The Mobile Life Report 2006

How mobile phones change the way we live

contents

The Mobile Life survey was conducted on behalf of The Carphone Warehouse by YouGov who questioned more than 16,500 British adults who use mobile phones. Fieldwork was conducted online between 30 May and 2 June 2006. Most of the questions were asked of the whole sample; but some questions were asked of around half the sample.
It should be noted that as this survey was conducted online, it does not cover the 40% of the population who do not have access to the Internet. However, the data has been weighted to the characteristics of the adult, mobile phone-owning population as a whole by age, gender, social class, region and newspaper readership and reflects their behaviour and attitudes on all non-Internet-related issues.

Mobile Life is the voice of authority and an on-going forum that publishes the most comprehensive proprietary research into the impact of the mobile phone on our daily lives.

Foreword:

Charles Dunstone
Chief Executive Officer
The Carphone Warehouse Group plc.

How has the mobile phone changed the way we live? Has it made our lives better or worse? Are we a happier, more fulfilled society, or, if you listen to the nay sayers, are we slipping into an ever more fragmented and isolating world?

These were some of the questions we wanted to answer when we undertook Mobile Life, the largest ever consumer survey into the impact of the mobile phone on our daily lives. Over 16,500 people were asked what they think about the mobile phone and how they use this ubiquitous piece of technology.

So why did The Carphone Warehouse decide to establish Mobile Life and undertake such a significant piece of social research? After all, we are an independent retailer, not a think tank.

The answer lies in our core business. One of our founding principles, which we believe is central to our continued success, is the ability to offer consumers a better mobile life by anticipating and catering for their needs at every turn.

To achieve this we need to make sure we understand our customers and the way they live their lives, which is changing and evolving faster than ever. Establishing Mobile Life just seemed to make sense to us. After all, who else is in the unique position of having such an independent and wide ranging view of the market in the UK and Europe? Nobody should forget that we are experts in the mobile phone market. Since we started trading in 1989, we have freed the market up for consumers and made it more accessible, understandable and cost-effective.

In this report we look at the impact of the mobile phone on three major areas of our lives – society, family & relationships and work.

It is hard to believe that the mobile phone is now 21 years old. This is a generation, a whole section of society. People born since 1985 have never known life without a mobile phone. We have called these people Generation Mobile. Through Mobile Life we have identified five other new tribes or groups of mobile phone users. We have called them Phonatics, Practical Parents, Fingers & Thumbs, Smart Connecteds and Silver Cynics.

Like any good idea, Mobile Life needed a good team to make it happen. It would not have been possible for us to undertake such a significant piece of social research without the advice and counsel of our strategic and academic partners, YouGov, Lord Philip Gould and The London School of Economics and Political Science, who all helped design the survey.

Along with our other contributors, Raising Kids and The Social Issues Research Centre, they have come up with some remarkable insights into how we live our lives today.

Across the generations most people say mobile phones have improved their quality of life. They have become the social glue that connects us. To paraphrase Kate Fox whose essay appears later in this report, in our fragmented society mobile phones have become the new garden fence, the new village green. I hope you find this as insightful as we do.

Key findings:

Key findings

The Mobile Life survey, conducted by YouGov, of more than 16,500 British adults who use mobile phones finds that:

Mobile phone habits	
Number of mobiles	14% of people have two or more mobile phones that they use regularly
Number of calls	On average people make 2.8 calls a day
Number of texts	On average people send 3.6 text messages a day
Phone replacement	70% of people replaced their mobile phone within the last 18 months
PAYG vs contract	Of people who own their own mobile phones (as opposed to having a company phone) 48% have PAYG and 52% have monthly contracts
Choosing a mobile phone	When choosing a mobile phone, the most important factor for people is function (31%), price (29%) and style (16%)

Society

Daily Life

- 92% of mobile phone owners cannot get through a typical day without using their phone

- 9% of 18-24 year olds – around 400,000 people – admit they are addicted to their phone, so they no longer feel in control of how they use it

- For people 18-24 years old, their mobile phone matters more to them than television

- Most people aged 18-40 say mobile phones have improved their quality of life. However, mobile phone-owners over 40 are evenly divided

- People aged 18-29 tend to use their phones more to send and receive texts than to hold conversations

- Two out of five people have lost the use of their mobile phone at least once. The main reason was that the phone was broken

Health

- Only 18% of people are strongly concerned about the health risks of living near a mobile phone mast and only 6% of people strongly agree that they are concerned that using a mobile phone too much could be harmful to their health

Etiquette

- Most people turn their mobile phone off, or to silent when in a cinema or theatre – but not in a restaurant, on holiday or at night

- Three out of four people say that it is unreasonable to talk on a mobile phone at the dinner table at home – but only 9% think it is unreasonable to use a mobile phone on a train

Driving

- 56% of mobile phone users say it is always unsafe for motorists to use a mobile phone while driving

- Yet 12% of all mobile phone users say they use a phone frequently while driving

- Most of this group use a hands-free system, but 19% of them "rarely" or "never" use a hands-free system – which means that up to 700,000 people routinely break the law on the use of phones while driving

Crime & Safety

- 9% of all mobile phone owners say that they have had their phone stolen

- Young women aged 18-24 are more likely to have had their mobile phone stolen, 17%, than young men, 10%

- Mobile phones have given most women a much greater feeling of safety when driving alone and when out and about – shopping, going to a bar or travelling to and from work

- Mobile phones are used to deter unwanted advances. 54% of young women sometimes use their mobile phone specifically, "to deter people from approaching me"

Recycling

- Britain has a vast "mobile phone mountain" of old mobile phones lying around at home. More than one person in three says they have held on to their old phone, rather than giving it away, trading it in, recycling it or throwing it away

Family

- Almost half of all mothers and one in three fathers, ask a son or daughter how to use certain functions on their own mobile phones

- Almost half, 48% of all parents of mobile phone-owning children are not worried that their child's health might suffer if they use a mobile phone for long periods

- 45% of grandmothers think mobile phones can help strenghen communication between grandchildren and grandparents

Relationships

- Mobile phones are revolutionising the love lives of young adults. More than half of mobile phone users aged 18-24 have either sent or received an invitation to a date by text

- Half of young adult phone users have sent or received a sexually explicit text

- More than double the number of mobile phone users think that when people send flirty texts to someone other than their partner, this is a form of cheating on their relationship, compared to those who do not regard it as cheating

- More than one in four men and women aged 18-24 admit that they regularly use their mobile phone to keep in touch with someone they don't want their partner or family to know about

- Only 14% of people would turn their phone off completely when having sex

Work

- Almost half, 46.5%, of people who work use their mobile phone as part of their job. 24% do so regularly

- Almost half of these workers say they never, or hardly ever, turn their phones off

- People who use a mobile phone for work have significantly more daily calls than the rest – 50% have six or more daily calls compared with only 5% of people who do not use a mobile phone for work

Mobile phone user? Yes? But which tribe are you?

Mobile Life set out to identify new tribes or groups of mobile phone users. Six distinct tribes have been identified and have been named Generation Mobile, Phonatics, Practical Parents, Smart Connecteds, Fingers & Thumbs and Silver Cynics.

Generation Mobile

Are

Single, students or first jobbers, aged 18-24 and are one of the most style-conscious of the tribes. They follow trends rather than set them. They regularly update their mobile and are always chasing the latest, must-have phone. They text, text, text and some say the art of conversation is dying amongst this tribe. They have embraced interactive technology and many will use their mobiles to vote in television programmes. In the era of Big Brother, they are the 'little sisters' of society and use their phones to snap celebrities or newsworthy events. They have never known life without the mobile phone.

Like

- Shopping at high street chains – Next and Top Man
- Reading celebrity magazines and lads mags
- Reading the Daily Star
- Watching MTV and Channel Five
- Watching films, playing games and listening to and downloading music
- MP3's, iPods, Nanos, Xbox and PS2

Dislike

- Internet shopping

Phonatics

Are

Single, employed, aged 18-34 and regard their mobile phone as their most important electronic possession. They are fanatics, some would say geek like, in their passion for new technology. They are heavy phone and text users and seldom turn their phones off. Many own two or more mobile phones. Having a phone that looks good is as important to them as clothes that look good. It is important for them to be connected, many feel unwanted if a day goes by when their mobile phone doesn't ring. They are also the naughty tribe – these are the people most likely to use their phones to send sexually explicit texts, photos and videos.

Like

- Shopping online
- Reading glossy men's & women's magazines
- Reading The Sunday Times
- Watching Sky One and E4
- Watching films, playing games and listening to and downloading music
- MP3's, iPods, Nanos, X Box, PS2, Internet and plasma screens

Dislike

- Being out of touch

Practical Parents

Are

Young, cost-conscious families aged 18-34 who choose their mobile on the basis of price, rather than style or function. They are used to budgeting and shop around to get the best deals. They have a landline at home and use it a lot although they use their mobile on-the-go to organise their family's life. Conversation is important to this tribe but they do also use text.

Like

- Shopping at Asda
- Reading real life magazines
- Reading The Mirror
- Watching Sky Box Office and ITV
- Watching and reading about soaps

Dislike

- Downloading music and videos

Smart Connecteds

Are

Affluent families and professionals aged 25-44 who use their mobile to organise their busy work and social lives. They like to shop around and enjoy negotiating a good deal, they like to know that their phone is a good investment. They use their mobile during their commute to work, especially while driving when they use a hands-free kit. They use their phones to talk and are less likely to text.

Like

- Shopping at Waitrose and online shopping
- Reading style magazines
- Reading The Guardian, The Times, Daily Mail and Evening Standard
- Watching BBC2, Sky News and Sky Sports
- HDTV, Sat Nav, Internet, Sky Plus, Tivo, MP3's

Dislike

- Being ripped off
- Pushy sales people – they know what they want!

Fingers & Thumbs

Are

Married, middle-aged or retired with children or grandchildren. They regard a mobile phone as a luxury and only make calls out of necessity. Many keep their phone switched off most of the time only turning it on when they want to make calls, but they like to take it with them when they are driving to feel more secure. They can feel overwhelmed, all fingers & thumbs, by new technology and often pretend to be disinterested. Once they grasp how technology works, they feel empowered and are willing to learn more and embrace it.

Like

- Supermarket shopping
- Reading Daily Express and Daily Mail
- Reading women's weeklies and Reader's Digest
- Watching UKTV Gold and ITV
- PCs, Internet and digital cameras

Dislike

- People using their phones to talk in restaurants or on trains

Silver Cynics

Are

Affluent, married with children and coming up to retirement. They use their phones for emergencies and are cynical about the benefits of new technology.

Like

- Shopping at Marks & Spencer Simply Food
- Reading The Daily Telegraph, Daily Express and Daily Mail
- Reading Good Housekeeping and Saga Magazine
- Watching BBC One, The History Channel and Animal Planet

Dislike

- Using the phone to make last minute arrangements

Society

The new garden fence

Kate Fox, Co Director
The Social Issues Research Centre

I was delighted to be invited to contribute to the Mobile Life report, as this is one of my favourite subjects. I have spent a lot of time, over the past five years, doing research on the role and social impact of mobile phones. Indeed, Jeremy Clarkson once jokingly introduced me, on a television programme, as a 'telephone anthropologist'. I have been called worse things!

At the risk of finding myself (again) in Private Eye's 'Neophiliacs' column, I have to say that the Mobile Life data confirms my view that mobile phones are the new garden fence, the new village green.

What I mean by this is that the space-age technology of mobile phones has allowed us to return to the more natural and humane communication patterns of pre-industrial society, when we lived in small, stable communities and enjoyed frequent conversation with a tightly integrated social network of family, neighbours and friends.

In the fast-paced modern world, we have become severely restricted in both the quantity and quality of communication with our social network. Most of us no longer enjoy the cosiness of a gossip over the garden fence, or chatting with friends and neighbours on the village green. Living in towns and cities, we may not even know our neighbours' names and communication is often limited to a slightly embarrassed nod, if that. Families and friends are scattered and even if our relatives or friends live nearby, we are often too busy, tired or stressed to visit. We are always on the move, spending much of our time commuting to and from work, either among crowds of strangers on trains and buses, or alone and isolated in our cars.

Landline telephones allowed us to communicate, but not in the sort of frequent, easy, spontaneous, casual manner that would have characterised the small communities in which most of us lived in pre-industrial times and for which we are adapted by evolution. Communication by landline telephone has always involved a certain amount of deliberate effort and planning: we could only talk at specific times and places. Personal calls on phones at work are frowned upon and often forbidden. We had to wait to get home, hope the other person was at home, overcome tiredness and make a conscious effort to call, often in the presence of noisy children or demanding partners. Mobile phones – and in particular the ability to send short, frequent, cheap text-messages – have restored our sense of connection and community, and provide a highly effective antidote to the pressures and alienation of modern life.

Think about a typical, brief 'village-green' conversation. "Hi, how're you doing?" "Fine, just off to the shops – oh, how's your Mum?" "Much better, thanks." "Oh, good, give her my love – see you later!" If you take most of the vowels out of this exchange and scramble the rest into text-dialect (HOW R U? C U L8R!), it looks exactly like a typical SMS exchange. Not much

"Mobile phones are the garden fence, the new village green"

is said – just a friendly greeting, a scrap of news – but a vital personal connection is made, we are reminded that we are not alone. Until the advent of mobile text-messaging, most of us had to live without this kind of small but psychologically and socially very valuable form of communication.

I am not at all surprised to find that the Mobile Life report emphasises the increasing importance of the mobile phone in our everyday lives, or that the majority of respondents feel that it has improved their quality of life. Mobiles have become a kind of 'social lifeline' in a fragmented and isolating world.

I was particularly interested to see the Mobile Life findings on women's use of the mobile phone for 'protection', as a means of feeling safer when out alone. In my observation field research on mobile phones five years ago, I started noticing that women on their own in cafes and bars and on trains seemed to be using their mobiles as 'barrier signals' in the same way that they used to hold up a newspaper or read a magazine to indicate to predatory males or other intruders that they were unavailable. I was intrigued by this and started interviewing women about it, and it seemed that they found the mobile even more effective as a sort of 'symbolic bodyguard'. One woman explained: "You just feel safer if it's there – just on the table, next to your hand…Actually it's better than a newspaper because it's real people – I mean, there are real people in there you could call or text if you wanted, you know? It's sort of reassuring."

That comment really struck me – particularly the bit about "There are real people in there". The idea of your social support network of friends and family being somehow 'inside' the mobile phone means that even just touching or holding the phone gives you a sense of being protected – and sends a signal to others that you are not alone and vulnerable. Although I was convinced that this use of the mobile was significant and increasing, I had no survey figures to back up my observation-data. The Mobile Life survey has now confirmed my findings, showing that a significant number of women (up to 55% among the under-25s) use their mobile phone in public situations to deter people from approaching them, and that carrying a mobile phone helps the vast majority of women (82%) to feel safer when out and about.

You may be surrounded by indifferent or potentially threatening strangers in a busy city street or on a train, or isolated and vulnerable in your car, or working in a competitive, uncaring office, but your mobile phone gives you a lifeline connection to your own social world, your village green, your garden fence. Carrying your social support network in your pocket, you'll never walk alone.

The Mobile Life data on 'mobile manners' are also of particular interest to me. Almost everyone now has a mobile phone, but because this is relatively new, unfamiliar technology, there are no established rules of etiquette governing when and where and how these phones should be used,

"We are still in the process of negotiating the rules of mobile phone etiquette"

what is acceptable, what is tolerated, what is encouraged, what is utterly beyond the pale and so on. We are having to make up and negotiate these rules as we go along, which for a social scientist is an absolutely fascinating process to watch, and very exciting, because one does not often get the chance to study the formation of a new set of unwritten social rules.

The Mobile Life data shows that we are still very much in the process of negotiating the rules of mobile phone etiquette. There is still very little consensus on, for example, the circumstances in which one should turn off one's phone (or switch it to silent) out of courtesy or consideration for others. There seems to be almost a 50/50 split on whether one should turn off (or 'silence') one's phone in cinemas, theatres, restaurants or meetings, a similar split on whether it is acceptable to talk on one's mobile in restaurants, or to spend one's holidays talking on the mobile to work colleagues. Some clear rules are starting to emerge, however: it is almost universally agreed that texting while in conversation with someone is unacceptable, as is talking on one's mobile at the home dinner table, and talking or texting while at a formal occasion such as a wedding or funeral. I hope that Mobile Life will repeat these questions in future surveys, so that we can monitor the progress of these negotiations.

Meanwhile, the Mobile Life report helps us to understand why mobiles have become such a crucial, indispensable part of our everyday lives.

They tap into some very deep-seated, primeval instincts. With mobiles as with the internet and email, we seem to be using new technological advances to counteract the adverse effects of previous technological advances – to counteract the social isolation, fragmentation and alienation of modern post-industrial society. Mobile phones are re-creating the more natural, more 'human' communication patterns of pre-industrial times: we are using space-age technology to return to stone-age social interaction.

Without wanting to get too mystical and Gaia-ish about it, it is almost as though there is some kind of homeostatic balancing system in operation – except of course that there is nothing mystical or magical about what we are doing with these new technologies. What we are doing is using them to return to more traditional and – if I may be allowed to borrow a bit of environmentalist jargon – more 'sustainable' patterns of communication and interaction. It is interesting, in this context, to note that the main perceived 'downside' of mobile phones – the sense of being constantly, instantly available, connected day and night, unable to escape from our family, partner, friends and colleagues – is uncannily similar to the 'downside' of living in a small village or close-knit tribal society. For the overwhelming majority, however, the benefits of this 'umbilical' connection to our social network far outweigh the disadvantages.

New technology icon
"For people aged 18-24, their mobile phone matters more to them than television"

Respondents were asked to identify the most important of five modern technological products in their lives. The internet comes top, with 51%, followed by television (22%), the mobile phone (13%), and personal music players, such as iPods, 2%. Less than 0.5% opted for their games console.

However, the striking finding from this question is how much the proportion plumping for their mobile phone varies from group to group. The mobile phone is much more likely to be named by women (17%) than by men (9%). Among 18-24 year-old women, the proportion jumps to 26%, well ahead of television (12%).

The same point applies to heavy users of mobile phones (defined here as those who typically have six or more mobile phone conversations a day). 43% of heavy users in this online sample cite the internet, with 30% citing mobile phones and just 15% television.

Which of the following, if any, is most important in your life?

All respondents   18 – 24 year olds

Internet
Television
Mobile phone
MP3 player (e.g. iPod)
Games console
Not sure
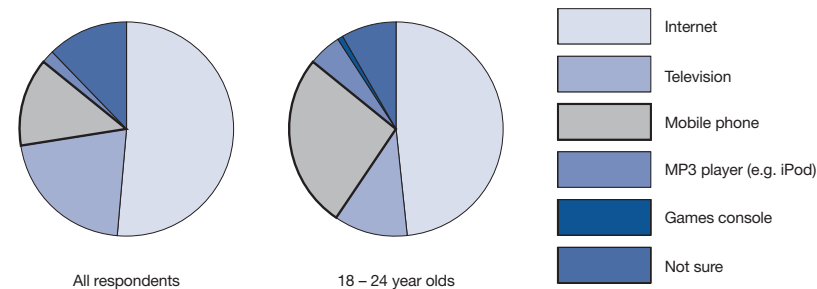
The majority agrees the mobile phone has improved the quality of life of those who own one. Overall, 51% say it has, while 38% say it has not. The under 30s, however, believe by more than two-to-one that the mobile phone has improved their quality of life (62% say it has, 25% say it has not). Among the over 40s, however, opinion is evenly divided: 46% say it has improved their quality of life; 44% say it has not.
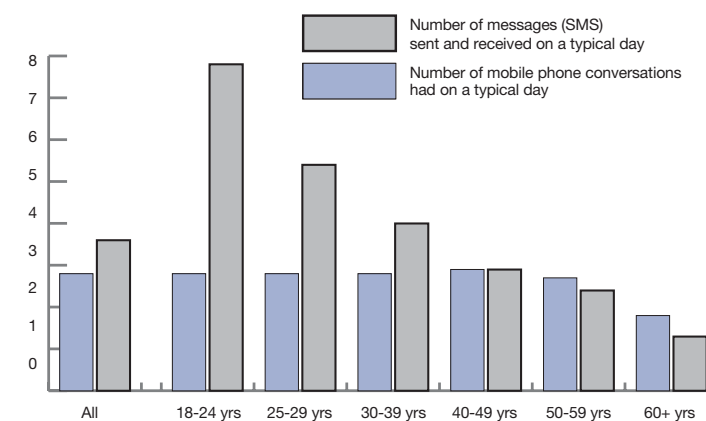
So do many people wish that the mobile phone had never been invented, so that nobody owned one? The answer is an emphatic "no". Just 3% of phone-owners "agree strongly" with this proposition; a further 9% "tend to agree". Big majorities in every demographic group disagree, most of them strongly.

The texting revolution
"Among those aged 18-24 texting is more frequent than talking"

Almost three out of four mobile phone owners send and/or receive texts most days. Texting has even penetrated the oldest phone-owners: on a typical day 51% of over-60s use their texting function.

Average text to call ratios within different age groups

Number of messages (SMS) sent and received on a typical day

Number of mobile phone conversations had on a typical day

All   18-24 yrs   25-29 yrs   30-39 yrs   40-49 yrs   50-59 yrs   60+ yrs

However, it is among young adults that the texting revolution has had the biggest impact. Among the under 25s – and also, though less dramatically, among the 25-29s – texting is a far more frequent form of communication than speaking: for example, 51% of 18-24 year-olds send/receive at least six text messages a day – but only 15% have six or more mobile phone conversations a day.

'Generation Mobile' is four times more likely than the rest of the sample to send/receive more than 10 texts a day. 88% of 'Smart Connecteds' send less than five texts a day but 2% of 'Phonatics' send more than 50!

The phone list revolution
"Most people only regularly contact 10 people or less on their phone list"

Allied to the texting revolution is another: the phone list revolution, namely the ability to store many phone numbers in a mobile phone. This has effectively become the modern address book. Overall, 36% of mobile phone users store at least 50 numbers on their phones; but, again, that overall figure disguises the significance of the impact of mobile phone technology on the young. 64% of under 25s have more than 50 numbers stored on their phones – compared with just 12% of the over-60s. 7% of men aged 18-24 store more than 200 numbers on their phones – compared to just 1% of women.

'Phonatics' are three times more likely than the rest of the sample to store at least 100 numbers on their phones. In contrast, 'Fingers & Thumbs' are twice as likely as the sample as a whole to store fewer than 20 numbers.

However, many of these numbers are used very infrequently. Just 25% of the under 25s contact more than 10 of the people on their phone list by voice or text regularly, that is, at least once a week – a figure that falls to a mere 5% among the over 60s.

Like the more traditional, paper address book of previous generations, the mobile phone still contains all those important numbers that people need to use in important situations. Yet the frequency of usage of a small number of phone list contacts shows that people's social and family networks remain tight knit.

How mobile phones have affected people's lives

Mobile Life asked people to assess the overall impact that having a mobile phone has had on their lives. In some areas there are significant differences by age and/or gender.

Personal safety

Women are more likely than men to feel safer with a mobile phone when driving alone: 54% of women say "yes, definitely", compared with 25% of men. The totals saying "yes definitely" or "yes, to a small extent" are: women 70%, men 51%, a surprisingly high figure for men.

Older people also feel safer when driving alone. 46% of the over 50s say "yes, definitely", compared with just 28% of the under-25s. Among women over 50, the figure reaches 62%.

This figure doubles when comparing men aged 18-24, with 16% saying definitely yes to men over 60 – 36%. Although one of the general findings to emerge from this poll is that mobile phones have changed the lives of young adults dramatically, here is one instance where it is a huge benefit to older people, especially older women.

The findings suggest that older people are more worried about driving and the thought of a breakdown or getting lost and how they would cope than young adults.

Women are more likely to feel safer if they are carrying a mobile phone when "out and about, e.g. shopping, going to a bar, travelling to and from work": 53% of women say "yes, definitely", compared with 21% of men. The totals saying "yes definitely" or "yes, to a small extent" are: women 82%, men 49%. On this, however, there is no significant variation by age.

Keeping in touch – and avoiding unwanted calls
"Women often use their mobile phones in public to deter people from approaching them"

Younger adults are much more likely than older mobile phone owners to make spontaneous social arrangements by phone, instead of fixing things up in advance: 45% of 18-24s say "yes, definitely", and a further 32% say "yes, to a small degree", giving a total of 78%. This total falls significantly with each subsequent age group: 25-29, 66%; 30-39, 47%; 40-49, 32%; 50-59, 26%, 60+, 16%.

Similarly, younger people are more likely to feel "better connected to your social network". This applies to 76% of under 25s, and 66% of 25-29s, but to only 25% of the over 60s.

Mobile phones offer both a blessing and a curse – the ability to reach other people immediately; but also the capacity to disturb those who either don't want to be called, or do not want to speak to the particular caller. For the large majority, the blessing outweighs the curse. Three mobile phone users in four either "like" to be able to reach other people instantly (62%) or say it is "vital" (14%). Only one in six phone users either express concern that they might disturb others (10%) or "seldom make calls to those I fear that I am going to disturb" (8%).

Just as some people want to keep phone callers at bay, some use their mobile phone as a barrier against physical contact. 21% of our respondents agree that "I sometimes use my mobile phone in public situations to deter people from approaching me". This applies especially to women under 25, where the total reaches 55%.

Silence please

"Only 14% of people would turn their phone off completely when having sex"

Of course, one way to avoid being disturbed is to turn your phone off – or switch it to silent, in order to avoid disturbing others. Mobile Life asked mobile phone users to say in which circumstances they would turn their phones off altogether and when they would switch it to silent mode:
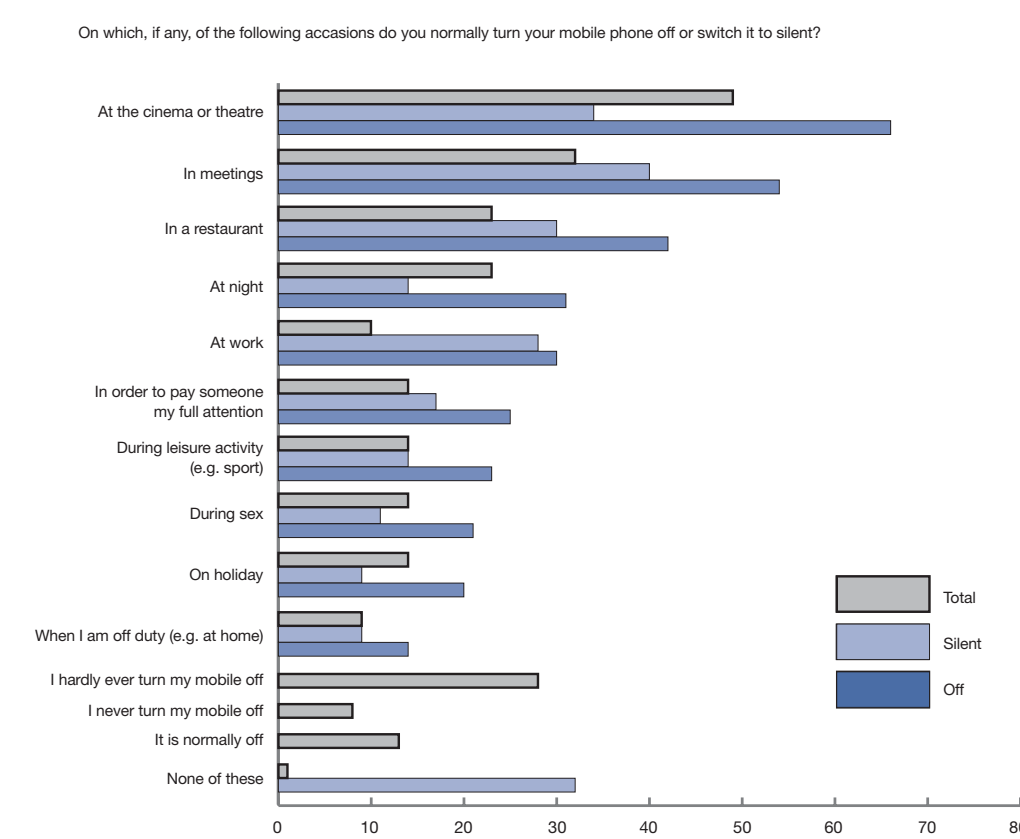
On which, if any, of the following accasions do you normally turn your mobile phone off or switch it to silent?
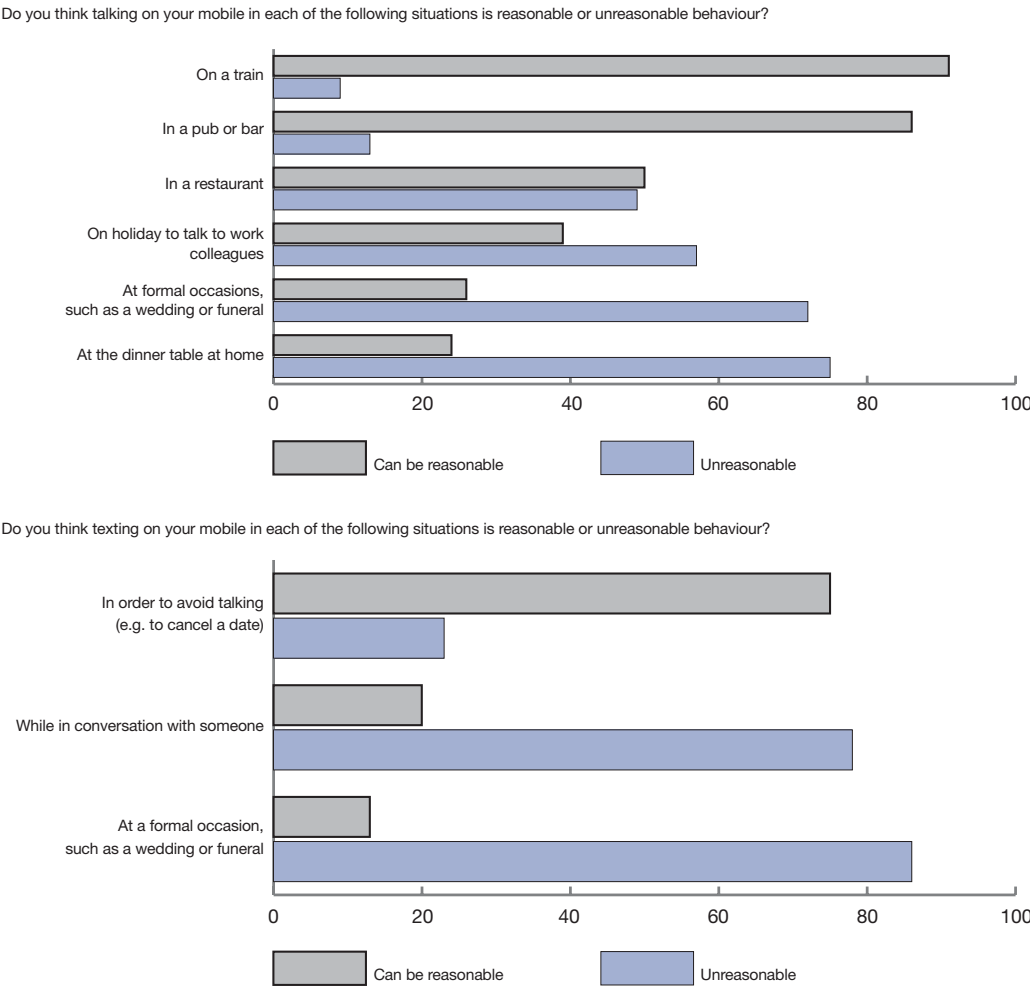

People are very sophisticated in distinguishing between wanting to and needing to make themselves available to others. Two thirds of people would turn their mobile phone off or to silent when they are in a cinema or theatre, yet this figure drops to 42% when they are in a restaurant. Perhaps surprisingly, 14% of people admitted to turning their phones off completely when having sex – at what point do they do this? Almost a third of people hardly ever turn their phone off and 1 in 12 (8%) never turn their phone off at all. A significant minority, 13%, keep their phone turned off and only turn it on to make calls or when they are expecting a call.

Mobile manners

"Most people think it is rude to talk while at the dinner table at home"

Mobile Life asked phone users to consider a variety of circumstances in which some people use their mobile phones and say whether they are acting reasonably or not:

Do you think talking on your mobile in each of the following situations is reasonable or unreasonable behaviour?

Do you think texting on your mobile in each of the following situations is reasonable or unreasonable behaviour?
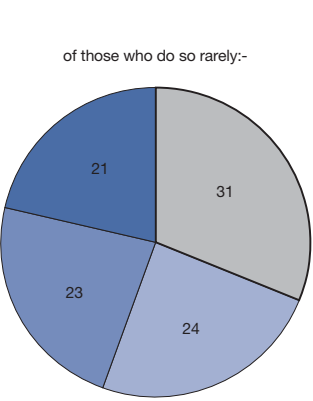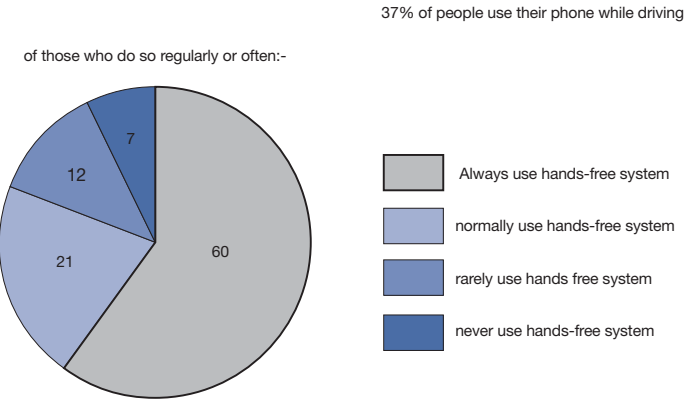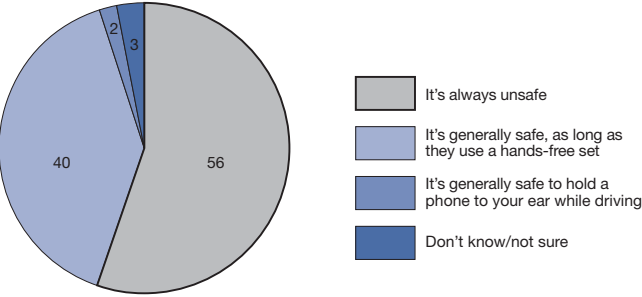

On few of these occasions do the figures vary much by age and on none by gender. There are two exceptions by age, which are talking on a mobile phone in a bar or on a train. 53% of 18-24 year-olds, and 44% of 25-29 year-olds, consider it reasonable to hold conversations on their phone in a bar, compared with just 10% of people in their 50s, and 5% of those over 60. 'Phonatics' and 'Generation Mobile' are twice as likely as the sample as a whole to say it's reasonable to use a mobile phone in a pub or bar – and three times more likely than 'Smart Connecteds', 'Fingers & Thumbs' and 'Silver Cynics'.

As for talking on a mobile phone on a train, 25% of under 25s consider this reasonable, compared with just 5% among the over-60s.

Driven to distraction
"700,000 people flout the law and fail to use hands-free kits while driving"

It is now illegal to use a mobile phone while driving, unless the driver uses a hands-free system. The law was introduced to increase safety on the roads. Do phone-users share Parliament's concerns? If anything, this survey finds that they are even more concerned about safety in this context than the politicians. 56% think it always unsafe for motorists to use a mobile phone while driving, while 40% say "it's generally safe, as long as they use a hands-free set". A mere 2% say it is generally safe for motorists to hold a phone to their ear while driving.

What do you think about people who talk while driving?

Legend:
- It's always unsafe
- It's generally safe, as long as they use a hands-free set
- It's generally safe to hold a phone to your ear while driving
- Don't know/not sure

37% of people use their phone while driving

of those who do so regularly or often:-

of those who do so rarely:-

Legend:
- Always use hands-free system
- normally use hands-free system
- rarely use hands free system
- never use hands-free system

Under 25s divide evenly between those who think it is always unsafe (47%) or generally safe with a hands-free set (45%). But among the over-fifties, 64% say it is always unsafe, while just 33% think it can be safe with a hands-free system.

That is what people say; but what do they do? For 21% the issue does not arise: they don't drive. A further 42% are drivers, but never use their phones while driving. That leaves just over one in three (37%) who do use a phone while driving. Two thirds of this group (25% of the total sample) use their mobile phone "rarely" while driving. 12% use it either "quite often"(8%) or "regularly" (4%).

How many motorists who do use their phones while driving take care only to use hands-free sets? The following figures are instructive:

Motorists who use their mobile phones while driving		
	Regularly/often %	Rarely %
Always use hands-free system	60	31
Normally use hands-free system	21	24
Rarely use hands-free system	12	23
Never use hands-free system	7	21

These figures indicate that motorists who use their mobile phones a lot while driving are generally good at using a hands-free system; but as many as 19% of them "rarely" or "never" use a hands-free system. That amounts to around 700,000 people who frequently flout the law banning the use of mobile phones while driving, without using hands-free sets.

Health

In recent times, fears have been raised that mobile phones might be responsible for two different health risks: one is possible health effects from excessive use of mobile phones, the other the alleged dangers of living near a mobile phone mast. As this survey was conducted among mobile phone users, it does not measure the extent to which people have refused to buy mobile phones because of these fears.

Nevertheless, even among mobile phone users, there are widespread, but on the whole shallow, fears of both "dangers". 42% agree that "I am concerned that using a mobile phone too much could be harmful to my health", while 46% disagree. But few people either agree strongly (6%) or disagree strongly (11%). These figures do not vary greatly by age or gender or whether respondents have children.

A rather larger number, 57%, agree that "I am concerned about the health risks of living near a mobile phone mast", while 33% disagree. This time 18% agree strongly, while just 9% disagree strongly.

But a large minority of parents (42%) admit they are "worried that my child's health might suffer if they use a mobile phone for long periods". As with worries about their child being attacked, only a small minority agree strongly (6%), while 36% "tend to agree". These figures suggest that for most people, their fears are not great.

Mobile addiction

"9% of 18-24 year olds admit to some degree of addiction to their phone"

Mobile Life asked mobile phone users whether they were addicted to their phones. As many as 9% of under 25s admit to some form of addiction – 2% "definitely" plus 7% "to a small degree". That represents around 400,000 young adults.

Phone losers

"Younger phone users feel frustrated, angry and isolated when they lose their phone"

Two mobile phone-owners in five have lost the use of their mobile phone at some point. The figure ranges from 57% among the 18-24s to 23% among the over-60s.

The most common reason is that it was broken or failed to work, but 10% say they have lost a phone and 9% say one was stolen. There is a contrast between men and women aged 18-24. 17% of women in this age group have had their phone stolen compared with 10% of men. This is interesting as the current perception is that young men are more likely to be the victims of crime, yet more young women than men have their phones stolen. Does this mean women use their phones more in public and expose themselves to greater risk, or more likely, are their phones lying visible in handbags making them an easy target for thieves?

Young adults are more likely than older phone-users to suffer from all the different ways of losing use of their phone.

Which of these phrases, if any describes how you felt about having lost the use of your mobile phone?
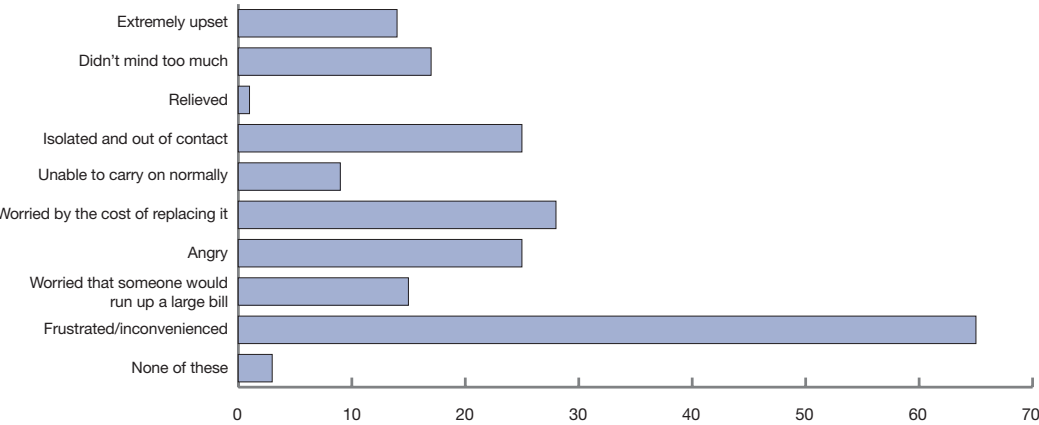
Those who had lost the use of their phone were asked how they felt about it. By far the biggest proportion, 65%, felt "frustrated / inconvenienced". Around one in four felt "worried by the cost of replacing it" (28%), "angry" (25%) or "isolated and out of control" (25%). One in seven (14%) were "extremely upset"; while 15% were "worried that someone would run up a large bill", and 9% were "unable to carry on normally". On the other side of the coin, 17% "didn't mind too much", while 1% were positively relieved. Younger respondents, especially 'Phonatics' and 'Generation Mobile' were significantly more likely than older phone-losers, especially 'Silver Cynics & 'Fingers & Thumbs' to feel frustrated, angry and isolated. In other words, younger people depend on their phone more than older men and women - but are also more likely to lose it.

Yet young adult phone users say they take more precautions than older respondents to protect themselves from having their phones stolen. Two precautions dominate: not using their phones in certain public places – 28% among 18-24s, falling to 15% among the over-60s; and taking out mobile phone insurance – 27% among 18-24s, falling to 10% among the over-60s.

We are all reporters

The Mobile Life survey has confirmed the trend towards citizen journalism. People were asked if they have ever used, or would consider using, the camera or video facility on their mobile phone to snap a celebrity or other newsworthy event. More than a third, 36%, said they would use their mobile if either of these situations presented themselves.

Additionally, half of people said they would use the camera or video facility on their phone to record evidence of a crime, 50%, or to actually record a crime, 47%, confirmation that big brother is watching.

Not so green

Apart from first-time mobile phone-owners, and those who need a new one because their old one has been lost or stolen, every new phone means the disposal of an old one. As many as 37% say they simply held on to their last phone, which implies a vast phone mountain exists in Britain today. 24% gave their old phone away, 16% recycled it, 8% traded it in at the shop where they obtained their new phone and 4% threw it away. Older people are more likely than the under 30s to recycle their old phones, younger people to hang on to it.

Family & Relationships

Dr Pat Spungin,
Founder of parenting
website raisingkids.co.uk

The influence of the mobile phone on the family

When my children were growing up they didn't have mobile phones. Pity, because I would have been able to track down my wayward teenager rather than frantically call everyone she knew. I would have been able to locate my son when he was stuck in a lift all night. And when I couldn't get to the school gate on time, I could have phoned another mum to pick up the children, thus avoiding the wrath of their teacher. There's no doubt about it, mobile phones make it easier to keep track of the kids and keeping track of the kids has become much more of an issue than it used to be.

Mean streets
At raisingkids.co.uk we get a regular stream of questions asking 'At what age is it safe to let my children out on the street alone?' Not a question my mother would have asked herself, when as a seven year old I walked a mile to school alone. In our society there is increasing concern about the safety of children away from home. Concerns about traffic, feral teenagers, paedophiles and muggers all create an impression that the streets are not a safe place for anyone, let alone children! So we keep our children at home, invite other kids to play and send them out into the garden. If they want to go further, we take them to the park. Look at any playground and you will not see any child under the age of ten without a supervising adult. When children have to go out alone we

prepare them by making sure they are aware of traffic danger and 'stranger danger'. We talk about how to avoid being bullied and picked on and what to do if they feel threatened. But the thing that makes parents feel they are still 'there' if needed and gives them the confidence that they are still in touch with their children, is the mobile phone.

Mobile phone as an umbilical cord
We live in a society where our children are among the most supervised in the world. For the first ten years of their lives children live under the watchful eyes of a large number of adults and have few opportunities to develop 'street smarts'. At eleven there is a major change, as children move from the security of primary school to secondary school, often outside their local community. This is an anxious time for parents with many things to worry about: how will their children cope with the travelling, especially if they have to take more than one bus? Will they lose their bus fare? What about bullying or getting their dinner money stolen? This is really one question, how will they cope without me being there to help? The answer is they don't have to, because parents can be 'there'. If both parent and child have a mobile phone, they are accessible to each other anytime any place.

Umbilical cords have to be cut. Children don't want to feel the tug of home through their mobile phone. Children today are 'older younger'.

"Children don't want to feel the tug of home through their mobile phone"

They watch adult programmes on TV, dress like adults, adopt the attitudes and values of much older people and they ask for the same freedoms. With added sense of security and control offered by the mobile, some parents feel able to give their children more freedom. In the Mobile Life research, one parent in three would be willing to 'let their child stay out later than they would if they did not have a mobile phone'.

I can understand how parents feel the mobile is a security link, but is it always? The majority of parents questioned think not. 66% of parents say that they would not change their habits, just because their kids have a phone. A mobile phone is a safety mechanism for adolescents when they know they are in a crisis, like a missed bus, stolen property or getting lost, but it has its limits. A mobile phone is no help when it comes to deciding who to trust or whether to get into a car with someone who has been drinking. And it's no help at all in resisting the most powerful pressure on teenagers that of the peer group.

In an emergency dial-a-mum
Keeping safe is only part of the story. Like the adults in the Mobile Life survey, teens use their mobile phone to make arrangements with friends and family. At secondary school, a pupil's life becomes more complicated with more things to remember and consequently more things to forget. Children use their mobile phones to let their parents know where they are, ask for help and report changes in their plans – 'Forgot my gym kit, can you bring it in?' 'Forgot to tell you, I'm staying late after school.'

It seems that even when she's not there, mum'll fix it. But is this the best thing for the child? Does having mum or dad always on the end of the phone to sort things out, undermine the growing child's independence, resourcefulness and ability to deal with a crisis? A generation ago, an 11-12 year old who lost their bus ticket or lunch money would have used their own resources to sort it out, now they simply call their parents.

For some parents, the time will come when they cut the mobile umbilicus and make their children take responsibility for themselves. Other parents may like the feeling they are still needed at a time when their adolescent children seem to be growing away from them. But sooner or later those teenagers will leave home and will need skills to organise their lives. My advice to mums who are always getting phone calls from forgetful and disorganised offspring, switch off your phone and let them sort it out for themselves!

I know where you are!
Worrying about where their children are and the possible dangers they face, explains why 83% of parents would use their child's mobile phone to track their whereabouts, without seeking

"In our child-centric society the mobile phone keeps parents and children bonded in both senses of the word"

their permission. I can see why this looks very attractive. Teenagers can be a handful and it's not always down to poor parenting. Good parents have troublesome teenagers who say they'll be home by a certain time and two or three hours later, they're still not home.

On the face of it, it looks like a good idea to be able to see where they are and then go and get them. But what then? The parent has to own up to the fact that they have been tracking their son or daughter without their consent, and what self-respecting teenager would give consent? I can just imagine the teenager's outrage. They might have been in the wrong before but now they can climb on to their high horse and rant about the invasion of privacy, betrayal of trust, police state etc. Any possibility of a constructive dialogue has gone out of the window.

Mobile phone tracking seems to me to be a tactic that can only be used once. Remember a savvy teenager will simply turn off their phones, as they do at present when they don't want to be contacted by anxious parents.

Mobile phone etiquette
New technology means new rules. As more children seem permanently attached to their phones, parents make rules to circumscribe its use. Although there has been a decline in the number of families eating together and when they do a large number of them are watching television, to use a mobile phone during the family meal is still a step too far. According to the Mobile Life survey 75% of those surveyed said they would never use their phone during the family meal. The family meal is 'family space' where the outside world is kept out.

Although not covered in this research, there are other places where mobile use is limited. In many homes children are not allowed to have their phones in their bedrooms, as it distracts them from either doing their homework or getting to sleep.

To conclude, in our child-centric society the mobile phone keeps parents and children bonded in both senses of the word. It builds relationships by maintaining regular communication but it also ties the child to the parent and vice versa.

Sooner or later children have to break free and take responsibility for their own actions and sort out their everyday problems. Breaking free also means shifting from total allegiance to family to bring in new allegiances to the peer group. Paradoxically, parents see the mobile phone as a way of retaining parental control while children are using it to build their peer group relationships out of the reach of interfering parents.

The dating game

"Half of young adult phone users have sent or received a sexually explicit text"

Mobile phones are revolutionising the love lives of young adults. More than half of mobile phone-users aged 18-24 have either sent or received an invitation to a date by text. And just as many, 54% 18-24 year olds, have sent or received a sexually explicit text. And one in five of the under 25s have ended a relationship by text. Among older mobile phone users, these things are almost, but not completely, unheard of:

| Proportion who have sent or received through their mobile phone							
				Age			
	All %	18-24 %	25-29 %	30-39 %	40-49 %	50-59 %	60+ %
A text sent to you by mistake	53	80	74	60	48	37	23
A text containing bad language	40	76	67	49	30	16	7
A sexually explicit text	28	54	48	34	22	10	4
A text inviting you on a date	26	57	44	28	17	10	6
A sexually explicit photo or video	12	25	21	14	7	3	1
A text to end a relationship	8	21	12	8	4	2	1
None of these / I never send or receive texts	33	7	11	22	37	53	70

A gender gap emerges on some issues, but it is not as wide as some might suppose. 43% of men have sent or received a text containing bad language, but so have 38% of women. As for sexually explicit texts, the proportions are: 31% men, 25% women; and for a sexually explicit photograph or video: 14% men, 9% women. 'Phonatics' are 40 times more likely to send/receive sexually explicit photographs/videos than 'Fingers & Thumbs'.

Flirty texts

"Over half of people think a flirty text sent to somebody other than your partner is a form of cheating"

Mobile Life then asked about flirty texts. Suppose someone who was married or in a relationship sent one to someone other than their partner. Is this a form of cheating on their partner? Just over half, 53%, say it is, while just 25% say it is not. An unusually high 22% aren't sure – for some of these it may depend on the wording and the context of the communication.

If someone who was married or in a relationship sent a flirty text to someone other than their partner, would you consider this a form of cheating on their partner?
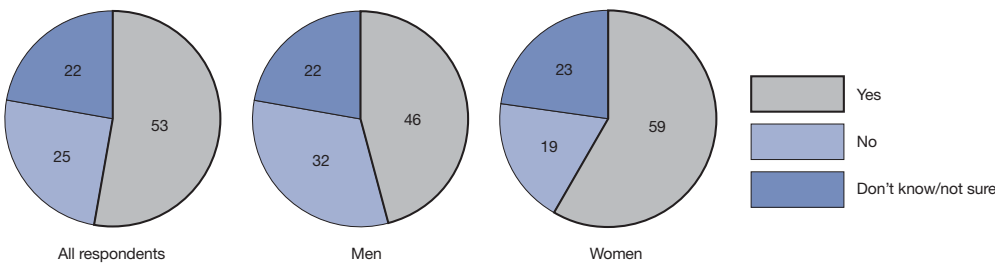
As might be expected, older respondents are more likely than younger respondents to regard this as cheating; but the differences are not massive: 60% of the over-50s regard it as cheating, but so do 47% of the 18-30s. There is also a modest gender gap: 59% of women, compared with 46% of men, consider flirty texts cheating. The differences are most marked in the 25-49 age range. By almost three-to-one (55%-20%), women in this group consider flirty texts to be cheating. But men of the same age group are less polarised in their views with 40% saying it is cheating, while 36% do not.

Do you talk regularly and/or send texts to anyone you don't want your spouse/partner/family to know about?
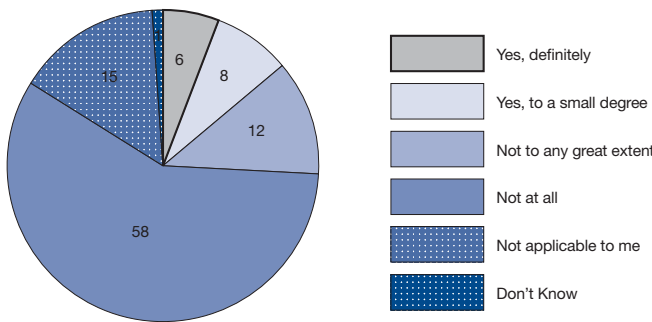
This may be connected to answers to another question: "As a result of having a mobile phone, do you talk regularly and/or send texts to anyone you don't want your spouse/partner/family to know about?" Overall, 14% say either "yes, definitely" (6%) or "yes, to a small extent" (8%). Among men aged 25-49, 18% say yes, compared with 13% for women in this age range.

Younger people – both men and women – are more likely than older people to talk regularly and/or send texts to people they don't want their spouse or partner to know about. Among the 18-24s, such communications are fairly common among both men (29%) and women (27%). In contrast only 5% of mobile phone users over 60 admit to this behaviour.

Relationship rules

"Only 17% of people think it reasonable to track a partner's whereabouts using a mobile phone"

Issues of candour and privacy arise in a different context – the ability, using current technology, to track down the location of each mobile phone while it is on. Many people evidently feel that the widespread use of this technology could harm relationships. Just 17% think it is reasonable for partners to keep track of each other's whereabouts – even with each other's permission. And the proportion who think it's reasonable to keep track of each other without permission is only 5%.

Such is the importance of their mobile phone to young adults that only 13% turn it off completely while they are having sex. A rather larger number turn in to silent mode – 28%.

If a ringing mobile phone is liable sometimes to interrupt sex, texting technology helps many people navigate their relationships. Not only, as we have seen, have a significant minority ended a relationship this way; most people believe that it can be reasonable to use a text "in order to avoid a conversation (e.g. to cancel a date or say sorry") 33% think it is reasonable, while a further 42% say it "can be reasonable if done considerately".
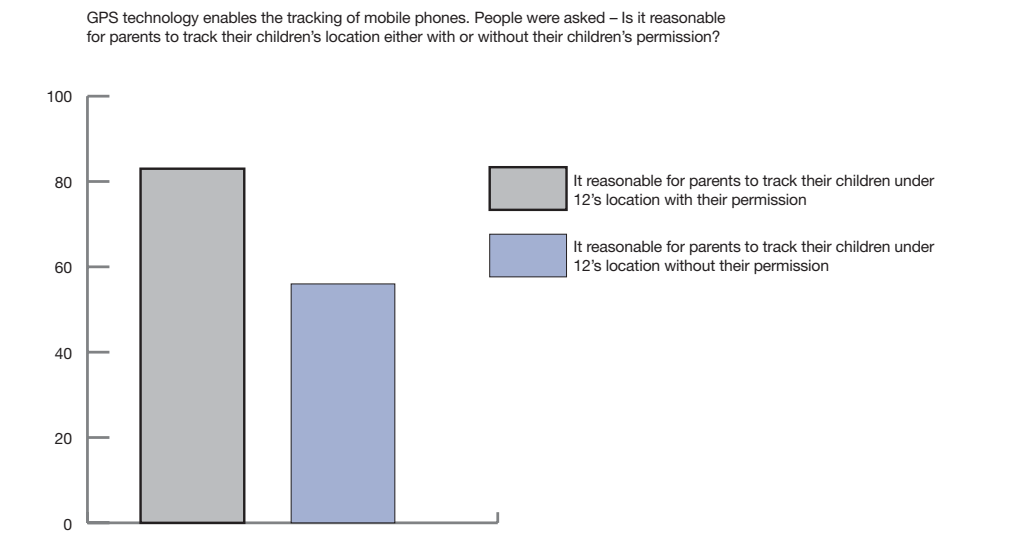
Friendships & family life

The biggest single reason for making mobile phone calls is for people to arrange to meet their friends or family. 46% say they do this "regularly" or quite often". The second greatest use is "for general conversation with friends and family" (35%), underlining the convenience of mobile phones and their usefulness in managing our social lives.

Mobile umbilical cord

One parent in three (36%) says they are willing to let their child "stay out later than they would if they did not have a mobile phone". But most (60%) disagree. Children aged 15 and over are most likely to be allowed to stay out later (44% of their parents agree with this statement; the figures for girls and boys are much the same).

Big brother

"Most parents think it reasonable to use a GPS system to track where their children are, via their mobile phone"

GPS technology enables the tracking of mobile phones. People were asked – Is it reasonable for parents to track their children's location either with or without their children's permission?

It reasonable for parents to track their children under 12's location with their permission

It reasonable for parents to track their children under 12's location without their permission

One way in which mobile phones could affect family life would be for parents to track the location of their children. There could be a huge appetite for this service. 83% of children with mobile phones belong to families whose parents think it is reasonable to use this facility with their child's permission – and 56% think it is reasonable even without their child's permission. These figures are much the same, irrespective of the age or gender of either the child or the parent.

The numbers thinking it's reasonable for children to keep track of their parents are much lower – 23% with permission, 6% without permission.

Family etiquette

As for the etiquette of using mobile phones within a family setting, there is a widespread belief that the family should come first. Only 4% of Mobile Life's sample says it is reasonable to talk "on a mobile phone at the dinner table at home". A further 20% say it "can be done reasonably if done considerately". But the great majority, 75%, say flatly that such behaviour is "unreasonable". Just 16% of 'Fingers & Thumbs' and 20% of 'Smart Connecteds' think it can be reasonable compared to 43% of 'Phonatics'. Not surprisingly, opposition to mealtime conversations is stronger among older respondents: 81% of over-50s say it is unreasonable. But even among 18-24 year-olds, more than two-thirds (70%) share this view. Clearly the family meal is not dead and is seen as an important opportunity to get together and catch up through conversation.

Many parents admit that they sometimes know less about using a mobile phone than their children. 42% of all parents whose children have mobile phones acknowledge that "I sometimes have to ask my child how to use certain functions on my own mobile phone". Mothers (46%) are more likely to say this than fathers (35%). However, girls with mobile phones are almost as likely to be asked for help (40%) as boys (43%). Among parents of children aged 15 and over, the proportion is 48% – and it is still a strikingly high 37% among parents whose only, or eldest, mobile phone-owning child is 11-14.

"Grandmothers think mobile phones can help strengthen communication between grandchildren and grandparents"

Overall, the jury is still out on whether mobile phones draw friends and families together. Mobile Life asked respondents whether having a mobile phone made them "feel a stronger bond with your family and closest friends". 16% say "yes, definitely", while a further 27% say "yes, to a small degree"; making a total of 43% who think the impact of mobile phones has been positive. Against that, 51% say either "not to any great extent" (26%) or "not at all" (25%). 'Phonatics' are twice as likely as others to feel better connected with their family and friends. This partly reflects differences by age and gender.

As a result of having a mobile phone do you feel a stronger bond with your family and closet friends?
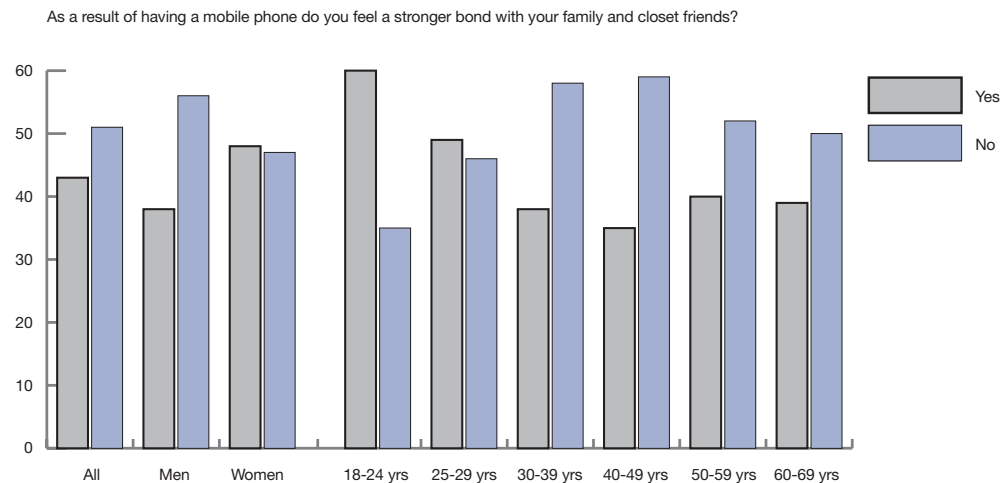
Two conclusions emerge from the age profile of answers to that question. The first is that the 18-24s feel especially that the mobile phone strengthens friend and family bonds. The second is that the greatest scepticism towards mobile phones on this issue is not the over 50s or over 60s, but phone-users in their 30s and 40s. It seems likely that communication between grandchildren and grandparents helps to make some older phone-users feel more warmly about the impact of mobile phones on family bonds. This seems to apply especially to grandmothers: among women over 50 with their own mobile phone, there is an almost even division (yes 45%, no 46%).

Work

Mobile phones at work

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How is the world of work changing? Why are people spending more and more time talking to each other at work? How does the mobile phone influence our home-life and our work-life? At LSE we have studied these questions in workplaces around the world for several years and now the Mobile Life survey offers many further insights into the impact of mobile phones on the working lives of people here in the UK.

Executives were the first to adopt the expensive mobile phones in the late 1980s and mobile email on Blackberry handsets introduced in 1999. These days the mobile phone is widely used for work, this survey found that 46.5% of people who work use their phone to some extent, and nearly 14% of these respondents find it hard or impossible to do their job without their mobile phone. The mobile phone is now used in almost all work contexts, supporting executives staying in touch while travelling around the globe, by plumbers talking to prospective customers while fixing a leak, and by delivery vans wanting to drop off Internet shopping earlier than scheduled. Although the mobile phone is mostly seen as a consumer technology, it is destined to have an immense impact on our working life. Along with age, the survey clearly shows that using the mobile phone for work is the most significant explanation for variation in attitudes towards, and experiences with, this technology. People who use the mobile phone for work use it more extensively and use a broader range of functions.

In many cases they have quite different patterns of use from those who don't use their phone for work. As a work tool it leads to a much wider set of experiences than when it is used for personal use only, and also demands that people who use it in this way adapt their routines.

Our traditional way of thinking about work is as something that only happens "at work," but this is becoming an increasingly elusive thing of the past. I am not arguing that people will suddenly stop working in offices, shops and on factory floors, merely that for an increasing proportion of people working life is becoming more flexibly organised. The LSE studied London black cabbies and found that many of them choose this line of work precisely because it means they are able to decide for themselves when they work. Taxi drivers have always had to be where the customers are, but this way of working is becoming increasingly common, more and more of us now have to think in much the same way. Gone are the days of toiling away in the coal-pits or spinning in dark mills. Most of us are in the service sector selling things, delivering services and speaking to people about what they need and want, not producing things to be stored in a warehouse. For many of us the future of work is not in factories and offices but out and about where customers and colleagues are. The mobile phone is an essential lifeline between people working together, as indicated by the 61% who argued it has improved their quality of

"As a work tool it leads to a much wider set of experiences than when it is used for personal use only, and also demands that people who use it in this way adapt their routines"

life and by the 21% who claimed they were not able to carry on normally when having lost their mobile phone.

The service society of the 21st Century is a "talk society"[1]. To find out what customers want and to co-ordinate our work with colleagues we meet, talk, write memos and presentations. Instead of simply engaging in one-step transactions, we need to build relationships with customers and colleagues[2]. This implies a vivid, multi-faceted world of both creativity and stress[3]. Decision making needs to be flexible and the mobile allows this constant re-negotiation. The rise of the service industry has brought about a corresponding increase in the need for people to have more say in whom they talk to and have email access to. There is a constant need for quick and easy interaction with others, cutting through bureaucracy. Above and beyond this we explore opportunities and make unforeseen connections with others through networking. The telegraph and the telephone played an important role in this, but with email, the mobile phone, text messages and even mobile access to email and instant messaging, the flexibility has made it possible to be in instant contact with colleagues and customers whenever and wherever needed. Co-ordinating our work has become complex and hectic and making decisions on the go with mobile phone and mobile email has become more and more

important. This clearly explains why people who use a mobile phone for work have significantly more daily calls than the rest – 50% have six or more daily calls compared with only 5% of people who do not use the mobile phone for work.

Traditionally the limiting factor for how much people communicated over distance at work was the high costs of sending telegrams, or letters by mail coach[4]. Today, there are few such limitations, it is cheap and easy to call or email people, the cost has moved to those receiving the calls and emails, the time and attention we can pay these communications has become the limiting factor. We are starting to adjust to these constant demands on our attention. The mobile phone allows us to directly link up with colleagues but also allows them to demand our instant attention, and we therefore develop routines for coping with this demand. The study showed that people are very sophisticated in distinguishing between wanting to and needing to make themselves available to others. Work-related mobile phones are hardly ever switched off compared to phones used for private purposes only, and this leads to a much more predominant feeling amongst this group of often being disturbed. The study also reveals how the mobile phone as a work tool creates the need for people to develop sophisticated coping mechanisms for dealing with the conflicting demands of both home-life and work-life. The survey shows that 35% of us never, or hardly

"The future of work is out and about where customers and colleagues are and the mobile phone is an essential lifeline between people working together"

ever, turn off our mobile phones, and people who use their phones for work are significantly less inclined to turn them off when engaged in leisure activity, when at the theatre or in a cinema, but much more likely to turn them off at night, at a restaurant or as a signal of paying someone attention. 67% turn off their phone on holidays if they also use it for work, whereas only 41% do so if the mobile phone is for private use only. Clearly we are all developing new patterns, new routines to deal with the new fluidity of work and home life facilitated by the mobile.

The flexibility associated with instant access to colleagues has advantages, for example being able to work from home when children are ill, when the washing machine is being repaired, or when needing to write a report without being disturbed. However, as we still think of work as happening at work, we tend to make a point of answering the phone and making ourselves available when out of the office. Indeed, answering phones and emails is our way of signalling to everyone else that we are indeed working hard even if we are out of the office. Using the mobile phone both privately and for work accounts for 74% of the people who feel they are too much at the beck and call of their employer.

29.5% of people who use their phone for work regularly or quite often use their phone while driving, compared to only 4% of those who do not use the phone for work. This shows us that people who use their phones for work make use of their idle time in the car to co-ordinate work or perhaps increasingly working from their cars. The mobile phone is excellent for blowing life into our dead time, but this also means that we are seldom fully switched off and idle. Mobile phones not only dissolve traditional boundaries between home and work, but also mean that work is increasingly encroaching on holiday time, there is less and less time when we are totally switched off from work. We are still getting used to the impact of mobile phones on our lives and part of this adjustment may be to work out how to find times when we allow ourselves to be completely disconnected.

The journey of working life with mobile phones has just begun, and although it will require much hard work to find out how best to marry the two, it is clear that so far it has been extremely successful, and we have barely scratched the surface.

http://mobility.lse.ac.uk

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2 Zuboff, Shoshana and James Maxmin (2002): The Support Economy: Why Corporations are Failing Individuals and the Next Episode of Capitalism. London: Penguin.
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Work

"Using the mobile phone for work matters most to men in their forties"

One in three mobile phone-owners use a mobile phone as part of their work. 46.5% of workers use their phone for work. 24% do so regularly and half of these use it only occasionally. But one-third of this group – 12% of the total sample of all adult phone users, or more than three million workers – say they would find it "hard" (7%) or "impossible" (5%) to do their job without a mobile phone.

21% of people who need their phone for their job make more than 10 calls a day compared with 1% of people who don't use their phone for their job.

The people for whom their mobile phone matters most in their work are men in their forties. One in four (25%) of all mobile phone-owners in this group say they need their phone as part of their job.

The three million workers who need their mobile phone for their work form a distinct tribe:

- 70% are men

- 38% have more than one phone, compared with only 7% of people who never use their phones for work

- 50% have six or more mobile conversations on a typical day, compared with just 5% of those who never use their phones for work; in this survey, heavy users are cited as those who have more than six conversations a day

- 41% use Bluetooth regularly or occasionally, compared with 19% of people who never use their phones for work

- 37% say it is "vital" to be able to reach other people instantly on the mobile phones – compared with 11% among people who never use their phones for work

- 47% "never" or "hardly ever" turn their mobile phone off; though 56% turn it to silent during meetings

- 21% of those who had lost use of their phone said they were unable to carry on normally, compared with just 6% of those who never used their phones for work

- 61% say mobile phones have improved the quality of their life, compared with 46% of those who don't use their phones for work

- 64% would be happy to use their mobile phones to pay for small items, such as bus and tube travel and parking tickets, compared with 43% of those who don't use their phones for work

However there is a downside, 41% think they are too much at the beck and call of their employer as a result of using a mobile phone for their work. There is also widespread opposition to "taking a mobile phone on holiday and using it to speak frequently to work colleagues". 57% consider this unreasonable, with 39% saying it is either "reasonable" (just 10%) or "can be done reasonably if done considerately" (29%).

Only young men aged 18-24 think it is reasonable/can be reasonable (57%) to take a phone on holiday and use it to make or receive frequent work-related calls, compared to 40% who find it unreasonable.

Implications:

Mobile democracy

Visiting Professor Media and
Communications, London School of
Economics and Political Science[1]

"A change in the nature of communication so vast, so rapid, so overwhelming in its implications that few of us have really come to understand what it all amounts to"

At home, as a youngish teenager we had a solid black ceramic phone that lived in the spare room downstairs. We shared a line with the family opposite which meant we could listen to their calls, and them to ours.

Phones were for big moments and big conversations. Exam results, illness, marriages, significant family milestones.

Often they were about waiting. Waiting for the phone to come free, waiting for someone to call, waiting under the clock at Waterloo station for someone to turn up at a time and a place fixed days earlier. Social arrangements were always tinged with a hint of uncertainty, and in my case at least a large dose of disappointment as ten minutes late slowly turned into the realisation that I had been, yet again, stood up.

Those calls were so important that I can still remember many of them word for word. The telephone was special and rather scary. A quality for me that the landline phone has never completely lost.

My transition to mobile phones was not exactly seamless. The first mobile phone that I ever owned was issued to me for the General Election of 1987. It was a huge block of a phone, like a wireless transmitter used in the first world war. Carrying it was an effort. None the less I dutifully took it with me to a café on the first day of the election campaign and set it up in front of me as a vast and ugly symbol of my modernity.

Then the phone went off and I realised that I had absolutely no idea how to use it. It rang and rang, and unable to work out how to answer it I fled to the street and waited until the ringing ended, and I could safely return to my cup of tea.

And now the mobile phone is everywhere, everybody's, a personal electronic connection, mobile, accessible. A change in the nature of communication so vast, so rapid, so overwhelming in its implications that few of us have really come to understand what it all amounts to.

As I write this my wife phones me, nervous and uneasy because my daughter has gone out for the afternoon without her phone. A few hours disconnection now the cause of anxiety. My daughter for her part uses her phone like a kind of antenna as she and her friends swarm like bees through the evening, never pre-arranging, always in contact, moving as a group but remaining individuals.

We all use mobile phones, but we don't understand quite what they really mean to us.

This is why this report is so useful and so timely. It gets to the heart of why mobile phones matter so much to us: as individuals and as a society. The polling is in itself illuminating, showing the vast impact that mobile phones are making to people's lives. But it is the fusing of opinion poll findings and academic insight that gives us such a unique understanding of the huge and complex influence of mobile phones.

In fact it is arguably the case that of all the electronic innovations brought to us in the last thirty or so years the development of the mobile phone is the most far reaching in its effects.

The mobile phone is important because it is about expanding genuine human communication beyond the confines of physical space and in doing so exploding the possibility of community. Television is of course a crucial advance but you cannot talk to a television, it talks to you. The internet has transformed the world but it is not direct human communication, but mediated electronic connection.

The mobile phone retains the intensity of human connection but breaks clear of the constraints of physical proximity, enabling communication to be both completely personalised and intrinsically communal at one and the same time.

Mobile phones are part of a process in which communications are being inexorably democratised. There is no nation nor political system that can block the consequences – for good or bad – of each individual having his or her own opportunity both to receive opinions, and to transmit them.

Give someone a mobile phone and you give them a voice. Give them a voice and you offer the opportunity of empowerment.

Technology has made it possible not just for all citizens to receive information, but for all citizens to create communication. To change the very nature of citizenship from spectators at the play, to actors on the stage.

It would be foolish to suggest that the technology can solve the problems of democracy. Of course it can't. Equally it would be wrong to assume that the contribution mobile phones can make to the democratic process lies only with text voting and instant opinion polls.

The contribution that mobile phones and communications technology makes to the democratic process is much more far reaching than voting out someone or other from the Big Brother house, important though that may be.

The real point is that we are witnessing the redistribution of communications power and that this will lead inexorably to the redistribution of the power to participate in the political process.

Think of this. Within a short while billions, not millions of people over the planet will own a mobile phone handset with the power to talk directly by voice or text to anyone else on the planet, to receive and respond to internet information; to hear opinions and to voice opinions.

Each person will soon have the opportunity to be their own personalised communications centre - with the power to receive news and to create news, to receive opinion and to transmit opinion.

A small, miniaturised version of the BBC Television Centre can be packed into the pockets of billions across the globe.

"The mobile phone makes reporters of us all, changing the whole balance of communications power and eventually of political power too"

This is the revolution that we face. It may sound far fetched but it is not. There is now virtually no event that can happen on the planet that cannot and will not be recorded by mobile phones and then transmitted to the world. This is what happened after the terrorist attacks of 7/7. It will happen time and time again whenever disaster, terror, atrocity or crime strikes. The mobile phone makes reporters of us all, changing the whole balance of communications power and eventually of political power too.

We are moving inevitably to new forms of democracy and political involvement. Representative democracy is not finished but is being gradually transmuted into participatory democracy. People will no longer accept that their involvement in the political process is limited to one vote in a general election every four or five years, they want their voice to be heard not just some of the time but all of the time. It is now a truism that communication has become participatory. It is completely foolish to think that this participation will not profoundly affect the nature of the relationship between citizen and state in democracies and dictatorship alike.

Like it or not we have already moved from the era of mass communication to the age of mass participation.

This is a very long way from a shared line in the suburban sitting room of my home. It is a journey of technological innovation but of growing personal empowerment also. I welcome that journey. It has its risks, and it has its dangers, but it is part of a process that will lead to more democracy not less, more voices heard not fewer, more chance for more people to influence the world in which they live.

I doubt very much if the development of the mobile phone could have helped avoid my ritual teenage humiliation at Waterloo station, but that is a problem that even the most advanced technology can't fix. In the meantime the world is changing faster than we think and those of us who work in politics should get used to it.

Continuous Conversations

Dr Carsten Sørensen, London School of Economics and Political Science

The mobile phone is the most significant information technology of the past 20 years[1]. It has reached the pockets and handbags of most individuals in the developed world and a rapidly increasing part of the developing world. The impact of the mobile phone is extensive and touches many aspects of public and private life. This essay argues that there are five essential aspects to the social impact of the mobile phone:

- Mobile intimacy – extending personal links through a technology closely associated with the body

- New networking – shifts in the ways people organise their life through the mobile phone

- Fluidity and stability – the constant questioning of established boundaries

- Safety and surveillance – the mobile phone as both a technology making us feel safer and also potentially being surveilled more

- Fashion and culture – how cultural aspects have been essential in defining the patterns of use of the mobile phone

Mobile intimacy

The primary reason for carrying a mobile phone at all times and for very rarely turning it off is the desire to be available to and keep in touch with family and friends. People do not simply, as indicated in much of the marketing material for mobile phones, acquire a mobile phone to infinitely extend their ability to connect with the rest of the world[2]. The survey shows that arranging meetings with friends and family is the biggest reason for making mobile phone calls (46%) and general conversations with friends and family the second most important use of the phone (35%). The mobile phone extends and enforces strong social ties between family, friends, and work colleagues. It extends intimate conversations from the living room, the club, the office and the bedroom into the street, the pub and the cinema[3]. Our conversations always stretch across the times we physically meet and shared experiences form a rich context we draw upon when we engage with people who matter to us. We only start from scratch when we talk to people we do not share experiences with. The landline telephone offers a lifeline for these conversations to span geographical distances, but the mobile phone ultimately allows continuous conversations unbroken by our whereabouts[4;5].

The Internet was generally thought to abolish distances through easy virtual connections forming a virtual reality. But distance is as real as ever and the further we are apart the less frequently we get in touch, no matter how strongly connected we are – even if we talk for longer with remote people strongly connected to us[4]. Hectic life-styles may make it necessary to frequently connect with friends, family and colleagues on mobile phones and emails, but technology cannot replace the need for shared experiences formed when being together[6;7;8]. Mobile phones extend the intimacy between family members, friends and colleagues. Phone calls or 160 character SMS messages continue conversations and carry a richness grounded in already firmly established strong social ties.

The mobile phone is itself an intimate technology most people carry with them wherever they go. In Sweden its first name was "Yuppi-Nalle" (Yuppie-Teddybear). The mobile phone has in a very short period of time gained the same importance in people's lives as glasses, keys and watches. It is being treated with care and tenderness by some and with roughness by others. The vast majority of people who have experienced losing their mobile phone expressed some form of frustration, anger and isolation, especially young people.

The mobile phone is not just used for its simple, intended purpose of making and receiving calls and messages. As an intimate technology, it plays a role in the rituals performed when people meet such as being passed around to show photos and messages, and allowing others to use the phone or to pretend to be the owner of the phone[6;9]. The mobile phone is also often used as an effective shield against engaging with others as was indicated by 17% of the people surveyed. People leave the phone on tables in public both to have it ready when someone calls but also for men to unconsciously signal their status to other men when women are near[10].

New networking

It would of course be grossly unfair to only consider the mobile phone as a technology extending existing social relationships. Mobile phones have changed the way arrangements are made. They inspire people to engage in new networking. The instant ability to stay in contact with others makes it possible to continuously negotiate and re-negotiate practical arrangements and mobile-based co-ordination has for many replaced time-based co-ordination[5]. We still do not know what the consequences of this large-scale social experiment will be, but for the younger generation it involves constant assessment and negotiation of where to go and what to do. Sometimes it simply fulfils the purpose of just staying in touch for the sake of it.

The importance of the mobile phone combined with the ease with which it moves back and forth between our direct attention and its resting place in pockets or handbags presents a specific need for explicitly negotiating the rituals of using it amongst others. It is a magnet demanding attention and for some this is a temptation difficult to withstand – 9% of the under 25 year olds in the survey indicate that they have a mobile phone addiction they can not control. As the mobile phone is not simply a passive object such as a pair of glasses that we can fiddle with when engaging in conversation, but can be rather intrusive, people are constantly negotiating the appropriate etiquette for using the mobile phone. Fiddling with the phone or texting whilst talking to someone else sitting across the table will often be considered rude as it implies that the body is present but the mind is somewhere else – the absent presence[11]. It is clear that just as important as the mobile phone is, it is just as essential that we learn how to live with it. This implies learning how to switch it off in situations to make sure we experience the moment and give our full and undivided attention to the situation we engage with. The study showed that the mobile phone is generally only turned off when people are at cinemas and theatres (49%), and to some extent in meetings (35%). More than a third of people hardly ever turn their mobile phone off.

Fluidity & stability

The mobile phone is a technology that challenges and redefines established borders. Mobile communication transcends barriers between the caller and the receiver. Phones go off in the cinema, the theatre, the bedroom and on the beach whilst enjoying a holiday. The mobile phone only respects borders distinguishing between home, work, holiday and intimacy if enforced by its owner. When the rest of the world is one touch of a button away from you, then you are also one touch of a button away from everyone else – if you take their call. However, quite often people actually do respect these borders as the survey clearly indicates. Whilst the mobile phone continuously challenges long established distinctions such as work and leisure it does not dissolve these but merely engages in constantly questioning and nudging them.

Our ability to experiment with how we each wish to live with the mobile phone has made us all into "everyday innovators"[12]. One of the first results of direct Bluetooth communication between mobile phones was the so-called "bluejacking" where one mobile phone user can send an anonymous message to another via Bluetooth disguised as phonebook contact information (http://www.bluejackq.com/). This phenomenon has been formalised by Nokia in their Sensor application. The mobile phone is also challenging the traditional distinction between producers and consumers of media content. Broadcasters engage viewers in programmes such as the X-Factor, Strictly Come Dancing or Big Brother via participation through SMS votes. Even this fairly limited influence seems to be a requirement for major TV success,

as well as for more humble every-day choices of what music video is played on satellite TV channels. Ready availability of camera-phones taking digital photos or recording short videos has, together with services for sharing the media with others, further defined a fluid boundary between those engaging in public spaces as active producers and those who passively consume. This can be exemplified with amateur photographers or video operators actively selling pictures to media companies, blurring the boundary between the professional photographer and the keen amateur – a new form of reporting called citizen journalism.

Security & surveillance

The mobile phone creates intimate bonds with the user. It is never left behind. It resides on or near our body, and it represents the promise of instant connections directly to the people we care most about and others we need to get in touch with. This leaves a sense of freedom with the user – a feeling that for three-quarters of the people surveyed persists. It also instils a sense of safety and security, in particular for the women surveyed. Here, 70% of women felt safe driving alone and 82% when out and about.

However, there is of course a darker side to the issue of safety and security. The closer we bring technology to our bodies, the more benefit and risk it can bring us. Our mobile phone has a built in ability, like ET in Spielberg's movie, to phone home. It continuously reports our movements from cell to cell. Widespread diffusion of mobile technology implies the very real possibility of pinpointing the geographical movement of a person and has successfully been used in criminal cases[13;14]. The survey demonstrated extensive willingness for families to locate their children. A total of 83% of respondents indicate that it is reasonable use this facility with the child's permission – and 56% think it is reasonable even without.

Future advanced mobile services relying on automatic recordings of where we are, who else we are with, what we are doing, where we come from, and how we physically feel may of course provide a range of individualised and social benefits. However, they also carry grave risks for infringing our privacy. With the estimate of around 1,000 networked devices for each of the seven billion people on Earth in 2017, there will not be a shortage of connections to make and information to locate[15].

Orwell's Big Brother from the book 1984 is based on centralised direct surveillance of citizens by the state. When the entire population is equipped with a camera-phone the most important effect could be decentralised surveillance by everyone of anyone, and can both lead to citizens striking back at authorities engaging in direct surveillance as well as the more sinister scenario of the general public turning into a mass of "little sisters" reporting any activity deemed inappropriate[16]. Delivery vans regularly have signs with telephone numbers to call by anyone offended by the way the driver behaves in traffic. Three-quarters of the phone users surveyed are able to take photos or videos with their mobile phone and 81% of the people surveyed would consider passing this information on to the police. In the future we could all become hostages to others eager to report any wrongdoing to authorities and websites. This could make life as repressive as living in the building portrayed by Roman Polanski in his movie "The Tenant" where every little noise or controversial behaviour is punished instantly. But it is of course likely that groups in society will rebel against such growing oppression, and the mobile phone can also be an important element in a decentralised and emerging uprising as was demonstrated when viral distribution of SMS messages in the Philippines helped mobilise the masses leading to President Estrada's resignation in 2001.

Fashion & culture

When Nokia removed antennas from its phones, manufactured a shiny silver phone, and then made it possible to change the faceplate on some models, it acknowledged that the mobile phone is bestowed with values far beyond the ability to talk to others. The walkman became an important aspect of modern culture in the 70s because it allowed individualised access to music when out and about. The mobile phone symbolises the turn of the century bringing individual freedom to social interaction. Mobile Life cannot be separated from discussions of fashion and culture[17;18]. Failing to realise the importance of

a particular tribe of Tokyo teenage girls – shibuya girls – as fashion trend-setters, reportedly caused significant losses for a global network operator in Japan[19].

The mobile phone is also experienced differently in different cultures. In Japan, for example, the initial use of the mobile phone was in public dominated by access to mobile data and by mobile email [20;21]. Speaking on a mobile phone in public is generally frowned upon. In Europe the initial wave of mobile voice calls was followed by massive increases in SMS messages when networks allowed messages to cross between networks[22]. In developing countries, the mobile phone takes on different meanings, for example as a means of moving money through pre-paid cards from one area of a country to another. Here, the mobile phone, like the television, is often a collective asset.

One of the primary cultural characteristics associated with the mobile phone is its close links to youth culture and the survey clearly shows respondent age as one of the strongest determinants for differences in answers. The young have more radically adopted the technology and are much more likely to argue that it has changed their life and that it is the most important technology for them. But while the mobile phone has most radically spoken to the younger generation, all ages tend to have both a mobile phone and an opinion about it. Only further research will tell us if the mobile phone will always be more central to youth culture, and whether young people will maintain their attitudes to mobile phones as they age.

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Credits

Mobile Life was the idea of The Carphone Warehouse Group plc and was developed in conjunction with Lord Philip Gould and YouGov.

The project's academic partner is The London School of Economics and Political Science and key contributors to Mobile Life are Raising Kids and The Social Issues Research Centre.

The Carphone Warehouse is Europe's leading independent retailer of mobile phones and services, with over 1,400 stores in 10 countries. www.carphonewarehouse.com   www.cpwplc.com

The London School of Economics and Political Science is one of the leading social science institutions in the world.   www.lse.ac.uk

Raising Kids is the UK's biggest parenting website offering help and advice on everything about raising kids.   www.raisingkids.co.uk

The Social Issues Research Centre is a well-known social-science research centre and think-tank, which monitors and assesses global sociocultural trends and conducts research on a wide range of social issues.   www.sirc.org

YouGov is an online research company specialising in opinion polls, market research and online consultation.   www.yougov.com

Philip Gould Associates is a polling and strategy company founded in 1985.

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life