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Seatbelt and Mobile Phone Usage Survey Scotland, 2017

Contents

Background

This bulletin provides statistics on the proportion of vehicle occupants observed wearing seatbelts and drivers using mobile phones from a roadside observation survey commissioned jointly by Transport Scotland and the Department for Transport in 2017.

The 2017 seatbelt survey resulted in 7,169 vehicle occupants being observed in Scotland, whilst the mobile phone survey recorded the behaviour of 14,427 drivers.

Key findings

- 97.3% of all drivers were recorded using a seatbelt in 2017, an increase from the 96.4% observed in 2014
- the proportion of car drivers observed using their seatbelt correctly in 2017 was 98.6%, a marginal increase from the 97.8% recorded in 2014
- rear seat passenger seatbelt usage has decreased, dropping from 99% in 2014 to 95.1%. However, this is largely driven by the inclusion of rear seat passengers in 'other vehicles' (vans, lorries, buses, coaches, and mini-buses) which have lower seatbelt rates overall and were excluded in the 2014 survey
- the proportion of car drivers observed using a mobile phone whilst driving was at 1.8% at moving (free-flowing) sites, a marginal increase from the 2014 figure (1.3%). At stationary (traffic light controlled junction) sites, the proportion observed using a mobile phone was 2.4%, an increase from 2014 figure (1.6%)
- the mobile usage rate at moving sites by drivers of 'other vehicles' (vans, lorries, buses, coaches, and mini-buses) was notably higher (3%) compared to car drivers (1.8%)
- at-ear mobile phone use has increased from 0.2% at both types of site in 2014 to 0.9% at moving sites and 1.2% at stationary sites

1. Introduction

This bulletin presents the Scottish findings of a survey carried out jointly by Transport Scotland and the Department for Transport (DfT) in 2017[1] to provide evidence on seatbelt compliance amongst vehicle occupants and mobile phone use by drivers. Data were collected at a range of sites across Scotland and England, and this is the second survey to present representative estimates on both mobile phone and seatbelt use in Scotland. The first survey to include findings on mobile phone and seatbelt use was published in 2014, with a previous survey including only seatbelt use in Scotland published in 2009.

1.1. The law

Road safety law in regards to seatbelt and mobile phone use is a reserved matter, thus remaining the responsibility of the UK Parliament. Under current law, with limited exceptions, vehicle occupants must wear a seatbelt if one is fitted in the seat being used or face a fine of up to £500[2].

In addition, since 2003, it has been illegal to use a hand-held phone or similar device whilst driving or riding a motorcycle, including when stopped at traffic lights or queued in traffic. In March 2017, the penalty for hand-held mobile phone use by drivers was doubled from the previous fixed penalty notice of 3 license penalty points and a fine of £100 and now attracts 6 penalty points and a fine of £200, but can potentially result in more severe penalties depending on the circumstances[3].

1.2. Existing research

Research shows the important role seatbelts can play in reducing the extent and severity of injuries. Indeed, a report published by the DfT in 2008 estimated that seatbelts have the potential to reduce fatal injuries to both front and rear seat occupants by as much as 50%[4]. Furthermore, it is important for all vehicle occupants to make use of an appropriate restraint as one individual not using a seatbelt can pose a fatal danger to other occupants should a collision occur[5]. As such, whilst seatbelts have no bearing on crash risk, the European Transport Safety Council have suggested that encouraging 100% seatbelt compliance is the single most effective way of reducing the severity of injuries associated with collisions[6].

Research on mobile phone use and driving shows that the cognitive, physical and visual distraction caused by such activity significantly reduces awareness and focus, thus directly affecting the likelihood of being involved in a collision. Whilst it is difficult

[1] Five sites were resurveyed in June 2018. For more information, see section 2.2.
[2] For more detailed information on the law with regards to seatbelt use, please see: https://www.gov.uk/seat-belts-law
[3] For more detailed information on the law with regards to mobile phone use, please see: https://www.gov.uk/using-mobile-phones-when-driving-the-law
[4] Christmas, S., Young, D. and Cuerden, R. (2008) *Strapping Yarns: Why People Do and Do Not Wear Seatbelts.* Department for Transport, London.
[5] MacLennan, P.A. et al (2004) *Risk of injury for occupants of motor vehicle collisions from unbelted occupants.* Injury Prevention 2004: 10 [online].
[6] European Transport Safety Council (2007) *Raising Compliance with Road Safety Law: 1st Road Safety PIN Report*. ETSC [online].

to specify the exact increased crash risk caused by mobile phone use, some reports have suggested that drivers may be up to four times more likely to be involved in a road traffic accident when using a mobile phone[7].

Other studies have shown that the reaction times associated with drivers using mobile phones are higher than those related to driving at the previous drink-drive level of 80mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood. For instance, a report published by the Transport Research Laboratory in 2011[8] found that using a hand-held phone increased reaction times by 37.4% whilst texting, 37.6% whilst using social networking sites, and 45.9% when making a call, compared to control conditions of no distraction. In contrast, being at the previous legal alcohol limit resulted in a 12.5% increase in reaction times[9].

However, despite the well communicated importance of complying with these road safety regulations (and the fact that there are penalties in place to sanction non-compliance), self-reported studies continue to suggest that non-compliance with seatbelt and mobile phone laws are commonplace. For instance, a recent wave of a longitudinal study examining attitudes to road safety in Scotland found that 5% of respondents admitted using a hand-held mobile phone whilst driving in the previous 12 months, whilst 10% said they had not used a seatbelt at some point over the same period, either as a driver or a passenger[10].

1.3. 2017 Seatbelt and Mobile Phone Survey

This report outlines the extent of seatbelt compliance and hand-held mobile phone use in Scotland to enhance understanding of those who continue to neglect these regulations.

The latest survey has been carried out by the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL).

To produce representative findings, the data has been weighted prior to analysis (see section 2.3 for further information). The analysis and reporting of the data collected in Scotland has been conducted by Transport Scotland, with DfT analysts reporting from an England, Wales, and Great Britain[11](GB) perspective[12].

[7] World Health Organisation (2011) *Mobile Phone Use: A Growing Problem of Driver Distraction.* WHO [online].
[8] Basacik, D., Reed, N. and Robbins, R. (2011) *Smartphone use while driving – a simulator study*. TRL report PPR592, Wokingham.
[9] Burns, P. C. et al. (2002) *How dangerous is driving with a mobile phone? Benchmarking the impairment to alcohol*. TRL Report TRL547 [online].
[10] KANTAR TNS (2018) *RITS: Driver Attitudes and Behaviour Tracking – Main findings (Wave 17 – August 2018–)*.
[11] Results for Great Britain are produced from a combination of data recorded in England and Scotland.
[12] For results for Great Britain and England, please see the DfT report 'Seatbelt and Mobile Phone Use Surveys: Great Britain, 2017'.

2. Methodology

2.1. Site selection

The surveys were carried out by a series of roadside observations at 30 sites in Scotland, including different road (major and minor[13]) and area (urban and rural[14]) types to provide nationally representative estimates. Sites were chosen in locations across Scotland to reflect different levels of road use and traffic volume, and included a number of sites which have been used in previous DfT seatbelt studies[15].

Observation of mobile phone use took place on roads with moving (free-flowing) and stationary (at traffic light controlled junctions) traffic, although the seatbelt survey was only undertaken at stationary sites.

A breakdown of the sites by road and area category is outlined in table 2.1. Further details about the survey sites, including location, are provided in Appendix C.

Scotland	Stationary sites		Moving sites		Total
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	
Major	5	6	4	2	17
Minor	2	7	2	2	13
Total	7	13	6	4	30

Table 2.1: Distribution of sites in Scotland by site characteristics

2.2. Data collection

Roadside observations were made of occupants of cars, vans, taxis, private hire, lorries and buses, coaches, and mini-buses.

At moving sites, the gender of drivers was recorded by road side observers along with whether they were using a hand-held mobile phone, and if so, whether this was to make a call (at-ear) or some other function (in-hand), for example texting.

At stationary sites, the same information as above was recorded for the mobile phone element with driver age and the presence of passengers also recorded.

Additional information was collected on seatbelt use, age, gender and seating position of all vehicle occupants, except buses and coaches where only information on driver characteristics were recorded. The seatbelt details included additional age categories for children and whether the appropriate child restraint was being used correctly.

[13] Major roads are classified as A roads; B, C and unclassified roads are defined as minor roads.
[14] Urban and Rural categories are based on DfT population definitions.
[15] Walter, L. (2010) *Seatbelt and mobile phone usage surveys: England and Scotland 2009*. Department for Transport: London.

The information recorded is outlined in **Table 2.2**.

		Seatbelt stationary sites	Mobile phone stationary sites	Mobile phone moving sites
Vehicle characteristics	Type: car, van, taxi, private hire, lorry, bus (or minibus or coach)	✓	✓	✓
	Passengers present	X	✓	X
Driver characteristics	Gender	✓	✓	✓
	Age group	✓	✓	X
	Hand-held mobile phone use	X	✓	✓
	Purpose of hand-held mobile phone use	X	✓	✓
	Driver restraint use	✓	X	X
Passenger characteristics	Seating position	✓	X	X
	Gender	✓	X	X
	Age group	✓	X	X
	Restraint use	✓	X	X

Table 2.2: Information recorded by survey and site type (✓ = recorded, X = not recorded)

Surveys were conducted during half-hour observation periods in September and October 2017. An issue with the quality of the data collected at five Scottish moving sites (for mobile phone observations only) resulted in fieldwork being repeated at the affected sites in June 2018.

Each survey site was visited for a half-day session[16] during the week, with selected sites being revisited on Saturdays to provide a representative estimate of behaviour on weekdays and at weekends.

A breakdown of the session times is provided in table 2.3.

[16] A previous study by TRL compared full and half-day sessions and found that a representative estimate was obtainable through a half-day period. For more info see: TRL (2008) *Restraint use by car occupants, 2006–2008*. TRL leaflet LF2106, Wokingham.

Morning Session		Afternoon Session	
Start	**End**	**Start**	**End**
07:30	08:00	13:30	14:00
08:30	09:00	14:30	15:00
09:30	10:00	15:30	16:00
10:30	11:00	16:30	17:00
11:30	12:00	17:30	18:00

Table 2.3: Survey session times

Overall, the survey periods accounted for both the morning and evening peak periods so provide a reliable estimate of mobile phone use and seatbelt compliance throughout the day.

2.3. Weighting and analysis

During all survey periods, traffic counts of all vehicles passing the site were made. This included vehicles where no in-depth observation details were recorded, either because the observer could not accurately record information (if a vehicle passed too quickly or visibility was poor) or because the vehicle was not part of the sample (for example, a moving vehicle passing a stationary site during a green-light phase).

Following collection, the data were quality assured before being weighted using the recorded traffic count and DfT traffic flow data to provide a nationally representative estimate for Scotland across different road and area types.

Therefore, seatbelt wearing rates were calculated as the (weighted) number of relevant vehicle occupants correctly restrained over the (weighted) number of all relevant occupants observed[17]. In the same way, mobile phone usage rates were calculated as the (weighted) number of drivers using a hand-held mobile phone (at-ear and in-hand combined) over the (weighted) number of all drivers observed.

It is worth noting that some records were excluded from certain elements of the analysis process and this is reflected in the sample sizes detailed. The most notable exclusions were:

- records where mobile phone or seatbelt use was recorded as unknown
- records where vehicle type was recorded as unknown
- records where gender or age were unknown and these were variables being analysed

[17] For example, the (weighted) number of front seat car passengers correctly restrained over the (weighted) number of all front seat car passengers observed.

The majority of the results presented in this report are based on data recorded during weekday observations. Analysis based on data collected at weekends is highlighted where appropriate.

For the purposes of analysis, car drivers and passengers in the survey results includes occupants of private cars, taxis, and private hire vehicles unless otherwise stated. The 'other vehicle' category includes drivers and passengers of vans, lorries, buses, coaches, and minibuses, unless otherwise stated.

When referring to passengers, the seatbelt usage rate also includes the correct use of child restraints where children have been observed in the vehicle.

Where charts are used to present results, the corresponding tables can be found in Appendices A and B. These tables provide details of the data behind the charts as well as an indication of the relevant sample sizes.

Figures relating to the wearing rates in England and across Great Britain have been provided by the Department for Transport and may be calculated in a different way from the figures for Scotland. Further information and comparisons are available in the DfT (2019) publication *Seatbelt and Mobile Phone Use Surveys: Great Britain, 2017.*

For the mobile phone survey, usage rates are presented separately for moving and stationary sites as it is possible that the prevalence and type of mobile phone use may vary across different driving situations. Moreover, the data recorded and the weightings applied during the analysis process differed between the site categories.

Statistical tests have not been carried out to determine whether differences between Scotland and Great Britain or between groups (e.g. male or female) are statistically significant.

2.4. Comparability

The results reported for seatbelt compliance in Scotland in 2017 are comparable with the DfT analysis of the 2017 England and Great Britain data as the findings were established using the same recording, weighting and analysis procedures. The methodology employed in the seatbelt survey is the same as previous studies so figures presented in this report are also comparable with historical data, for example data related to Scotland in 2014 and 2009. Specifically, it is worth noting is that the fieldwork for the 2014 and 2009 seatbelt surveys were also conducted in October, although some 2017 seatbelt sites were surveyed in September.

The comparability of mobile phone use at moving sites has been impaired by the resurveying of five sites in June 2018 following issues raised in relation to the quality of the data. This means that results relating to mobile phone use at moving sites in Scotland are not directly comparable with the DfT 2017 England and Great Britain data as these were collected in the autumn of 2017. The comparability of mobile phone use at stationary sites in Scotland remains unaffected as these surveys were carried out at the same time as the England and Wales surveys.

2.5. Limitations

The survey findings are generally limited by the reliance on the judgement of roadside observers (for instance, on gender and age). However, this risk was present in all previous examples of the study, yet reliable findings were still achieved due to the large volume of observations made and the weightings procedure followed during analysis. In addition, observers were given extensive training and the data were quality assured prior to analysis.

As previously noted, five of the moving sites were resurveyed in June 2018. This has meant that the results for mobile phone use at moving sites in Scotland are not comparable with the England and Great Britain results as these refer to data collected exclusively in the autumn of 2017.

It is possible that visibility could have been restricted by poor lighting, tinted windows or glare, particularly at moving sites. This may have led to inaccurate data being recorded or certain details being missed. The survey session times were scheduled to avoid problems of poor lighting as far as possible.

Roadside observers were wearing high-visibility jackets for the purposes of safety and transparency and this may have influenced the behaviour of some drivers. For example, some may have hidden or ended their mobile phone use having detected the observers. Once again, this risk was present in all previous studies.

The mobile phone survey also recorded the use of tablets, mp3 players, and satellite navigation systems, along with any other distracting activity (e.g. eating or drinking) at the end of each observation as a short 'free text' description. Being distracted by using such devices is dangerous and also illegal[18]. It is possible that a few users of these devices are included in the standard observation data where the observer could not clearly tell whether a driver was using a mobile phone or some other device. However, this effect may also be present in the other direction, i.e. observers not recording mobile phone use as they thought it was a different type of device.

[18] The law states that: You can use hands-free phones, sat navs and 2-way radios when you're driving or riding. But if the police think you're distracted and not in control of your vehicle you could still get stopped and penalised. For more information, please see: https://www.gov.uk/using-mobile-phones-when-driving-the-law.

3. Seatbelt survey results

The 2017 seatbelt survey resulted in 5,391 eligible vehicles and 7,169 vehicle occupants being observed in Scotland.

Key findings

- seatbelt use was recorded at 97.3% for all drivers, a marginal increase from 96.4% in 2014
- the seatbelt wearing rate for car drivers in 2017 was 98.6%, compared to 98% in 2014
- 'other vehicle' (vans, lorries, buses, coaches, and mini-buses) driver seatbelt use has increased from 88.5% in 2014 to 92.5% in 2017
- there has been a decrease in the proportion of rear seat passengers observed wearing their seatbelt from 99% in 2014 to 95.1% in 2017. However, this is largely driven by inclusion of 'other vehicles' (vans, lorries, buses, coaches, and mini-buses) in the 2017 survey as the 2014 survey only recorded rear seat passengers in cars
- seatbelt compliance amongst occupants of 'other vehicle' types (vans, lorries, buses, coaches and mini-buses) was substantially lower, with wearing rates of 92.5% for drivers, 95% for front seat passengers, and 52.8% for rear seat passengers

The majority of the results are based on data recorded during weekday observations, except from those sections which explicitly discuss weekends.

In addition, results presented in sections 3.3 to 3.7 focus solely on seatbelt use by car occupants due to small sample sizes for 'other vehicles'.

Figures relating to the seatbelt rates in England and across Great Britain have been provided by the Department of Transport, some of which have been calculated in a different way from the figures of Scotland. For example, the DfT car category does not include taxi and private hire occupants. However, broad comparisons of headline figures should be reliable. Further information and comparisons are available in the DfT (2019) publication *Seatbelt and Mobile Phone Use Surveys: Great Britain, 2017.*

3.1. Overview of observations

The 2017 seatbelt survey resulted in 5,391 eligible vehicles and 7,169 vehicle occupants being observed in Scotland. The majority of vehicles were cars, excluding taxis and private hire vehicles (4,397, 81.6% of the total).

Larger numbers of observations produce more reliable results when weighted, so it can be assumed that the seatbelt compliance estimate for car drivers is more accurate than that for drivers of other vehicles and all passengers.

Further information on the number of observations is provided in table 3.1 below.

Vehicle type	Driver	Front seat passenger	Rear seat passenger
Car	4,397	1,212	352
Other vehicle	994	187	27
All vehicles	5,391	1,399	379

Table 3.1 Vehicle occupants observed in seatbelt survey, weekdays

3.2. Overall seatbelt use

The proportion of drivers observed correctly using a seatbelt in 2017 was 97.3%, an increase from the 96.4% observed in 2014. Seatbelt use for drivers of 'other vehicles' (vans, lorries, and buses) in particular has increased from 88.5% in 2014 to 92.5% in 2017.

An increase of seatbelt usage among front seat passengers was also recorded, rising from 96.7% in 2014 to 98.7% in 2017. However, the level of rear seat passengers appears to have decreased from 99% in 2014 to 95.1% in 2017. This is largely due to the fact that the 2014 survey only recorded rear seat passenger seatbelt usage for cars, while the 2017 survey includes 'other vehicles' which have lower usage rates overall but particularly for rear seat passengers (see table 3.2). Rear seat passengers in cars were significantly more likely to wear seatbelts compared to rear seat passengers in other vehicles, 98.4% compared to 52.8%. However, it should be noted that the sample size for rear seat passengers in 'other vehicles' was very small (see table 3.2).

Seat position	Vehicle type	Seatbelt use	Sample size
Driver	All vehicles	97.3%	5,391
	Car	98.6%	4,397
	Other vehicle	92.5%	994
Front seat passenger	All vehicles	98.7%	1,399
	Car	99.4%	1,212
	Other vehicle	95.1%	187
Rear seat passenger	All vehicles	95.1%	379
	Car	98.4%	352
	Other vehicle	52.8%	*27*

Table 3.2 Seatbelt use by vehicle type, weekdays

In line with this trend, a greater proportion of car drivers were observed using a seatbelt compared to 'other vehicles' (98.6% compared to 92.5%), which was also the case for front seat passengers (99.4% versus 95.1%)

The 2017 results for Scotland show marginal increases in seatbelt usage rates for car drivers and front seat passengers compared to 2014, while rates for rear seat passengers have decreased slightly, although still remaining significantly higher than the 2009 level (see figure 3.1)

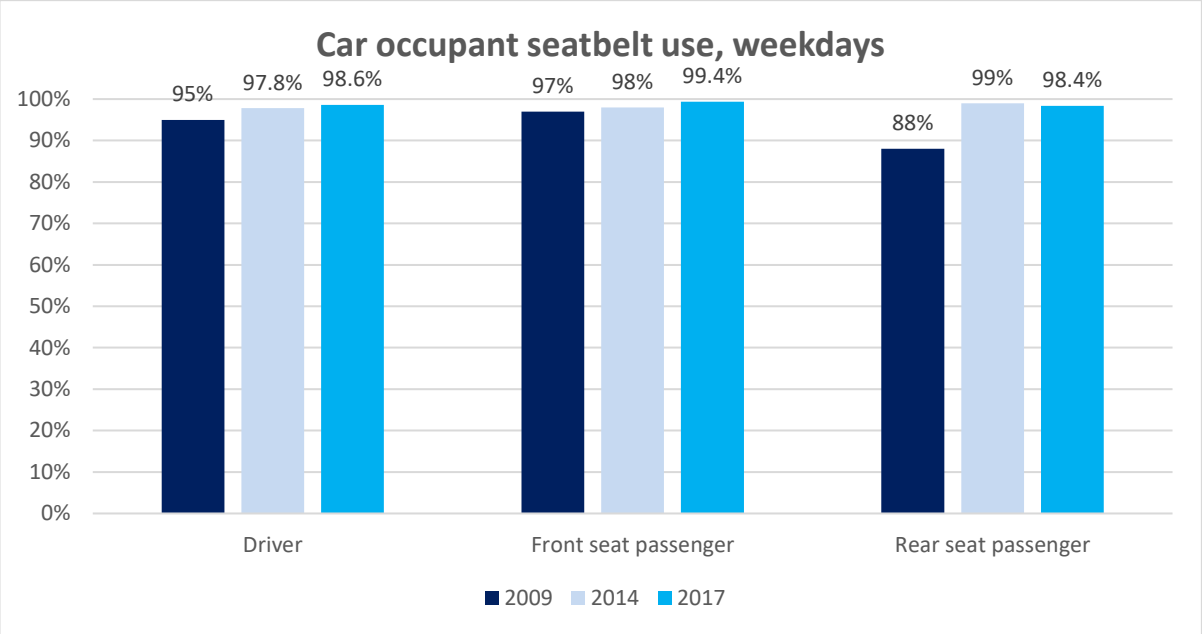

Figure 3.1

The seatbelt rates for drivers in Scotland were slightly higher compared to drivers in England, Wales, and Great Britain (see table 3.3). For passengers, usage rates were notably higher in Scotland compared to England and Wales, and Great Britain.

	Driver	Sample size	Front seat passenger	Sample size	Rear seat passenger	Sample size
Great Britain	96.5%	15,745	93.1%	4,152	90.7%	1,093
England and Wales	96.0%	10,354	90.4%	2,753	88.3%	714
Scotland	97.3%	5,391	98.7%	1,399	95.1%	379

Table 3.3 All vehicle occupants seatbelt use by seating position, weekdays

It should be noted that the Scotland figures are based on smaller sample sizes those of England and Wales and Great Britain.

3.3. Seatbelt use by gender

Analysis of the data according to gender revealed that female drivers tended to be slightly more likely to wear a seatbelt than their male counterparts (see table 3.4). While the 2014 survey suggested this gap was showing signs of narrowing, the gap for drivers has increased slightly based on the 2017 data. Overall, the seatbelt wearing rates of passengers were found to be similar across gender.

Seat position	Gender	Scotland 2009	Scotland 2014	Scotland 2017	2017 Scotland sample size
Driver	Male	93%	97.7%	97.9%	2,437
	Female	97%	98.2%	99.4%	1,916
Front seat passenger	Male	96%	98.0%	99.0%	399
	Female	98%	98.2%	99.5%	765
Rear seat passenger	Male	79%	99.4%	97.9%	116
	Female	89%	99.3%	98.2%	175

Table 3.4 Car occupant seatbelt use by seating position and gender, weekdays

3.4. Seatbelt use by age

Car occupant seatbelt use was found to be consistently high (above 98%) across all age categories. Seatbelt use has increased for occupants in all seating positions (drivers, front seat and rear seat passengers), except for rear seat passengers over the age of 14 which has decreased, and for front seat passengers over 60 which has remained static (see table 3.4). There was a notable increase in the usage rate for child front seat passengers which is now at 100% compared to 94.3% in 2014. However, the small sample size for this category (n=99) should be noted.

Seat position	Age	Scotland 2009	Scotland 2014	Scotland 2017	2017 Scotland sample size
Driver	17-29	96%	98.2%	99.2%	566
	30-59	94%	97.8%	98.2%	2,976
	60+	96%	98%	99.7%	827
Front seat passenger	0-13	97%	94.3%	100%	99
	14-29	97%	98.1%	99.6%	239
	30-59	98%	98%	99.1%	538
	60+	98%	99.5%	99.5%	308
	14+	98%	98.5%	99.3%	1,085
Rear seat passenger	0-13	-	98.6%	100%	186
	14+	75%	99.3%	98.4%	148

Table 3.5 Car occupant seatbelt use by seating position and age, weekdays

A 100% seatbelt rate was also found for rear seat passengers below the age of 14. However, the small sample size (n=186) should be considered here also.

3.5. Seatbelt use by area and road type

Seatbelt wearing rates by car drivers have increased on the 2014 levels for all road types in rural areas, and most significantly, for drivers on minor roads where seatbelt use was recorded at 99.6% compared to 97.6% in 2014. However, it is worth noting that the sample size for this category is significantly smaller than the other

categories. For urban areas, seatbelt use has marginally increased for major roads while remaining at 98.3% for minor roads (see table 3.6).

Area type	Road type	Scotland 2009	Scotland 2014	Scotland 2017	2017 Scotland sample size
Urban	Major	91%	98.5%	99.4%	1,399
	Minor	94%	98.3%	98.3%	1,443
	All	93%	98.4%	98.6%	2,842
Rural	Major	96%	97.5%	98.4%	1,327
	Minor	95%	97.6%	99.6%	228
	All	96%	97.5%	98.5%	1,555

Table 3.6 Car driver seatbelt use by area and road type, weekdays

Seatbelt use was 98.6% or higher for front seat passengers for all categories of road and area.

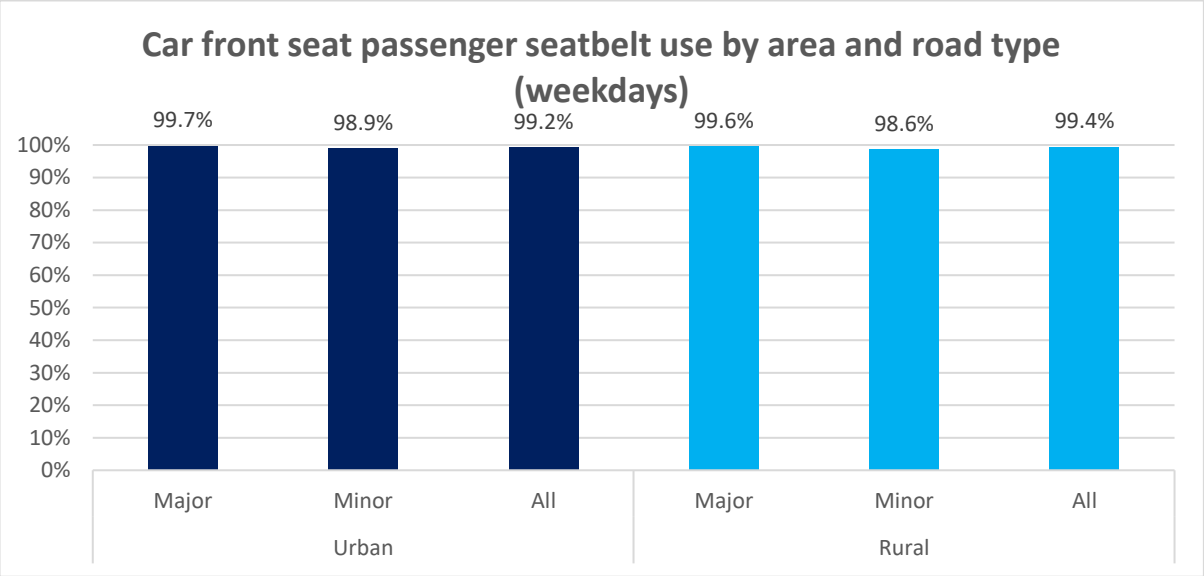

Figure 3.2

3.6. Seatbelt use by time of day

Analysis of seatbelt use at different times of the day found that wearing rates were above 95% for all occupants types at all points throughout the day.

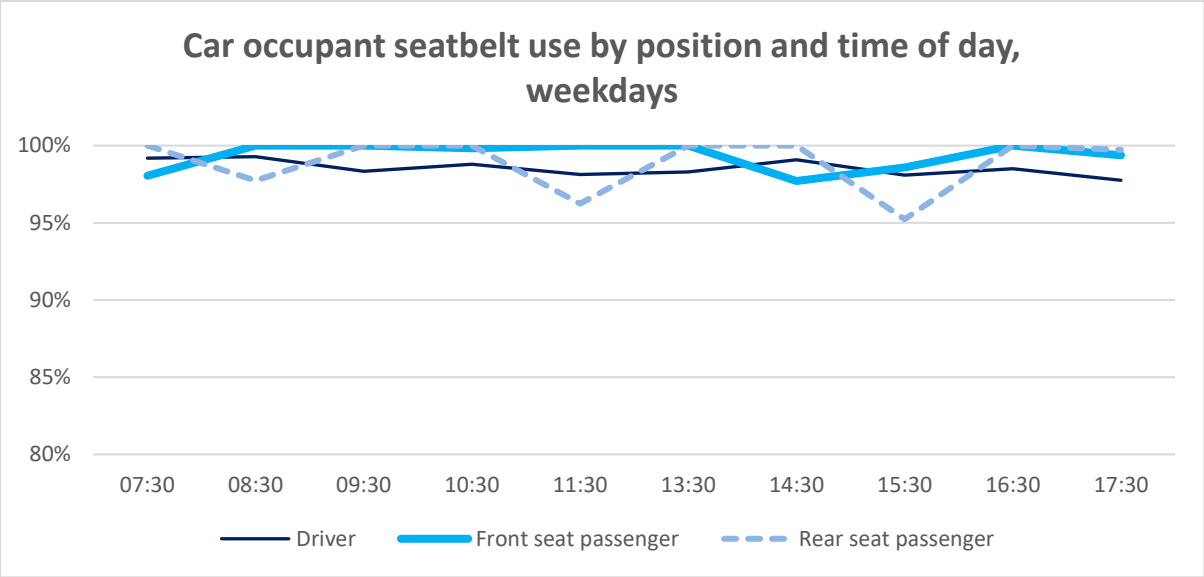

Figure 3.3

3.7. Seatbelt use by time of week

A selected number of observation sites were also surveyed at the weekend. At these sites, similar levels of seatbelt use was found on weekdays and weekends, with a slight increase at weekends for drivers and front seat passengers. For rear seat passengers however, the weekend brought a decrease in seatbelt use from 98.4% to 96.9%.

	Weekday	Sample size	Weekend	Sample size
Driver	98.6%	4,397	98.9%	2,383
Front seat passenger	99.4%	1,209	99.8%	1,074
Rear seat passenger	98.4%	352	96.9%	421

Table 3.7 Car occupant seatbelt use by time of week

Again, it is worth noting the significantly smaller sample sizes for rear seat passengers.

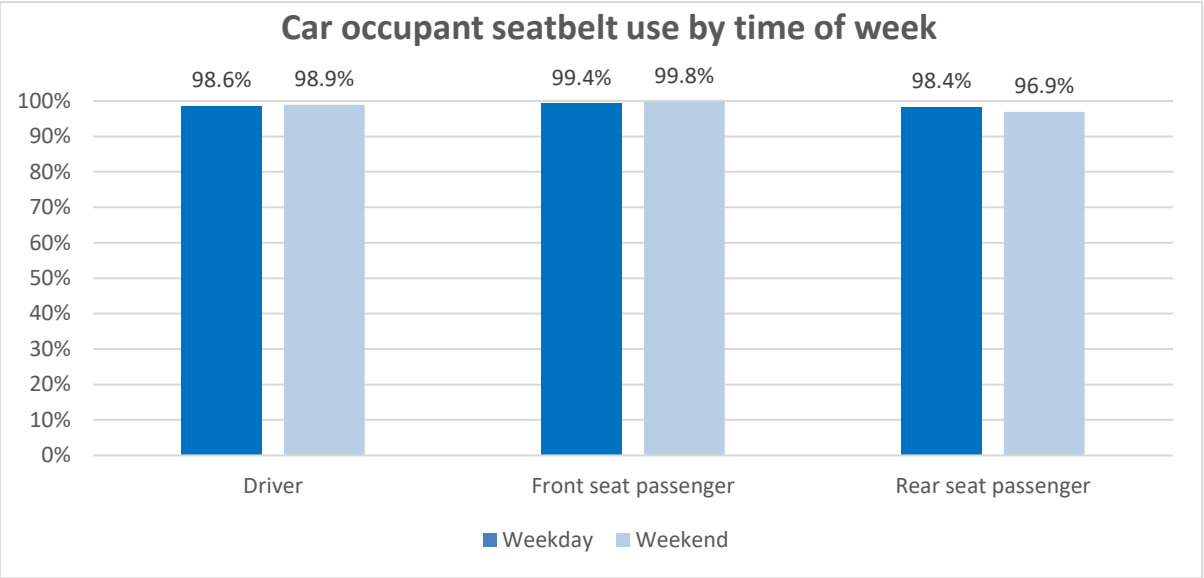
Car occupant seatbelt use by time of week
98.6%
98.9%
99.4%
99.8%
98.4%
96.9%
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
Driver
Front seat passenger
Rear seat passenger
Weekday
Weekend

Figure 3.4

4. Mobile phone survey results

The 2017 mobile phone survey resulted in 14,427 drivers being observed in Scotland, the majority of which (79%, 11,392) were in cars.

Key findings

- mobile phone use has increased overall. In 2017, 2% of all drivers were observed using a mobile phone at moving sites and 2.5% at stationary sites, compared to 1.6% and 1.7% respectively in 2014
- notably, at-ear mobile phone use has increased for all drivers, bringing use up to similar levels for in-hand use
- mobile phone use by drivers of 'other vehicles' (vans, lorries, buses, coaches, and minibuses) was higher at both moving and stationary sites (2.9% and 3% respectively) compared to car drivers
- data collected at stationary sites revealed that younger car drivers (aged between 17-29) were more likely to be observed using a mobile phone than those in older age categories

The majority of the results are based on data recorded during weekday observations, except from those sections which explicitly discuss weekends.

In addition, results presented in sections 4.4 to 4.8 focus solely on mobile phone use by car drivers due to small sample sizes for 'other vehicles'.

Figures relating to the mobile phone usage rates in England and across Great Britain have been provided by the Department of Transport, some of which have been calculated differently from the figures for Scotland. For example, the DfT car category does not include taxi or private hire drivers. However, broad comparisons of headline figures should be reliable. Further information and comparisons are available in the DfT (2019) publication *Seatbelt and Mobile Phone Use Surveys: Great Britain, 2017.*

4.1. Overview of observations

The 2017 mobile phone survey resulted in 14,427 drivers being observed in Scotland, the majority of which (79%, 11,392) were in cars.

Vehicle type	Moving sites	Stationary sites
Car	6,720	4,975
Other vehicle	1,634	1,098
All vehicles	8,354	6,073

Table 4.1 Drivers observed in mobile phone survey, weekdays

4.2. Overall mobile phone use

Analysis of the weighted data collected through the mobile phone observation survey found that mobile phone use was slightly higher at stationary sites (see table 4.2). At-ear use has increased from 0.2% for both sites in 2014, to 0.9% and 1.3% for moving and stationary sites respectively in 2017 (see table 4.3). Therefore, at-ear and in-hand use are now at similar levels, whereas previously there was a distinction between type of use.

Site type	All use	At-ear	In-hand	Sample size
Moving	2.0%	0.9%	1.1%	8,354
Stationary	2.5%	1.3%	1.2%	6,073

Table 4.2 All drivers mobile phone use by type of use and site type, weekdays

4.3. Mobile phone use by vehicle type

There has been an increase of mobile phone use at both sites for all vehicles. This is driven by increased at-ear usage as in-hand usage has remained static for car drivers and notably decreased for drivers of ‘other vehicles’ (see table 4.3).

Car drivers were less likely than drivers of ‘other vehicles’ to use mobile phones at both moving (1.8% compared to 3%) and stationary sites (2.4% compared to 2.9%). However, drivers of ‘other vehicles’ were less likely to be observed using a mobile phone in-hand than car drivers at stationary sites (0.3% versus 1.5%).

Site type	Vehicle type	Scotland 2014			Scotland 2017			2017 Scotland sample size
		All use	At-ear	In-hand	All use	At-ear	In-hand	
Moving	Car	1.3%	0.2%	1.1%	1.8%	0.7%	1.1%	6,720
	Other vehicle	2.9%	0.5%	1.4%	2.9%	1.8%	1.1%	1,634
	All vehicles	1.6%	0.2%	1.3%	2.0%	0.9%	1.1%	8,354
Stationary	Car	1.6%	0.2%	1.5%	2.4%	0.9%	1.5%	4,975
	Other vehicle	1.8%	0.6%	1.2%	3.0%	2.7%	0.3%	1,098
	All vehicles	1.7%	0.2%	1.4%	2.5%	1.3%	1.2%	6,073

Table 4.3 Mobile phone use by vehicle type, type of use and site type, weekdays

Considering 'other vehicles' in Scotland, van drivers were more likely than lorry drivers to be observed using a mobile phone at both moving and stationary sites (see table 4.4). Rates for van drivers at moving sites were found to be notably higher than lorry drivers, while lorry drivers' mobile phone use at stationary sites has increased significantly from 0% in 2014 to 1.9% in 2017. However, it is worth noting the small sample size for lorry drivers.

Vehicle type	Moving sites				Stationary sites			
	All use	At-ear	In-hand	Sample size	All use	At-ear	In-hand	Sample size
Van	3.4%	2.0%	1.4%	1,225	3.2%	2.8%	0.4%	800
Lorry	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%	231	1.9%	1.9%	0.0%	183
Van and Lorry	2.9%	1.6%	1.2%	1,456	2.9%	2.6%	0.3%	983

Table 4.4 Other vehicle driver mobile phone use by vehicle and site type, weekdays

Mobile phone usage rates at stationary sites in Scotland were marginally higher compared to England and Wales and Great Britain (see table 4.5). While drivers in Scotland were almost equally as likely to be recorded using a mobile phone in-hand as at-ear, drivers in England and Wales were more likely to be observed using a mobile phone in-hand. A comparison of mobile phone use at moving sites is not possible (see section 2.4 for more information).

	Stationary sites			
	All use	At-ear	In-hand	Sample size
Great Britain	2.1%	0.7%	1.4%	18,274
England and Wales	2.2%	0.5%	1.7%	12,201
Scotland	2.5%	1.3%	1.2%	6,073

Table 4.5 All vehicle driver mobile phone use by type of use, stationary sites, weekdays

4.4. Mobile phone use by gender

Analysis of mobile phone use by gender revealed marginal differences between male and female drivers. Mobile phone use by female drivers was the same across sites. Male drivers were somewhat more likely than female drivers to be observed using a mobile phone at stationary sites (2.6% compared to 2%), while female drivers were marginally more likely to be recorded using a mobile phone at moving sites (2% compared to 1.7%).

Site type	Male	Sample size	Female	Sample size
Moving	1.7%	3,736	2.0%	2,977
Stationary	2.6%	2,748	2.0%	2,189

Table 4.6 Car driver overall mobile phone use by gender and site type, weekdays

The survey recorded a general increase of mobile phone use compared to 2014 levels, most notably of at-ear use. For male drivers, at-ear use at stationary sites was observed as 1.1% compared to 0.3% in 2014.

Site type	Use	Scotland 2014		Scotland 2017	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
Moving	At-ear	0.1%	0.2%	0.7%	0.7%
	In-hand	1.2%	0.9%	1.0%	1.3%
	All use	1.3%	1.2%	1.7%	2.0%
Stationary	At-ear	0.3%	0.1%	1.1%	0.7%
	In-hand	1.3%	1.6%	1.5%	1.4%
	All use	1.6%	1.7%	2.6%	2.0%

Table 4.7 Car driver mobile phone use by type of use, site type, and gender, weekdays

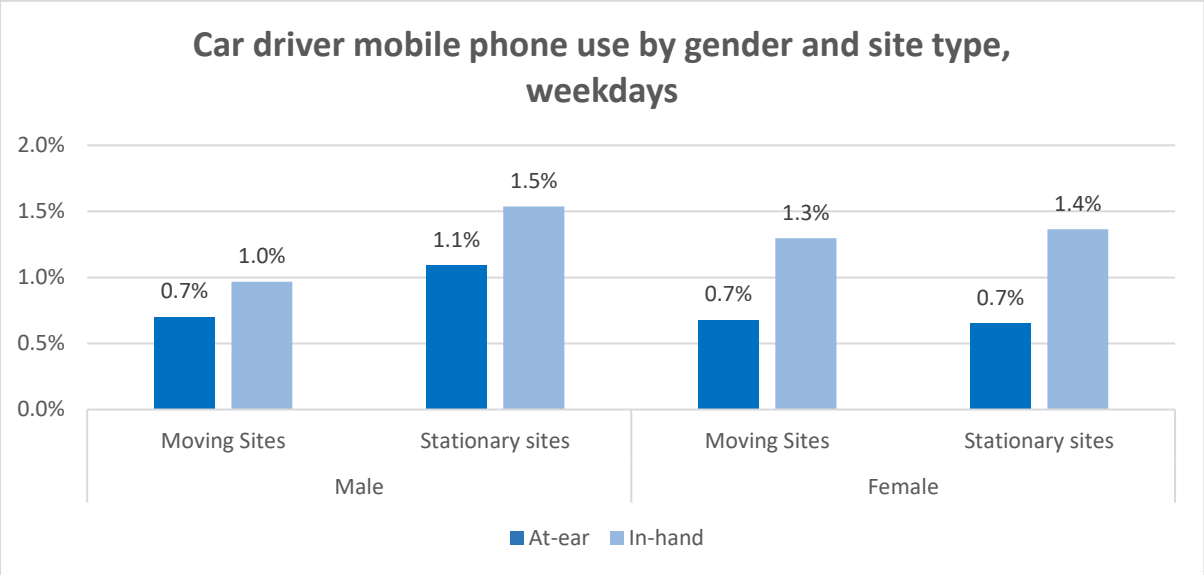

Figure 4.1

4.5. Mobile phone use by age

Analysis of the data collected at stationary sites by age found that younger drivers (those aged between 17 and 29) were more likely to be observed using a mobile phone than those in older age groups (see table 4.8).

	17-29	30-59	60+
At-ear	1.2%	1.1%	0.3%
In-hand	3.6%	1.4%	0.5%
All use	4.8%	2.5%	0.8%
Sample size	523	3,253	1,178

Table 4.8 Car driver mobile phone use by age, weekdays

All mobile phone use for younger drivers has also increased since 2014. In-hand use has decreased slightly for those aged 60+, while at-ear use has increased for drivers aged 30 to 59 (see figure 4.2). Overall mobile phone use has increased for all age groups except for drivers aged 60+ whose usage rate has remained static.

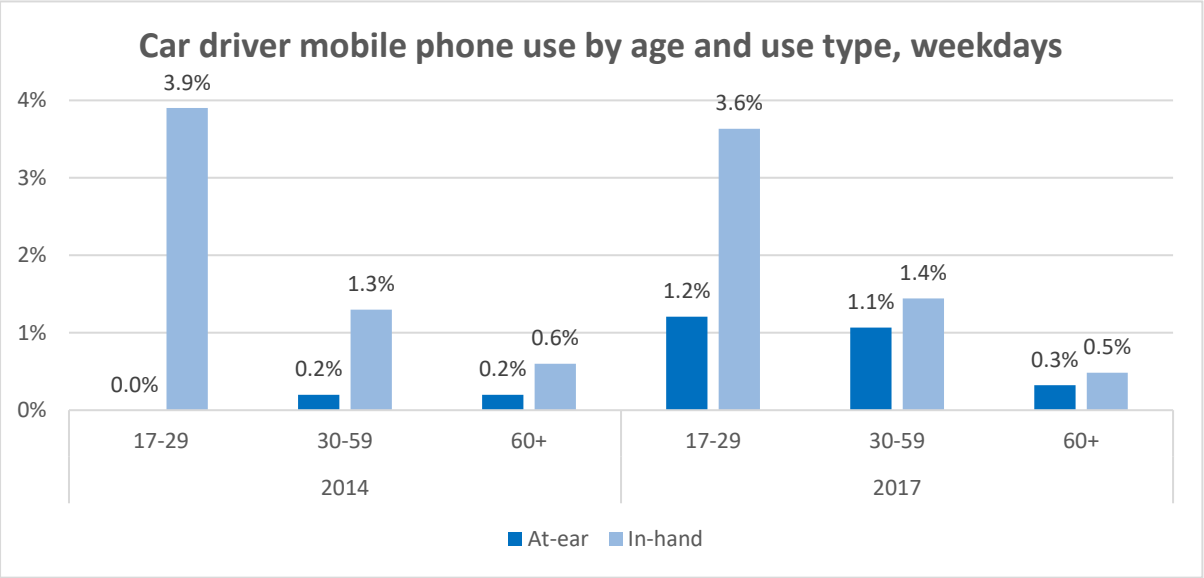

Figure 4.2

The usage rates according to age followed a similar pattern for both men and women, with the highest overall usage rate found amongst younger men.

Age	Male				Female			
	All use	At-ear	In-hand	Sample size	All use	At-ear	In-hand	Sample size
17-29	5.9%	1.2%	4.7%	159	4.3%	1.1%	3.2%	361
30-59	2.9%	1.3%	1.6%	1,822	2.0%	0.7%	1.3%	1,403
60+	1.2%	0.5%	0.7%	760	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	413

Table 4.9 Mobile phone use by gender and age, weekdays

4.6. Mobile phone use by area and road type

The largest proportion of car drivers observed using mobile phones at moving sites were on minor roads in urban areas (3.0%). This signifies a change from 2014 when major roads in urban areas had the largest proportion of car drivers observed using mobile phones. Drivers were also more likely to be observed using mobile phones in urban areas overall than rural (2.8% compared to 1.4%).

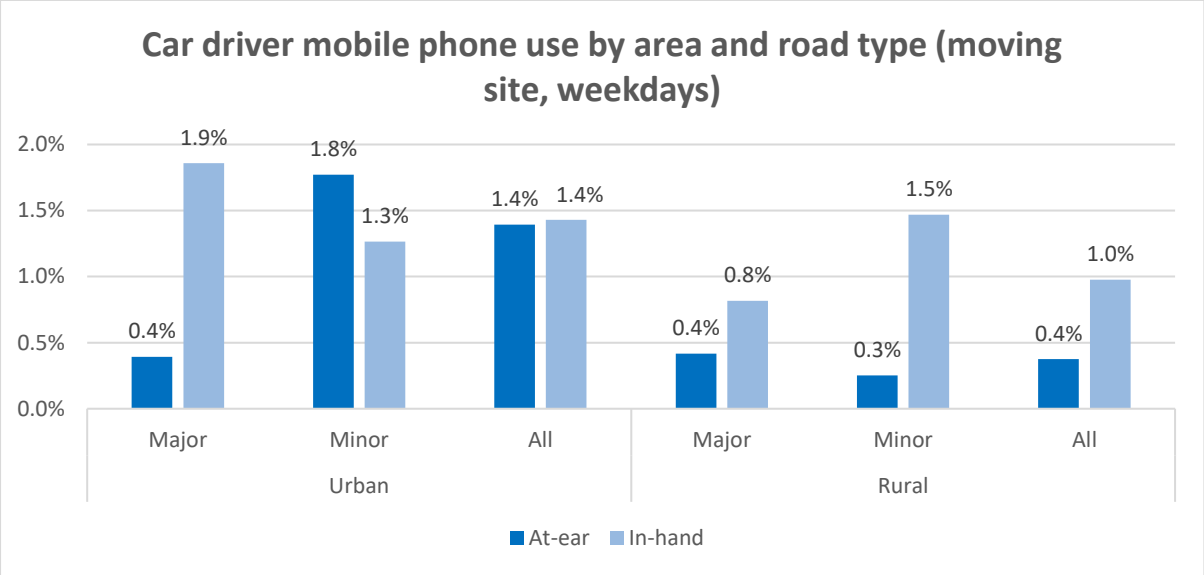

Figure 4.3

The opposite was true for stationary sites, where rural areas had the largest proportion of drivers observed using mobile phones, with minor roads in particular having the greatest percentage of mobile phone usage at 8.6%. This is a notable change from 2014, where minor roads in rural areas had the lower proportion of mobile phone usage at 0.4%. However, only two stationary rural minor road sites were surveyed in 2017, neither of which were included in the 2014 survey. It is possible that these sites have particularly high mobile phone usage rates relative to the sites surveyed in 2014, rather than there being a general increase in mobile phone use on these types of roads.

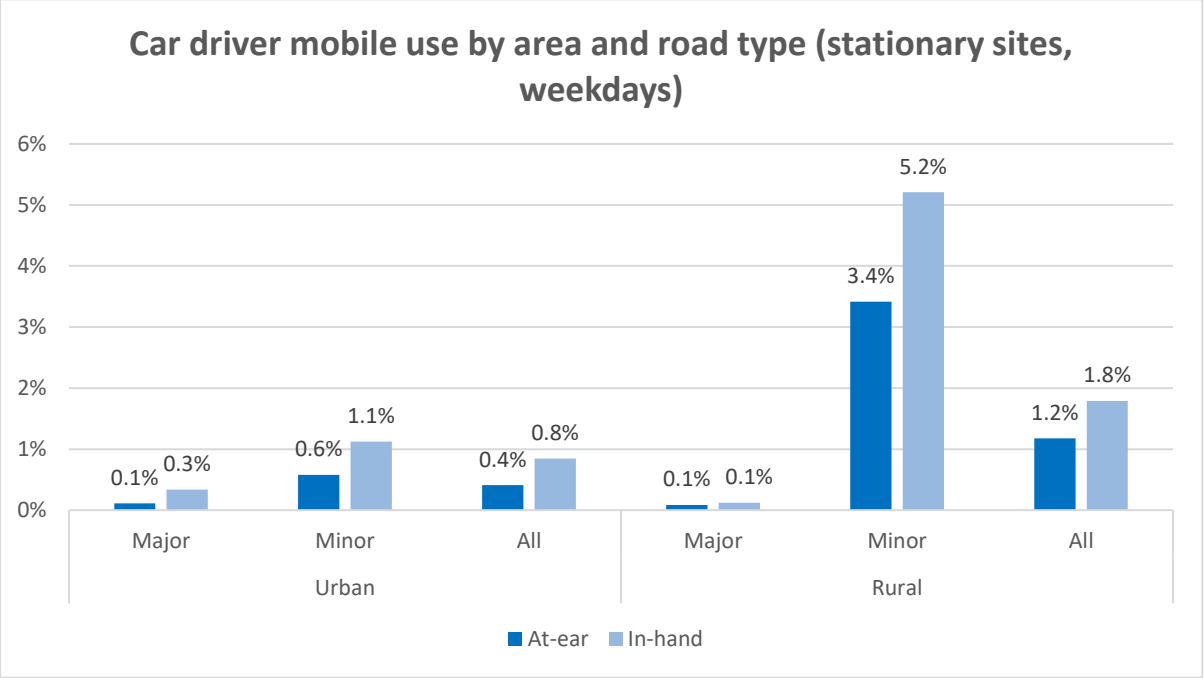

Figure 4.4

Mobile phone usage at major roads in urban areas decreased from 1.9% in 2014 to 0.4% in 2017, and at major roads in rural areas from 2.1% in 2014 to 0.2% in 2017.

4.7. Mobile phone use by time of day

Analysis of the data recorded at moving sites found varying levels of mobile phone use over the course of the day, peaking at 17.30.

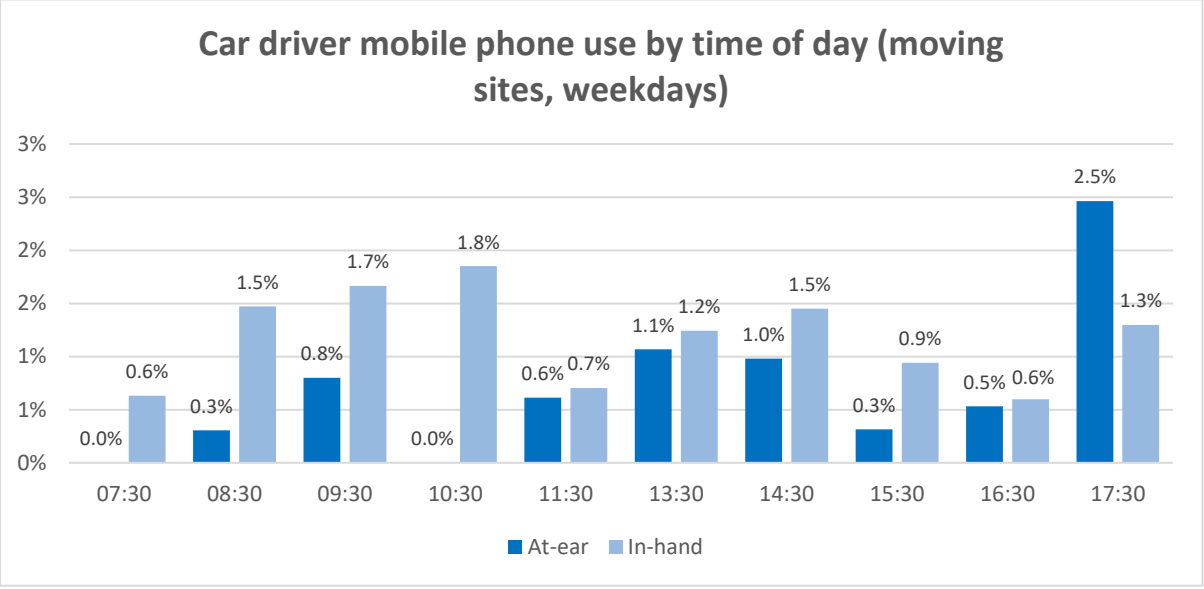

Figure 4.5

In contrast, mobile phone use at stationary sites seemed to increase as the day progressed, with higher levels at later times of day.

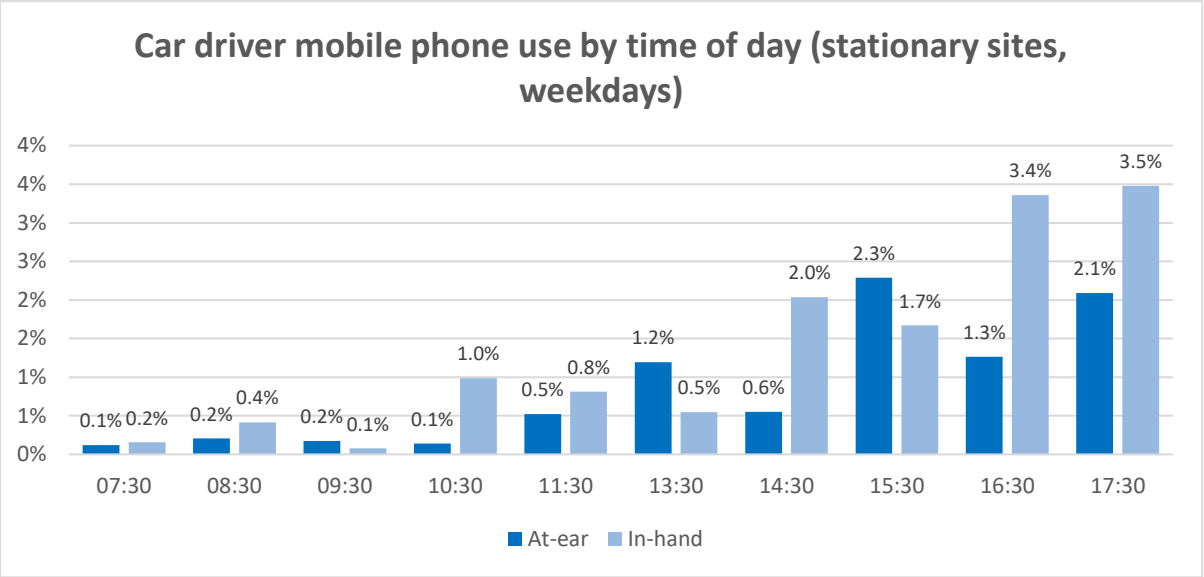

Figure 4.6

4.8. Mobile phone use by time of week

In order to allow comparison between weekdays and weekends, a selected number of sites were re-surveyed on a Saturday. Analysis of only those sites surveyed both during the week and at the weekend shows that usage rates were higher during the week at moving sites (1.8% compared to 0.5%). Conversely, usage rates at stationary sites were higher at the weekend (3.9% compared to 2.4%). This contrasts with findings from 2014 where the weekend rate at stationary sites was recorded at 1.5% which was lower than the weekday rate of 2.3%.

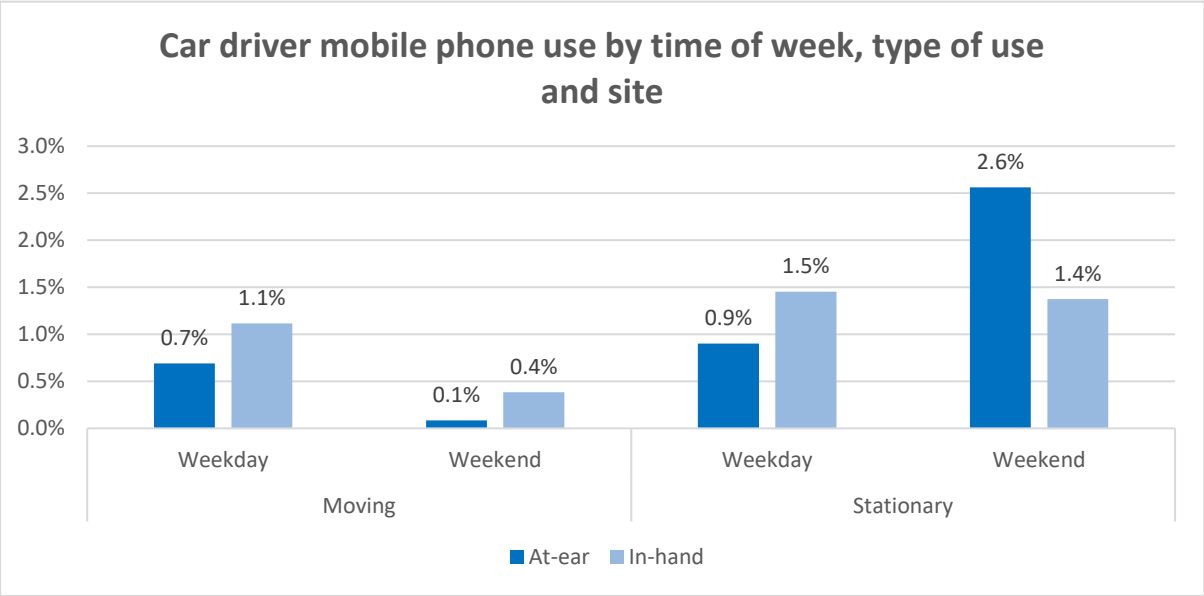

Figure 4.7

5. Conclusions

5.1. Seatbelt survey

The 2017 seatbelt survey resulted 5,391 vehicles and 7,169 vehicle occupants being observed in Scotland. The results showed increased wearing rates for both drivers and front seat passengers in all vehicles, especially for front seat passengers in 'other vehicles' (vans, lorries, buses, coaches, and mini-buses). Despite an increase in wearing rates, seatbelt use among 'other vehicle' occupants remained notably lower than that of car occupants.

Drivers, as well as passengers, were more likely to wear a seatbelt in Scotland compared to England and Wales and Great Britain.

Seatbelt use among rear seat passengers has decreased from the 2014 figure. While wearing rates for car rear seat passengers has declined somewhat, the overall decrease is largely related to the inclusion of 'other vehicle' passengers who were excluded from the 2014 survey and as discussed, have lower seatbelt usage overall.

The survey found that female drivers were somewhat more likely to wear a seatbelt than their male counterparts. Wearing rates for car passengers were similarly high (around 98%) across gender, and seatbelt use was found to be generally high (above 98%) amongst car occupants of all ages.

Seatbelt use by car drivers in rural areas has increased while remaining static in urban areas. Wearing rates were found to be high throughout the day (generally above 97% for all occupants) whilst seatbelt use for drivers and front seat passengers was higher at weekends compared to weekdays, but lower for rear seat passengers.

5.2. Mobile phone survey

The mobile phone survey resulted in 14,427 drivers being observed in Scotland, including 8,354 drivers recorded at moving sites and 6,073 drivers at stationary sites. The 2017 survey showed increased mobile phone use for all vehicles which appeared to be driven by a significant increase in at-ear use. In-hand mobile phone use has remained static for car drivers but decreased for drivers of 'other vehicles'. Drivers in Scotland appeared marginally more likely to be recorded using a mobile phone at stationary sites compared to their counterparts in England and Wales.

Drivers were more likely to be recorded using a mobile phone at stationary sites compared to moving sites. 'Other vehicle' drivers had higher usage rates compared to car drivers across sites. Analysis of mobile phone use by gender revealed marginal differences between male and female drivers. Male drivers were somewhat more likely than female drivers to be recorded using a mobile phone at stationary sites, while female drivers were marginally more likely to use a mobile phone at moving sites.

Mobile phone use at major roads has decreased overall, while usage rates at stationary rural minor roads has significantly increased. Analysis according to time of day found that mobile phone use at moving sites fluctuates during the course of the day, while at stationary sites, mobile phone use appeared to increase as the day progressed. In addition to this, mobile phone use at moving sites was found to be higher during weekdays but higher at the weekend at stationary sites.

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Appendix A

Additional Seatbelt Survey Tables

Seat position	Scotland 2009	Scotland 2014	Scotland 2017	Scotland 2017 sample size
Driver	95%	97.8%	98.6%	4,397
Front seat passenger	97%	98.0%	99.4%	1,202
Rear seat passenger	88%	99.0%	98.4%	379

Table A.1 Car occupant seatbelt use, weekdays

Seat position	Age	Seatbelt use	Sample size
Driver	17-29	99.2%	205
	30-59	97.4%	1,748
	60+	99.7%	510
Front seat passenger	0-13	98%	*37*
	14-29	100%	92
	30-59	97.9%	178
	60+	100%	85

Table A.2 Male car occupant seatbelt use by age, weekdays

Seat position	Age	Seatbelt use	Sample size
Driver	17-29	99.2%	360
	30-59	99.4%	1,253
	60+	99.7%	312
Front seat passenger	0-13	100.0%	*36*
	14-29	99.4%	143
	30-59	99.6%	352
	60+	99.3%	222

Table A.3 Female car occupant seatbelt use by age, weekdays

Area type	Road type	Seatbelt use	Sample size
Urban	Major	99.7%	429
	Minor	98.9%	314
	All	99.2%	743
Rural	Major	99.6%	393
	Minor	98.6%	73
	All	99.4%	466

Table A.4 Car front seat passenger seatbelt use by area and road type, weekdays

Time	Driver	Sample size	Front seat passenger	Sample size	Rear seat passenger	Sample size
07:30	99.2%	406	98.1%	80	100.0%	17
08:30	99.3%	497	100.0%	110	97.7%	37
09:30	98.3%	358	100.0%	95	100.0%	25
10:30	98.8%	357	99.8%	95	100.0%	17
11:30	98.1%	382	100.0%	121	96.2%	40
13:30	98.3%	369	100.0%	115	100.0%	17
14:30	99.1%	456	97.7%	120	100.0%	29
15:30	98.1%	492	98.6%	169	95.2%	66
16:30	98.5%	550	100.0%	134	100.0%	52
17:30	97.8%	530	99.4%	170	99.7%	52

Table A.5 Car occupant seatbelt use by time of day, weekdays

Restraint	Front seat passenger		Rear seat passenger	
	1-4 years old	5-9 years old	1-4 years old	5-9 years old
Seatbelt	26.1%	53.3%	34.5%	57.9%
Other child seat	73.9%	46.7%	65.5%	42.1%
Unrestrained	-	-	-	-
Sample size	12	50	69	93

Table A.6 Child occupant restraint use by age, weekdays

Appendix B

Additional Mobile Phone Survey Tables

Site type	Male			Female		
	At-ear	In-hand	Sample size	At-ear	In-hand	Sample size
Moving	0.7%	1.0%	3736	0.7%	1.3%	2,977
Stationary	1.1%	1.5%	2748	0.7%	1.4%	2,189

Table B.1 Car driver mobile phone use by gender, type of use, and site type

Age	All use	At-ear	In-hand	Sample size
17-29	4.8%	1.2%	3.6%	523
30-59	2.5%	1.1%	1.4%	3,253
60+	0.8%	0.3%	0.5%	1,178

Table B.2 Car driver mobile phone use by age and type of use at stationary sites, weekdays

Type of use	Urban			Rural		
	Major	Minor	All	Major	Minor	All
At-ear	0.4%	1.8%	1.4%	0.4%	0.3%	0.4%
In-hand	1.9%	1.3%	1.4%	0.8%	1.5%	1.0%
All use	2.2%	3.0%	2.8%	1.2%	1.7%	1.4%
Sample size	2245	790	3035	2941	744	3685

Table B.3 Car driver mobile phone use by area and road type, moving sites, weekdays

Type of use	Urban			Rural		
	Major	Minor	All	Major	Minor	All
At-ear	0.1%	0.6%	0.4%	0.1%	3.4%	1.2%
In-hand	0.3%	1.1%	0.8%	0.1%	5.2%	1.8%
All use	0.4%	1.7%	1.3%	0.2%	8.6%	3.0%
Sample size	1522	1749	3271	1096	608	1704

Table B.4 Car driver mobile phone use by area and road type, stationary sites, weekdays

Time	All use	At-ear	In-hand	Sample size
07:30	0.6%	0.0%	0.6%	846
08:30	1.8%	0.3%	1.5%	630
09:30	2.5%	0.8%	1.7%	347
10:30	1.8%	0.0%	1.8%	381
11:30	1.3%	0.6%	0.7%	387
13:30	2.3%	1.1%	1.2%	672
14:30	2.4%	1.0%	1.5%	762
15:30	1.3%	0.3%	0.9%	784
16:30	1.1%	0.5%	0.6%	958
17:30	3.8%	2.5%	1.3%	953

Table B.5 Car driver mobile phone use by time of day, moving sites, weekdays

Time	All use	At-ear	In-hand	Sample size
07:30	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	475
08:30	0.6%	0.2%	0.4%	612
09:30	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%	406
10:30	1.1%	0.1%	1.0%	404
11:30	1.3%	0.5%	0.8%	408
13:30	1.7%	1.2%	0.5%	418
14:30	2.6%	0.6%	2.0%	480
15:30	4.0%	2.3%	1.7%	546
16:30	4.6%	1.3%	3.4%	629
17:30	5.6%	2.1%	3.5%	597

Table B.6 Car driver mobile phone use by time of day, stationary sites, weekdays

Type of week	Moving		Stationary	
	Weekday	Weekend	Weekday	Weekend
At-ear	0.7%	0.1%	0.9%	2.6%
In-hand	1.1%	0.4%	1.5%	1.4%
All use	1.8%	0.5%	2.4%	3.9%
Sample size	6,720	4,471	4,975	2,721

Table B.7 Car driver mobile phone use by site type and time of week

Appendix C

Survey Site Details

Site no.	Area	Road	Speed limit	Urban/rural	Major/minor	Longitude	Latitude	Date	Shift
SM1	Perth & Kinross	A86	40	Major	Rural	56.40815	- 3.50194	25/09/2017	AM
SM2	Angus	A930	60	Major	Rural	56.5194	-2.71212	25/09/2017	PM
SM3	Highland	A862	40	Major	Rural	57.47919	-4.30791	27/09/2017	AM
SM4	Aberdeenshire	A944	30	Major	Rural	57.17198	-2.4111	06/10/2017, *06/06/2018**	PM
SM5	Falkirk	B825	30	Minor	Rural	55.91362	-3.82244	29/09/2017 *18/06/2018**	AM
SM6	Aberdeenshire	B999	50	Minor	Rural	57.2551	-2.13013	06/10/2017 *06/06/2018**	AM
SM7	Glasgow City	A728	40	Major	Urban	55.84474	-4.21389	29/09/2017 *18/06/2018**	PM
SM8	Highland	A82	30	Major	Urban	57.48273	-4.2244	27/09/2017 *08/06/2018**	PM
SM9	Aberdeen City	Cove Road	30	Minor	Urban	57.09719	-2.08887	27/09/2017	AM
SM10	Dundee City	Perth Road	30	Minor	Urban	56.45594	-2.9916	25/09/2017	PM

** Sites resurveyed in June 2018 due to issue with the quality of data collected at original date.*

Table C.1 Moving

Site no.	Area	Road	Speed limit	Major/ minor	Rural/ urban	Latitude	Longitude	Date	Shift
SS1	West Lothian	A89	30	Major	Urban	55.8987	-3.69974	04/10/2017	AM
SS2	South Lanarkshire	A73	40	Major	Rural	55.65423	-3.72529	04/10/2017	AM
SS3	Aberdeenshire	A957	30	Major	Urban	56.96382	-2.20826	06/10/2017	PM
SS4	West Lothian	A71	60	Major	Rural	55.82668	-3.66893	04/10/2017	PM
SS5	East Lothian	A199	40	Major	Rural	55.94465	-2.98735	02/10/2017	PM
SS6	West Dunbartonshire	A814	40	Major	Rural	55.93517	-4.52728	04/10/2017	AM
SS7	Fife	A977	30	Major	Rural	56.06923	-3.71735	29/09/2017	AM
SS8	Midlothian	Lasswade Road	30	Minor	Urban	55.88311	-3.12483	02/10/2017	AM
SS9	Fife	Waggon Road	30	Minor	Rural	56.06361	-3.49765	27/10/2017	PM
SS10	Midlothian	The Wisp	30	Minor	Rural	55.91334	-3.11764	02/10/2017	PM
SS11	West Lothian	B8084	30	Minor	Urban	55.8987	-3.69974	04/10/2017	PM
SS12	Glasgow City	A8	40	Major	Urban	55.86227	-4.19911	29/09/2017	PM
SS13	Dundee City	A930	40	Major	Urban	56.46854	-2.93123	25/09/2017	AM
SS14	Aberdeen City	A90(T)	40	Major	Urban	57.13303	-2.13317	27/09/2017	PM
SS15	Glasgow City	A82 (T)	40	Major	Urban	55.90326	-4.37883	04/10/2017	PM
SS16	Edinburgh, City of	Colinton Rd	30	Minor	Urban	55.9299	-3.22397	02/10/2017	AM
SS17	Glasgow City	B763	30	Minor	Urban	55.83577	-4.249	29/09/2017	PM
SS18	East Dunbartonshire	C / unclass	30	Minor	Urban	55.90457	-4.22468	29/09/2017	AM
SS19	Aberdeen City	B9119	30	Minor	Urban	57.14642	-2.11295	06/10/2017	AM
SS20	Highland	B861	20	Minor	Urban	57.47701	-4.22668	27/09/2017	AM

Table C.2 Stationary

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Official and National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Both undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs and are produced free from any political interference.

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How to access background or source data

The data collected for this statistical bulletin:

☐ are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics

☐ are available as part of a GB dataset on data.gov.uk

☒ may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact nadia.alnasser@transport.gov.scot for further information.

☐ cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.

Complaints and suggestions

If you are not satisfied with our service or have any comments or suggestions, please write to the Chief Statistician, 2W, St Andrews House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG, Telephone: (0131) 244 0442, e-mail statistics.enquiries@gov.scot.

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