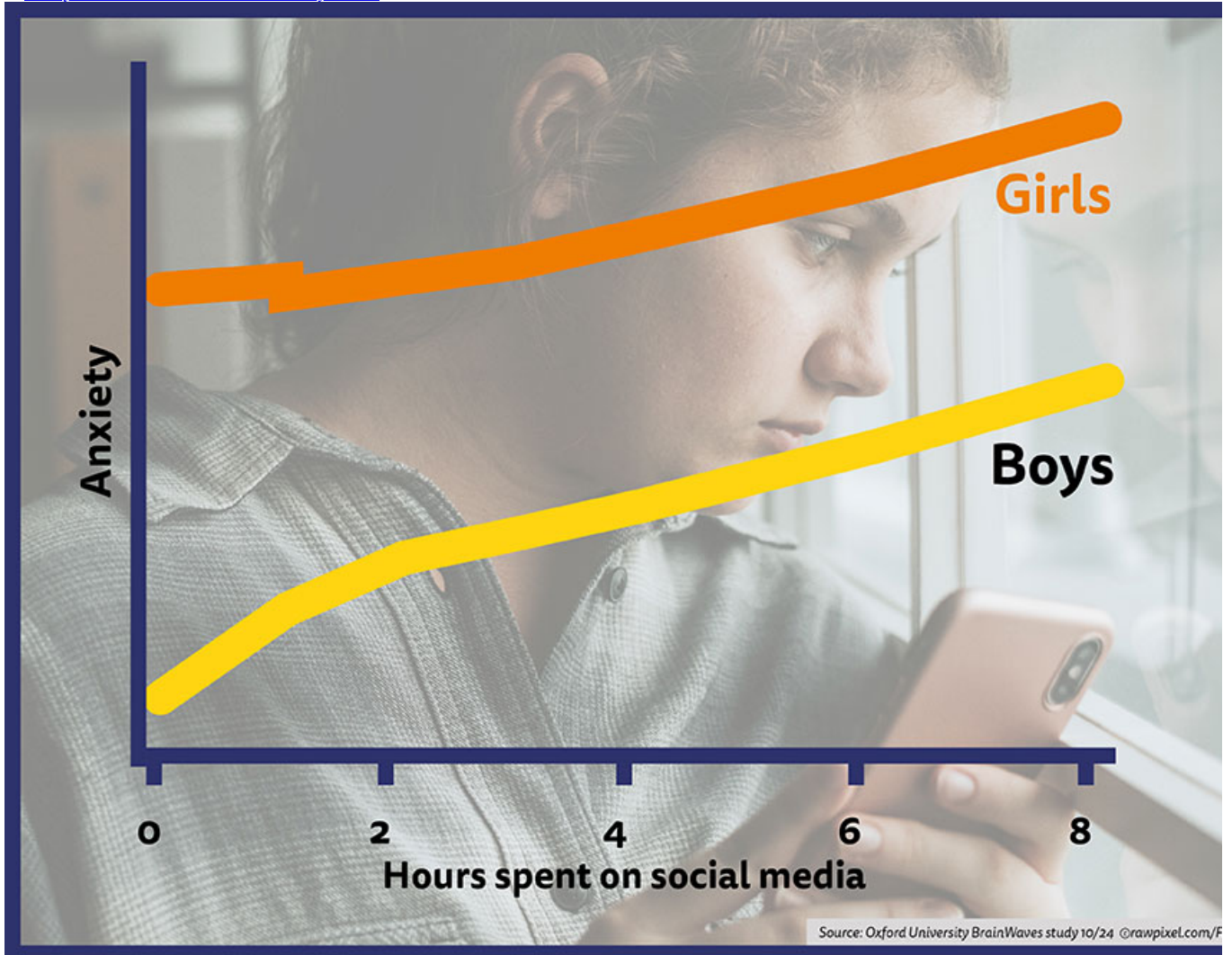


Social media blamed as anxiety soars

[theday.co.uk/social-media-blamed-as-anxiety-soars-4](https://www.theday.co.uk/social-media-blamed-as-anxiety-soars-4) 14 October 2024



Long-term: Oxford's Professor John Gallacher will examine how 50,000 UK teenagers' mental health changes over 10 years in the full BrainWaves study.

Should we give up smartphones? New research has found that as social media use goes up, so does anxiety. Some think it is time for us all to turn off our phones.

What's happening?

A new survey of thousands of people aged 16 to 18 in the UK has found that using social media is linked to being anxious.

The study was carried out by scientists at the University of Oxford, who worked with *The Day*.

Find out more

Sixty percent of the teenagers said they spent between two and four hours a day on social media.

Other research has also linked social media use with poor mental health. Even Meta, one of the world's biggest social media companies, found that some teenage girls who use Instagram report worse body image, sleep, eating habits and feelings of anxiety.

Today, more and more children are receiving mental health treatment. From 2023 until March of this year, 20% of 16- and 17-year-old girls in England had been in touch with NHS mental health services.

This is why some think the only answer is to treat smartphones the way we do cigarettes. Cigarette companies once used animal cartoons to appeal to children, but this practice was banned when everyone began to agree that smoking can make you ill.

Others say we should think more before we act. They argue that social media is key for many young people, who can find others with whom they fit in with online. Some think its name is true: social media makes us more social, not less.

Should we give up smartphones?

Some say

Yes! We are all addicted to our smartphones. The only way forward is to give them up. Nobody needs a smartphone. We would be better off without them.

Others think

No! We should not make a step backwards in the world of technology. Cars kill, for example, but few want to completely ban them. We need to teach people how to use smartphones in a safe way.

Six steps to discovery

1. Connect

How do you feel about this story? - Do you have a smartphone? How does it make you feel?

2. Wonder

Some people say

"There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in."

Leonard Cohen (1934 – 2016), Canadian singer and writer

What do you think?

What questions do you have? - For example: Should all addictive things be banned?

3. Investigate

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

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - Your teacher asks for your advice. They are deciding whether or not to ban smartphones at school. What do you say?

5. Express

What do others believe? - "Is technology doing more harm than good?" Discuss as a class.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - If you have a smartphone, keep a log of how many times you use it in one day, and for how long. What do you learn?

Glossary

Survey - When you ask a group of people questions about what they think about a particular topic.

Social media - Social media is defined by websites, apps and social games that connect people to each other through the sharing of pictures, thoughts, ideas, articles, and other content.

Anxious - Worried.

University of Oxford - A top university in the UK.

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

Meta - The new name of the company which owns Facebook and Instagram.

Instagram - A social-networking service that allows users to share photographs and videos.

Body image - The thoughts and feelings you have about your body.

Anxiety - A feeling of unease or worry. It can be mild or very severe.

NHS - The National Health Service, the publicly funded healthcare system in the UK. The NHS was founded in 1948.

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

Addicted - Unable to stop doing something.