"Something went suddenly and horribly wrong for adolescents in the early 2010s."

There are numerous cases where the educational advantages of technology and screen time surpass their drawbacks.

For the moment, we want to focus our efforts on the most obvious culprits. Studies show that smartphones and social media are the biggest contributing factors to poor mental health in children.

# Our children and smartphones

### Hi there, parent.

Just being here means you're coming with an open mind, and for that, thank you.

We are a collective of parents that are aiming to understand the effects of smartphones and social media on our children and to drive discussions on the reasons behind this and ultimately create change.

#### Our current initiative?

# A push for no smartphones before 16yo

And reduced use of tech across all ages.

02

## Here are four reasons why

01 Mental health & self harm

The cost of time and life

03 Addiction & social withdrawal

04 Unforeseen perils

7

## Here are four reasons why

O1 Mental health & self harm
O2 The cost of time and life
O3 Addiction & social withdrawa
O4 Unforeseen perils

It took years to gather tangible data and research supporting initial theories. Conclusive results were only achieved recently, largely around May 2023, after more than two decades of data collection.

#### Where did we get our information?

We've weaved an easy to digest narrative that compiles excerpts of our research from a variety of books, articles and medical studies.

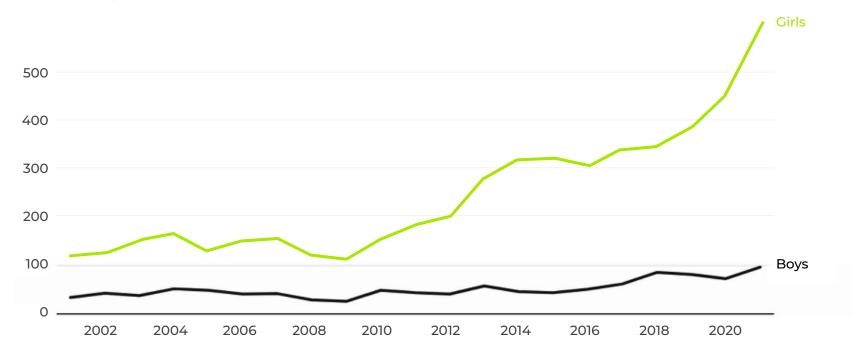
The sources are clearly listed on every page for you to delve in deeper should you so choose.

To access the resources we've referenced, please see here.

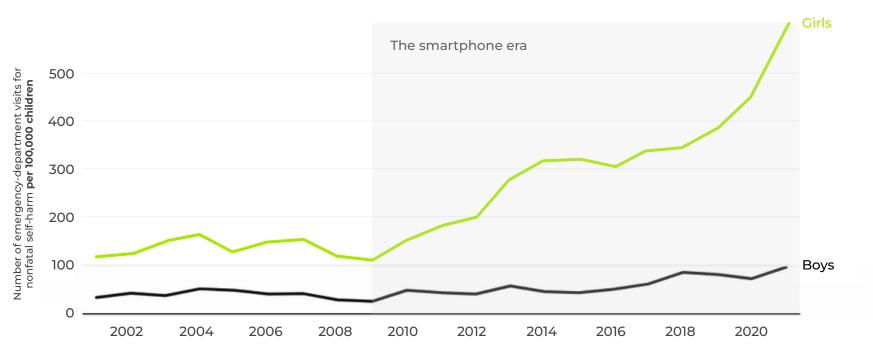
### And the data is alarming.

### Self-harm rate of US Children Ages 10 - 14

Number of emergency-department visits for nonfatal self-harm per 100,000 children

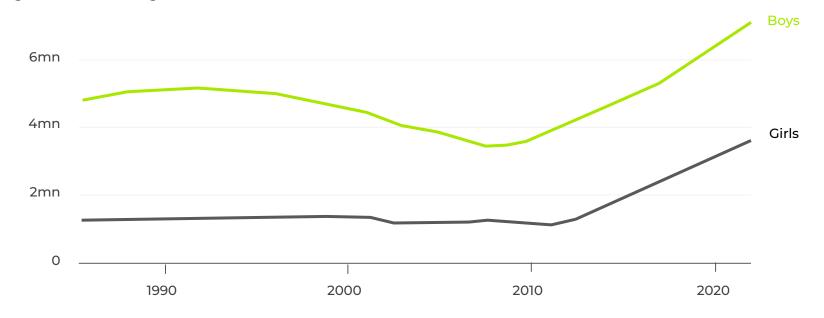


### That is an increase of 188% for girls since 2010



### Fatal suicide rates of UK Children Ages 15 - 19

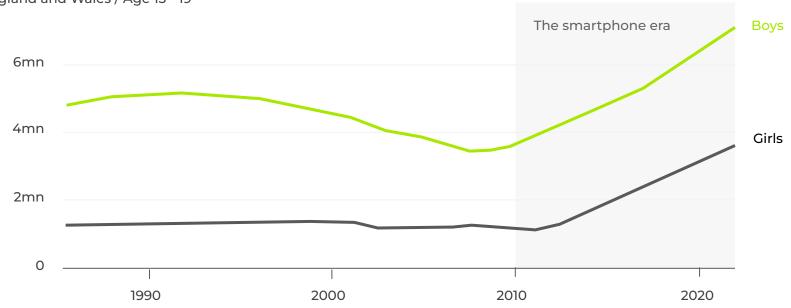
Rates of death by suicide per 1mn children England and Wales / Age 15 - 19



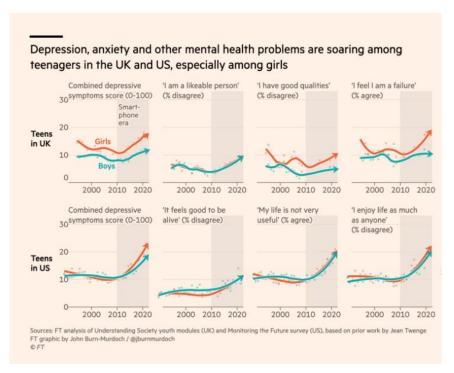
FT analysis of 20 and 21st century Mortality files (UK) / Find more graphs including US stats here

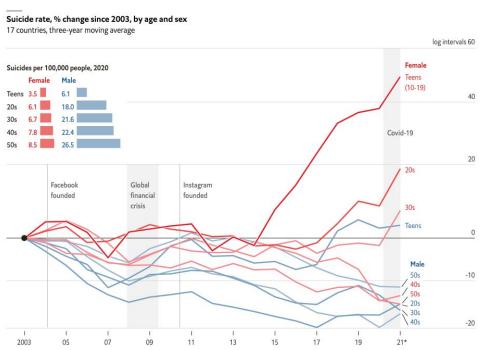
### For boys, rates of suicide are higher - they tend to use irreversible methods.

Rates of death by suicide per 1mn children England and Wales / Age 15 - 19



#### ... and it's a worldwide trend





The UK versus the US For the full report: FT.com

Across 17 countries, 3 year moving average For the full report: The Economist

"Nobody wanted their child to be isolated and alone, so parents rarely forced their children to shut down their [social media] accounts.

We had no idea what we were doing."

### Here are four reasons why

O1 Mental health & self harm
O2 The cost of time and life
O3 Addiction & social withdrawa
O4 Unforeseen perils

"The cost of a thing is the amount of life which is required to be exchanged for it, immediately or in the long run."

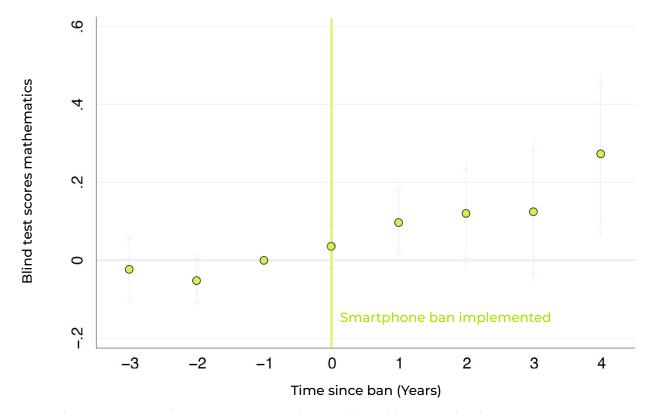
"[Given] 5 to 8 hours a day spent online during childhood, we estimate that this could displace as much as 1,000 to 2,000 hours a year that would otherwise be spent in various face-to-face social interactions, learning and mastering these important skills and building strong relationships."

This is time that would've been spent learning.

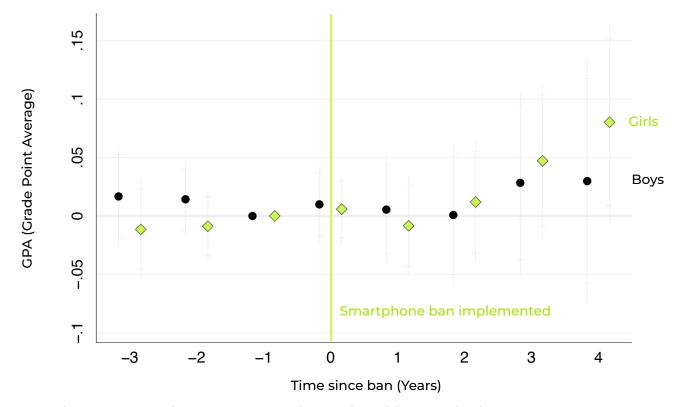
400 Norwegian schools committed to banning smartphones on school grounds for a study.

Here are the results.

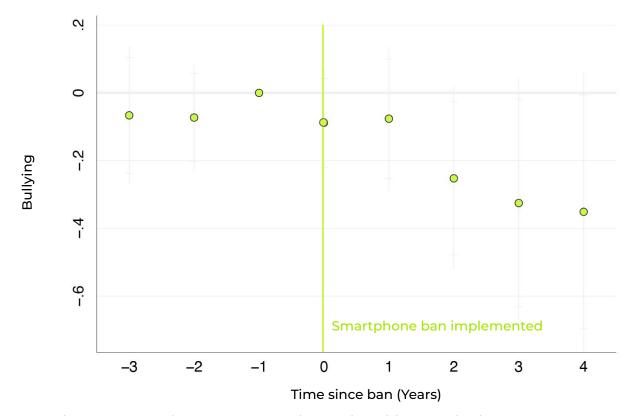
### Their maths grades improved.



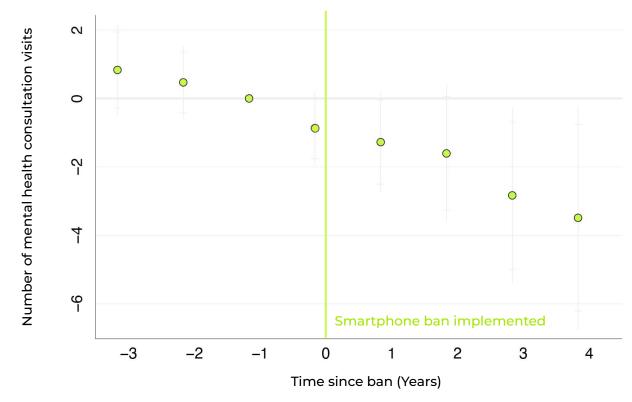
### In fact, overall grades improved.



### Bullying levels dropped.



### Mental health consultations dropped.



"I was always interested in using technology in the classroom before it existed. but when it became apparent that it was affecting the classroom, it raised the question [of] what effect this was having."

In a study published in the journal Educational Psychology, the two researchers divided 118 upper-level college students into two groups.

One group was allowed to have laptops and cell phones open for non-classroom purposes, and the other group wasn't.

The group using devices scored about a half a letter grade lower on exams -- the difference between passing or failing for some students.

"These findings," he added, "should alert the many dedicated students and instructors that dividing attention is having an insidious effect that is impairing their exam performance and final grade."

Dr. Arnold Glass, Lead researcher + Professor of Psychology, Rutgers University <u>Cellphones in classrooms contribute to failing grades: Study</u>, July 2018

## Here are four reasons why

Mental health & self harm
 The cost of time and life
 Addiction & social withdrawal

26

"In pursuit of profit, internet platforms are mounting an assault on the minds of children."

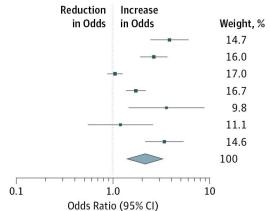
"[Meta's] algorithms were designed to push children and teenagers into rabbit holes of toxic and harmful content... with features like 'infinite scroll' and persistent alerts used to hook young users."

"Their phones are pinging constantly - one study found that the typical adolescent now gets 237 notifications a day, roughly 15 every waking hour."

### Nighttime addiction is impacting their sleep. Children having a bedtime media device have significantly higher odds of inadequate sleep quantity.

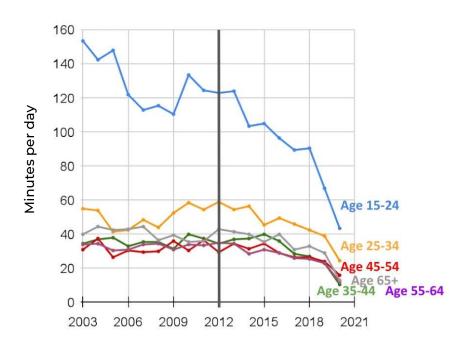
Source	Device Users Near Bedtime		No Access to a Device			
	No. of Events	Total No.	No. of Events	Total No.	Odds Ratio (95% CI)	Reduction Increase in Odds in Odds
Arora et al, <sup>30</sup> 2013	185	289	38	120	3.84 (2.44-6.04)	
Arora et al, 13 2014	199	440	71	298	2.64 (1.91-3.66)	
Chahal et al, <sup>31</sup> 2013	207	611	914	2785	1.05 (0.87-1.26)	-
Gamble et al, <sup>32</sup> 2014	252	555	205	629	1.72 (1.36-2.18)	
Gradisar et al, <sup>3</sup> 2013	116	181	8	24	3.57 (1.45-8.79)	
Kubiszewski et al, <sup>35</sup> 2013	41	141	11	43	1.19 (0.55-2.59)	
Lemola et al, <sup>27</sup> 2015	88	180	40	182	3.40 (2.15-5.36)	
Total events	1088	2397	1287	4081	2.17 (1.42-3.32)	
Heterogeneity: $\tau^2 = 0.27$ ; $\chi_6^2 = 57$	7.48; P<.001; I <sup>2</sup>	= 90%				

Test for overall effect: z = 3.57; P < .001



### Most devastating is the collapse of time spent interacting face-to-face with friends.

#### **Daily Avg Time with Friends (minutes)**



**Figure 4.** Daily average time spent with friends. Graphed by Zach Rausch from data in Kannan & Veazie (2023), analyzing the American Time Use Study. <sup>2</sup>

"Most of us in Gen Z were given phones and tablets so early that we barely remember life before them. Most of us never knew falling in love without swiping and subscription models. We never knew having a first kiss without having watched PornHub first."

## Here are four reasons why

Mental health & self harm
The cost of time and life
Addiction & social withdrawal
Unforeseen perils

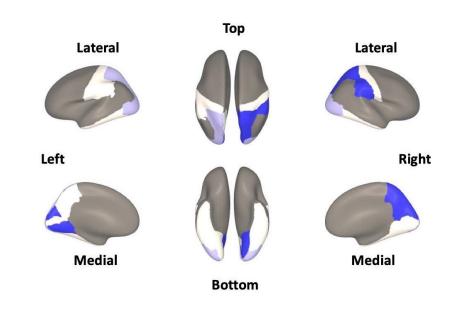
#### Unforeseen perils

In our research, we have uncovered several risks, including some that were not immediately apparent, that merit attention

- a. Digital Dementia
- b. Porn
- c. WhatsApp

"[Digital dementia] Excessive screen time is known to alter gray matter and white volumes in the brain, increase the risk of mental disorders, and impair acquisition of memories and learning which are known risk factors for dementia."

"MRI scans of young children show screen time reduces the size of brain areas responsible for visual processing, empathy, attention, memory & early reading skills."



Lower cortical thickness (blue) associated with higher Screen Q score

"I can't tell you how many stories of 5-year olds on school buses getting shown porn on a device because every third grader [8yo] has a phone."

51%

of 11 - 13 year olds have seen pornography online majority of which is accidental. This number is likely conservative. 7<sub>yo</sub>

Many children - some as young as 7 years old - stumble upon pornography online.

The average age of first exposure is 8.

63%

had seen pornography on social media platforms than on pornographic websites (47%). of girls and 50% of boys say they're sent explicit pictures or videos they don't want to see

13yo

Boys as young as 13 have been targeted for sextortion scams

5 %
say they or their

say they or their friends were targets for, or victims of, catfishing

Review of sexual abuse in schools...
Ofsted Report, June 2021

<u>Boys Targeted in Sextortion Scams</u>, Police Scotland Report, 2023 <u>Two-Thirds of Gen Z Targeted for</u> <u>Onine Sextortion</u>, WeProtect Global Alliance, June 2023 80% of teenage girls are being put under pressure to provide sexual images of themselves "As accounts gain followers, they also draw a higher proportion of males... [who] flatter, bully and blackmail girls to get racier images, some have been convicted of sex crimes."

"I was 10, when I watched porn for the first time. I stumbled upon it by accident. The website has no age verification, no ID requirement. Where was my mother? In the next room, making sure I was eating 9 colored fruits and vegetables on the daily."

"A phone in itself is not dangerous, but a smartphone loaded up with apps becomes a portal to God knows what" The way WhatsApp is used by adults is not the way it's used for children.

A study of 4,477 elementary, middle, and high school students found that 30% of participants reported personal victimisation from cyberbullying in their WhatsApp classmate groups.

"We have had students who have had death threats on WhatsApp outside school...

And bullying is so easy to hide online. There's no escape from any of it. No safe space."

"As a school we are powerless to track down a man from a phone number," she said. "This is low down the list for the police. And it's too late they've already seen what they've seen."

Victoria Tully, the co-headteacher had no idea that her new first years [11yos] had invited people from outside the school to join their WhatsApp group.

She only found out when a "strange man" shared "horrible pictures" with the 11-year-olds and someone alerted a teacher.

# Pitfalls of WhatsApp

- Ol End-to-end encryption means
  WhatsApp nor police can monitor
  (groups targeting children to promote self harm
  or porn cannot be monitored or regulated)
- O2 Disappearing messages optional setting that can make evidence of sextortion and bullying vanish
- O3 Multiple groups can be connected, inadvertently allowing online predators
- O4 Live location allows children to share their real-time location with everyone in the group

"Schools said pupils in Years 5 and 6 [9 - 10yo] were being added to the [WhatsApp] groups, and one head teacher discovered 40 children in one year group were involved.

The BBC has seen screenshots from one chat which included images of mutilated bodies."

"It was particularly concerning that even if children leave the group, they can continue to be contacted by other members of the group, prolonging the potential danger." "The social media platforms themselves don't know the kinds of messages they're conveying...

If the platforms don't know and the rest of the world don't know, how are we going to make it safe?" A What's next?
B Helpful tips coming soon
C Further reading coming soon

A What's next?

B Helpful tips coming soon

C Further reading coming soon

## Next steps

O1 Sign the petitionO2 Spread the word.Share this summary.

"Bill and Melinda Gates waited until their kids were 14 years old before giving them smartphones, and Melinda acknowledged, in hindsight, that even this was too soon." "Although children can and do advocate for smart phones at early ages, the parents and caretakers who procure and pay for the phone or device are the ultimate decision makers in the process.'

## The petition

To ban smartphones and camera phones for under 16s

## Why after 16?

"While many mental health problems decreased with older age of first smartphone acquisition, suicidal thoughts and intentions decreased most steeply for both males & females."

## Delay smartphones. Protect our children. Sign the petition.

Click here to sign the petition

"If she resists while most of her classmates do not, she might, in fact, be marginalised, which puts her at risk for anxiety and depression, though via a different pathway...

In this way social media accomplishes a remarkable feat, it even harms adolescents who do not use it."

"Definitive experimental verification between smartphone use to specific outcomes is not possible due to the ethical considerations of forcing smartphone paradigms on children... We may well wait for such insight only to the detriment of future generations.'

"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."

Dr. Susie Davies of @papaya\_parents Stats from NHS Database

## Thank you.

## Appendix

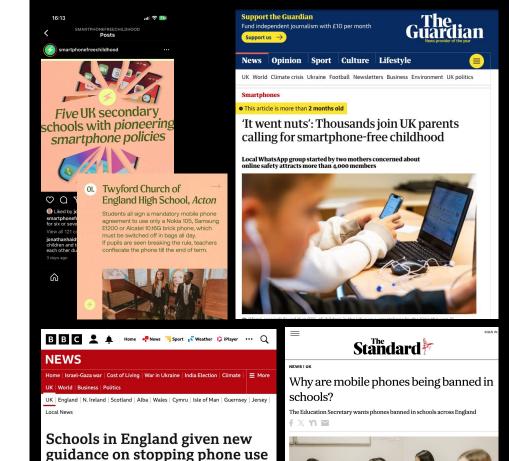
# Schools & Government

Items in this section are related to schools and government policies

## Top schools in the UK are pivoting quickly

Parent led petitions and head teachers of prominent schools are spearheading the effort in the UK

We have started compiling various schools' digital policies. Please view them here <u>please see here</u>.



### The UK government is supportive

Help the movement and click here to sign the GOV.UK petition to Ban Smartphones and Camera Phones for under 16s.



Petition

#### Ban smartphones and camera phones for under 16s

I have many concerns regarding the use of mobile phones that can access photographs and social media for children under 16. I believe there are too many safeguarding concerns, exploitation, cyber bullying and group trolling that can be mentally damaging children's well being

More details

Sign this petition

23,798 signatures

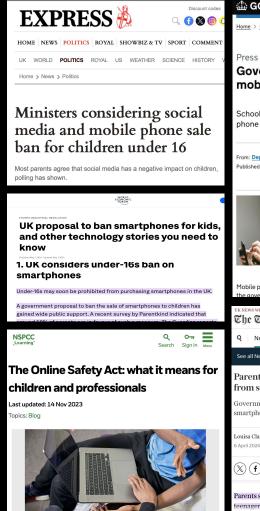
Show on a map 100.000

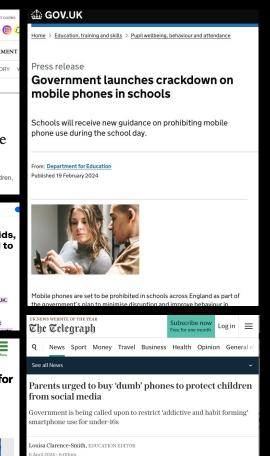
Government responded

This response was given on 15 March 2024

"The government is committed to making the UK the safest place to be a child online, as evidenced by the Online Safety Act. We are focused on implementing the regime as soon as possible.

Read the response in full









Parents should be able to buy phones without social media apps for teenagers, the leader of the UK's biggest teaching union has said.

# ... the French government too

A report on children's screen time commissioned by Emmanuel Macron on April 30, 2024, suggests ways to reduce exposure for children:

#### Before 6 years old

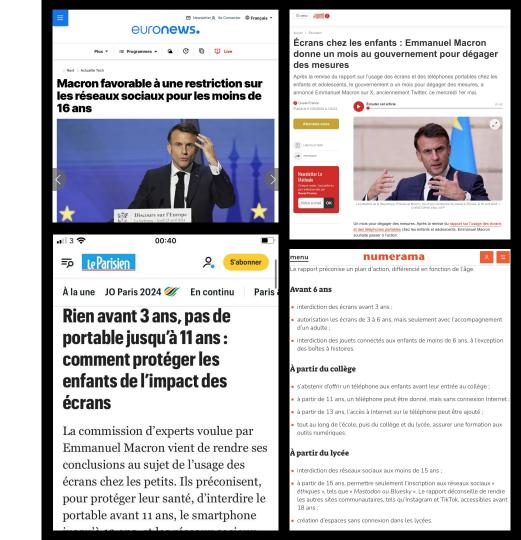
Limit screen time and avoid giving connected toys

#### Middle school

Avoid giving phones until middle school, then give phones without internet until age 13, and provide digital tools training

#### **High school**

Prohibit social media under 15, limit to "ethical" platforms until 18, and create offline spaces in schools



### ...and so is the rest of the world



#### China is proposing a twohour limit on children's smartphone use

The draft law sent shares of Chinese tech companies down as they grapple with even stricter controls

By Diego Lasarte

Published August 2, 2023

. .







#### **NEWS**

China: Children given daily time limit on Douvin - its version of

TikTok



Douyin, China's version of TikTok, will limit use of the platform for children to 40 minutes a day.

The rules will apply to users under 14, who have been authenticated using their real names, and who will be able to access it between 06:00 and

Parent company Bytedance announced the app's Youth Mode in a blog



Under a bill signed by Republican Governor Ron DeSantis on

Monday, Florida will implement one of the nation's strictest social media restrictions for minors.

Published on March 26, 2024, at 1:44 am (Paris), updated on March 26, 2024, at 7:58 am - 6 Time to1 min.

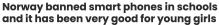


**UNESCO** education report advises appropriate use of technology in schools



VIDEO: South Australian government wants to stop kids under 14 using social media









SA government pushes social media ban for children, but one expert says platforms need to be more accountable

Listen (1 min)

sted 1h ago, updated 7m ago

Amendment challenges

By Jimmy Vielkind Follow Undated Feb. 7, 2024 11:20 am ET



## Version log

Version	Date updated	Page	Changes made
1.1	14 May 2024	27	<ul> <li>Changed the file's title to Our Children and smartphones</li> <li>Replaced the 'student test scores improved by 6.41% of a standard deviation' stat as further reading into the study this stat reads verbatim and is inconclusive.</li> </ul>