

SMART PHONES



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Educating Yorkshire

Series 2 Episode 5

Year 11 students Skyler, Olivia and Falak feel the pressure as GCSEs edge closer. Headteacher Mr Burton cracks down on mobile phones. And a special guest returns to the school.

HD

Why?

- Previously thought better to teach awareness and positive action over bans and compliance
- BUT...
- Compelling evidence on the impact of smartphones on health and wellbeing
- Evidence of the impact of notifications, distractions and focus
- Is it possible that the situation is likely to improve or get worse?

Join at menti.com | use code 7279 6088

What concerns you the most about your child's phone use?



Join at menti.com | use code 7279 6088

What benefits have you seen about their phone use?



Research

What Gen Z thinks about its social media and smartphone usage

Brief September 10, 2024 • 4 min




“About half of adult Gen Z social media users (47%) report that they use social media for 2-4 hours per day. Sixty percent of the sample spend at least 4 hours a day, with 22% saying they spend seven or more hours each day.”

Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report

Published 7 May 2025

Ofcom 2025

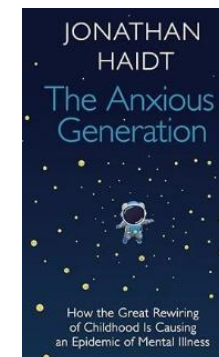
 CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER

Resources >

School phone policies in England: Findings from the Children's Commissioner's School and College Survey

10 April 2025

The majority of children (69%) spend more than two hours a day using one of these devices, while 23% spend more than four hours on them a day. [ii](#)



1. The Youth Mental Health Crisis

It starts in the early 2010s...

Self report based on symptom checklist

Major Depressive Episodes in the Last Year (U.S. Teens)

Percent of 12-17-Year-Olds

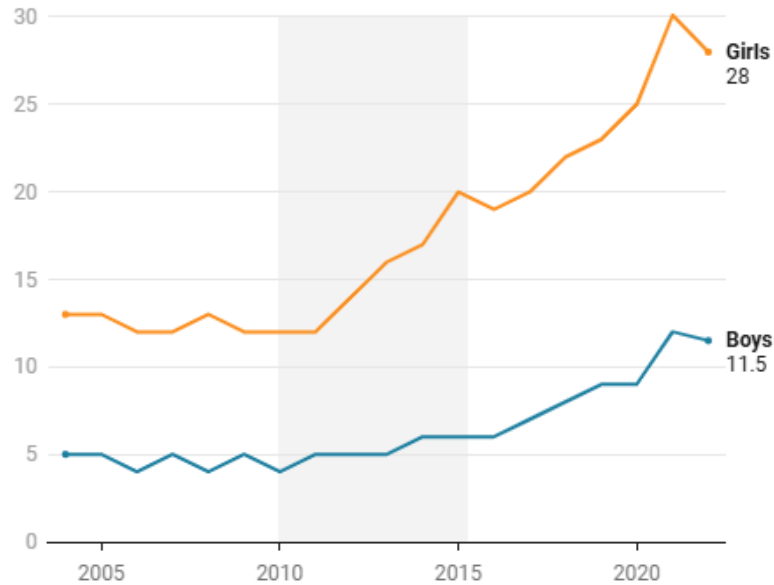


Chart: Zach Rausch • Source: [National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#) • [Get the data](#) • [Embed](#) • [Download image](#) • Created with [Datavrapper](#)

Figure 1. Percent of U.S. teens (ages 12-17) who had at least one major depressive episode in the past year (by self-report based on a symptom checklist). Data from [U.S. National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#). This was Figure 7.1 in *The Coddling of the American Mind*, now updated with data beyond 2016. See the [online supplement](#) for these data split by race, region, and social class.

It is mostly “internalizing disorders,” like anxiety and depression

Diagnosed implies
some medical
intervention

Percent of U.S. Undergraduates with a Mental Illness

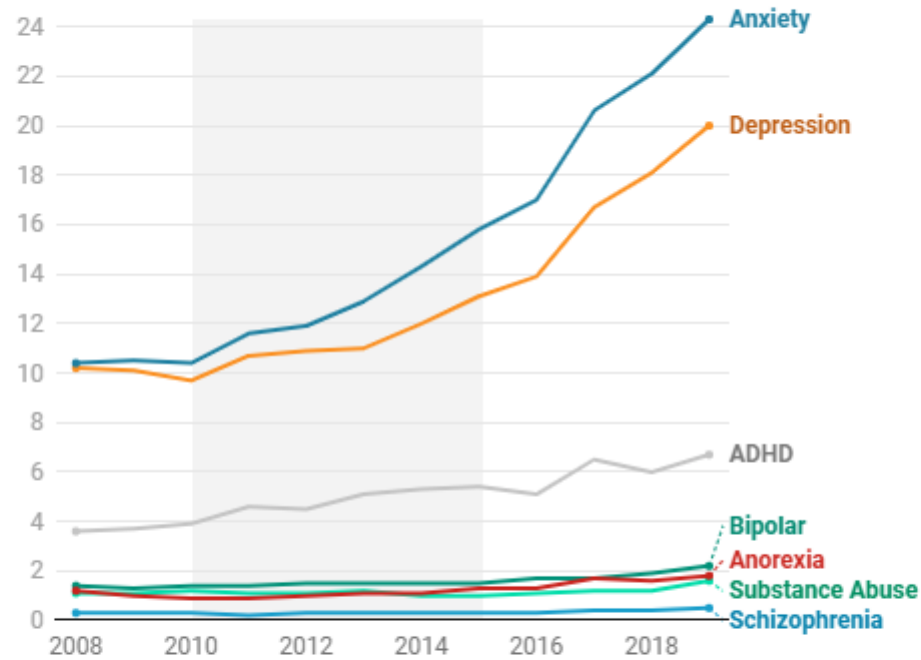


Chart: Zach Rausch • Source: American College Health Association (ACHA-NCHA II) • [Get the data](#) • [Embed](#) • [Download image](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Figure 2. Percent of U.S. Undergraduates Diagnosed with a Mental Illness. [American College Health Association](#). [[Zach's spreadsheet](#)]. See the [online supplement](#) for these data split by sex.

It hits younger people more than older people, Gen Z harder than other generation...

Reporting high levels of anxiety could be self reported....

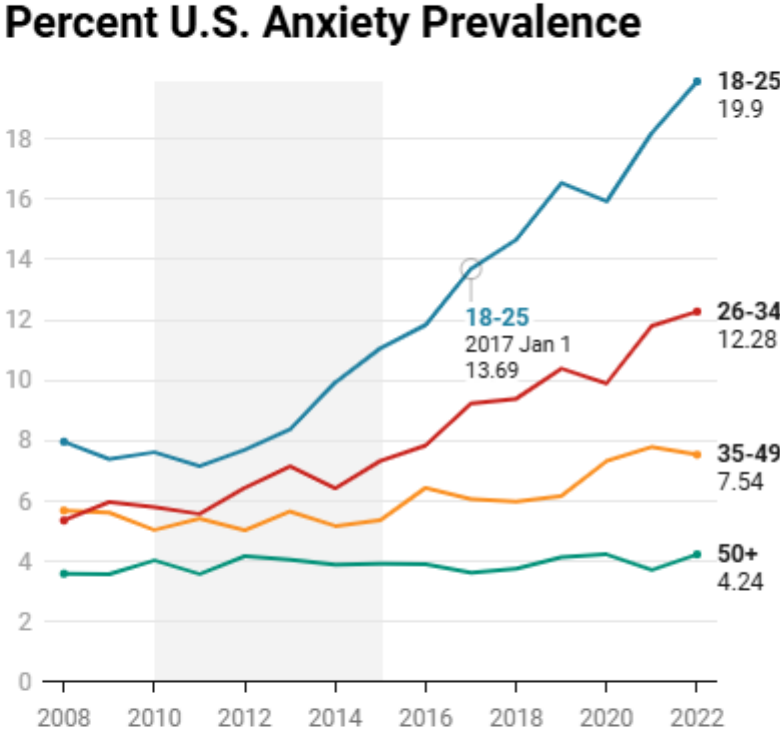


Chart: Zach Rausch • Source: [National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#) • [Get the data](#) • [Embed](#) • [Download image](#) • Created with [Datavrapper](#)

Figure 3. Percent of U.S. adults reporting high levels of anxiety. Source: U.S. National Survey on Drug Use and Health, re-graphed from [Goodwin, Weinberger, Kim, Wu, & Galea \(2020\)](#) and updated with 2019-2021 data. [[Zach's Spreadsheet](#)].

But – these are treatment in emergency rooms – not self reported

U.S. Emergency Department Visits for Self-Harm (Ages 10-14)

Rate per 100,000 Population

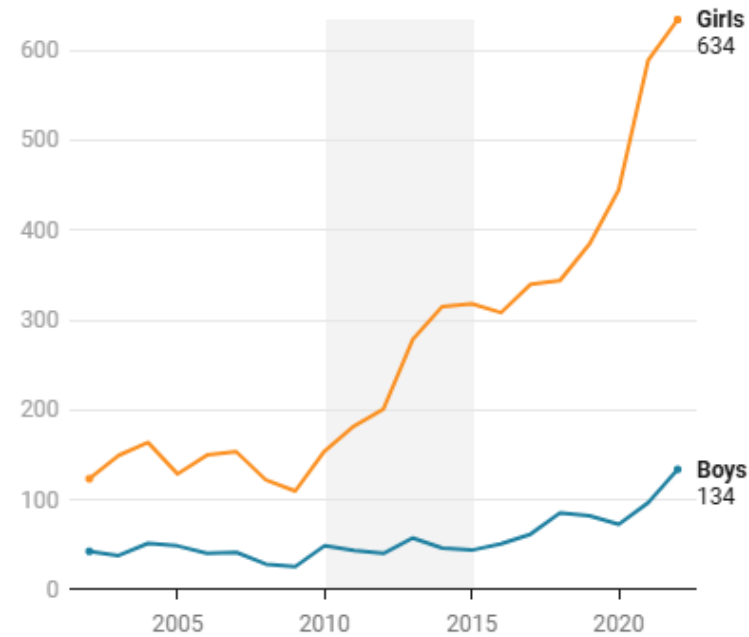


Chart: Zach Rausch • Source: [CDC Non-Fatal Injury Reports](#) • [Get the data](#) • [Embed](#) • [Download image](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Figure 4. The rate per 100,000 in the population at which U.S. teens and pre-teens (ages 10-14) are treated in hospital emergency rooms for non-fatal self-injury. Data from U.S. Centers for Disease Control. [[Zach's spreadsheet](#)]. See the data for 15-19 year-olds in the [online supplement](#).

These trends are unique to adolescent girls.

U.S. Female Emergency Department Visits for Self-Harm

Rate per 100,000

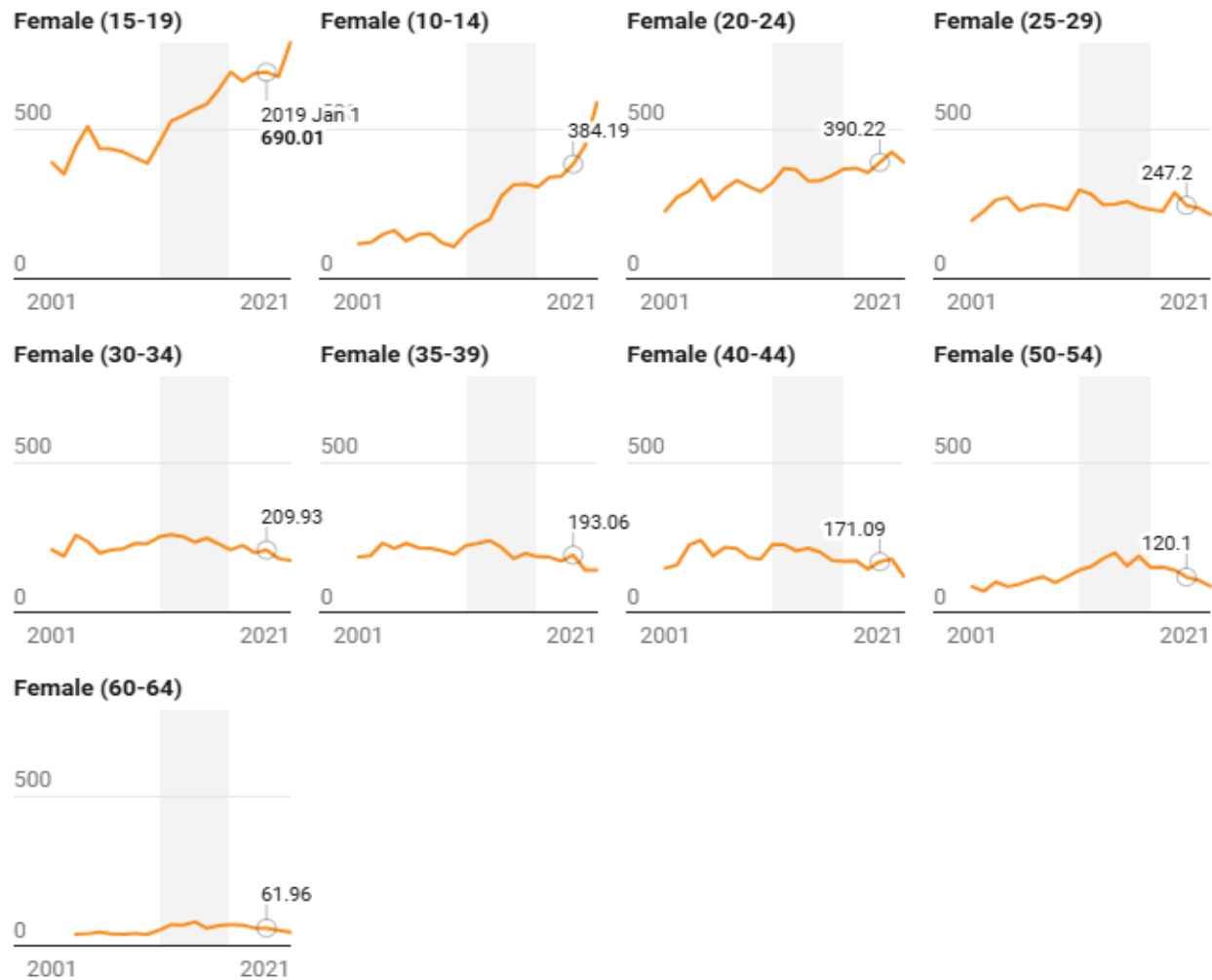


Chart: Zach Rausch • Source: [Center for Disease Control, Non-Fatal Injury Reports](#) • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

United Kingdom

Not just an American problem....

UK Self-Harm Episodes (Ages 13-16)

Rate per 100,000 Population

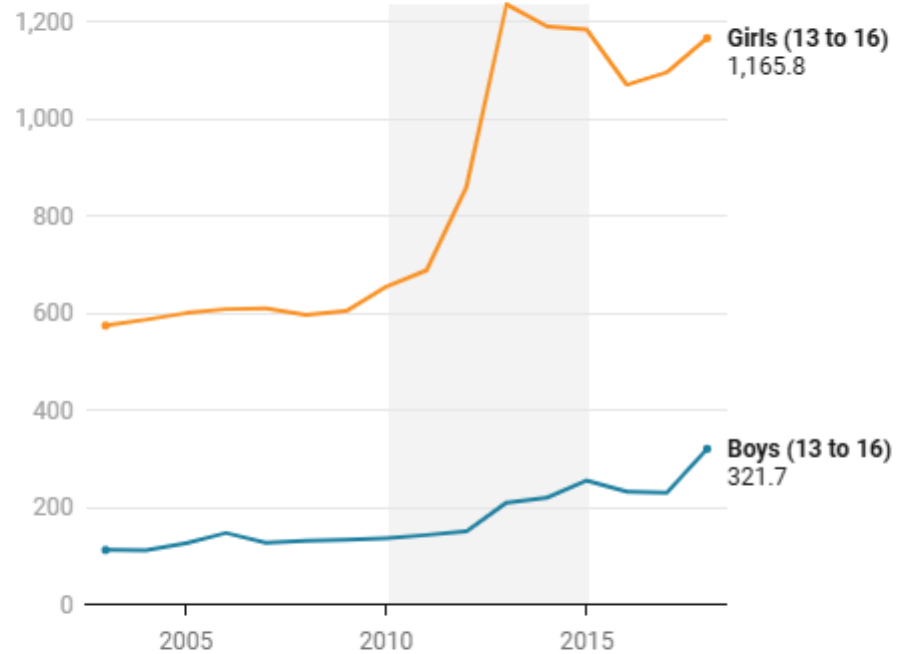
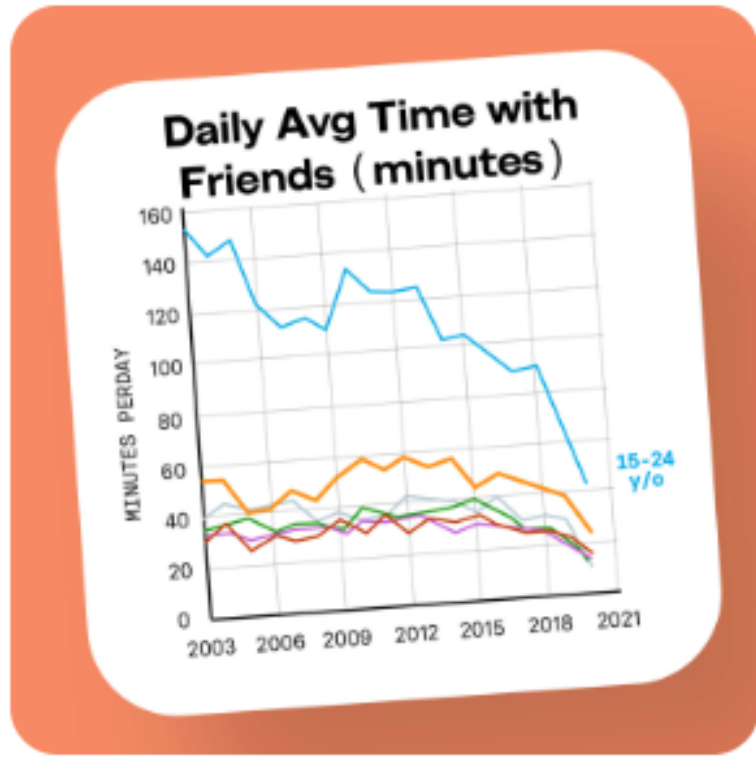


Chart: Zach Rausch • Source: Aurum and GOLD datasets of the Clinical Practice Research Datalink (CPRD). • [Get the data](#) • [Embed](#)
• [Download image](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)



Figure 8. Source: [Cybulski et al. \(2021\)](#), drawing from two databases of anonymized British medical records. Ages 13 - 16. [[Zach's spreadsheet](#)]. See the data for other age groups and other measures of mental health in the [online supplement](#).



Opportunity cost

Compared to any other generation in history, children growing up in the smartphone era spend less time outdoors, less time playing, less time reading, less time moving and more time scrolling, alone.



Harmful content

Smartphones mean explicit, violent, and extreme content is only ever a few clicks away, often served up by algorithms when kids aren't looking for it. Once children see these things, they can never be unseen.





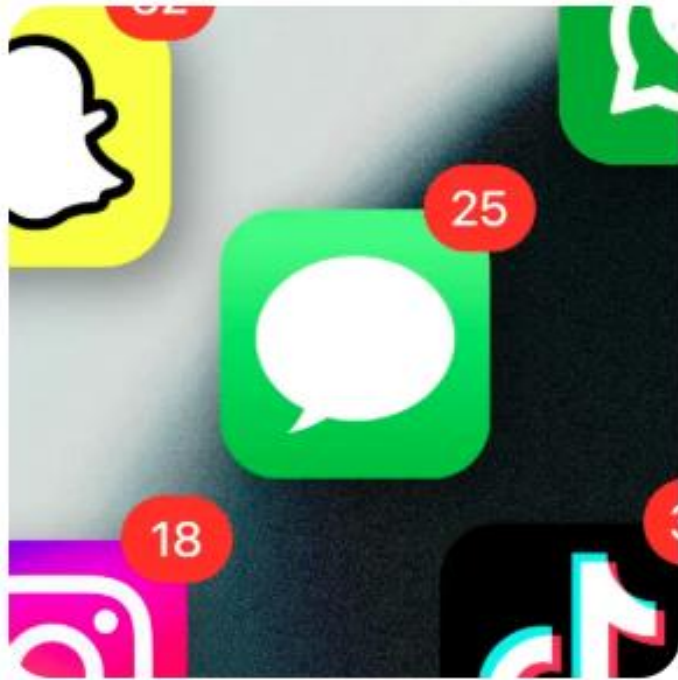
Mental health

Teenage anxiety, depression and self-harm rates have skyrocketed since 2010 – when kids started getting smartphones. Evidence shows a direct link between early smartphone use and declining mental health.



Addiction

The tech giants' business model is simple: the longer kids stay on their platforms, the more money they make. That's why apps are packed with addictive features – and why kids find it so hard to put them down.



Attention

The average teen now receives over 200 notifications a day – fragmenting their focus and making it harder to concentrate on schoolwork, hobbies or real-life friendships. Constant distraction is the new normal.



Family life

Smartphones' addictive design means they can quietly start to take centre stage in family life – causing arguments, battles over screen time, and making it harder to share real, uninterrupted time together.

ZACK

Such an idiot
srsly
no one wants you here

JAKE

I dont know why we're even friends with you

MATTY

SERIOUSLY WHAT IS WRONG WITH U?!

JOE

Just delete him ffs

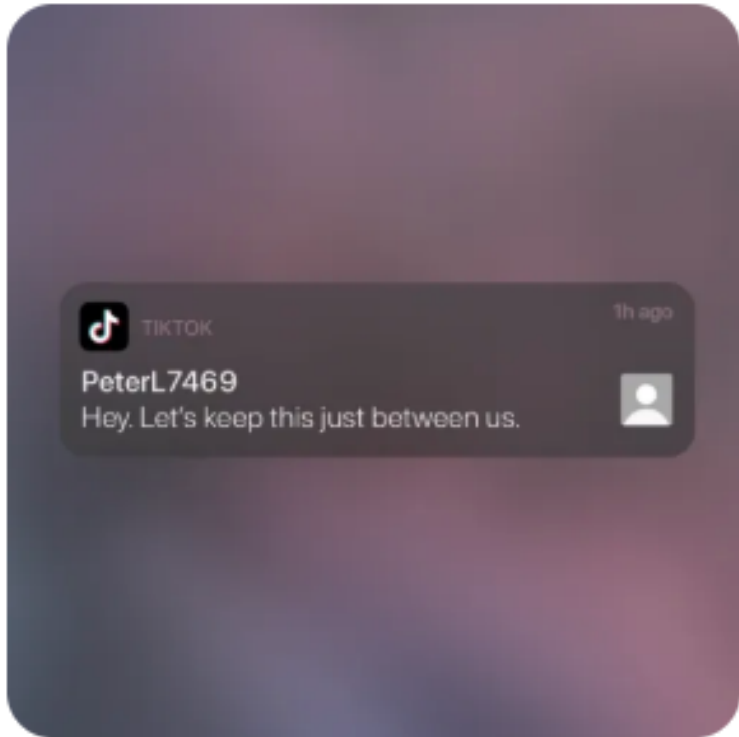
Cyberbullying

Arguments and fallouts used to end at the school gate. Now they follow kids home, lingering on their screens day and night – with no safe space to switch off, process or recover.



Sleep

The blue light from screens disrupts melatonin, making it harder to fall asleep, while endless scrolling and late-night notifications keep kids wired when they should be resting.



Grooming

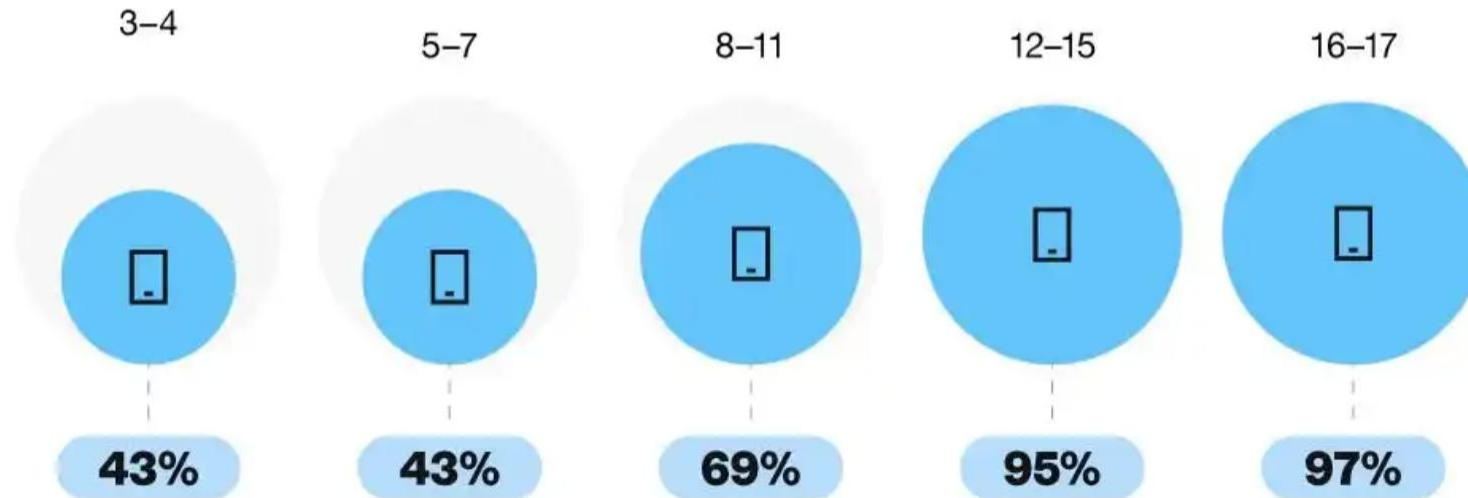
TikTok, Snapchat, and Roblox aren't just playgrounds for kids – they're hunting grounds for predators. They're often used by sexual predators to target children with their first smartphones

Children's mobile phone statistics

Research by Ofcom's 2024 Children's and Parents' Media Literacy Tracker shows that smartphones are the most popular way for children aged 5-15 to access the internet (71%, compared to 63% for tablet devices).

The percentage of children who use mobile phones to go online, 2023

Age group | % of children that use mobile phones to go online



Source: Statista

Age group | % of children that own a mobile phone

■ =5%

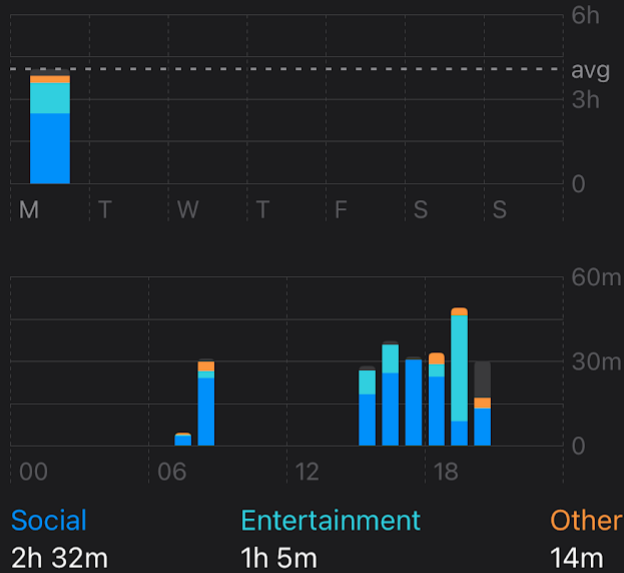


Source: Ofcom

Screen Time

Today, 24 November

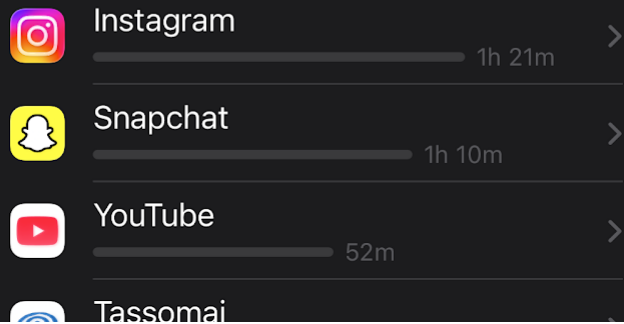
4h 3m



Updated today at 20:40

Most Used

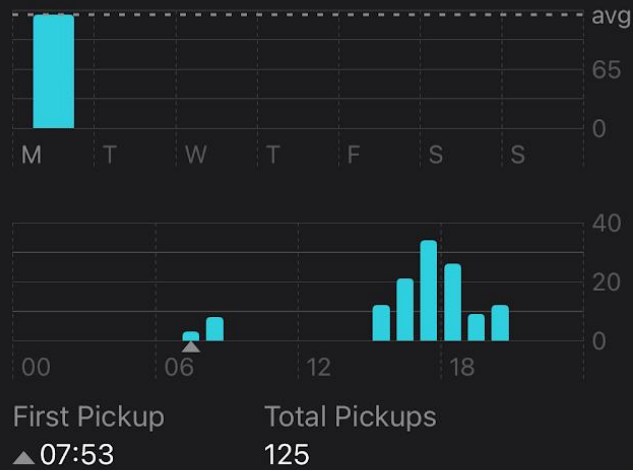
Show Categories



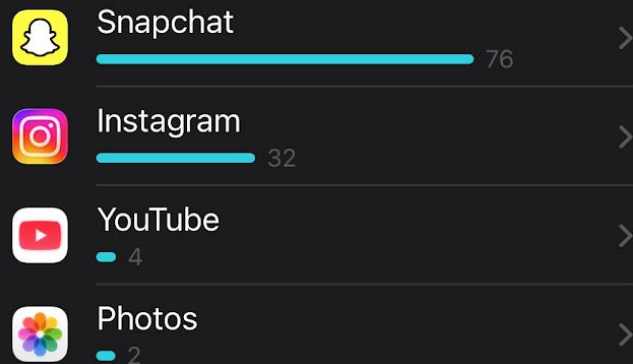
Pickups

Today, 24 November

125



First Used After Pickup

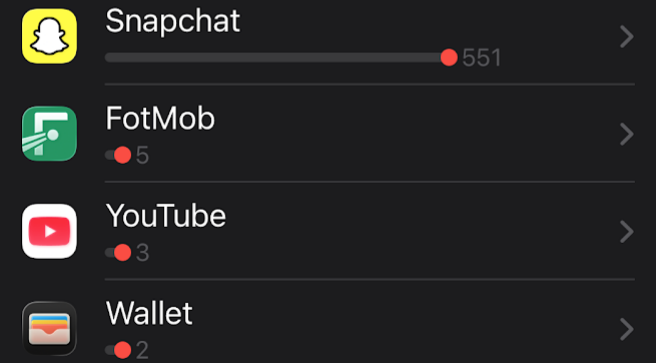
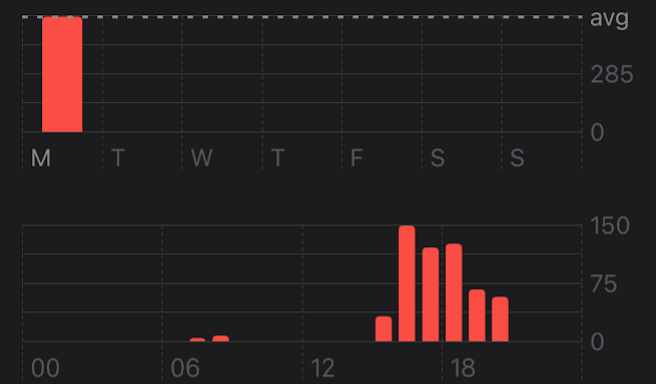


Show More

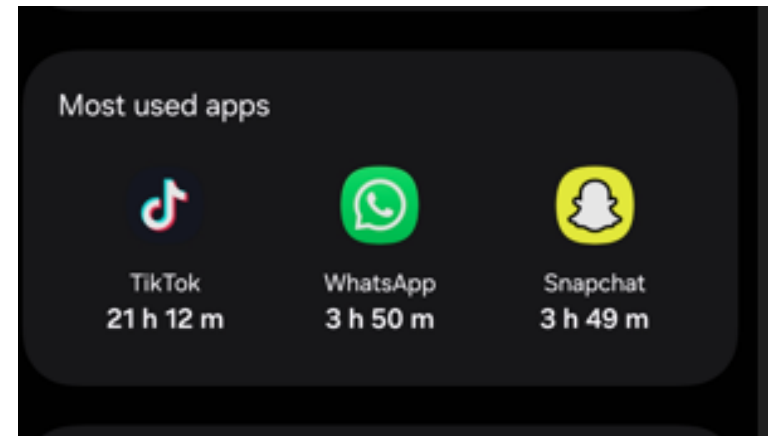
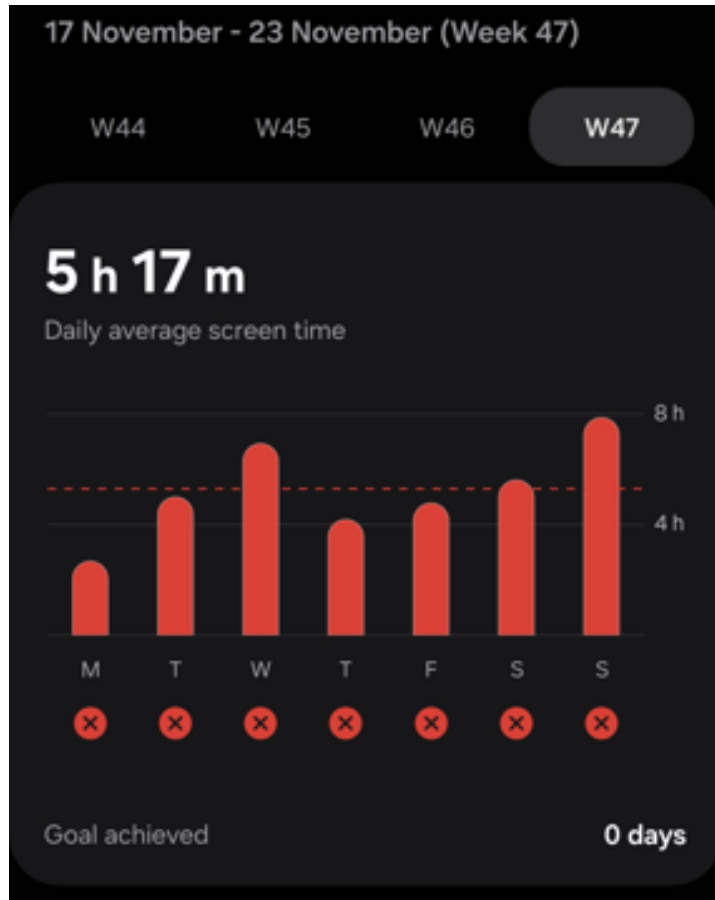
Notifications

Today, 24 November

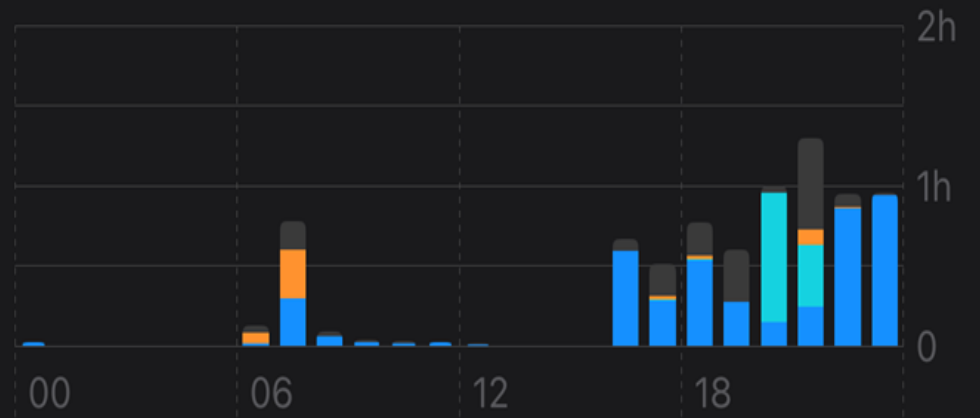
563



Show More



7h 52m

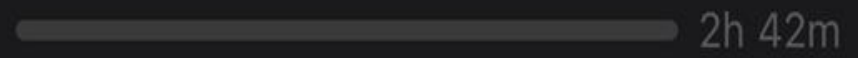


Social 4h 31m
Other 1h 31m
Productivity & Finance 35m

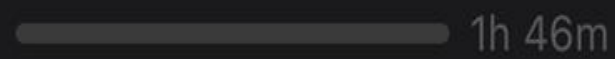
Most Used

[Show Categories](#)

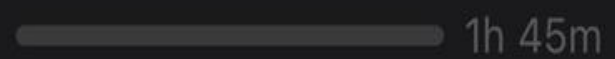
Snapchat



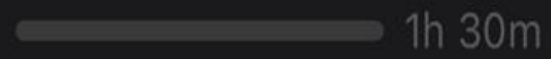
TikTok



Safari



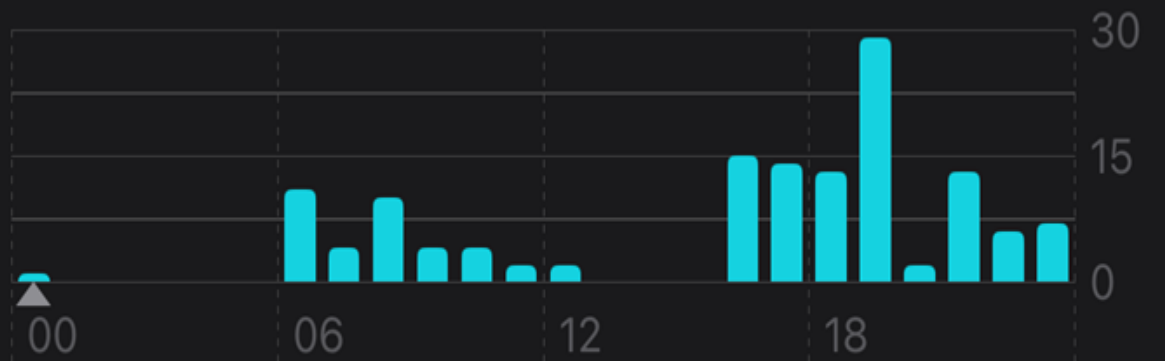
ppv.to



Trip.com: Flight, Hotel, Train

Yesterday, 24 November

137




First Pickup
▲ 00:00


Total Pickups
137

Yesterday, 24 November

583^o



 Snapchat ▶

 TikTok ▶

Progress bar for Snapchat: 380

SOME SCENARIOS...



Scenario 1: "Your Year 7 son is the only one in his friend group without a smartphone. He's being left out of group chats and says he feels isolated. You're worried about giving him one too early, but also about his social wellbeing. What's your approach?"

Scenario 2: "You've set a rule that phones stay downstairs at 9pm. Your Year 8 son keeps sneaking it upstairs, saying he needs it as an alarm clock and to check the weather for PE kit. What boundaries do you set?"

Scenario 3: "Your Year 10 son becomes secretive when you walk past while he's on his phone. You're worried but also want to respect his privacy as a teenager. Should you ask to check his phone? What rights to privacy does he have?"

Children are notorious for doing the things we tell them not to.....we were

We need to encourage openness, not promote secrecy

Don't want to appear preachy or telling parents how to parent

How to help them make better decisions, better risk assessors.



Children can be super sneaky and very tech capable

We need to do something.

Start somewhere

- Written to parents of primary aged children
- Start the discussions, be open about the concerns
- Provide a talking point – 5th December, device free day
- Drip drip approach to teaching students the hazards of smartphone use – get them used to other alternatives and accepting of them
- Review our policy of phone use, homework apps and build a safe consensus
- No quick knee jerk change, well considered and effective changes

5th December – Device free day

Aims:

- Greater awareness of smartphone harms
- Benefits of a detox day
- Promote buy in rather than sanction based
- Encourage discussions/oracy/activities
- Survey phone use from students...and staff
- Encourage parents to extend at home

Where can I get more help?





How should I talk to my child about smartphones? Tips for parents at every stage



How do I talk to other parents about delaying smartphones without sounding judgemental?



What are the best child-friendly phones?



How should I navigate sleepovers and playdates with kids who have smartphones?



Are smartphones really that bad for kids?



My advice...

- Ask your children to show you what they do and what apps they have
- Look at their usage, times and apps
- Agree with them phone free times – meals etc
- Absolutely – NO MEDIA/PHONES in bedrooms – phones should charge downstairs