

**TOOLBOX TALK: Men's Health and the Internet**

# IS YOUR LIFE ONLINE BRINGING YOU DOWN?

**1. In 2020, how many smartphone users were there in the world?**

- A. 1 billion B. 2 billion C. 3 billion  
D. 3.5 billion

**2. How many times a day does the average user unlock their phone?**

- A. 15 B. 55 C. 150 D.200

**3. How many Brits spend more than 1 hour a day on their phone?**

- A. 13% B. 36% C.76% D 100%

**4. What do Facebook, Bet365 and PornHub all have in common?**

- A. all owned by Mark Zuckerberg B. all sued by Donald Trump  
C. all illegal in China D. all designed to keep you on them as long as possible

**5. Who or what is dopamine?**

- A. the pacifist version of Minecraft B. a brain chemical linked to pleasure  
C. a Korean slash metal band D a street drug like poppers.

**6. Roughly how many gambling-related suicides are there in the UK each year?**

- A. 100 B. 200 C. 400 D. 600

**7. How much profit does the UK gambling industry make each year?**

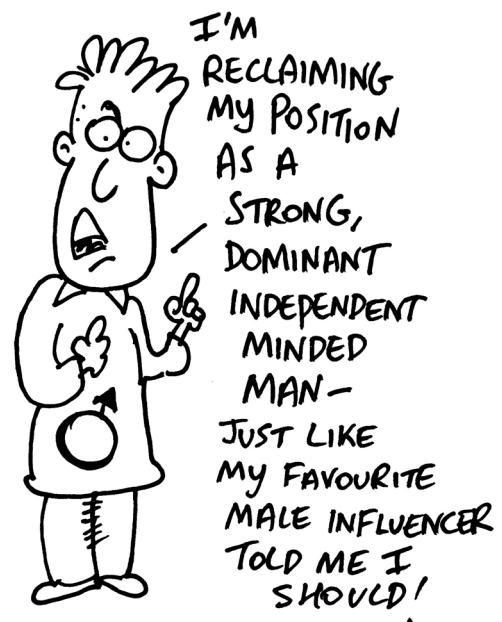
- A. £14 million B. £14 billion C £41 billion

**8. How many children have seen porn by the age of 14?**

- A. 10% B. 27% C. 54% D. 86% E. 96%

**9. For what addiction do UK men most commonly seek treatment?**

- A. Alcohol B. Pornography C. Gambling  
D. Watching football



## Talking Points

- At what age should children have phones or laptops of their own?
- How should we regulate the internet?
- Should there be a 'right to switch off' (from work emails etc out of hours)?
- Are you addicted to your phone?

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**Quiz Answers**

1. D. 3.5 billion.
2. C. 150 - 15 is the number of times we laugh a day.
3. B. 36% - 13% spend less than 10 minutes.
4. D. Bet365 is legal in China!
5. B. 6. D. 600
7. B. £14 billion - £41 billion is the size of the contingency fund to replace the UK's nuclear weapons
8. E. 96% - 10% by age 9 and 27% by age 11
9. A. Alcohol - porn is second with gambling catching up

**So are you 'addicted'?**

The iPhone was born in 2007. Today's teens are growing up with a high-performance computer in their pocket. We all have one. There are health benefits to being able to access information or receive services online but what are the downsides? Do we use them too much?

**Why do we love our phones?**

Dopamine is a key chemical messenger in your brain. It creates feelings of pleasure and reward, making us feel good. We all like a hit of it from time to time.

The smartphone is a dopamine-delivery device that is to hand 24/7. It gives us a hit every time we pick it up in anticipation and again when we find something we like. Every single app you use knows this and is designed to keep you using it. The potential for addiction is obvious. Even an 'addiction' to a pretty benign app is going to cost us time and the attention we could have devoted to more meaningful things. But what about when it starts costing money, relationships, work... ?

**How do I know if I'm 'addicted'?**

Here's a questionnaire to help you assess whether your phone might be making you unhappy:

- Do you find yourself looking at your phone more than you realise or intend?
- Do you try to cut down on phone-use but fail?
- Do you ever feel that you lose time mindlessly browsing on your phone?
- Do you ever feel anxious if you're unable to access your phone (dead battery, forgotten or lost etc)?

- Has your use of your phone ever interfered with your productivity at work?
- Do you ever look at your phone in dangerous or inappropriate situations, such as when driving or crossing the street?
- Has your use of your phone negatively affected your relationships?
- Do you ever feel guilty, sad, or anxious about your use of your phone?

Answering yes to any of these is a red flag. More than one yes and it makes sense to think about how you can reset your relationship with your phone. **Six tips:**

- Turn your phone off from time to time.
- Turn off data to deter mindless browsing.
- Occasionally go out without it.
- Don't keep it by the bed at night.
- Delete apps that just eat up time rather than contributing to your life and happiness.
- Try an app that monitors your time online.

**Is the internet fuelling other addictions?**

We know that smartphones and the internet are helping fuel two addictions that are commonly and increasingly affecting men today: pornography and gambling.

If you're concerned about your use of porn or your gambling or, indeed, anything else, you can try the same questionnaire as above and replace the word 'phone' with whatever it is you're concerned about. Dangerous or inappropriate places for porn or gambling would, of course, include work.

Again, one yes is a red flag. More than one and you need to act. The Forum has new content on porn (Porn Free) and gambling (Wanna Bet). The weblinks are:

[menshealthforum.org.uk/PF](http://menshealthforum.org.uk/PF)  
[menshealthforum.org.uk/WB](http://menshealthforum.org.uk/WB)

