



Mobile Device Usage Observational Survey 2025

Safe Road Use

January 2026

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Report Overview

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary (1/2)

- Distracted driving due to handheld mobile device usage is one of the dangerous behaviours that leads to road traffic collisions. Recent data from the World Health Organisation indicates that drivers using a mobile phone are 4 times more likely to be involved in a collision.
- As part of the RSA Driver Attitudes and Behaviour Survey 2025, the following statistics on in-vehicle mobile phone behaviours by drivers were compiled:
 - 25% of motorists reported that they talked on a mobile phone hands-free often or always
 - 7% of motorists reported that they check phone notifications often or always
 - 6% of motorists reported that they read messages/emails often or always
 - 6% of motorists reported that they talked on a mobile phone hand-held often or always
- Given these relatively high percentages, and the fact that international research acknowledges that mobile phone usage contributes to road traffic collisions, it is important to track handheld mobile device usage rates.
- The RSA has been conducting observational surveys on the use of mobile phones since 2009. The definition for the survey was broadened from 2022 to take into account usage of a larger set of mobile devices, including tablets and personal navigation devices.



Executive Summary (2/2)

- The results from this survey showed that 8% of motorists were using a handheld mobile device, and this represents a deterioration in behaviour when compared to the 2024 survey, where 6% of motorists were seen using a device.
- The highest rate of handheld mobile device usage was seen by LGV drivers at 15%, with rates ranging from 6% - 8% amongst drivers of other vehicle types.
- Of the drivers observed using a handheld mobile device, 48% were using the device in their hand, and 52% were using the device to their ear. In 2024, 67% were using the device in their hand and 33% were using the device to their ear.
- The percentage of drivers seen using a handheld mobile device increased on motorways (+10%) and urban roads (+2%) in the 2025 study, with a slight improvement seen on rural 80km/h and 100km/h roads.
- In the 2025 study, male drivers were more likely to be observed using a handheld mobile device.
- The 2025 study saw increases in usage rates on most days of the week when compared with the results from the 2024 study.
- Handheld mobile device usage gradually improved over the course of the day in the 2025 study, consistent with the findings from 2024.



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Safety Performance Indicators

Safety Performance Indicators (SPIs) in the Government Road Safety Strategy, 2021-2030



- This observational study on mobile device usage has been conducted in the context of the SPI approach as part of the Government Road Safety Strategy.
- Use of performance indicators has been recommended in international guidance from global organisations, including ETSC and ITF/OECD.
- It is critical that SPIs have an evidence base and established relationship with safety performance (i.e., death and serious injury reduction).
- They reflect elements of the operational and safety context to better understand the road traffic system.
- In an Irish context, SPIs will be used to measure our performance in specific areas, known to contribute to death and serious injury reduction, to help us refine our policy interventions.
- An SPI has been developed as part of the Safe Road Use intervention area to determine the percentage of drivers not using a handheld mobile device.
- A Distraction SPI was also included in the EC Trendline Project, which Ireland participated in from 2022 to 2025.



Methodological Approach

Study Objectives

- The aim of this study was to gather observational data of handheld mobile device usage rates among drivers on the Irish public road network.
- The report will outline the methodology used for the 2025 mobile device usage survey and will present the key findings from the study.



Methodology

- A manual observational study of handheld mobile device usage by drivers was conducted at 145 sites in September and October 2025.
- The observational procedure involved trained observers standing at the roadside and observing the rate of handheld mobile device usage among drivers of passenger cars, goods vehicles, and buses/coaches as they passed the site.
- There are limitations to this type of procedure, given that observations are recorded at a point-in-time, and it can be challenging to make entirely accurate observations. This may explain differences in rates when compared to self-reported mobile device usage.
- Fieldwork was conducted by Nationwide Data Collection on behalf of the RSA.
- A nationally representative sample was used as part of this study, and observations took place in all 26 counties.
- The 2025 study included 22,582 observations in total, and followed the methodology specified by the EC Trendline Project.
- The approach adopted was broadly in line with the method used by the RSA in historic mobile phone usage surveys.
- All route types were included in the study, and observations were made during daylight hours on weekdays and at weekends.



Analysis of mobile device usage

Mobile device usage by vehicle type

- Overall, 8% of observed drivers in this study were using a handheld mobile device.
- Rates of handheld mobile device usage were highest amongst light goods vehicle (LGV) drivers (15%), which represents a significant increase in usage compared to 2024. A lower percentage of drivers of other vehicle types being recorded using mobile devices (6% - 8%).

Table 1 – Mobile device usage rates by vehicle type

Vehicle Type	% Using Mobile Device (2024)	% Not Using Mobile Device (2024)	Sample Size (2024)
Car	6% (6%)	94% (94%)	17,822 (22,385)
Light Goods Vehicles (LGVs)	15% (2%)	85% (98%)	3,336 (1,986)
Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs)	6% (4%)	94% (96%)	1,102 (882)
Public Service Vehicles (PSVs)	8% (3%)	92% (97%)	322 (707)



Type of mobile device usage

- A sub-analysis of the type of handheld mobile device usage by vehicle category in 2025 reveals that car drivers are most likely to be using a mobile device in their hand, with drivers of the other vehicle types included in this survey are most likely to be using a device to their ear.

Table 2 – Type of mobile device usage by vehicle category

Vehicle Type	% Using Mobile Device in hand (2024)	% Using Mobile Device to ear (2024)	Sample Size (2024)
Car	60% (68%)	40% (32%)	1,097 (1,348)
LGVs	26% (44%)	74% (56%)	511 (45*)
HGVs	29% (65%)	71% (35%)	68* (34*)
PSVs	11% (45%)	89% (55%)	27* (22*)

* The small sample sizes need to be considered when interpreting these rates.



Mobile device usage by road type

- Rates of handheld mobile device usage increased by the highest percentage on motorway roads (+10%) in the 2025 study.
- A 2% increase in usage was seen on urban roads, and a slight improvement can be noted on rural roads.

Table 3 – Mobile device usage rate by road type

Road Type	% Using Mobile Device (2024)	% Not Using Mobile Device (2024)	Sample Size (2024)
Urban (50km/h and 60km/h)	7% (5%)	93% (95%)	9,603 (10,508)
Rural (80km/h and 100km/h)	6% (7%)	94% (93%)	9,592 (12,834)
Motorway (120km/h)	12% (2%)	88% (98%)	3,387 (2,618)



Mobile device usage by gender

- 9% of male drivers were using a handheld mobile device in the 2025 study, up from 6% in the 2024 study.
- 5% of female drivers were seen using a handheld mobile device in the 2025 study, an improvement of 1% when compared with the results from 2024.

Table 4 – Mobile device usage rate by gender

Gender	% Using Mobile Device (2024)	% Not Using Mobile Device (2024)	Sample Size (2024)
Female	5% (6%)	95% (94%)	7,697 (8,590)
Male	9% (6%)	91% (94%)	14,885 (15,673)



Mobile device usage by gender and vehicle type

- A sub-analysis of handheld mobile device use by gender and vehicle type reveals a higher rate of usage amongst male car drivers when compared to female car drivers (7% vs 4%).
- Large increases in handheld mobile device usage by both male and female LGV drivers were seen in this year’s study when compared with the findings from 2024.

Table 5 – Mobile device usage rate by gender and vehicle type

Gender	Vehicle Type	% Using Mobile Device (2024)	% Not Using Mobile Device (2024)	Sample Size (2024)
Female	Car	4% (6%)	96% (94%)	7,584 (8,416)
	LGVs	12% (0%)	88% (100%)	91* (109)
Male	Car	7% (6%)	93% (94%)	10,238 (12,382)
	LGVs	15% (2%)	85% (98%)	3,245 (1,829)

** The small sample sizes need to be considered when interpreting these rates.*



Mobile device usage by gender and road type

■ A sub-analysis of handheld mobile device use by gender and road type reveals consistently higher usage by males on all road types in the 2025 study.

Table 6 – Mobile device usage rate by gender and road type

Gender	Road Type	% Using Mobile Device (2024)	% Not Using Mobile Device (2024)	Sample Size (2024)
Female	Urban (50km/h and 60km/h)	4% (5%)	96% (95%)	3,594 (3,738)
	Rural (80km/h and 100km/h)	4% (7%)	96% (93%)	3,036 (4,124)
	Motorway (120km/h)	6% (2%)	94% (98%)	1,067 (728)
Male	Urban (50km/h and 60km/h)	9% (5%)	91% (95%)	6,009 (6,424)
	Rural (80km/h and 100km/h)	7% (7%)	93% (93%)	6,556 (7,461)
	Motorway (120km/h)	14% (2%)	86% (98%)	2,320 (1,788)



Mobile device usage by day of week

- Weekday handheld mobile device usage was consistent, ranging from 7%-8%.
- Weekend surveys took place on Saturdays and Sundays and the rate of handheld mobile device usage was 7%.
- The 2025 study saw increases on most days of the week when compared with the results from the 2024 study.

Table 7 – Mobile device usage rate by day of week

Day of Week	% Using Mobile Device (2024)	% Not Using Mobile Device (2024)	Sample Size (2024)
Monday	7% (7%)	93% (93%)	3,567 (4,445)
Tuesday	8% (5%)	92% (95%)	5,527 (4,174)
Wednesday	7% (5%)	93% (95%)	4,154 (4,341)
Thursday	7% (6%)	93% (94%)	3,700 (4,331)
Friday	8% (6%)	92% (94%)	4,466 (3,736)
Weekend	7% (5%)	93% (95%)	1,168 (4,933)



Mobile device usage by time of day

- Handheld mobile device usage gradually improved over the course of the day, with the highest rate observed in the morning period and the lowest rates seen during the afternoon and evening sessions.
- The results of this sub-analysis are only presented for 2025, as the timing of the sessions is not directly comparable with the previous year’s study.

Table 8 – Mobile device usage rate by time of day

Time of Day	% Using Mobile Device	% Not Using Mobile Device	Sample Size
07:00 – 10:00	11%	89%	6,275
10:00 – 13:00	8%	92%	7,276
13:00 – 16:00	5%	95%	4,483
16:00 – 19:00	5%	95%	4,548



Summary of main findings

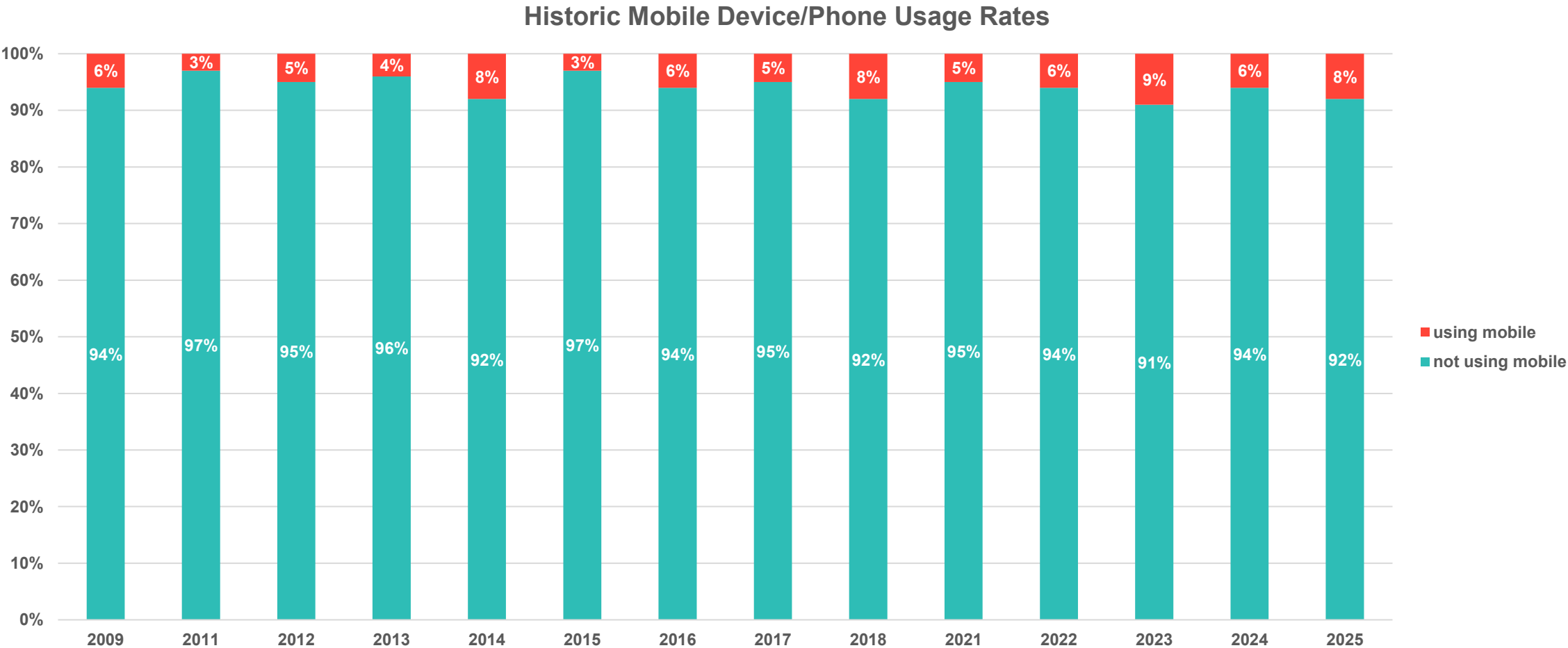
Key Results

- Overall, 8% of observed drivers in the 2025 study were using a handheld mobile device, an increase of 2% when compared to last year's study.
- Rates of handheld mobile device usage were highest amongst LGV drivers (15%) and lowest amongst car and HGV drivers (6%) in this year's study. The rate of usage amongst LGV drivers has fluctuated in recent times (e.g., 13% in 2023, 2% in 2024, and now 15% in 2025).
- Of the drivers seen using a handheld mobile device, a higher percentage were using the device to their ear, compared to holding the device in their hand in 2025. This finding is interesting because it is a deviation from the pattern of usage typically seen in past studies.
- The percentage of drivers using handheld mobile devices increased on motorways and urban roads in the 2025 study, with the biggest increase seen on motorways (+10%).
- A higher percentage of male drivers were observed using a handheld mobile device in the 2025 study.
- Weekday handheld mobile device usage ranged from 7% to 8%, while weekend usage was 7%.
- Handheld mobile device usage gradually improved over the course of the day in this year's study. E.g., usage was quite high in the morning period, at 11%, falling to 5% in the time periods from 1pm onwards.



Historic rates

Appendix 1 – Historic Mobile Device/Phone Usage Rates





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