



In two decades, everything's changed

2005



2025



2005

Nokia's ruled

2007

The first iPhone launches

2008

Apple app store opens

2012

4G launches in the UK, enabling internet everywhere

2025

89% of 12-year-olds own a smartphone, permanently connected to the internet



Parents wish things were different

94%

of primary school
parents think
smartphones
are harmful

Parentkind nationwide poll
of 2,496 people, April 24

70%

of parents believe
smartphones
negatives impact
family life

HMD poll of 10,000
parents, June 24

33%

of parents of children
with smartphones have
cried over their child's
phone obsession

HMD poll of 10,000
parents, June 24



Young people wish things were different

67%

of 16-18 year olds
think smartphones
are harmful

Parentkind poll, 2024

1 in 5

of 16-18 year olds
have felt “life is
not worth living”
due to social
media

Parentkind poll, 2024

50%

of teens say they
are “addicted” to
social media

Millennium Cohort Study, 2024



Yet smartphones have become the norm

25%

of 5-7 year olds in the UK own their own smartphone



89%

of 12 year-olds in the UK own their own smartphone



Almost all children at Shelton say they have a device that they can message people on. Even those in year 3 and 4.

SOURCE: Attitudes April 24



Everyone's got one, because everyone's got one!



Most parents believe smartphones are harmful, yet almost all children have them by Year 7



Because resisting peer pressure becomes almost impossible when children's social lives migrate online

The powerful network effects of smartphones and social media mean parents and young people feel like they have no choice



**But what exactly
is the problem?**

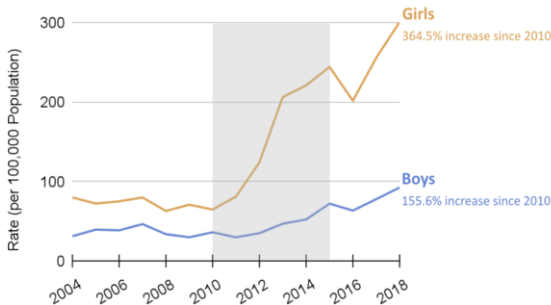


Smartphones are fuelling a mental health crisis

Rates of depression, anxiety, self-harm and even suicide among teens have all dramatically spiked globally since 2010 – when children started getting smartphones.

A 2023 global study of 27,969 young adults from Sapiens Labs showed that the younger they got their first smartphone, the worse their mental health today.

UK Teens, self-harm Episodes (Ages 10-12)



67%

Teens with problematic smartphone-use are twice as likely to have anxiety and three times as likely to have depression

King's College London, 2024

1 in 5

UK 16 to 18 years olds say that their social media has made them feel that 'life is not worth living'

Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2024

53%

The number of children referred to emergency mental healthcare in England has soared by 53% in three years

Parentkind Poll, 2024



Smartphones are addictive by design

Tech companies spend billions on making apps and devices as addictive as possible because 'maximising engagement' is the fundamental objective of their business model.

So it's little wonder that many children are routinely 'spending six, seven, eight hours a day on social media - often more' (Ofcom, 2024).

Time spent on phones is only going up



46%

of teens say they use the their phones "almost constantly"

Pew Research Centre, Aug 2022

29hrs

Per week is the average British 12-year-old now spends on their smartphone

Childwise Monitor Report, 2021

2in3

of 11-17 year olds 'often' or 'sometimes' find it difficult to put down their phone

Common Sense Media, 2023

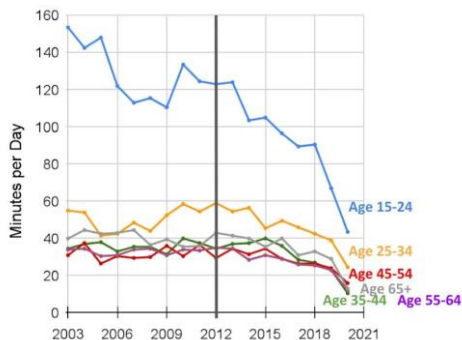


Smartphones are changing childhood

Smartphones are experience blockers, distracting children from engaging in the real world activities and connections that are crucial to healthy childhood development.

The opportunity cost to childhood is profound. The average UK 12 year-old now spends over four hours per day on their smartphone, displacing the kinds of activities that have shaped childhood for millennia.

Daily Avg Time with Friends (minutes)



43%

of US teenagers waking minutes are spent on screens

Gitnux Marketdata Report, Jan 2024

30%

Since 1975, the daily average time children spend playing outdoors has fallen by 30%, while screen-based activities have risen 23%

Zach Rausch - Mullan 2019

65%

The daily average time that teenagers spend with friends has plummeted by 65% since 2010

American Time Use Study



~Susie

In the last decade there have been 70% less outdoor accidents and 93% more incidents of self harm in children... as a GP I can promise you it's much easier to mend a broken bone than a broken mind.



24

Dr Susie Davies, founder of Papaya Parents, citing NHS DATA



Sadly, we could go on



SLEEP

Bedtime use of smartphones doubles children's risk of poor sleep

Jama Paediatrics, 2016



BULLYING

84% of bullying now takes place on a device

CommonSense Media, 2023



DISTRACTIONS

On average teens are bombarded by 237 smartphone notifications a day

LookUp



ARGUMENTS

55% of parents say their child's smartphone use causes big family arguments

Ofcom, 2022



ROAD SAFETY

Mobile phone distraction is a major cause of road accidents involving children

HMD, 2024



CRIME

500 children a day were mugged in 2020 in the UK, almost all for smartphones

ONS, 2020



**Parents are in an
impossible position**



Because our 'choice' isn't really a choice at all



Either we...

Give our children access to a product that we know to be harmful.



Or we...

Risk alienating them from their peers at a crucial stage of their development.

It's a lose-lose; for parents for children & for society

**Leaders across the world
are thinking about how to
legislate to protect children**

**But proper regulation of big
tech will take years, and we
don't have time to waste**

Mobile phones set to be banned across all

said that they are open to children using social



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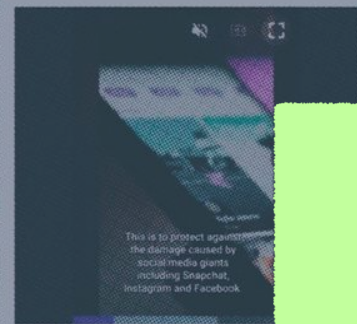
could follow Australia in
ning social media for
ng teenagers
ters are considering ways to stop children
sing harmful content online, citing the
t on mental health

right, Rachel Sylvester
September 13 2024, 9:50am, The Times

Restrict
Signed by

ports of cyberbullying
e harmful to childrens

Share on X



'Enough is enough': Fed
confirms nationwide s
media ban - and reveal
it will work

Anthony Albanese has revealed how a
nationwide age-based ban on social media
accounts, including Snapchat, Ins
and Facebook, will work.

Education
Children's exposure to
harmful online content
a 'public health crisis',
says Minister

Stronger laws may be needed to
safeguard young people, according to
Stephen Donnelly



Kim Willsher in Paris

Follow Kim Willsher

ire schools in the
ones by July 1, 2026,
e by children in



**The solution is to
work together**



A recommended approach

01

Delay smartphones
until at least 14

02

Delay social media
until at least 16

03

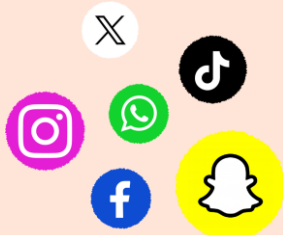
A simple phone to
stay in contact

04

Shared access to a
family computer



SMARTPHONE



SOCIAL MEDIA



SIMPLE PHONE



**FAMILY
COMPUTER**

1

The Parent Pact is an online tool that helps parents agree to delay with others in your community. The more of us who sign, the more powerful it becomes.

STEP 01

Select your region
& child's school



Select your region

Select your school

Select your school year

Name

STEP 02

Sign the Pact to delay
until at least 14



Sign the pact

STEP 03

View results for your
region, school & class



141,833

CHILDREN

13,732

SCHOOLS

Sort by:

Leaderboard

Region name

REGION	FACTS
Bedfordshire ↗	937
Berkshire ↗	3286
Bristol ↗	2510
Buckinghamshire ↗	2911
Cambridgeshire ↗	2936

2 Policy Change

Alongside the parent pact, Shelton governors could change policy for our younger children who have yet to start bringing their smart phones into school to not allow these in the building at all.



SMARTPHONE



Governors and I are considering this to support the well-being and mental health of all our young people.

SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD

<https://sheltonj.derby.sch.uk/smartphone-free-childhood>

www.smartphonefreechildhood.org



@smartphonefreechildhood



Smartphone Free Childhood is a restricted fund under the auspices of Prism the Gift Fund, Charity Number 1099682.

Together, we learn,
trust & succeed.

