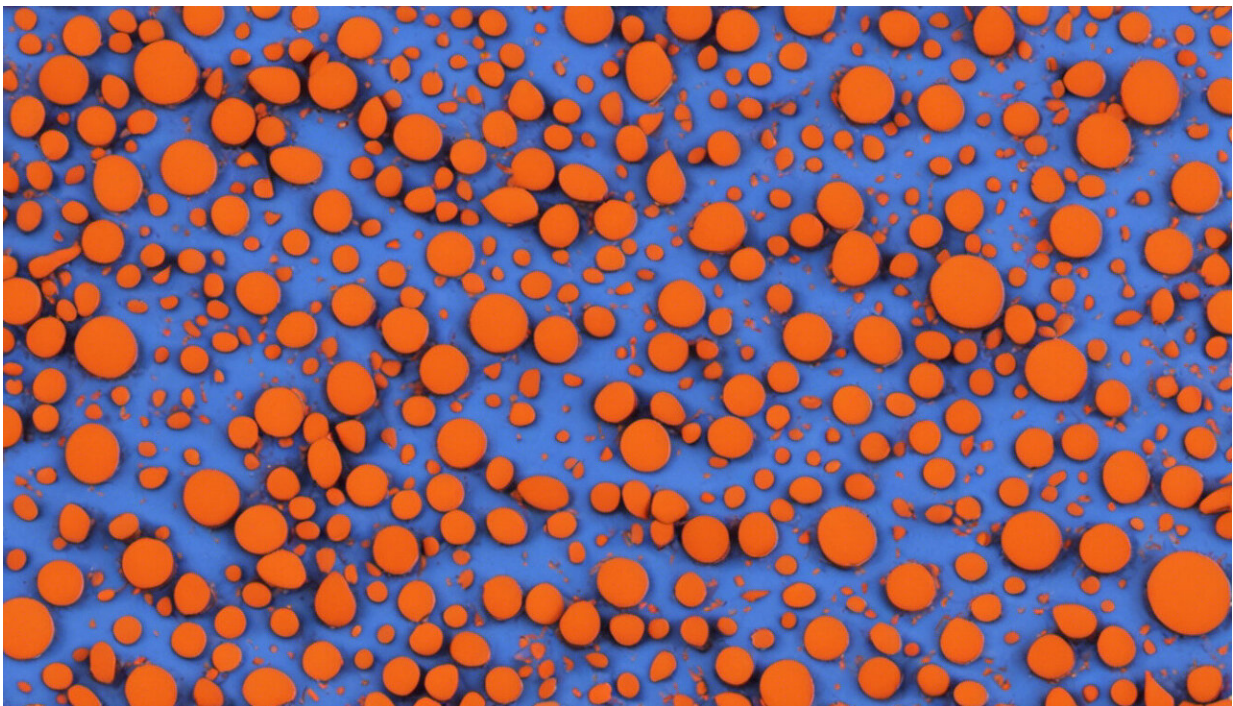


Young workers are most likely to use their phones while driving – here's how we can change that

December 13 2017, by Akshay Vij



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Distracted driving is a significant contributor to road accidents and fatalities. Mobile phone use while driving is a particularly important form of driver distraction. It can increase the risk of traffic accidents by [up to four times](#).

At any moment, roughly [1-2% of Australian drivers](#) are using their mobile phone while driving. In 2016 alone, police in New South Wales charged [39,000 people](#) for doing so.

[Our survey](#) of 413 South Australians revealed that young working people were those most likely to use their phones while driving. Our broader findings could help inform the design of public information campaigns run by road safety organisations to discourage dangerous driving [behaviour](#).

How prevalent is it?

One in three respondents in our survey reported never using their phones while driving; one in two reported rare or occasional use; and one in five reported frequent use.

The chart below shows the frequency of engagement in different mobile phone use behaviours. Receiving incoming phone calls while driving was the most commonly reported behaviour: 61% reported having received at least one call while driving in the past two weeks.

Using a mobile phone while driving is illegal across Australia. When inside the car, the driver is only allowed to use a phone if it can be operated completely hands-free or while placed in a cradle. It is illegal for the driver to hold a phone in their hand for any purpose other than to pass it to a passenger, even if the car is temporarily stopped at an intersection.

The laws are stricter still for L- and P-platers. Some states ban all mobile phone use while driving for these drivers: hands-free, cradled, or otherwise.

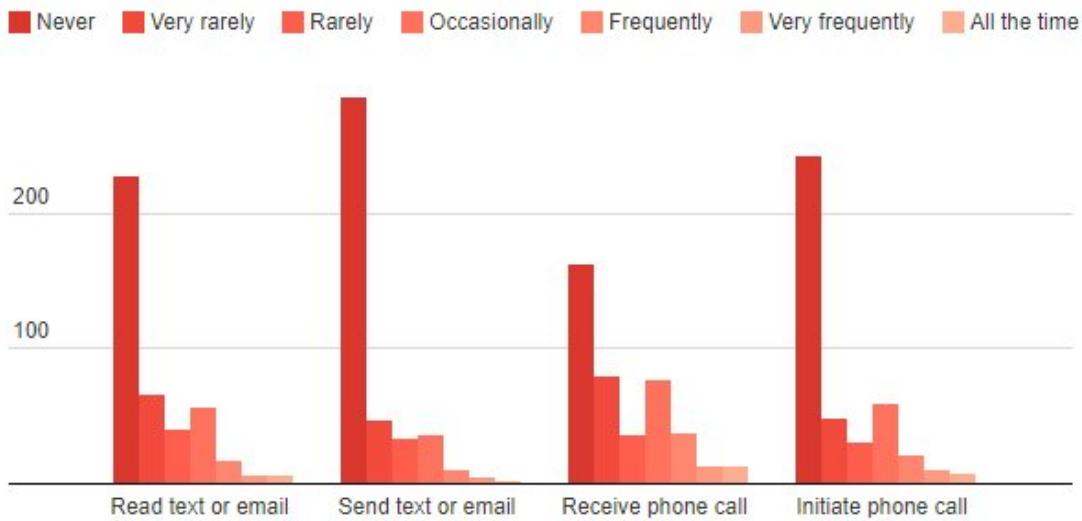
Of our sample, only 43% reported having a hands-free headset. An even

smaller 23% reported having a mobile phone cradle.

Who is most likely to use their phones?

Both popular media and academic studies have portrayed young adults as [being particularly prone](#) to mobile phone use while driving.

Frequency of engagement in behaviour involving a mobile phone while driving, survey of 413 drivers



Source: [Reducing mobile phone use while driving in South Australia](#)

However, our findings indicate that 18-29-year-olds are no more likely than average to use their mobile phones while driving. 30-39-year-olds report the greatest frequency of use, and those over 65 report the lowest frequency.

Employment was found to be a strong predictor of mobile phone use while driving. Stated use was highest among those who were employed full time.

Together, these findings indicate that young working people are most likely to use their phones while driving. Our study finds they are also most likely to feel socially pressured to use their phones while driving, and more likely to perceive benefits from doing it, through real-time communication and increased work productivity.

Road safety campaigns targeting mobile phone use among these people should emphasise how perceived social pressure is not an acceptable excuse for engaging in the behaviour. These campaigns should attempt to debunk some of the perceived benefits of the same.

More generally, those who are more likely to use their phones while driving have lower perceptions of risk with regard to the behaviour, and are therefore less likely to experience guilt or remorse over doing so.

Our findings are consistent with previous studies and support the use of campaigns focused on [risks related with](#) mobile [phone](#) use while driving.

Social disapproval doesn't always work

Our analysis reveals that those who feel strong social disapproval toward [mobile phone](#) use while driving are actually *more likely* to engage in it.

The use of normative messaging to foster safer and healthier behaviours has met with mixed results across different public health domains. In some cases, campaigns have [actually increased](#) the incidence of the undesirable behaviours they set out to change.

However, some public campaigns have [successful application](#) and have

been credited with changing societal norms around the likes of smoking, drinking and driving, and safe-sex practices.

When used thoughtfully and based on evidence, public information campaigns can be effective policy instruments to encourage safer and healthier behaviours, both on the road and off it.

Road safety campaigns frequently use the [perceived disapproval](#) of friends, family members and other peer groups as part of their strategy to foster changes in attitudes and behaviours. Our findings indicate that such strategies have the potential to backfire. They should be used carefully, if at all.

This article was originally published on [The Conversation](#). Read the [original article](#).

Provided by The Conversation

Citation: Young workers are most likely to use their phones while driving – here's how we can change that (2017, December 13) retrieved 11 August 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-12-young-workers.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--