



Ireland's Distracted Driving Report 2025

An Analysis of Driver Behaviour and Distraction Trends Across Ireland



Driver distraction is now among the most frequent and dangerous behaviours observed behind the wheel in Ireland.

While phones are the most visible issue, distractions also come from within vehicles through interactive display dashboards, passengers, work pressure, and day-to-day habits that significantly reduce driver focus.

As road safety continues to evolve, a new challenge has emerged – **driver distraction**. Once dominated by concerns over drink-driving and speeding, the focus is now shifting to the growing issue of distracted driving, which has quietly become a leading cause of accidents on Irish roads.

To better understand this risk, Transpoco conducted the first national survey on driver distraction, gathering insights from over 1,000 drivers across all 26 counties in the Republic of Ireland. This comprehensive report aims to highlight the scale of the problem, identify the most dangerous behaviours, and explore potential solutions based on real driver feedback.

Survey Overview

- Sample Size: 1,024 drivers
- Counties Represented: All 26 in the Republic of Ireland
- Age Range: 18 to 75
- Gender Breakdown: 75.3% female, 24.7% male
- Survey Period: December 2024 to February 2025

Key Findings

The data is clear: distraction is the new drink-driving, happening far more often than many realise. Just as Ireland made significant progress in reducing speeding and alcohol-related collisions, now is the time to focus on the risks of distracted driving. Key areas explored in this report include:

- Frequency of Distraction: How often drivers are distracted, with many admitting to risky behaviour on a regular basis.
- Most Dangerous Activities: The specific actions that pose the highest risk, from texting to adjusting in-car systems.
- High-Risk Groups: Identifying who is most at risk, including younger drivers and those in high-pressure, field-based jobs.
- Driver-Backed Solutions: What drivers themselves believe could make a real difference, from stricter enforcement to smarter vehicle design.

A Call for Action

With distraction now a critical road safety issue, it's clear that a combined effort is needed to tackle the problem. This report highlights the urgent need for:

- Stronger Policies: Tougher penalties and improved enforcement.
- Smarter Vehicle Design: Simplified controls and built-in safety features.
- Cultural Change: Support for commercial drivers and better education around the risks of distraction.



Transpoco surveyed over 1,000 drivers in Republic Of Ireland.

Below are some of the headline results.

65%

Say phone use is the most distracting activity while driving.

45%

of drivers have experienced a near miss or incident due to distraction.

51%

support stricter Garda enforcement to tackle the problem.

9%

use built-in phone-blocking or safety tools in their vehicle.

"We've become used to distractions behind the wheel. The danger is that we don't even realise how risky they are."

- Survey respondent, Mayo

Mobile Phone Use – Still the Biggest Risk

Even with strict rules in place, using a mobile phone while driving remains a common and dangerous habit across Ireland. According to the Road Safety Authority (RSA), 1 in 5 drivers admit to texting while driving at least occasionally, and 18% still use handheld phones behind the wheel.

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- **18% still use handheld phones.**

Not Just Phones: Distraction by Design

“My touchscreen takes three presses just to adjust the heat. I used to do it with one dial.”
Survey respondent, Galway

Modern cars are adding more screens and features, but this may be doing more harm than good.

Doing This While Driving	In-Car Activity %
Adjust music/heating/settings	73.1%
Use sat-nav/GPS	38.3%
Eat or drink	41.3%

The *Pressure to Stay Connected*

Many drivers, say they feel expected to answer calls or messages while driving. The pressure to stay connected can be intense. It's a difficult balancing act, ignoring a call or message could mean missing an important job or delaying a response, but responding while driving significantly increases the risk of accidents.

"If I don't answer the call, I might miss a job. But taking the call while driving isn't safe either."

Driver, construction industry

The *Push to Stay Connected*

Drivers aged 25-34 are among the most confident when it comes to multitasking behind the wheel, but this confidence can come at a cost.

Key Findings

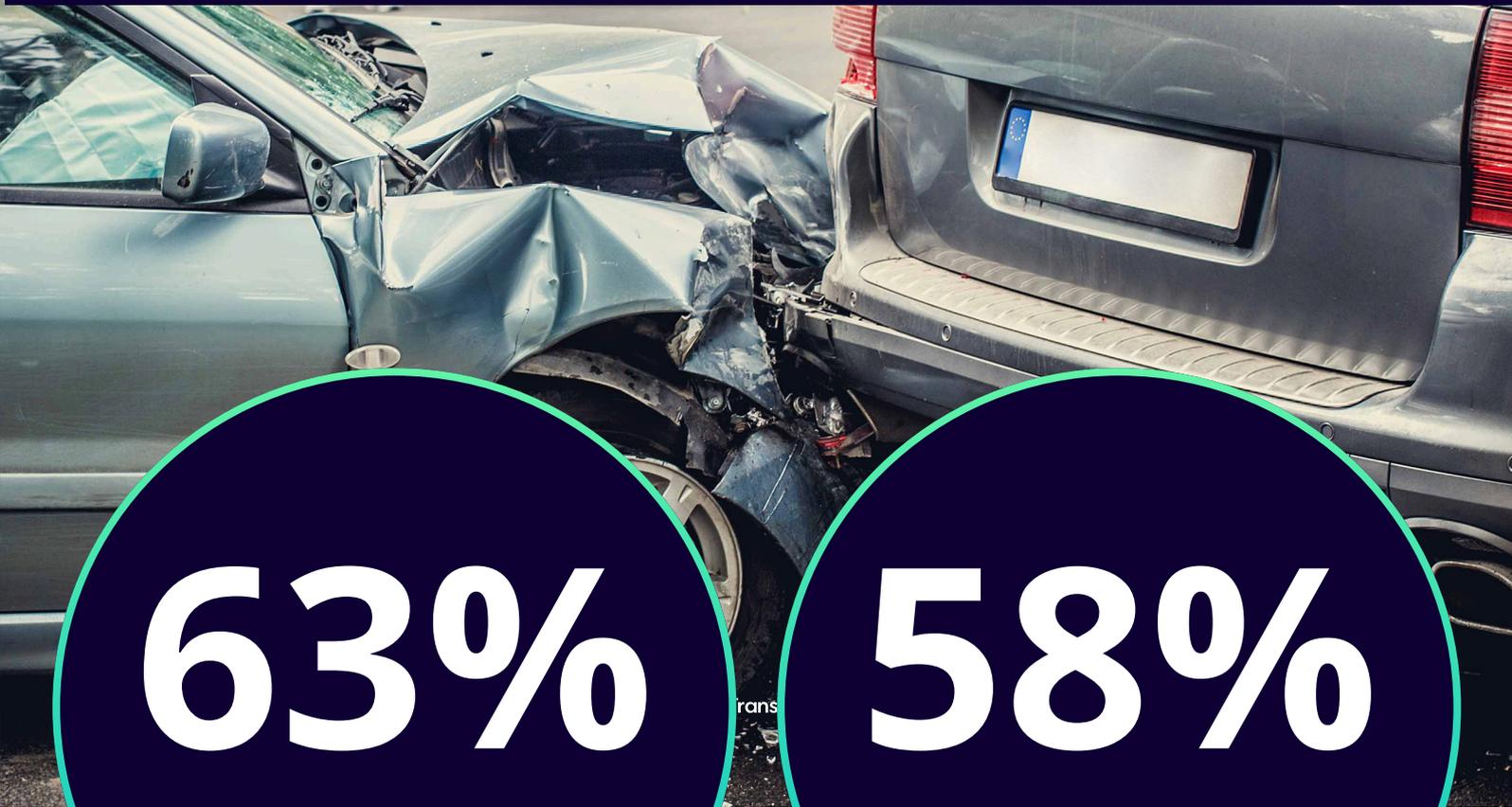
- **Higher Risk of Near Misses:** This age group reported the highest number of near misses.
- **Low Use of Safety Features:** Despite being the most tech-savvy group, these drivers were also the least likely to use in-car phone safety settings, such as *Do Not Disturb* modes or voice-activated controls.

Why This Group is More Prone to Risk

- **Digital Dependence:** Many in this age range have never known a world without smartphones. They're used to being constantly connected, making it harder to ignore notifications or calls while driving.
- **Peer Pressure and Social Habits:** Younger drivers often feel the need to stay in touch with friends and family, even while on the road, increasing the temptation to check messages or social media.
- **Overconfidence in Their Abilities:** According to the National Distracted Driving Coalition, studies have shown that younger drivers tend to overestimate their ability to multitask safely, despite clear evidence that divided attention significantly reduces reaction times and focus.



There's a disconnect between what drivers say and what they do.



63%

"I'm **confident** I avoid distractions while driving."

58%

"I've had a **close call** or accident due to distraction."

"It only takes a second, but that's all it takes for something to go badly wrong."

Survey respondent, Cork

Policy & Enforcement

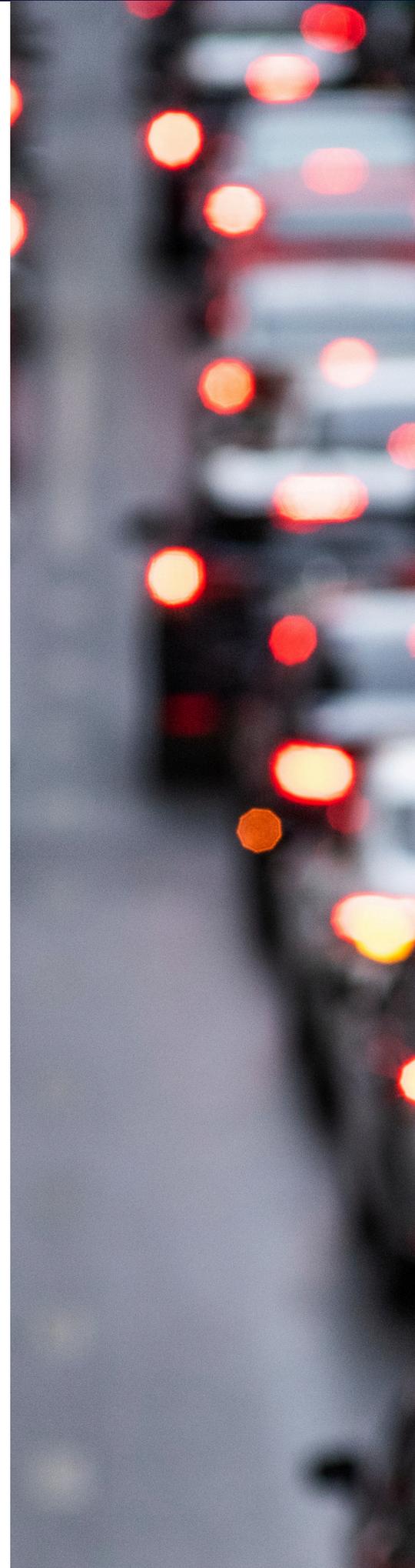
- **Stricter Penalties:** Nearly half of drivers believe tougher fines, points, and immediate suspensions should be considered for those caught using a phone while driving.
- **Technology Support:** Detection cameras can significantly increase the chances of catching offenders, acting as a powerful deterrent. These systems can work in all weather conditions, day and night, making them a reliable option for widespread enforcement.

Technology & Vehicle Design

- **Drivers Want Simplicity:** Feedback from drivers is clear – less is more when it comes to in-car tech. Complex touchscreens can be just as distracting as a phone, with drivers calling for a return to physical buttons for key functions like air conditioning, radio, and vehicle settings.
- **Smart Safety Features:** Many drivers want safety-first technology, including:
 - **Phone Lockers Linked to Ignition:** A simple, effective way to prevent phone use while driving.
 - **Automatic “Do Not Disturb” Mode:** Engages as soon as the vehicle is in motion, reducing the temptation to check messages or take calls.
 - **Voice-Activated Controls:** For essential tasks, allowing drivers to keep their eyes on the road.

Workplace Policies

- **Supporting Fleet and Commercial Drivers:** For professional drivers, the pressure to stay connected can be even greater. Employers play a crucial role in reducing this risk:
 - **Clear No-Call Policies:** Mandating that drivers never take calls while on the move, supported by real-time telematics to track compliance.
 - **Regular Training:** Focused on the risks of distracted driving, including real-world examples and accident statistics.
 - **Vehicle Monitoring Systems:** Providing managers with insights into risky behaviour, allowing for early intervention.



Bridging the Gap Between Intention and Behaviour

Despite widespread awareness of the dangers, driver distraction remains a leading cause of accidents on Irish roads. There's often a disconnect between what drivers know is right and what they actually do behind the wheel. Understanding this gap requires a comprehensive approach, touching on multiple areas:

1. Policy

- Issue: Many drivers acknowledge the risks but continue to use their phones.
- Recommendation: Enforce stricter penalties for handheld and even hands-free phone use. This could include larger fines, automatic points, or even short-term suspensions for repeat offenders.

2. Enforcement

- Issue: Gardai can't always spot distracted drivers, and enforcement is resource-intensive.
- Recommendation: Consider the roll-out of AI-powered detection cameras, like those already trialled in parts of the UK, which automatically flag drivers using phones. These systems can significantly increase detection rates.

3. Vehicle Design

- Issue: Modern vehicles often have complex touchscreens, increasing the cognitive load on drivers.
- Recommendation: Reduce touchscreen complexity and restore physical controls for essential functions, allowing drivers to focus more on the road. Standardising phone-blocking features in new cars could also limit distraction.

4. Technology

- Issue: While hands-free systems are widely used, studies show they still pose a risk.
- Recommendation: Introduce standardised phone-blocking technology that automatically limits phone functions when the vehicle is moving, potentially integrated via vehicle software updates.

5. Employers

- Issue: Commercial drivers are particularly at risk, often under pressure to stay connected.
- Recommendation: Companies with fleet vehicles should introduce strict safe driving policies, including hands-free bans where practical, supported by real-time telematics monitoring to identify risky behaviour.

6. Education

- Issue: Changing driver habits requires more than just awareness – it needs a cultural shift.
- Recommendation: Launch targeted campaigns aimed at young drivers and commercial fleet operators, focusing on the real-life consequences of distracted driving. These could include powerful, real-world stories and data-driven insights.

Combining these elements can help bridge the gap between drivers' intentions and actions, creating safer roads for all. A coordinated effort, including policy updates, smarter vehicle design, and comprehensive education, is essential to reducing the growing problem of driver distraction.

For many drivers, distraction has become a routine part of being behind the wheel – and that's the real danger. Whether it's replying to a group message, adjusting settings on a touchscreen, or taking an important work call, each small distraction pulls focus from the road, increasing the risk of accidents.

This report makes it clear: distraction is everywhere, and it's costing lives. Just as society has made progress in reducing speeding and promoting seatbelt use, it's time to confront the growing risk of distracted driving. No message, song, or task is worth a life.

About Transpoco

Transpoco Ireland's leading telematics and driver safety providers, helping improve safety and efficiency through vehicle tracking, connected camera technology and insights. Learn more at www.transpoco.com