The State of Connected Operations

Behind the Wheel: Distracted Driving in the US Public Sector

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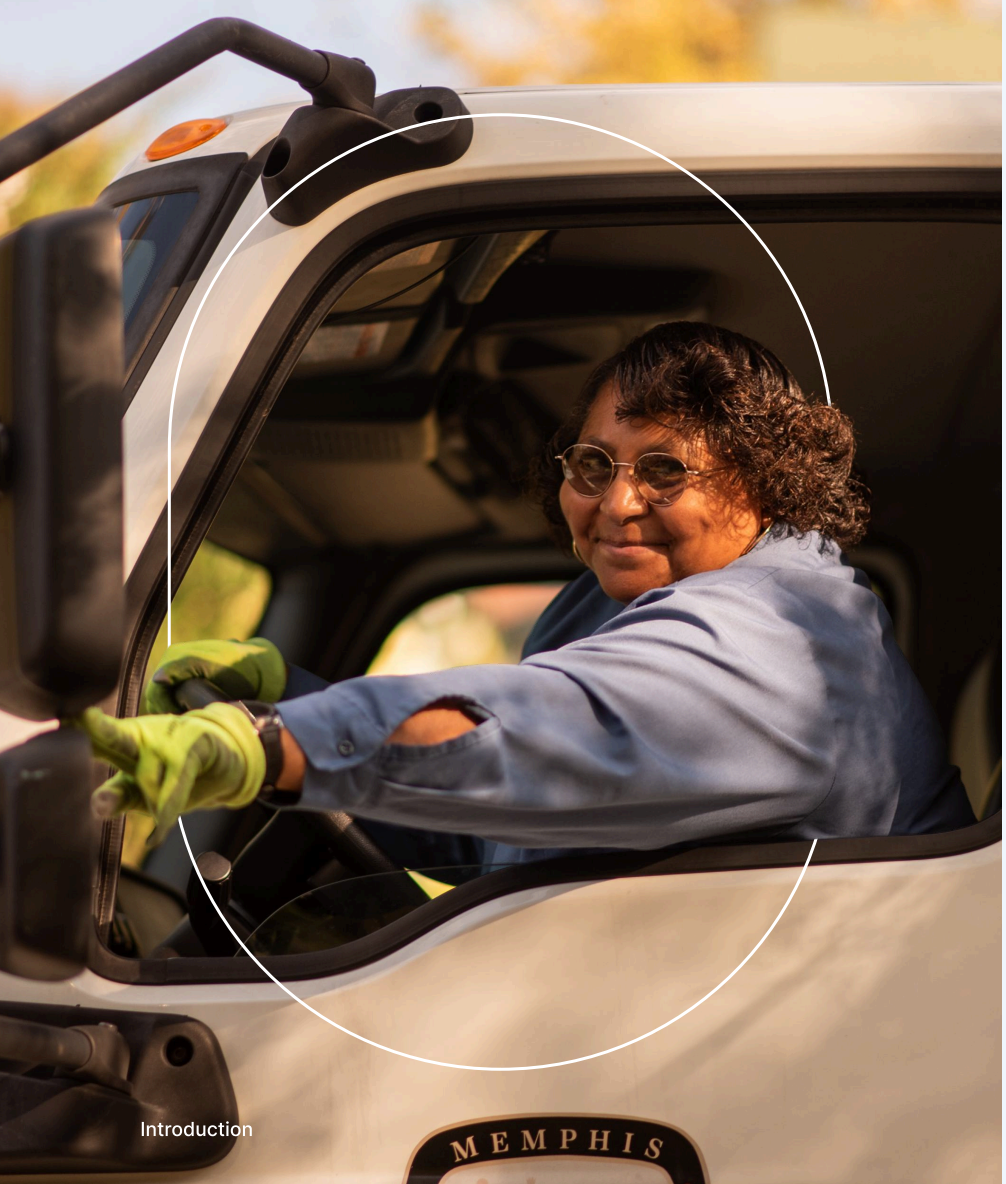


Introduction

Distracted driving within the US public sector represents a critical challenge to operational safety, fiscal responsibility, and public trust. Each year, distracted driving causes an estimated 2.5 million crashes and thousands of preventable deaths around the globe, making it one of the most critical safety challenges facing the motoring public. In 2023, 3,275 individuals were killed and an estimated 324,819 were injured in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers in the US alone—tragedies that could have been prevented.

While these figures encompass all drivers, they reflect the hazardous environment in which public sector fleets must operate, underscoring the risk that government agencies face. For public sector drivers—behind the wheel of everything from police cruisers to school buses and heavy service equipment—the stakes are exceptionally high. A momentary lapse in focus can lead to devastating injuries and fatalities, the disruption of essential public services, compromised emergency response capabilities, significant financial liabilities, and an erosion of community confidence. The consequences extend far beyond the immediate crash scene, touching taxpayers and undermining trust.

Despite widespread efforts to address distracted driving, little attention has been given to the perspectives of these drivers—those who experience these challenges firsthand. As the professionals behind the wheel, they offer invaluable insights into the root causes of distraction and the most effective ways to mitigate it. Guided by their firsthand experiences, this report uncovers practical solutions and actionable strategies that can help public sector organizations reduce risk, enhance driver safety, and foster a culture of safer driving–ultimately making roads and communities safer for everyone.

250
US public sector CDL operators surveyed

2.4K+
years of combined driving experience

370K+
employees represented across respondents' organizations

Foreword

Distracted driving remains one of the greatest risks on our roads, especially in physical operations where professional drivers navigate demanding and diverse environments. One important step in addressing this challenge lies in continuing to better understand the various, underlying causes of distraction from commercial drivers themselves—the individuals on our roads each and every day. By leveraging insights from drivers and data-driven coaching, companies can take proactive steps to reinforce safe driving habits and prevent incidents before they happen.

At Together for Safer Roads (TSR), we believe that collaboration, innovation, and leadership are essential in creating safer roads for all. This new report by TSR member Samsara highlights the critical role that driver insights play in combating distracted driving and provides a roadmap for organizations to implement meaningful change. By prioritizing a strong safety culture, adopting smart technologies, and listening to drivers, we can collectively reduce risk and protect lives.

Peter Goldwasser
Executive Director at Together for Safer Roads

Key takeaway #1

Distracted driving is a challenge for all drivers, regardless of age or experience.

76% of public sector drivers had a "close call" or near-miss while driving because they were distracted within the last year.

Top 3 distractions identified by drivers:

- Using personal phone to check social media
- Using personal phone to send and read messages
- Smoking cigarettes, e-cigarettes, or vaping

Read more on page 04 →

Key takeaway #2

Organizations that act to prevent distracted driving benefit from stronger driver retention.

86% of drivers are more likely to stay with organizations that implement proactive measures to prevent distracted driving.

Top 3 ways employers can help reduce work-related mobile use on the road:

- Better in-cab routing and navigation
- Implement policies that prioritize safety over speed
- Improve communication systems to limit work-related calls/messages

Read more on page 08 →

Key takeaway #3

Technology, training, and policy are shaping the future of distracted driving prevention.

Improved hands-free communication systems are the #1 technology drivers want to tackle distracted driving.

Top 3 technologies drivers want to help mitigate distractions while driving:

- Improved hands-free communication system
- AI-powered detection with alerts
- Automatic blocking of non-essential notifications

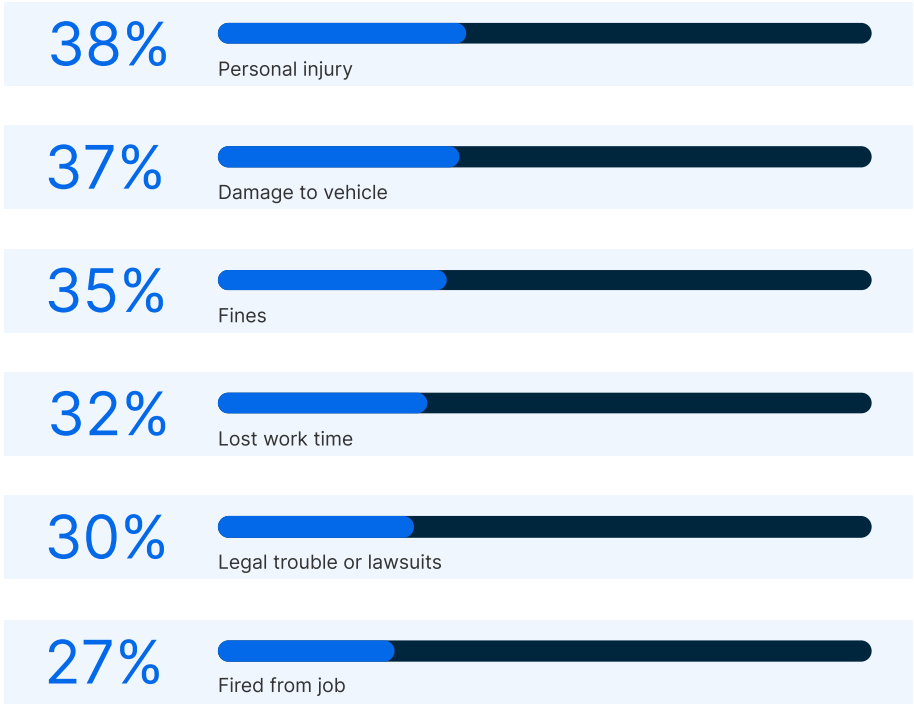
Read more on page 14 →

Navigating Challenges Drivers Face

The risks of distracted driving hit close to home: Within the last year, 76% of drivers have experienced a "close call" or near-miss while driving because they were distracted.

Distracted driving is a widespread issue with serious impacts—95% of drivers have personally experienced its effects, including personal injury, vehicle damage, fines, and lost work time. This emphasizes the urgent need for proactive measures to mitigate distractions and prioritize safety without disrupting essential work.

The impact of distracted driving is undeniable—more than 9 out of 10 drivers have been impacted by it firsthand. The top 6 ways drivers say they've personally experienced the impact includes:



We're just experiencing the tip of the iceberg with Samsara. Everyday, we're finding something that's so neat about the platform. We're just so glad we have Samsara for our students and our community."

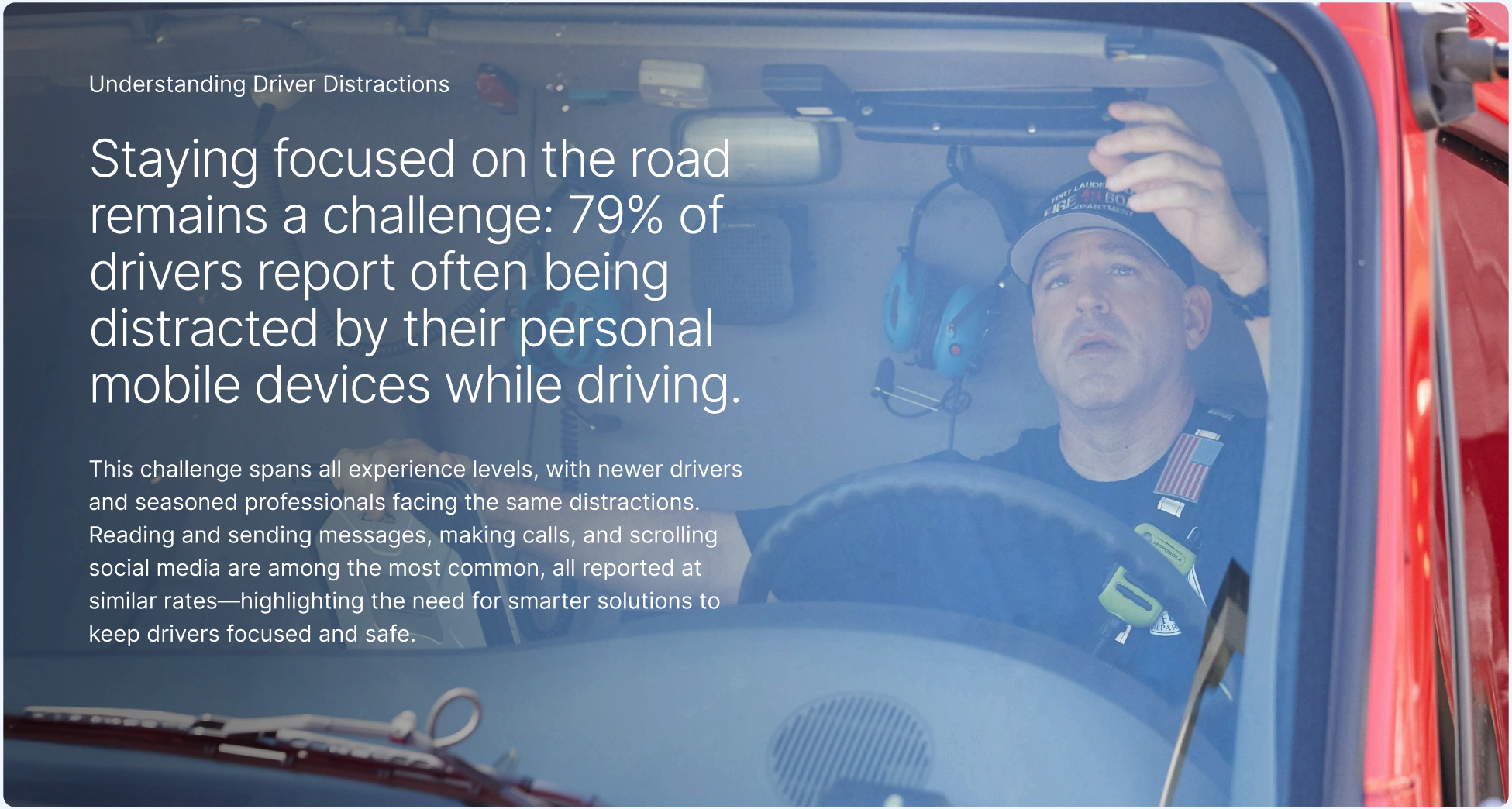
Eric Keesecker
Executive Director of School Transportation,
Berkeley County Public Schools

Drowsiness remains a serious concern, with 60% of drivers experiencing it at least sometimes while driving.

While HOS regulations, drowsiness detection technology, and driver awareness play a role in managing fatigue, there's a clear opportunity to enhance safety support systems and implement smarter digital solutions that help drivers stay alert and safe on the road.

Staying focused on the road remains a challenge: 79% of drivers report often being distracted by their personal mobile devices while driving.

This challenge spans all experience levels, with newer drivers and seasoned professionals facing the same distractions. Reading and sending messages, making calls, and scrolling social media are among the most common, all reported at similar rates—highlighting the need for smarter solutions to keep drivers focused and safe.



Top 5 distractions identified by drivers:

#1

Using personal phone to check social media

#2

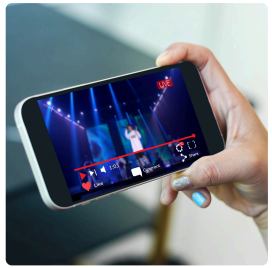
Using personal phone to send and read messages

#3

Smoking cigarettes, e-cigarettes, or vaping

#4

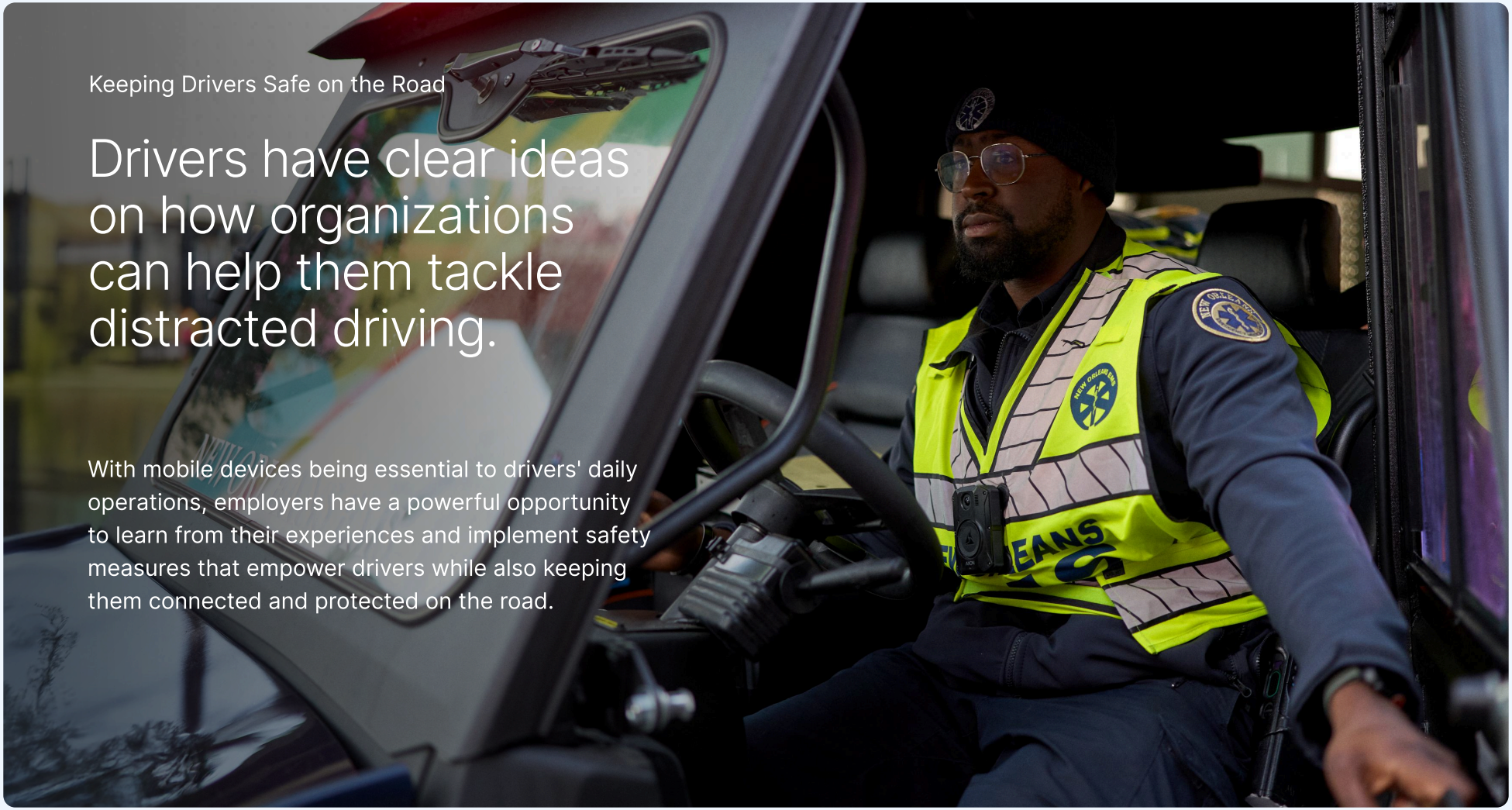
Eating or drinking



#5

Watching videos on a phone or tablet

Drivers have clear ideas on how organizations can help them tackle distracted driving.



With mobile devices being essential to drivers' daily operations, employers have a powerful opportunity to learn from their experiences and implement safety measures that empower drivers while also keeping them connected and protected on the road.

72% of drivers use mobile phones or other technology for work-related tasks while driving on the road.

This is the reality drivers face. Recognizing that these technologies are a necessary part of their job, drivers say their organizations can do more to keep them safe on the road.

Top 5 ways drivers say their organizations can help to reduce the need to use a mobile phone or other technology for work-related tasks while driving:

Improve in-cab routing and navigation technology

Implement policies that prioritize safety over speed

Improve communication systems so drivers receive fewer work-related calls/messages

Provide training on managing fatigue

Adjust job expectations to reduce pressure to respond to calls/messages

Drivers believe onboard monitoring systems are a powerful tool for staying safe on the road and reducing risk.

67% of drivers trust onboard systems that monitor for distracted driving and alert them when an incident occurs, helping them stay focused. These technologies have strong driver buy-in and broad industry acceptance, reinforcing their effectiveness in reducing distractions and improving overall road safety.

With Samsara AI Dash Cams, New Orleans Emergency Medical Services (NOEMS) reduced speeding by 37% and mobile phone usage by 46% over 12 months.

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

46%

Mobile phone usage reduction over 12 months

37%

Speeding reduction over 12 months

Organizations that commit to preventative distracted driving measures are benefiting from stronger retention.

> *We analyze every available data point and provide coaching to enhance driver safety. Last year, we achieved an overall average safety score of 95, so we know the coaching is having an impact."*

John Saturley
Safety Manager, City and County of Denver

86% of drivers are more likely to stay with an employer that has implemented preventative measures for distracted driving. Whether it's upgrading technology, coaching, or training, investing in safety protects drivers on the road while also strengthening loyalty and long-term workforce stability.

Dash cam footage is a powerful tool in helping drivers recognize and address their own distractions.

92%

of drivers agree that seeing dash cam footage of themselves has increased their awareness of being distracted while driving.

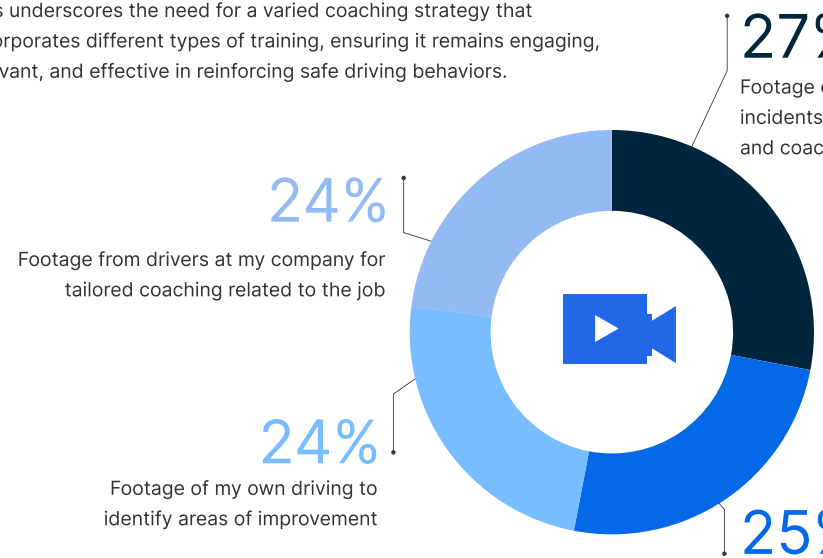
67%

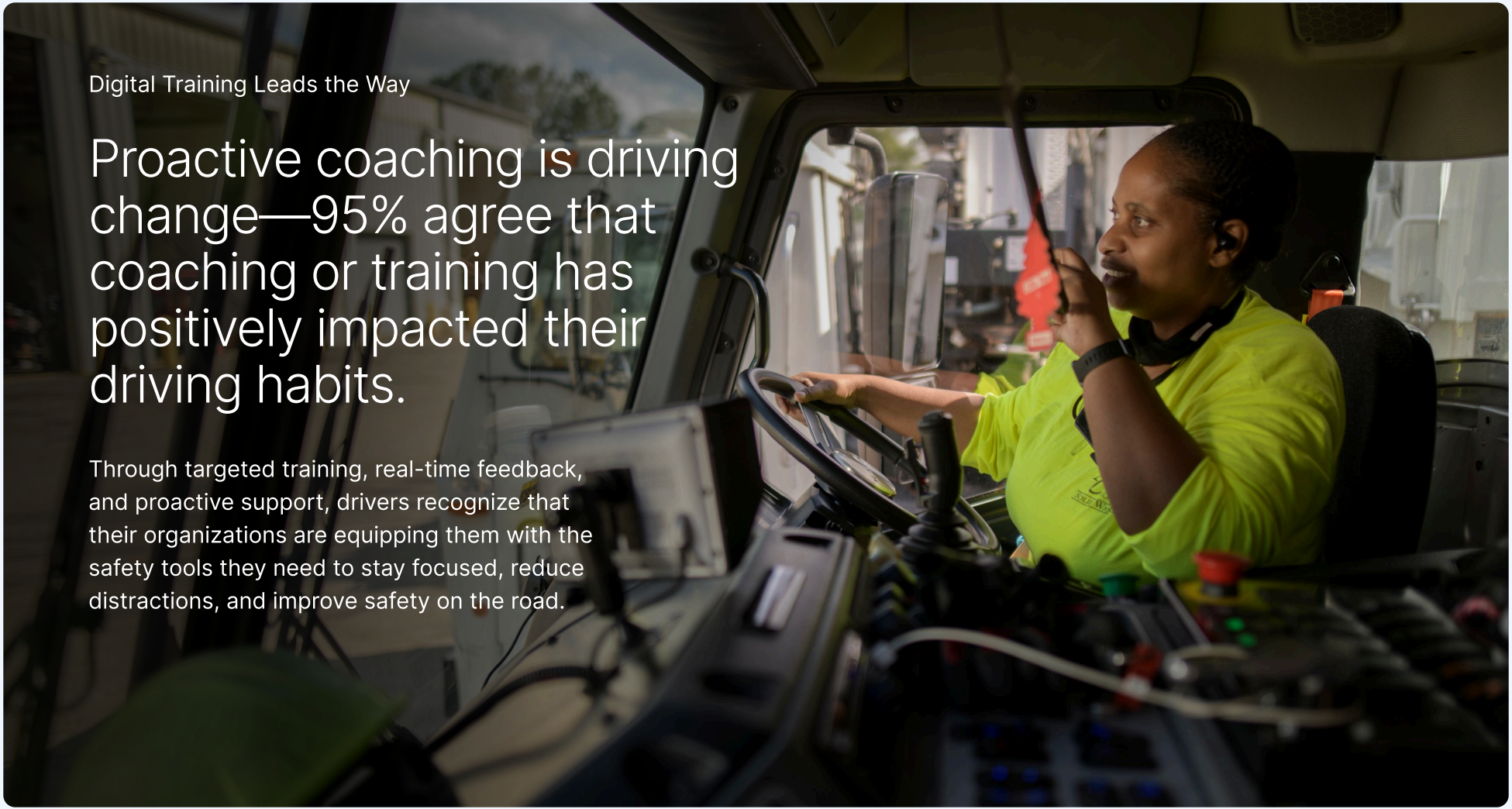
of drivers changed their driving habits after seeing their dash cam footage.

Only 7% have not changed their awareness or habits. This highlights the positive impact of dash cam technology as a valuable safety tool for increasing awareness, encouraging safer habits, and fostering a stronger safety culture, both organizationally and on the road.

Dash cam footage can be compelling—but which types are most effective at influencing driver behavior? Drivers were almost evenly split between the type of dash camera footage they find most impactful for reducing distracted driving on the road.

This underscores the need for a varied coaching strategy that incorporates different types of training, ensuring it remains engaging, relevant, and effective in reinforcing safe driving behaviors.





Digital Training Leads the Way

Proactive coaching is driving change—95% agree that coaching or training has positively impacted their driving habits.

Through targeted training, real-time feedback, and proactive support, drivers recognize that their organizations are equipping them with the safety tools they need to stay focused, reduce distractions, and improve safety on the road.

85% of public sector drivers are currently being coached and/or trained on distracted driving.

This highlights an intentional and proactive commitment within the public sector to address and mitigate the risks associated with distracted driving—prioritizing the safety of their drivers and the communities they serve across the nation.

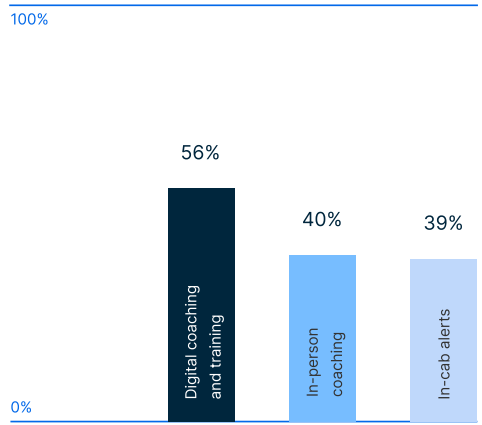
Among drivers receiving coaching or training on distracted driving, 95% agree that coaching or training has positively impacted their driving habits.

This shows that drivers are not only receptive to coaching but, with the right support, are translating this into tangible safety improvements on the road.

Tech-forward training has become the top method for reinforcing safe driving behaviors.

Digital coaching and training is the top method of coaching. (56%)

This is closely followed by in-person coaching (40%) and in-cab alerts (39%), which are nearly tied as coaching methods for combating distracted driving.



AI-Powered Solutions in Demand

Drivers understand the power of AI to enhance safety—59% believe it will reduce their distracted driving.

As AI continues to evolve, drivers are experiencing its benefits firsthand—allowing them to stay more engaged, respond faster to risks, and feel more confident on the road.

A significant majority (59%) of public sector drivers express confidence in AI-powered technology to mitigate distracted driving. This is reinforced by the finding that 50% of these drivers identify accurate, AI-powered detection and alerts as a top desired technology.

Drivers are asking for AI-powered solutions because they know they can keep them focused, enhance their reaction times, and improve safety.

The growing demand for AI-powered solutions—such as AI dash cams, AI-powered detections and in-cab alerts—signals a clear opportunity for leaders to invest in technology that enhances driver safety while empowering them to perform at their best.

The data shows that as AI-powered technology becomes more precise, drivers are not only more willing to adopt it—they are actively seeking it. For example, Samsara's advanced AI system is continuously learning from real-world driving data, using trillions of data points to refine their models, better detect risk and provide timely, accurate alerts. This ability to deliver real-time, proactive insights is shifting perceptions of AI-powered technology to a driver-preferred safety solution, reinforcing trust and adoption across the workforce.

> *Once drivers saw how Samsara AI Dash Cams could lead to exonerations, there was zero pushback. It was no longer 'your word against mine'—we could get immediate access to video that would prove they weren't at fault for an incident."*

Dave Persad
Director of Fleet Management and Mobility, City of Boynton Beach

Drivers also highlighted the following key areas where technology could enhance safety and reduce distractions:

52% Improved hands-free communication systems

47% Automatic blocking of non-essential notifications

46% Improved voice-activated systems

46% A dedicated dash cam record button that captures additional context during an incident

Policies That Align With Driver Priorities

Drivers support distracted driving policies, but they can be even stronger.

83% of drivers believe their organization's current policies are effective, giving organizations a solid foundation of driver buy-in to use as a springboard for even stronger engagement and safety outcomes.

Drivers overwhelmingly prefer recognition and incentives over penalties when it comes to reducing distracted driving.

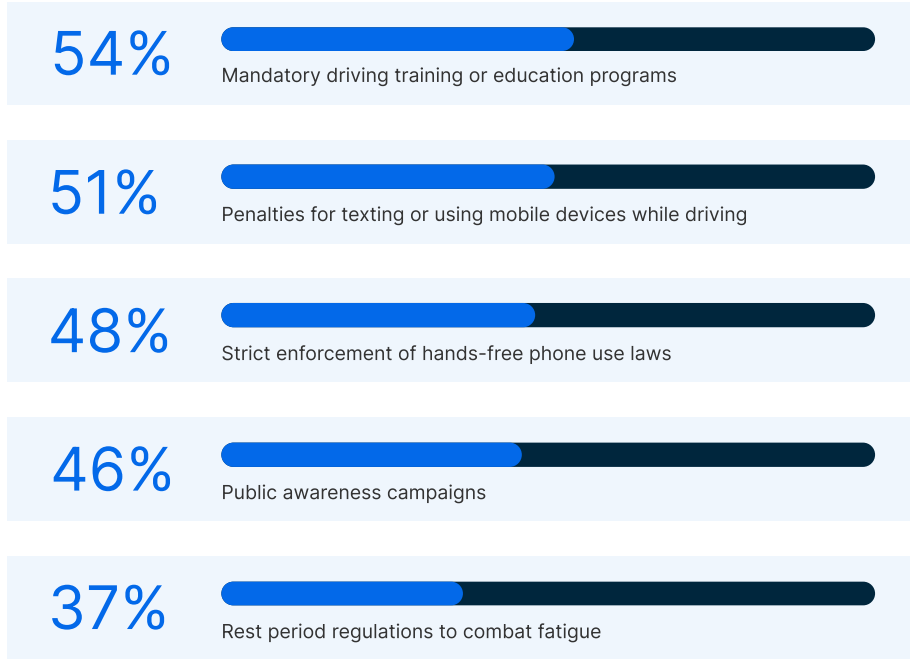
67% of drivers believe that positive reinforcement, such as recognition and incentives from their employer, are more effective in discouraging distracted driving. This presents a key opportunity for organizations to foster a supportive work environment, where recognition and incentives improve safety, strengthen driver satisfaction, and enhance long-term retention.

> *Typically, anytime you put new technology out there, people are concerned. But once employees realize this is being done for safety, they're a lot more receptive. In a recent incident, the footage proved our employee wasn't at fault—an incident that could have cost thousands. That's good for safety, our employees, and our citizens."*

Brian Blum
Assistant Director, City of Houston Public Works

To encourage safer behavior, drivers also see training, enforcement, and public awareness as essential to reducing distractions.

When asked which policies they find most effective, drivers pointed to these top five:



Looking to the Future

The road ahead: How drivers see the role of policies and regulations in distracted driving prevention.

Drivers agree that a combination of technology, policies, and enforcement will play a critical role in improving safety.

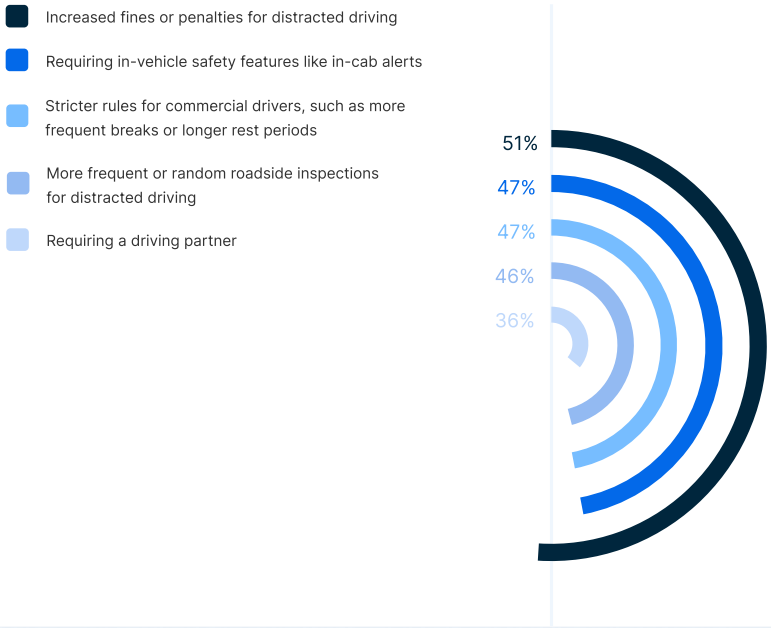
> *We looked at a half a dozen companies and Samsara was the only provider that met all of our requirements. I had high expectations and Samsara delivered on them."*

Bill Zollo
Manager, Department of Transportation & Infrastructure Fleet Management Division, City and County of Denver

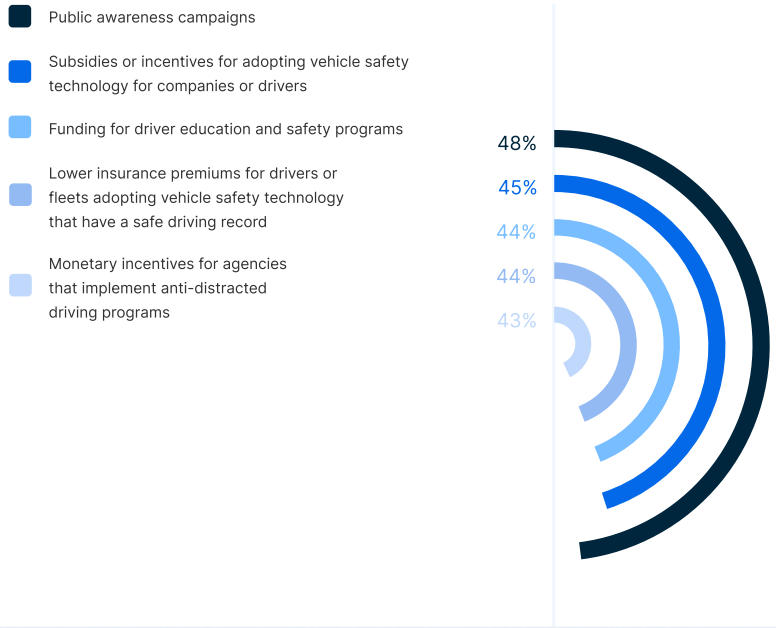
Policies that Align with Driver Priorities: Key Findings

Drivers have identified specific policies and government actions that can significantly enhance road safety and reduce distracted driving.

Drivers point to a range of potential changes—including enforcement actions, technology, and regulations—that would have the biggest impact on safety:



Government policies can be a powerful catalyst. Drivers see several key areas where government action can help reduce distracted driving:



Turn Insights Into Action

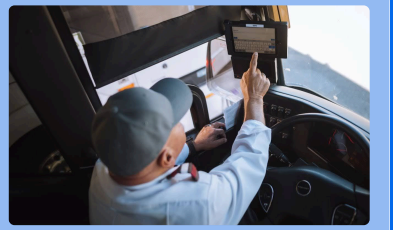
Enhance public safety with a driver-first safety program powered by Samsara AI Dash Cams

A successful safety program is about more than technology—it's about reinforcing driver trust and buy-in. Samsara AI Dash Cams provide real-time insights that help drivers stay safe while also recognizing and rewarding great driving.

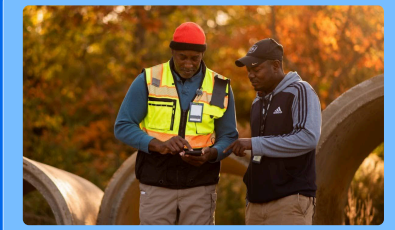
With over 1.5 million CDL drivers having driven with Samsara and trillions of data points refining its AI models, Samsara AI Dash Cams are continuously evolving—delivering smarter, more accurate insights that help drivers and managers stay ahead of risks. Designed with drivers in mind, they provide real-time awareness and proactive alerts to create safer roads and more confident driving.

Samsara's Four Pillars of Safety—Anticipate Risk, Coach Drivers, Recognize Drivers, and Protect Drivers—helps organizations implement AI-powered technology in a way that builds driver trust and reinforces buy-in. Coaching is personalized, focusing on improvement rather than just correction. Instead of only flagging mistakes, Samsara's sophisticated AI-powered safety programs highlight safe driving behaviors—reinforcing positive habits and fostering a culture where safety and recognition go hand in hand.

With the right approach, companies can create a safety program that drivers see as a tool for support, not just oversight. As one Samsara customer says best, "It's about looking after our drivers, not over them."



Anticipate Risk



Coach Drivers

Recognize Drivers

Protect Drivers

Learn how to successfully implement a driver-first safety program with AI-powered technology—watch our on-demand webinar today.

Scan the QR code or visit d.samsara.com/rollout-guide

About Samsara

Samsara (NYSE: IOT) is the pioneer of the Connected Operations® Platform, which enables organizations that depend on physical operations to harness Internet of Things (IoT) data to develop actionable insights and improve their operations. With tens of thousands of customers across North America and Europe, Samsara is a proud technology partner to the people who keep our global economy running, including the world's leading organizations across construction, transportation and warehousing, field services, manufacturing, retail, logistics, and the public sector. The company's mission is to increase the safety, efficiency, and sustainability of the operations that power the global economy.

With Samsara's help, our customers saw huge impact in FY25

250K+
accidents prevented

300M+
workflows digitized

3B+
pounds of CO2 saved

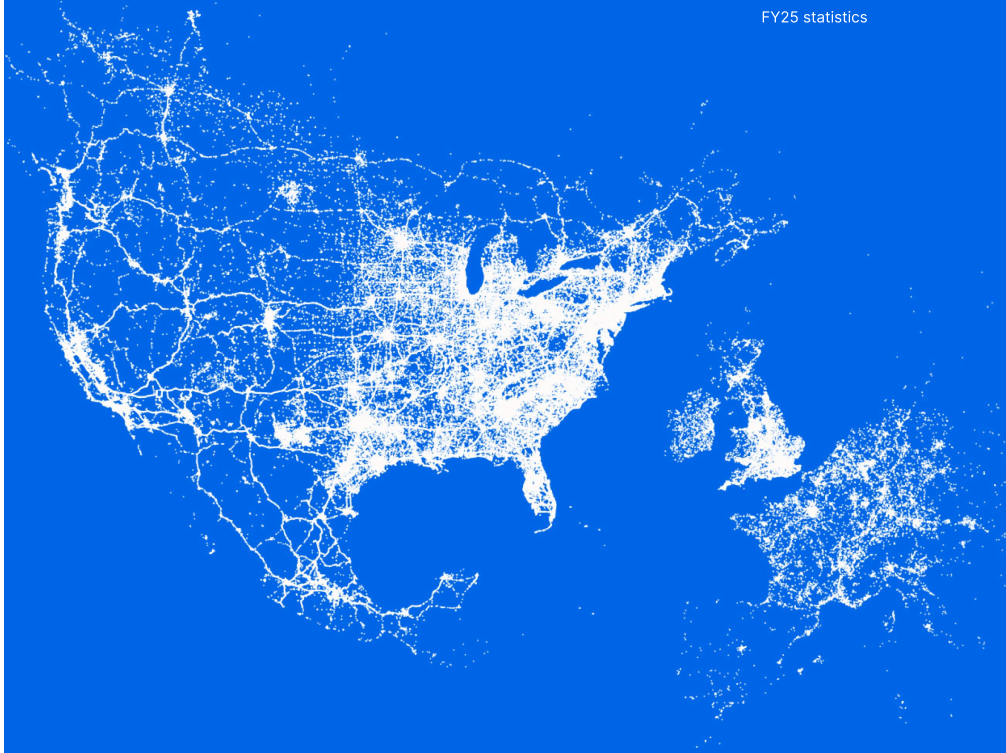
FY25 statistics based on internal estimates of customer improvements

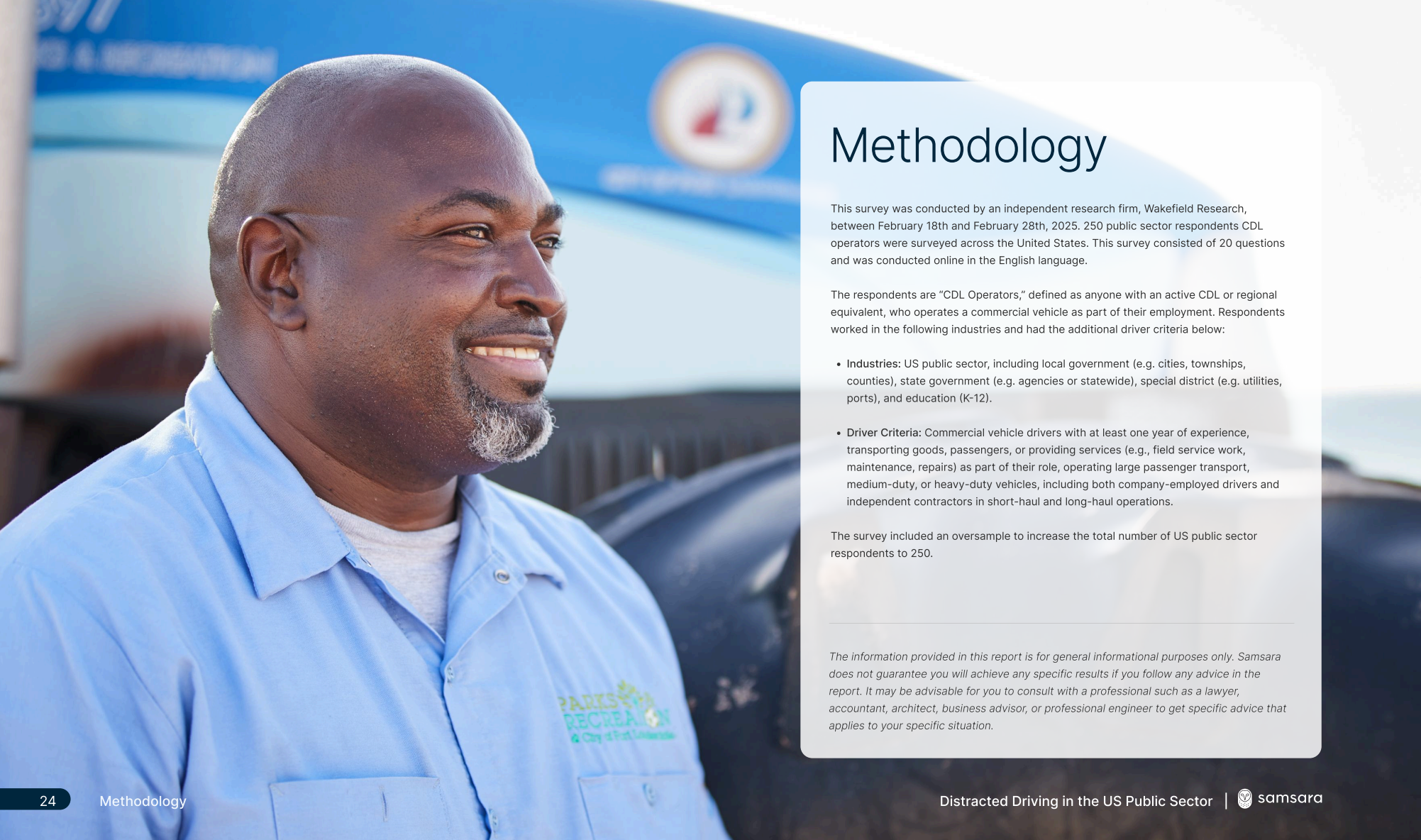
14T+
Data Points
50%+ Y/Y Growth

80B+
Miles Traveled
25%+ Y/Y Growth

120B+
API Calls
50%+ Y/Y Growth

FY25 statistics





Methodology

This survey was conducted by an independent research firm, Wakefield Research, between February 18th and February 28th, 2025. 250 public sector respondents CDL operators were surveyed across the United States. This survey consisted of 20 questions and was conducted online in the English language.

The respondents are "CDL Operators," defined as anyone with an active CDL or regional equivalent, who operates a commercial vehicle as part of their employment. Respondents worked in the following industries and had the additional driver criteria below:

- **Industries:** US public sector, including local government (e.g. cities, townships, counties), state government (e.g. agencies or statewide), special district (e.g. utilities, ports), and education (K-12).

- **Driver Criteria:** Commercial vehicle drivers with at least one year of experience, transporting goods, passengers, or providing services (e.g., field service work, maintenance, repairs) as part of their role, operating large passenger transport, medium-duty, or heavy-duty vehicles, including both company-employed drivers and independent contractors in short-haul and long-haul operations.

The survey included an oversample to increase the total number of US public sector respondents to 250.

samsara

Operate Smarter™