



Impact of Smartphones on Parent-Child Relationships



Study Objective:

To understand the impact of smartphone usage on human relationships, especially among parents & children, as well on their shared time & experiences.

Table of Contents

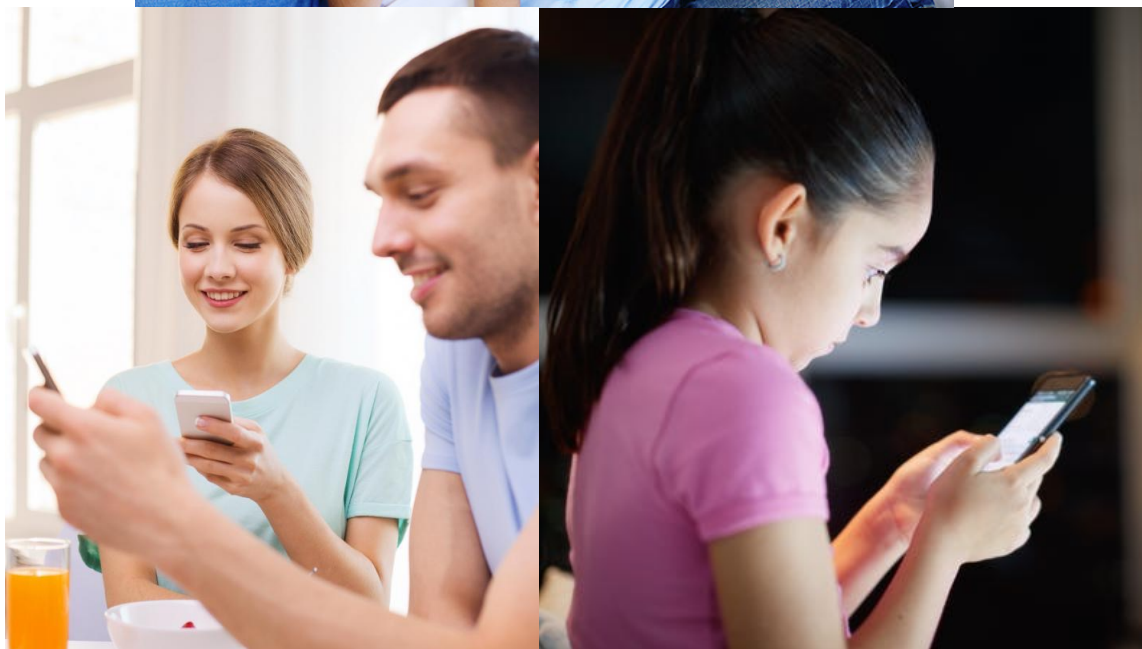
Key Findings

Parents

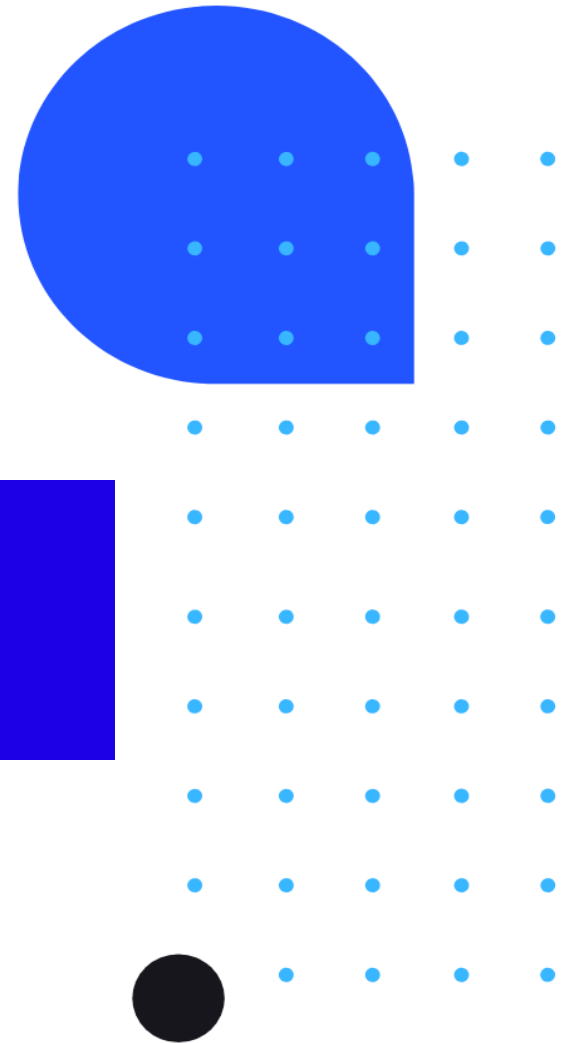
- Smartphone Usage among Parents
- Impact on Relationship with Children

Children

- Smartphone Usage among Children
- Impact on Relationship with Parents



KEY FINDINGS – Quantitative module



Key Findings (Parents)



Parents agree that their phones have become an integral part of their life and they cannot imagine their life without it.



On an average, smartphone usage per day among parents.



Parents agree that they spend their time at home on their smartphones mostly



Agree that it would be more relaxing / refreshing to have in person engagement with their kids than scrolling through smartphones during free time



Implications?

Key Findings (Parents)



93%

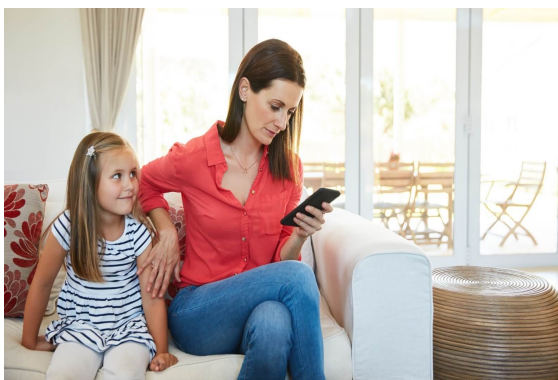


Feel guilty about the quality of relationships with their children

90%



Agree that they spend less quality time with their kids than possible.



94%



Parents are worried about their children's mental health

77%



Accept that their kids often complained about their (parents) overindulgence on the phone instead of spending time with them.



91%



Parents believe that there should be some restrictions to smartphone usage by children

90%



Get irritated when kids ask for something while they are immersed in their smartphones.

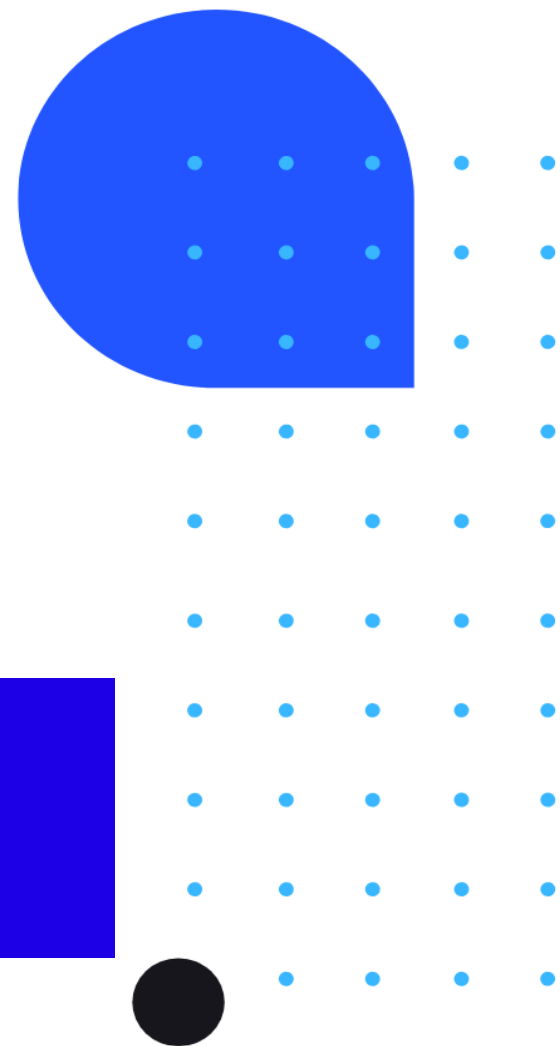
Solution

91%

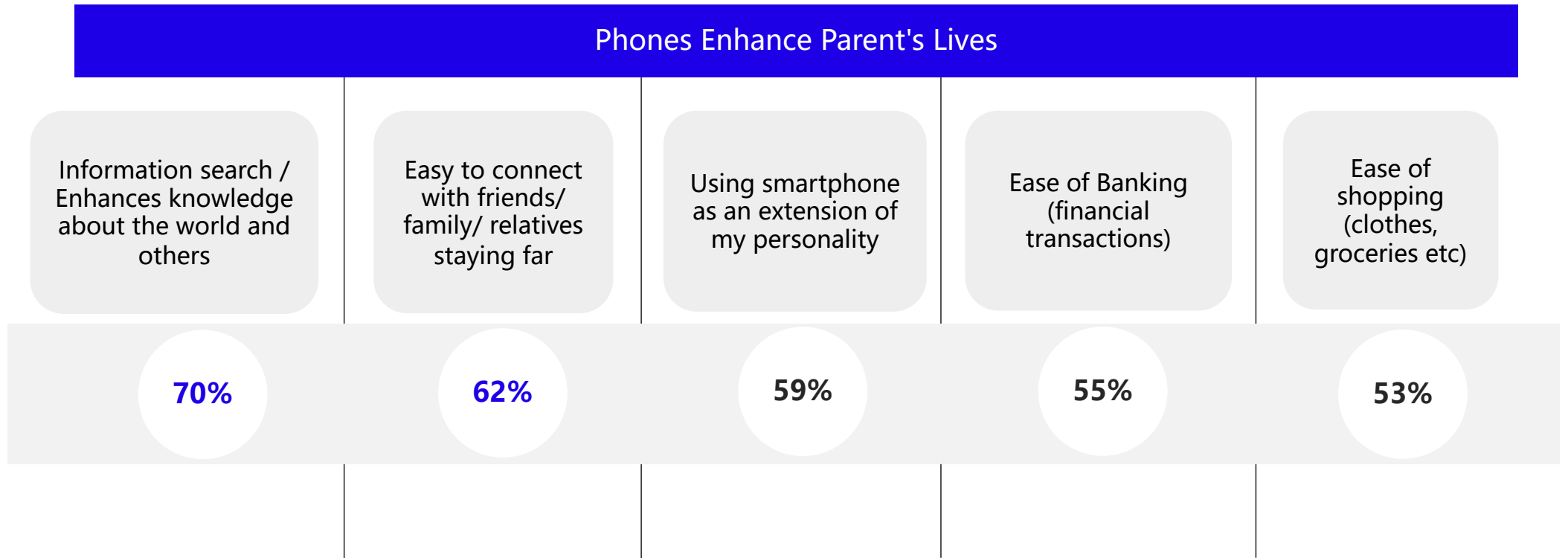
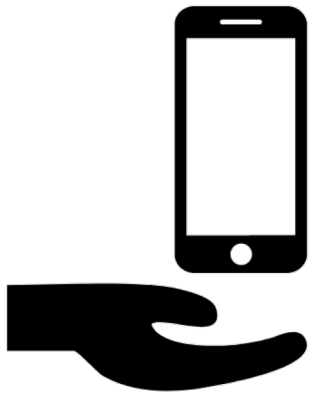
Parents want to devote more meaningful time with their children.

CHAPTER ONE

SMARTPHONE USAGE AMONG PARENTS

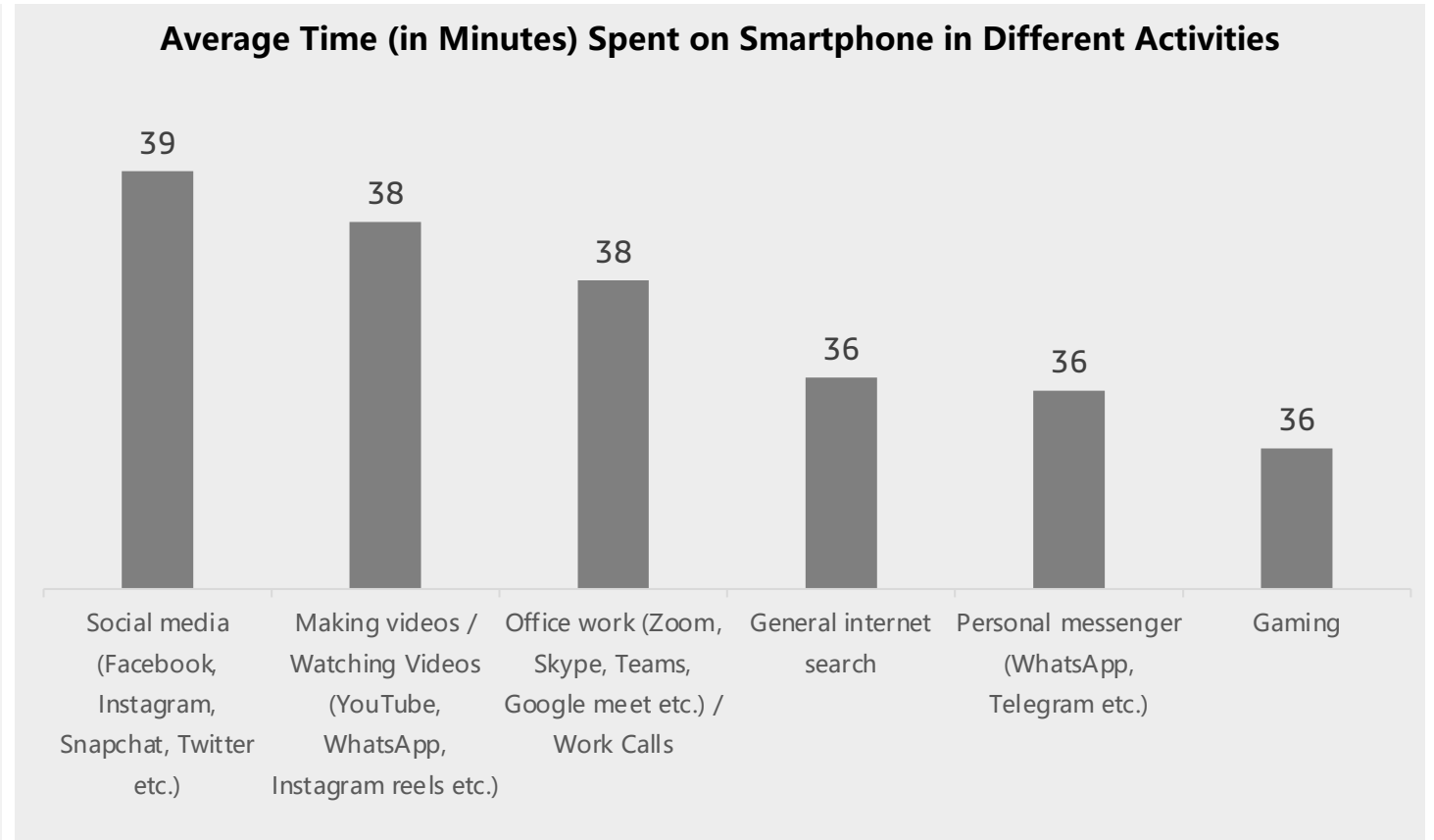
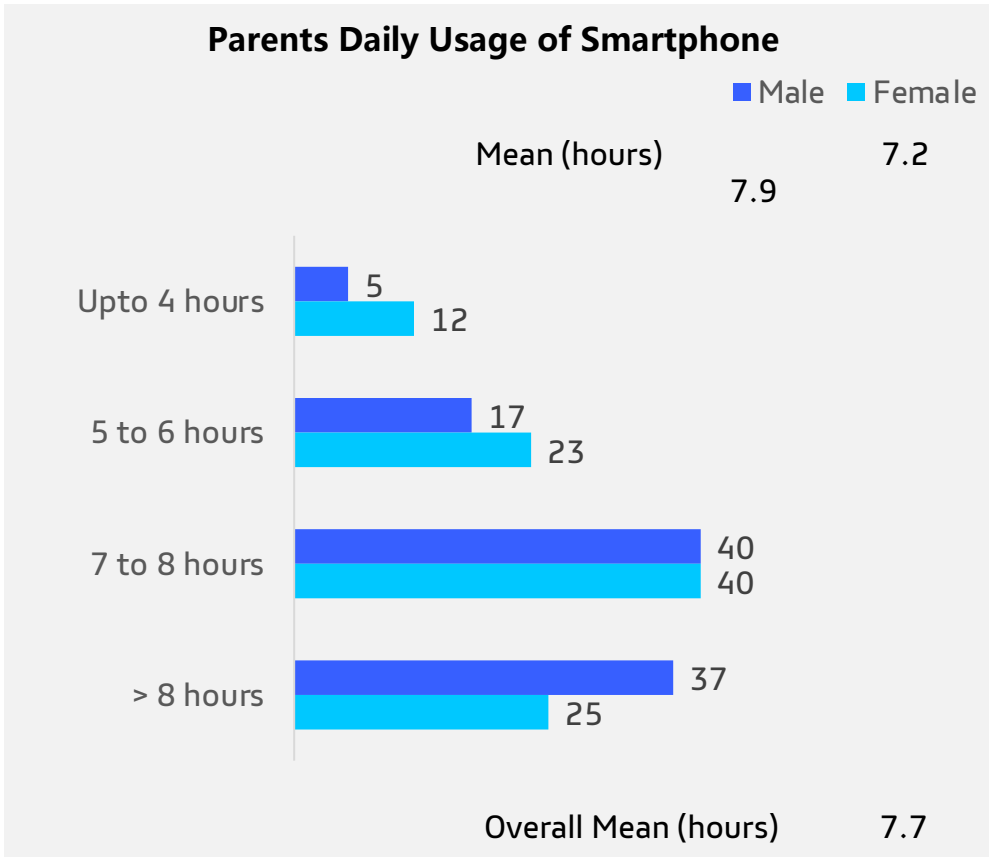


Smartphones play a significant role as an essential tool for both acquiring information and nurturing social connections among parents.



Q. What are the benefits of using a smartphone in your life?

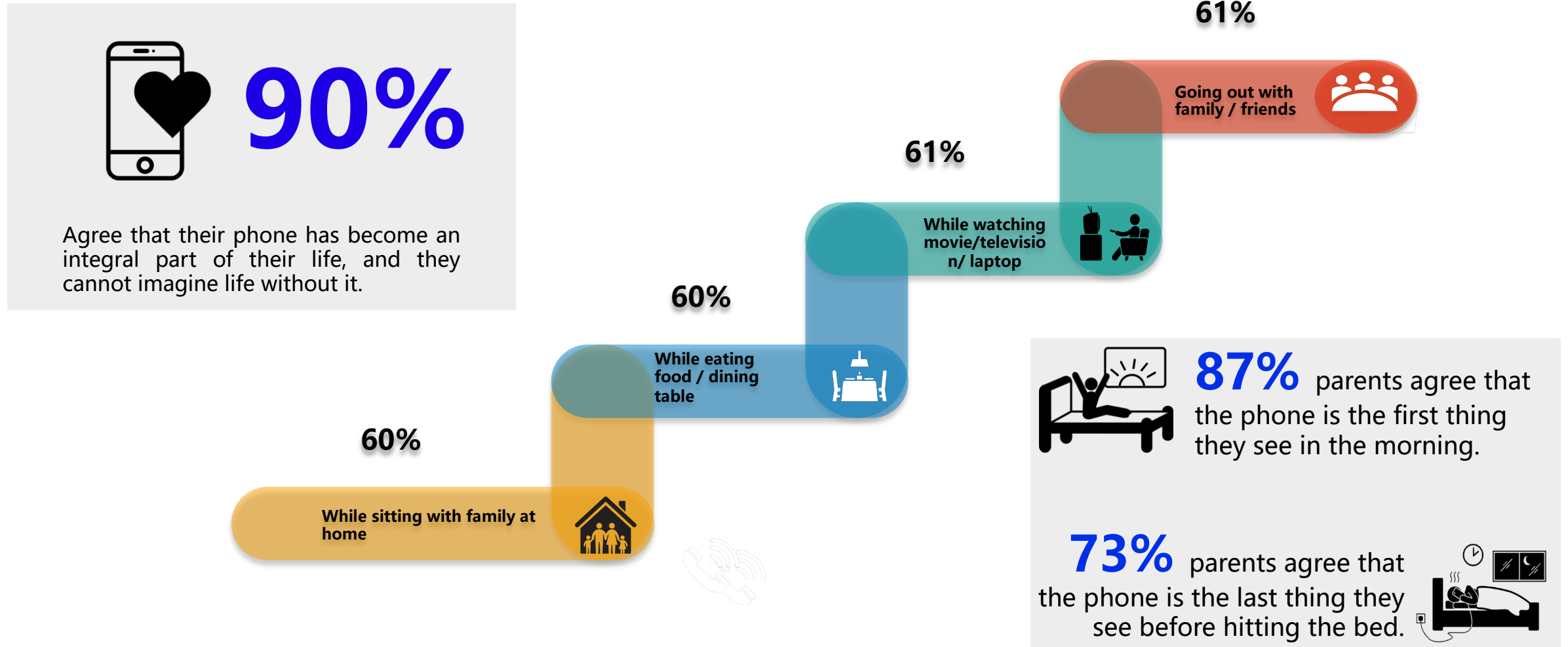
Average time spent on smartphone is 7.7 hours – Social media contributes to the highest usage time for parents. Further, Fathers spend more time on their smartphones in comparison to mothers.



Q. How many hours do you spend on your mobile device per day?

Q. How much time do you spend on following activities on your phone in a day?

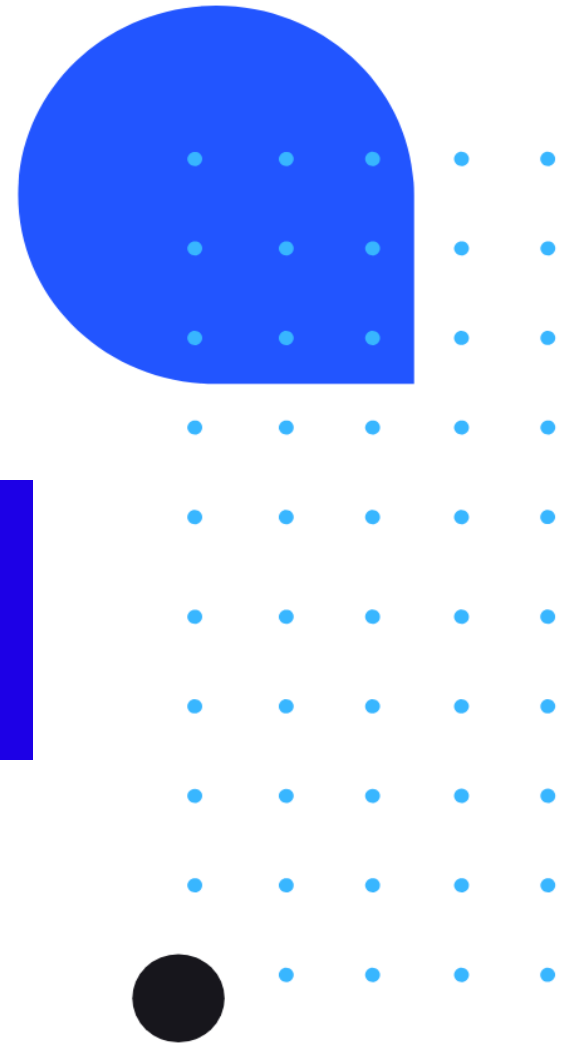
Smartphone dependency among parents – Parents carry their smartphones almost everywhere and it has become an indispensable part of their life



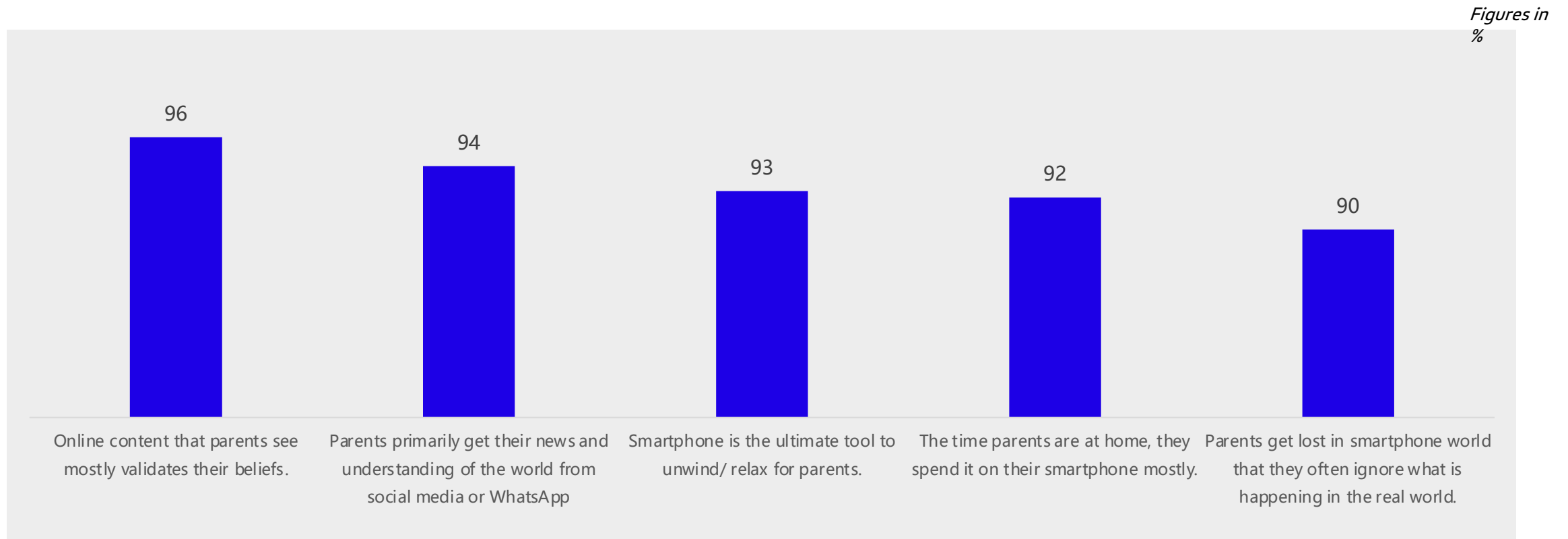
- Q. How much do you agree with this statement that your phone has become a part of your body and you cannot separate?
- Q. Where all do you take & use your phone at home ?
- Q. Is your phone the first thing you look at when you wake up? Q. Is your phone the last thing you see before going to bed?

CHAPTER TWO

IMPACT ON RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILDREN



Parents tend to spend the time they have at home mostly on their smartphones



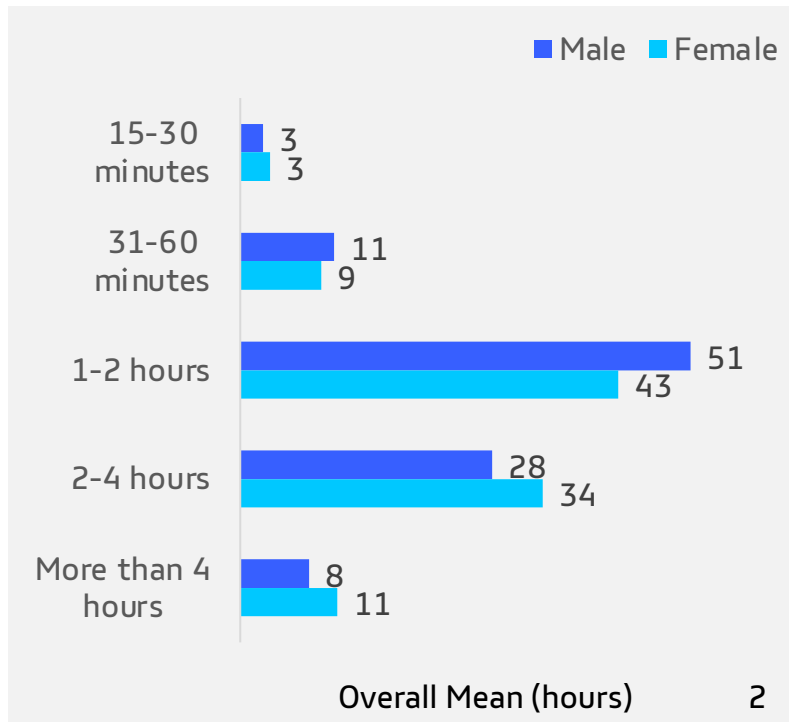
Q. How much do you agree with these statements? (Top 2 Box Scores)

On average, parents spend nearly two hours with their children, but ~75% parents admit to using their phones during this time. Three out of four children frequently voice their apprehensions about their parents devoting excessive attention to their phones when they are together.

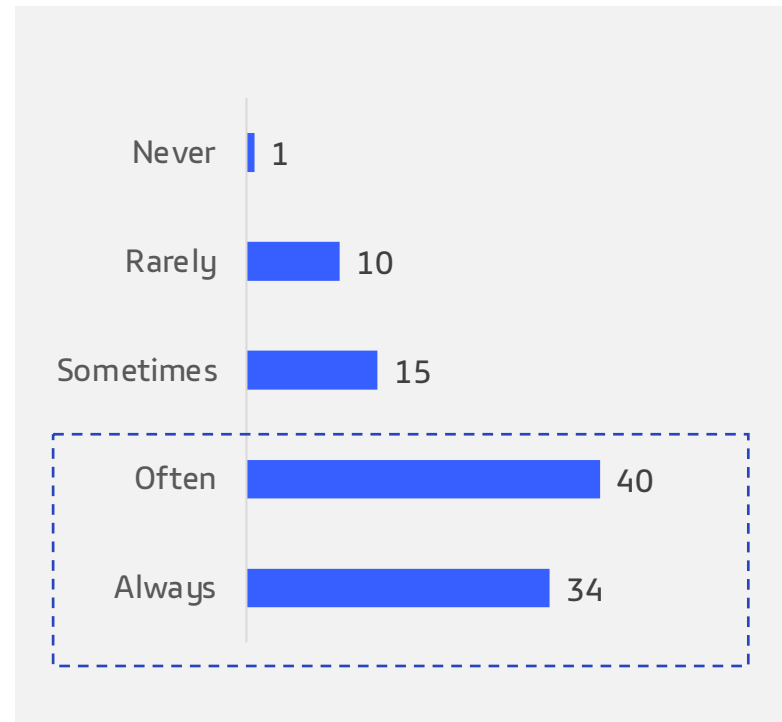


Figures in %

Time spent with kids



Phone usage while spending time with kids



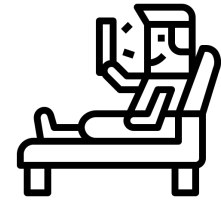
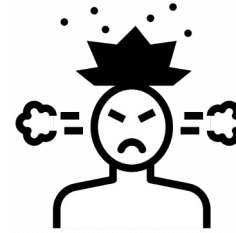
Overindulgence on Phone	
Frequency of usage	% of people
Rarely	7
Sometimes	15
Often	35
Always	42

Q. How much meaningful time do you spend with your kids daily?

Q. Do you use your phone while spending time with your kids?

Q. Have your kids ever complained about your overindulgence on the phone instead of spending time with them?

Parents mostly agree that it will be more relaxing to have in-person engagement with kids and they feel guilty about the current quality of relationships with their children



Preferred Way to Relax

Feel Guilty

Get irritated

Spending less time with kids

94%

It would be more relaxing / refreshing to have in person engagement with their kids than scrolling through smartphones during their free time

93%

Parents feel guilty about the quality of their relationships with their children

90%

Parents sometimes get irritated when their kids ask something when they are immersed in smartphones

90%

Parents spend less quality time with their kids than possible

Majority of the parents are worried about their children's mental wellbeing, their social skills and overall holistic development



91%

Parents believe that there should be some restrictions to smartphone usage by children

91%

Parents are worried about their children's social skills and overall holistic development

94%

Parents are worried about their children's mental health

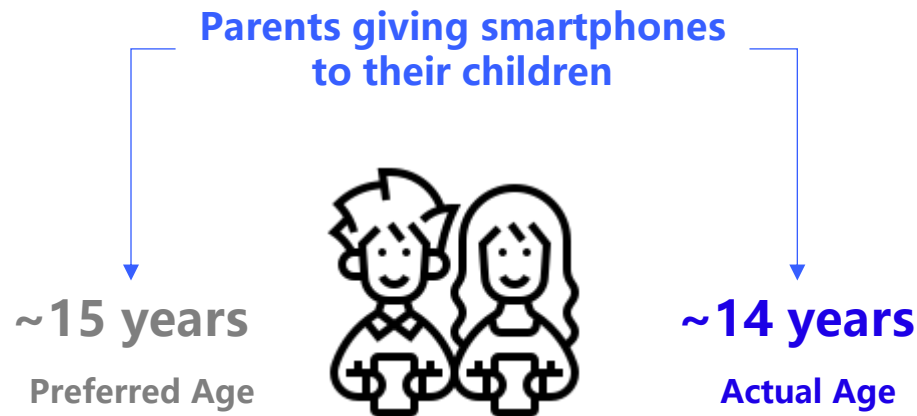
92%

Parents agree that children are misusing their smartphones

91%

Parents want their children to spend more time playing outside and meeting up friends and family physically

Majority of parents tend to provide their children with smartphones at around the age of 14, often equipped with parental controls. This decision is primarily driven by security concerns, as well as the recognition that smartphones are increasingly essential for educational purposes.



89% parents have employed parental controls on their kid's smartphone.

37%

I gave it for security purpose

31%

Child required it for studies

20%

Child was asking for it as his / her friends have smartphone

12%

I gave it to him / her as a reward for scoring well in exams

- Q. What should be the minimum age of a child to get a personal smartphone?
- Q. At what age did you give a personal smartphone to your child?
- Q. Do you employ parental controls on your kid's smartphone devices currently?
- Q. What are the reasons for giving a smartphone to your child?

Parents want to foster deeper connection with their kids in future and want to devote more meaningful time to them



96%

parents would want to have deeper connection with their kids in future



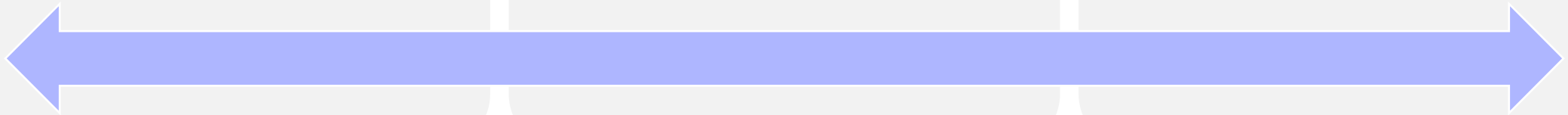
93%

parents feel that there is a need to use parental controls on children's devices



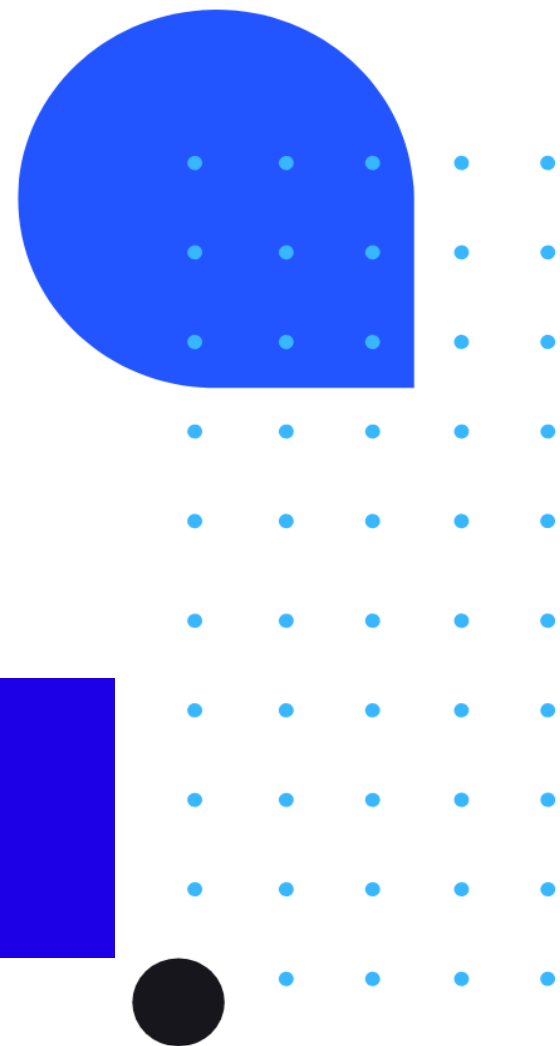
91%

parents would want to devote more meaningful time to their kids in future.

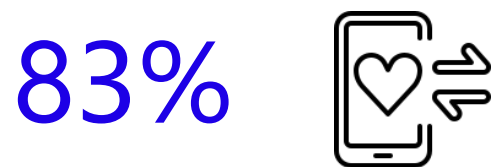


CHAPTER THREE

**SMARTPHONE USAGE
AMONG CHILDREN**



Key Findings (Children)



Children agree that their phones have become an integral part of their life and they cannot imagine life without it.



On an average, smartphone usage per day among children.



Children say that they spend most of their time on their smartphones when they are at home



Agree that it would be more relaxing / refreshing to have in person engagement with their parents than scrolling through smartphones during free time.



Implications?

Key Findings (Children)



72% 

Children accept that they use their smartphone while interacting with their parents.

87% 

Children feel inferiority complex if they don't own a smartphone.

78% 

Accept that their parents have complained about their (Children's) overindulgence on their phones instead of spending time with them.

87% 

Children accepted that they talk to their parents rudely while using smartphone because they get annoyed.

93% 

Feel guilty about the quality of relationships with their parents.

83% 

Agree that they spend less quality time with their parents than possible.

Solution

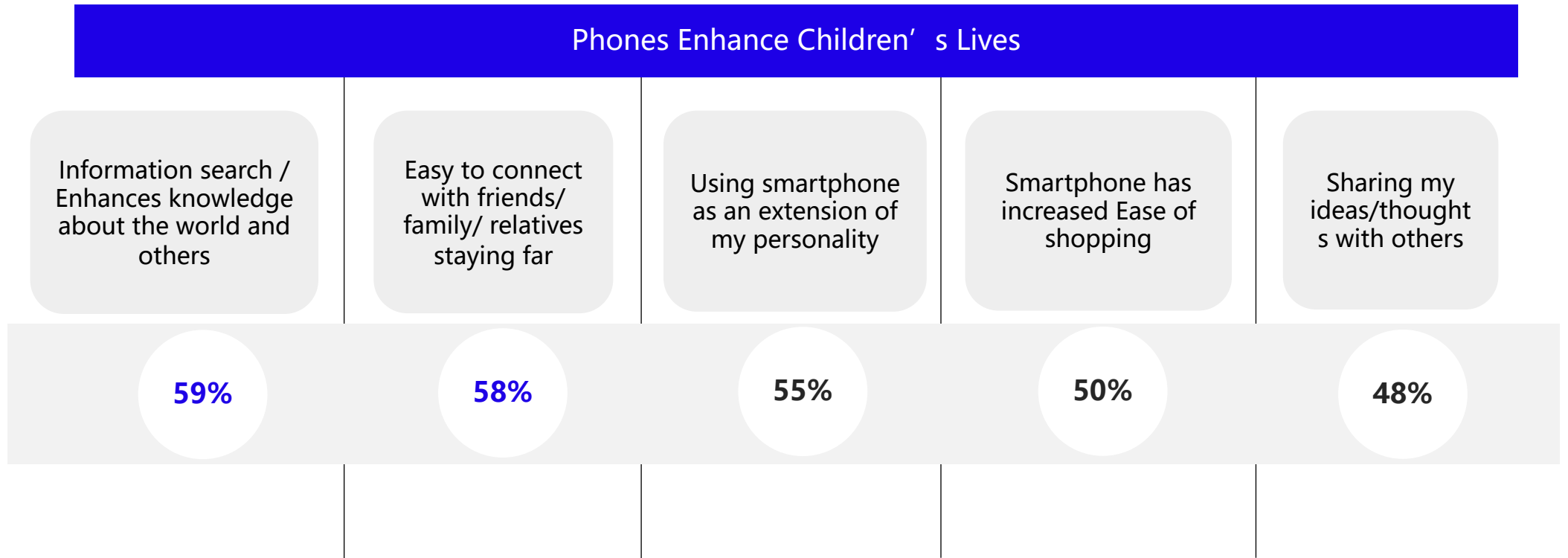
93%

Children want to devote more meaningful time with their parents.

~60% children use their smartphones for infotainment. 58% children find smartphones convenient for connecting with friends, family, and relatives who are geographically living far.



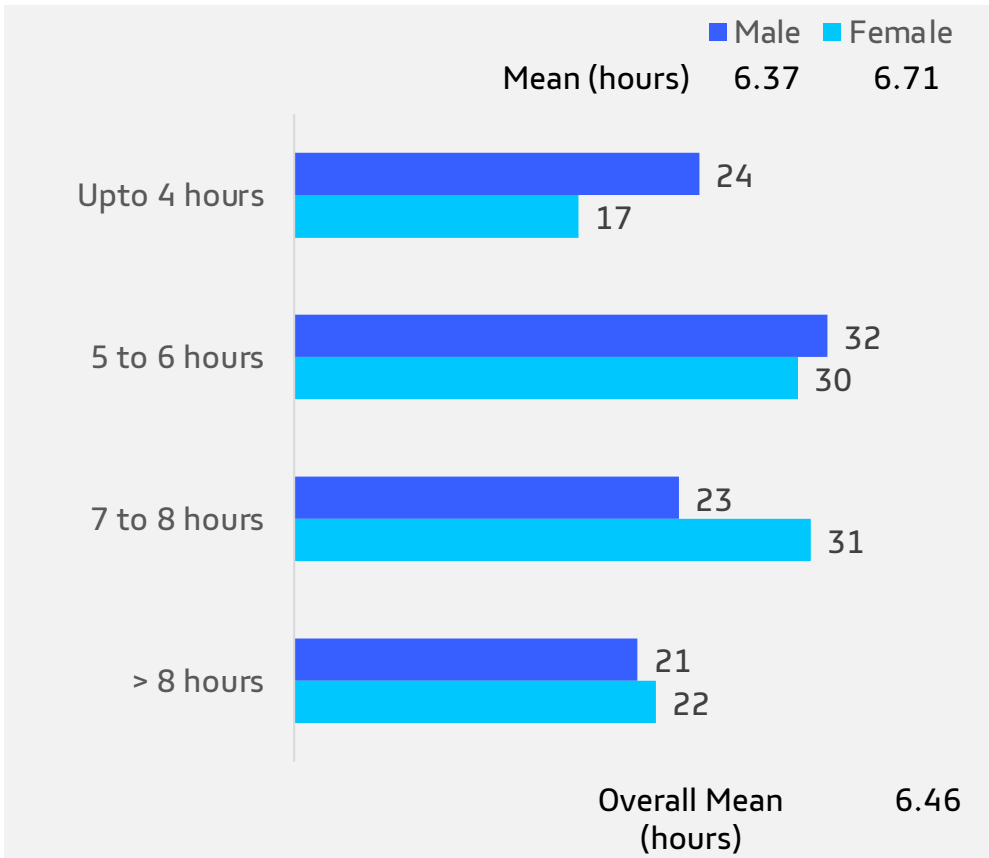
“On an average, each child started using smartphone at the age of 12 Years.”



Average time spent on smartphone is between 6.5 hours – Gaming being prominent source of their entertainment - Girls spend slightly more time on their smartphones in comparison to boys.

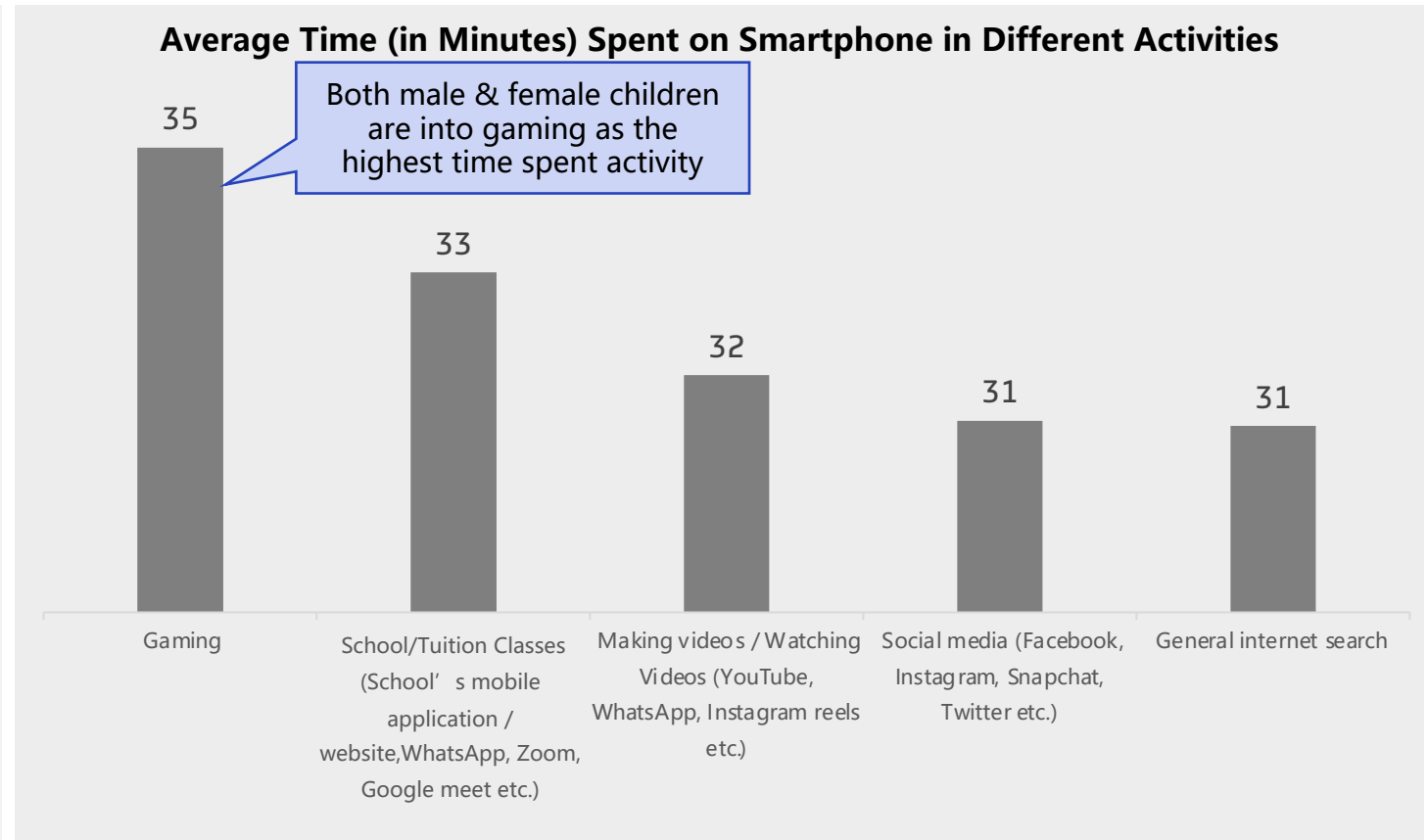


Children Daily Usage of Smartphone



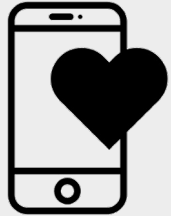
Q. How many hours do you spend on your mobile device per day?

Average Time (in Minutes) Spent on Smartphone in Different Activities



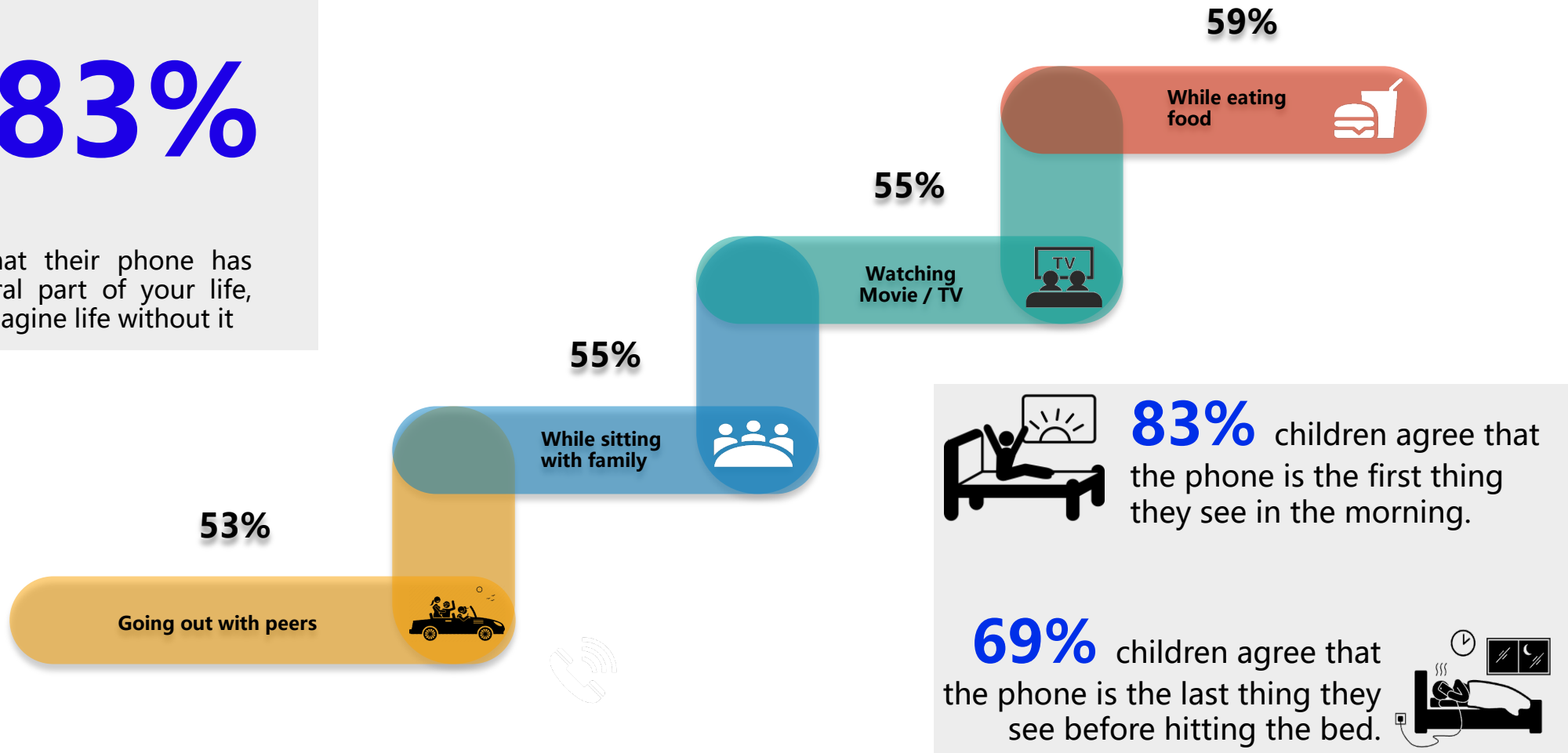
Q. How much time do you spend on following activities on your phone in a day?

Smartphone dependency among children – they carry their smartphones almost everywhere and it has become an indispensable part of their life



83%

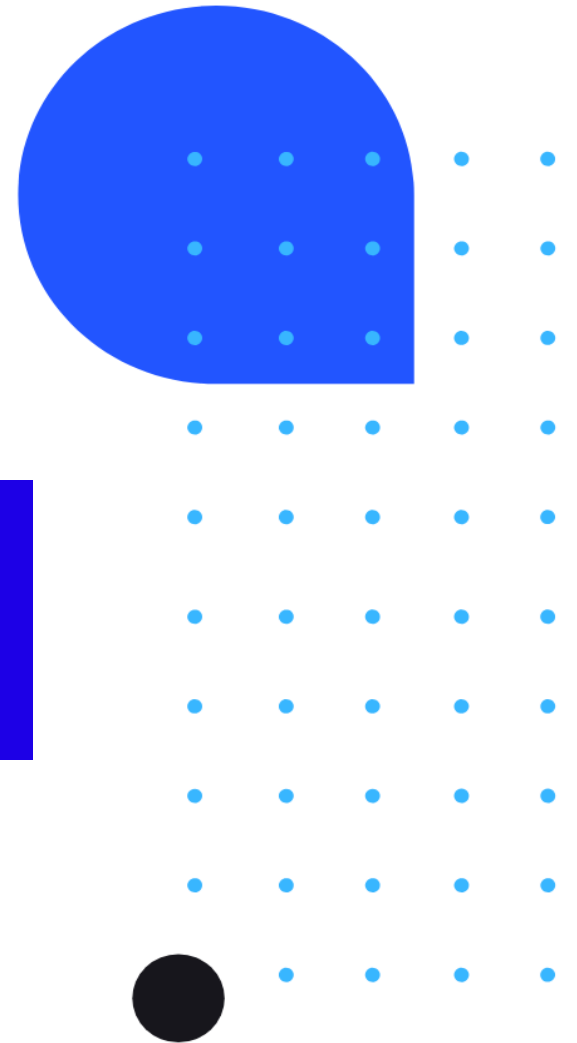
Children agree that their phone has become an integral part of your life, and you cannot imagine life without it



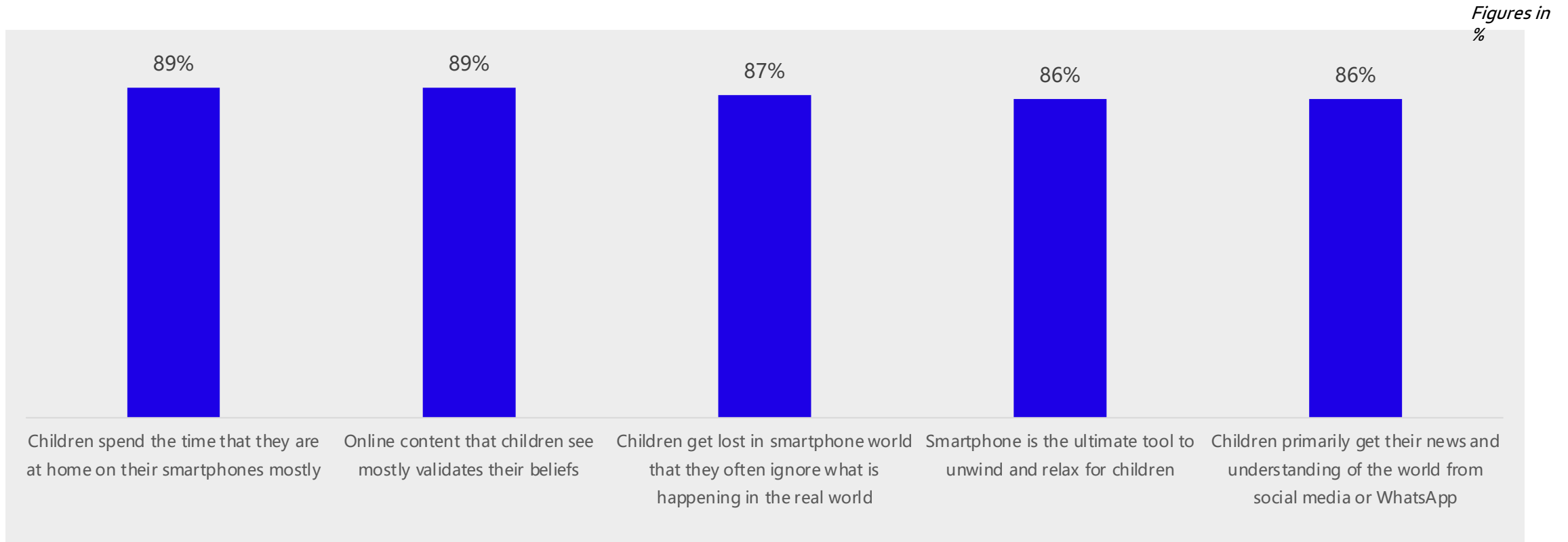
- Q. How much do you agree with this statement that your phone has become a part of your body and you cannot separate?
- Q. Where all do you take & use your phone at home ?
- Q. Is your phone the first thing you look at when you wake up? Q. Is your phone the last thing you see before going to bed?

CHAPTER FOUR

IMPACT ON RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENTS



~90% of children spend their time on smartphones when they are at home and claim to often get lost in the smartphone world that they ignore the real world.



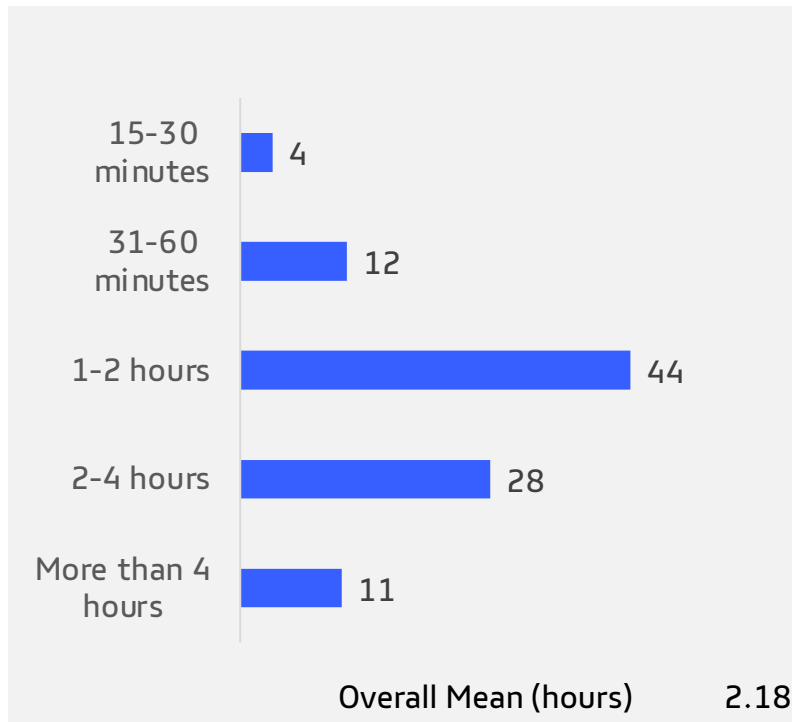
Q. How much do you agree with these statements? (Top 2 Box Scores)

Children typically spend ~2 hours with their parents. Further, three out of every four children often use their phones while spending time with their parents. Similarly, equal proportion of parents also complain about the overindulgence of their children on smartphone.

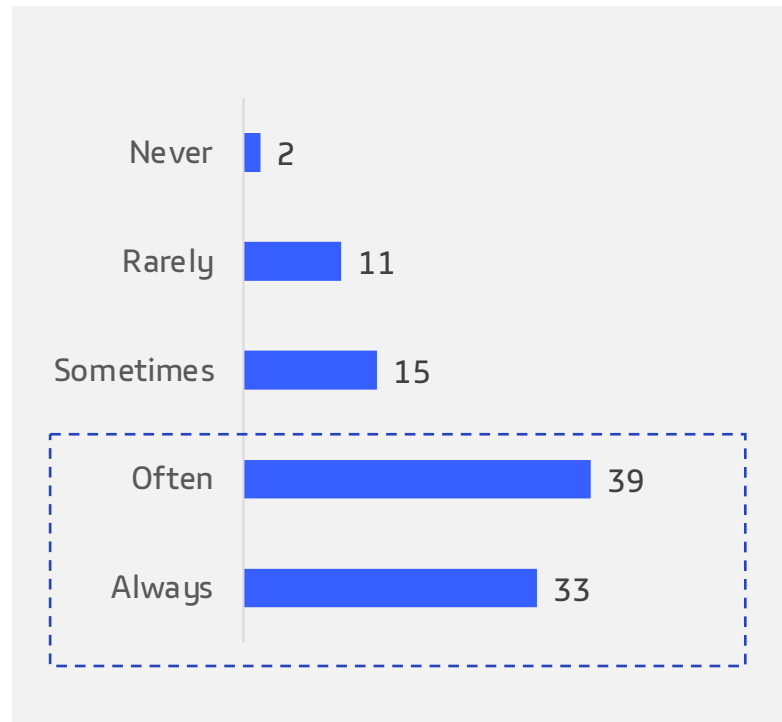


Figures in %

Time Spent With Parents



Phone Usage While Spending Time With Parents



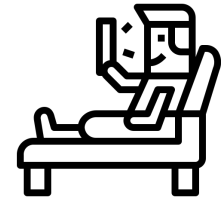
Overindulgence on Phone	
Frequency of usage	% of people
Rarely	8
Sometimes	12
Often	33
Always	46

Q. How much meaningful time do you spend with your parents daily?

Q. Do you use your phone while spending time with your parents?

Q. Have your parents ever complained about your overindulgence on the phone instead of spending time with them?

Almost all the children feel guilty about the quality of relationship with their parents. They also feel lonely because of their parents' smartphone usage.



Feel Guilty

Feel Lonely

Preferred Way to Relax

Spending less time with parents

93%

children feel guilty about the quality of relationships with parents.

91%

children feel lonelier than ever before because of their parent' s smartphone usage

91%

children feel that that it would be more relaxing / refreshing to have in person engagement with parents than scrolling through smartphones during their free time

83%

children spend less time with their parents than possible

91% children experience anxiety when they are separated from their phones, while majority of children feel lonely and agreed that excessive usage takes a toll on their mental health



91%

Children feel anxious when they are away from phone

87%

Children feel inferiority complex if they don't own a smartphone

89%

Children compare themselves to people online and feel unhappy/depressed with their existing lifestyle in comparison to online influencers

90%

Children agreed that excessive smartphone usage takes a toll on their mental health

90%

Children feel lonely even though they have a lot of friends on social media

87%

talk to their parents rudely while you are using smartphone because they get annoyed.

84%

Children spend long periods of time in silence on their smartphones, while spending time together as a family



Children realize the importance of more time with their parents and less on the phones



88%

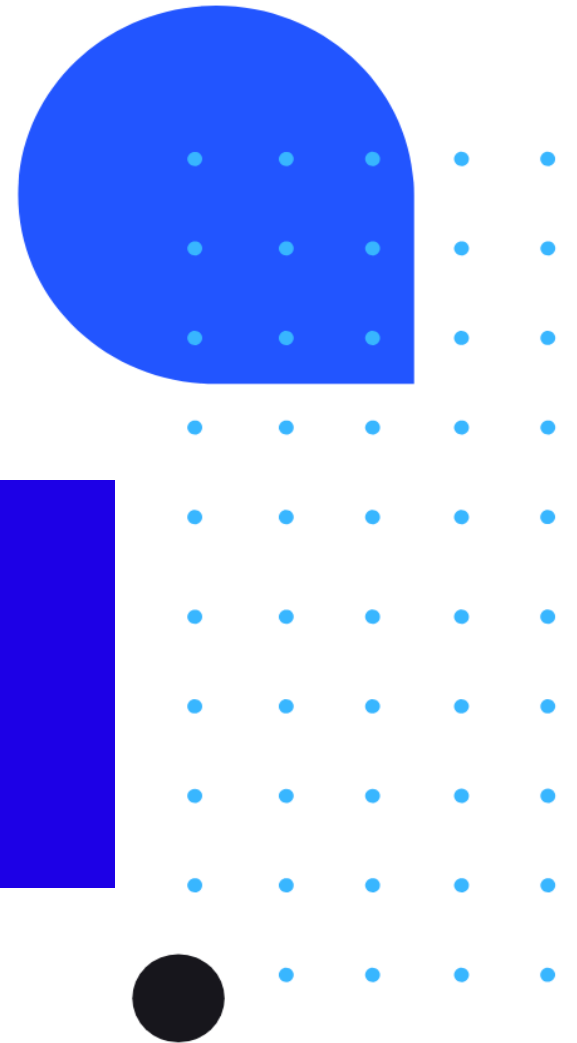
Children would want to devote more meaningful time with their parents in future.



93%

Children would want to have deeper connection with their parents in future.

**KEY FINDINGS –
Qualitative module
(Consumer testimony)**



Key Learnings – *Addiction not limited to the young; parents equally guilty of high screen time - face problems in telling children to get off phone*

Parents find the dopamine kick is addictive as much for themselves as it is for their kids – they find it difficult to confront kids to tell them to put down their phones



“After I am done with cooking and household chores, I usually spend some time watching some OTT series or YouTube to relax. My son sees that and when I ask him to keep his phone, he argues with me that I use my phone more than him so why can't he?” – Parents, Mumbai

Key Learnings – *Parents accept that equation with distant relatives are slowly becoming more impersonal – prefer digital socializing than real meet and greet*

There is a unanimous agreement that relations are getting distanced even with availability of technology to be connected as most find spending time on their phone to be a more convenient leisure activity



“Earlier relatives used to come during holidays or at least meet at some wedding or gathering. Now I hardly see any of them in years. There's no calling nor do we find time to call. We have phones and laptops, but we just don't find time to reach them, and I am sure the condition is same on the other side.” – Parents, Mumbai

Key Learnings – *Smartphone making both parents as well as children live life in silo – eating up the traditional family time moments*

High screen time seen to be a factor causing gap in all their relationships – be it within the home or even in the larger social scheme. Communication between couples reducing and sometimes leads to misunderstanding and also important aspects not being discussed (slept over)



“Yes, we see a lot of distance between us after phones have come in. Like we used to talk a lot before during normal relaxing hours or with chai also. Now its only during lunch and sometimes, I have a phone in hand, or she does and there is not much talking. My son, before lockdown, he used to ask his mother or me his doubts from his homework, now he either calls his friends to clear it or uses YouTube. I used to feel involved and know what he is being taught, now that’ s not there too.” – Parents, Bangalore

Key Learnings – *The personal screen with instant access to a world of “interesting” stimulants makes smartphones inseparable among teens*

With phones, allowing teens to be in constant touch with their phones through sharing reels, memes, DMs and comments on social media posts → need for physical meet-ups declining. Even when they meet offline, they struggle to have human conversations and look for a crutch in the form memes or other contents to engage over



“Sometimes I keep the phone away. But friends will keep sharing memes. Even if I don’ t want to reply I will have to. Otherwise, they will roast me and tell me I have become too big or too busy. Even when we meet, we talk about the same reels or memes that we had shared” – Teens, Delhi

Key Learnings – Technology is not only for leisure but also seen to be the go to source for learning. Interestingly, making the role of a parent as a tutor or guide redundant

The first point for seeking out answers among teens is seen to be Google and not parents as it used to be previously without phones → felt to be time consuming and requires more context setting



“I don’ t ask Papa about my doubts now. I call my friend or check on the internet. Quite many times, other children have the same doubts so its there on the internet. If I ask Papa, he will first read the question then ask more questions on it so I have to explain him a lot many thing before he can clear my doubts ” – Teen, Kolkata

Key Learnings – Excessive usage is defined to be a phenomenon when the child is addicted to the smartphone to the extent that they start neglecting their academics and other social engagements

Excessive usage seen to be a big concern among parents – fear the addiction might impair the child’ s mental and physical growth – child might lack social skills and would impair their personal development

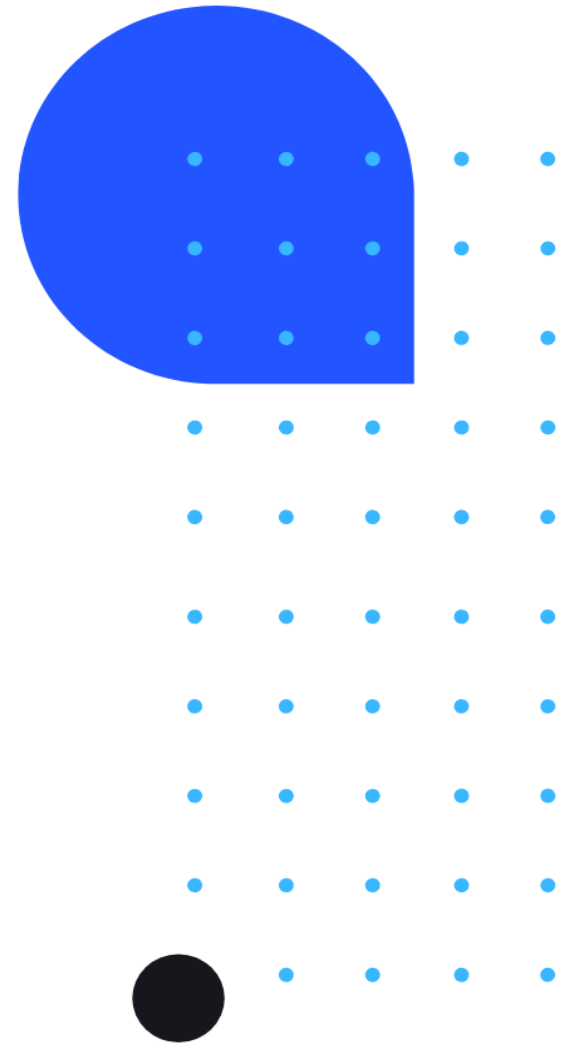


“I don’ t know think I have become angry, but my mummy friends say I don’ t talk much like I used to before when I didn’ t have a phone. I just like to keep to myself that’ s it. Yes, mummy scolds me when I am very tired in the morning and can’t study. She tells me that I spent a lot of time on the phone last night and that’ s why I am so tired. It’ s true, I don’ t feel very active if I keep using the phone till late. I am very tired in the morning and sleepy.” – Teen, Delhi



“I try to stay away from the phone... but then when I come home there’ s nothing to do much... mom is busy with her work and serials. I go to my room and play on my phone or look at Insta... even I sometimes think why I am wasting time watching this meaningless stuff. Then I keep it away... but again then some friend will send a message or meme and I will go back to the phone. If I don’ t reply then they will tell me that I am avoiding them or becoming too arrogant – Teen, Bangalore

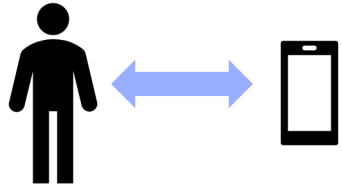
KEY FINDINGS – Expert module



Worrying signs of incremental progression towards dependence and addiction of smartphones among children



Difference between Dependence and Addiction of Smartphones



Dependence ↔ Enabler

Dependence on smartphone for daily activities such as booking a cab, ordering food etc. is fine under limits (*~2 hours per day*)

Addiction ↔ Driver

Addiction impacts daily routine and leads to heightened irritability and inability to carry out daily tasks. The activities include binge watching OTTs or online gaming.



For teenagers



Smartphone usage reasons

- Boredom leading to an urge to pick smartphone
- Non-involvement in age-specific activities such as playing outdoor games, learning new skills, spending quality time with parents etc.
- Distract themselves from unresolved trauma (negligence of parents etc.)

Addiction

- Triggered by FOMO and peer pressure
- Results in **Nomophobia - NO MOBILE PHOne PhoBIA** is used to describe a psychological condition when people have a fear of being detached from mobile phone connectivity.
- Smartphone being a substitute for parental guidance – teenagers prefer google over adults



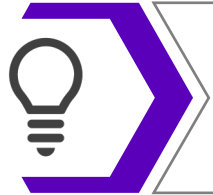
For young adults, smartphone is sometimes taken up as a time pass. They have thoughts like – I don't have anything, so I'm doing a time pass and from that time pass it becomes a behavioral addiction. Now, what is behavioral addiction is where the FOMO sets in. So what happens if I don't have a mobile phone? If I stay away from mobile phone, what will happen? Will my friends like me? Will they like my pictures? Will my friends stay connected with each other? Will I know everything that's happening in the school group or class group? Oh, I have uploaded a picture of are they liking it? What are the comments? – and this also leads to excessive use of smartphones.



- Certified Child Psychologist and Parenting Counselor



Expert Speaks



Lost Empathy

Exposure to screen since childhood makes them understand only one-way communication where the information is constantly bombarded at them without any understanding of the need for acknowledgment. Hence, they are unable to express themselves.



Phubbing and Increased Loneliness

Phubbing, or phone snubbing, contributes to increased loneliness by diverting individuals' attention away from face-to-face interactions and personal connections - fostering a sense of disconnection and loneliness.



Impact on Mental Wellbeing

When everything is available through a click, there is a persistent need for instant gratification which decreases patience and tolerance levels. This leads to depression, irritability and frequent mood changes.



Impact on Physical Wellbeing

Sleep disorders due to excessive usage at night, not keeping track of food consumption or trying out fad diets and preference of on-screen gaming over physical activities has adversely impacted health.



Over stimulation of brain

Excessive screen time overstimulates young brains with intense digital sounds and rapid animations, hindering proper development and blurring the distinction between real life and virtual reality for children.



Young adults only understand one-way communication through screens as they were exposed since a very young age. They don't understand that when somebody is talking, they need to acknowledge. There is no mirror effect of body language happening, and there is no nodding. There are no expressions. The emotions of the other person is not felt because they have never understood that what is feeling of emotions or what is empathy.

- **Certified Child Psychologist and Parenting Counselor**



For example, there is this adolescent who comes to me and constantly says that you know what, I'm not able to have even one face to face conversation with my mom because she pulls out her phone and starts doing something on her phone while I am trying to talk to her.

- **Certified Mental Health Expert**



The blue rays that are emitted from the screens, they will shut down melatonin at night, which is your sleep hormone. Because the brain is interpreting the blue rays as daylight and it's completely desynchronizing the circadian rhythm. If your brain is thinking it's daytime, it will not go to sleep. This translates to a vicious cycle of less fulfilled sleep.

- **Certified Child Psychologist and Mental Health Expert**

Fostering Healthy Connections: Nurturing Positive Relationships with Smartphones for Improved Relationships with Loved Ones



Suggestion

Parents can adopt mindful practices and set boundaries for their children to curb negative impact of smartphones and ultimately, build a strong relationship

What can parents do?

Cultivate engaging habits in children to alleviate boredom



- Allow the child to experience boredom
- Cultivating habits such as reading, household chores, and gardening, along with a designated hobby, is essential to prevent turning to smartphones out of boredom.

Create a safe non-judgemental space for children



- Establish an open and non-judgmental environment for the child to freely communicate with parents.
- Ensure they feel accepted and not pressured, creating a space where they feel comfortable sharing without hesitation.

Limit technology usage by setting timelines



- Set a switch off time for both the smartphones and wi-fi at night
- Do not let children wear smartwatches for entire 24 hrs
- Limit the notifications of less important apps on the smartphone to avoid unnecessary distractions

Increase awareness about mental health impact



- Establish a strong bond with children by making them aware of the ill-effects of using smartphones and how to prevent mental health issues
- Consider children as a responsible stakeholder who know the importance of using smartphones under limits



Expert Speaks



Your sole focus should be on creating a bonding with the child. The world is taking a 360 degree turn and it's moving towards AI. And while the child, well, things are moving towards AI and excessive use of technology has been there. Smartphones is one of just one of them. Without fostering a strong bond, instilling resilience, and expanding your child's emotional vocabulary, professional help may become necessary at a young age. Thus, it is crucial to provide unwavering support to your child.

- Certified Child Psychologist and Mental Health Expert

Parents can enable children to use their smartphones wisely and establish reasonable boundaries to limit the usage duration



Permissible time limit for smartphone usage as per experts	
Age	Time duration
< 5 years	~15 mins (or better to avoid completely)
5-8 years	30 mins
8-11 years	1 hour
12-16 years	2-3 hours
> 16 years	Own discretion



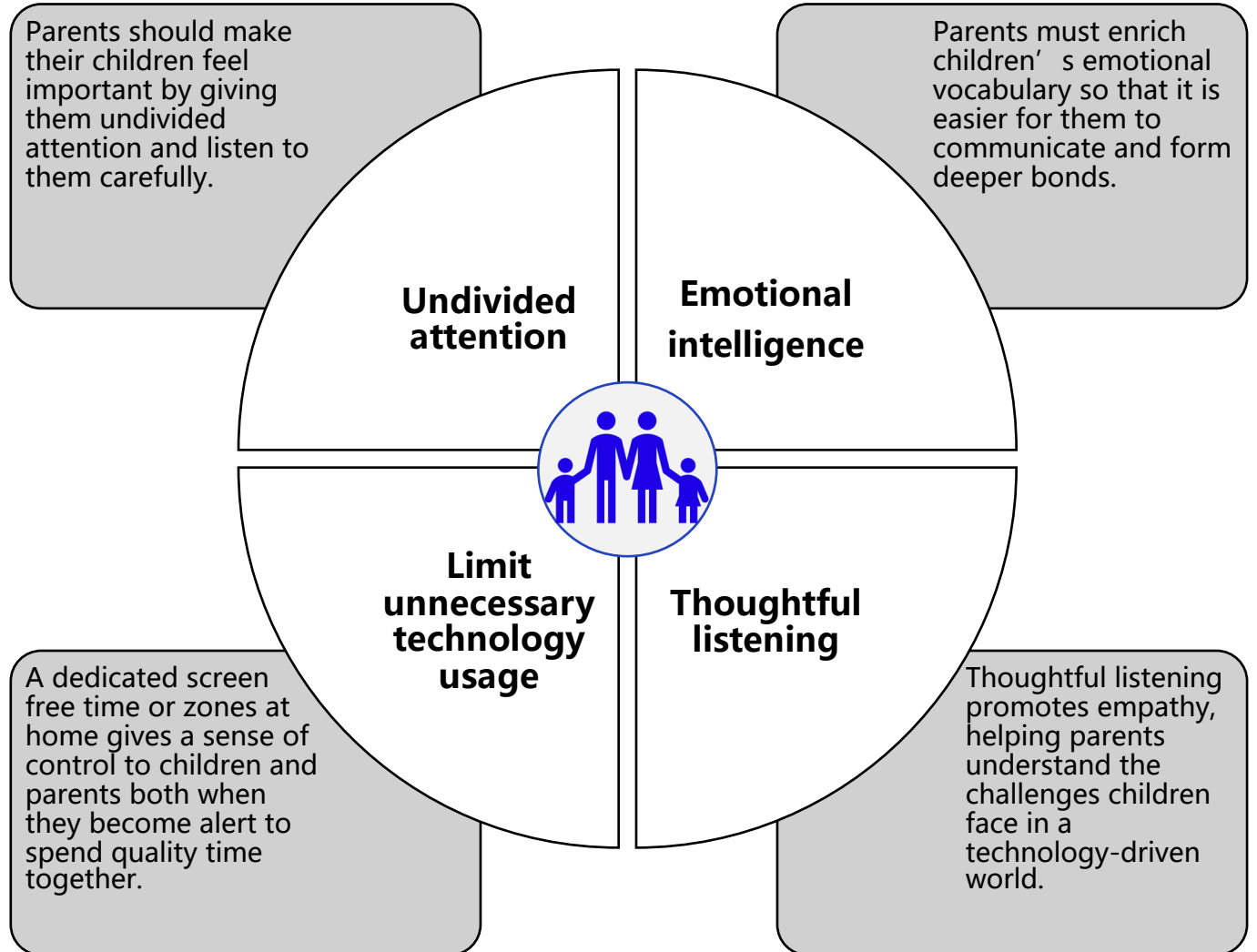
Parents need to be aware of the content and frequency of the shows their children are watching. This should be monitored. From the age of 16 onwards, if the child is responsible enough to comprehend the associated responsibilities and is aware of the potential harm to their mental, emotional, and physical well-being, as well as the problems they may encounter, then a screen time limit of two to three hours (or four hours depending on usage and necessity) can be considered.

- Certified Mental Health Expert



Expert Speaks

Implications for Parents from experts

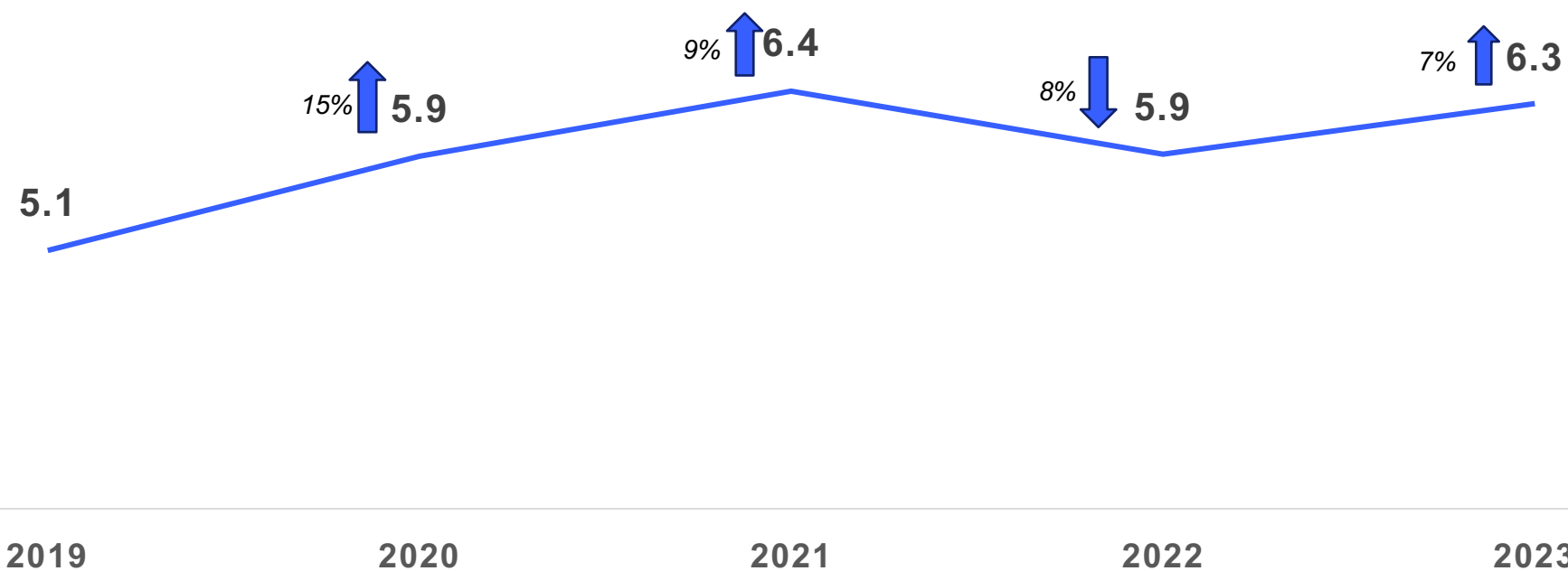


THANK YOU.
谢谢。

Trend of Duration of Smartphone Usage in India of last 5 years (Daily)

Age Group – 15 to 50 Years

Average Duration of Usage of Smartphone on a Daily Basis (hrs)



Trend of Duration of Smartphone Usage in India of last 5 years (Yearly)

Age Group – 15 to 50 Years

Average Duration of Usage of Smartphone on a Yearly Basis (hrs)

