

**SMARTPHONE
FREE CHILDHOOD**

Smartphones: the new frontier in parenting

PARENT PRESENTATION 2025



In two decades, everything's changed

2004



2024



2004

Nokias ruled

2007

The first iPhone launches

2008

Apple app store opens

2012

4G launches in the UK, enabling internet everywhere

2024

89% of 12-year-olds own a smartphone, permanently connected to the internet via 4g/5g



They're not really 'phones' at all



Mobile Phones

Make calls, send texts, play Snake



Pocket Supercomputer

24/7 access to the internet in your pocket



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

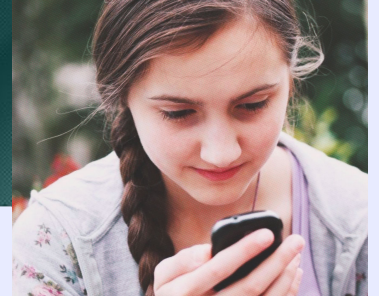
25%

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



89%

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

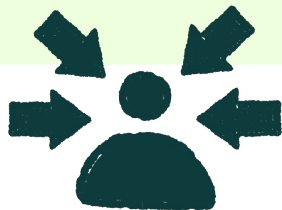




Everyone's got one, because everyone's got one!



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

**So ~~what~~
exactly
is the
problem?**



When children first started getting smartphones in the early 2010s we didn't understand their impact.

Now we do, and the evidence is overwhelming.

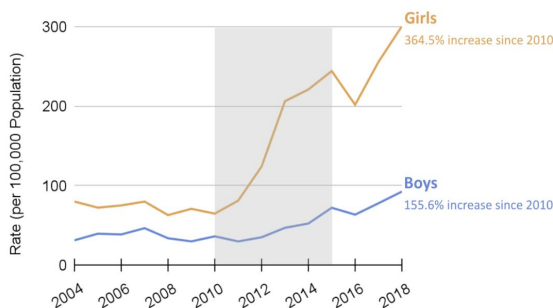


Smartphones are fuelling a mental health crisis

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 expose children to harmful content

Having unrestricted access to the internet in your pocket creates a gateway to extreme content and viewpoints that we'd never dream of exposing children to in real life.

Hardcore pornography, extreme political views, sexualised and violent imagery, trolling and material promoting suicide, self-harm and eating disorders have become part of the fabric of modern childhood.

The dangers of platforms like TikTok

51%

of UK 11-13 year-olds have seen hardcore pornography online

British Board of Film Classification Report, March 2022

75%

of UK 15 year olds questioned had been sent beheading videos

Digital Childhoods, children's commissioner report, 2022

90%

of girls and 50% of boys say they are sent unwanted explicit content

Ofsted review of sexual abuse in schools, 2021



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 their phones "almost constantly"

Pew Research Centre, Aug 2022

29 hrs

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

Childwise Monitor Report, 2021

2 in 3

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

Common Sense Media, 2023

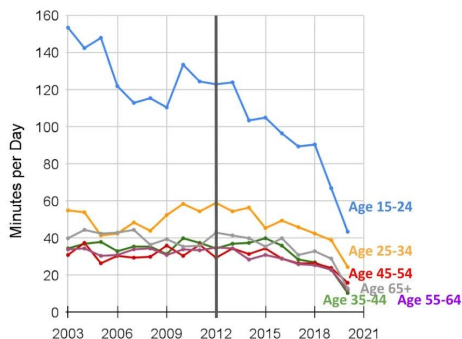


Smartphones are changing childhood

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



It's little wonder that many of the people who created this technology keep it away from their kids

"We don't allow the iPad in the home. We think it's too dangerous for them."

STEVE JOBS



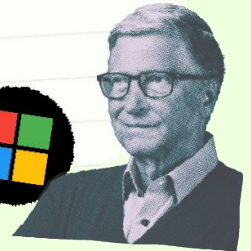
"Grew up without a TV and credits his own success on that tech restriction. Limits his kid to 1.5hrs screen time per week."

EVAN SPIEGEL



"Didn't allow his 4 children smartphones or their own computers until they were 14"

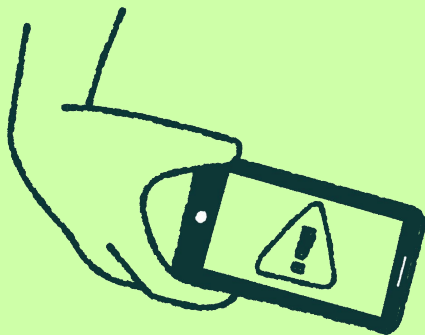
BILL GATES



 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...

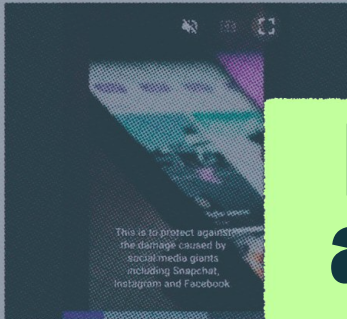
Risk alienating them from their peers at a crucial stage of their development.

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

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

Mobile phones set to be banned across all

said that they are open to children using social



'Enough is enough': Fed confirms nationwide social media ban - and reveals it will work

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

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



France

France to trial ban on mobile phones at school for children under 15

'Digital pause' experiment at 200 secondary schools could be extended nationwide in January

Kim Willsher in Paris

Follow Kim Willsher



The Minister for Education is planning to ban mobile phones from all second-level schools research which links use of devices to distraction and cyberbullying. Photo: Barlow/PA Wire

Carl O'Brien

...ve that is intended to children's mental

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

California Schools Must Restrict Phones Under New Law Signed by Newsom

Calls for crackdowns have mounted with reports of cyberbullying and studies indicating that smartphones are harmful to children's mental health.

Listen to the article - 4:43 min - 1/20/2025



could follow Australia in banning social media for teenagers

Ministers are considering ways to stop children using harmful content online, citing the impact on mental health

By Rachel Sylvester
September 13, 2024, 3:50pm, The Times

are open to a ban on social media. Newsom warned that such a law was likely to be

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

By Shawn Hurler
Shawn Hurler
New York

Newsom said that school districts should consider such a ban during a period of concern

Free School Lunches for all students statewide. More than 10 million have passed.

school crack down among

**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**

THE IRISH TIMES

Education

Mobile phones set to be banned across all

said that they are open to children using social media

This is to protect against the damage caused by social media giants including Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook

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

Education

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January

Kim Willsher in Paris

Follow Kim Willsher

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Restrict Signed by

reports of cyberbullying are harmful to children's

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By Shawn
Shawn Hul
York.

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**The solution is
to work
together**



This is what Smartphone Free Childhood is all about.

It's a growing movement of 150,000 parents in the UK who are coming together to support each other in delaying access to smartphones and social media for their children.

It's coordinated via a national network of WhatsApp communities where parents can learn more about the issue, find other like-minded parents and support one another.



We're not anti-tech, We're pro childhood

Technology has immense benefits, and young people should be able to enjoy the opportunities it creates – when they're ready and when it's safe to do so.

But childhood is precious and fleeting. All children should have the opportunity to learn, develop and grow free from the addictive-by-design algorithms and age-inappropriate content of social media and smartphones.



Parental controls aren't the solution

⚡ Even the most tech-savvy parents struggle to manage parental controls

⚡ Some apps require updates to hundreds of settings to make them age appropriate

⚡ Even if your child's phone has controls, their friends may not so they may be sent harmful content regardless

58%

of teens say they've never had controls put on their phone by parents.

(PARENTKIND POLL, MAY 2024)

47%

of teens with controls in place say they have bypassed them.

(PARENTKIND POLL, MAY 2024)

And teens find multiple ways to bypass controls:

Performing a factory reset

Using VPN software

Hacking the WiFi router

Memorising your passcode



THE PARENT PACT

**makes collective action
simple**

The movement is growing across the UK

151,120

Parent Pacts have been signed in 8 months



It's happening in Buckinghamshire

3,163

Parent Pacts have been signed in Bucks,

15

Parent Pacts have been signed in Great Kimble CofE.

[SFC Bucks Leaderboard](#)



**We're all trying
to do the best
for our kids**



Let's keep talking

SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD

www.smartphonefreechildhood.org

[@smartphonefreechildhood](https://www.instagram.com/smartphonefreechildhood)



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