To:	Neighbourhoods Directorate
From:	Adrian Davis
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Subject:	Essential Evidence on a page: No. 169 Mobile phone use while driving

Top line: Using a hands-free mobile phone is no safer than using a hand-held mobile phone. Both increase crash risk fourfold, but under-reporting at crash scenes of mobile phone use hampers analysis and future prevention efforts.

There is consensus that using a mobile phone while driving increases the risk of exposure to traffic collisions and injuries. There is also a consensus that mobile phone use while driving is a widely prevalent behaviour found in many countries across the globe. The use of mobile phones while driving is one of the most serious forms of distraction. This might be largely due to the fact that mobile phone use while driving requires visual, physical and cognitive attention of the driver. Studies suggest that mobile phone use (handheld or hands-free) increases a driver′s crash risk by a factor of four. There are also indications that text messaging might be more dangerous than making or receiving a phone call while driving. This is because in addition to cognitive impairment, sending a text message while driving also keeps the driver′s eyes away from the road (physical impairment) for at least five seconds and one or both hands from the wheel.[1]

Based on the results obtained through a recent literature review, many of the 60 studies found identified a group of drivers who are more likely to use mobile phones while driving. [2] The authors note that a special emphasis should be placed on studies dealing with the connection between mobile phone use while driving and the use of safety belts. Generally, there is a link confirmed between lower seat belt use rates among drivers who tend to use a mobile phone while driving. These studies have confirmed the negative influence of mobile phone use while driving, which is reflected in a reduced driving performance. Driver's reaction time increases and a vehicle loses a correct position in the lane.

A number of studies examined characteristics of drivers who tend to use mobile phones more often while driving. It is possible to identify a group drivers who are more likely to use a mobile phone while driving. Such groups comprise younger males with less driving experience, and in most of the cases, persons who drive newer and more powerful models of vehicles. It can be said that a reason behind such behaviour, above all else, lies in self-assurance and a tendency to overestimate their skills – self-enhancement bias. Also, such behaviour is the result of an underdeveloped awareness of detrimental effects of mobile phone use while driving and a failure to comply with road traffic laws.

There are indications that the use of mobile phones while driving is one of the leading contributors to road traffic collisions (RTCs). However the true impact of the contribution of mobile phones to RTCs is masked by deficiencies in reporting. Under-reporting is a world-wide phenomenon. The issue of under-reporting of the contribution of mobile phones to RTCs necessitates the need to design a more effective means of detecting and analysing mobile phone usage at the scene of a crash.[1]

[1] Inge, Banstola, A., Pilkington, P. 2016 Mobile phone use while driving: Underestimation of a global threat, *Journal of Transport & Health,* 3(1): 4-8.

[2] Lipovac, K. et al 2017 Mobile phone use while driving–literary review, *Transportation Research Part F*, 47, 132-142.