



**SMARTPHONE
FREE CHILDHOOD**

Smartphones: the new frontier in parenting

PARENT PRESENTATION 2025



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In two decades, everything's changed

2004



2025



2004

Nokia's 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 ~~W~~hat
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.

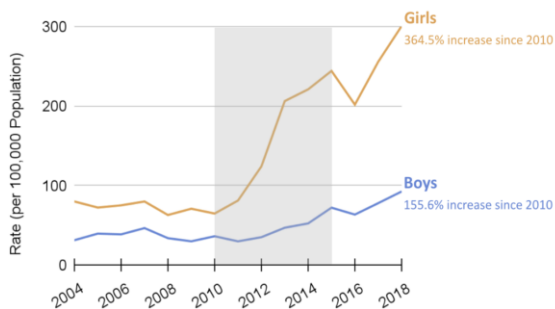


Smartphones are fuelling a mental health crisis

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

“The mental health crisis among young people is an emergency.

It is time to require a warning label on social media platforms.”



Dr Vivek Murthy
US Surgeon General, 2024

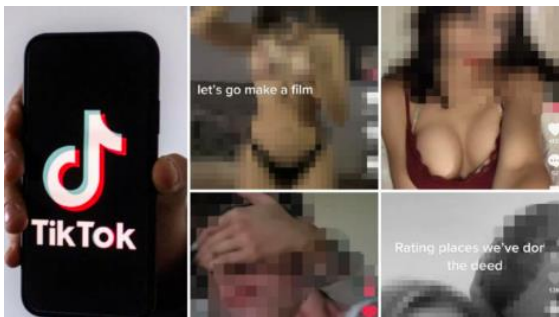


Smartphones expose children to harmful content

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

“We’ll look back in 20 years and be horrified by what our children were exposed to”



Dame Rachel de Souza
Children’s Commissioner for England, 2022



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

29hrs

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

“Behind every screen on your phone, a thousand engineers have worked to make it maximally addicting. Children are particularly susceptible to this kind of manipulative design.”



Aza Raskin

Co-inventor of 'infinite scroll', turned campaigner

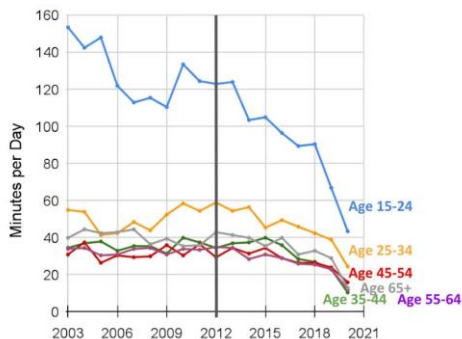


Smartphones are changing childhood

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

“When kids are on their phones all day, it’s not just what they’re doing on the phone that matters — it’s what they’re not doing. They’re missing out on crucial experiences that help them grow into healthy adults.”



Dr. Jonathan Haidt
Professor of Social Psychology, NYU



~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

Over half of teens get 237 smartphone notifications a day, some get more than 5000

Common Sense Media



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



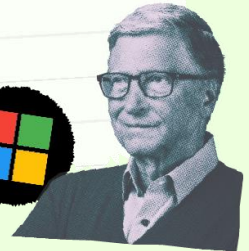
"Grew up without a TV and credits his own success on that tech restriction. Limits his kid to 1.5hrs screen time per week."


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



By Shawn
Shawn Hul
York.

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t on mental health

rights, Rachel Sylvester
September 13 2024, 5:50pm, The Times

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 this article - 4:42 min - Last 2024



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. Phology Barlow/PA Wire

Carl O'Brien

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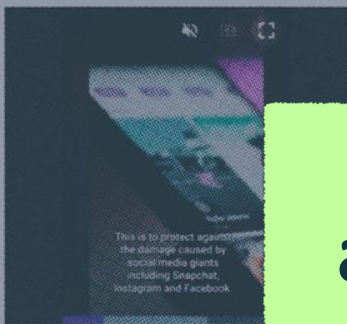
France

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



'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.

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



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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

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By Shawn
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Ministers believe social media is partly to blame

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By Rachel Sylvester
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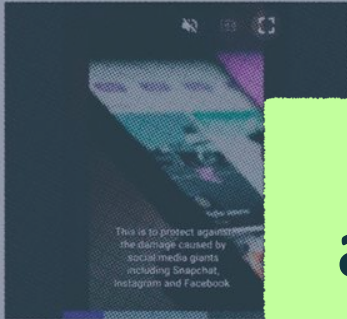
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This is to protect against
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'Enough is enough': Fed
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Anthony Albanese has revealed how a
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Stronger laws may be needed to
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January

Kim Willsher in Paris

Follow Kim Willsher

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**The solution is
to work together**



If we all agree to delay giving our children smartphones, and instead gave them brick phones until at least the end of Year 9, the peer pressure instantly reduces.

Saying no can feel impossible when you're acting alone. Acting collectively makes it infinitely easier.



This is what **Smartphone** **Free Childhood** is all **about.**

It's a growing movement of 160,000 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.

The background of the slide is a collage of images with a green tint and a halftone dot pattern. It includes a person riding a bicycle on a path, a close-up of large green leaves, and a person's face in the bottom left corner. A black circle with a white lightning bolt icon is positioned above the word "not" in the main text.

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.



Our recommended approach

01

Delay smartphones until at least 14

02

Delay social media until at least 16

03

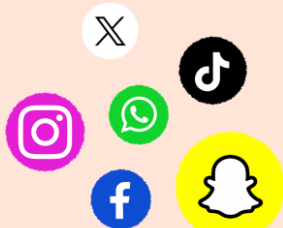
A simple phone to stay in contact

04

Shared access to a family computer



SMARTPHONE



SOCIAL MEDIA



SIMPLE PHONE



FAMILY COMPUTER



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 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



STEP 02

Sign the Pact to delay until at least 14



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

The movement is growing across the UK

160,000+

Parent Pacts have been signed in 8 months



It's happening in [enter your county name]

INSTRUCTIONS

Please edit the number of Pacts signed in your region. You can find the live data for your region on the link below. You can also insert a screenshot of your school's place on your region's leaderboard

<https://www.smartphonedefreechildhood.org/parent-pact-results>

PLEASE DELETE THIS BOX BEFORE PRESENTING

750

have been signed in
[enter your county name]

82

Parent Pacts have been signed in
[xxx school name]

SCHOOL NAME	PACTS
Dartington CE Academy, Dartington ↗	125
Blundell's School, Tiverton ↗	105
St Peter's CE Primary School, Budleigh Salterton ↗	82
Woolacombe School Woolacombe ↗	71
St Peter's Preparatory School, Lympstone ↗	46
Trinity CE Primary School, Exeter ↗	39
Landscape CE Primary School, Landscape ↗	31



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



We're in this together

**Navigating the fast changing world of smartphones
and social media is complex.**

This stuff's tricky, the evidence is evolving fast,
and every family is different.

Wherever you sit on the spectrum, or whatever decisions you've
made for your children, we respect your position.

Every family will come to their own conclusions; we just want to open
up a conversation about these issues.

It's a new frontier of parenting, and we're all in it together.



Let's keep talking

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.