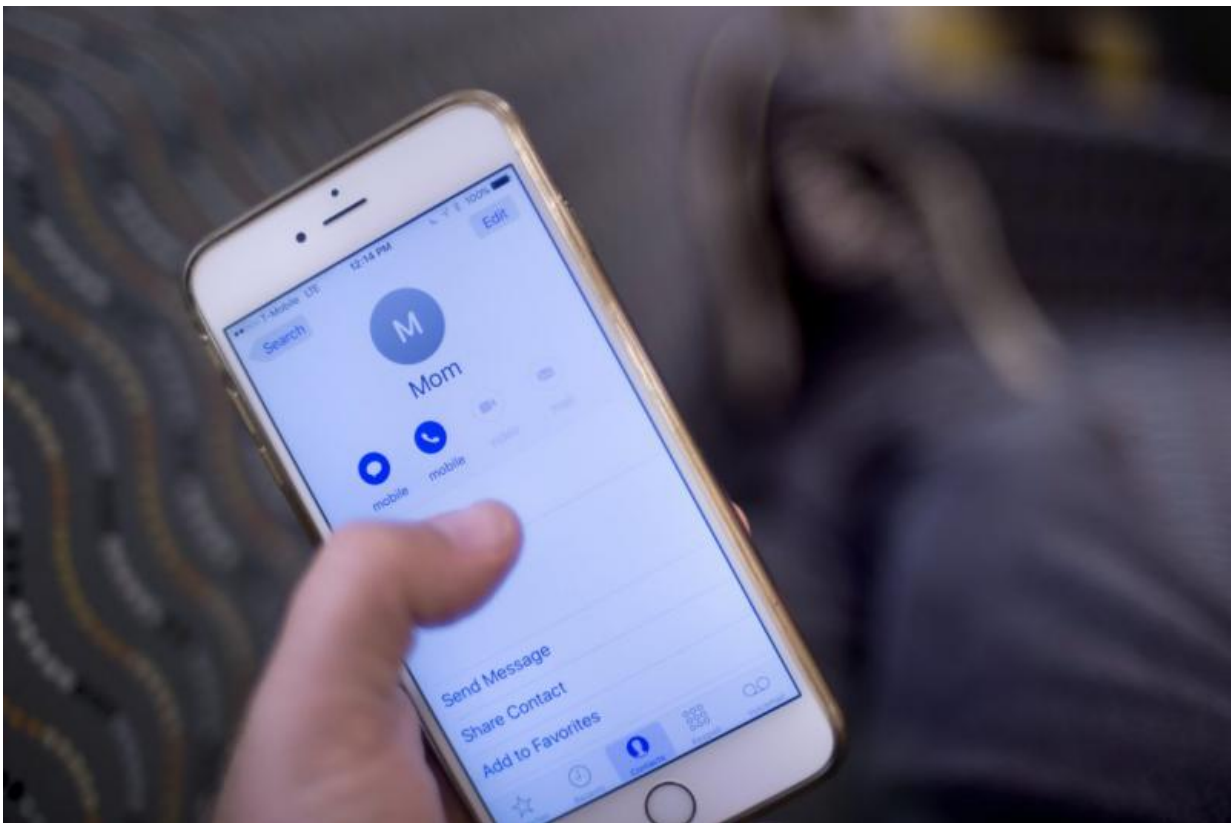


## Study links cellphone proliferation, more frequent calls to mom by adult children

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“The rapid development and diffusion of new communication technologies permit greater interaction among relatives, especially those separated by geographical distance,” says study co-author Judith Treas, Chancellor’s Professor of sociology at UCI. Credit: Steve Zylius / UCI

Making that Mother's Day phone call isn't as big a deal as it used to be.

According to a study from the University of California, Irvine, adult children are in touch with their moms more frequently than were earlier generations, thanks to the proliferation of cellphones.

"Previous research has shown a rise in maternal contact over the past two decades, and our work correlates that to the widespread adoption of mobile phones," said Chancellor's Professor of sociology Judith Treas, director of UCI's Center for Demographic & Social Analysis and co-author of the study. "In the U.S. and 23 other developed countries, we found that those with higher rates of mobile phone subscriptions also showed increased contact between [adult children](#) and their mothers. The rapid development and diffusion of new communication technologies permit greater interaction among relatives, especially those separated by geographical distance."

But these new technologies haven't revolutionized family communication so much as they've supplemented existing patterns. According to the study, daughters still call their mothers more than do sons, and the youngest [adults](#) reach out most often because they're more dependent on their parents.

Treas and co-author Zoya Gubernskaya, assistant professor of sociology at the State University of New York at Albany, analyzed data from the International Social Survey Program's Social Networks module on intergenerational contact from the start of the 21st century, when mobile phones were just becoming common. The ISSP collected information on the frequency of adult [children](#)'s non-face-to-face contact with mothers, which was measured on a scale of 1 to 6, with 1 being less than several times a year and 6 being daily. This was combined with country-level data on the prevalence of such phones.

The U.S., which averaged once-a-week calls to mom, ranked sixth among the 24 nations surveyed. Israel and Italy were the leaders, with

adult children reporting that they got in touch with their mothers several times a week, while in Japan, Brazil and Russia, such conversations occurred several times a month.

The study also found that adult children living in countries with more [mobile phone](#) subscriptions contacted their mothers more frequently. And the affordability and accessibility of cellphones virtually eliminated socioeconomic disadvantages in contact, as less educated children called their [mothers](#) as often as did the better educated ones.

"Although our results show more frequent [phone](#) communication between adult children and their parents, there was no increase in face-to-face interactions," Treas said. "Maybe the best present for Mom on her special day is an in-person visit."

**More information:** Zoya Gubernskaya et al. Call Home? Mobile Phones and Contacts With Mother in 24 Countries, *Journal of Marriage and Family* (2016). [DOI: 10.1111/jomf.12342](https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12342)

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