

Increased use of video chats is turning us to 'Zoom zombie' drivers, survey claims

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Is our dependence on Zoom and other video chat software during the pandemic turning us into bad drivers?

According to a survey and analysis of driver habits by Root Insurance, increased screen usage amid the pandemic has turned some drivers into a "Zoom zombie" on the road.

The survey found 54% of respondents said they had trouble concentrating behind the wheel after a video chat.

The company also analyzed habits based on the Root app's test-drive feature, which measures data like braking and turning, then assigns a driver score. Root says that score is used to help determine their customers' insurance rate.

The analysis of 6.1 billion miles driven found the average American driver used their phone once every 5.5 miles last year.

"COVID-19 fundamentally changed the way we interact with our vehicles," says Root Insurance founder and CEO Alex Timm in a statement released Tuesday. "As many abruptly shifted to a [virtual environment](#), Americans' reliance on technology dramatically increased along with their screen time, causing a majority of drivers to carry this distracted behavior into their vehicles."

The survey also found 64% of respondents said they check their phones while driving.

The survey was conducted between March 12-17, involving 1,819 U.S. adult drivers over the age of 18, using an email invitation and an [online survey](#), said the company.

As more Americans stayed home during pandemic-induced quarantines, they drove less. Despite this, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration wrote an [open letter](#) in January which warned [risky driving](#) and fatal crashes have risen sharply.

The letter cited risky behavior such as not wearing seat belts or failing to obey the speed limit. The letter did not indicate how big a role distracted driving played in riskier driving.

"Driving is a privilege, and with it comes the responsibility of protecting yourself and those around you," read a portion of the letter.

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