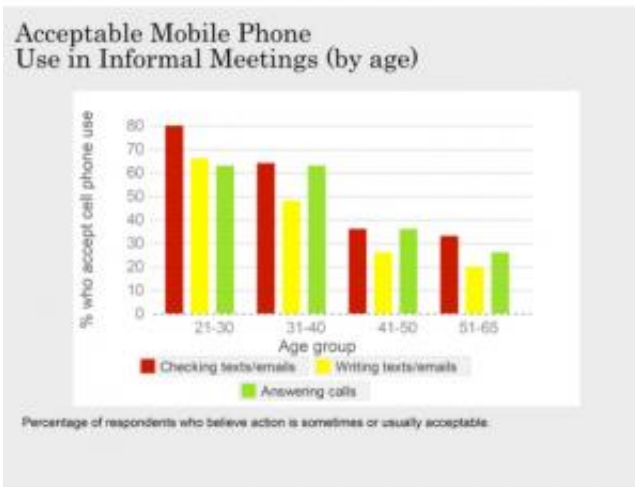
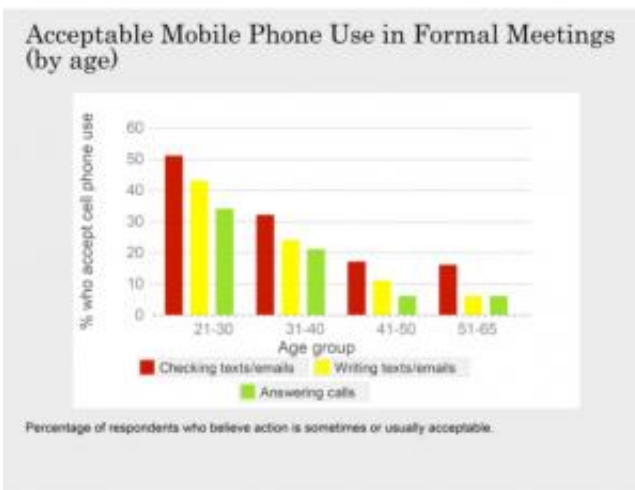
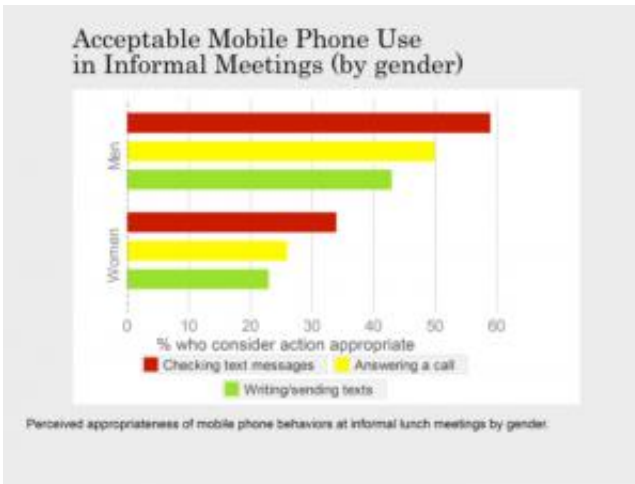


# **Reading this in a meeting? Women are twice as likely as men to be offended by smartphone use**

October 24 2013

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These are charts showing how perceptions of rude cellphone behavior break down by age and gender. Credit: USC Marshall School of Business

The world may be increasingly uncivil, and the workplace is no exception. With the rise of smartphones, you've probably even been a perpetrator of bad behavior yourself, checking text messages or taking a call during a meeting or business lunch.

But unlike rudeness among friends, discourteous behavior in the workplace can have real implications for careers, hiring and even workplace efficiency, with tension among coworkers harming productivity. A timely new study co-authored by Peter W. Cardon of the USC Marshall School of Business and colleagues at Howard University is the first to provide an empirical baseline for how attitudes towards [mobile phone](#) use actually break down across gender, age and region.

Published today in the journal *Business Communication Quarterly*, the research offers a critical baseline for how attitudes toward technology may change over time and serves as a guide to navigating social expectations around polite smartphone use.

"Hiring managers often cite courtesy as among the most important soft skills they notice. By focusing on civility, young people entering the workforce may be able to set themselves apart," said Cardon, associate professor of clinical management communication at the USC Marshall School of Business Center for Management Communication.

Among their findings:

- Three out of four people – 76 percent – said checking texts or emails was unacceptable behavior in business meetings.
- 87 percent of people said answering a call was rarely or never acceptable in business meetings.
- Even at more informal business lunches, the majority of people thought writing a text message is rude – 66 percent said writing or sending a [text message](#) is inappropriate.

- Men were nearly twice as likely as women to consider mobile phone use at a business lunch acceptable. More than 59 percent of men said it was okay to check text messages at a power lunch, compared to 34 percent of women who thought checking texts was appropriate.
- Similarly, 50 percent of men said it was acceptable to answer a call at a power lunch, compared to 26 percent of women.
- Despite the casual reputation, professionals from the West Coast were less accepting of mobile phone use in meetings than people from the East Coast.
- Higher-income professionals had less tolerance for smartphone use in business meetings.
- Dramatic age gap: Younger professionals were nearly three times as likely as older professionals to think tapping out a message over a business lunch is appropriate – 66 percent of people under 30 said texting or emailing was okay, compared to just 20 percent of those aged 51-65.
- At a working lunch with five other people? Chances are, just having your phone out is offending somebody: A full 20 percent of professionals said simply having your phone out at a business lunch is rude.
- Saying "Excuse me" to take a call didn't cut it: over 30 percent still found it to be rarely/never appropriate during informal/offsite lunch meetings.

With a national sample of more than 550 full-time working professionals, the study reveals what business professionals perceive as acceptable, courteous or rude use of mobile phones in the workplace. The researchers first identified the most common grievances people had about smartphone use among their colleagues, including browsing the Internet and checking text messages. They then asked working professionals earning at least \$30,000 a year to identify which of these behaviors they considered acceptable – and which ones are flat-out rude.

"Not surprisingly, millennials and younger professionals were more likely to be accepting of smartphone use, but they might be doing themselves a disservice," Cardon said. "In many situations, they rely on those older than them for their career advancement."

Provided by University of Southern California

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