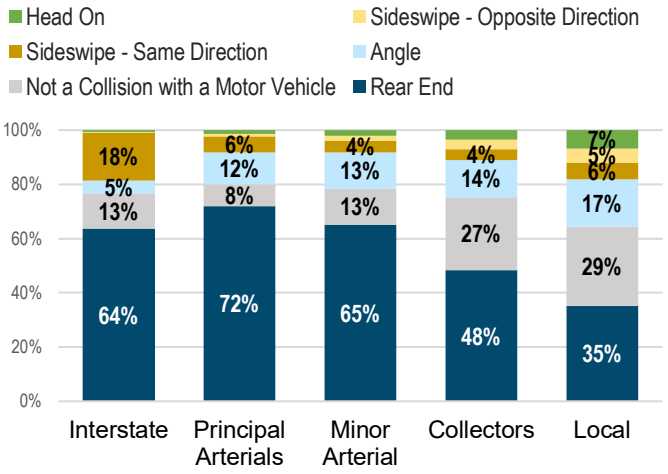
[7] Suspected serious injuries are reported by law enforcement and used when any injury, other than fatal injury, prevents the injured person from walking, driving, or normally continuing the activities the person was capable of before the injury occurred.

Crash Characteristics

Rear-end collisions were the most common manner of collision involving *confirmed* distracted drivers across all roadway types (Figure 3).

- Rear-end collisions with confirmed distraction represented more than half of all distraction-driving collisions on higher-capacity roadways—interstates (64%), principal arterials (72%), and minor arterials (65%).
- Sideswipe crashes in the same direction involving confirmed distracted drivers were more common on interstates (18%) than any other roadway function.
- Local and collector roads have a higher proportion of confirmed distracted driving collisions with non-motorized road users or single-vehicle crashes with objects (crashes that *do not* involve another motor vehicle in Figure 3).

Figure 3. **Manner of Collision for Crashes Involving *Confirmed* Distracted Drivers by Roadway Classification, 2023**



Source: Numetric Roadway Function Class 2023, CODES 2023

Table 4 on the next page highlights the distribution of distraction-related versus non-distraction-related crashes across different roadway classifications and regions in Georgia.

- In the Atlanta region, more distraction-related crashes occur on *principal arterial* roads (29% of all distraction-related crashes) and *interstates* (25%). Notably, the proportion of distraction-related crashes on the Atlanta region *interstates* was higher than the proportion of non-distraction-related crashes (25% vs. 17%).
- In other urban counties, distraction-related crashes and non-distraction-related crashes were most prevalent on *principal arterials* (38% and 35%, respectively). Interstates had a slightly higher percentage of distraction-related crashes (10%) compared to non-distraction-related (7%). The proportion of distraction-related crashes on minor arterials and local roads in the Atlanta region (27% and 11% respectively) was marginally less than non-distraction-related crashes (31% and 15%).
- In rural counties, the pattern shifts notably. A greater percentage of distraction-related crashes occur on rural collectors (25%) compared to non-distraction-related crashes (22%).

Table 4. **Percent Distribution of Distraction-Related and Non-Distraction-Related Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes by Region and Roadway Classification, 2023**

Roadway Classification	Atlanta Region[8] (11 counties)		Other Urban Counties (30 counties)		Rural Counties (118 counties)		Statewide	
	Distraction-Related	Non-Distraction	Distraction-Related	Non-Distraction	Distraction-Related	Non-Distraction	Distraction-Related	Non-Distraction
Interstate	**25%**	17%	10%	7%	8%	7%	**18%**	12%
Principal Arterial	29%	28%	**38%**	35%	30%	30%	**32%**	30%
Minor Arterial	27%	31%	28%	30%	21%	22%	27%	30%
Collectors	8%	9%	11%	11%	**25%**	22%	11%	12%
Local	11%	15%	13%	17%	15%	18%	12%	16%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

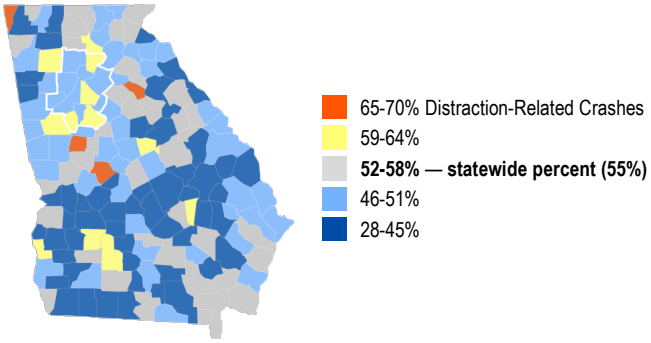
*Total includes freeway/ramp roadway classifications. Note: Principal arterials include freeways and multilane highways (e.g., Buford Highway in DeKalb County and SR-520 & US-82 in Atkinson County). Minor arterials are other important multilane roadways that supplement the highways (e.g., Spring Street in Fulton County and SR-56 in Richmond County). Collector roads are roads that connect local roads and streets with arterials. Source: Numetric Roadway Function Class 2023 , CODES 2023

[8] The Atlanta Region includes the ten counties that are defined by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC): Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, and Rockdale counties. In July 2021, Forsyth County officially joined ARC, becoming the 11th county member.

Figure 4 shows the proportion of all motor vehicle crashes that were distraction-related by county and their deviation from the statewide percent of distraction-related crashes (55%). For additional information, see the Appendix for the percent of distraction-related crashes by county. Generally, there are lower proportions of distraction-related crashes among all crashes in the coastal plain and South Georgia region.

- All eleven counties within the Atlanta Region had a greater percentage of distraction-related crashes compared to the statewide percent.
- Six out of 30 other urban counties and 23 out of 118 rural counties had a greater percentage of distraction-related crashes compared to the statewide percent.
- The counties with the highest proportion of distraction-related crashes are Crawford (68%) and Oconee (67%)—which are classified as rural counties.

Figure 4. **Percent of Distraction-Related Traffic Crashes and Deviation from the Statewide Percent by County, 2023**



Source: CODES 2023. Note: Counties that are light to dark teal have a lower percentage of distraction-related crashes compared to the statewide percent. Counties that are light to dark orange have a higher percentage of distraction-related crashes compared to the statewide percent.

Distracted Driver Convictions (Crash and Non-Crash)

On July 1, 2018, Georgia's Hands-Free Law (O.C.G.A. § 40-6-241) furthered the "no texting while driving" law and made it illegal for drivers (including young drivers) to physically hold or support a wireless communications device while driving. Under this law, drivers can be cited and convicted for distracted driving that may or may not have resulted in a motor vehicle traffic crash. Amendments to the law also provided the point system for suspension or revocation of license for habitually negligent or dangerous drivers. While first-time offenders of Georgia's Hands-Free Law can be excused if they provide evidence that they have obtained a device that allows them to use hands-free communication technology, the increase in enforcement and convictions for distracted driving indicates a growing traffic safety concern. See the "*Legal Perspective*" section for more information regarding how the legal codes for distracted driving citations and convictions have changed over time in Georgia.

Table 5 presents the number of distracted driver convictions (that may or may not have resulted in a motor vehicle traffic crash), licensed drivers, and distracted driver conviction rates from 2014 to 2023.

While the number of distracted driving convictions increased steadily over the 10-year period, the number of convictions reported to DDS more than doubled from 2017 to 2018 (2.2 times) and from 2018 to 2019 (2.6 times). In 2023, the number of distracted driving convictions and rate per licensed drivers increased by 11% compared to 2022.

The COVID-19 response caused many Georgia courts to temporarily postpone court hearings, including traffic court, and many traffic safety law enforcement officers were reassigned to other critical and high-priority areas. Therefore, many distracted driving convictions may not have been reported to the Department of Driver Services.

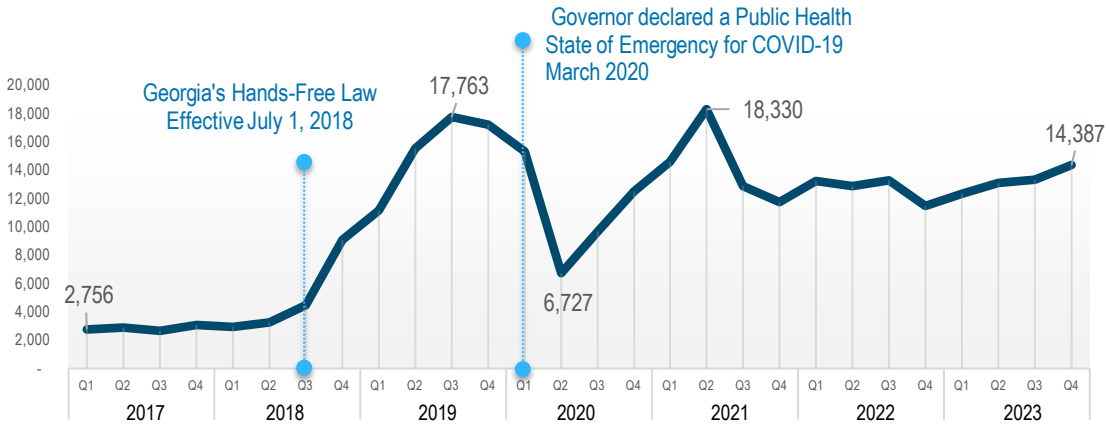
Table 5. **Distracted Driver Convictions, Licensed Drivers, and Distracted Driver Conviction Rate, 2014-2023**

Year	Distracted Driver Convictions	Licensed Drivers	Distracted Driver Conviction Rate per 100,000 Licensed Drivers
2014	5,837	7,099,538	82.2
2015	6,883	7,263,758	94.8
2016	9,148	7,337,619	124.7
2017	11,505	7,414,323	155.2
2018*	25,593	7,512,197	340.7
2019	65,625	7,616,176	861.7
2020**	31,173	7,891,390	395.0
2021	43,846	8,007,599	547.6
2022	49,280	8,341,774	599.2
2023	54,546	8,564,852	629.5

Note: Distracted driver convictions may or may not have resulted in a motor vehicle traffic crash. The distracted driver convictions are summarized by the year the violation occurred. License totals include individuals with permits/provisional licenses and unexpired, suspended licenses.
*On July 1, 2018, Georgia's Hands-Free Law further expanded the "no texting while driving" law and made it illegal for drivers to have a phone in their hand or for a phone to touch any part of their body while driving.
**The decrease in distracted driving convictions in Georgia in 2020 is primarily attributed to reduced traffic volumes and enforcement activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
Source: DDS 2014-2023

Figure 5 shows the number of distracted driver convictions processed by DDS quarterly from 2017 to 2023. After the law took effect, the number of convictions processed by DDS increased 4.4 times during the first three years, from 3,260 distracted driver convictions in the second quarter of 2018 (July 2018) to 17,763 in the second quarter of 2019. However, the number of distracted driving convictions processed by DDS decreased significantly during the 2020 year during the COVID-19 public health emergency response in Georgia. The higher number of distracted driving convictions processed in the second quarter of 2021 suggests that the court reporting and processing may have returned to pre-pandemic norms.

Figure 5. **Distracted Driver Convictions, 2017– 2023**



Note: Distracted driver convictions may or may not have resulted in a motor vehicle traffic crash. The distracted driver convictions are summarized by the year DDS processed the conviction. Source: DDS 2017-2023 Distracted Driver Report by *Process Month*.

Table 6 shows the counties with the highest number of distracted driving convictions processed by DDS and the rate of distracted driver convictions per 100,000 licensed drivers in 2023.

Gwinnett County has consistently had the highest number of distracted driving convictions compared to any other county. From 2011-2017 (before the Hands-Free Law), Gwinnett represented 26% of all distracted driving convictions across the state. In 2023, however, Gwinnett represented 11% of all distracted driving convictions reported across the state—indicative of Gwinnett's consistent enforcement of distracted driving laws and other counties increasing their distracted driving enforcement. The top five counties with the greatest number of distracted convictions processed by DDS represented 29% of all *distracted driving convictions* (15,808 out of 54,546), and 154 Georgia counties represented 71% of all distracted driving convictions. In 2023, one county did not have any distracted driving convictions processed by DDS.

Of all drivers issued one or more citations involved in a motor vehicle traffic crash, nearly two out of every 100 drivers received a distracted driving citation. Table 7 shows the counties with the highest number of distracted driver citations issued after a motor vehicle traffic crash incident and the rate of distracted driver citations for every 1,000 distraction-related motor vehicle crashes in 2023. The five counties with the greatest number of distracted driving citations issued after a crash represented 32% of all *distracted driving citations issued after a crash* (1,396 out of 4,417) and 142 Georgia counties represented 68% of all distracted driving citations after a crash. In 2023, twelve counties did not have any distracted driving citations issued after a crash.

Table 6. **Top Five Counties with the Highest Distracted Driver Convictions and Distracted Driver Conviction Rate, 2023**

Number of Distracted Driver Convictions			Distracted Driver Conviction Rate per 100,000 Licensed Drivers		
Rank	County	Number	Rank	County	Rate
1	Gwinnett	6,241	1	Twiggs	3,329.5
2	Clayton	3,003	2	Banks	2,981.1
3	Henry	2,973	3	Liberty	2,631.7
4	Hall	2,035	4	Cook	2,519.1
5	Bartow	1,556	5	Clay	2,254.0

Note: The distracted driving violations presented in the table occurred in 2023 and may or may not have resulted in a motor vehicle traffic crash. While first-time offenders of Georgia's Hands-Free Law can be excused if they provide evidence that they have obtained a device that allows them to use hands-free communication technology, the increase in enforcement and convictions for distracted driving indicates a growing traffic safety concern. Rates were calculated when the number of convictions in the county was greater than or equal to ten.
Source: DDS 2023

See the "*Additional Information*" to access the **Appendix** for this document. The appendix includes the following information by county: Licensed drivers • Distracted driver citations issued after a motor vehicle traffic crash incident • Convictions processed by the Department of Driver Services • Percent and rank of distraction-related motor vehicle crashes.

Table 7. **Counties with the Highest Distracted Driver Citations Issued After a Motor Vehicle (MV) Traffic Crash and Distracted Driver Citation Rate, 2023**

Number of Distracted Driver Citations Issued After a MV Crash			Distracted Driver Citation Rate per 1,000 Suspected or Confirmed Distracted Driving Crashes		
Rank	County	Number	Rank	County	Rate
1	Fulton	390	1	Turner	197.7
2	Chatham	329	2	Grady	142.9
3	Gwinnett	243	3	Decatur	122.2
4	Cobb	235	4	Dade	100.8
5	Clayton	199	5	Tattnall	100.0

Source: CODES 2023
Note: Rates were calculated when the number of citations in the county was greater than or equal to ten. The resulting convictions for citations issued after a motor vehicle crash is not known.

Distracted Drivers by Age Group

Young drivers aged 15-to-24 years are overrepresented in distracted driving incidents. Although young drivers represented 15% of all licensed drivers, they account for:

- **20%** of crashes involving a suspected distracted driver.
- **24%** of fatal crashes involving a confirmed distracted driver.
- **33%** of post-crash distracted driver citations—the highest among all age groups.
- **20%** of distracted driving convictions.

According to the 2021 High School Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, 29% of Georgia high school students texted or e-mailed while driving a car or other vehicle during the 30 days before the survey[9].

Drivers aged 25-to-34 years had the highest percentage of involvement in confirmed or suspected distracted-related crashes compared to other age groups (22%). This group also accounted for the highest distraction-related convictions (31%). Drivers aged 35-to-44 years had the highest percentage of confirmed distracted drivers involved in fatal crashes, compared to other age groups (32%).

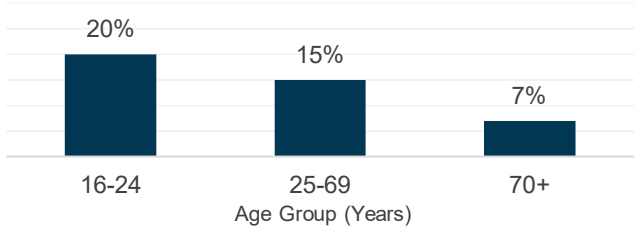
Table 8. **Licensed Drivers, Confirmed or Suspected Distracted Drivers Involved in Types of Motor Vehicle (MV) Crashes, Distracted Driver Citations Issued after a Motor Vehicle Crash, Distracted Driver Convictions by Age Group, 2023**

Age Group	Licensed Drivers	Confirmed or Suspected Distracted Driver Involved in a Crash	Confirmed Distracted Driver Involved in a Fatal Crash*	Distracted Driver Citations Issued Post-Crash	Distracted Driver Convictions (Crash or Non-Crash)
15-24	**15%**	**20%**	**24%**	**33%**	**20%**
15-20	*8%*	*10%*	*12%*	*18%*	*8%*
21-24	*7%*	*10%*	*12%*	*15%*	*12%*
25-34	17%	22%	15%	27%	31%
35-44	17%	17%	32%	17%	23%
45-54	16%	14%	12%	11%	14%
55-64	15%	11%	7%	7%	9%
65+	21%	8%	7%	8%	4%
TOTAL	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Note: Distracted driver convictions may or may not have resulted in a motor vehicle traffic crash. Percents are calculated using records with known age over 15 years. * FARS 2023 data was not available during the time of reporting. Source: DDS 2023, CODES 2023

The Georgia Distracted Driving Observational Survey estimates the statewide prevalence of driver distraction during daylight hours. According to the 2023 survey, observed distracted driving decreases as age increases, with younger drivers exhibiting higher rates of distraction compared to older drivers. In 2023, 20% of drivers aged 16 to 24 years, 15% of drivers aged 25 to 69 years, and 7% of drivers 70 years and older were observed to be distracted while driving.

Figure 6. **Observed Driver Distraction in Georgia by Age Group, 2024**



Source: 2024 Georgia Distracted Driving Observational Survey

The differences in the proportion of *convictions* processed by the Georgia Department of Driver Services (DDS) and the proportions of drivers *observed* to be distracted can be attributed to several factors. These factors may include differences in citation procedures, enforcement priorities, court processes, technological factors, legislative factors, and other systems of influence.

[9] Source: 2021 CDC (The YRBS is conducted every two years among a representative group of Georgia public school students.)

Legal Perspective

On July 1, 2018, Georgia's Hands-Free Law further expanded the "no texting while driving" law and made it illegal for drivers (including young drivers) to have a phone in their hand or for a phone to touch any part of their body while driving. *This policy change provided greater specification for a distracted driving offense and clarification of the Hands-Free Law for law enforcement to further address distracted driving on Georgia roadways.*

The number of convictions processed by DDS more than doubled from 2017 to 2018 (2.2 times) and from 2018 to 2019 (2.5 times).

- The most common code used before the Hands-Free Law was O.C.G.A. 40-6-241 "Failure to exercise due care/careless driving."
- After the Hands-Free Law became effective, O.C.G.A. 40-6-241(c) "Unlawful use of wireless device" is the most commonly used legal code in distracted driving convictions.

Table 9. **Distracted Driver Convictions Reported to Department of Driver Services by Legal Code and Violation Year, 2019-2023**

Convictions Codes	2019	2020**	2021	2022	2023
O.C.G.A. 40-6-241(b) Failure to exercise due care	4,802	2,170	4,092	5,818	6,698
O.C.G.A. 40-6-241(c) Unlawful use of wireless device	60,729	28,957	39,627	43,234	47,537
O.C.G.A. 40-6-241(d) Unlawful use of wireless device in Commercial Motor Vehicle	94	46	127	228	311
TOTAL	**65,625**	**31,173**	**43,846**	**49,280**	**54,546**

Source: Distracted Driver Convictions Reported to Department of Driver Services Summarized by Violation Year, 2019-2023
*On July 1, 2018, Georgia's Hands-Free Law (O.C.G.A. § 40-6-241) went into effect.
**Governor declared a Public Health State of Emergency for COVID-19 March 2020

Data Definitions and Considerations:

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) defines confirmed distraction-related activities as anything that takes a driver's eyes off the road (visual distraction), mind off the road (cognitive distraction), or hands off the wheel (manual distraction).

Police crash reports are reviewed in a post hoc analysis by the Governor's Office of Highway Safety, Georgia Department of Public Health, and the Georgia Department of Transportation using a jointly developed definition of suspected distracted driving based on multiple factors. The imputation of suspected distracted drivers includes drivers that indicate emotional distress and evidence of driver inattention and distraction. The imputation removes driver contributing factors that include drug/alcohol impairment, sleepiness/drowsiness, aggressive/reckless driving, and speeding. The definition also excludes roadway and vehicle contributing factors. The CODES Analytical Reference Guide is available upon request.

A traffic crash is defined as an incident that involved one or more motor vehicles where at least one vehicle was in transport, and the crash originated on a public trafficway, such as a road or highway. Crashes that occurred on private property, including parking lots and driveways, are excluded.

Fatal crashes are defined as crashes that involve a motor vehicle traveling on a trafficway customarily open to the public and that resulted in the death of a motorist or a non-motorist within 30 days of the crash.

Suspected serious injuries are reported by law enforcement and used when any injury, other than fatal injury, prevents the injured person from walking, driving, or normally continuing the activities the person was capable of before the injury occurred.

The Department of Driver Services licensing database is a live database system and represents the information at a point-in-time on the date of extraction.

The Georgia's Hands-Free Law (House Bill 673 (O.C.G.A. § 40-6-241)) of 2018 introduced new legal codes to enforce the "no texting while driving" law. Some Georgia counties may not have reported distracted driver convictions in 2019.

Additional Information:

Other general information on distracted driving may be accessed at:

- https://dds.georgia.gov/distracted-driver-data-reports
- https://www.gahighwaysafety.org/highway-safety/shsp/

Other fact sheets available at the Governor's Office of Highway Safety and Crash Outcomes Data Evaluation Systems (CODES) are Older Drivers, Young Drivers, Motorcycles, Non-Motorists (Pedestrians & Bicyclists), and Occupant Protection.

The suggested APA format citation for this document is:

Crash Outcomes Data Evaluation System. (2025, March). *Distracted Drivers: 2023 Preliminary data.* (Georgia Traffic Safety Facts). Atlanta, GA: Governor's Office of Highway Safety.

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Appendix

Distracted Drivers Georgia Traffic Safety Facts (2023)

This document is the appendix for the **2023 Distracted Drivers Georgia Traffic Safety Facts**.
Visit https://www.gahighwaysafety.org/georgia-traffic-safety-facts/ to access the full report.

Distracted Driver convictions are convictions processed at the Georgia Department of Driver Services. The total convictions include the following codes based on the county where the violation occurred.

O.C.G.A. 40-6-241(b)	Failure to exercise due care
O.C.G.A. 40-6-241(c)	Unlawful use of wireless device
O.C.G.A. 40-6-241(d)	Unlawful use of wireless device in CMV

Data Considerations:

- On July 1, 2018, Georgia's Hands-Free Law furthered the "no texting while driving" law and made it illegal for drivers (including young drivers) to physically hold or support a wireless communications device while driving. Under Georgia's Hands-Free Law, drivers can be cited and convicted for distracted driving that may or may not have resulted in a motor vehicle traffic crash. While first-time offenders of Georgia's Hands-Free Law can be excused if they provide evidence that they have obtained a device that allows them to use hands-free communication technology, the increase in enforcement and convictions for distracted driving indicates a growing traffic safety concern.
- Gwinnett County has consistently had the highest number of distracted driving convictions compared to any other county. From 2011-2017 (prior to the Hands-Free Law), Gwinnett represented 11% of all distracted driving convictions across the state.
- Some Georgia counties may not have reported all or any distracted driver convictions in 2023.

Licensed Drivers, Citations Issued after Motor Vehicle Crash, Distracted Driving Convictions, and Percent Confirmed or Suspected Distracted Drivers (Distraction-Related) Involved in Motor Vehicle Crashes by County, 2023

County Name	Licensed Drivers	Distracted Driving Convictions	Distracted Driving Citations Issued After a Crash	MV Traffic Crashes		
				Percent Distraction-Related		Total Crashes
				Percent	Rank	
STATEWIDE	**8,564,852**	**54,546**	**4,417**	**53%**		**383,633**
Appling	14,739	49	<10	51%	(72)	489
Atkinson	5,825	50	<10	36%	(147)	128
Bacon	8,415	17	<10	53%	(57)	319
Baker	2,412	--	--	34%	(154)	53
Baldwin	31,192	306	<10	59%	(16)	1,716
Banks	17,443	520	<10	54%	(48)	581
Barrow	77,118	241	14	53%	(53)	2,969
Bartow	97,940	1,556	106	60%	(9)	4,178
Ben Hill	12,876	51	<10	50%	(75)	412
Berrien	14,895	151	<10	58%	(21)	452
Bibb	113,417	246	<10	54%	(51)	6,331
Bleckley	9,619	159	<10	36%	(148)	177
Brantley	14,680	26	<10	48%	(100)	202
Brooks	11,759	<10	10	33%	(156)	248
Bryan	39,606	179	17	55%	(40)	1,342
Bulloch	55,560	846	89	56%	(37)	2,835
Burke	19,322	184	18	56%	(32)	630

Licensed Drivers, Citations Issued after Motor Vehicle Crash, Distracted Driving Convictions, and Percent Confirmed or Suspected Distracted Drivers (Distraction-Related) Involved in Motor Vehicle Crashes by County, 2023 *(con't)*

County Name	Licensed Drivers	Distracted Driving Convictions	Distracted Driving Citations Issued After a Crash	MV Traffic Crashes		
				Percent Distraction-Related		Total Crashes
Butts	21,661	137	<10	46%	(105)	513
Calhoun	3,441	24	<10	35%	(150)	52
Camden	45,797	203	19	48%	(93)	1,011
Candler	8,569	47	<10	34%	(155)	286
Carroll	103,317	176	62	54%	(46)	3,912
Catoosa	56,860	1,093	112	48%	(97)	2,140
Charlton	7,923	<10	<10	46%	(104)	150
Chatham	230,472	1,379	329	52%	(65)	13,999
Chattahoochee	4,867	13	<10	44%	(119)	34
Chattooga	20,085	<10	<10	46%	(102)	392
Cherokee	231,849	789	49	58%	(19)	6,725
Clarke	80,889	1,239	112	50%	(77)	4,901
Clay	2,307	52	<10	61%	(8)	77
Clayton	209,072	3,003	199	55%	(39)	13,178
Clinch	4,959	16	<10	34%	(151)	111
Cobb	606,706	688	235	58%	(23)	27,632
Coffee	30,476	225	18	46%	(106)	911
Colquitt	34,408	226	35	51%	(73)	1,213
Columbia	132,612	413	<10	54%	(44)	4,650
Cook	14,013	353	16	44%	(122)	514
Coweta	128,165	1,301	90	59%	(12)	4,437
Crawford	10,665	15	<10	68%	(1)	267
Crisp	15,684	117	14	45%	(115)	659
Dade	14,285	121	12	66%	(3)	231
Dawson	28,680	503	10	59%	(13)	1,026
Decatur	21,613	48	27	38%	(140)	592
Dekalb	552,188	1,306	127	59%	(15)	37,575
Dodge	14,336	117	<10	43%	(123)	343
Dooly	7,353	59	15	44%	(121)	306
Dougherty	62,245	604	39	50%	(76)	3,413
Douglas	116,729	556	61	52%	(59)	5,688
Early	8,285	43	<10	57%	(27)	254
Echols	2,604	<10	<10	52%	(64)	31
Effingham	59,002	193	12	53%	(54)	1,349
Elbert	17,105	141	<10	43%	(125)	412
Emanuel	17,637	164	<10	34%	(152)	383
Evans	8,037	39	<10	52%	(58)	336
Fannin	24,443	201	<10	51%	(70)	766
Fayette	107,168	1,440	44	62%	(7)	3,674
Floyd	79,250	868	43	55%	(38)	3,318
Forsyth	214,039	579	40	59%	(14)	6,554
Franklin	20,576	389	16	57%	(30)	850

Licensed Drivers, Citations Issued after Motor Vehicle Crash, Distracted Driving Convictions, and Percent Confirmed or Suspected Distracted Drivers (Distraction-Related) Involved in Motor Vehicle Crashes by County, 2023 *(con't)*

County Name	Licensed Drivers	Distracted Driving Convictions	Distracted Driving Citations Issued After a Crash	MV Traffic Crashes		
				Percent Distraction-Related		Total Crashes
Fulton	805,011	1,326	390	56%	(33)	52,997
Gilmer	28,839	132	<10	50%	(81)	827
Glascock	2,350	--	--	49%	(91)	43
Glynn	70,673	1,538	43	54%	(50)	2,557
Gordon	49,289	493	22	45%	(117)	1,809
Grady	18,508	177	18	42%	(129)	562
Greene	18,170	<10	<10	49%	(89)	557
Gwinnett	744,448	6,241	243	58%	(17)	33,334
Habersham	39,151	448	26	51%	(71)	1,227
Hall	176,972	2,035	106	52%	(63)	8,099
Hancock	6,540	21	--	34%	(153)	50
Haralson	27,599	26	11	45%	(114)	710
Harris	31,485	194	21	57%	(31)	495
Hart	23,517	<10	15	53%	(55)	913
Heard	10,522	<10	<10	56%	(34)	198
Henry	207,767	2,973	68	60%	(10)	10,088
Houston	134,741	1,058	33	57%	(29)	3,255
Irwin	7,504	16	<10	53%	(56)	251
Jackson	72,091	321	19	49%	(92)	2,562
Jasper	14,109	<10	<10	58%	(18)	328
Jeff Davis	11,392	73	--	39%	(138)	257
Jefferson	12,712	65	<10	32%	(159)	194
Jenkins	5,988	44	<10	40%	(136)	91
Johnson	6,336	86	<10	45%	(110)	97
Jones	24,762	159	<10	58%	(20)	665
Lamar	17,140	49	<10	49%	(88)	467
Lanier	7,027	14	<10	41%	(132)	116
Laurens	40,369	441	19	45%	(109)	1,415
Lee	27,636	446	11	62%	(6)	600
Liberty	49,740	1,309	63	49%	(85)	1,747
Lincoln	7,196	--	--	35%	(149)	31
Long	14,183	77	<10	58%	(22)	246
Lowndes	86,996	449	140	49%	(87)	3,585
Lumpkin	27,785	64	14	58%	(26)	695
Macon	8,020	157	<10	32%	(158)	155
Madison	27,085	<10	<10	58%	(25)	689
Marion	6,145	86	<10	45%	(108)	77
McDuffie	17,696	61	<10	49%	(86)	649
McIntosh	10,979	31	<10	48%	(99)	126
Meriwether	19,782	388	<10	52%	(61)	297
Miller	4,469	<10	<10	32%	(157)	102
Mitchell	16,049	47	10	58%	(24)	494

Licensed Drivers, Citations Issued after Motor Vehicle Crash, Distracted Driving Convictions, and Percent Confirmed or Suspected Distracted Drivers (Distraction-Related) Involved in Motor Vehicle Crashes by County, 2023 *(con't)*

County Name	Licensed Drivers	Distracted Driving Convictions	Distracted Driving Citations Issued After a Crash	MV Traffic Crashes		
				Percent Distraction-Related		Total Crashes
Monroe	30,564	291	<10	54%	(47)	1,137
Montgomery	6,564	28	<10	63%	(5)	191
Morgan	19,200	150	<10	48%	(96)	768
Murray	32,408	215	18	45%	(112)	675
Muscogee	144,389	102	112	50%	(80)	6,695
Newton	102,614	768	38	56%	(35)	3,253
Oconee	36,674	139	<10	67%	(2)	1,599
Oglethorpe	13,787	195	<10	43%	(126)	196
Paulding	145,766	876	196	52%	(66)	3,853
Peach	21,293	77	10	45%	(113)	1,218
Pickens	32,713	33	21	49%	(84)	879
Pierce	16,795	22	<10	36%	(145)	361
Pike	18,089	128	<10	66%	(4)	398
Polk	36,208	72	15	43%	(124)	1,035
Pulaski	6,993	81	--	36%	(146)	86
Putnam	20,054	71	<10	40%	(135)	575
Quitman	1,821	<10	<10	38%	(140)	24
Rabun	16,067	31	<10	51%	(69)	497
Randolph	4,867	<10	--	38%	(139)	68
Richmond	146,600	281	29	56%	(36)	8,491
Rockdale	74,837	708	25	54%	(45)	3,626
Schley	3,732	<10	<10	37%	(143)	46
Screven	11,864	22	<10	39%	(137)	166
Seminole	7,612	30	<10	47%	(101)	167
Spalding	59,203	954	19	52%	(60)	2,036
Stephens	23,389	55	21	43%	(127)	664
Stewart	2,965	45	--	50%	(78)	56
Sumter	21,490	197	19	41%	(130)	739
Talbot	5,049	93	<10	51%	(68)	105
Taliaferro	1,378	--	--	41%	(131)	150
Tattnall	15,778	98	11	40%	(134)	312
Taylor	6,361	57	<10	57%	(28)	150
Telfair	7,664	95	<10	28%	(160)	96
Terrell	7,006	80	<10	36%	(144)	121
Thomas	37,386	151	34	40%	(133)	1,573
Tift	31,176	423	26	42%	(128)	1,444
Toombs	21,458	254	<10	45%	(107)	899
Towns	12,522	43	<10	55%	(41)	291
Treutlen	5,026	<10	<10	38%	(140)	176
Troup	56,910	154	47	52%	(67)	3,036
Turner	6,780	115	17	45%	(118)	200
Twiggs	6,968	232	<10	51%	(74)	415

Licensed Drivers, Citations Issued after Motor Vehicle Crash, Distracted Driving Convictions, and Percent Confirmed or Suspected Distracted Drivers (Distraction-Related) Involved in Motor Vehicle Crashes by County, 2023 *(con't)*

County Name	Licensed Drivers	Distracted Driving Convictions	Distracted Driving Citations Issued After a Crash	MV Traffic Crashes		
				Percent Distraction-Related		Total Crashes
Union	25,416	52	11	53%	(52)	658
Upson	23,769	196	18	48%	(98)	657
Walker	56,557	338	29	45%	(111)	1,158
Walton	91,412	192	14	48%	(95)	2,590
Ware	27,320	28	<10	49%	(83)	1,109
Warren	4,374	--	<10	50%	(78)	176
Washington	15,379	77	<10	48%	(94)	514
Wayne	24,129	92	10	44%	(120)	622
Webster	2,001	26	<10	45%	(116)	29
Wheeler	3,934	15	--	49%	(90)	59
White	26,337	283	11	46%	(103)	780
Whitfield	81,116	869	99	54%	(49)	3,585
Wilcox	5,705	--	<10	52%	(62)	58
Wilkes	8,039	66	--	49%	(82)	87
Wilkinson	7,576	<10	--	55%	(43)	245
Worth	15,805	100	10	60%	(11)	635