



**THE CASE FOR**

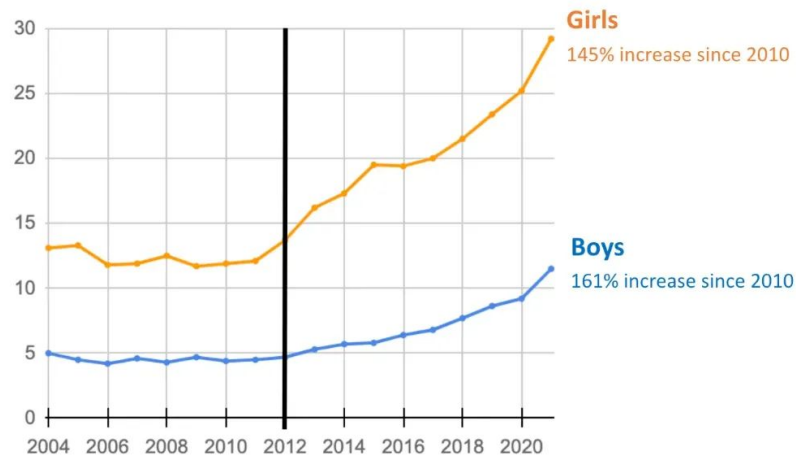
**PHONE-FREE**

**USD 497 SCHOOLS**

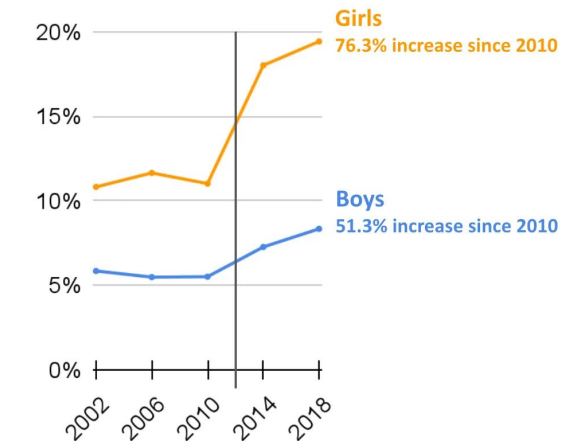
# THE DATA: MENTAL HEALTH

## THERE IS AN INTERNATIONAL INCREASE IN TEEN ANXIETY SINCE 2010

% US Teens with Major Depression



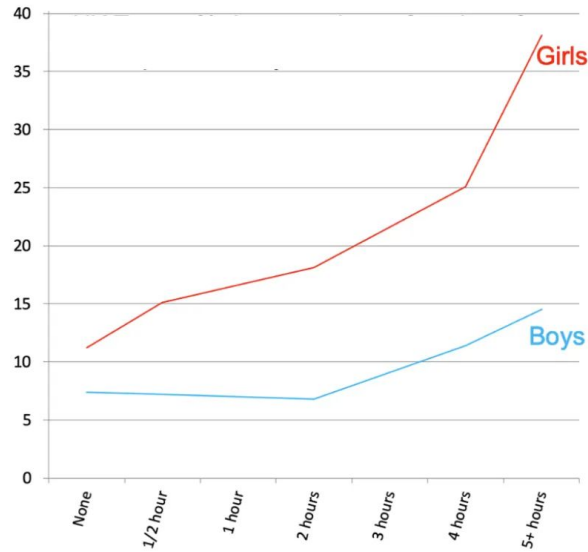
Percent of Nordic Teens with High Psychological Distress (Ages 11-15)



# THE DATA: MENTAL HEALTH

## SMARTPHONE USE IS A LIKELY CAUSE

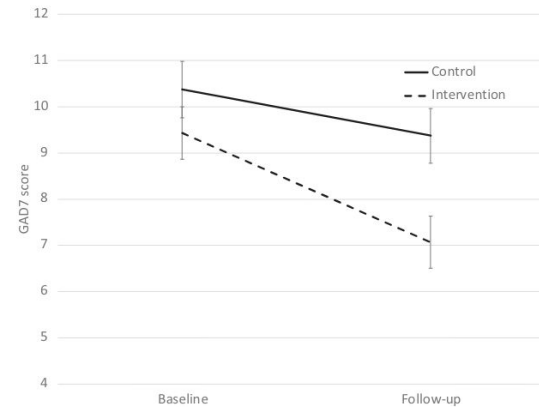
Percent of UK Teens Depressed as a Function of Hours per Weekday on Social Media



<https://www.afterbabel.com/p/social-media-mental-illness-epidemic>

Correlation is not causation. But a controlled trials indicate likely causality.

**Figure 4**  
Effect of Reducing SMU on Symptoms of Generalized Anxiety



Note. Error bars represent standard errors. SMU = social media use; GAD-7 = generalized anxiety disorder 7.

Intervention: Limitation of Social Media Use (SMU) to 1 hour/day

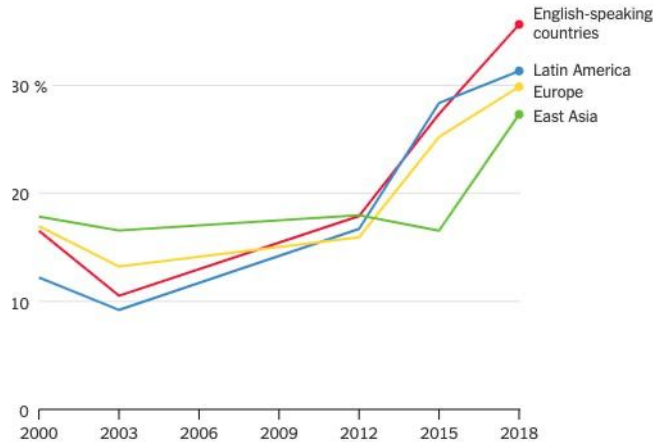
Davis, C. G., & Goldfield, G. S. (2024). Limiting social media use decreases depression, anxiety, and fear of missing out in youth with emotional distress: A randomized controlled trial. *Psychology of Popular Media*. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000536>

# THE DATA: EFFECTS OF USE IN SCHOOL

## *STUDENTS ARE MORE LONELY AT SCHOOL*

### Lonely at School

The share of students reporting high levels of loneliness at school has increased sharply since the early 2010s.



By The New York Times | Note: English-speaking countries include Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States. Source: "Worldwide increases in adolescent loneliness" by Jean M. Twenge, Jonathan Haidt, et al.

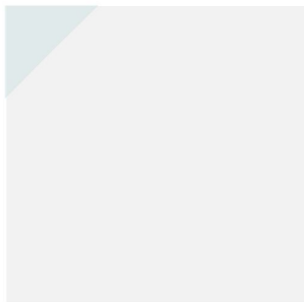
# THE DATA: EFFECTS OF USE IN SCHOOL

## SMARTPHONE BANS ARE BENEFICIAL

### Smartphone Bans, Student Outcomes and Mental Health

BY Sara Abrahamsson

DISCUSSION PAPER



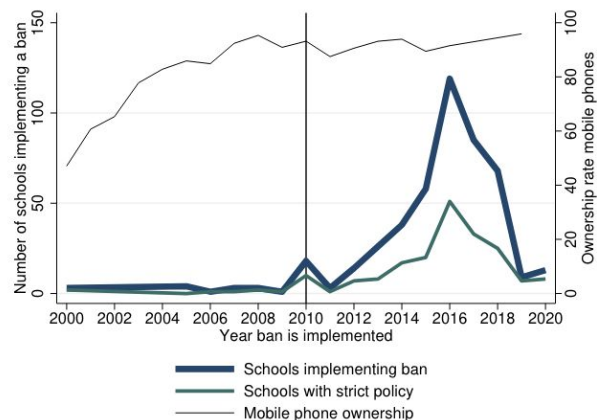
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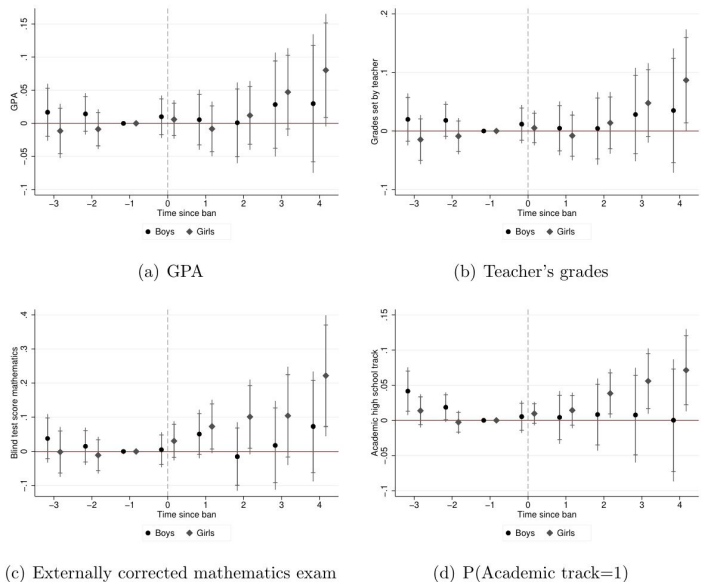
Figure 1: Introduction of Smartphone Bans Over Time at Middle Schools



# THE DATA: EFFECTS OF USE IN SCHOOL

## SMARTPHONE BANS ARE BENEFICIAL

Figure 6: Effect of Smartphone Ban on GPA, Test Scores and Likelihood of Attending an Academic High School Track by Gender



## Smartphone Bans, Student Outcomes and Mental Health\*

Sara Abrahamsson

Norwegian Institute of Public Health

### Abstract

How smartphone usage affects well-being and learning among children and adolescents is a concern for schools, parents, and policymakers. Combining detailed administrative data with survey data on middle schools' smartphone policies, together with an event-study design, I show that banning smartphones significantly decreases the health care take-up for psychological symptoms and diseases among girls. Post-ban bullying among both genders decreases. Additionally, girls' GPA improves, and their likelihood of attending an academic high school track increases. These effects are larger for girls from low socio-economic backgrounds. Hence, banning smartphones from school could be a low-cost policy tool to improve student outcomes.

# A CASE STUDY OF AN OHIO SCHOOL THAT REMOVED PHONES



**“I’ve seen the benefits from it  
and how much it has had an  
effect in classrooms”**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ltnhWeP-om4>

# **POLICY RECOMMENDATION**

## ***FOLLOWING TEACHER RECOMMENDATION***

**We propose that student phones be stored in a designated area from the first bell until the last bell of the day.**

**We propose forming a committee at the beginning of June 2024 composed of board members, administrators, faculty and staff members, and parents to select a suitable and cost-effective storage solution and create an equitable plan to be enacted this August 2024.**

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SAy3qCtzhcH0hCBf\\_Ppfq9kUIWnDKYaDuVPHrIGu4aU/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SAy3qCtzhcH0hCBf_Ppfq9kUIWnDKYaDuVPHrIGu4aU/edit?usp=sharing)



# FINAL THOUGHTS

***The research is clear: Smartphones undermine attention, learning, relationships, and belonging. – Jon Haidt***

A smartphone ban during school hours may be opposed for reasons of convenience by parents. However:

1. Prior to smartphones, parents could reach children through front office. This worked fine.
2. It should not be the job of teachers to enforce *ad hoc* policies on a class-by-class basis.  
*There is a need for a coherent and enforceable policy across USD497. Teachers support this.*
3. Student academic success and mental health should be the *primary* objective of USD497 policy.
4. The Surgeon General states:

“One of the most important lessons I learned in medical school was that in an emergency, you don’t have the luxury to wait for perfect information. You assess the available facts, you use your best judgment, and you act quickly.”

“Schools should ensure that classroom learning and social time are phone-free experiences.”

# OTHER RESOURCES

USD497 Teacher Petition:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SAy3qCtzhcH0hCBf\\_Ppfq9kUIWnDKYaduVPHrIGu4aU/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SAy3qCtzhcH0hCBf_Ppfq9kUIWnDKYaduVPHrIGu4aU/edit?usp=sharing)

Phone-Free Schools. A collaborative review:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uBKqzszvrUm6eK4-TbcEGKsYBPrvaxO8IbMh3v7JLJU/edit>

Ohio school district bans cellphones – and sees positive results:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ItnhWeP-om4>

The Case for Phone-Free Schools:

<https://www.afterbabel.com/p/phone-free-schools>

Surgeon General Vivek Murthy: Why I'm calling for a warning label on social media platforms

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/06/17/opinion/social-media-health-warning.html>

Surgeon General Advisory on Social Media and Youth Mental Health

<https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/youth-mental-health/social-media/index.html>