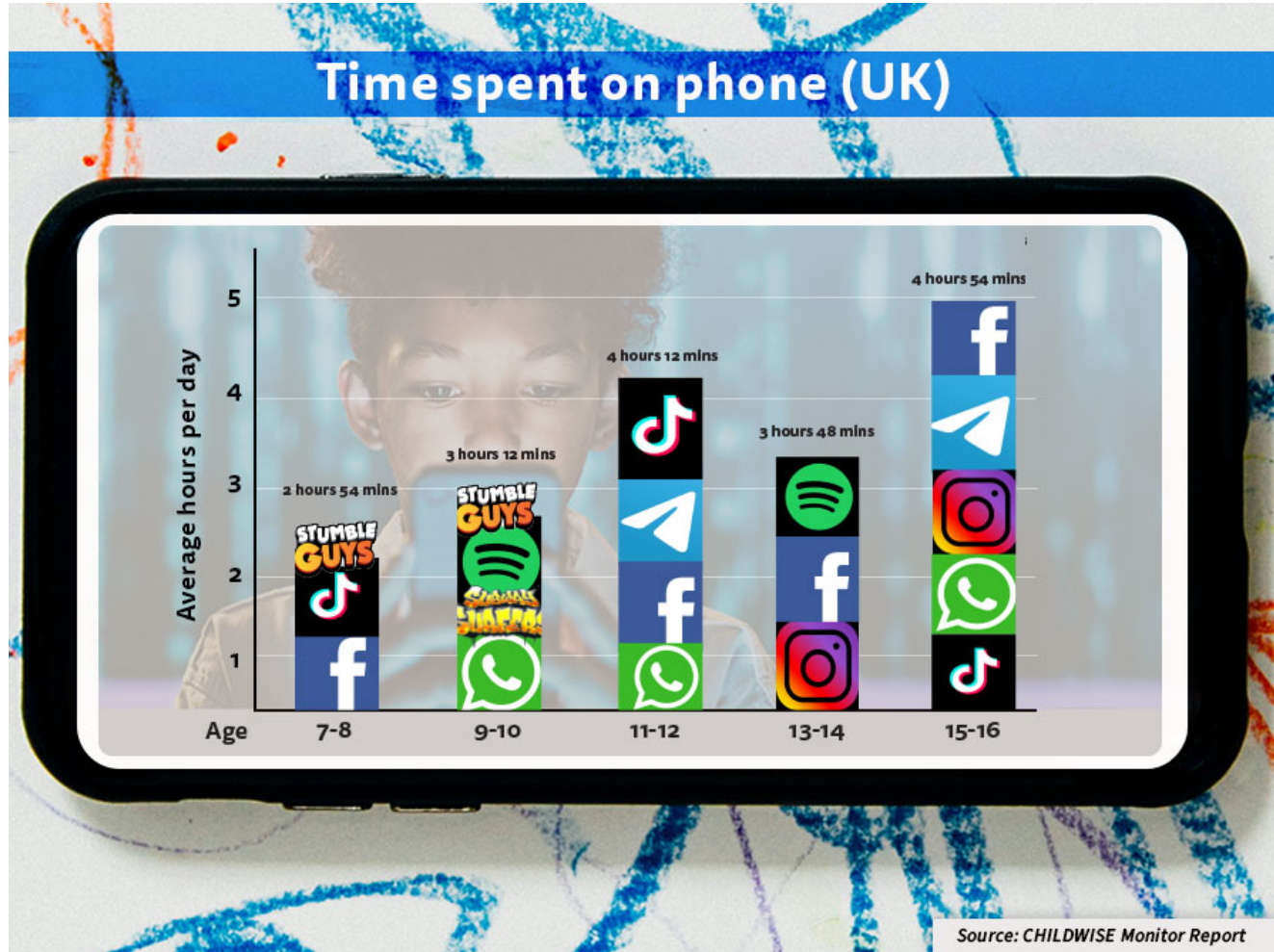


End 'phone-based childhood' now say experts

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Epidemic: Nearly half of all children aged five to 10 in the UK have their own mobile phone.

Can we turn back time? Mental health problems are shooting up even while literacy rates fall. Some pin the blame on the little box in your hand. But can we do without them?

What's happening?

In the last **decade**, something worrying has happened. Young people's reading abilities have come down. Meanwhile, their **mental health** is getting worse too. More and more teen say they are lonely, worried or sad.

Why is this? More and more **experts** are pointing the finger at phones.

Find out more

Experts say that young people who spend most of their time on a phone never learn how to make friends with and talk to the people around them or how to take risks in the real world.

Meanwhile, many believe phones reduce our attention span, making it harder for us to focus on things like reading.

That is why some think the only way of saving our youth is to do away with phones. Polling shows nearly two-thirds of Britons would ban sales of **smartphones** to under-16s.

Others, however, think we cannot put the clock back. They say phones are just too big a part of young people's lives. And many would try to find ways around a ban.

Instead, they argue, we need to find some way of helping children and teenagers to be happy in a world that includes smartphones.

Others say that phones are not really the problem at all. The last 10 years have been a difficult time. The **pandemic** and climate change could be one cause of unhappiness. So could worries about money.

Can we turn back time?

Some say

Some people say

“Technology can be our best friend, and technology can also be the biggest party pooper of our lives. It interrupts our own story, interrupts our ability to have a thought or a daydream, to imagine something wonderful, because we’re too busy bridging the walk from the cafeteria back to the office on the cell phone.”

Steven Spielberg (1946 –), American director

What do you think?

Six steps to discovery

1. **Connect**

How do you feel about this story? - Do you have a phone? Do you feel it is good for you?

2. **Wonder**

What questions do you have? - For example: How would a ban on phones for under-16s work?

3. **Investigate**

What are the facts? - Pick out one thing we know for certain and one thing we cannot say for sure from this story.

4. **Construct**

What is your point of view? - You are the headteacher of your school. Would you ban smartphones at school?

5. **Express**

What do others believe? - Would everyone be happier if there were no phones? Discuss as a class.

6. **Reflect**

What might happen next? - Try to go a whole day without using a phone, tablet or a computer. Is it possible? If you have to use a phone, why?

Yes! Adults chose to give children phones. So adults can choose to take them away again. It will be hard, but it will be worth it. Children will be much happier without phones.

Others think

No! Young people need phones to stay in contact with their friends and family and to do their homework. We need to find a way to make sure that children can have phones AND be happy.

Glossary

Decade - Ten years.

Mental health - The part of your health that has to do with your mind, your thoughts and feelings.

Experts - Someone who knows a lot about a particular subject.

Smartphones - A phone that works in the same way as a computer, with apps, access to the internet and more.

Pandemic - An outbreak of disease which occurs across a wide geographic area, as opposed to an epidemic, which is confined to a particular region.