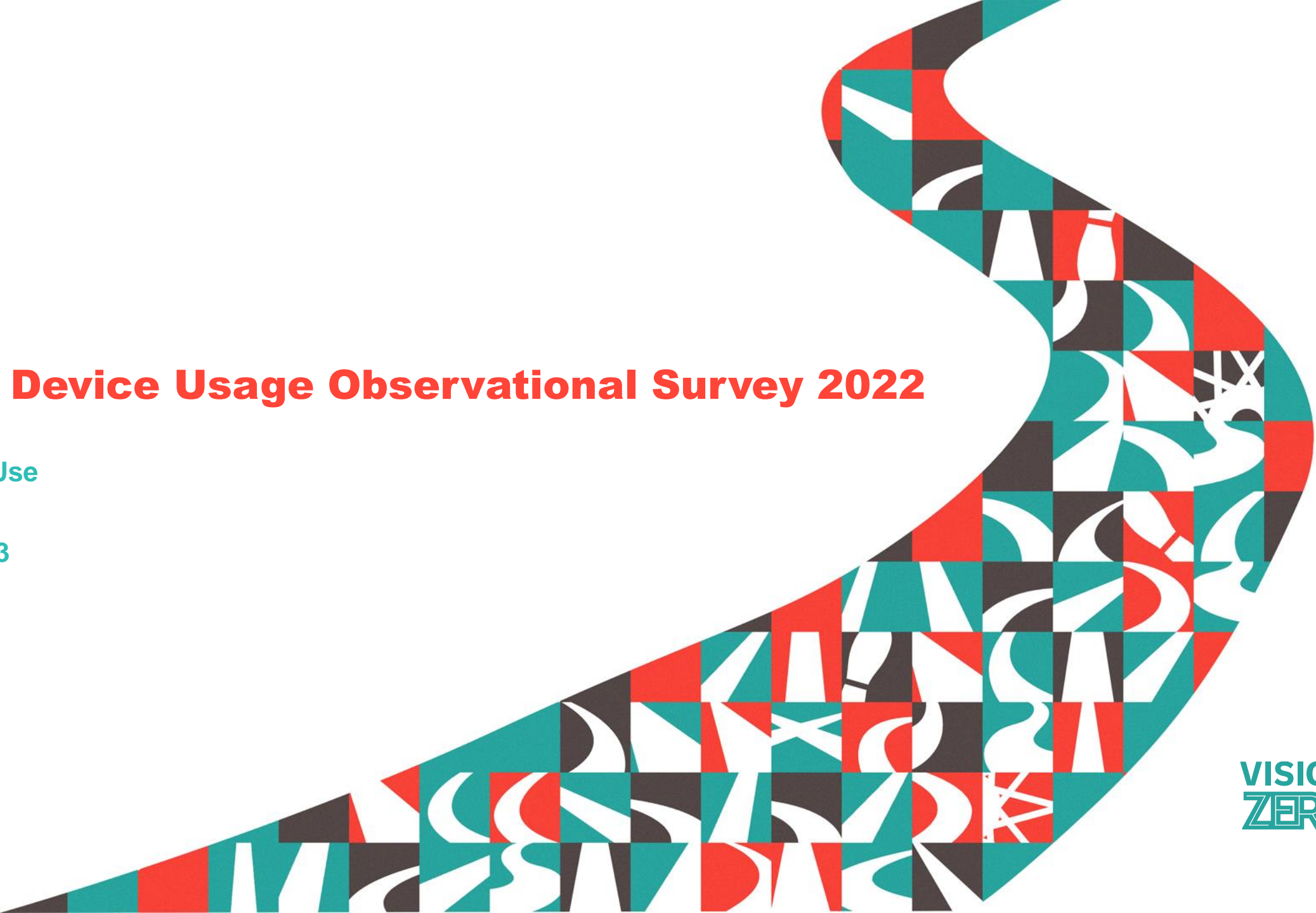




Mobile Device Usage Observational Survey 2022

Safe Road Use

August 2023



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Executive Summary

- 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 National Surveys on Speeding & Mobile Phones 2022, in the past 12 months while driving:
 - 29% of motorists reported that they talked on a mobile hands-free often or very often
 - 20% of motorists reported that they read messages/emails often or very often
 - 18% of motorists reported that they wrote messages/emails often or very often
 - 17% of motorists reported that they checked social media often or very often
- 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 2022 survey was broadened to take into account usage of a larger set of mobile devices, including tablets and personal navigation devices.

Executive Summary

- The results from this survey showed that 6% of motorists were using a mobile device, and this represents a slight increase in comparison to the 2021 survey, where 5% of motorists were seen using a mobile phone, and a slight improvement on the 2018 survey, where 8% of motorists were seen using a mobile phone.
- A higher percentage of drivers of light goods vehicles (LGVs), heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) and public service vehicles (PSVs) were observed using a handheld mobile device in the 2022 survey when compared with drivers of passenger cars.
- Of the drivers observed using a handheld mobile device, 53% were using the device in hand and 47% were using the device to their ear.
- A higher percentage of drivers were seen using a handheld mobile device on rural roads and motorways, compared to urban roads.
- No difference in handheld mobile device usage was noticeable between genders overall, but variation was evident when analysing gender by vehicle type and road type.
- There is a degree of variability in terms of handheld mobile device usage by county, with full, or near full, compliance in some counties and relatively lower compliance in others.
- Similar rates of handheld mobile device usage were witnessed during the weekdays and at weekends.

Report Overview

 Safety Performance Indicators

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 Summary of Key Results



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



- This observational study on handheld 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.



EU Baseline Project

- The methodology for the Irish free speed survey is in line with recommendations from the EC, as part of the Baseline Project. Further details about this project can be found at <https://www.baseline.vias.be/>.
- A Distraction SPI to determine the percentage of drivers not using a handheld mobile device was included as part of this project. A report outlining the results of this SPI across the Member States participating in the Baseline Project can be found here: [Baseline Project Report](#)
- Baseline is an EU consortium of Member States created to assist authorities in the collection and harmonised reporting of SPIs co-ordinated by VIAS Institute in Belgium.
- The RSA have been participating in Baseline on behalf of Ireland since July 2020.
- The following research/methodology components are key elements of the Project:
 - Detailed methodological guidelines provided to Member States to ensure consistency of approach
 - Data collection methodologies considered best practice, developed by research experts at EC level, and overseen by 3 experienced road safety research institutes
 - Consistency in methodology across Europe to ensure benchmarking is possible
 - Consistency year-on-year ensures comparability of performance can be measured
- Trendline is the follow up project funded by the EU and will continue the work of Baseline until 2025.

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.
- This report will outline the methodology used for the 2022 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 139 sites in June and July 2022.
- 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 (NDC) on behalf of the RSA.
- *A nationally representative sample was used as part of this study, and observations took place in 23 counties.
- The 2022 study included 14,145 observations in total, and followed the methodology specified by Baseline.
- 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.

** Due to constraints in the sampling approach adopted, it was not possible to conduct observations in counties Carlow, Cavan and Sligo as part of the 2022 study.*



Mobile device usage by vehicle type

- Overall, 6% of observed drivers in this study were using a handheld mobile device.
- Rates of handheld mobile device usage were lowest amongst car drivers (5%), with a higher percentage of drivers of other vehicle types being recorded using mobile devices (9% - 11%).

Table 1 – Mobile device usage rates by vehicle type

Vehicle Type	% Using Mobile Device	% Not Using Mobile Device	Sample Size
Car	5%	95%	11,107
LGVs	11%	89%	2,135
HGVs	9%	91%	667
PSVs	9%	91%	236



Type of mobile device usage

- A sub-analysis of the type of mobile device usage by vehicle type reveals an interesting finding, with car drivers much more likely to be using a mobile device in hand and drivers of goods vehicles and PSVs much more likely to be using a mobile device to ear, as can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2 – Type of mobile device usage by vehicle category

Vehicle Type	% Using Mobile Device in hand	% Using Mobile Device to ear	Sample Size
Car	62%	38%	564
LGVs	38%	62%	229
HGVs	34%	66%	58*
PSVs	23%	77%	22*

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



Mobile device usage by road type

- The percentage of all drivers using handheld mobile devices was lowest on urban roads (5%), rising to 7% on rural roads, and 12% on motorways.

Table 3 – Mobile device usage rate by road type

Road Type	% Using Mobile Device	% Not Using Mobile Device	Sample Size
Urban (50km/h and 60km/h)	5%	95%	6,610
Rural (80km/h and 100km/h)	7%	93%	6,082
Motorway (120km/h)	12%	88%	1,453



Mobile device usage by gender

■ No gender difference was observed in the study, with the same percentage of males and females witnessed using a handheld mobile device.

Table 4 – Mobile device usage rate by gender

Gender	% Using Mobile Device	% Not Using Mobile Device	Sample Size
Female	6%	94%	5,071
Male	6%	94%	9,074



Mobile device usage by gender and vehicle type

- A sub-analysis of mobile device use by gender and vehicle type reveals similar rates of usage by male and female car drivers, and more variability is noticeable when comparing drivers of other vehicle types by gender.

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

Gender	Vehicle Type	% Using Mobile Device	% Not Using Mobile Device	Sample Size
Female	Car	6%	94%	4,933
	LGVs	6%	94%	114
Male	Car	5%	95%	6,174
	LGVs	11%	89%	2,021



Mobile device usage by gender and road type

- A sub-analysis of mobile device use by gender and road type reveals similar rates of usage by male and female drivers on urban roads, and more variability is noticeable when comparing drivers on rural roads and motorways by gender, with males more likely to be using a mobile device on both of these road types.

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

Gender	Road Type	% Using Mobile Device	% Not Using Mobile Device	Sample Size
Female	Urban (50km/h and 60km/h)	5%	95%	2,589
	Rural (80km/h and 100km/h)	5%	95%	1,989
	Motorway (120km/h)	10%	90%	493
Male	Urban (50km/h and 60km/h)	4%	96%	4,021
	Rural (80km/h and 100km/h)	7%	93%	4,093
	Motorway (120km/h)	13%	87%	960



Mobile device usage by county

Statistical significance tests conducted at the 95% confidence level indicate statistically significant findings for several counties.

Table 7 – Mobile device usage rate by county

County	% Using Mobile Device	% Not Using Mobile Device	Sample Size	Statistically Significant?
Clare	5%	95%	282	No
Cork	4%	96%	1,112	Yes
Donegal	16%	84%	771	Yes
Dublin	5%	95%	3,673	Yes
Galway	9%	91%	1,634	Yes
Kerry	3%	97%	363	Yes
Kildare	15%	85%	281	Yes
Kilkenny	4%	96%	330	No
Laois	2%	98%	249	Yes
Leitrim	11%	89%	74	No
Limerick	7%	93%	793	No
Longford	5%	95%	323	No

Mobile device usage by county

Table 7 – Mobile device usage rate by county

County	% Using Mobile Device	% Not Using Mobile Device	Sample Size	Statistically Significant?
Louth	8%	92%	427	No
Mayo	5%	95%	366	No
Meath	5%	95%	260	No
Monaghan	7%	93%	294	No
Offaly	8%	92%	239	No
Roscommon	9%	91%	104	No
Tipperary	4%	96%	924	Yes
Waterford	0%	100%	510	Yes
Westmeath	4%	96%	550	No
Wexford	3%	97%	393	Yes
Wicklow	12%	88%	193	Yes

Mobile device usage by day of week

- Weekday handheld mobile device usage was highest on Tuesdays (8%) and lowest on Mondays (5%).
- Weekend handheld mobile device usage was higher on Saturdays (9%) and lower on Sundays (3%). The small sample size needs to be considered when interpreting the rate on Saturdays.

Table 8 – Mobile device usage rate by day of week

Day of Week	% Using Mobile Device	% Not Using Mobile Device	Sample Size
Monday	5%	95%	3,238
Tuesday	8%	92%	2,886
Wednesday	6%	94%	2,277
Thursday	6%	94%	2,207
Friday	7%	93%	2,703
Saturday	9%	91%	110
Sunday	3%	97%	724



Mobile device usage by time of day

- Handheld mobile device usage increased over the course of the day, with 5% of drivers observed using a device during the hours 6am – 9am and 11% seen using a device during the hours 6pm – 9pm.

Table 9 – Mobile device usage rate by time of day

Time of Day	% Using Mobile Device	% Not Using Mobile Device	Sample Size
6am – 9am	5%	95%	1,266
9am – 12pm	6%	94%	5,149
12pm – 3pm	6%	94%	5,342
3pm – 6pm	7%	93%	1,968
6pm – 9pm	11%	89%	420



Key Results

- Overall, 6% of observed drivers in this study were using a handheld mobile device.
- Rates of handheld mobile device usage were lowest amongst car drivers (5%) and highest amongst drivers of LGVs (11%) in the 2022 study.
- Of the drivers seen using a handheld mobile device, a slightly higher percentage were using the device in their hand, compared to holding at their ear. Car drivers were more likely to use the device in their hand when compared with drivers of other vehicles.
- The percentage of all drivers using mobile devices was lowest on urban roads (5%) and highest on motorways (12%).
- No overall gender difference was observed in the study, but a degree of variation was evident when analysing gender by vehicle type and road type.



Key Results

- The levels of handheld mobile device usage varies by county, with full compliance witnessed in Waterford and 16% of drivers seen using a device in Donegal.
- Weekday handheld mobile device usage was highest on Tuesdays (8%) and lowest on Mondays (5%).
- Weekend handheld mobile device usage was higher on Saturdays (9%) and lower on Sundays (3%).
- Handheld mobile device usage increased over the course of the day, with 5% of drivers observed using a device during the hours 6am – 9am and 11% seen using a device during the hours 6pm – 9pm.

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Appendix 1 – Historic Mobile Phone Usage Rates

Table 7 – Historic mobile phone usage rates

Year	% Using Mobile Device
2009	6%
2011	3%
2012	5%
2013	4%
2014	8%
2015	3%
2016	6%
2017	5%
2018	8%
2021	5%
2022*	6%

* The definition for the 2022 survey was broadened to take into account usage of a larger set of mobile devices, including tablets and personal navigation devices.

