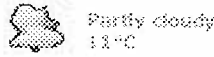


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It's now illegal for Ontario drivers to use cellphones, BlackBerries and other hand-held electronic devices.

Cellphone ban now in effect for Ontario drivers

Updated: Mon Oct. 26 2009 1:41:05 PM

ctvtoronto.ca

Ontario's new law banning hand-held devices in vehicles is a "good first step" in ensuring safety on the road, says an official with the Insurance Bureau of Canada.

Robert Tremblay, the research director at IBC, said Monday the legislation addresses some important factors to help avoid driver distraction on the road.

Under the province-wide ban, drivers are forbidden from talking, texting or emailing on their portable phones while behind the wheel of their vehicle. The law, which came into affect Monday, is aimed at protecting drivers from distractions that take their eyes off the road for a long period of time.

"From experiment and research, we have a good idea that (this new law) has the potential to reduce (the risk of an accident) from four times to 1.1 times," he said.

Tremblay said all two-way communication devices are a cognitive and visual distraction that delay a driver's response time to changing traffic situations. He said research has concluded that drivers are four times more at risk of getting into an accident if they are holding a cell phone.

He cited texting and emailing as the most dangerous tasks drivers do on their mobile devices, as research shows that motorists are 23 times more likely to get into an accident when they're typing behind the wheel.

The new law also forbids drivers from operating entertainment products such as portable DVD players and laptops.

However, iPods and GPS units are still permitted as long as they are mounted to a dashboard or "another accessible place in the vehicle," Ontario's Ministry of Transportation states on its website.

Other exceptions to the rules are:

- Drivers can use cell phones to dial 911 if they have an emergency
- Phones can be used behind the wheel if the driver safely pulls off the road or is parked
- Hands-free devices, such as headsets and phones plugged into the vehicle's sound system, can also be used
- Emergency workers like paramedics will be able to use hand-held phones for the next three years for work purposes

Drivers are not permitted to use hand-held devices while they are stopped in traffic, either at a stop light or stop sign.

Enforcement

Drivers who violate the new law won't be given a ticket just yet, according to the Ontario Provincial Police.

For the next few months, drivers who are caught on their cell phones will be given a stern warning by police. On February 1, authorities will start ticketing drivers with fines of up to \$500.

In addition to fines, police may lay charges of careless driving or dangerous driving, depending on the circumstances. Demerit points will also be deducted.

Tremblay said the legislation is a key step in getting drivers to be more aware of the dangers around distractions.

"This goes beyond fines and enforcement," he said. "It's about raising awareness. When you're behind the wheel you have to focus strictly on driving."

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- CTV Toronto: Galit Solomon on the first day of hands-free
- CTV News Channel: Marc Saltzman with Bluetooth options
- CTV News Channel: Robert Tremblay, research director
- Canada AM: Kris Abel with hands-free devices
- CTV National News: Janice Golding on the rules
- CTV News Channel: Marc Saltzman, technology columnist

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Kris Abel's Tech Life Best on the market: Four recommended hands-free devices.

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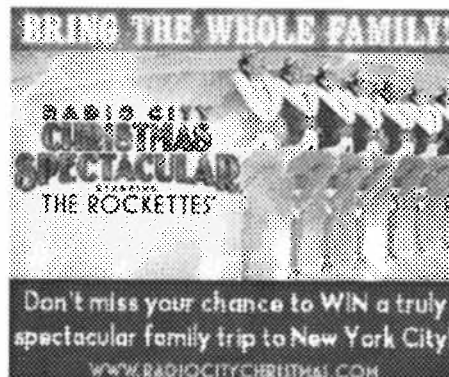
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Survey shows strong support for laws restricting mobile use while driving

The large majority of the 7,311 respondents to a BCAA survey on the use of mobile communications devices while driving say the BC government should restrict the practice of texting and talking on cell phones while driving.

While there is almost unanimous support for prohibiting texting while driving, and for prohibiting texting and cell phone use among new and novice drivers, respondents are divided over whether the government should ban all cell phone use or just the use of hand-held phones while driving.

Survey Results:

- Almost half (46%) of 7,311 survey respondents said they talk on their phones while driving, at least a few times a week:
 - 73% hold the phone to their ear and 27% use a hands-free device.
- 91% of survey respondents said there should be restrictions on talking on phones while driving:
 - 60% said any use of cell phones while driving should be banned; and
 - 40% said talking on hand-held phones should be prohibited, but talking using a hands-free device should be allowed.
- Six % admitted to texting while driving.
- 97% said texting while driving should be prohibited.
- 97% said restrictions should be placed on the use of mobile communications devices by new and novice drivers (those in the Graduated Licensing Program):
 - 82% said new and novice drivers should be prohibited from any use of cell phones, including texting;
 - 16% said they should be restricted from texting or using hand-held phones, but allowed to talk using a hands-free device;
 - Three% said they should be restricted from texting only.

BCAA's Director of Corporate Communications and Government Relations, Trace Acres, says although the survey is a web poll and therefore not statistically valid or representative of the entire driving population, it reveals the opinions of a large number of British Columbians.

"This is the largest response BCAA has ever had to one its surveys," says Acres. "It's obviously an issue about which people have strong views and want to share them."

Acres expects the BCAA survey will prove informative and valuable to the provincial government in its deliberations on the issue of talking, texting and driving. p>BCAA's advocacy position—restrictions for new and novice drivers

"Banning texting while driving, and prohibiting the use of all mobile communications by new and novice drivers in the Graduated Licensing Program, is in the opinion of BCAA and a large number of BC drivers, something of a 'no-brainer', " says Acres.

"With respect to cell phone use among the driving population as a whole, the survey suggests that the only question is whether the government should invoke a complete ban, or limit the ban to hand-held phone use."

Acres says that will be a challenging question for the government to answer as it has been proven that cell phone conversations are a distraction, regardless of whether the driver is holding the phone to his/her ear or using a hands-free device. On the other hand, the convenience and benefits offered by a cell phone is something a large number of British Columbians have come to value and expect.

For Immediate Release
July 27, 2009



British Columbians Support a Cell Phone Ban for Drivers

Vancouver, BC – The vast majority of British Columbians agree that cell phone use by drivers is a serious road safety issue and most support a total ban of cell phone use while driving.

In a poll conducted by Ipsos Reid on behalf of the BC Medical Association, 92% of British Columbians said they think cell phone use is a serious road safety issue and 62% categorized the issue as “very serious.” Only 7% of those polled thought the problem was not serious.

The poll also showed 76% of British Columbians support a complete ban on all cell phone use by drivers. This includes 56% of people who would “strongly support” such a ban.

Support for the ban and the seriousness of the issue was consistent across regions and demographics.

“This poll shows that the provincial government’s decision to look at the issue of cell phone use by drivers is timely and what the public wants,” said Dr. Brian Brodie, President of the BC Medical Association.

The BCMA has long been on the record promoting a ban of cell phone use by drivers. Most recently it joined forces with the BCAA and the BC Association of Police Chiefs to call on the province to implement restrictions on cell phone and text messaging by drivers.

“The evidence clearly shows that driver distraction increases while using a cell phone or other communication’s devices. Each of us sees near misses on our roads every day. The BCMA believes it is time BC adopts a ban on text messaging and cell phone use while driving,” Dr. Brodie continued.

The BCMA is responding to the Solicitor General’s call for submissions on this issue and adds its voice to the increasing number of vocal supporters that BC follow other provinces in bringing in legislation to deal with this important road safety issue.

The omnibus poll conducted by Ipsos Reid in July 2009 surveyed 800 adult British Columbians. The results are accurate within +/- 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

The BCMA submission is available on the BCMA website at www.bcma.org.

-30-

For more information:
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Observed Driver Phone Use Rates in Canada

Peter Burns, Jean-François Lécuyer and Aline Chouinard
Transport Canada

Abstract

Little is currently known about the actual nature and amount of phone use while driving on Canadian roads. The present study tried to quantify this by collecting data on observed driver phone use across Canada. Transport Canada's annual seatbelt survey was modified to record driver hand-held phone use, along with the traditional variables of belt use, driver age, gender and vehicle type. The observational survey recorded driver phone use rates at 2.8% for rural areas and 5.9% for urban areas. Phone use varied widely by urban community, with Alberta being highest (11.7%) and Nova Scotia the lowest (2.2%). Phone use is a common behaviour on Canadian roads, despite the risks and public concern. These results highlight the need for further countermeasures to reduce this behaviour. The present data provide baseline rates on which to evaluate the impact of legislative, and other, countermeasures.

Résumé

Actuellement, on connaît bien peu de choses sur la nature et les chiffres réels de l'utilisation des cellulaires sur les routes du Canada. La présente étude visait à quantifier cette utilisation en collectant, au Canada, des données en observant l'utilisation des cellulaires au volant. L'enquête annuelle de Transports Canada concernant les ceintures de sécurité a été modifiée afin d'enregistrer l'utilisation des cellulaires au volant, au même titre que les variables habituelles sur le port de la ceinture de sécurité, l'âge et le sexe du conducteur, et le type de véhicule. Lors de l'enquête, on a constaté une utilisation des cellulaires au volant de 2,8 % dans les zones rurales et de 5,9 % dans les zones urbaines. L'utilisation des cellulaires varie largement d'une communauté urbaine à l'autre, l'Alberta étant la plus grande utilisatrice (11,7 %) et la Nouvelle-Écosse la plus petite (2,2 %). L'utilisation des cellulaires est courante sur les routes du Canada malgré les risques et la préoccupation publique. Ces statistiques soulignent la nécessité d'adopter d'autres mesures préventives afin de réduire ce comportement. Les présentes données servent de taux de référence à partir desquels on peut évaluer l'impact de mesures législatives et autres mesures de prévention.

INTRODUCTION

The consensus from an extensive international body of experimental and epidemiological research is that using a cell phone impairs driving performance and significantly increases the risk of collision [1-5]. Canadians appear to be somewhat aware of this scientific evidence; the majority (66%) think that cell phone use while driving is a very serious road safety problem [6]. However, this awareness of risk does not seem to have had a large impact on behaviour. Reported cell phone use while driving has been increasing steadily. A 2006 survey by the Traffic Injury Research Foundation found that 37% of drivers reported using a cell phone while driving in the past week [6]. People in the same survey also reported that using cell phones was

the most commonly seen behaviour from a list of nine possibly unsafe driving behaviours (e.g., tailgating, failing to signal, speeding). This pervasive use of cell phones is not surprising now that two-thirds of Canadian households have access to a wireless phone [7], however the real extent of this problem remains unclear.

Little is currently known about the actual nature and amount of phone use while driving on Canadian roads. Several interview surveys have investigated the self-reported frequency of phone use, but no data currently exist on actual use. At a given moment, how many people on Canadian roads are using their phones while they drive? The present study tried to answer this question by collecting data on observed driver phone use across Canada. Data on cell phone use by drivers were collected, as supplementary information, during the observational seat belt use surveys carried out in rural areas of Canada in September 2006, and urban areas in the same week in September of 2007. It was hypothesized that observed driver cell-phone use rates would be consistent with the general trends of phone use spreading through the Canadian population.

METHOD

The National Seat Belt Survey uses trained observers, stationed at various controlled intersections across the country, to observe the light duty vehicles stopping at the intersection [8]. They make the following observations: 1) whether the vehicle is a passenger car, minivan/SUV or pickup truck; 2) whether the driver is wearing a seat belt or not; 3) whether front and back seat passenger(s) are wearing belts, child restraint or no restraint; 4) sex of the driver; 5) age of the driver within three categories: under 25 years, 25-49 years and 50 years+; 6) whether their view was obstructed by tinted windows; and 7) whether the driver is using a cell phone, or not. Observations were made during daylight hours.

The survey population consisted of all private vehicles with Canadian licence plates, including passenger vehicles, minivans/ sport utility vehicles (SUVs) and pickup trucks (but excluding heavy trucks, campers, government and police vehicles) travelling over the appropriate road type during the observation period.

This report is based on the results from two National Seat Belt Surveys. The first survey was conducted for rural areas of Canada in September 2006. Rural includes towns with a population of fewer than 10,000, but more than 1,000 inhabitants that are located outside any census metropolitan area or census agglomeration. The second survey was conducted for urban areas of Canada in September 2007. Urban includes communities with a population over 10,000, plus those communities with a population of less than 10,000 that are located within a census metropolitan area.

The rural survey, which occurred over the week of September 15 to 21, 2006, involved 249 sites. Each observation period was two hours long and took place during daylight hours (between 7:30 a.m. and 18:30 p.m.). A total of 41,137 vehicles and drivers were observed during the course of the survey.

The urban survey, which was conducted over the week of September 15 to 21, 2007, involved two separate observation periods at each of 270 sites. Each observation period was one hour

long and took place during daylight hours (between 7:30 a.m. and 18:30 p.m.). A total of 92,440 vehicles and drivers were observed during the course of the study.

For the two surveys, a total of 133,577 vehicles and drivers were observed at 519 sites across Canada. No data were collected in Nunavut.

RESULTS

Driver Cell Phone Use by Jurisdiction

Figure 1 shows that an estimated 2.8% ($\pm 0.2\%$) of drivers in rural communities were using a cell phone in 2006. Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Ontario, Alberta, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories were at or above the national average.

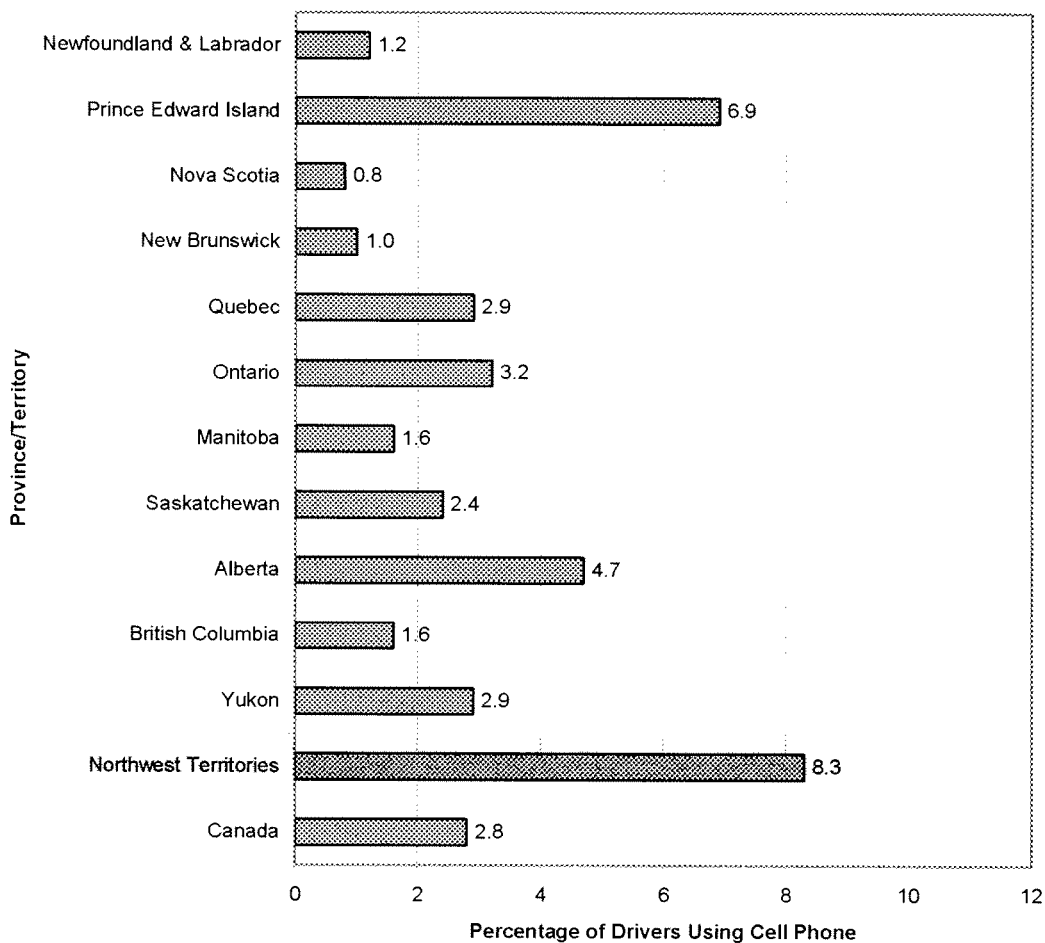


Figure 1 - Rural Canada, driver cell phone use by province/territory - 2006

Figure 2 shows that in 2007 an estimated 5.9% ($\pm 0.4\%$) of drivers in urban communities were using a cell phone. Ontario and Alberta were at or above the national average.

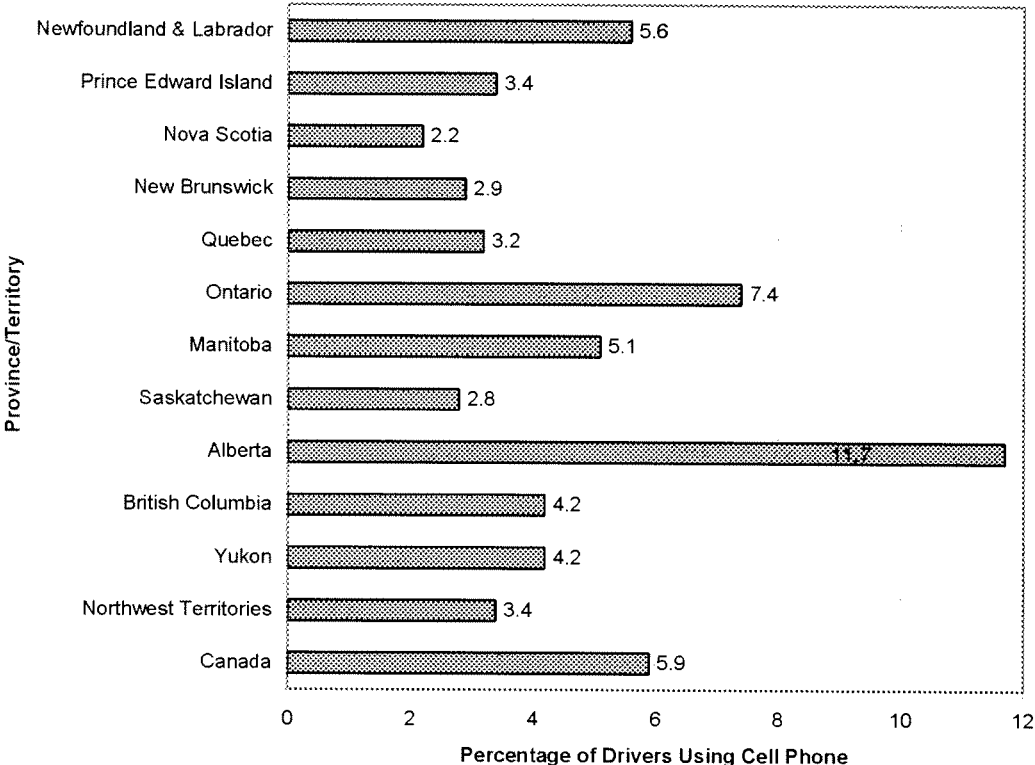


Figure 2 - Urban Canada, driver cell phone use by province/territory - 2007

Figure 3 shows an estimated 5.5% ($\pm 0.3\%$) of drivers in Canada were using a cell phone. Ontario and Alberta were above the national average.

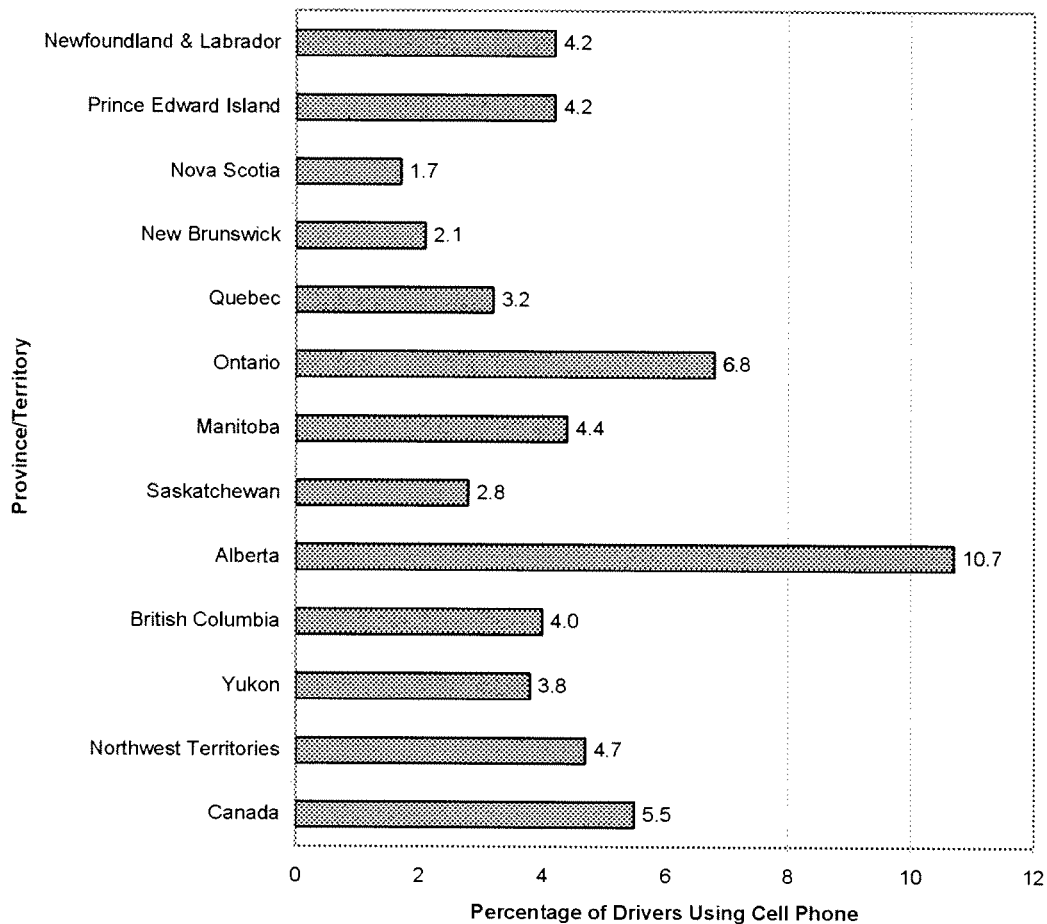


Figure 3 - Rural and Urban Canada, driver cell phone use by province/territory - 2006-2007

Cell phone use and age of the driver

Contingency tables and Pearson's χ^2 test of independence were used to analyze the relationship between cell phone use and the following five variables: age of the driver, gender, seat belt use by the driver, vehicle type and area (urban or rural road).

Table 1 shows that drivers aged 50 years and older (2.4%) were much less likely to use a cell phone while driving than drivers 25 to 49 years old (4.5%) and drivers under 25 years (6.7%). The difference in the use of cell phone while driving between these age groups is significant at $\alpha = 5\%$ criterion ($\chi^2 = 560.06$, $df = 2$, $p\text{-value} < 0.0001$). Moreover, among drivers not using a cell phone while driving, those aged under 25 years represent only 11.05% of the drivers, while those aged 25 to 49 years old and 50 years and older represent respectively 59.86% and 29.09%. Among drivers using a cell phone while driving, these three age groups represent 18.42%, 65.04% and 16.54% respectively.

		Age			Total
		Under 25 years old	25 to 49 years old	50 years and older	
Cell phone	Used	1002 (6.7%)	3538 (4.5%)	900 (2.4%)	5440
	Not used	13923	75446	36659	126028
	Total	14925	78984	37559	131468

Table 1 - Distribution of the drivers by cell phone use and age of the driver

Cell phone use by gender

Table 2 shows that there were a slightly greater proportion of women (4.5%) than of men (4.0%) using a cell phone while driving. Based on Pearson's χ^2 test of independence, the difference was found to be significant at $\alpha = 5\%$ criterion ($\chi^2 = 22.64$, $df = 1$, $p\text{-value} < 0.0001$). However, men represent a higher proportion, both among drivers using a cell phone (57.91%) and drivers not using a cell phone (61.11%), even though the gap is smaller for drivers using cell phone.

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Cell phone	Used	3181 (4.0%)	2312 (4.5%)	5493
	Not used	77007	49007	126014
	Total	80188	51319	131507

Table 2 - Distribution of the drivers by cell phone use and gender

Cell phone use and seat belt use

Cell phone users are more likely to be unbelted (10.8%) than those who are not using a cell phone while driving (8.1%). The difference is significant at $\alpha = 5\%$ ($\chi^2 = 51.52$, $df = 1$, $p\text{-value} < 0.0001$).

		Seat belt use		Total
		Belted	Unbelted	
Cell phone	Used	4901	596 (10.8%)	5497
	Not used	115550	10216 (8.1%)	125766
	Total	120451	10812	131263

Table 3 - Distribution of the drivers by cell phone use and seat belt use

The correlation between seat belt use and cell phone use by drivers was also calculated using the Phi coefficient. First, it was calculated for all drivers, and then for the following groups separately: male drivers, female drivers, drivers under 25 years old, drivers between 25 and 49

years old, drivers 50 years and older, passenger car drivers, minivans and SUV drivers, light trucks drivers, drivers in urban communities and drivers in rural communities. The overall correlation coefficient was -0.02 ($df = 1$, p -value < 0.0001) and the coefficients for the different subgroups were between -0.015 ($df = 1$, p -value < 0.0001) and -0.028 ($df = 1$, p -value < 0.0001). Even though these associations are statistically significant, the association is weak.

Cell phone use and vehicle type

Observed cell phone use is also higher among light trucks and minivans/ SUVs (respectively 5.0% and 4.8%) than in passenger cars (3.6%). The difference is significant at $\alpha = 5\%$ ($\chi^2 = 121.39$, $df = 2$, p -value < 0.0001). Moreover, drivers of passenger car represent the highest proportion, followed by drivers of minivans and SUVs, both for drivers using a cell phone while driving (cars 48.87%, SUV/ minivans 29.16% and light trucks 21.97%) and drivers not using a cell phone (cars 56.34%, SUV/ minivans 25.37% and light trucks 18.30%).

	Vehicle type			Total	
	Passenger cars	Minivans/ SUVs	Light trucks		
Cell phone	Used	2705 (3.6%)	1614 (4.8%)	1216 (5.0%)	5535
	Not used	71501	32194	23225	126920
	Total	74206	33808	24441	132455

Table 4 - Distribution of the drivers by cell phone use and vehicle type

Cell phone use and area

Cell phone use is much higher in urban communities (4.9%) than in rural communities (2.5%). The difference is significant at $\alpha = 5\%$ ($\chi^2 = 121.39$, $df = 1$, p -value < 0.0001). The values in this table are unweighted, so they differ slightly from the weighted percentages shown in Figures 1-3.

	Area		Total	
	Urban	Rural		
Cell phone	Used	4535 (4.9%)	1037 (2.5%)	5572
	Not used	87905	40100	128005
	Total	92440	41137	133577

Table 5 - Distribution of the drivers by cell phone use and area

DISCUSSION

The results of these surveys provide a snapshot of driver phone use in Canada. The behaviour appears to be widespread. Average driver cell phone use was significantly higher in urban areas (5.9%) than in rural areas (2.8%). Urban Alberta had the highest rate of phone use at 11.7%, which was twice the national average for urban areas. Nova Scotia had the lowest rates of phone use for both rural (0.8%) and urban areas (2.2%). As predicted, the prevalence of cell phones seems to be symptomatic of usage rates on the road. Alberta has the highest number of households with access to a wireless phone [7] and the highest rates of driver phone use.

The survey results also gave some indication of the patterns of phone use. Phone use varied significantly by age, gender, and vehicle type. Drivers aged 50 years and older (2.4%) were much less likely to use a cell phone than drivers 25 to 49 years old (4.5%) and drivers under 25 years (6.7%). A slightly greater proportion of women (4.5%) were on the phone than of men (4.0%). Phone use was higher among light trucks (5.0%) and minivans/ SUVs (4.8%) than in passenger cars (3.7%). There was even a slight tendency for drivers using their phones to be less often wearing their seatbelt.

There have been other observational surveys of driver phone use; for example, a study done in British Columbia found a relationship between observed phone use on city streets and riskier driving records [9]. A similar seatbelt survey, conducted in the United States in 2004, observed 5% of drivers using phones [10]. In addition, a multi-year observational study that was carried out in the state of Michigan, found that driver hand-held phone use had more than doubled between 2001-2005, from 2.7% to 5.8% [11]. They estimated that average phone use rates would continue to increase in Michigan. It would be reasonable to assume that the rates in Canada will also increase.

There are several potential limitations to this study that should be addressed. One limitation is the observations were restricted to daylight hours; consequently, if phone use differs at other times of day, this would not have been captured. Also, the vehicles were observed as they stopped at intersections, so it is possible that the drivers used this as an opportunity to make their calls. Phone use probably varies as a function of road type and location. Lower usage rates in rural areas may be attributed to poorer cellular network coverage and national usage might have increased somewhat from 2006, when the rural observations were made, to 2007 when the urban study was done.

It should also be noted that different teams of observers were used at the different sites, consequently, some of the regional differences might be attributed to features of the locations and observers, although standard training and site selection procedures were used to limit these potential confounds. Lastly, the observations were limited to hand-held phones because there was no effective means for observing hands-free phone use. Actual phone use, including both hand held and hands-free, would likely be higher. It has been estimated that 3% of motorists use hands-free phones [10]. This would make the national average closer to 9 percent. Nevertheless, despite these potential limitations, it is very clear from the results of this study, that phones use is becoming an increasingly significant road safety issue in Canada.

The data from the present study suggest that a significant percentage of Canadian drivers are using their phones. During the observation period, more than 1 in 10 drivers were observed using a phone in some urban communities. Drivers need to stay focused on the driving task.

The use of cell phones, and other distractions, impairs the driver's ability to safely control their vehicle and effectively monitor and respond to events occurring in the road traffic environment. These events are often unpredictable; they could be anything from a changing traffic signal, to a sudden appearance of a pedestrian or bicyclist, to another vehicle stopping directly ahead. There is no safe time for distractions while driving. This impairment increases the risk of collision, and as wireless communication becomes even more common, a greater number of collisions will occur on Canadian roads. Given that there is little tolerance for more road trauma in Canada, effective countermeasures are needed.

There are no simple remedies for driver distraction from cell phones, however there are a variety of potential countermeasures. These countermeasures include driver education and awareness, information management systems that control the flow of information to drivers, lockouts that disable access to cell phones in certain situations, corporate policies on employee cell phone use, legislation and enforcement. A more detailed discussion of these countermeasures is available in a report from the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators' (CCMTA) Strategy on Distracted Driving Task Force [12].

At the time of the survey, Newfoundland and Labrador was the only province that had legislated a ban on hand-held cell phones. Quebec and Nova Scotia instituted a ban on hand held cell phones starting April 1, 2008, and other provinces and territories are actively considering similar legislation. Newfoundland and Labrador had one of the lowest rates of driver phone use during the 2006 rural survey (1.2%), but the rates were almost at the national average during the urban survey in 2007 (5.6%). Since historical data on cell phone use do not exist, any trends showing increased or decreased usage cannot be determined at this time. As the data are collected in future seat belt use surveys, trend lines will develop. The data presented above, on cell phone use by drivers of light duty vehicles in 2006 and 2007 in Canada, will become the foundation for comparison of future data. It could provide a baseline on which to evaluate the impact of legislative, and other, countermeasures. The next seatbelt survey is planned for September 2009.

Transport Canada recommends against using any type of cell phone while driving.

Acknowledgements

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THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Ontario cellphone ban begins

Violators risk \$500 fine; ban extends to portable game and video players

Maria Babbage

Toronto — The Canadian Press Published on Sunday, Oct. 25, 2009 9:20PM EDT Last updated on Monday, Oct. 26, 2009 9:10AM EDT

Starting Monday, Ontario drivers will be the latest Canadians prohibited from using cellphones or BlackBerrys while behind the wheel.

Millions of motorists in the country's most populous province are banned from using any hand-held electronic devices to text, e-mail or talk while driving, except for 911 calls.

They're also forbidden from using portable video games or DVD players while chugging along. Global positioning systems are allowed, as long as they're properly secured to the dashboard.

It's the fourth province to enact such a ban, following Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec and Nova Scotia.

Manitoba's cellphone ban is expected to be proclaimed into law next year, British Columbia has introduced similar legislation and Saskatchewan has promised a bill this fall.

Hands-free devices aren't covered under the Ontario ban, but provincial officials say they're not recommended for use while driving.

Cabinet ministers usually have a driver to shuttle them around on official business, but Ontario Corrections and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci said he still made sure he was prepared for the ban.

"Guess what? I purchased my earpiece," he said.

"I won't be using my hands to use the cellphone. I respect the law because it respects the safety of my fellow Ontarians."

Ontario drivers could be fined up to \$500 if they're caught, but unlike other provinces, there are no demerit points attached.

There will be an "education" period in the first three months where police will show some leniency and, in many cases, simply let drivers off with a warning.

But make no mistake – drivers should not assume they're "scot-free" until February, said Sgt. Dave Woodford, a spokesman for the Ontario Provincial Police.

Cops still have discretion to lay charges by way of summons under the new law, where the driver would have to go to court to find out how big the fine will be, he said.

Motorists using a banned device can also be charged under careless driving laws and face fines, six demerit points, licence suspension – even jail time.

“If we see someone driving erratically or they're involved in a collision and they've been on their cellphone, there are already offences in place under the Highway Traffic Act where people can be charged,” he said.

“So you don't want to send out the wrong messaging that you're allowed to talk on the phone for the next three months and not be charged with any offences, because you could be.”

The bureau's tips for obeying the new law include:

- Eat before driving so you won't be tempted to juggle distracting snacks behind the wheel.
- Pull over and park before using a cellphone or other hand-held electronic device.
- Create a “driving” playlist on your iPod or music player and activate it before you hit the road so you won't be searching for a good song while driving.
- If there's something distracting you – something fell on the floor, the kids are acting up in the back seat – pull over to a safe area first, then deal with it.
- Check the map, adjust the seat, the climate control and the radio, and familiarize yourself with the dashboard controls, before heading out.
- Make sure pets are safely secured and in the back seat.
- Listen to your GPS device, don't look at it.

According to the 2006 Ontario Road Safety annual report, there were 77 fatalities among the 33,551 accidents due to “inattentive” drivers, which included talking on a cellphone while driving.

It's hard to know how many accidents were caused by drivers talking on their cellphones, said Woodford. The cause of many accidents are never known because the driver was killed.

Ontario was the first province to extend the ban to all hand-held electronic devices, a move that B.C. has followed in legislation introduced last week.

The proposed new rules – billed as the most comprehensive in Canada – would go a step further by banning new drivers in B.C. from hands-free phones. Drivers caught violating the rules would receive three penalty points on top of a \$167 fine.

But motorists should go beyond the letter of the law if they want to stay safe on the roads, said Robert Tremblay of the Insurance Bureau of Canada.

“Using hands-free devices while driving is certainly better than using hand-held devices, but not using any distracting devices, or participating in any distracting behaviour at all, is the best policy,” he said in a statement.