

EVIDENCE

At Unplugged Rebels NZ we have been inspired by the incredible mahi of the UK group Delaysmartphones.org.uk and have found many references through them which we hope you find helpful. Please note: This is a global problem and these are global references.



Sexual content & behaviour

- Exposing children to sexual & offensive content
- Pressuring girls into sending sexual images of themselves
- Exposing children to sexual abuse & grooming



Physical health

- Damaging children's eyes
- Contributing to obesity in children
- Preventing children playing outside
- Damaging development of children's spine
- Stopping kids getting enough sleep



Focus & brain change

- Addictive
- Reducing children's academic performance
- Creating structural changes to children's brains



Mental & emotional health

- Responsible for the huge increase in cyberbullying
- Increasing depression and anxiety in children
- Increasing loneliness in children
- Making children more likely to self-harm



Social development

- Hinder development of social skills and relationships
- Damaging for family relationships

EVIDENCE FOR SEXUAL CONTENT & BEHAVIOUR

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18+

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...exposing children to sexual & offensive content

- 90% of girls and 50% of boys say they and their peers are sent explicit pictures or videos of things they **do not want to see**

- 36% of children aged 8-17 said they had seen something 'worrying or nasty' online in the past 12 months

...pressuring girls into sending sexual images of themselves

- 80% of teenage girls are being put under pressure to provide sexual images of themselves

- 51% of 11 to 13 year olds say they have seen pornography online

...exposing children to sexual abuse & grooming

- 1,058% increase since 2019 of webpages showing **sexual abuse of 7-10 year old children**

- Girls are commonly contacted by **multiple boys a night** asking for 'nudes' (naked/ semi-naked images)

EVIDENCE FOR PHYSICAL HEALTH



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...contributing to obesity
in children

- 9 hrs/day average screen time in kids with a smartphone

...damaging development of children's spine

- Studies of young, healthy individuals show habitual use of smartphones causes musculoskeletal problems.

Paediatricians, chiropractors and physiotherapists are warning of "text neck syndrome"

43% higher risk of obesity for those using smartphones for 5+ hrs/day

...preventing children playing outside

- Children spend twice as long looking at screens as playing outside

...stopping kids getting enough sleep

- 57% more teens sleep deprived in 2015 than in 1991

- When they should be sleeping 80% of teens are using smartphones

...damaging children's eyes

- Children's myopia risk (shortsightedness) is linked to smartphone use

EVIDENCE FOR FOCUS & BRAIN CHANGE



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...addictive

- 46% of teens say they use their phones "almost constantly"

...preventing children playing outside

- ...creating structural changes to children's brains

...reducing children's academic performance

- Smartphones reduce memory and recall accuracy, even when not in use

- Children who spend 5-7 hrs/day on a digital device are 49 points (equivalent of two school years) behind children who are on a screen <1hr/day

- MRI scans of young children shows screen time reduces the size of the brain areas responsible for visual processing, empathy, attention, complex memory and early reading skills

EVIDENCE FOR MENTAL & EMOTIONAL HEALTH



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...increasing depression and anxiety in children

- A 2023 study of 27,969 18-24 year olds found that mental health outcomes were significantly better the older the young person was when they got a smartphone.

- Depression, feelings of aggression, suicidal thoughts, low self-confidence, poor self-image, detachment and weak relationships **increase for every year younger a child is given a smartphone** – even in those with no traumatic or adverse childhood experience.

...making children more likely to self-harm

- **194% increase** in emergency department visits for **self-harm** by 10-14 year olds girls (94% for boys)

The first generation of children who were given smartphones in primary school are now adults.

We now know **for every year younger** they were given smartphones by their parents, **the worse their mental health is today.**

...increasing loneliness in children

- Loneliness has doubled in children since 2012
- School loneliness is highest where access to smartphones and internet use is high

- Up to **30% of teenage girls report purposefully hurting themselves without wanting to die in the last year**

EVIDENCE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



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Children with smartphones spend longer in a virtual world **without human interaction**

- The quality of family relationships and friendships **decreases for every year** younger a child is given a smartphone

- **Hinder development** of social skills and relationships

- **Social Self** – how we see ourselves and relate to others – shows the most significant and steepest improvement with older age

- Damaging for **family relationships**

The **daily average** of 5-8 hours adds up to **1,000 to 2,000 hours a year** that would otherwise be spent in face-to-face social interactions, learning and mastering these important skills and building strong relationships