

TIME TO GIVE YOUR MOBILE THE BOOT

- 3 million tweets, Snapchats, emails, WhatsApps, Facebook and Instagram posts sent by motorists while driving PER WEEK in the UK -

- New research in wake of harsher penalties being introduced this month for mobile phone usage when driving reveals shocking extent of the issue across the UK
- A third of guilty Britons admit to checking their social media from behind the wheel (28%) in spite of new laws
- Almost 2 million Snapchats, Instagram pictures and WhatsApp messages sent and checked by motorists each week as they drive
- Issue is being attributed to Phone Separation Anxiety (PSA) 'epidemic' among Britons which a quarter (24%) of people are said to suffer from
- Study has been commissioned by MORE TH>N to mark its new **Give Your Mobile The Boot** initiative, which urges motorists to put their mobiles in the boot of the car before their journey so they are not tempted to use them while driving
- To launch the campaign, MORE TH>N has worked with psychologist Amanda Hills to create a five-step guide to help people overcome their smartphone addiction

As a nation we have never been more addicted to our smartphones. We use them everywhere – we take them into meetings, we use them at funerals, in church, at the dinner table, and even in the bathroom! It seems people are so obsessed with their phones, there really is nowhere that is 'off limits', even – in spite of all the dangerous and potentially costly implications of doing so – when driving.

New research out today from MORE TH>N depicts the full extent of Britons' addiction to their smartphones which cause them to regularly use it when driving, with one in five (18%) of the 3,000 motorists surveyed owning up to using their mobile behind the wheel, despite the new harsher punishments that came into force at the start of this month for those caught in the act by police.

Of those admitting to using their smartphones while driving (18%), the study found that the use of messaging apps such as texting and WhatsApp (51%) topped the list of the most common means of using the phone by drivers, followed closely by making of phone calls (44%), and streaming videos from YouTube and TV shows from the likes of Netflix and Amazon Prime (9%).

As part of the research respondents were also asked to reveal how many times they posted on their social media accounts and sent emails in a given journey. These results were then measured against official data on how many people currently hold

a UK Driver's Licence² to infer the full extent of the nation's illegal mobile phone usage from behind the wheel each week.

Using this method, the study found that on average 1,964,953 Snapchat, Instagram pictures and WhatsApp messages, 576,967 emails, 229,553 tweets and 508,975 Facebook posts are sent from the behind the wheel each week, revealing the shocking extent of our social media addiction, which shows we're unable to ever fully disconnect ourselves from our smartphones, even when driving.

Perhaps more worryingly, the research revealed that 9% of people are so gripped by the latest BBC drama or Netflix binge-watch that they admit to streaming an average of 2.5 hours video content per week from the driver's seat. This could mean that approximately 1,943,360 hours' worth of video footage is being watched behind the wheel on a weekly basis when people should be focusing on the road, posing an inconceivable amount of risk to both themselves and others.

To affirm the potential dangers of using your phone when driving, the study also asked those who have ever been in an accident as a result of using their mobile to state what they were doing on their phone at the time. Social media addicts should take note, as the results found that browsing and posting on Facebook was the most likely mobile phone activity to result in an accident (19%). Those married to their job need also be careful, as this was followed by the checking and sending of emails (11%). The top 10 list in full can be seen below:

Ranking	Mobile phone activity	Number of accidents (%)
1	Browsing Facebook	19
2	On emails	11
3	On phone taking a call	8
=3	On Instagram	8
5	Texting	8
6	On WhatsApp	5
7	On Snapchat	3
=7	On Twitter	3
=7	Streaming a film	3
=7	Using online banking apps	3

The new study has been carried out to mark the launch of MORE TH>N's new '**Give Your Mobile The Boot**' campaign, which is encouraging motorists to put their mobiles in the boot of the car before they begin their journey, so they are not tempted to use them while driving. It has been created to coincide with the new laws that came into force earlier this month which mean drivers that are now caught using their mobile phone behind the wheel will have six points put on their licence, and be subjected to a £200 fine – double what it was previously³.

While you might expect these harsher penalties to cause motorists to think twice about using their phone while driving, the research showed this may not be the case after all. Two fifths of people (41%) in fact confessed to being completely unaware of the new law change. Worse yet, 43% of those surveyed who have been in an accident or pulled over for using their mobile when driving in the past, said that it hasn't deterred them from continuing to use their phone behind the wheel.

So why do so many people do it if there are so many potential negative repercussions of doing so? The results point to the fact it is borne out of people being addicted to their smartphones, with a quarter (23%) of those surveyed admitting they struggle to put their phone down. This addiction is a real medical condition, and has been scientifically termed as Phone Separation Anxiety (PSA) - also known as **Nomophobia** which is the phobia of being without your mobile device⁴.

To help people break their addiction to a smartphone and succeed in giving their mobile the boot, MORE THAN has worked with Amanda Hills, a psychologist and lecturer specialising in addictions, to create a five-step guide⁵ which people are encouraged to watch ahead of a journey to help them overcome their PSA.

The PSA step-by-step routine is below or you can view the video guide here – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5MByKYFmW8&t=7s>

STEP ONE: BREATHING - Start by taking a couple of deep breaths. Keeping your mouth closed, breathe in gently through your nose to the upper chest, feeling the lungs expand, exhale and repeat a few times. Practicing breathing exercises for five minutes each morning and before bed, will start to train your body and mind to de-stress, and relieve early stages of anxiety.

STEP TWO: KNOW YOUR TRIGGERS – It is important to know your triggers and recognise you have a need. Give yourself space to ask ‘What do I really want to pay attention to now? What’s the most important priority?’ In this case it’s focusing on driving safely.

STEP THREE: STRETCH – Try sitting comfortably on a chair or on the floor with your eyes closed and breathe in and raise your arms out to the side and above your head for a good stretch. As you exhale deeply, think of letting go of all stress and bring arms back down to your sides.

STEP FOUR: PLAN AHEAD - Make it a habit to answer important emails and messages 30 minutes before the car journey and tell people you won’t be available until you’re out of the car. You can even try putting your phone on flight mode for a few hours a day to practice. This will help you begin to realise you don’t need your phone all the time, and the lack of vibrations will stop you reaching for it.

STEP FIVE: DISTANCE YOURSELF - Try and decrease your phone usage over time. Leave it in another room when you sleep - physically separating yourself from your mobile device will re-wire your brain in readiness to lock it in your car boot before you drive.

Hills commented: “These results confirm there are growing numbers of people suffering from an addiction to their phones, which is clearly a huge concern for safety on the road whilst driving. To try and help curb this addiction I have created a simple five step guide designed to help relax, de-stress and relieve anxiety to watch ahead of a car journey. Following these steps regularly may reduce the need to use a smartphone in the car and assist in breaking a phone habit.’

Kenny Leitch, global connected insurance director at MORE TH>N, said: “Our research shows that there continues to be a worrying amount of phone usage behind the wheel across the UK, in spite of the newly introduced harsher penalties for those caught doing so. Here at MORE TH>N we appreciate just how much a phone can be a distraction in the car, which is why our new Give Your Mobile The Boot campaign sets out to urge motorists to put their devices in the boot before their journey so they are not tempted to use it while driving, ensuring they keep both themselves and others out of danger when on the road. We really hope drivers everywhere, of all ages, are encouraged to watch our step by step guide before a drive, and give their mobile the boot.”

Anyone interested in joining the campaign, and committing to put their mobile in the boot before they set off on their car journeys, can do so by making the pledge on social media with the hashtag #BootYourMobile. For more information visit the MORE TH>N Facebook page.

-ENDS-

For more information, please contact Cow PR - morethan@cowpr.com / 020 7234 9150

Notes to Editors

1. According to research conducted by One Poll on behalf of MORE TH>N among 3,000 UK Driver's Licence holders.
2. These figures are based on the fact that 38,558,731 people currently hold a driving licence in the UK (*Source: DVLA*).
3. Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-39118523>
4. Source: http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2015/05/14/nomophobia-smartphone-separation-anxiety_n_7282008.html
5. Amanda Hills - Copyright 2017

About Amanda Hills

Amanda Hills (Psych. MBPsS) is a freelance writer, psychologist & communications consultant.

About MORE TH>N

MORE TH>N is the direct financial services arm of RSA. Established in 2001, the company offers car, home, pet, business and travel insurance.