

Nestlé Social Research Programme

Incorporating the Nestlé Family Monitor

'TXT DON'T TALK' SAY YOUNG PEOPLE

Texting has transformed the social lives of young people according to a new study from the Nestlé Social Research Programme. The study shows that many young people now prefer to chat, flirt, make dates – and even end relationships – by text rather than mobile talk, email or landline.

The social implications of the use of texting are considerable according to Professor Haste, Director of the Nestlé Social Research Programme:

“Texting is replacing speech for a large swathe of communication amongst young people. It is immediate, accessible, private, and gives young people unprecedented control over how they communicate with their friends and family.”

With 95% of young people claiming access to a mobile phone, texting now plays a key part in their social lives. It is used by nine out of ten (89%) 11 – 21 year old mobile phone users at least once a day and over half (54%) use it at least five times a day. Texting is preferred for chatting people up, (55%), making a first date (40%) and even ending a relationship – with more boys (34%) than girls (23%) choosing this way of saying goodbye.

The Nestlé Social Research Programme study, which is called “Joined up texting: the role of the mobile phone in young people’s lives”, looks at how, when and where young people use their mobile phones. It reveals that:

- Young people are wedded to this piece of technology with three-quarters (77%) saying they ‘could not bear to be without their mobile phone’
- The telephone conversation is no longer a private act; it is a public event. There is little inhibition to interrupting a conversation to answer the phone and little pressure to moderate one’s voice. Two thirds (66%) of mobile phone users would ‘always’ answer their phone when in a public place with friends, and only 18% would ‘always’ deliberately talk quietly in public places. Sixteen per cent ‘sometimes’ or ‘always’ leave their phone ring-tone on in the

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cinema. "Young people are not just conversing with their friends; they are parading or displaying their connection to their friends. It's a sign of being part of the group, as well as the most efficient way they have of keeping in close touch with their group," says Professor Haste.

- Owning a mobile phone makes young people feel more secure, (77%) with 73% claiming to have used their mobiles for contacting friends or family during an emergency. Nearly a quarter (24%) have used the mobile to ask for emergency help or make 999 calls.
- Wearing a phone on a belt is a fashion no-no for three quarters of young people, and over half would 'never' keep their phone in a special pocket in their bag either. The most popular place is a pocket, (for nearly four out of five).

According to Professor Haste: "How the mobile phone looks is a fashion statement and using a mobile phone, and being seen to do so, is part of being credible with their peers. For these young people it is a prosthesis of the body, an extension of oneself."

The study, which is based on fieldwork by MORI amongst a representative sample of 725 young people in Britain aged between 11 – 21 in April and May 2004, is the third published by the Nestlé Social Research Programme. The first two, which were published in 2004, looked at young people's attitudes to science and health.

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Technical note: the research was carried out by MORI using a representative national sample of 1,058 girls and boys aged 11-21 years during April and May 2004. The self-completion questionnaire was versioned and 725 young people answered questions relating to technology and mobile phones. 687 are mobile phone users. Interviews among school and college pupils were conducted in 25 establishments on paper during self-completion sessions. Interviews with university students and others not studying were conducted via an on-line self-completion questionnaire.

Notes to editor:

The full report will be published in January 2005.