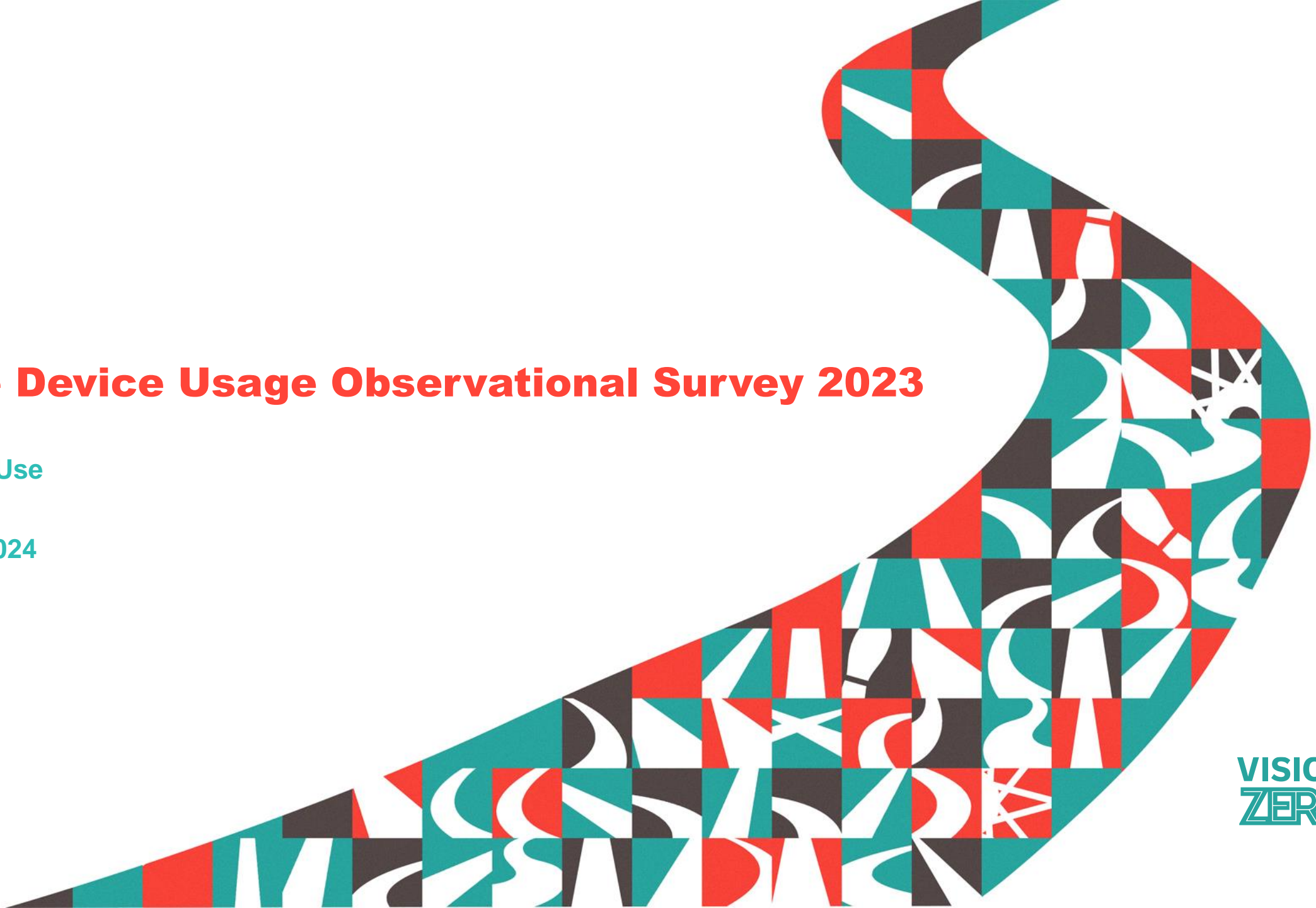




# Mobile Device Usage Observational Survey 2023

Safe Road Use

February 2024



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## Report Overview

-  Executive Summary
-  Safety Performance Indicators
-  Methodological Approach
-  Analysis of mobile device usage
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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 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 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 9% of motorists were using a mobile device, and this represents an increase in comparison to the 2022 survey, where 6% of motorists were seen using a mobile device.
- The highest rate of handheld mobile device usage was seen by drivers of light goods vehicles (LGVs) at 13%, with rates ranging from 6% - 8% amongst drivers of other vehicle types.
- Of the drivers observed using a handheld mobile device, 59% were using the device in hand and 41% were using the device to their ear.
- The percentage of drivers seen using a handheld mobile device was consistent across all road types in the 2023 study, at 9%.
- In the 2023 study, males were more likely to be observed using a handheld mobile device than females overall, and variation was also evident when analysing gender by vehicle type and road type.



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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.





## EC Projects

- Ireland participated in the EC Baseline Project from 2020 to 2022. A Baseline Project Report was published in early 2023: [Baseline Project Summary](#).
- Trendline is the follow-up to Baseline and will last until 2025. Further details about this project can be found at <https://trendlineproject.eu/>.
- The main aim of these projects is to ensure that a consistent approach to data collection and SPI reporting is adopted across the Member States.
- Ireland will collect and analyse data for the various SPIs over the course of 2023 and 2024, with the intention of delivering data to Trendline in late 2024/early 2025.
- A Trendline Project Report will be published by the end of 2025, and individual SPI reports will also be made available.
- A Distraction SPI was included as part of Baseline and has also been included as part of Trendline.

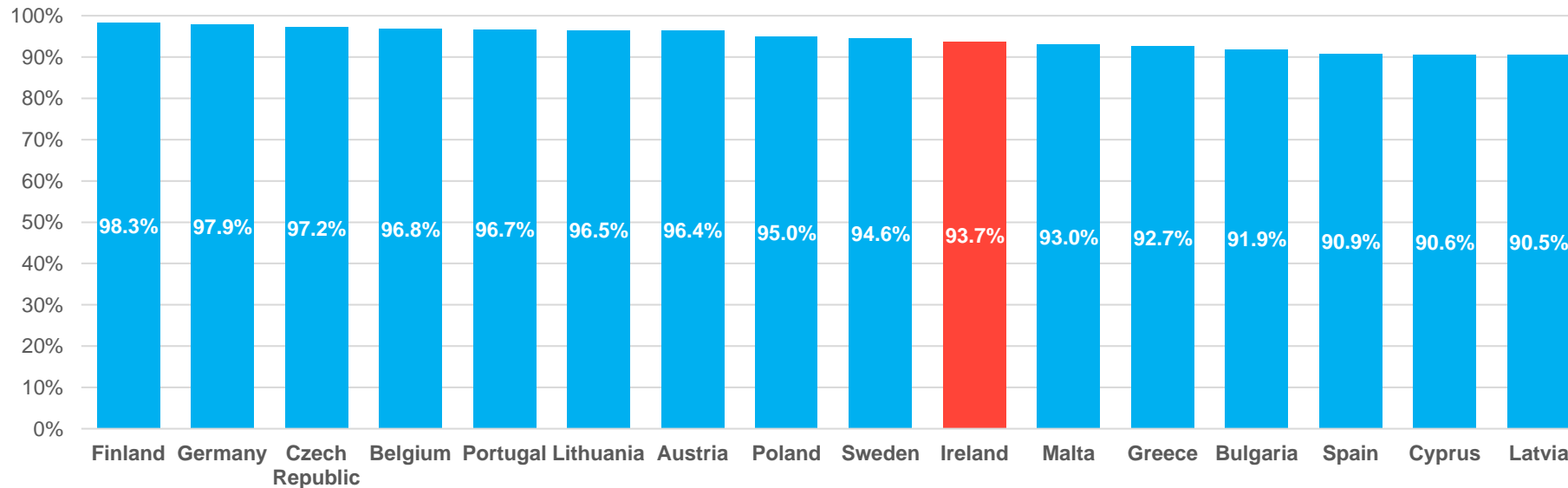




# International Comparison

- The following graph is based on information taken from the Baseline [Distraction SPI Report](#).
- It shows the percentage of drivers not using a handheld mobile device across the **various vehicle types and road types on weekdays**.
- The result in this graph is based on data collected by the RSA in June and July 2022.

% of drivers not using a handheld mobile device



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# 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.
- This report will outline the methodology used for the 2023 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 2023.
- 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 all 26 counties.
- The 2023 study included 20,551 observations in total, and followed the methodology specified by Trendline.
- 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.



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# Analysis of mobile device usage

# Mobile device usage by vehicle type

- Overall, 9% of observed drivers in this study were using a handheld mobile device.
- Rates of handheld mobile device usage were highest amongst LGV drivers (13%), with 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 (2022)	% Not Using Mobile Device (2022)	Sample Size (2022)
Car	8% (5%)	92% (95%)	15,822 (11,107)
LGVs	13% (11%)	87% (89%)	3,141 (2,135)
HGVs	7% (9%)	93% (91%)	1,180 (667)
PSVs	6% (9%)	94% (91%)	408 (236)



## Type of mobile device usage

- A sub-analysis of the type of mobile device usage by vehicle type reveals a similar finding to the 2022 study, with car drivers much more likely to be using a mobile device in hand and drivers of goods vehicles and PSVs 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 (2022)	% Using Mobile Device to ear (2022)	Sample Size (2022)
Car	65% (62%)	35% (38%)	1,321 (564)
LGVs	46% (38%)	54% (62%)	419 (229)
HGVs	46% (34%)	54% (66%)	81* (58*)
PSVs	20% (23%)	80% (77%)	25* (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 consistent across all road types in the 2023 at 9%.
- Rates of handheld mobile device usage increased on urban and rural roads when compared to the 2022 study, while the rate dropped on motorways by a few percentage points.

**Table 3 – Mobile device usage rate by road type**

Road Type	% Using Mobile Device (2022)	% Not Using Mobile Device (2022)	Sample Size (2022)
Urban (50km/h and 60km/h)	9% (5%)	91% (95%)	8,960 (6,610)
Rural (80km/h and 100km/h)	9% (7%)	91% (93%)	7,848 (6,082)
Motorway (120km/h)	9% (12%)	91% (88%)	3,743 (1,453)



## Mobile device usage by gender

- 10% of male drivers were using a mobile device in the 2023 study, an increase of 4% from the 2022 study.
- 8% of female drivers were using a mobile device in the 2023 study, representing an increase of 2% from the 2022 study.

**Table 4 – Mobile device usage rate by gender**

Gender	% Using Mobile Device (2022)	% Not Using Mobile Device (2022)	Sample Size (2022)
Female	8% (6%)	92% (94%)	7,119 (5,071)
Male	10% (6%)	90% (94%)	13,432 (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 LGVs by gender.

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

Gender	Vehicle Type	% Using Mobile Device (2022)	% Not Using Mobile Device (2022)	Sample Size (2022)
Female	Car	8% (6%)	92% (94%)	6,942 (4,933)
	LGVs	7% (6%)	93% (94%)	123 (114)
Male	Car	9% (5%)	91% (95%)	8,880 (6,174)
	LGVs	14% (11%)	86% (89%)	3,018 (2,021)



## Mobile device usage by gender and road type

- A sub-analysis of mobile device use by gender and road type reveals the same rate 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 (2022)	% Not Using Mobile Device (2022)	Sample Size (2022)
Female	Urban (50km/h and 60km/h)	9% (5%)	91% (95%)	3,271 (2,589)
	Rural (80km/h and 100km/h)	8% (5%)	92% (95%)	2,504 (1,989)
	Motorway (120km/h)	6% (10%)	94% (90%)	1,344 (493)
Male	Urban (50km/h and 60km/h)	9% (4%)	91% (96%)	5,689 (4,021)
	Rural (80km/h and 100km/h)	9% (7%)	91% (93%)	5,344 (4,093)
	Motorway (120km/h)	11% (13%)	89% (87%)	2,399 (960)

## Mobile device usage by day of week

- Weekday handheld mobile device usage was highest on Mondays (10%) and lowest on Thursdays (8%).
- Weekend surveys took place on Saturdays and the rate of handheld mobile device usage was 10%.

**Table 7 – Mobile device usage rate by day of week**

Day of Week	% Using Mobile Device (2022)	% Not Using Mobile Device (2022)	Sample Size (2022)
Monday	10% (5%)	90% (95%)	2,910 (3,238)
Tuesday	9% (8%)	91% (99%)	3,092 (2,886)
Wednesday	9% (6%)	91% (99%)	3,659 (2,277)
Thursday	8% (6%)	92% (98%)	5,425 (2,207)
Friday	9% (7%)	91% (99%)	3,616 (2,703)
Weekend	10% (4%)	90% (96%)	1,849 (834)



## Mobile device usage by time of day

- Handheld mobile device usage was broadly consistent over the course of the day, peaking during the hours 6am – 9am (10%).

**Table 8 – Mobile device usage rate by time of day**

Time of Day	% Using Mobile Device (2022)	% Not Using Mobile Device (2022)	Sample Size (2022)
6am – 9am	10% (5%)	90% (95%)	3,949 (1,266)
9am – 12pm	9% (6%)	91% (94%)	5,969 (5,149)
12pm – 3pm	8% (6%)	92% (94%)	6,020 (5,342)
3pm – 6pm	9% (7%)	91% (93%)	4,613 (1,968)



## Summary of main findings



## Key Results

- Overall, 9% of observed drivers in the 2023 study were using a handheld mobile device, an increase of 3% when compared to last year's study.
- Rates of handheld mobile device usage were lowest amongst PSV drivers (6%) and highest amongst drivers of LGVs (13%) in this year's study. A higher rate of usage by LGV drivers was also evident in the 2022 study.
- Of the drivers seen using a handheld mobile device, a 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. These results are consistent with the findings from the 2022 study.
- The percentage of all drivers using mobile devices showed no difference by road type, with a usage rate of 9% being witnessed on urban roads, rural roads and motorways.
- Overall, a slightly higher percentage of males were observed using a handheld mobile device in the 2022 study, and a degree of variation was also evident when analysing gender by vehicle type and road type.
- Weekday handheld mobile device usage ranged from 8% to 10%, while weekend usage was 10%.
- Handheld mobile device usage was broadly consistent over the course of the day, ranging from 8% to 10%.



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## Historic rates

# 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%
2023*	9%

\* The definition for the 2022 and 2023 surveys was broadened to take into account usage of a larger set of mobile devices, including tablets and personal navigation devices.



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