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MOBILE LIFE 2007

Author / organisation	The Carphone Warehouse
Year recorded	2007
Region	Europe
Category	Other
Original source	mobilelife2007.co.uk
Archive page	kiwanja.net/mobile-database/mobile-life-2007/

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mobile life

2007 Survey

The Mobile Life European Report: 2007

From The Carphone Warehouse

The Mobile Life European Report 2007

Exploring how mobile phone usage reflects our national cultures

LSE THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

From The Carphone Warehouse
www.mobilelife2007.co.uk

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Mobile Life Europe was conducted on behalf of The Carphone Warehouse by Ipsos MORI who questioned more than 5000 people, 1000 people 16-64 in each of the following countries; Britain, Spain, Sweden, Germany and France . Fieldwork was conducted online between 25th – 28th May 2007.
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. The nature of this sample, no people over 64 years of age and all with on-line access means that our sample will not be fully representative, either of older people or the off-line population but the size of the sample, 5000 people across Europe, means we can have real confidence in our results.

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

When I launched The Carphone Warehouse eighteen years ago I found the company on what seemed an ultimate customer need. Corporate clients were well looked after by mobile companies but individual people had nowhere to go. Today, our customer is still at the very core of the company and understanding how they feel about, live with and are empowered by mobile phones or connecting technology is invaluable to shaping our business.

We established Mobile Life in order to understand more fully the impact of the mobile phone on all our daily lives. Have mobile phones improved our lives? Do they help us become better communicators? What impact have they had on our identity, our family and our relationships?

Mobile Life provides our business with invaluable insights which enable us to understand our customers more fully and so respond better to their needs across the business; deliver better product solutions, improved advice and superior customer care. We are committed to placing this understanding at the heart of everything we do; from the best buying in our purchasing teams to how we talk to our customers through marketing or the retail experience we bring them in store.

This report, Mobile Life Europe, is the fourth in the Mobile Life series. Having explored the British market in a variety of ways it seemed to make sense to make our research international in some of the markets in which our European brand The Phone House operates. For this phase, Mobile Life Europe, we questioned over 5,000 people in the UK, Spain, France, Germany and Sweden.

Our objective was to explore the different attitudes, behaviours, and etiquettes that surround mobile phone usage across Europe and uncover what these differences reveal about how mobile phones have been integrated into our various cultures.

Every country has a slightly different mobile life. This report offers a fascinating insight into the cross border differences – and similarities – of mobile phone usage in Europe. It also shows we are very much still coming to terms with the impact of mobile phones, still in the process of negotiating appropriate behaviours and responses to this life changing technology. In some instances cultural differences outweigh both gender and age differences and in others these two prevail.

It would not have been possible for us to extend this research without the advice and strategic counsel of our strategic and academic partners Lord Philip Gould and The London School of Economics and Political Science who both helped to design the survey. Along with our other contributors, James Harkin of the Social Issues Research Centre and Susan Quilliam, Relationship Psychologist who have developed some fascinating theories about how we live our lives in 2007. I hope you find this report as absorbing as we do.

The Oxygen of Mobile

James Harkin
Consultant forecaster,
Social Issues Research Centre

Gone are the days when it was enough to own a single mobile phone. Just over a decade into the mobile revolution and the average European, along with the proverbial 2.4 children, is the proud owner of 1.3 mobile phones. What can they be doing with them?

The analogy with children is apt, because if our survey data is to be believed, mobile phones have become almost as much a part of the modern European family as the kids themselves. The answer to the riddle of why many of us need more than one mobile phone could be technical; it could mean that price-conscious and technology-aware punters have worked out that one mobile phone tariff or model is better at doing certain things than another. That on its own, however, surely can't account for the fact that, in mobile-mad Spain, a full one in three people have two mobile phones that they use regularly. Another plausible solution, supported by the evidence of this study, is that we Europeans are now so attached to the mobiles in our pocket that we need to have one in reserve at all times. Allied to that is another intriguing possibility. Just as many of us now have more than one email address with which to master the wildly different aspects of our work and personal lives, the evidence of this survey suggests, many of us are now in need of more than one mobile to manage the different identities which go to make up our many-headed, multi-functional selves.

Variations by region and gender

What can our survey tell us about national and gender stereotypes in Western Europe? Women, it suggests, are much more likely to have a crisply practical approach to buying mobiles – they are more likely than men to choose a phone based on its price than either its style or its ability to perform a wide variety of functions. By contrast, nearly twice as many men as were influenced by price were guided by the myriad gadget-like things the modern mobile can do. But if the old saw that mobile phones are simply boys toys is true in the buying, it is emphatically no longer true in the using. When we came to ask what they people did with their phones, women were almost as likely as men to say that they used them for using Bluetooth, for accessing the internet etc. Once bought, it seems, mobiles are now truly androgynous – girls toys every bit as much as toys for the boys.

Some stereotypes, on the other hand, appear to be well founded. More than any other country within our pan-European survey, the French are more interested in the styling and the look of a phone than either what it can do, its manufacturer or its price. Likewise, it was hardly a surprise that the Spanish, the only Mediterranean country within our survey, proved the most talkative; Spaniards make an average of 4.8 calls per days, significantly higher, for example, than the average 2.98 calls a day made by people in Britain. When we came to find out what happens to mobiles when their owners are finished with them, the Spanish turned out to be natural traders and up-graders; the Swedes were hoarders, but also more likely than any other country to be altruists and to give their previous phone away. Perhaps surprisingly, the Brits were the most adept at recycling their mobiles; nearly

“The mobile phone has now become a kind of pacifier for adults”

half of previous-used British mobiles are being recycled, either formally or because their owners are simply handing down their old mobiles to anyone who needs them.

The intimate object

Western Europeans, and particularly the British, emerge from this survey as endowed with an almost neurotically intimate attachment to their mobiles. A full one in ten respondents to the entire survey admitted that they felt "addicted" to their mobile phone, and an equal number even claimed that their mobile phone was their most prized possession. If our survey data is to be believed, the mobile phone has now become a kind of "pacifier for adults". Since many of our respondents were young people, this attachment to their mobiles doesn't just indicate that they are slaves to office life. Instead, it seems, people of all ages – but particularly the young – have begun to confuse this electronic repository of photos and friends telephone numbers with their real circle of friends – and that they have become hooked on the buzz that they get from answering a text, and then the inevitable wait for an answer in return. Germany was the only exception to the rule. In that country, if our survey is to be believed, lower levels of phone usage combine with a much weaker emotional attachment to mobile phones among Germans of all ages.

It comes as no surprise that this ongoing love affair between Europeans and their mobiles is most acutely felt among the young. Finnish teenagers, sociologists have been pointing out for some time, are so enamoured with their mobiles that they have begun to refer to them as kanny, a Nokia trademark which has now passed into the Finnish vocabulary to mean "an extension of the hand." More newsworthy is the fact, revealed very starkly in this survey, that the love affair with mobile is most intense among British people, and that young British people between the ages of 16 and 24 place a much higher emotional significance on their phones than people anywhere else, either young or old. A full one in six Britons admitted that if a whole day went by where their phone didn't ring or receive a text, they'd end up feeling unwanted; among young British people, that figure rose to one in three. Further evidence that the Brits have a peculiarly intimate relationship with their mobiles lies in the fact that they, more than any other European nation within our survey, prefer texting to talking on their mobiles. In every other country within our survey, people told us that they make more calls than they send texts, but in Britain that pattern is reversed; Brits send almost twice as many texts as they make calls, and send twice as many texts as their French counterparts. Given that text is a much more intimate medium than making a mobile phone call – you text your friends and lovers, not your boss or your accountant – it offers yet more evidence of the intimate relationship which Brits have with the mobiles in their pocket.

“The purchase of a mobile phone by a parent for a young adult is akin to a rite of passage in the contemporary family”

If any further evidence of the British intimacy with their mobiles were needed, it arrived when we asked our pan-European sample whether they had ever used their mobile while on board an aeroplane in flight. In each of the categories suggested – from sending a text to making a voice call – the Brits were most likely to admit being unable to resist fiddling with their phones while on board moving aircraft; and one in ten Brits admitted to contravening air safety regulations by using their mobile phone in flight. The sociological idea that mobile phones have become a kind of "imaginary friend" or an "interactive cyberpet" for many of us was given credence by the fact that a substantial minority of Brits now use them as a convenient barrier with which to resist the intrusions of strangers in public places. A quarter of Brits – compared, for example, to a paltry 8% of Swedes - admitted to fiddling with their mobiles in public as a way of deterring advances from strangers; that figure rose to one in three among British women. Aspiring lotharios take note – that nice young woman who is defiantly failing to return your stare in favour of fiddling with her mobile most definitely wants to be left alone.

Who’s on the end of the digital leash?

For some years now, sociologists have pointed out that the purchase of a mobile phone by a parent for a young adult is akin to a rite of passage in the contemporary family. It is hardly surprising, then, to hear that young people are using those mobiles to keep in touch with their parents. In all of the countries surveyed, and particularly Spain, young people were happy to admit to using their mobile phone to phone their parents. More novel and more interesting was the relative frequency with which parents phoned their children and children phoned their parents. The idea, common among sociologists, that those gifted mobile phones become a digital leash through which parents can keep a digital eye on their children is overturned by the findings of our report. In all of the countries surveyed, young people between the ages of 16 and 24 phoned their parents more often, or at least as often, as their parents phoned them. An astonishing one in twenty European 16 to 24 year-olds now text their parents daily - the majority, we can deduce, have introduced their parents to the joy of text rather than the other way around. Young people, it turns out, are in control of the technology after all - and are more likely to using newly purchased mobile phones to nag their parents than the other way around.

On cheating and being caught

Intrigue, exhibitionism, subterfuge and surveillance, our survey suggests, are the inevitable fallout when the stuff of intimate relationships are funnelled through communication on our mobile phones. Across

Europe, a quarter of our respondents admitted to apologising by text, while an astonishing nearly one in five admitted to lying by text. From the shy teenagers afraid to confront the object of their affection to the lusty clubbers straining to type "r u up 4 it?", the mobile has also given rise to a whole new form of courting ritual.

The murky world of "text sex", it would be tempting to argue, is yet another stumble down the evolutionary ladder after the privations involved in having sex on the telephone. All the same, it is now a thoroughly mainstream part of modern living, and now not only among the young – nearly one in four Europeans, if our survey is to be believed, have received a sexually explicit text, and one in five have sent one. It is no surprise that the Brits and the Swedes, with such an intimate relationship to their mobiles, are the most likely to admit to having engaged in a bout of text sex – 39% of Swedes have admitted to having received a sexually explicit text, as did 31% of Brits. Sexually explicit photos and videos, too, are less common but on the rise – 6.8% of our sample admitted to sending them, and 11% to receiving them, which means that either some people are doing all the sending, or that some of our respondents are not being entirely forthright about their role in fuelling this new trade in amateur pornography. If we really are on the cusp of a brave new world of amateur pornography, it is worth noting that women are at it just as much as men, if not more so. Swedish women, for example, were more likely to have sent a sexually explicit text-message than Swedish men.

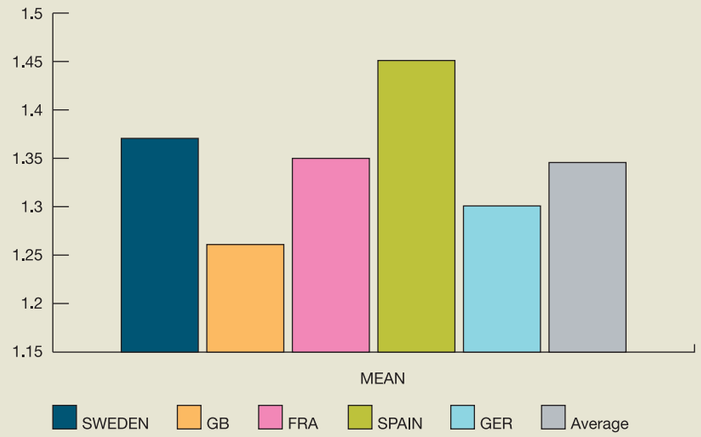
Given the discreet nature of mobile communication, it is hardly surprising that it seems to come in most handy when romance needs to proceed on the quiet. An average of 18% of respondents to our sample admitted to sending flirtatious texts to someone other than their partner – the figure was as high as 28% among the amorous French. All this is further proof, if any was required, that mobile phones have become the essential accessory to modern infidelity. The data trail left on mobiles, however, can also prove very useful to the cheated-upon party, or to those who simply want to keep tabs on what their partners are up too. Over a quarter of our flirtatious French respondents admitted to using their mobile to flirt with someone other than their partner, but even more than that (34%) admitted to checking their partner's messages for possibly incriminating texts.

Who owns what

On the basis of this Mobile Life research we can confidently say that the Europe-wide love affair with mobile phones continues to grow from strength to strength. It seems for many of us one phone simply won't do; on average the Europeans in this survey have 1.3 mobiles that they regularly use.

How many mobile phones do you have that you regularly use? Please include mobiles that you own yourself or company mobile phones that you regularly use:

Average number of phones per person: (By country)

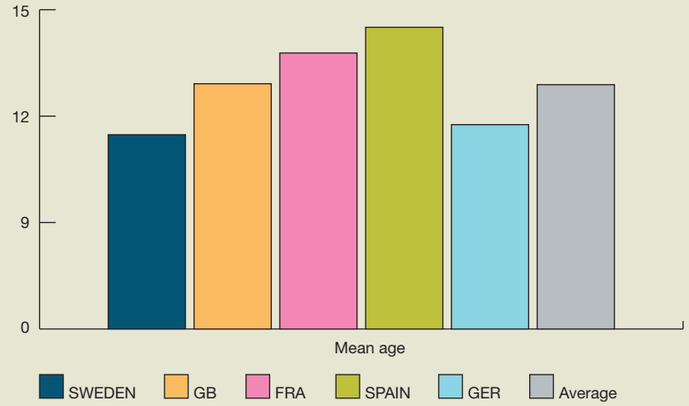


In Spain a staggering 1 in 3 people have 2 mobile phones that they use regularly. Whether this reflects people separating work phones from personal phones, or taking advantage of different tariffs, it illustrates how completely central these devices have become to how we organise our lives. People in Britain own the fewest mobiles per head with 72% managing to 'make do' with just one phone.

My first mobile

On average Europeans think children should not be bought their own mobile until just a couple of months shy of their 13th birthday (12.9).

In your opinion what is the youngest age at which it is sensible for children to be given a mobile phone? (By country)

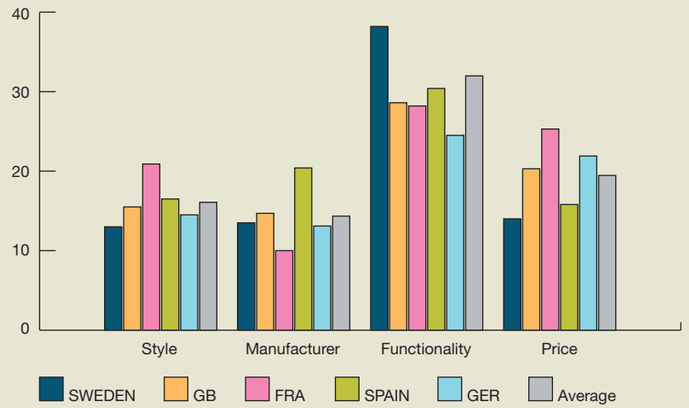


But this average disguises some interesting cultural differences. In Britain we largely believe children are ready to be phone owners between their 8th and 13th birthdays whereas more than 1 in 4 Spaniards think children should be 16 or over before being given a phone, perhaps reflecting a more traditional family model in Spain.

What we want

Unsurprisingly, functionality, or what the phone can do, is the most important factor in the purchase decision in all the countries we researched. Price is the second most important factor everywhere except Spain where style is slightly more important than price:

Which of the following, if any, is the most important reason why you chose the particular phone you bought? (By country)



People in Spain are the most brand conscious when it comes to choosing their mobile and people in France are the least. But this lack of brand awareness does not imply that the French don't care how their phones look, on the contrary, traditional notions of the French emphasis on style are upheld here with style being significantly more important to the French than anyone else when choosing their mobile. (Although interestingly a more practical side to the French also came through with price being rated as more important to the French than to anyone else).

Mobile phones and gender equality

Dr Carsten Sorensen,

London School of Economics and Political Science

Men and women have traditionally used new media, such as internet and TV, differently.[1] Several studies have found differences in the percentage of men and women using mobile phones across countries with men generally being more likely to own a mobile phone than women.[2] Studies have also found differences in how women and men use the mobile phone, with women more likely to use it to maintain social networks and coordinate family activities. However, the gap in ownership is narrowing, and what is particularly interesting in our study is how few differences we found between the behaviour of men and women as regards mobile phones. The similarity is especially interesting when compared to gender differences and the domestic landline phone, where in the past women have consistently been heavier users than men.[3] While it has been argued that the mobile phone could both reduce or enforce gender differences, we found surprisingly similar patterns of usage and attitudes towards the technology.[4]

Men and women not only have similar patterns of use as regards mobile phone calls, they also report similar experiences with SMS messages; both genders use them as means of flirting, sending and receiving romantic messages or sexually explicit material, and even abusive or bullying phone calls.

One difference we did find was with respect to the volume of SMS messages sent by the two genders. Women lead the way by sending significantly more messages each day than men. Women make up 57% of the intensive SMS users (more than 6 messages per day).

The women we spoke to are most likely to choose a phone based on price (21%), then style (17%). Men are most often are guided by functionality (35% of those surveyed), then price (19%) with style and make of mobile phone equal at 14%. It is quite interesting that this difference in how the sexes choose their mobile phone does not lead to significant differences in usage, the relative lack of interest in phone functionality on the part of women does not imply lack of experience in using the different functionalities.

1 Sonia Livingstone (2002): Young People and New Media. Sage

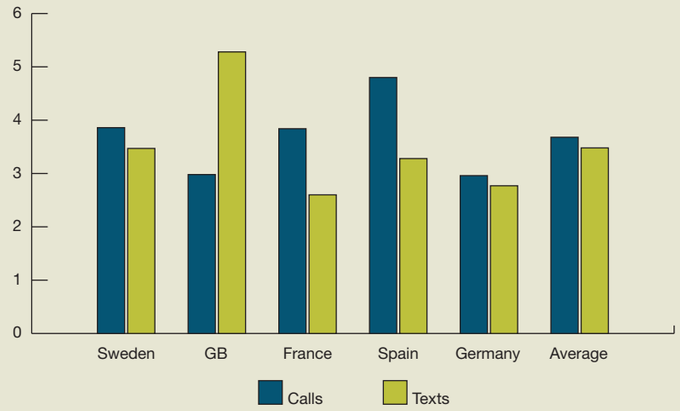
2 Manuel Castells, Mireia Fernández-Ardévol, Jack Linchuan Qiu, and Araba Sey (2007):Mobile Communication and Society. The MIT Press

3 Claude S. Fischer (1988): Gender and the Residential Telephone, 1890-1940: *Technologies of Sociability. Sociological Forum. vol:3. no:2. pp:211-233*

4 Manuel Castells, Mireia Fernández-Ardévol, Jack Linchuan Qiu, and Araba Sey (2007): *Mobile Communication and Society. The MIT Press*

Talk vs Text

How many voice calls do you make on an average day on your mobile phone and how many text messages (SMS) do you send on an average day? (By country)



The average European makes 3.6 calls a day and sends 3.4 texts.

When we look at the countries individually Spaniards make the most calls, making an average of 4.8 calls per day, significantly higher than the average 2.98 calls a day made by people in Britain. Our research suggests that in Britain people prefer to text. In every other country people make more calls than they send texts, but in Britain that pattern is reversed – Britons make an average of 2.98 calls a day but send 5.28 texts (twice as many as the average French person). In Britain, it seems it's good to text.

This British use of the mobile phone in a way which reduces the need for human contact is a reoccurring feature in our findings, one could wonder whether this reflects the often noted British reserve, or if it in fact reflects the longer working hours in Britain, a quick text replacing the need for a lengthier call.

If you take a total of calls plus texts it's the British who are using their phones the most and the Germans who are using them the least.

I'm addicted to text....

Dr Carsten Sorensen

Our research suggests that we live in a world addicted to the constant connections facilitated by mobile phones. Much of this addiction is fed via text messaging: this is especially true for Britons. The UK is undergoing a text revolution compared with the other countries. 33% of those sending a large number of daily SMS messages are from Britain with the other four countries trailing behind with 14-19% each. But this revolution has not reached everyone - 25% of Europeans argue that they do not use SMS messages at all. This is largely related to age - 65% of those not sending any SMS are between 45 and 64 years old.

Beyond the basics

Looking at the list below please say which you have done via your mobile phone: (By country)

	Sweden	GB	France	Spain	Germany	Average
Most common activitie Used Bluetooth	50	51	**38**	**60**	42	48
Accessed the internet	59	**46**	43	**46**	**30**	45
Recorded a video	24	37	**13**	**50**	27	30
Downloaded a music track	27	27	25	**41**	**17**	27
Uploaded pictures or video to the internet	20	**25**	19	20	**12**	19
Used GPS	11	20	**7**	13	**21**	14
Watched TV/video clips	13	**18**	**9**	11	**9**	12
Paid bills	**2**	9	8	**13**	8	8
Bought products	6	**8**	**4**	7	5	6
Average	24	27	**18**	**29**	19	23

Country with highest usage **/** ***country with lowest usage***

In terms of usage of the additional features on our phones it's bluetooth, the internet, videos and downloading music which are currently the most popular functions.

Nearly 1 in 2 Europeans have used bluetooth (48%) and a similar proportion have accessed the internet via their phones (44%). Recording videos and downloading music are also both reasonably widespread with 30% and 27% respectively doing these. Few of us are using functions beyond these.

It is the Spanish who are leading the way when it comes to adopting and using the most mainstream of the additional features, but Britain isn't far behind and in fact when it comes to the more niche activities such as uploading content from our phones, buying products, and watching TV or video clips it is the British who are most likely to be doing them. In fact Britain is the only one of the five countries with on or above average usage of the full range of features.

There is very little gender difference between who is using which functions on their phones but there are very marked age differences.

In Britain for example:

Looking at the list below please say which you have done via your mobile phone: (Britain; gender and age breakouts)

	Population average	Men	Women	16-24	45-54
Used Bluetooth	51	54	49	74	33
Accessed the internet	46	47	45	72	24
Recorded a video	37	37	37	58	16
Downloaded a music track	27	30	25	41	14
Uploaded pictures or video to the internet	25	28	23	41	14
Used GPS	20	20	19	28	14
Watched TV/video clips	18	22	15	32	6
Paid bills	9	9	9	14	7
Bought products	8	9	6	13	6

It appears mobiles are one area of technology without a gender divide – the men and women in our study have very similar usage patterns of the full range of mobile features. There are however very marked differences across the generations with young people taking up additional features in far greater numbers.

Advancement of technological opportunities

Dr Carsten Sorensen

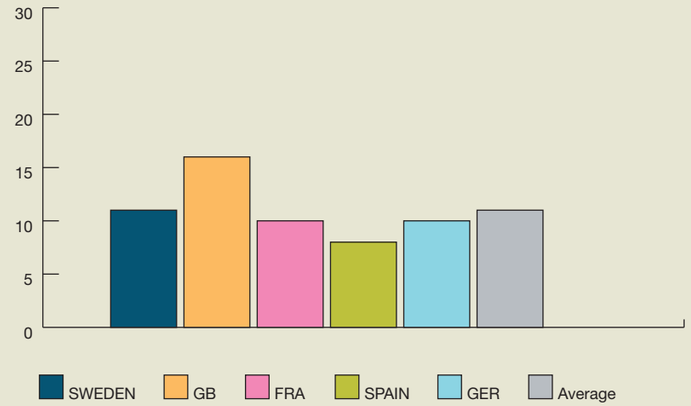
One way of measuring how advanced peoples' use of their mobile phone is is to look at the variety of activities they pursue. Across the nine different activities we asked about (internet access, bluetooth, GPS, bills, purchase products, upload pictures, download music, record video, and watch TV), Germany, Spain and Sweden displayed a similar number of experiences in total with Britain having a higher level of experience with a variety of services and France, significantly lower.

Interestingly, there are no significant differences in the breath of experiences with advanced mobile phone functionality between men and women. Predictably, there is a clear trend of younger mobile phone users having a wider set of experiences.

As mobile technology is maturing, so are its users across gender and ages. The androgynous nature of the mobile phone is clearly evident when looking at the tiny differences in how the two genders use the different technological advancements such as bluetooth and file up- and downloads.

My life, my mobile

"My mobile phone is my most important possession" – All those agreeing (By country)



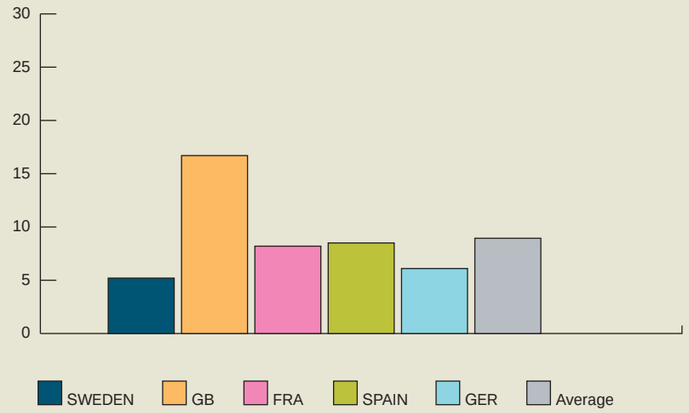
For one in ten people across Europe their mobile phone is their most important possession. But in Britain this figure increases to 1 in 6, and if you look only at British youngsters 1 in 3 of this group (16-24 year olds) say their phone is their most important possession. The British clearly have a far greater degree of attachment to their mobile phones.

In the previous section we noted that the British have the most consistent and widespread usage of the full range of mobile features. This greater use of full functionality may mean that British people experience the impact of their mobile phone in more areas of their life and therefore have a greater sense of attachment to it.

This theory is borne out by our findings regarding age – here again greater use of a wider range of functions appears also to be correlated with a greater sense of attachment. We found attachment to mobile phones was closely correlated to age in all countries except France. Generally speaking the younger age groups right across Europe are more likely to say their mobile is their most important possession (19% 16-24 year olds in Sweden say it is (up form 11% Swedish average), 18% in Germany (against 10% German an average), 13% in Spain (against 8% Spanish average) except for in France where interestingly the figure is a constant 10%. Although beyond the scope of this study, it would be interesting to know what cultural values are at play here that mean this generational divide should exist everywhere except France.

We found no significant gender differences as regards attachment to our mobiles.

"I would feel unwanted if a whole day went by when my phone didn't ring or receive a text message" – All those agreeing: (By country)

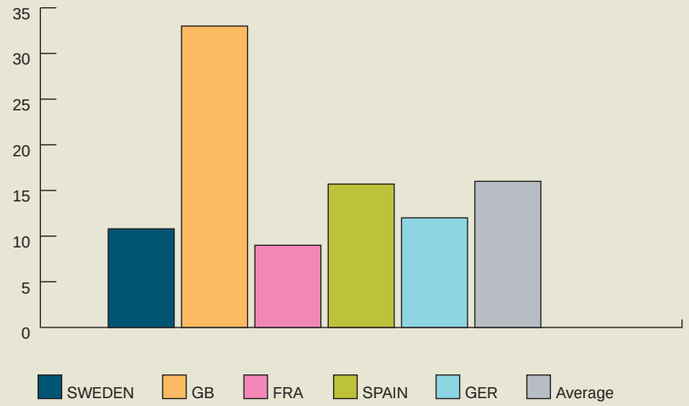


We can see that while this statement was virtually dismissed in Sweden and Germany, and not popular in France and Spain, it seems that, as seen with the previous question, the British really are far more emotionally reliant on their phones: 1 in 6 agrees with this statement.

As with the statement above this attachment is very closely correlated with age – the number in agreement doubles for 16-24 year olds across Europe (16% agree on average.)

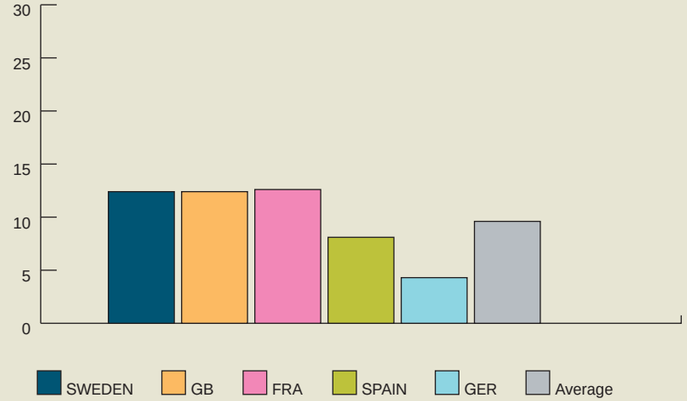
This cross continental average hides the same cultural pattern as above; the number rises to 1 in 3 amongst Britons aged 16-24 but in France stays constant across the generations.

"I would feel unwanted if a whole day went by when my phone didn't ring or I did not receive a text message." 16-24 yr olds agreeing: (By country)



Mobile phone addiction

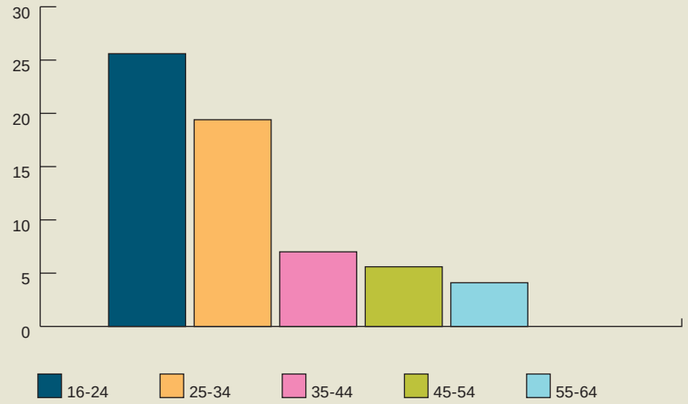
'I am addicted to my phone'. All those agreeing: (By country)



1 in 10 people across Europe admit to being addicted to their mobile phone.

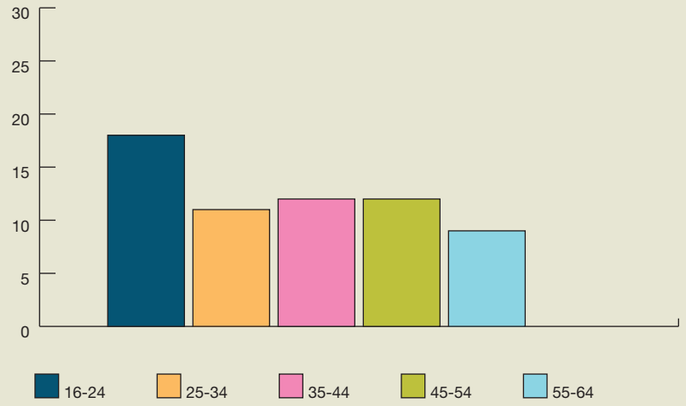
In Britain there is a huge age difference:

'I am addicted to my phone.' All those agreeing: (By age in Britain)



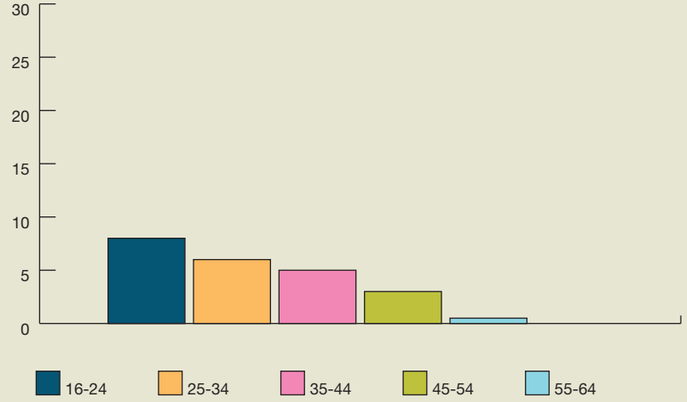
But this is not so pronounced in France:

'I am addicted to my phone.' All those agreeing: (By age in France)



And in Germany the idea is unheard of amongst older people and hardly strikes a chord amongst youngsters:

'I am addicted to my phone'. - All those agreeing: (By age in Germany)



It is clear that young people in Britain place a much higher emotional significance on our phones than either older people in our own society or people of any ages outside of Britain.

In France, although overall the population does place significant importance on the phone there is little generational difference – the level is constant across the age groups.

In Germany people of all ages are reluctant to express such strong emotional attachment to their phones.

Addiction to phone

Dr Carsten Sorensen

In this research we asked people to what extent the mobile phone was their most important possession, to what extent they would feel unwanted if they were not contacted via their mobile for a whole day, and to what extent they feel addicted to their mobile phone. Together these three questions express the emotional intensity of the relationship between the person and their phone. We found 74% are in the low-addiction range, 17% in the middle-range, and 9% in the high range - quite strongly or strongly agreeing that their phone is their most important possession, they feel unwanted if not contacted for a day, and that they consider themselves addicted to their mobile phone.

The question is to what extent this intensity of relationship is negative for this minority of nearly 10%. It seems that younger people are much more likely to report a more intense relationship with their mobile phone than the older generations.

Mobile Relationships

Love on the Phone

Susan Quilliam
Relationship Psychologist

At age 17, my first "serious relationship" was with a lad who, very shortly after we met, moved to the other end of the country for his job. Young love is desperate, but luckily he worked for a firm that allowed - amazing in hindsight - free phone calls after 18:00. Which is why at 17:59 precisely every weekday evening - summer, spring, autumn and winter - I would be found sitting on the hallway stairs, eyes fixed on the phone, willing it to ring. When it did, there would follow hours of whispered sighs and endearments, while my tactful parents lurked in kitchen or lounge, coughing loudly if they crossed the hallway.

Today, were I still 17 - or indeed 27, 47 or 77 - things would be very different. The latest Mobile Life European survey confirms what contemporary teenagers and older lovers alike are already experiencing: that love is quite simply easier now. We no longer have to schedule a single phone opportunity from an ice-cold bottom step; instead, Europe-wide, we make an average of 3.6 calls every day from schoolyard, garden and bedroom - 4.8 calls if we are the loquacious Spaniards. We no longer have to lower our voices so as not to be heard whispering about love or indeed sex; instead, over 20% of us receive sexually explicit texts - nearly 40% if we are the libidinous Swedes. The language of love is the same but, in the 21st century, the means of communicating that language has changed beyond all recognition.

Love's easier

It's obvious from my reminiscence that new technology makes the expression of love more convenient than it used to be. And, both as a woman and a professional advice columnist, I wholeheartedly welcome that. In my personal life I daily witness little acts of affection as those around me send loving texts, receive touch-down phone calls, or whip their camera phone out to record and then pass on daily moments of joy to their significant others.

In my professional life, I also bear witness that all over the world - for my advice columns bring in letters and emails worldwide - the mobile revolution is transforming our patterns of intimacy, making it easier to maintain relationships even when our loved ones are out of town or even in another country. Worldwide reach and low price make contact accessible; the ease of calls and texts makes constant and close contact possible. So, where I talked to my significant other from one specific spot in my hallway, today's lovers have that possibility in the car (32%), on the train (32%), or in a restaurant (30%). Where I was only able to talk at all because of the generosity of my boyfriend's employers, today's couples get such an easily affordable service that 1 in 3 in Spain has mobile two phones.

Psychologically, this kind of constantly available communication builds relationships more effectively than ever before. Exchanging mobile numbers at once gives the sense that a potential partner is accessible to us 24/7 - a statement of interest that is at the same time affirming, flattering and instantly seductive. At the same time, the slight distance created by the technology gives a sense of safety, allowing even the shy souls amongst us to make a move, accept a move, open up or reveal our emotions, again reinforcing the bond. As a relationship progresses, it's then consolidated by the ability to invite a partner into your world by sending them regular updates - verbal, written and visual - on what you are doing, seeing and feeling. Never has the courtship ritual been so easy, so rich and so habit-forming; the sheer emotional intensity of it all is immensely compelling.

Bad behaviour

It is this very intensity, however, which creates the more suspect phenomena highlighted in the latest Mobile Life survey. For, while the amazing intimacy facilitated by the mobile revolution supports loving and committed relationships, it also supports the opposite end of the extreme: flings, affairs, betrayal. 19% of us Europe-wide indulge in extra-marital flirting by text, while 20% of us lie through that medium; it's a justifiable conclusion that, at least to some extent, that second statistic is linked with the first.

Plus, new technology also makes it easier to avoid the repercussions of bad behaviour. Rather than making amends in person to a partner we have hurt, we text our apologies (25%) with the biggest culprits being the British, French and Spanish. And nearly 10% of us - admittedly this figure is artificially inflated by the one in three French figure - even dump said partner by text; after which, of course, we have the possibility of dumping the phone, changing the number and making the break permanent and irreversible.

Professionally, it's no surprise to me that so many of us have indulged in extra-marital flirting, have lied, have dumped and, knowing that others are capable of behaving just as badly, have also felt the need to snoop on our beloved's messages. Because new technology not only creates new opportunities for misdeeds but also affords a certain deniability. If "he" wants to go clubbing with the lads, he can now text his spouse that he's working late, then turn the phone to silent and put said spouse out of his mind. If "she" wants to speak to her lover, she can do so from the supermarket parking lot and, given she has a non-itemised bill, no-one will be any the wiser and she can pretend it never happened.

The mobile brings us closer to those we love. But it also lets us separate ourselves - physically and emotionally - from those we no longer love. This is not always a bad thing; it gives much needed distance when it's best for all concerned to cut ties absolutely and completely. But it can also take away the sense of responsibility that human beings should feel; resolving emotionally difficult situations face-to-face is more challenging than doing so shielded by technology, but stepping up to that challenge is a sign of personal maturity.

Differences

I am unsurprised by the Mobile Life survey figures in general. I am equally unsurprised, though equally fascinated, by the generational differences it reveals. Young people are always more ready to adopt new ways, and more proactive about developing new norms and mores to go with those new ways. So the fact that a 16-24 year-old would use their phone to lie, flirt or dump more readily than 55-64 year-old would is absolutely predictable. (It's also

"The mobile brings us closer to those we love"

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“Some nationalities quite simply prefer to communicate directly, others indirectly”

absolutely predictable, from a psychological standpoint, that in five or ten years' time, when those same young people have themselves suffered the pain of a broken heart and begun to realise that all actions - even sending a 'you're dumped' message - have their repercussions, they won't be quite so cavalier with their texts.)

What fascinates me too is the difference the survey turns up in national statistics. Most basically, there is the voice-text difference. Some nationalities quite simply prefer to communicate directly, others indirectly (it's surely a justifiable leap to presume that these communication patterns will apply not only generally but also to the ways they start, build and maintain love relationships). So we find that the more southern, Romance nations surveyed (France and Spain) prefer the direct approach, calling rather than texting, while in the more northern, Germanic nations (Sweden and Germany) the difference is less marked, and in Britain text overwhelmingly rules. Are these figures linked with the Southern nations' sociability and their emotional openness? Are they more at ease with love talk? More eager for involvement? And does the Brits' tendency to text prove they are more wary when it comes to love?

Perhaps - but that doesn't mean that the Brits are less sexual. When it comes to sending explicit texts, they are almost up there with the Swedes at the highest level. From a cultural perspective, given the liberal tradition around erotica in Scandinavian countries, the Swedish figures are not surprising; more unexpected, given British reserve, are the British statistics. But there could be an explanation: the Brits' very embarrassed streak could well underpin the fact that they use text not voice to make their desires known. The French, on the other hand, hardly dabble in sexual texting at all; they presumably have other, more direct ways to achieve the same seductive end. When it comes to betrayal, national differences are again both marked and fascinating. Check the figures for that raft of questions about flirting, lying, and calling a halt to a love affair, and one nation rears its head again and again. 28% of the French surveyed play away by text, 30% of them lie that way, while 33% of them use text to end a love affair. Is this because the French are less intense and romantic than their national stereotype would suggest? Or is it, conversely, that their intensity makes them prone to the wandering eye - and then their romanticism makes them shrink from directly deceiving and dumping?

These are fascinating statistics and I have suggested some promising theories about those statistics. But I have to come clean. There are no factual or scientific studies as yet to prove these theories; we can only surmise. When it comes to explaining why different nations use the new technology in different ways - to meet, to woo, to lie, to betray - we need to explore further to have definitive answers.

Where’s the blame?

There is, too, a crucial question. In among all this talk of lying and betrayal, we must ask: is the new technology harmful to relationships? Am I, as an advice columnist in the front line of Love's War, wagging a finger and blaming the communication revolution for the zooming infidelity rate and the plummeting rate of marriage survival?

“The communication revolution is playing a large part in the human race's love story”

Absolutely not.

For the emotional turmoil I am describing is certainly not the fault of the medium per se. Any action, as crime thrillers always point out, needs means, opportunity and motive. New mobile technology certainly increases the means and the opportunity, but in order for emotional disasters to happen, the motive has to be there in the first place.

I see motive galore in my advice column postbag. Under the strain of a fragmented society, with unrealistic expectations of love at an all-time high and with little support available from family or friends to fulfil those expectations, I see failing relationships, shot through with frustration, anger and disillusionment; couples constantly struggling to make their relationships work; individuals constantly reaching out to ease the pain of being unable to make them work. In our current society, the temptation to stray and betray is stronger than it has ever been. Yes, calls, texts, photos and videos all allow this temptation breathing space. But they are not to blame.

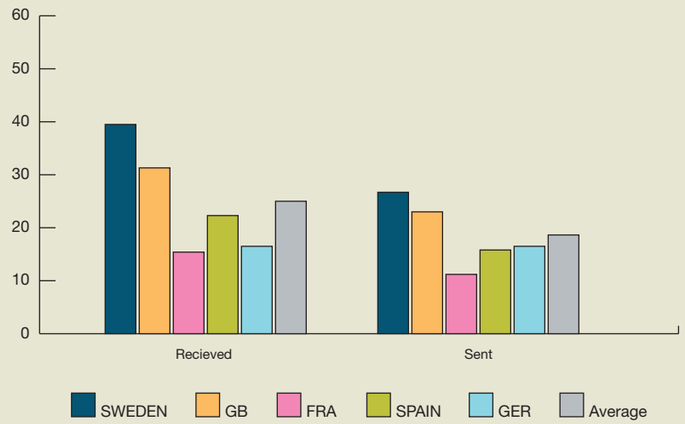
On the contrary, in my opinion the new era of mobile technology is issuing in a new era of relationship success. More accessibility to potential partners, more ease of contact once a partner is found, more communication, more information, more understanding. What's not to like? My postbag daily shows me a human race - Europe-wide and world-wide - noticeably maturing in our ability to form intimate bonds and to maintain those bonds by revealing our own minds and hearts and by having access to the minds and hearts of others.

Yes, there are national differences: the Northern European ease with sexually explicit material, the Southern European preference for direct connection, the Gallic tendency to intrigue. And yes, some of these differences concern behaviour that is less than ideal. But overall I do not see new technology heralding in a Europe-wide age of romantic immaturity and relationship failure; on the contrary, I overwhelmingly see the easier and more constant access it offers as supporting individual commitment and couple bonding. The communication revolution is playing a large part in the human race's love story, and with my professional hat on I am grateful for that.

And with my personal hat on, I am also grateful that today when I speak with my significant other, I no longer have to crouch on the bottom step in a freezing hall and lower my voice to a whisper...

Text life

All who have sent or received sexually explicit text messages: (By country)

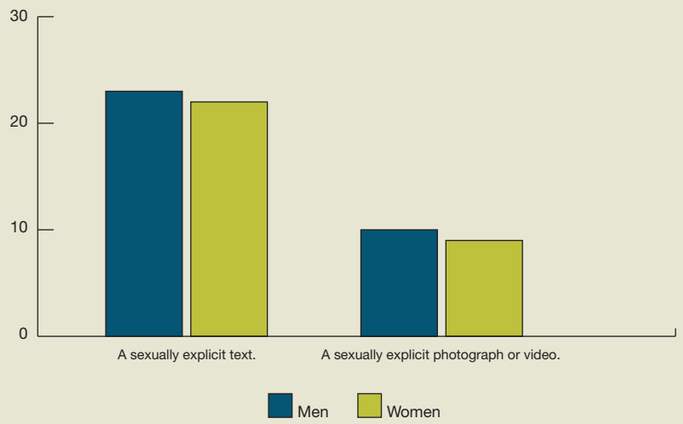


Nearly 1 in 4 people Europe-wide have received a sexually explicit text, and 1 in 5 have sent one. But it is the Swedes and the British who are most textually promiscuous. In France as few as 11% have sent one and only 15% have received one. Perhaps the French have more traditionally romantic notions about how it is proper to proposition a love interest!

Sexually explicit photos and videos are less common: on average 6.8% of our sample admit to sending them and 11% to receiving them (clearly there are key people who act as distributors of this type of material). But again they are much more common behaviours in Britain and in Sweden than they are in the other countries we researched.

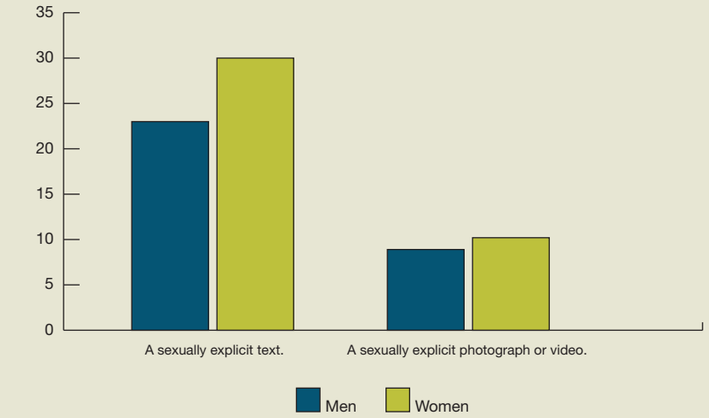
Interestingly gender differences are not as significant as you might expect. In France, Germany, Spain and Britain there is virtually no difference.

All who have sent or received sexually explicit text messages: (Britain - by gender)



And in Sweden women are more likely to have both sent and received sexually explicit material.

All who have sent or received sexually explicit text messages: (Sweden - by gender)



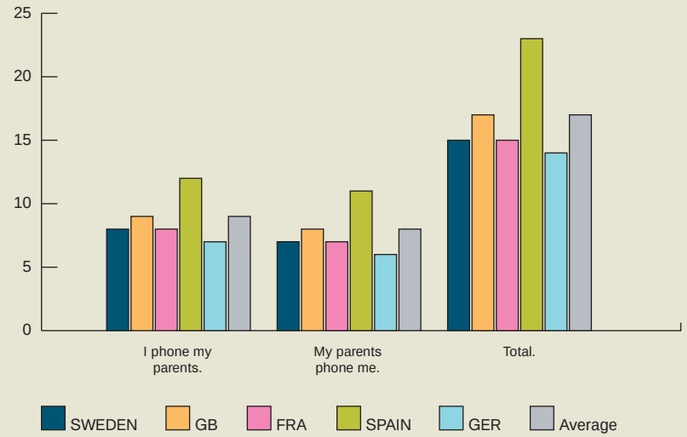
Flirting, romance, sex and bullying at a distance

Dr Carsten Sorensen

The mobile phone through its voice connections, as well as SMS and multi-media messages can be use for a range of purposes, from co-ordinating meetings to just keeping in touch, and it can also play an important role in flirting and romance. Classifying the extent of varied experiences of sending and receiving messages related to flirting, romance, sex and bullying, we found that 74% of Europeans had little experience in sending or receiving these types of messages. 17% had some experience, and a small group of 8% had quite extensive experience. We found men and women had equal experience of both sending and receiving messages but that there were significant differences in the extent of the SMS experience across Europe; for example, only 13% of French respondents were in the high-usage group compared to around 20-22% of people in the other four countries.

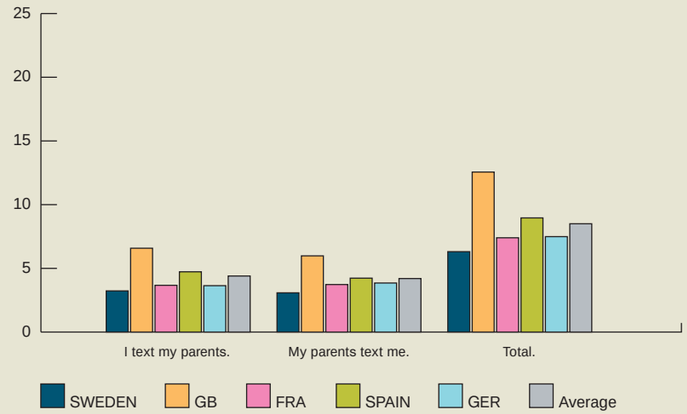
Mobile families

How often do you phone your parents? And how often do your parents phone you? (By country)

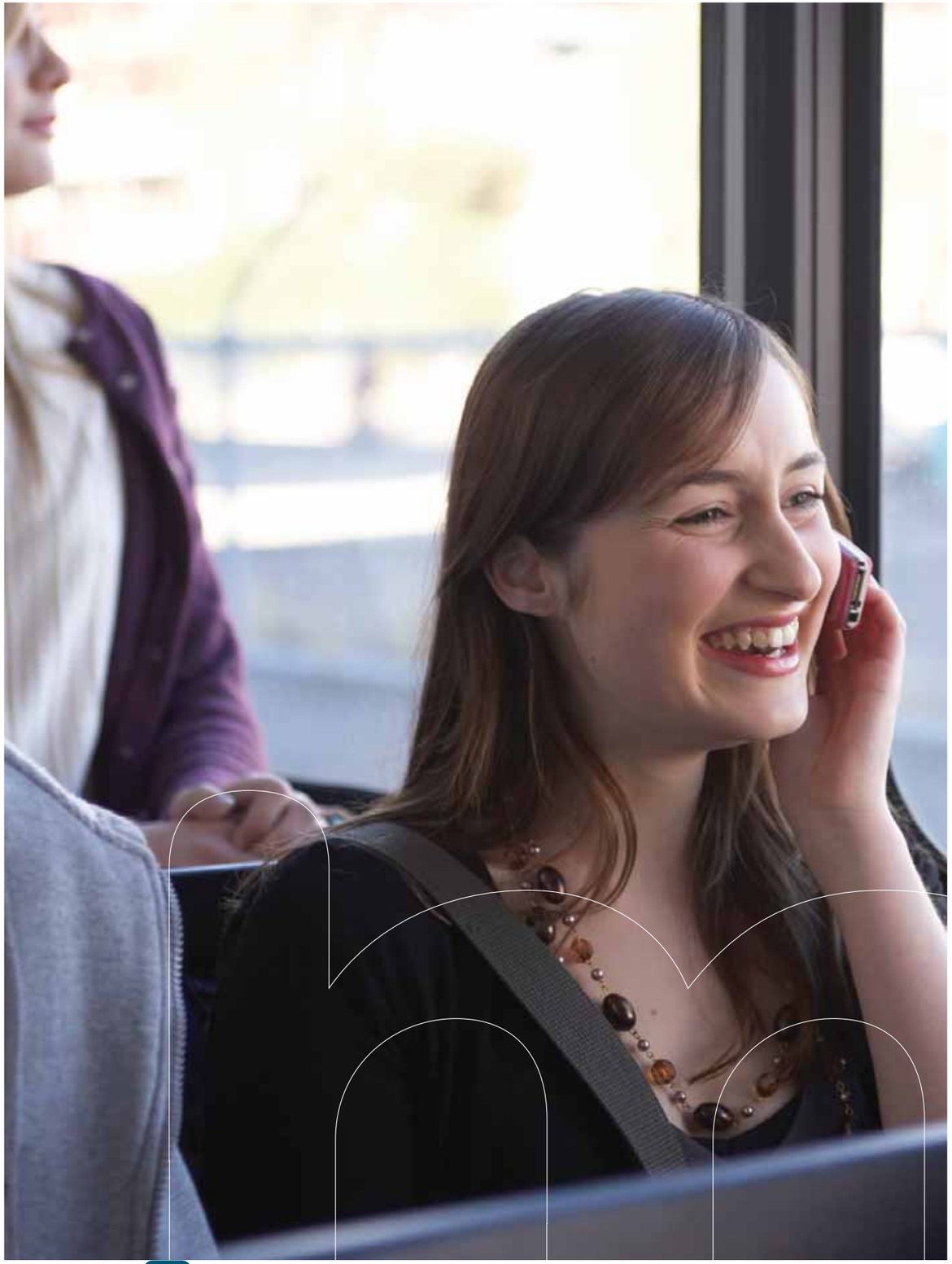


When it comes to speaking to our parents on the phone it appears that there is a norm across much of Europe with very similar figures being reported everywhere, except perhaps in Spain where nearly a third more phone calls are being made to or from parents each month compared to the average throughout the rest of Europe.

How often do you phone your parents? And how often do your parents phone you? (By country)

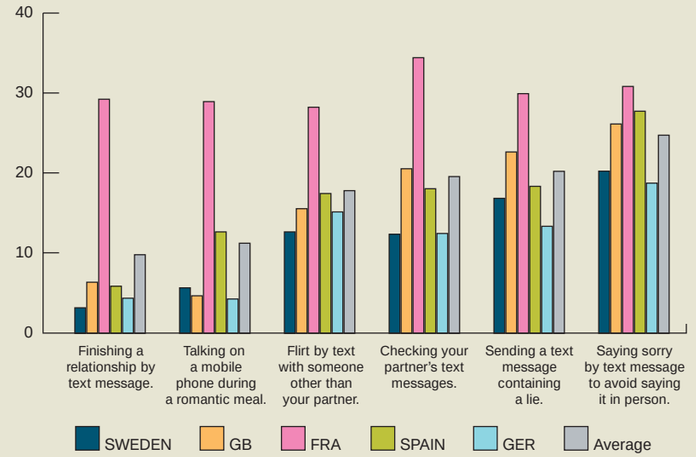


However when it comes to texting it's the British who have the most contact, sending and receiving twice as many texts to or from their parents as the Swedes. While on average just 2% of Europeans text their parents daily, over 5% of British do.



Mobile Manners

We asked people which of the following they had done:



When it comes to mobile etiquette what stands out immediately is how significantly the attitude of the French differs to the rest of Europe. Across the board the French are more likely to have engaged in all of these questionable activities. A stunning 1 in 3 of the French people we spoke to say they have finished a relationship by text message and nearly 30% admit holding mobile phone conversations while on romantic dates. Are they simply far less concerned with so-called mobile protocol than their neighbours, or just more likely to admit to their indiscretions?

The Swedes and the Germans are the least likely to own up to any of these behaviours. For example just 3% of Swedes and 4% of Germans have ended a relationship by text. Despite some significant differences, the rest of Europe (excluding France) does seem to be in a fair amount of agreement about what is and isn't acceptable mobile behaviour.

It appears that many of us are pretty comfortable admitting to the convenience of using text message to avoid difficult conversations or situations – 20% admit to lying by text and 25% admit to apologising by text. But it seems we have higher standards when it comes to keeping romance alive. Finishing a relationship by text or talking on a mobile during a date are something very few outside of France would admit to. Only 4% of British people have held a conversation on their mobile while on a date compared to 29% of the French, and only 6% of British admit to having finished a relationship by text compared again to 29% of the French. So much for the nation of lovers!

And while the French appear most likely to have a wandering hand, as it were (28% admit to sending flirty texts to someone other than their partner) they certainly don't deserve their reputation for turning a blind eye to their partners' infidelities; 34% of the French admit to checking their partners inbox without their permission compared to the more trusting British (where 20% do it) and the much more trusting Germans – a mere 12% of them sneak around in this manner.

According to other questions we asked it would seem that as far as locations and situations are concerned romantic dates are now the only real refuge from the mobile - nearly a third of us deem buses and trains (32%), family meals (28%) and restaurants (30%) all suitable places for mobile phone conversations.

When we asked which of the same behaviours are acceptable (as opposed to which people actually do them) it is the Spanish who show the most leniency - they might not actually do these things but they are happy to accept others doing them. Unlike the French who despite being the worst offenders are no more likely than average to think they are acceptable!

Generation gap

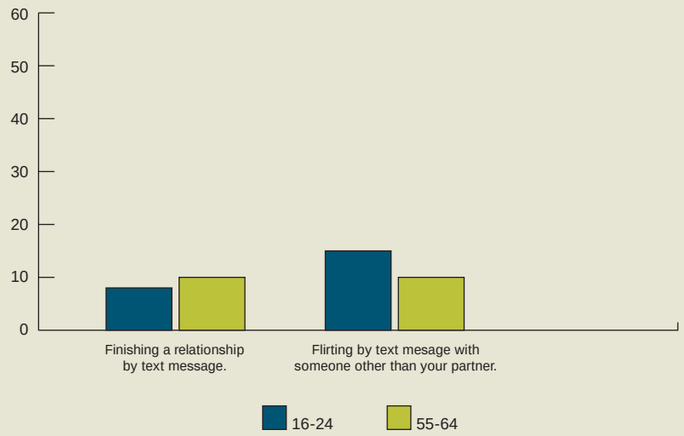
When we look at what impact age has on ideas of etiquette there are some interesting things to note.

Right across Europe young people are more likely to think it is acceptable to talk on their mobile phone on the bus, or in a restaurant, or during a family meal, perhaps expressing a change in sensibility regarding notions of privacy and different notions of respect for communal spaces.

Looking at the list of situations below, please say for each whether you think it is acceptable behaviour: (By age)

When it comes to more fundamental issues the generational differences are not so great. The young are not more likely than the old to think that finishing a relationship by text, or flirting with a person other than their partner by text are acceptable. It would appear that these actions contravene more deeply held issues of social morality and as such are not as subject to change.

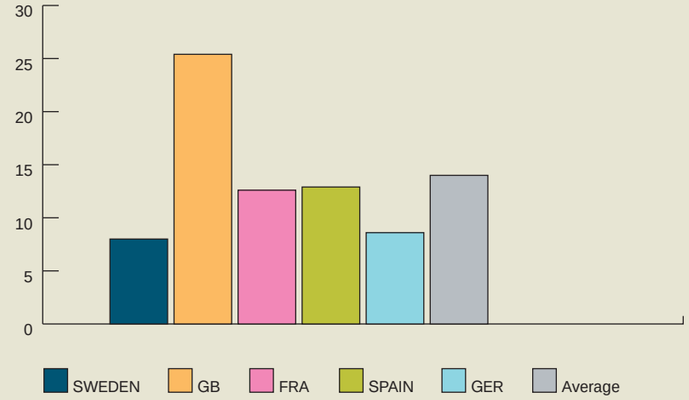
Looking at the list of situations below, please say for each whether you think it is acceptable behaviour: (By age)



However this cross-generational agreement does not extend to lying – 20% of 16-24 year olds believe sending a text message containing a lie is acceptable compared to 13% percent of 55-64 year olds.

One of the interesting findings from the original UK Mobile Life was the prevalence of young women using mobile phones in public situations to deter strangers from approaching them. Having asked this question again across Europe it's clear that this is in fact behaviour peculiar to the British:

I sometimes use my mobile phone in public situations to deter people from approaching me. (By country)



1 in 4 Britons admits to deterring strangers in this way compared to a European average (excluding the British) of 1 in 10. And that figure increases to nearly 1 in 3 if you look at British women only. Does this highlight a more significant fear of strangers than the rest of Europe or simply suggest that the British are not as a friendly a nation as they might think?

Mobile phone etiquette

Dr Carsten Sorensen

The discussion of how a relatively new invention such as the mobile phone takes its place in our everyday life is an interesting one, and one where there will inevitably be very different opinions. One of the most prominent features of the mobile phone is its ability to connect people in very different situations. Jack calls Joan from the number 62 bus on his way home - but she is in the cinema. Carlos calls Carmen from the airport to say he is leaving but she is using her landline phone to call her mother. Sven is in the middle of an important client presentation in New York when his brother Stig calls from his garden.

We don't know what situation our call might stumble into and for this reason our interruption is for the most part excused.

We are currently in the process of collectively negotiating which situations we believe can and can't be punctuated by mobile calls, trying to balancing our selfish desires against our wish to be socially acceptable.

Our behaviour is for the large part dictated by informal norms about when it is acceptable to leave our mobiles on, when we turn to silent, make a call etc. Although some situations regulate the use of mobile phones, silent carriages on the train, on an airplane, or when in the theatre, most situations do not. We are left to judge the issue in much the same manner as we judge what jokes are appropriate in what situations or how to dress for what occasion. This makes it all the more interesting and exciting as it is a matter of constantly negotiating the boundaries through a process of push and pull.

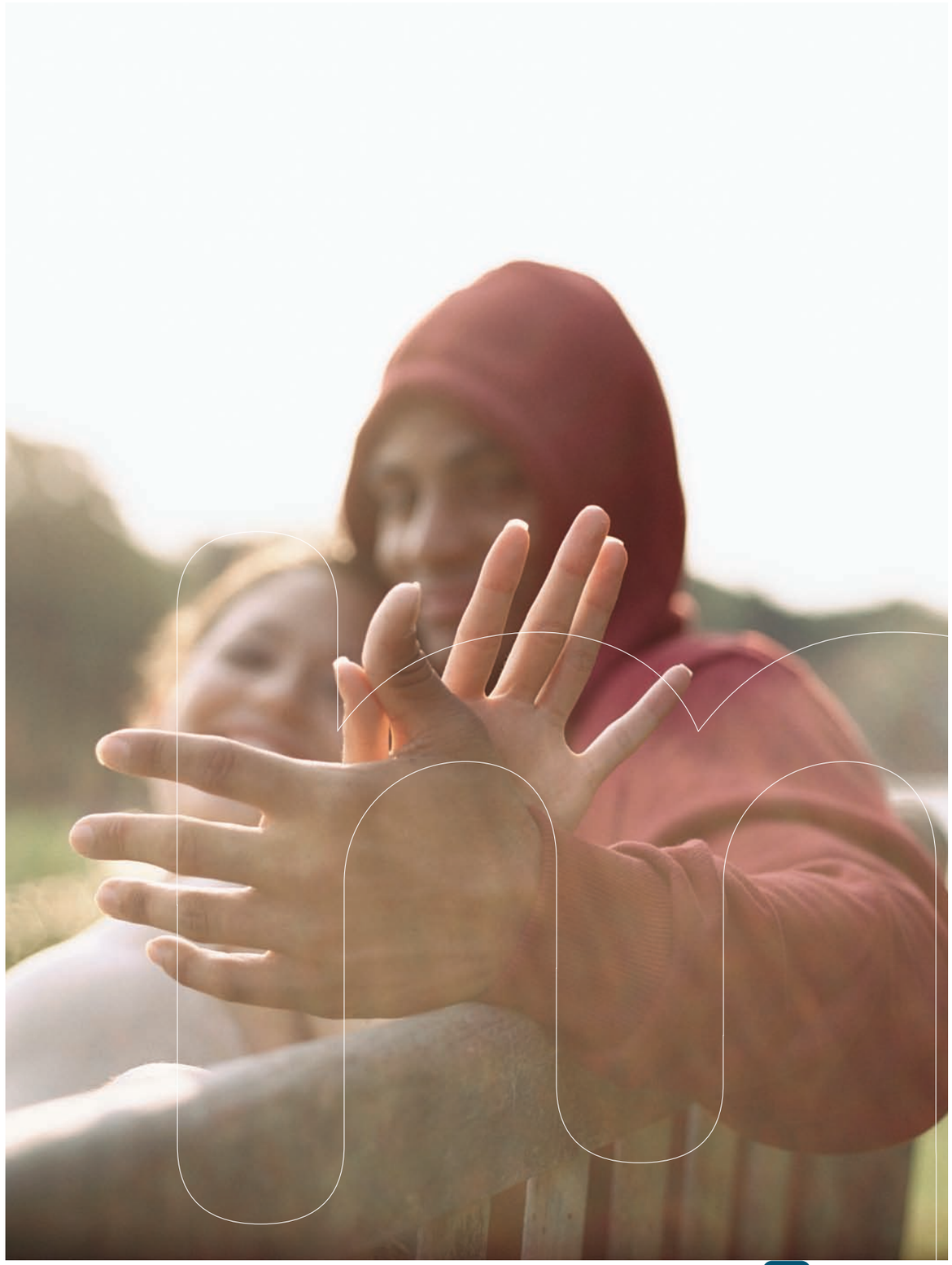
The varied opinions and reported patterns of behaviour that our research found across the five countries is a clear illustration of this process. French respondents are generally much more likely to report having used the mobile phone in a range of social situations most respondents would consider unacceptable.

For example, 5% of the French respondents had experience in doing almost or all the activities listed compared with 1.92% of the Spaniards and less than 1% of the other three nationalities. Interestingly, people in Spain are much more likely to accept using the mobile phone through a range of situations, which in the other four countries would be considered poor form. A staggering 39.2% of Spaniards generally accept almost all of the practices listed, compared with 18.5% in GB, 16.3% in Sweden, 15.4% in Germany and only 15.5% in France. This indicates that the French seem to be the nationality most worried about conforming to social rules but that they are also the worst at breaking them, or perhaps just the most honest!

We find the closest match between people's high level of acceptance of the mobile phone conversations drifting into various aspects of social life and their self-reported behaviour in Spain. Britain and Germany both display quite low levels of acceptance of the behaviour listed and also report relatively little experience in the behaviours listed.

There are no significant differences between men and women in the way we look at the social etiquette of using the mobile phone in different situations or in terms of how we approach moral issues related to using a mobile phone. Men are not more likely than women to engage in a greater variety of practices, neither are they more likely to condone these.

The middle-aged generation generally is more likely to be against any of the mobile phone practices challenging social etiquette and the average of people not accepting any of the practices is just over 40 years.



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Mobiles and social responsibility

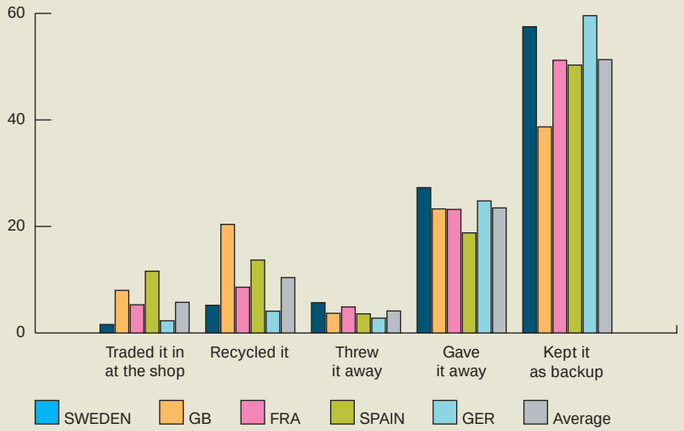
Who's green, and who's not

It is the British who lead the way when it comes to re-cycling their phones. If you add the percentage re-cycled (20%) to those passed on to someone else (23%) it shows that 43% of all of phones in Britain are being re-cycled (compared to a European average of 33%).

It seems Germany, a country generally associated with very good re-cycling habits, is the country with the most to do here with just 4% re-cycling their phones. This may reflect a lack of opportunities to do so and we would expect this number to rise in all countries as awareness and opportunities rise.

Additionally, as the market matures further we might expect fewer people to feel the need to hang on to their old phones. Currently across Europe on average more than 1 in 2 of us are keeping our old phones as back-up. Presumably there is a limit to the number of 'back-up' phones we each need.

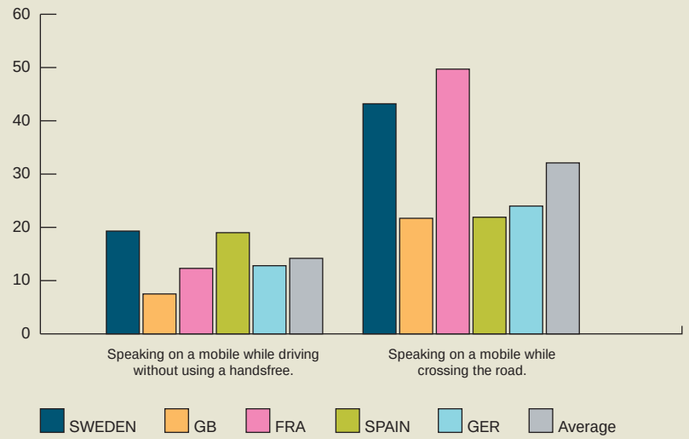
What did you do with your previous mobile phone when you got the mobile that you use most often nowadays? (By country)



Safety first

We asked people about whether it is acceptable to speak on their mobiles while driving and whether it is acceptable to speak on your mobile while crossing the road:

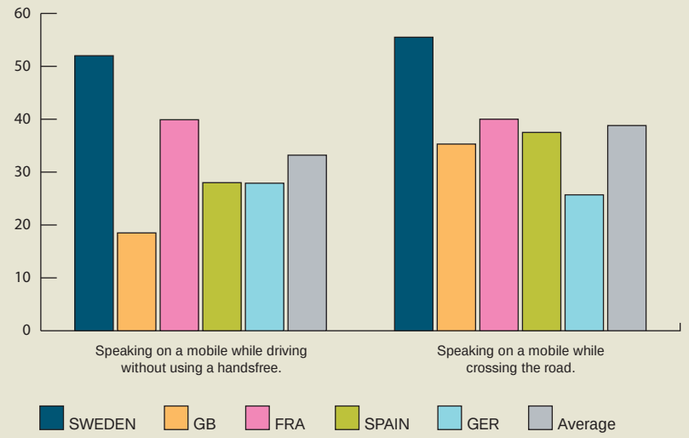
Looking at the list of situations below, please say for each whether you think it is acceptable behaviour: (By country)



We found that across the continent there is pretty strong agreement that it is not acceptable to talk on your mobile whilst driving without using a hands-free kit. There was less cross continental agreement about the issue of crossing the road while on the phone; only around 20-25% of people in Britain, Spain and Germany think this is ok, whereas half of the French and 43% of Swedes think it is acceptable.

When it comes to what we have actually done it's a different picture again:

Road safety and mobiles: Regardless of whether you think it's acceptable, have you done it? (By country)



Britain is clearly leading the way in terms of putting driving safety talk into practice but 1 in 3 Britons fail to exercise the same caution as pedestrians.

However, it seems the British are not so safety conscious when it comes to the use of mobiles while on aeroplanes in flight.

Have you ever done any of the activities listed below while on board an aeroplane in flight? (By country)

	SWEDEN	GB	FRA	SPAIN	GER	AVERAGE
Sent text messages (SMS)	3	8	2	6	4	5
Received text messages (SMS)	3	7	2	5	4	4
Listened to an answerphone message	2	4	4	3	2	3
Made a voice call	1	5	2	4	3	3
Received a voice call	1	5	2	3	3	3
At least one of these	4	9	6	9	5	7

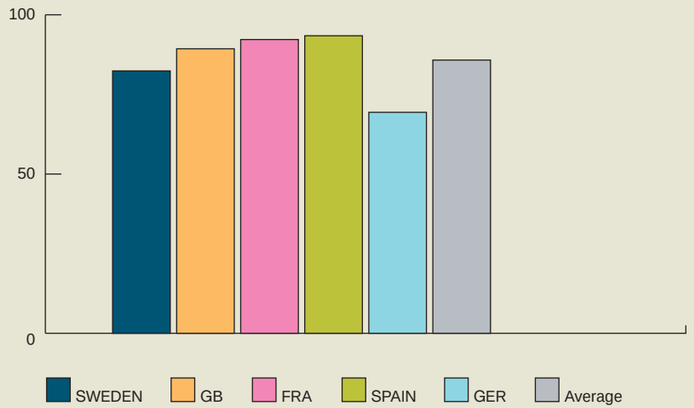
Nearly 1 in 10 Britons have contravened air safety regulation by using their mobile phone in flight, a proportion only matched elsewhere in Europe by the Spanish.

Invisible Connections

Since we first initiated Mobile Life the emerging world of wireless connectivity has grown to significantly affect our consumers' interaction with technology both in and out of the home. As a business that puts its consumers at the heart of everything we do it was vital for us to explore consumer behaviour and advancement in this area to enable us to meet their needs in this exciting new world.

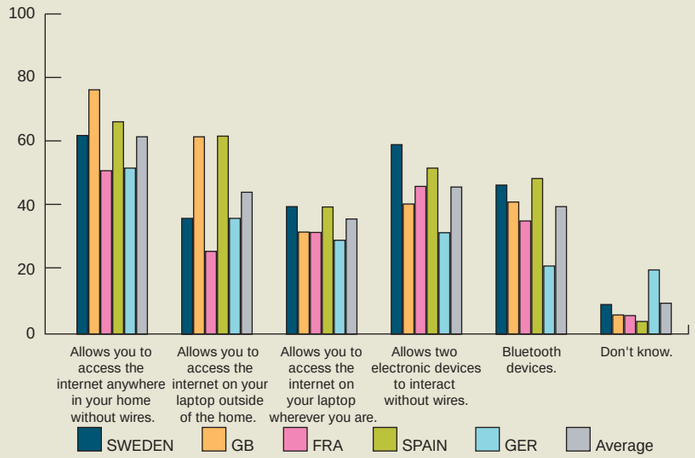
Overall the majority of consumers in Europe feel they understand what wireless technology refers to, with over three quarters in nearly all of the countries researched claiming to have an understanding. The only country with under three quarters understanding was Germany, with just two thirds claiming to understand. This lack of understanding, or perhaps lack of engaging, is a theme following Germany throughout this section of the research. Given the clarity of the phrase 'wireless' (in all languages), perhaps the surprise is that more people don't feel confident in what wireless technology actually means. Our succeeding questions, which drill down into wireless understanding, highlight further an apparent lack of full comprehension of wireless and particularly the benefits that it represents. There would seem to be potential for educating consumers as to the benefits of wireless, beyond just the obvious of ridding their house of trailing wires.

All who say they understand what the phrase 'wireless technology' refers to: (By country)



When we looked in further detail at consumers' understanding of what wireless technology is, more national differences emerged. In the Britain, wireless understanding is led by accessing the internet wirelessly at home, with over three quarters understanding this aspect of wireless. This concept of in home wireless internet is not embraced by nearly as many French or Germans, with only half of consumers in each country claiming wireless technology brings this benefit. In fact, less than half of French and Germans in total agreed with any of our statements regarding wireless: which does beg the question what 40% and 15% of people respectively do therefore understand by the term "wireless". Although accessing the internet at home is still the predominant understanding of wireless in Sweden, a close second is allowing the interaction of two devices; Sweden punches considerably over the European average here. This suggests the Swedes have developed the most sophisticated understanding of wireless potential in the home. They are closely followed in this respect by the Spanish. It is also the Spanish that best understand wireless potential in accessing the internet outside of the home, through wi-fi spots. Overall it is the Spanish that demonstrate the best understanding of wireless, regardless of location. When it comes to understanding wireless it seems the greatest commonality is a disagreement with the phrase 'allows you to access the internet on your laptop wherever you are'. This demonstrates the improvement required across Europe in making the continent wi-fi enabled; although it would seem that the countries most advanced in an understanding of wi-fi are Spain and Britain, where two-thirds of each population understanding this benefit of wireless.

Which of the following applies to wireless technology? (By country)

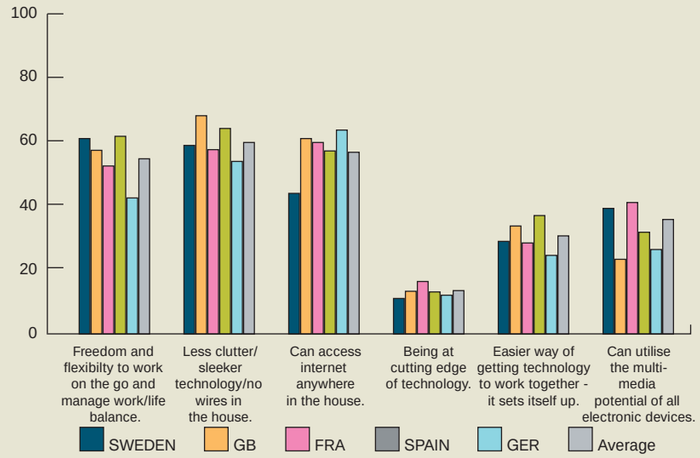


Next we explored consumers' perceptions of the benefits of wireless technology. Although coloured by their understanding of what wireless provides, this still gives an intriguing insight into the different stages of development across Europe where wireless is concerned.

The Swedish and the Spanish were most interested in the ability to work on the go and so manage a better work life balance. They are markedly ahead of the Germans here: nearly two thirds of Swedes agreed wireless would help a work life balance compared to only two-fifths of Germans. Where Germans did feel wireless provided a benefit was in allowing access to the internet from anywhere in the house, with 62% agreeing. This is intriguing when you consider only 50% understood this as possible with wireless technology, illustrating the education job that still needs to be done regarding wireless in Germany. The French are also interested in the benefit of accessing the internet from anywhere in the home: in fact most nations are. The only country falling under fifty-percent agreement here is Sweden, where just two-fifths see this as a benefit. The British people we researched were much more interested in the aesthetic benefits of wireless regarding the removal of ugly trailing wires: at over two-thirds citing this benefit it seems the British are most concerned with keeping up appearances.

Overall, it is Spain and Britain that seem most determined to see the advantages of wireless, with each country above average in its endorsement of benefits virtually across the board. Where the benefits have made least headway is again in Germany.

Most significant benefits of wireless technology: (By country)



Lastly we looked at which devices consumers are currently connecting wirelessly in their homes. None of our options were widely adopted, but connecting digital cameras to computers wirelessly was the most prominent behaviour reported. This was followed by connecting computers wirelessly to televisions, which is a good signal for the future of downloaded films and TV. The British are furthest ahead in their wireless connection of devices, with the Germans most resistant to adopting the idea of being able to connect different devices wirelessly.

The research paints a picture of a Europe that's half embracing wireless (with Spain leading the way) and half yet to embrace its benefits (Germany).

Implications:

New Rules for New Times

Philip Gould
Visiting Professor Media and Communications, London School of Economics and Political Science

Mobile phone fever grips the continent of Europe, just as it grips Britain, but it does so in a variety of ways. For those who see Europe as a great homogenous steamroller, ironing out quirks and kinks of national character, this research proves them wrong. Every country has a slightly different mobile life. This report offers a fascinating insight into the cross border differences – and similarities – of mobile phone usage in Europe. It is also the next stage in developing a body of knowledge about how mobile phones and wireless technologies are affecting our world.

There are five big themes emerging from this research, some of it paradoxical, all of it shedding light not just on how we use our mobile phones, but on the way we live modern lives.

These themes are:

Liberation: Most people see mobile phones as instruments of freedom: the technological gateway to untrammelled communication, unrestricted access to the world and its possibilities. For most this means we talk mainly to just a small group of families and friends, but it still means that we are free to communicate whenever we want, wherever we want. Across Europe people believe young people should own a phone from the age of 12, the beginning of adolescence, a traditional marker of freedom, it seems that nowadays that freedom is incomplete without a mobile.

Dependency: The other side of liberation is dependency, 10% of the people questioned claim to be addicted to their mobile phones, 10% see it as their most important possession, with the numbers much higher amongst the young. You can see this addiction everywhere. People – like me- who fiddle with their phones incessantly. Business people who switch on their phones instantly when their plane lands – or even on the plane, as this report reveals - to see if they have received a text or message. This is an assertion of personal identity in the face of a world of insecurity. 'I matter because I have received a message'.

Convergence: Phones are now no longer just about talking, they are about texting – this research shows that more people in Britain text than talk – they are about timekeeping, watches often not used by the young, the showing of videos, even shopping. Mobile phones used to be personal communications centres, now they are mobile life centres in which the essential – and less essential- functions of modern living, are contained in one, personal, portable piece of technology. The list of additional functions used by mobile phone users, and the amount they use them is almost intimidating and constantly growing.

Community: Crucially technology is changing the nature of community and the relationships that are contained within it. Traditional community is based upon face-to-face interaction, and is supported by a set of behavioural rules which form a kind of social etiquette. This etiquette has certain principles; privacy, not encroaching into the space of others unless invited, acknowledging that there are sanctuaries of space and time that need to be respected. The new etiquette of the new communications community is entirely different. It is basically that you should always be on, always accessible. Protecting a social or personal sanctuary by not answering a mobile phone may be adhering to the rules of the traditional community, but may be breaking the rules of the new community. This is not about good or bad behaviour but about the rules of the old fighting with the rules of the new. This

“The shift to individual empowerment is the most fundamental gift of technology, and mobile phones have been central to this”

research found cross-generational differences in opinion that vividly illuminate this process of change: in the old world answering the phone during a family meal was practically unthinkable: the height of bad manners, in the new world not answering it can be interpreted as downright rude. This changing of the landscape of social behaviour is at the heart of this Mobile Life report.

Change: Perhaps what flows through this report most vividly is a sense of permanent and continuous change. Mobile phones moving their functions from talking to texting to downloading in months rather than years. People changing the way they behave quite radically and very quickly. What a mobile phone was five years ago will not be what a mobile phone is in five years time. The big question of course is how much does this change really matter. Are virtual communities fundamentally different from traditional communities or are they just communities for modern times? Is it really that different to phone my daughter in Uganda, rather than just write to her each week? Is permanent connectedness through a mobile phone really that different from the permanent connectedness of an extended family living in an East London tenement block in the 1930s?

This is the really crucial issue. Has technology changed the nature of politics, or business, or relationships, or community, or is it just the same but different?

It is in helping to answer these questions that Mobile Life becomes most vital. In politics it is certain that many essential truths of political life and political campaigning remain unchanged by the onset of technological change. The basic virtues still matter: courage, strategy, argument and the capacity to use rhetoric to lead were crucial one hundred years ago and they are crucial now. To that extent nothing changes. But the speed of events, the transparency of information, the assertiveness of the electorate is totally transforming. It means that political leaders act under the most unendurable pressures: a life more demanding, more difficult and more complex. And the same fundamentally is true of the rest of us, having to cope with the pressures of modern living. Virtual communities may echo traditional face to face communities, but the sheer speed and intensity of modern relationships means that something has also substantially changed. We are more rootless, we are more insecure, we are more pressured, and politics and society must compensate for this in new ways.

But there is one fundamental change that shines through all the pages of this report. The shift to individual empowerment is the most fundamental gift of technology, and mobile phones have been central to this.

One hundred years ago there was community, and there was connectedness but there was not empowerment. The mass of people had no right to know, no right to be heard, no right to assert. Now this completely transformed with every individual not just with the facility to communicate but with the right to communicate at any time, and with anybody on their own terms and in their own way. This report reveals the tension between old and new concepts of community. At the heart of this tension is one crucial insight: a mobile life is my own life and as I live my own life, I will make new rules, and these rules are different to the old. But reassuringly the rules for each European nation are slightly, and not so slightly, different. Some things never change.

Credits

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

The project’s academic partner is the London School of Economics and Political Science.

The Carphone Warehouse is Europe’s leading independent retailer of mobile phones and services with more than 2,300 stores in 11 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**

Ipsos MORI is the second largest research company in the UK, specialising in marketing, advertising, media, loyalty and public affairs. **www.ipsos-mori.com**

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

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