



Office of the Director of
**Telecommunications
Regulation**

OfTel Office of
Telecommunications

GENERAL

Consumer awareness of mobile roaming

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A report by the ODTR, part of a joint
ODTR/OfTel study on mobile roaming

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1 Foreword by the Director

Due to the increasing frequency with which consumers are using their mobile phone abroad and the growing importance of this service to consumers, the ODTR and Oftel undertook this joint project on international roaming with the aim of increasing consumer awareness of international roaming costs and options available to consumers to reduce these costs.

This report presents consumer awareness, usage and satisfaction results with regards to their use of mobile phones abroad from consumer surveys carried out in February 2002 for the ODTR and Oftel. A second report gives advice to consumers outlining options to reduce their international roaming costs, and in particular the potential international roaming savings available to Irish consumers roaming in the UK which may accrue depending on their choice of international roaming service provider.

The principal results from this report are the following:

Firstly, Irish consumers (38%) tend to use their mobile phone abroad more frequently than consumers in Great Britain (19%) or Northern Ireland (23%).

Secondly, there appears to be a rather low awareness among Irish consumers of international roaming costs and options to reduce these costs – an exception was that 89% of Irish consumers were aware that international roaming charges can be reduced by sending SMS messages rather than voice messages. Irish consumer awareness figures in general were similar or slightly lower than those in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

With regards to consumer usage of options to reduce international roaming costs, consumers in Great Britain (43%) & Northern Ireland (42%) make greater use of other methods to reduce roaming costs than consumers in Ireland (31%).

Finally, it appears that Irish consumers are generally dissatisfied with their international roaming service and in particular the costs of receiving incoming calls whilst abroad. This is consistent across Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The ODTR has worked alongside Oftel, the UK Regulator in completing this project and I am pleased to see the benefits this working relationship has brought to both regulators. Such co-operation between regulators will become increasingly important under the new European Regulatory Framework.

Etain Doyle,

Director of Telecommunications Regulation.

2 Introduction

In the Republic of Ireland (ROI) and across Europe mobile phone usage has increased significantly over the last number of years. Currently, the mobile phone penetration in ROI is 79%, having increased by 12% in the last year. Increasingly Irish consumers are travelling to international destinations for holidays or business and the UK¹ appears to be our most popular international destination. When visiting abroad, consumers may use their mobile phone to make or receive calls and thus may incur international roaming charges.

Bearing this in mind the ODTR and Oftel recognise the importance of promoting consumer awareness among international roaming users in order that consumers can make informed choices. The ODTR and Oftel carried out consumer surveys on international roaming practices and awareness in February 2002 with the aim of answering the following questions:

- How often do consumers use their mobile phone abroad?
- Are consumers aware of the costs of using a mobile phone abroad?
- Are consumers aware of the methods that can be used to reduce the costs of using a mobile phone abroad and are they currently using those methods?
- Are consumers satisfied with the quality of information available, value for money and the costs of international roaming?

The findings of the survey in relation to the above questions form the main part of this report.

In addition to these findings, the final chapter of this report broadly compares the results of the studies carried out by the ODTR and Oftel. When comparing these results the reader should take into consideration that different research methodologies and samples sizes were used by both organisations.

Finally it should be noted that this report has been prepared by the ODTR, and that a similar report for the UK can be found at www.oftel.gov.uk

2.1 Research Methodology

This research was conducted on behalf of the ODTR, by IMS. A telephone interview was conducted using questions in relation to consumers' use of mobile phones abroad, which are listed in Annex A.

¹ According to the CSO publication on tourism and travel for the third quarter 2001, 45% of visits abroad by Irish residents were to the UK.

The sample used consists of adults aged 15+ living in the Republic of Ireland and was controlled by sex, age and region to ensure adequate cross-representation of the adult population in ROI; with a landline telephone in the household².

² Because the survey was conducted amongst a sample of adults, rather than the whole population, the data may be subject to a small margin of error. The error margin for this sample of 361 Irish adult mobile customers is about 3-5%, but is higher amongst the 164 customers who had used their mobile abroad (6-10%).

3 Frequency of mobile phone usage abroad

3.1 Summary of results:

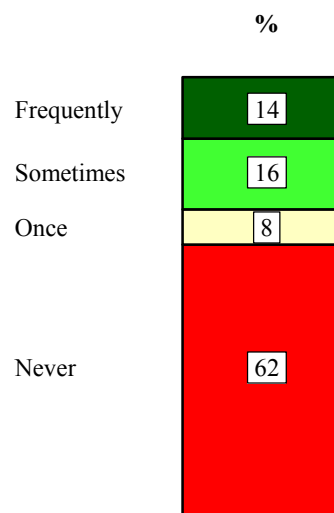
According to the survey approximately 38% of mobile customers have used their phone abroad and these international roaming customers tend to be younger consumers, higher social grades and those using contract packages. Higher income groups are also the most likely to use their mobile abroad.

3.2 Survey results

3.2.1 Frequency of using mobile phone abroad

Base: Mobile customers - All who have regular use of a mobile phone

Figure 1 shows the frequency with which consumers use their mobile phone abroad. Almost 2 in 5 (38%) have used their mobile abroad. 14% of these are using their mobile abroad frequently, 16% use it sometimes and 8% have used it once while abroad.



Q. How often, if ever, have you used your mobile when visiting abroad?

Figure 1: Frequency of using mobile phone abroad

There is a high correlation between the frequency of mobile usage abroad and household income. 35% of those with a household income greater than €65,000 frequently use their mobile abroad, while 79% of those with a household income of less than €13,000 have never used their mobile abroad.

Mobile customers in Dublin are the most frequent users of mobile phones abroad, 46% having ever used their mobile abroad. This may be due to the higher concentration of business travel by those working in Dublin.

4 Awareness of roaming costs and charges

4.1 Summary of results:

Perceived awareness of costs of using a mobile phone abroad at time of purchase was rather low at 48% of mobile customers. However the awareness of these costs was higher (63%) for mobile roaming customers, thus reflecting their usage of the service.

Probing deeper into the awareness of mobile roaming customers, 57% of these customers knew exactly (6%) or roughly (51%) what the costs of using a mobile abroad were and 75% of mobile roaming customers were aware that there are charges for receiving incoming calls.

There may be a level of confusion in relation to the charges incurred for using mobile phones abroad. 15% of roaming customers who claimed to be aware of the costs of using their mobile abroad either did not know or thought they were not charged for receiving incoming calls whilst abroad. Pre-pay customers may pay up to €1.50 to receive an incoming call while roaming in GB or NI.

4.2 Survey results

4.2.1 Awareness of cost of using mobile phone abroad at time of purchase

Base: Mobile customers - All who have regular use of a mobile phone.

Figure 2 shows mobile customers' perceived awareness of the cost of using a mobile phone abroad at the time of purchase. Just under half (48%) are aware of the costs, while 50% are unaware and 2% don't know.

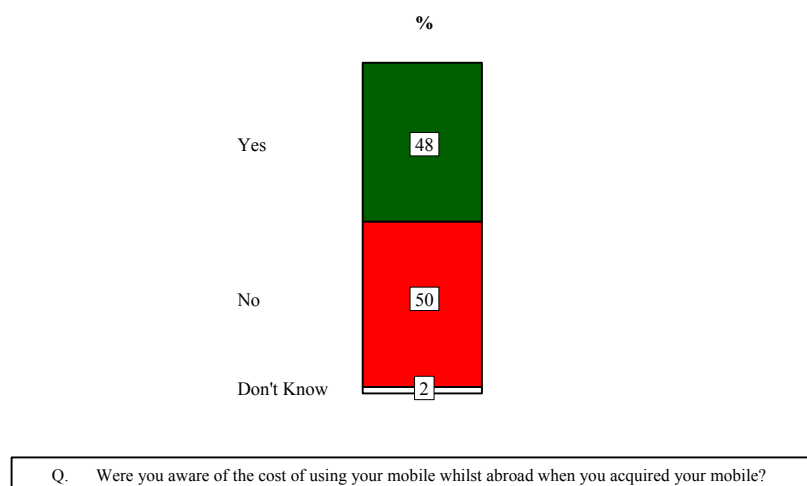


Figure 2: Mobile customers' awareness of costs of using mobile phone abroad at time of purchase.

Mobile customers over the age of 55 and those with a low income tended to be less aware of the costs involved for using their mobile abroad at the time of purchase. This is not surprising as these groups are less likely to use their mobile

abroad. Awareness was highest amongst contract customers (61%) and mobile roaming customers (63%).

4.2.2 General Awareness of cost of using mobile phone abroad

Base: Mobile roaming customers - All who have used their mobile when visiting abroad.

Figure 3 illustrates the mobile roaming customer's awareness of the costs of using their mobile abroad. Over half (57%) of mobile roaming customers claimed that they knew how much it would cost to use their mobile abroad. 51% claimed to know roughly, while 6% knew exactly.

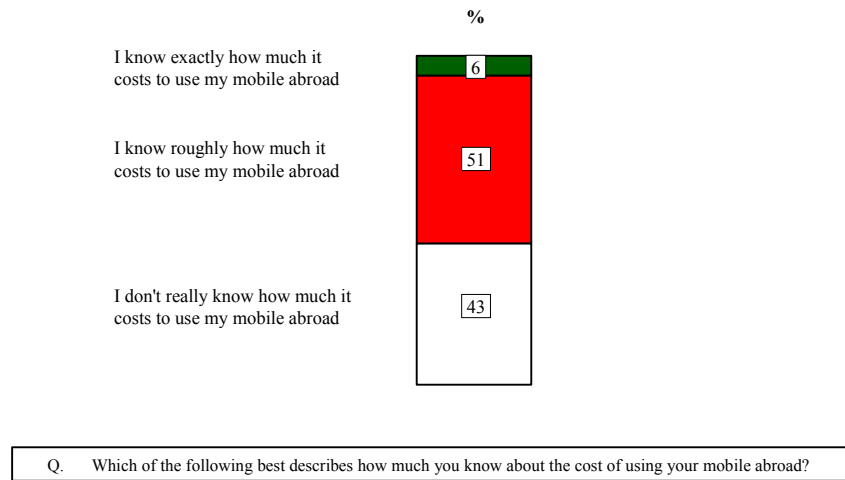


Figure 3: Mobile roaming customers' awareness of costs of using mobile phone abroad.

Men and younger mobile roaming customers were amongst those more aware of how much it costs to use a mobile abroad. Those living in Dublin were more likely to be aware of the cost of using their mobile abroad with 70% of these claiming to be aware. This is not surprising considering that 46% of mobile customers living in Dublin have used their mobile abroad, maybe on business trips to the UK.

Those living outside Dublin were more likely to not know the cost of using their mobile abroad.

4.2.3 Awareness that charges apply to incoming calls

Base: Mobile roaming customers - All who have used their mobile when visiting abroad.

Figure 4 shows the mobile roaming customers' awareness that there are charges for receiving incoming calls when abroad. The majority (75%) of mobile roaming customers are aware that there are charges for receiving incoming calls, while 9% were unaware of this and 14% did not know.

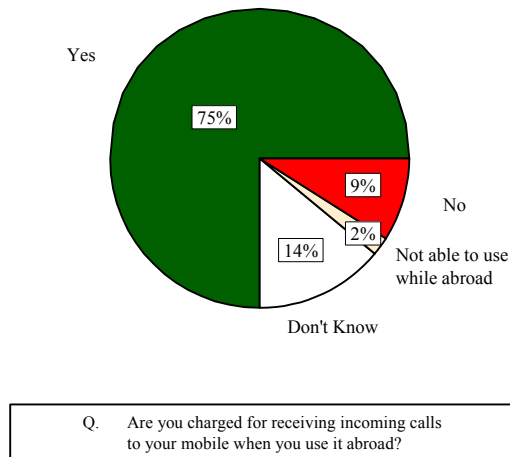


Figure 4: Mobile roaming customers' awareness that there are charges for receiving incoming calls when abroad.

Considering that the charges to receive calls whilst abroad could represent a significant proportion of the overall cost for roaming consumers, it may be surprising that 15% of roaming customers who claimed to be aware of the costs of using their mobile abroad either did not know or thought they were not charged for receiving incoming calls whilst abroad. This may suggest a level of confusion relating to the charges for using mobile phones whilst abroad.

Mobile roaming customers on a contract were significantly more aware of incoming call charges (81%), compared to pre-pay mobile roaming customers (61%). A possible reason for this is that contract customers may be better informed of these charges via their monthly phone bill, whilst pre-pay customers do not receive bills.

Finally, frequent mobile roaming customers were more aware of the cost of receiving incoming calls (80%) than less frequent customers.

5 Methods to reduce roaming costs

5.1 Summary of results:

54% of mobile roaming customers seem to be aware that costs abroad depend on the network used. When asked if they are currently manually selecting the network, 10% of users do this while 66% of mobile users make use of the network that automatically appears on their handsets.

When mobile roaming customers were asked whether they were aware of other methods to reduce their rates, 89% were aware that cheaper rates are possible by sending SMS messages, while approximately 90% were aware of some method to reduce costs while abroad. When asked whether they are using these techniques to reduce their mobile rates abroad, 21% stated that they send text messages rather than make voice calls when they are abroad. 62% of mobile roaming customers make no special arrangements to get cheaper calls when abroad.

5.2 Survey results

5.2.1 Awareness that costs abroad vary depending on network used

Base: Mobile customers - All who have regular use of a mobile phone

Figure 5 shows mobile customers' awareness that costs of using their phone abroad depend on the network used. Just over half (54%) are aware that costs vary depending upon the network used, while 42% are unaware.

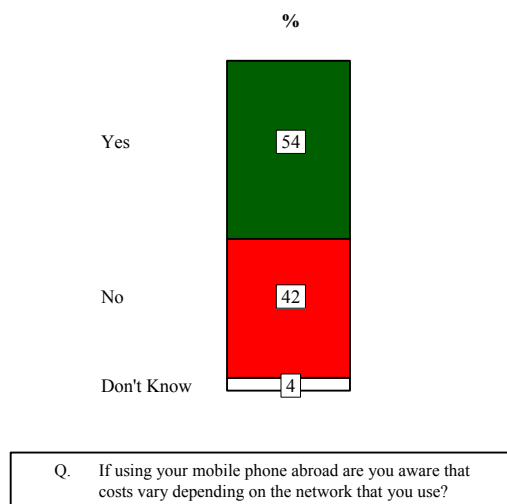


Figure 5: Mobile customers' awareness that costs abroad depend on network used.

Focusing on the awareness of mobile roaming customers, i.e. *all who have used their mobile when visiting abroad*, 54% of these customers were also aware that international roaming costs depend on the network used.

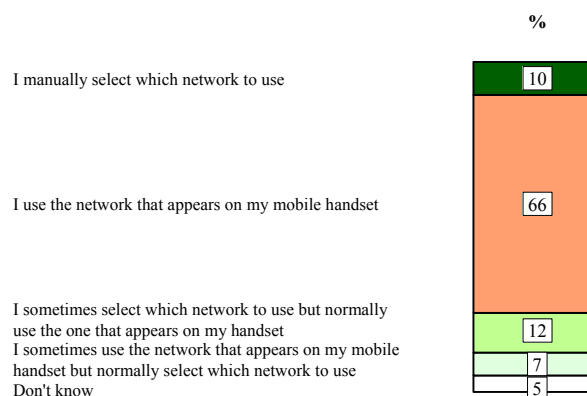
5.2.2 Methods used to select networks when abroad

Base: Mobile roaming customers - All who have used their mobile when visiting abroad

Perhaps the simplest and most effective way of reducing roaming charges while abroad is to manually select the mobile network with the lowest tariffs³. In general most phones automatically select a preferred network or a network with the strongest signal. However this network may not necessarily be the cheapest option. By manually⁴ selecting the network operator, consumers can ensure that they chose the network that reduces their costs.

To ascertain whether mobile roaming customers are currently using this method to reduce their roaming costs, these customers were asked to describe their current method for selecting networks abroad. The majority of mobile roaming customers (66%) use the network that appears automatically on their handset while only 10% manually select the network.

Only one in eight (12%) sometimes select which network to use, but normally use the one that appears on the handset, whilst one in fourteen (7%) sometimes use the network that appears on the handset but normally select which network to use.



Q. When using your mobile abroad, which of the following best describes how you select the network you use?

Figure 6: Methods used by mobile roaming customers to select networks when abroad

The results in section 5.2.1 have shown that over half (54%) of mobile roaming customers knew that costs of using their mobile phone abroad varied depending on the network used. It is therefore rather surprising that only 10% of mobile roaming consumers manually selected the network to use while abroad while a further 12% sometimes select a network. A possible reason for this is that

³ International roaming rates of foreign mobile operators can be found on the websites of the mobile operators in ROI. Consumers may check these rates to see if savings can be made by manually selecting which network to use if they are using their mobile abroad.

⁴ Manual selection of network operators can be achieved by using the manual network selection feature on the mobile handset to list the networks available and then selecting the cheapest option based upon the rates of the network operators.

consumers are not aware of how to manually select an alternative network, or that they are simply unaware of which network offers the cheapest rates.

5.2.3 Awareness of other ways to get cheaper mobile rates abroad

Base: Mobile roaming customers - All who have used their mobile when visiting abroad

Mobile roaming customers were asked whether they were aware of other ways of getting cheaper mobile rates abroad. These could be:

- Arranging with your mobile supplier to pay extra rental to get cheaper call rates abroad, i.e. an International Traveller Service
- Using an alternative SIM in your phone
- Renting or buying a phone in the country you are visiting
- Sending text messages rather than making voice calls

Figure 7 presents these results. The results show that awareness of sending text messages, rather than making voice calls is by far the most popular method of getting cheaper mobile rates abroad; 89% of users who have used their mobile abroad are aware of this option. A high level of awareness of SMS as a means of reducing the cost of international roaming may have been expected considering the popularity of SMS in ROI as on average each mobile subscriber in ROI sends 52 text messages per month⁵. Interestingly all mobile roaming customers in the 15-24 age category were aware of this option for reducing costs.

Awareness of other options for cheaper mobile rates abroad is low. Only one in seven mobile roaming customers (14%) was aware that they can arrange with their mobile supplier to pay extra rental to get cheaper call rates abroad, whilst around a quarter (26%) were aware that they can use an alternative SIM card in their phone when abroad. Renting or buying a phone in the country they are visiting is a known option by one in four mobile roaming customers (24%).

⁵ Source: The Irish Communications Market Quarterly Review, March 2002

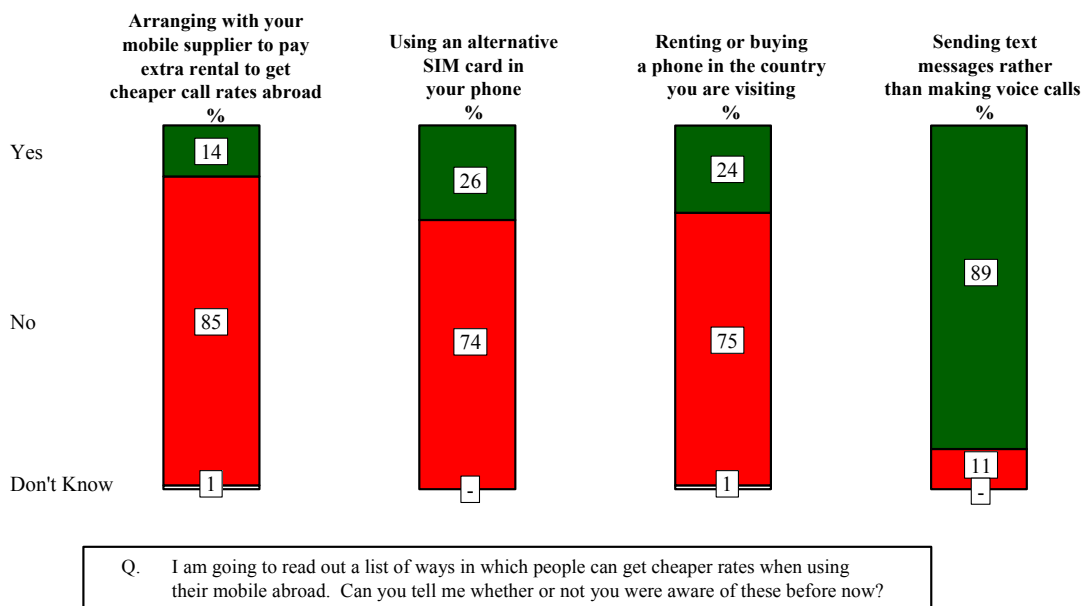
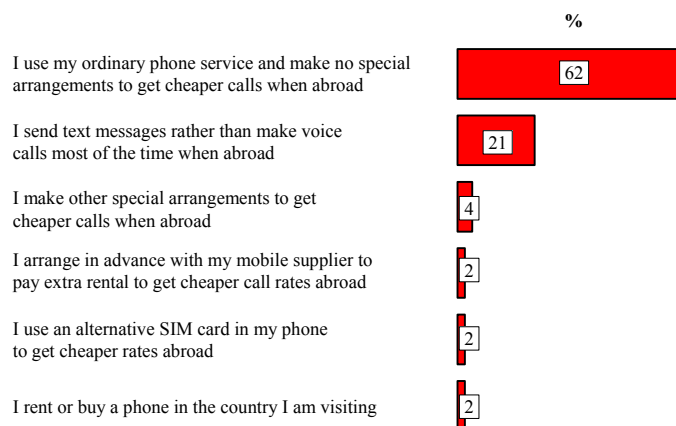


Figure 7: Mobile roaming customers' awareness of other ways to get cheaper mobile rates abroad

5.2.4 How are mobile phones used by roaming customers abroad

Base: Mobile roaming customers - All who have used their mobile when visiting abroad

Mobile roaming customers were asked which of the following best describes the way that they use their phone abroad. Most respondents (62%) use their ordinary phone service when abroad and make no special arrangements to get cheaper calls from their mobile supplier, while 21% of mobile roaming customers send text messages rather than voice calls most of the time abroad. 10% of mobile roaming customers make use of other methods, such as renting or buying a phone in the visited country (2%), using an alternative SIM card (2%), arranging in advance with their mobile supplier to pay extra rental to get cheaper call rates abroad (2%) or other special arrangements (4%).



Q. Which of the following best describes how you use your mobile phone abroad?

Figure 8: Methods used by mobile roaming customers to get cheaper rates when abroad

Although mobile roaming customers appear to be dissatisfied with the rates for roaming (see section 6) only 31% actually use methods to reduce their roaming charges. The most popular method of reducing cost is to send text messages rather than making voice calls (21%). This may be low considering that 89% of mobile roaming customers were aware that sending text messages was a way of reducing costs while abroad. Perhaps text messaging is seen as inconvenient, or less cost effective for long conversations.

More pre-paid customers (34%) send text messages to reduce their roaming costs compared to contract customers (15%). This may be due to the fact that a large proportion of business customers are contract subscribers and sending text messages may not be appropriate for business use.

6 Satisfaction with mobile service abroad

6.1 Summary of results:

Overall satisfaction was low with the various aspects of mobile service relating to usage abroad. 46% of roaming customers were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the cost of making mobile calls whilst abroad. Half of all roaming consumers were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the overall value for money whilst abroad. The aspect of mobile roaming that dissatisfied consumers the most was the fact that they were charged for receiving incoming calls whilst abroad; over half (51%) were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

6.2 Survey results

6.2.1 Satisfaction with mobile service abroad

Base: Mobile roaming customers - All who have used their mobile when visiting abroad

Figure 9 presents results where mobile roaming customers were asked to rate their satisfaction on a scale of 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied) with the following:

- Range and quality of information available on call charges for using your mobile phone abroad
- Cost of making calls whilst abroad
- Cost of receiving calls whilst abroad
- Overall value for money whilst abroad

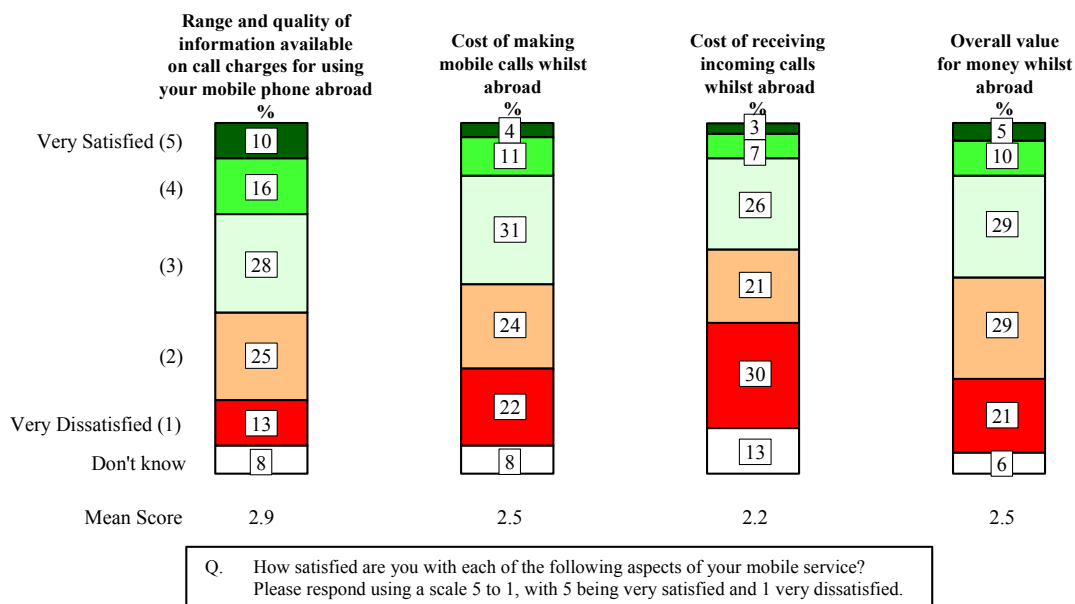


Figure 9: Mobile roaming customers' satisfaction with various aspects of their roaming service.

As illustrated in **Figure 9**, satisfaction was low with the various aspects of mobile service relating to usage abroad. The aspect of mobile roaming that dissatisfied consumers the most was the fact that they were charged for receiving incoming calls whilst abroad; over half (51%) were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Comparing the “value for money” satisfaction values between different telephony services – Internet, Mobile phone, Home telephone, Mobile phone abroad⁶ – reveals that satisfaction levels for using a mobile phone abroad are significantly lower than any of the other telephony services, as shown in **Figure 10**. This is not surprising considering the low awareness of international roaming charges by Irish consumers.

⁶ Satisfaction values for Home telephone, Internet and Mobile phone are taken from the ODTR Quarterly Market Update, March 2002, and were compiled from a consumer survey carried out during the same period with the same sample size as the international roaming survey.

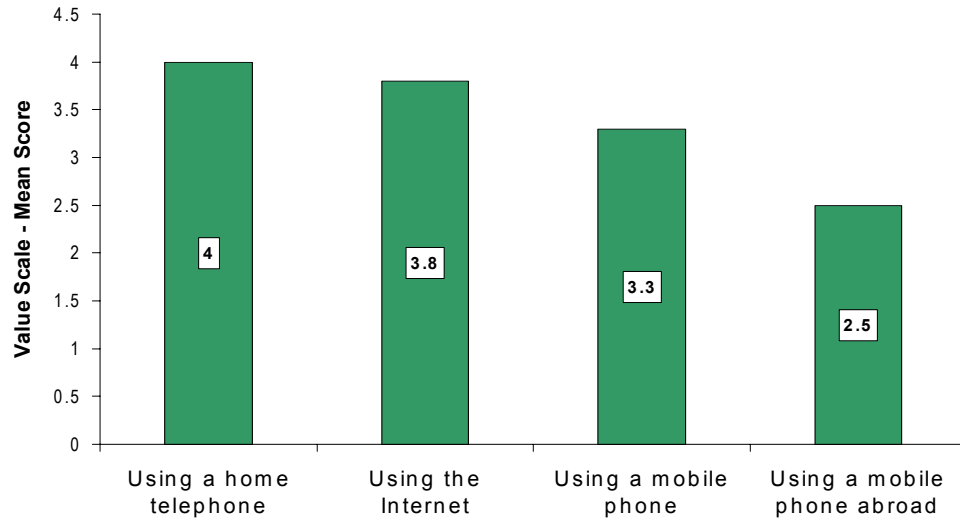


Figure 10: “Value for money” satisfaction rating for Internet home telephone, mobile phone and mobile phone abroad.

7 Comparison with results from GB and NI

As stated in the introduction to this report, a consumer survey on international roaming was also carried out on behalf of OfTel in February 2002. The results of this can be found at www.oftel.gov.uk.

The following section broadly compares the results of the studies carried out by the ODTR and OfTel. When comparing the results, the reader should be aware that different research methodologies and samples sizes were used by both organisations.

7.1 Frequency of mobile phone usage abroad

From the results of these surveys Irish consumers are using their phone more frequently abroad. In the Republic of Ireland (ROI) almost 38% of mobile phone users have ever used their mobile phone abroad, compared to 19% in Great Britain (GB) and 23% in Northern (NI) respectively. The higher rate of roaming within (ROI) might be accounted for by consumers travelling across the border more frequently.

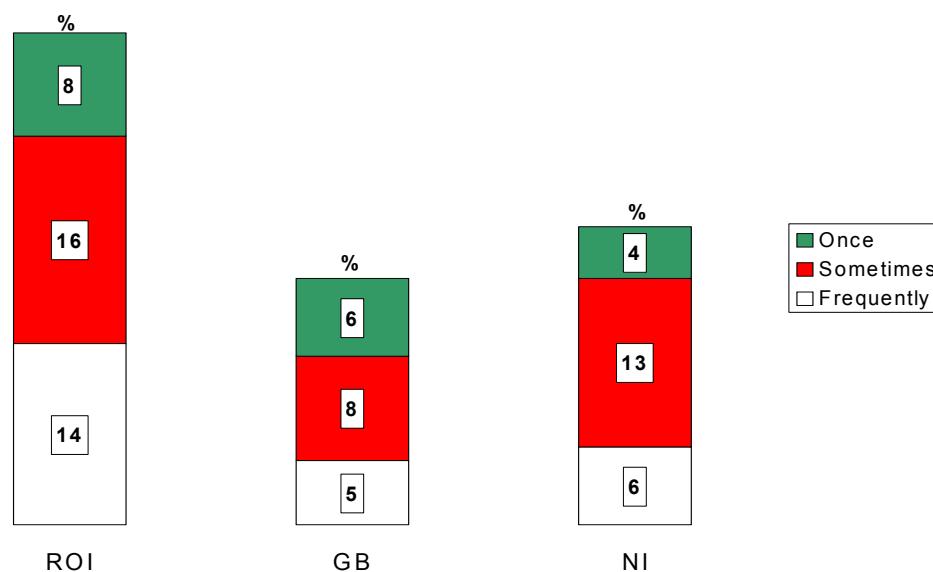


Figure 11: Frequency of Mobile Usage Abroad

7.2 Awareness of roaming costs and charges

Overall awareness of roaming costs and charges was mixed between ROI and GB & NI.

Results are similar with regards to whether mobile customers were aware of the roaming costs and charges at the time of purchasing their mobile phone. In ROI 63% of mobile roaming customers were aware of the costs of using their mobile whilst abroad, compared to GB and NI, where 61% and 70% respectively were aware of the costs at the time of purchase.

A greater percentage of mobile roaming customers in GB (69%) and NI (76%) know exactly or know roughly how much roaming costs. The figure in ROI is 57%, see **Figure 12**.

However more roaming customers in ROI (75%) were aware of the fact that they were charged for receiving incoming calls to their mobile while using it abroad than in GB (62%) and NI (66%).

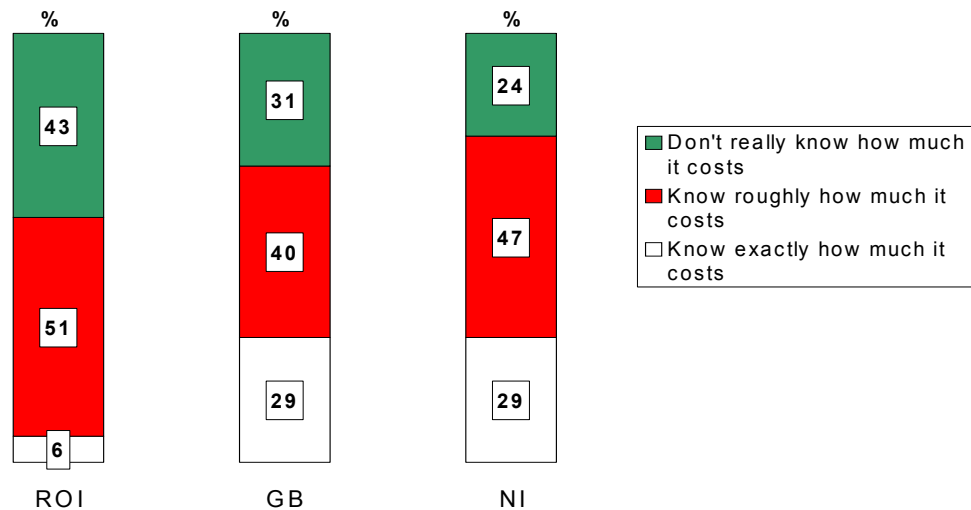


Figure 12: Mobile roaming customers' awareness of costs of using mobile phone abroad.

7.3 Methods to reduce roaming costs

Some of the methods used by mobile roaming customers to reduce costs are outlined in **Table 1**. With regards to the awareness of the options to reduce international roaming charges, 90% of mobile roaming customers in the ROI were aware of at least one method to reduce roaming costs compared to 76% in GB and 81% in NI. However with regards to the usage of these options, in general consumers in the GB & NI make greater use of other methods to reduce roaming costs than consumers in ROI.

- 31% of mobile roaming customers in ROI use a method to reduce costs while abroad compared to 43% and 42% of GB and NI mobile roaming customers respectively.

These usage figures may seem low considering that there was a high awareness of methods to reduce roaming costs. A possible explanation of this, particularly in the ROI, may be the low awareness of the exact costs of using a mobile phone abroad, 6% in the ROI as compared to 29% and GB and NI, see **Figure 12**.

Table 1: Percentage of mobile roaming customers using methods to reduce roaming charges

| | <i>ROI mobile roaming customers</i> | <i>GB mobile roaming customers</i> | <i>NI mobile roaming customers</i> |
|---|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Use ordinary phone/make no special arrangements/don't know | 69% | 57% | 58% |
| Sending text messages rather than voice calls | 21% | 26% | 29% |
| Pay extra rental for cheaper call rates abroad | 2% | 9% | 7% |
| Using an alternative SIM card in your phone | 2% | 5% | 2% |
| Make other special arrangements | 4% | 2% | 3% |
| Renting/buying a phone in country you are visiting | 2% | 1% | 2% |
| Use methods to reduce roaming charges | 31% | 43% | 42% |

7.4 Network selection

In ROI there is generally a lower awareness that costs vary depending upon network selection with just over half of mobile roaming customers (54%) being aware of this, compared to 77% of mobile roamers in GB, and 69% in NI. However with regards to methods used by roaming customers to select networks when abroad, the results are broadly similar, see figure 13.

In ROI 66% of roaming customers use the network that appears on the handset as compared to 63% in GB and 75% in NI. One in ten (10%) of roaming customers in ROI manually select the network as compared to 16% in GB and 6% in NI.

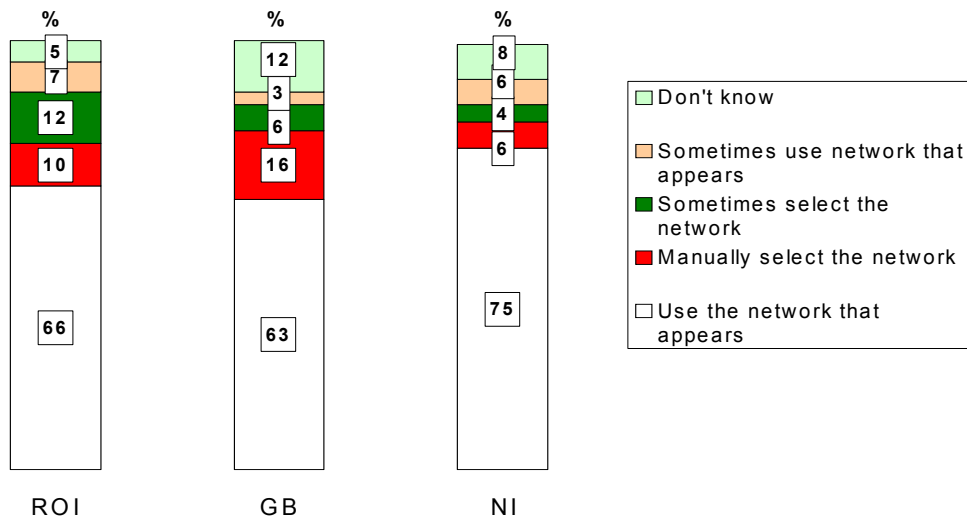


Figure 13: Methods used by mobile roaming customers to select networks when abroad

7.5 Satisfaction with mobile service abroad

With regards to satisfaction, overall satisfaction was highest with the range and quality of information available on call charges⁷. Consumers were least satisfied with the costs of receiving incoming calls (see figure 14).

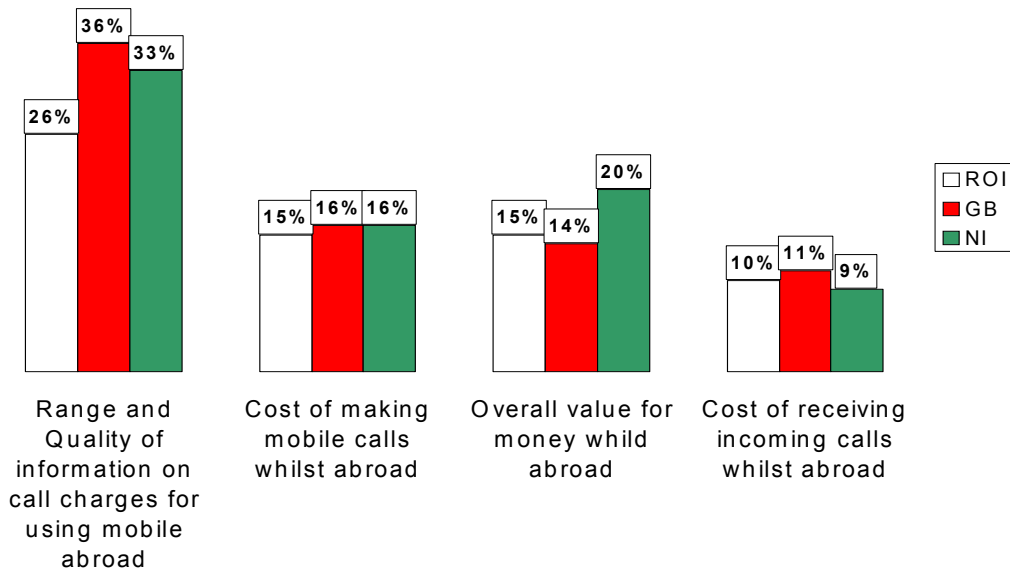


Figure 14: Mobile roaming customers’ satisfaction with various aspects of their roaming service.

⁷ There were some differences in the wording of this question between the surveys. Respondents to the ROI survey were asked to rank their satisfaction on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very dissatisfied and 5 is very satisfied. Respondents to the GB and NI survey were asked if they were either satisfied or dissatisfied. For the purposes of cross country analysis respondents who gave an answer of 5 (very satisfied) or 4 (satisfied) in the ROI survey were considered as satisfied.

APPENDIX A – List of questions asked

1. How often, if ever, have you used your mobile when visiting abroad? SINGLE CODE

- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Once
- Never
- Don't know/no answer

2. Were you aware of the cost of using your mobile whilst abroad when you bought your mobile? SINGLE CODE

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

3. Which of the following best describes how much you know about the cost of using your mobile abroad? SINGLE CODE

- I know exactly how much it costs to use my mobile abroad
- I know roughly how much it costs to use my mobile abroad
- I don't really know how much it costs to use my mobile abroad

4. How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of your mobile service? Please respond using a scale 5 to 1, with 5 being very satisfied and 1 very dissatisfied.

MULTICODE

- Range and quality of information available on call charges for using your mobile phone abroad
- Cost of making mobile calls whilst abroad
- Cost of receiving incoming calls whilst abroad
- Overall value for money whilst abroad

5. When using your mobile phone abroad are you aware that costs vary depending on the network that you use? SINGLE CODE

- Yes
- No

6. Are you charged for receiving incoming calls to your mobile when you use it abroad? SINGLE CODE

- Yes

- No
- Not able to use while abroad
- Don't know/no answer

7. When using your mobile abroad do you manually select which network to use or do you use the one that appears automatically on your mobile handset? SINGLE CODE

- I manually select which network to use
- I use the network that appears on my mobile handset
- I sometimes select which network to use but normally use the one that appears on my handset
- I sometimes use the network that appears on my mobile handset but normally select which network to use
- Don't know/no answer

8. I am going to read out a list of ways in which people can get cheaper rates when using their mobile abroad. Can you tell me whether or not you were aware of these before now?
SINGLE CODE FOR EACH PART

Yes

No

- Arranging with your mobile supplier to pay extra rental to get cheaper call rates abroad
- Using an alternative SIM card in your phone
- Renting or buying a phone in the country you are visiting
- Sending text messages rather than making voice calls

9. Which of the following best describes how you use mobile phone abroad? SINGLE CODE

- I arrange in advance with my mobile supplier to pay extra rental to get cheaper call rates abroad
- I use an alternative SIM card in my phone to get cheaper rates abroad
- I rent or buy a phone in the country I am visiting
- I send text messages rather than make voice calls most of the time when abroad
- I make other special arrangements to get cheaper calls when abroad
- I use my ordinary phone service and make no special arrangements to get cheaper calls when abroad
- Don't know

10. And is your mobile phone one where you get bills, or one where you buy cards and pay for your calls in advance?

- Get bills
- Buy cards and pay in advance

APPENDIX B – Options to reduce roaming costs abroad

There are a number of options available to consumers for reducing the cost of international roaming as outlined below.

While this section gives indicative advice to consumers, consumers should check these options with their mobile provider before making decisions regarding their mobile service.

Furthermore in considering some of the options below consumers should be aware that any potential to reduce mobile roaming costs will depend on their individual usage patterns.

Change from pre-pay to a post-pay service: In general roaming tariffs on post-pay (contract) services are significantly lower than tariffs available to pre-pay consumers. This option will generally suit a frequent traveller with high domestic usage as consumers should consider the long-term cost of a post-pay contract before switching from pre-pay. General considerations for consumers include:

- level of domestic mobile usage
- willingness to contract for a minimum period
- the charge for monthly access and any inclusive airtime.
- there may be a requirement to change mobile number.

Use International Traveller Services (ITS): Most mobile operators provide post-pay customers with an additional international roaming option, whereby a customer can avail of cheaper flat rate call charges by committing to paying an additional monthly access or service fee for a period which can be as little as one month.

Diverting and barring incoming calls: Barring or diverting mobile calls can reduce international roaming costs as, in general, there is a charge for receiving mobile calls when abroad.

- A mobile user can divert incoming calls directly to voicemail or another number rather than receiving a number of calls (and paying for each call received) while roaming. The user can make one call back to check the calls received and decide which calls require attention.
- A mobile user may also bar incoming calls completely. This may suit mobile users who only make outgoing calls.

Use text messaging (SMS) instead of voice calls: Sending text messaging rather than making voice calls may be a cheaper option depending on the operators rates, see Annex D of ODTR document 02/34 for mobile roaming rates in UK. Furthermore, most mobile operators do not charge for receiving text messages while roaming in the UK, so roamers may avoid the cost associated with receiving incoming calls by receiving text messages in their place.

Manually select a network to roam on: When arriving in the UK a consumer's mobile phone may select a preferred network or one with the strongest signal. However this may not necessarily be the cheapest option. Consumers can also manually select the network they wish to use in order to select the network operator that reduces their roaming costs, see Annex D of ODTR document 02/34 for mobile roaming rates in UK.

Avail of cheaper off-peak tariffs: Off-peak rates can be significantly cheaper than peak rates when roaming in the UK, see Annex D of ODTR document 02/34 for mobile roaming rates in UK. The times for off-peak will vary across networks and some operators charge peak rate on Saturday so care should be given to network selection.

Swap the "SIM card" in your phone: Functionality in the SIM (Subscriber Identity Module) card allows a mobile phone to operate on a mobile network. By using the SIM card of a UK network in the UK, the consumer may cut their bill significantly as they now avail of the UK rates for making and receiving calls. However consumers should take the following into consideration:

- Do the alternative SIM cards have expiry dates?
- Does the Irish provider need to unlock the handset first, and if so, is there any additional cost associated with this?
- Are the contact numbers needed abroad stored in the mobile phone memory or the SIM card memory? By storing numbers on the phone memory those numbers will still be available regardless of SIM changes.
- When using a UK SIM the consumer will need to change to a UK mobile number. The cost may then increase to consumers calling this UK number from Ireland.

Other Options: Consumers could consider buying or renting a different mobile phone to use in the UK or using payphones for making calls.