

The Mobile Life Youth Report 2006

The impact of the mobile phone on the lives of young people



From The Carphone Warehouse

www.mobilelife2006.co.uk



Contents

06	Foreword
08	Key Findings
12	TeenTalk: A Parent's Guide to Mobiles and Young People
14	Daily Life
20	Family and Relationships
28	School
32	Implications
34	Emerging Trends
35	Credits



**Mobile Life is the voice of authority
and an on-going forum that publishes
the most comprehensive proprietary
research into the impact of the
mobile phone on our daily lives.**

Foreword

How is the mobile phone changing the lives of young people in the UK and what is the impact on their parents? Are young people better communicators? Has the mobile phone improved family ties? Has it enabled young people to create their own private worlds away from the prying eyes of adults?

We wanted to find the answers to some of these questions when we commissioned the Mobile Life Youth Report, one of the largest consumer surveys into the impact of the mobile phone on the daily lives of young people. Over 1,250 11-17 year olds were asked what they think about their mobile phone and how they use this ubiquitous piece of technology.

In this report we look at the impact of the mobile phone on three major areas of the lives of young people – daily life, family & relationships and school.

This is the second report published by Mobile Life. The first, released in July 2006, looked at the impact of the mobile phone on over 16,500 British adults.

In the first Mobile Life Report, we saw some clear trends emerging among young adults aged 18-24 years, such as their mobile phone mattering more to them than any other electronic item.

We wanted to find out whether these attitudes were specific to young adults or whether they are trends being picked up by the next mobile phone owning generation. We have discovered a clear set of trends emerging which today's 11-17 year olds will almost certainly take on into adulthood.

There have also been some surprises. In many ways, one expects young people to be more radical, more liberal and quicker to take up new technologies than the previous generation. While this is true in many cases, we have also been surprised that this survey has revealed a significant minority of today's young people to be socially conscious and politically correct.

For example, they would not think less of someone who did not own or could not afford a mobile phone; most think it unreasonable to text during a school lesson; if they did not have a mobile phone bill to pay few would spend the extra cash on cigarettes or alcohol but would use it on, dare I say it – saving. Is this new prudence a genuine trend?

Or are today's young people so self-aware and anxious of being judged that they will say what they think is 'right'? Only time will tell if this is the case when they become adults.

To help parents better understand and communicate with their children, we have developed TeenTalk: A light hearted Parent's Guide to Mobiles & Young People which appears in this report. We have also put together a first phone guide that talks parents and young people through everything they need to know when buying their first mobile phone – this can be picked up in any of our stores or from **www.carphonewarehouse.com**

I hope you find this report an illuminating insight into the often private world of young people and into the impact of the mobile phone on their lives.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Charles Dunstone".

Charles Dunstone
Chief Executive Officer,
The Carphone Warehouse Group plc.

Key Findings

The Mobile Life Youth survey from The Carphone Warehouse, conducted by YouGov, of more than 1,250 young people in the UK found that:

Key Statistics

Starting age of mobile phone ownership

51% of 10 year olds and 70% of 11 year olds own a mobile phone (see bar chart for full age profile)

Numbers of texts

On average young people send or receive 9.6 text messages a day

Number of calls

On average young people make or receive 3.5 calls a day

Pay As You Go vs. Contract

Of young people who own their own mobile phone 85% have a Pay as You Go and 15% have monthly contracts

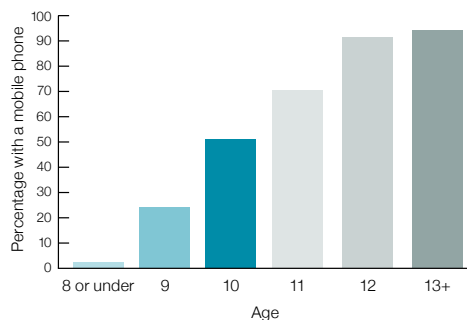
Choosing a mobile phone

When choosing a mobile phone, the most important factor for teenage boys is functionality and for girls it is style

Brands

Nokia (1), Motorola (2) and Samsung (3) are the most popular mobile phone brands amongst 11-17 year olds

Mobile Ownership by Age





Daily Life

Choosing & Using

- Asked which of five electronic items is the most important to them, 36% of girls, compared with 17% of boys, say their mobile phone
- Asked what they do most with their mobile phones, 74% say send or receive texts, while 14% say make or receive calls, and 12% say play games

Bank of Mum & Dad

- Three in four 11-17 year-olds had their mobile phone bought for them by their parents
- Half of all 11-17 year-olds have their calls paid for by their parents. The figure for 11-14 year-olds is 59%; it falls to 38% among 15-17 year-olds

Mobile manners

- 52% of 11-17 year-olds, compared with 77% of parents, think it is unreasonable to use their mobile phone for texting while in conversation with someone
- Just 23% of 11-17 year-olds, compared with 43% of parents, consider it unreasonable to talk on a mobile phone in a restaurant or café

Health

- 11-17 year-olds are less worried than their parents that their mobile phone might harm their health. Just 24% of children in this sample are concerned, compared with 34% of parents

Crime & Safety

- Owning a mobile phone makes 80% of young people feel safer when out and about, shopping, socialising or travelling to and from their school or college
- Girls (89%) find carrying a mobile phone makes them feel safer than boys (72%)

- On the other hand young people (56%) are more worried than their parents (28%) that having a mobile phone could make them a target for mugging
- 11% of 11-17 year-olds have had their mobile phone stolen

Family & Relationships

Social Life

- 78% of 11-17 year-olds say that having a mobile phone gives them a better social life, because they can more easily maintain contact with their friends. More widely, 70% say their mobile phone has made their life better

What, no mobile?

- 26% of 11-17 year-olds, compared with 11% of their parents, would “feel unwanted if a whole day went by when my mobile phone did not ring” this rises to 42% in 15-17 year old girls

Puppy love

- A quarter of 11-17 year olds have received a text inviting them on a date. 16-17 year olds are almost twice as likely to have received a text inviting them on a date (49%) or sent/received a text to end a relationship (16%) than adults aged 25 and over
- 20% of boys aged 16 or 17 have sent or received a sexually explicit photo or video; rather fewer girls aged 16 or 17 (11%) have done so

Four letter texts

- Almost half of all 11-15 year-olds have sent or received a text containing bad language. This rises to 70% for 16-17 year olds

Freedom

- More than half of 11-17 year-olds say their parents give them more freedom because they have a mobile phone (59%) and are allowed to stay out later as a result (53%)

Big mother

- Only 35% of young people think it is reasonable for parents to be able to keep track of children aged 13-16 via their mobile phone even with the child's permission. When parents were asked the same question, 71% thought it reasonable to keep track of 13-16 year-olds

Private world

- 35% of 11-17 year-olds say they talk regularly and/or send texts to people they don't want their parents to know about
- 37% of 11-17 year olds "sometimes dodge calls from my parents"

The modern day diary

- Two-thirds (68%) of 15-17 year olds say they would NOT let their parents look through text messages and pictures on their mobile phone
- 25% of 11-17 year-olds say their mobile phone has resulted in them keeping in more frequent contact with their grandparents. Yet 45% of grandmothers think mobile phones can help strengthen communication between grandchildren and grandparents

Tech heads

- 70% "have to show my parents how to use certain functions on their mobile phone." This applies almost as much to girls as boys, and to 11-14 year-olds almost as much as 15-17 year-olds

School

Mobiles in the classroom

- 73% of young people say it is unreasonable to send a text message during a school lesson
- However, 50% say they have, in fact, used their mobile phone to send or receive a text during a school lesson: among girls aged 15-17 the proportion is 67%; among boys aged 11-14, it is 33%
- 11% have used their mobile phone to make or receive calls during a lesson

To ban or not to ban

- By almost two-to-one, 11-17 year-olds disagree with the view that "schools should have the right to ban mobile phones" – 59% disagree, while just 32% agree

Bullying

- 65% of young people think physical bullying in the playground or at school is a greater problem for children of their age than bullying by mobile phone (13%). Among girls, the figures divide: 61% physical bullying, 16% mobile phone bullying. Boys divide 69-10% on this issue
- 13% say they have personally been threatened or harassed by someone speaking to them on their mobile phone. Among girls aged 15-17 the proportion rises to 21%

TeenTalk: A Parent's Guide to Mobiles & Young People

In our first Mobile Life Report published in July 2006, we identified that people born since 1985 have never known life without a mobile phone. This in itself presents a challenge to today's parents, many of whom grew up with a landline that was kept in the living room where everybody else in the family could hear your conversation.

For young people today, life is very different. They live in a world where almost three quarters of them own their own mobile phone by the age of 11. Many of them would not think of answering the landline at home, as "it might not be for me."

Young people have developed a whole new language which they use when texting which is constantly changing and evolving. Some are concerned about the impact of texting on literacy skills. Does texting contribute to the dumbing down of the English language? Perhaps not. A contradictory argument could suggest that far from eroding children's language, as widely feared, texting can increase young people's phonetic awareness and linguistic creativity.

One thing for sure the texts that young people are sending today can be pretty hard to understand.

Parenting tips

1. Learn to text so you can keep in touch with your child without them feeling embarrassed answering your call, or dodging your call, when they are with their friends.
2. Agree the ground rules for the occasions when your child can and cannot use their mobile phone.
3. If on a monthly contract, agree with your child a monthly spend limit so they do not run up bills they cannot pay.
4. Never read your child's text messages without their permission – it will lead to a serious breakdown of trust.
5. Discuss what content your child would like to access e.g. ring tones, wallpaper, games or football highlights.
6. Consider putting a content control bar in place so your child cannot access inappropriate material.
7. Warn your child of the dangers of giving out their personal details to strangers or people they do not know well.
8. Tell your child not to answer their mobile phone to a number they do not recognise.
9. Tell your child not to respond to spam.
10. Teach your child to be street smart so they use their mobile phone safely when out and about.

What young people say	What young people mean		
alrite	these are all used	cul8r	see you later
hey	to say hello, how	da	the
heylo	have you been	dat	that
hws u	and what have	er	here
hws tricks	you been doing	gud	good
kool b		iz	is
wag1		juz	just
wat u been on		k	ok
wats crackin		lol	laugh out loud
wats poppin		m8	mate
yo		ne1	anyone
bless	these are all used	newa	anyway
c ya	to say goodbye	nm	not much
holla		n/m	never mind
holla back		np	no problem
innabit		nt	not
luv ya		r	are
peace		tb	text back
peace out		ting	things
safe		ur	your
2moz or 2morrow	tomorrow	w.e	whatever
an or n	and	wit	with
av	have	wot	what
b	babe	wubu2	what have you
b4	before		been up to
c	see	xciting	exciting
		y	why
		ya or u	you

If your son or daughter starts telling you how they locked off a member of the opposite sex or flashed somebody, there is no need to be worried...

Youth mobile behaviour	What young people mean
Locking off	This is when your phone rings but you don't want to speak to the person calling. Instead of silencing the ring you just drop the call. For example, your teen daughter could say, "Some boy rang me but I locked him off"
Flashing	Flashing is making a call but ending it before the other persons picks it up. Teens usually flash each other when they have no credit on their phones. For example they may say, "Flash me and I'll call you back"
Dud calling/drop calling/mis-calling	This is the same as flashing

With thanks to Courtney, Victoria, Tom and Rachael for letting us into their texting world.

Daily Life

Which of the following is the single most important reason why you chose your particular mobile phone?

	All %	Boys %	Girls %	11-14 %	15-17 %	Parents %
Style (size, looks, colour etc.)	31	23	41	29	35	16
Functionality (what it can do)	26	32	20	23	30	31
Price	7	8	5	6	8	28
Make of mobile phone	2	3	2	2	3	11
Recommendation from a friend	2	3	2	2	3	2
Availability	0	0	1	0	1	3
None of these	1	1	1	1	1	8
I was given it, I didn't choose it	29	30	28	38	20	na

Choosing and using

“Most children have a mobile phone by the time they go to secondary school”

The usage pattern for young people is very unclear. Very few children have a mobile phone before the age of nine. But before their 11th birthday, the proportion rises to 51% and to 70% by their 12th birthday when they have joined secondary school.

However, it seems that many children have a mobile phone earlier than the public considers wise. First Mobile Life report found that almost two in three parents with 11-14 year olds think their children should have a mobile phone by the age of 11. Only one in three members of the wider mobile phone-owning public share that view. Clearly parents see the safety and peer group benefits of their children having a mobile phone more greatly than non parents.

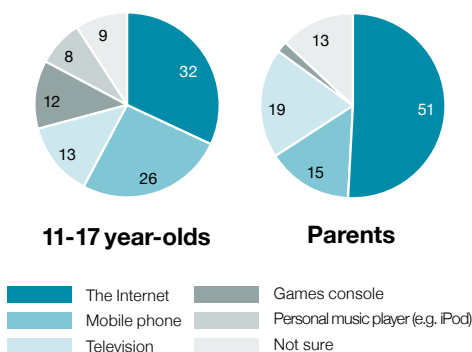
When choosing a mobile phone, for boys functionality matters more than style; for girls style matters more than functionality. While almost one third of 11-17 year olds do not choose their own mobile phones this lowers to one in five 15-17 year olds. This shows their increased spending power and independence to choose their own handsets.

“Mobile phones matter more to girls than to boys”

Mobile phones matter more to girls than to boys and matter more to 11-17 year-olds than to their parents. Asked which of five electronic items is most important to them, 36% of girls, compared with 17% of boys and 15% of parents say their mobile phone. The figures for games consoles are very different: 21% of boys, but just 2% of girls, say this matters most to them. The figures for the other three items are identical for both sexes: internet (32%), television (13%), and personal music players (8%).



Which of the following, if any, is most important in your life?



Among boys aged 11-14, only 11% say their mobile phone is their most important possession on this list, compared with 29% of girls in this age group. The figure rises to 44% among girls aged 15-17, compared with 23% among boys in this age group.

It seems that social stereotypes are already being formed with girls talking more and perhaps having wider social networks. Boys, on the other hand, seem to be wrapped up in the more solitary pursuit of playing computer games.

11-14 year-olds of both sexes use their mobile more to play games than to make or receive calls; however the appetite for games declines sharply among 15-17 year-olds.

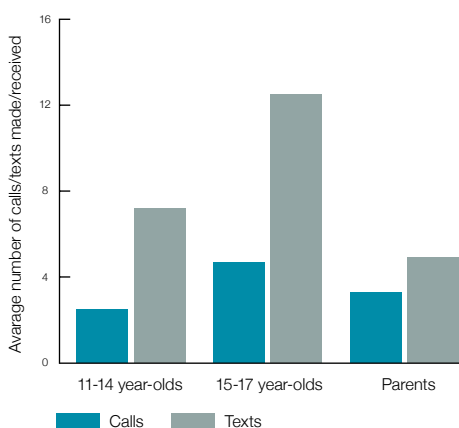
The joy of text

“Mobile phone owning 11-17 year olds send or receive almost three times more texts a day than the average mobile phone owning adult”

Mobile phone-owning 11-17 year-olds send or receive a phenomenal 9.6 texts a day. The average adult mobile phone user sends 3.6 texts.

While we have seen a texting revolution take place among young adults aged 18-24, texting among younger people is so ubiquitous it has become ordinary. It is striking that this survey confirms the trend identified among young adults in the first Mobile Life Report published in July 2006 – that our ‘talk ratio’ is falling. Young people are texting far more than they talk.

Talk/Text Ratio



The dominance of texts is confirmed by answers to the question, which do you do most on your mobile phone? 74% say send or receive texts, while 14% say make or receive calls and 12% say they play games. Among girls, aged 15-17, the proportion saying ‘texts’ rises to as much as 89%.

We revealed in the first Mobile Life Report that the ‘talk ratio’ amongst 18-24 year olds was falling and that they are texting more than they talk. This trend is already prevalent among 11-17 year olds. So is the art of conversation dying or is it more complex than that? It seems that rather than communicating less, young people are communicating even more than ever. But what they are doing is choosing to communicate in a variety of ways, whether it is by talking face-to-face or mobile phone, via text, email or instant messaging.

Bank of mum & dad

“Half of all 11-17 year olds have their mobile phone calls paid for by their parents”

Three in four, 76%, of 11-17 year-olds had their mobile phone bought for them by their parents; and a vast majority, 85%, have Pay-As-You-Go (PAYG) packages, compared with 15% who have monthly contracts.

Half of all 11-17 year-olds have their calls paid by their parents. The figure for 11-14 year-olds is 59%; it falls to 38% among 15-17 year-olds.

Of those 11-17 year olds who are contributing to their own phone bills 75% of them say the cost represents less than half their monthly spending.

Those who contribute towards the costs of their calls were asked what they would spend more on if they didn't have to pay anything towards their mobile phone. Among girls, clothes comes a clear first (68%) followed by going out (42%). Among boys, four items score roughly equally: clothes (29%), going out (28%), music (27%) and saving (26%).

In many ways, one expects teens to be more radical, more liberal and quicker to take up new technologies than the previous generation. So is this suggested monetary prudence a genuine trend? Or does it simply reflect the reality of being a young person, living at home with access to a limited budget, controlled by their parents?

Mobile manners

“The generation gap is biggest between young people and their parents in relation to attitudes to texting while in conversation”

Mobile Life repeated a series of questions that had been asked of adults earlier in the year by asking young people whether they thought using their mobile in different situations is “reasonable”, “can be reasonable if done considerably” or “unreasonable”.

It emerges that nearly half of 11-17 year-olds (46%), think it is reasonable to use their mobile phone for texting while in conversation with someone, less than a quarter, 21%, of parents held the same view.

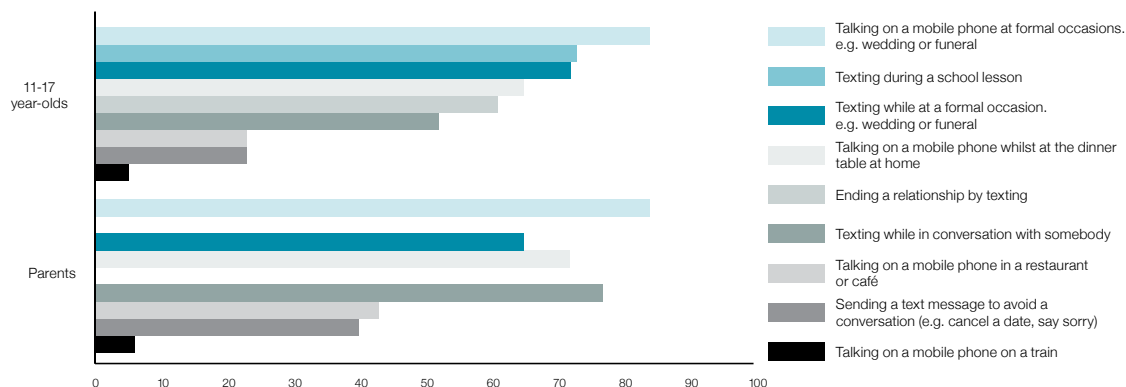
Just one in four 11-17 year-olds, compared with half of parents, consider it unreasonable to talk on a mobile phone in a restaurant or café. The proportions saying it is “reasonable,” without qualification, are 27% for 11-17 year-olds, but just 4% for parents.

As these figures show, the generation gap is biggest in relation to texting while in conversation, with 77% of parents saying this is unreasonable, compared with 52% of 11-17 year-olds. Additionally, parents and young people disagree on the mobile manners of talking on a mobile phone in a restaurant or café and sending a text message to avoid a conversation.

Does this lend weight to the argument that manners decrease with each generation or are we still establishing and grappling with the social norms of behaviour for the mobile phone.

Do you think each of the following is reasonable or unreasonable behaviour?

(Figures show % saying “unreasonable”)



Health

11-17 year-olds are less worried than their parents that their mobile phone might harm their health. Just 24% of children in this sample are concerned, compared with 34% of parents.

To paraphrase Iris Murdoch, this shows that youth is a wonderful garment and with it comes a sense of invincibility which only reduces with the burdens of age and responsibility.

Crime & safety

“Owning a mobile phone makes 80% of young people feel safer when out and about”

Owning a mobile phone makes 80% of young people feel safer when out and about, shopping, socialising or travelling to or from their school or college. This sentiment is particularly strong among girls, 89% of whom feel safer, compared with 72% of boys.

On the other hand young people (56%) are more worried than their parents (28%) that having a mobile phone could make them

a target for mugging. It should be noted, however, that few 11-17 year olds agree “strongly” with this statement (9%).

55% of 11-17 year-olds have at some point been deprived of their mobile phone, mainly because it was broken, although 11% have had their mobile phone stolen, while 21% have lost it. One in six of 15-17 year-olds say they have had a mobile phone stolen, although there was no significant difference between boys and girls.

The challenge for most mobile phone owning young people and their parents is how to balance their need to carry a phone for personal safety reasons vs. the threat of mobile phone crime.

One of the solutions must surely be educating young people about responsible mobile phone usage, particularly on the street, the responsibility for which lies with parents, schools, the mobile phone industry and the police.

Mobile phone users of all ages can log onto www.immobilise.com and register their mobile phone free of charge. The serial number will be logged onto a national database so once reported lost or stolen it will be blocked across all networks.



Family & Relationships

My phone, my friends, my life

As a mother of two daughters and a son who have now grown up, it is all too apparent just how grateful young people must be for the advent of mobile phones and text messaging. Just put yourself, if you can, in the shoes of a teenage boy who wishes to ask a girl out on a date.

Let's look for a moment at the landline route to romance. You dial the number, perhaps after much deliberation, and even a little rehearsing of your words. Ready to utter them, you find yourself speaking not to the girl you hope to speak to, but instead to somebody far more intimidating – her mother.

Now you've got to ask for the daughter, who will be summoned to the phone. And if her mother is anything like me, the daughter may well face some teasing glances along the way. The stage is set. But it's not as simple as just asking her out. You have to open the conversation, perhaps with an excuse for calling. Then establish a dialogue. If all this has gone well, and perhaps even if it hasn't, you still have to ask the girl out. And in a way that appears confident, and cool, and might have some chance of success. There are a whole series of hoops to jump through, each unnerving.

If that sounds bad for the boy, it's not easy for the girl either. A yes will see rising eyebrows from her family. But a no will leave the young man distraught. There is a visible tension and no easy way for both to save face. In this scenario it's easy to see the appeal of a text message that offers discretion, the chance to compose responses thoughtfully, and which can be ignored rather than leading inescapably to either acceptance or rejection.

Romantic relationships show clearly how the mobile phone can facilitate communications and relationships, through texting and young people having their own handset, but this is by no means the only area where it has an impact. Teenagers can often appear welded to their phones, and this is because the phone is enhancing their relationships in two ways.

Firstly, it's broadening the range of their relationships. The mobile phone allows young people to keep in touch with a very wide circle of friends. Built-in address books and the ability to send text messages and pictures to many people at once allow casual interaction to flourish. A text can easily be sent to people that you do not know well enough to pick up the phone to.

What the text message offers is a lack of obligation. There is no obligation to enter immediately into conversation, as there is with a phone call, and far less obligation than with a face-to-face meeting, which entails spending time together. For a young person concerned about their image, the mobile phone removes some of the more unnerving elements of opening a dialogue. It allows you to say hello, without worrying about what to say next.

Much of this broadening of communication is very visible, but what is sometimes



Dr Pat Spungin.
Founder of parenting website,
<http://www.raisingkids.co.uk>

overlooked is the other way that mobile phones enhance communications among young people. I think they help deepen relationships, too.

This may sound surprising to people who assume that because young people are having lots of trivial dialogues, often with text messages, this is somehow at the expense of their deeper relationships.

But two things reassure me. One is that as humans we all have the need for deep, caring relationships. It's in our very nature, and to assume that any piece of technology can change that is to underestimate the emotional forces at work within us.

The other thing that supports my view is a firm belief that the small things, including communications and even text messages, add up. They don't themselves create deep relationships, but they help to maintain them. What mobile phones engender is more sharing: of experiences, emotions, pictures and other communications.

What about the implications for parents of this new form of communication? Clearly their attitudes to mobile phones differ from the wider population. Only a third of the general public think that children should have a mobile phone by the age of 11. Presumably they view mobile phones like earrings – as unnecessary and inappropriate for people below a certain age. But in practice, just over half of children have a mobile phone at the age of ten. Why do parents agree?

The mobile phone has become a 'must-have' for children, and those without one feel left out, and pressure their parents to get one. Parents easily agree because they see advantages for themselves.

Parents feel that mobile phones can help keep children safe when they are away from home. If they lose their money, help is only a phone call away. Although whether phones actually make young people safer is debatable. They won't stop them having unsuitable friends, for example.

In the previous Mobile Life Report I considered whether having mum on the end of a mobile phone to fix things could undermine the developing of independence in teenagers. This is a potential problem, but there is also another, less obvious issue.

Children can now communicate easily with peers without leaving home. Pre-teens, too young to be allowed out after school are using mobile phones to interact with each other. Is this something that should concern parents? Is it any different to long conversations on a landline? Well yes. It's not public, and not overheard. Texts are not vetted or intercepted.

My parting question is whether the mobile phone is encouraging children not yet into their teens to adopt the values of older teens. Is it adding to the 'older-younger' phenomenon, whereby children are increasingly accessing the values of teens at an ever younger age? Are children worrying about their body image, talking about sex and relationships, and sending and receiving inappropriate material when they are too young?

Social Life

“78% of young people say that having a mobile phone gives them a better social life”

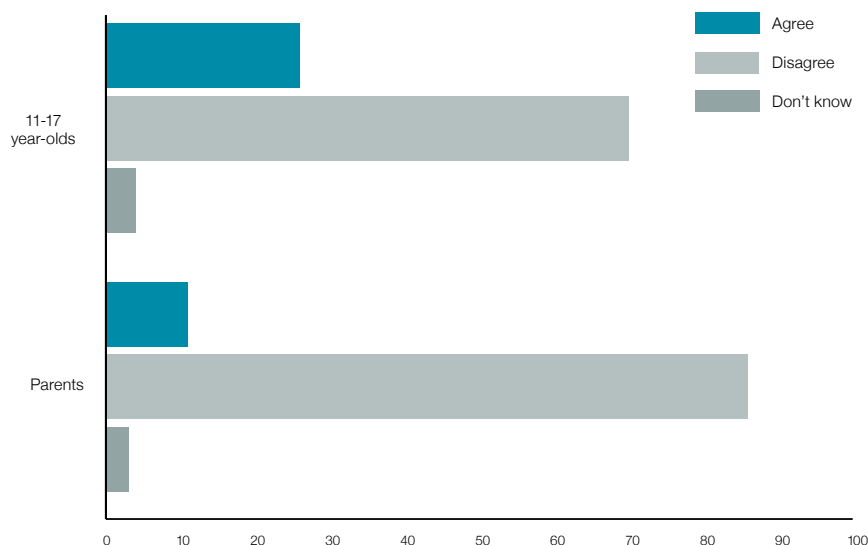
More than three-quarters (78%) of 11-17 year-olds say that having a mobile phone gives them a better social life, because they can more easily maintain contact with their friends. Among 15-17 year-olds, the proportion rises to 84%.

More widely, 70% say their mobile phone has made their life better. This proportion varies little by age or gender.

Young people are far more likely than their parents to feel unwanted if their mobile phone failed to ring all day. 26% of 11-17 year-olds, compared with 11% of their parents, would “feel unwanted if a whole day went by when my mobile phone did not ring”. This feeling is particularly widespread among 15-17 year-old girls, 42% of whom agree with the statement.

We have all experienced the challenges of the teenage years and the need to conform to our peer group while challenging the generation that has gone before. Today’s teenagers are influenced by more external pressures than ever before. The need to be popular and have that popularity constantly confirmed is a subject explored in Dr Carsten Sørensen’s article later in this report.

“I would feel unwanted if a whole day went by when my mobile phone did not ring.”



What, no mobile?

“It shouldn’t be used as a tool to determine somebody’s eligibility to be considered cool”

Young people were asked what they thought of other young people who did not own a mobile phone. Their answers captured a broad spectrum of views from the socially conscious and politically correct to the more materialistic and judgemental.

“It would not change my opinion of them”

“Good for them”

“I’d think it unusual but wouldn’t think less of them”

“They would be missing out”

“I don’t judge people on what they do or don’t do, have or don’t have. It’s a matter of choice and affordability. I wouldn’t think any less of somebody just because they didn’t have a mobile”

“Boring”

“No problem, maybe they can’t afford one”

“Sorry”

“That their parents are not in touch with modern society as even a cheap pay as you go mobile phone increases a child’s safety”

“Sad”

“Oh my god what are their parents thinking of, that should be reported to social services”

“Geek!”

Puppy love

“Text dating is the norm for half of 16-17 year olds”

While the first Mobile Life Report published in July 2006 showed that the mobile phone has revolutionised the love lives of young adults aged 18-24, the same trend can be seen among young people as they begin dating one another.

A quarter of 11-17 year olds have received a text inviting them on a date. 16-17 year olds are more likely to have received a text inviting them on a date or sent/received a text to end a relationship than the majority of adults i.e. those aged 18 and over.

More traditional dating behaviours are being put firmly in the past as text dating becomes the norm for today’s young people. What next – text proposals?

Four letter texts

“Half of 11-17 year olds have sent a text containing bad language”

Texts containing bad language are common among 11-17 year olds and to much the same extent among girls as among boys. Almost half of all 11-15 year-olds have sent or received a text containing bad language, a figure which rises to 70% for 16-17 year olds.

Almost a third of boys (30%) aged 16 or 17 and 25% of girls have sent or received a sexually explicit text. While 20% of boys aged 16 or 17 have sent or received a sexually explicit photo or video; rather fewer girls aged 16 or 17 (11%) have done so.

Proportion of young people that have sent or received the following through their mobile phone:

	11-15 year-olds			16-17 year-olds		
	All %	Boys %	Girls %	All %	Boys %	Girls %
A text containing bad language	48	48	48	70	72	67
A text sent to you by mistake	48	43	53	56	55	57
A text inviting you to a date	24	23	26	49	45	54
A text to end a relationship	13	12	14	16	13	20
A sexually explicit text	not asked			28	30	25
A sexually explicit photo or video	not asked			16	20	11
None of these	27	28	26	10	9	12

What does all this bad language and sexually explicit texting mean? Is it that young people have more relaxed norms of behaviour than the adult population or is it simply that they feel able to be more explicit in a text as it is one step removed from saying it face-to-face?

Freedom

“For most young people, the mobile phone gives them more freedom”

Most 11-17 year olds say their parents give them more freedom because they have a mobile phone (59%) and are allowed to stay out later (53%). 36% of parents questioned agreed that they let their children stay out later as a result of having a mobile phone.

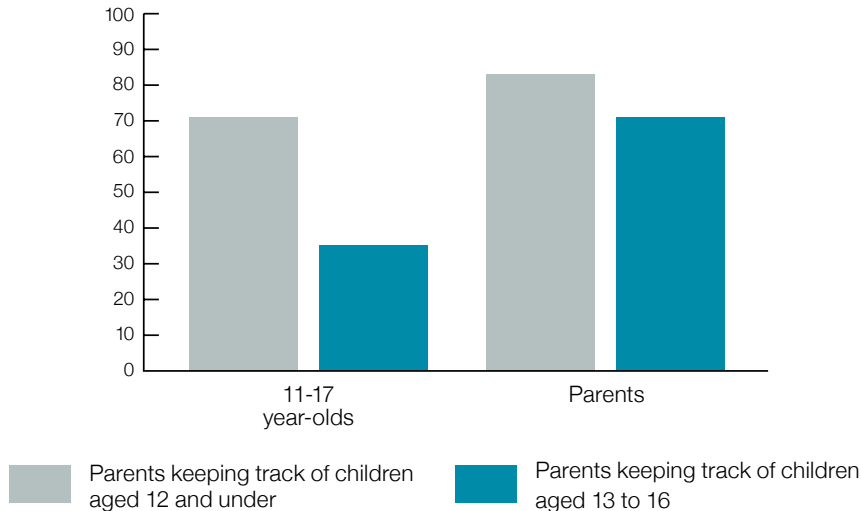
Despite this freedom, some tensions emerge between many young people and their parents. One in four think that their mobile phone means they are too much at the “beck and call” of their parents.

Big mother

“71% of parents think it reasonable to use a GPS system to keep track of their older teens via mobile phone yet only 35% of young people think it reasonable”

The technology exists to track the location of each mobile phone when it is on. 83% of parents thought it was reasonable to keep track of children aged 12 and under, while 71% thought it reasonable to keep track of 13-16 year-olds. When young people were asked the same question, 71% think it is reasonable for parents to be able to keep track of children aged 12 and under via their mobile phone, with the child’s permission. But only 35% think it is reasonable to keep track of children aged 13 to 16 in this way. There seems to be little appetite among children for keeping track of their parents. Just one in five of them think this is reasonable, very similar to the minority of parents who agree.

Do you think it is reasonable to use the tracking facility, with the owner's permission?



Not surprisingly, parents are still very much of the view that part of their role is to protect their children, which includes keeping track of their movements. While young people with mobile phones generally have more freedom than those without, unwittingly, the mobile phone is acting as a pretty efficient umbilical cord.

Private world

“A third of young people talk regularly and/or send texts to people they don’t want their parents to know about”

Despite mobile phones enabling parents to keep tabs on their children, mobile phones also give many children a chance to escape the attentions of their parents and create their own private worlds away from their families. In most cases, parents are excluded from these worlds and it is likely that many are also unaware that they exist.

More than one in four young people say their mobile phone enables them to maintain friendships or relationships that their parents would not approve of.

One in three say they talk regularly and/or send texts to people they don’t want their parents to know about. This applies more to 15-17 year-olds than 11-14 year-olds.

A similar number “sometimes dodge calls from my parents,” again, 15-17 year-olds more than 11-14 year-olds.

This clearly poses a new set of challenges for today’s parents and ones which many are ill-equipped to handle. While the technology may be new, the problem is not and comes down to one of trust between parents and their children.

The modern day diary

“Two-thirds of 15-17 year-olds would not let their parents look through their text messages”

To young people, their mobile phone is as private to them as the five year diary was to their parents when they were a similar age. Two-thirds of 15-17 year-olds and almost half of 11-14 year-olds would NOT allow their parents to look through their text messages and pictures on their mobile phone.

When Mobile Life asked those young people who would not let their parents read their text messages their reasons for this, their answers revealed a distinct attitude.

Why my text messages are private

“Because it’s private and is nothing to do with them”

“It’s mine and it’s private so they shouldn’t be looking”

“Nothing really...I like my privacy”

“Certain conversations are private even if they are nonsense”

“It’s none of their business”

“They wouldn’t ask anyway as they are pretty big on privacy and trust”

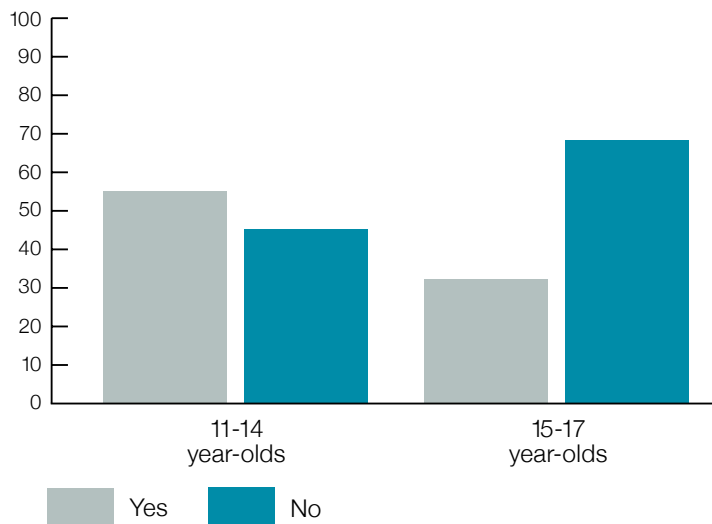
“It’s not that there’s anything on there that I don’t want them to know about but it is about my right to privacy”

“Cos it’s private not anything rude”

“Because they are text messages from my friends, not theirs”

“I like to have my world as my world – bit of privacy”

Would you let your parents look through your text messages and pictures on your mobile phone?



Tech heads

If many children use their mobile phone to assert their independence, most parents with an 11-17 year-old at home rely to some extent on their children to show them “how to use certain functions on their mobile phone”. This applies almost as much to girls as boys, and to 11-14 year-olds almost as much as 15-17 year-olds.

Family ties

There is one thing parents and their children do agree on. By a narrow margin 11-17 year-olds tend to think their mobile phone has strengthened their bond with their family.

One in four (25%) of young people say their mobile phone has resulted in their keeping more frequently in contact with their grandparents.

**Young people were asked a series of statements.
The percentages agreeing are shown below**

	All %	Boys %	Girls %	11-14 %	15-17 %
“I sometimes have to show my parents how to use certain functions on their mobile phone”	70	71	69	66	75
“My parents give me more freedom than they would if I didn’t have a mobile phone”	59	57	62	57	62
“My parents let me stay out later than they would if I didn’t have a mobile phone”	53	52	53	48	58
“I sometimes dodge calls from my parents”	37	39	35	29	46
“I talk regularly and/or send texts to people I don’t want my parents to know about”	35	34	35	28	42
“I am able to have friends and/or relationships that my parents wouldn’t approve of”	29	29	30	26	34
“I sometimes feel my mobile means I am too much at the beck and call of my parents”	23	25	21	22	25

School

Mobiles in the class room

“Two thirds of 15-17 year old girls have sent/received a text during a school lesson”

Almost three quarters of young people (73%) say it is unreasonable to send a text message during a school lesson. 8% think it is “reasonable” a further 18% think it “can be reasonable if done considerately.”

There are clear age and gender differences here, just 17% of boys aged 11-14 think it is, or can be, reasonable; the proportion rises to 33% among girls aged 15-17.

However, in reality 50% say they have, in fact, used their mobile phone to send or receive a text during a school lesson: among girls aged 15-17 the proportion is 67%; among boys aged 11-14, it is 33%. One in nine have used their mobile phone to make or receive calls during a lesson.

To ban or not to ban?

“Many young people oppose a ban on mobile phones in the class room because it would leave them without a mobile on their way to and from school”

One response to the use of mobile phones at school would be to force pupils to leave them at home. By almost two-to-one, 11-17 year-olds disagree with the view that schools should have the right to ban mobile phones: 59% disagree, while just 32% agree. Parents tend to be more sympathetic towards a ban: 56% agree with schools having this right, while 39% disagree.

It should be noted that among those who feel strongly about this issue, pupils divide three-to-one against a ban, while parents divide two-to-one in favour of a ban.

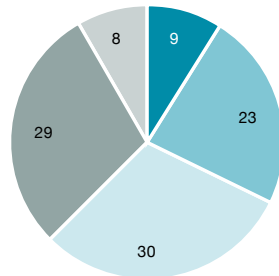
Have you ever used your mobile phone during lesson time at school or college?

	All	Boys	Girls	11-14	15-17
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes – to send or receive texts	40	37	43	32	48
Yes – to make or receive calls	1	2	1	2	1
Yes – both for calls and texts	10	9	11	6	15
No	49	52	45	60	36
Total – texts	50	46	54	38	63
Total – calls	11	11	12	8	16

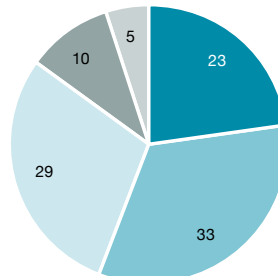


One reason why many pupils oppose a ban is that it would leave them without a phone on their way to and from school. And one of the key advantages of mobile phones is that it makes many of their owners feel safer when they are out and about. This sentiment is particularly strong among girls.

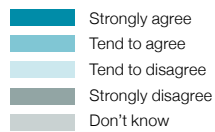
Do you agree or disagree with this statement?
“Schools should have the right to ban mobile phones”



11-17 year-olds



Parents

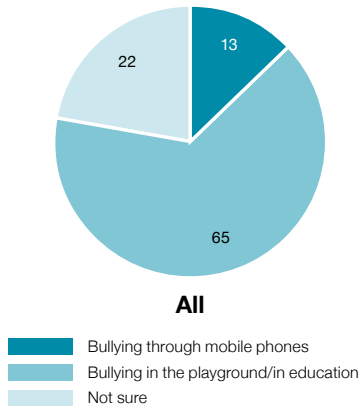


Bullying

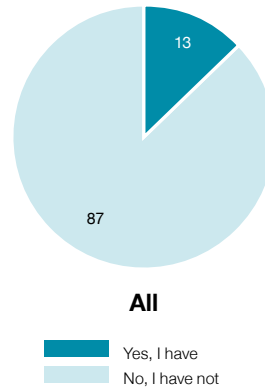
One widely discussed issue is cyber bullying: children being bullied over their mobile phone or the internet. When Mobile Life tested this issue, it found that whilst 11-17 year olds think traditional bullying in the playground is more prevalent, 1 in 8 of them have suffered harassment via their mobile phone. The figures are greater for girls (15%) than boys (12%).

When parents were asked about this issue, one parent in six (16%) says their child may have experienced harassment in the form of abusive calls or texts on their mobile phone.

Which do you think happens more to people of your age?

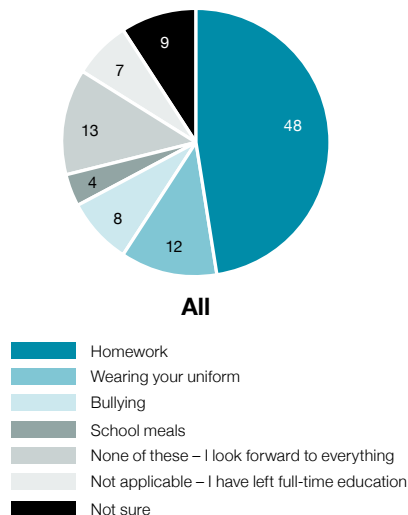


Have you ever been threatened or harassed by someone speaking to you on your mobile phone?



To put this into context, 11-17 year olds are least looking forward to homework as they return to school or college after the summer holidays, rather than worrying about bullying. However, due to new technologies bullying is moving beyond the confines of the school walls and into the previously safe haven of the home.

When you return to school or college in September, what will you LEAST look forward to?



Implications

Instant mobile connections as a way of teenage life

Being a teenager involves a constant dialogue about freedom, and seeking your own place in the world distinct from your parents. It is not hard to see the appeal of the mobile phone in this context, allowing young people to connect independently. It frees them from the constraints of fixed landline telephones, allowing conversations to be held at home in bedrooms away from parents and siblings' ears, and also, of course, outside the home. Plans can be made and whole social networks can be mobilised quickly, arrangements often made on the move.

The mobile phone has given millions of young people some of the freedoms that in the past were available only to the fortunate few with cars. It has also given them a communication tool that they can call their own, rather than a shared landline phone tying them to the living room or the hallway. The mobile phone offers the freedom of fluid access to the social network.

One of the most striking consequences of this new-found freedom among young people is the instant and near-constant communication between them. We see that people between the ages of 15 and 17 send and receive an average of 12.5 texts every day, in addition to holding an average of 4.7 mobile phone conversations. Overall, young people text three times as frequently as their parents, and make more calls. There is a constant pinging of messages.

This can be explained by the importance of the peer group and its opinions to young people. As teenagers establish their own identities, with all the angst this entails, the views and approval of their peer group

becomes hugely influential. The mobile phone has become the primary way of connecting with the peer group, and these connections are nurtured almost constantly. The report shows that although 73 per cent of young people think it wrong to send or read a text while in class at school, half have done so all the same. When shopping, teenagers send texts to test peer-group opinion before making a purchase.

This connectivity and freedom is essentially perceived as a good thing. The survey shows that 78 per cent of teenagers say that their mobile phone has given them a better social life, and more widely, 70 per cent say it has generally improved their lives.

But constant communication also raises potential problems. Young people have become so accustomed to it that if they do not receive calls or texts, they feel a sense of rejection. The survey shows that 26 per cent of 11-17 year-olds, compared with 11 per cent of their parents would "feel unwanted" if a day went by without their phone ringing.

The ability to test decisions against peer group opinion, seeking constant reassurance, could also inhibit young people's willingness to make decisions for themselves.

The mobile phone may also combine with other trends in society to make the peer group even more influential. In Britain, parents are working longer hours, making the peer group relatively more influential and powerful.

So although the mobile phone clearly speaks to young peoples' desire for freedom, it also effectively imposes itself upon them. We see in this report that by the age of 12, nearly all



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young people, a total of 94 per cent, have a mobile phone. Given that teenagers are preoccupied with conforming with their peer group, you have to ask if they feel they have much choice about having a mobile phone. It would take an unusually independent-minded teenager to decide not to.

This aspect of freedom is a common theme in the adoption of technology. It is usually seen as empowering the user, giving them the freedom to do things that they could not do before. The television allows you to see a whole range of programmes, for example. But what people watch is clearly influenced by what others watch, both because this determines the range of programmes on offer and because if you do not watch what other people watch, you may feel out of touch. It is the same with the mobile phone. It empowers young people to call and text, but they may feel lost without one, and have a degree of dependence on it.

There is, however, one way in which mobile phones have clearly empowered people, and especially young people, by facilitating different kinds of communication. This view rests on a distinction that communications specialists draw between so-called synchronous and asynchronous communication, and is part of a wider trend. Synchronous communications are those where the participants respond to each other immediately, such as talking face-to-face or even on the phone. Asynchronous communications allow for a time delay between exchanges, with examples including emails and text messages.

The last decade has seen a huge rise in the amount of asynchronous communication through texts and email. It allows people to

think carefully before expressing a view, for example, or lets responses to be stalled until there is time to compose them effectively. Young people can thus avoid some of the pressure of face-to-face communication by texting each other.

This broadening of communications also allows all kinds of “games” to be played, especially by ingenious young people. Those running late for a social meeting can claim to be closer to the location than they are, for example, hoping friends will not leave without them. Mobile phone users can also usually see the phone numbers for incoming calls, and choose to ignore them more easily. This is far easier than ignoring somebody in face-to-face conversation, which would be deeply offensive, or with most landlines when you do not know who is calling.

This may make life easier, but also presents moral dilemmas. There are far more temptations to mislead, or to overlook certain communications. We see in the report that more than a third of young people sometimes dodge calls from parents. This is a freedom of sorts, but doubtless a frustrating one for parents.

Emerging Trends



Philip Gould
Chairman, Philip Gould Associates, Communications and Strategy
Visiting Professor Media and Communications,
London School of Economics and Political Science

This report offers an unprecedented insight into the world of teenagers and mobile phones. After reading it I felt I began to grasp what my kids are up to when they spend all that time on their mobile phones. The report creates a real sense of the complexity of young lives today.

It is clear from this report that social interaction and mobile phone use are delicately and complexly intertwined. By a large margin teenagers would rather text than talk. Talking is intrusive and involves a degree of social risk – the recipient at the end of the call may not want to talk, or worse might reject advances. Texting is safer, unthreatening, unobtrusive, and allows social and sexual advances to be made with the minimum of risk and the maximum of discretion.

Texting does not just make social connection less stressful, it also makes intergenerational contact less embarrassing. In plain English this means that teenagers can communicate with their parents without actually talking to them, and best of all, do so without any of their friends knowing they are doing it.

All this texting and talking creates new peer networks and inevitably new peer pressure. Because communication is now so instant and continuous there is no escape from the intrusions of your friends. There is no escape, no hiding place from the onslaught of social connection – peer group pressure is always on.

The flip side of this is that when teenagers are not phoned they may feel a sense of abandonment and isolation. Being called or texted may be pressurising, but it is better than not being called at all. This is a specific example of a wider trend in which people

appear to need to show, through their electronic communications devices, that they belong and are included. And it is not just teenagers, how many times have we seen businessmen switch on their blackberries and their laptops the moment they leave a plane, signaling to others and themselves that they belong and that they matter? In today's world at every level, from the social to the political, the need to belong is emerging as the most powerful need of all.

What is also clear from this report is that communication has become a constant, unending flow, never stopping, never static, never relenting. Kids live now in a virtual social network that it is almost impossible to escape from. This involves new rules, new etiquette, and new pressures. But on balance I suspect they are having a lot more fun than the rest of us.

Credits

Mobile Life was the idea of The Carphone Warehouse Group plc and was developed in conjunction with Lord Philip Gould and YouGov.

The project's academic partner is The London School of Economics and Political Science and key contributors to Mobile Life Youth Report are Raisingkids.

The Carphone Warehouse is Europe's leading independent retailer of mobile phones and services, with over 1,855 stores in 10 countries.
www.carphonewarehouse.com
www.cpwplc.com

The London School of Economics and Political Science is one of the leading social science institutions in the world.
www.lse.ac.uk

Raisingkids is the UK's biggest parenting website offering help and advice on everything about raising kids.
www.raisingkids.co.uk

YouGov is an online research company specialising in opinion polls, market research and online consultation.
www.yougov.com

Philip Gould Associates is a polling and strategy company founded in 1985.



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