

Driven to distraction



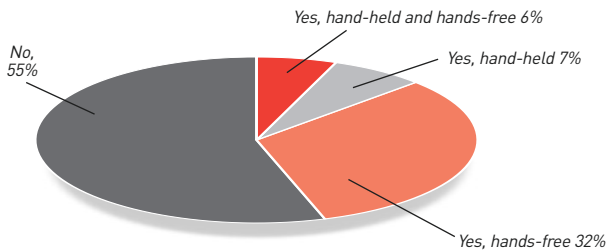
MOBILE PHONES

Q1: Within the past 12 months, have you driven while talking on a mobile phone, either hand-held or hands-free?

Almost half (45%) admit talking on a mobile at the wheel, significantly increasing their chances of a devastating crash. One in eight (13%) are flouting the law by talking on a hand-held phone. Talking on a hand-held mobile at the wheel has decreased significantly – 36% admitted it in 2006, three years after it was banned. However, in the same period there has been a worrying rise in hands-free phone use – which is just as dangerous – from 22% in 2006 to 38%.

- 6% said yes, on a hand-held and a hands-free
- 7% said yes, on a hand-held
- 32% said yes, on a hands-free
- 55% said no

Figure 1: Within the past 12 months, have you driven while talking on a mobile phone, either hand-held or hands-free?



In the past eight years

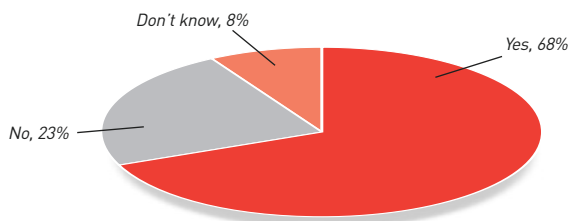
Compared to when Brake and Direct Line conducted a similar survey in 2006, far fewer drivers admit using a hand-held mobile phone now, but use of hands-free kits has risen. In 2006, 36% admitted talking on a hand-held phone, now down to 13%, while 22% said they used a hands-free kit for calls, now up to 38%. Encouragingly, there has been a rise in drivers who don't talk on the phone at all while driving, from 46% to 55%.

Q2: Do you agree with the statement: "It is dangerous to use any type of mobile phone while driving"?

A shocking three in 10 are still unaware or unconvinced that it is dangerous to use any type of mobile phone at the wheel.

- 68% said yes
- 23% said no
- 8% said they don't know

Figure 2: Do you agree with the statement: "It is dangerous to use any type of mobile phone while driving"?



Q3: Do you think hands-free mobile phones should be banned when driving?

More than a third (36%) say the ban on mobile phones at the wheel should be extended to hands-free as well as hand-held, again suggesting a misperception among many drivers that hands-free kits are a safe option.

- 36% said yes
- 60% said no, only hand-held should be banned, as at present
- 4% said no, mobile phones should not be banned at all

THE FACTS: MOBILE PHONES

- A study of in-vehicle video footage of driver behaviour from over two million miles of journeys found 22% of crashes could be caused, at least in part, by driver distraction. It also showed that drivers who perform a secondary task at the wheel are two to three times more likely to crash.¹
- Drivers who perform very complex tasks increase their risk even more, with those speaking on phones, whether hands-free or hand-held, four times more likely to be in a crash that causes injury.²
- Talking on a hands-free phone is just as dangerous as talking on a hand-held. Research shows the call itself is the main distraction, and hands-free calls cause almost the same level of risk.³
- Drivers using phones have slowed reaction times and difficulty controlling speed and lane position.⁴ Their crash risk remains higher than normal for up to 10 minutes after the call has ended.⁵
- The effect of talking on a phone on driving has been shown to be worse than drinking certain levels of alcohol. Driver reaction times have been found to be 30% slower while using a hands-free phone than driving with a blood alcohol level of 80mg alcohol per 100ml blood (the current UK limit) and nearly 50% slower than driving under normal conditions.⁶
- Research comparing drivers on phones and drivers with chatty passengers has found drivers on phones have much longer reaction times and worse speed control than those with chatty passengers, who performed nearly as safely as drivers with silent passengers.⁷
- Reading and writing messages and using smartphone apps is even more impairing than talking on a phone, as it takes the driver's mind, hands and eyes off the road. Texting drivers have 35% slower reaction times and poor lane control.⁸ In a large-scale study of commercial drivers, texting at the wheel was found to make them 23 times more likely to crash.⁹
- In the United States, death from distracted driving has been increasing and researchers put this down to increases in drivers using smart technology.¹⁰ In the UK, Ofcom has warned of increasing levels of smartphone addiction by users who are unable to go without checking their phone for short periods or through the night.¹¹

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Q4: Within the past 12 months, have you driven while sending or reading a text message?

A shocking three in 10 (30%) have driven while sending or reading a message on their phone, despite the huge danger this poses. Many of them – 11% of those surveyed – are engaging in this risky behaviour monthly or more. Among young drivers (age 18-24), this rises to more than four in 10 (44%), with one in five (19%) doing so monthly or more.

- 1% said yes, once a day or more
- 4% said yes, several times a week
- 3% said yes, once a week
- 3% said yes, once a month
- 19% said yes, only once or twice
- 70% said no

Among young drivers (age 18-24):

- 3% said yes, once a day or more
- 6% said yes, several times a week
- 4% said yes, once a week
- 6% said yes, once a month
- 26% said yes, only once or twice
- 56% said no

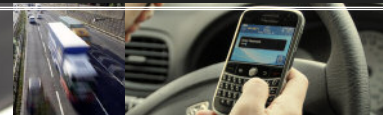
ADVICE FOR DRIVERS: REMOVE TEMPTATION

- Using a phone and driving is a deadly combination, and no call or message is ever worth a life. Drivers should put phones out of sight, earshot and reach when driving to avoid temptation, ideally by putting them in the boot. On long journeys, drivers should take regular breaks, which they can use to check messages or make calls.
- Do not kid yourself into believing that hands-free is a safe option; it is just as dangerous as using a hand-held because of the mental distraction of the call. Brake calls on government to ban hands-free phones at the wheel.
- Everyone can make a difference by refusing to speak to someone on the phone who's driving; politely but quickly end the call if they are at the wheel.

Q5: Within the past 12 months, have you driven while using the internet, social media or an app on your phone (excluding using it as a sat-nav)?

One in eight drivers (12%) have used the internet, social media, or other mobile phone apps at the wheel, half of those on a regular basis, indicating that new technology is posing a significant danger on our roads.

- 1% said yes, once a day or more
- 2% said yes, several times a week
- 2% said yes, once a week
- 1% said yes, once a month
- 5% said yes, only once or twice
- 88% said no



CATASTROPHIC INJURY

Imogen Cauthery, 26, from London, was nine years old she was hit by a driver talking on a mobile phone, who drove off without even stopping to check if she was alive.



Imogen was crossing the road with her mum, sister and a friend. Imogen was just ahead of the rest of the group, on the edge of the pavement, when the car veered towards them and hit her, sending her flying.

A local doctor, who saw the crash from his window, rushed to help and provided CPR, which saved Imogen's life. She was rushed to hospital and remained in a coma for 10 days. It took three months before she was able to return to school. She suffered long-term debilitating injuries including brain damage that affects her memory, and to this day continues to experience seizures.

Imogen said: "It's awful that so many drivers think it's okay to use their phone at the wheel, when someone could pay the price of their life for that call or text. Please don't take your licence for granted; make a commitment to stay focused and never use technology at the wheel."

End notes

1. *The impact of driver inattention on near-crash/crash risk: an analysis using the 100-car naturalistic driving study data*, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2006
2. *Role of mobile phones in motor vehicle crashes resulting in hospital attendance: a case-crossover study*, University of Western Australia, 2005
3. *Using a hands-free mobile whilst driving can be more dangerous than drink driving*, Transport Research Laboratory, 2009
4. *Ibid*
5. *Association between cellular-telephone calls and motor vehicle collisions*, Massachusetts Medical Society, 1997
6. *Using a hands-free mobile whilst driving can be more dangerous than drink driving*, Transport Research Laboratory, 2009
7. *New Zealand distractive effects of cell phone use: report 349*, New Zealand Transport Agency, 2008
8. *The effect of text messaging on driver behaviour: a simulator study*, Transport Research Laboratory, 2008
9. *Driver distraction in commercial motor vehicle operations*, The Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, presented at the International Conference on Driver Distraction and Inattention in Gothenburg, 2009
10. *Trends in fatalities from distracted driving in the United States, 1999 to 2008*, University of North Texas, 2010
11. *The Communications Market 2011*, Ofcom, 2011

