

Recapture Time, Reconsider Responsibilities

Self-driving cars offer teens the convenience they desire built into the technology they deserve

By the time you complete reading this article, it is likely that someone could be killed or injured due to distracted driving. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), “each day in the United States, approximately 9 people are killed and more than 1,000 injured in crashes that are reported to involve a distracted driver.”

Despite this daunting statistic, the fear tactic does not deter people from distracted driving. Teens, especially, are a major part of the problem. Fresh on the road, they feel that they are invincible. However, this is not the case. The CDC offered more statistics on teenagers and distracted driving, stating “drivers under the age of 20 have the highest proportion of distraction-related fatal crashes.” Along with this information, in 2017, research conducted by the CDC’s national [Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System \(YRBSS\)](#) found that at the time of the study, “42% of high school students who drove in the past 30 days reported sending a text or email while driving.”

Looking at car accidents in a more general sense, “Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death in the U.S., with over 100 people dying every day. More than 2.5 million drivers and passengers were treated in emergency departments as the result of being injured in motor vehicle traffic crashes in 2015. The economic impact is also notable: for crashes that occurred in 2017, the cost of medical care and productivity losses associated with occupant injuries and deaths from motor vehicle traffic crashes exceeded \$75 billion” (CDC, n.d.).

Without hesitation, these statistics are depressing, and can make even a simple, everyday task such as driving dangerous and even life-threatening. However, it is important to look forward to the future, and how these numbers can decrease significantly.

Believe it or not, with self-driving cars these risks could be completely eliminated.

Read that again. Completely. Eliminated.

Self-driving cars offer consumers the luxury of having a personal driver but instead, replace the chauffeur with technology. This is the world of automated vehicles that operate with no assistance from the passengers. Imagine that. No responsibilities while traveling in a car? No safety risks that could put you or a stranger in harm’s way? Reclaiming productivity during the time spent in the car? Yes. Please.

To prove the benefits of self-driving cars not only to all consumers, but specifically for teenagers we contacted students at Indiana University to partake in a test-ride of a fully automated vehicle. Students were given the vehicles for various periods of time, the longest was a month.

Senior, Vanessa Alvarez, spoke to the safety attributes during her experience, “To be honest, I was not expecting to feel any difference in this car than my own, especially now that I’m technically not the one behind the wheel. I was shocked, usually being in a car makes me anxious. Even though I wasn’t driving I was still paying attention but the car predicted every other driver’s move, way better than I ever could. I felt relieved. I wish I could feel that safe, less anxious, every time I got in a car. ”

Let’s be honest, teen priorities while driving aren’t always what we’d like them to be. Texting back friends, checking SnapChat, maybe even channeling James Cordon while driving and live streaming some Carpool Karaoke. Regardless of what the reason is, teens are more distracted than ever.

Sophomore, Justin Truly, spoke to his distractions and the detriments of such. “I hate to admit it, but I’m always checking my notifications while driving or queuing up some fire songs for my friends during our ride. It’s impossible not to. Our generation is so connected online.”

The solution to the dangers these distractions pose while driving lies in the safety features of self-driving cars. Self-driving cars operate on [LiDAR](#) (Light Detecting and Ranging) technology that measures that distance between objects as well as scans the entire road to monitor blind-spots, collisions, speed, and location. This means that while teens are scrolling through instagram and updating their location on SnapChat, the vehicle is safely maneuvering them through traffic through no effort of their own.

One brand in particular, [Aurora Innovation](#), located in Indianapolis, IN, offers the latest self-driving technology most appealing for teens due to its ability to eliminate any responsibility while on the road. “[Aurora Driver](#)” offers completely autonomous driving by connecting to a “Cloud” that analyzes and transcribes every vehicle and object on the road to efficiently and safely get its passenger to its destination.

When driving with “Aurora Driver”, the passenger has the ability to check Twitter, finish up school work, watch tv on their smartphone, or even take a nap. The worry of constantly having to keep one's eyes on the road vanishes.

Another student with the opportunity to test-drive a self-driving car spoke to the difference he saw in his productivity. First-year James Reynolds stated, “I’m quite the procrastinator. Sadly, that will never change. As a commuter, I was having to get up super early to make it to campus

with enough time to finish up my assignments last minute before class. The self-driving car allowed me to multitask on my way to campus, it was so awesome.”

For students like Reynolds, who lack enough hours in the day to students like Alvarez who are looking to eliminate the anxiety that comes with driving and increase safety - self-driving cars are the answer. The safety features combined with zero responsibility for the driver offers all individuals, especially teenagers a product that is no longer a desire, but a necessity.

Self-driving cars are the future. The opportunity to eliminate daunting statistics of death, the opportunity to increase productivity, and the opportunity to reclaim your time on your commute.

Think about it. It's ten years down the road, and everyone has access to self-driving cars. In the time it took you to read this article, you updated your Twitter status, finished the Calculus homework you'd been dreading, and pre-ordered your Starbucks before class all during your morning commute in self-driving vehicle. In that time frame, there were no distracted-driving related deaths. Imagine that?