

Monday, 31 October 2016

Girls given mobile phones before boys (thanks, Dad!)

It's something every parent today has to consider: when is the right age to give the kids their own mobile phones? And it's something every kid has to consider: how do I get one, which one do I want, and do I ask mum or dad? Roy Morgan Research shows that girls get their first mobile phone younger than boys, it's more likely to be a brand new gift—and dads are more protective of their darling daughters.

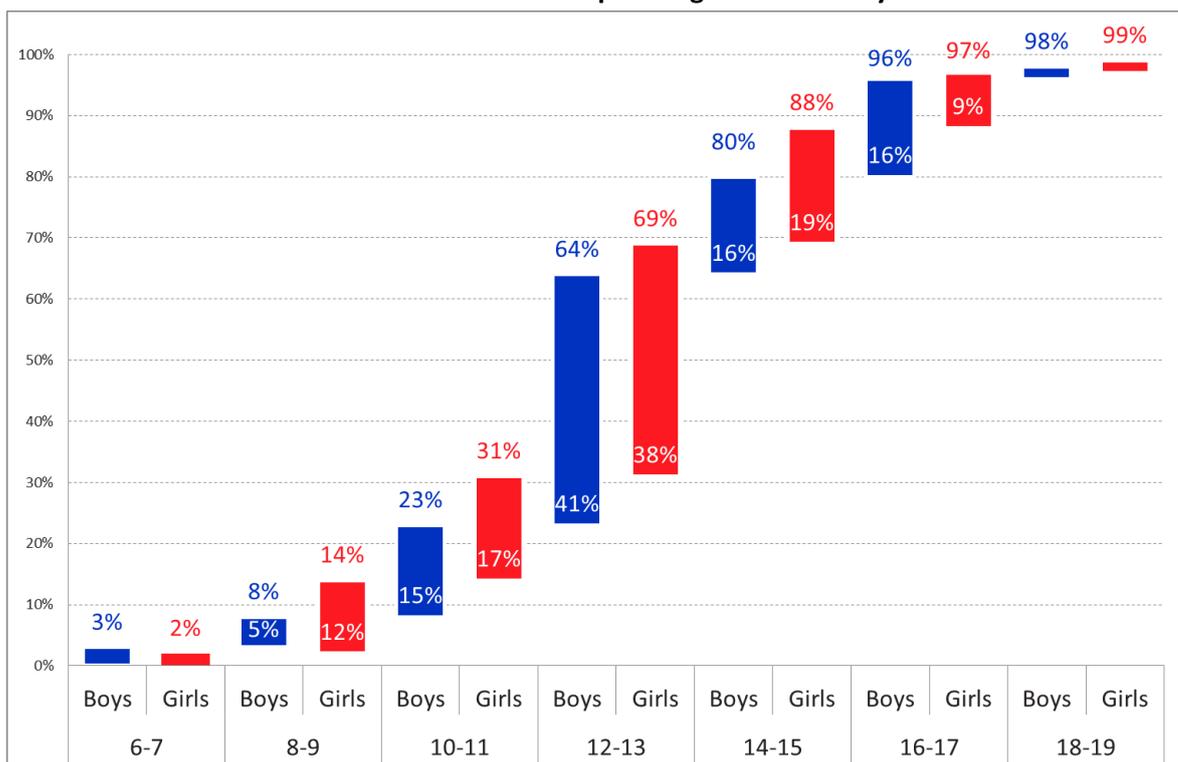
Roy Morgan's latest Young Australians Survey of kids aged 6 to 13 and Single Source Survey of Australians aged 14+ reveals that girls are often entrusted to own a mobile phone earlier than boys, and the gap continues through to the end of their teenage years.

Among kids aged six or seven, just 3% of boys and 2% of girls own a personal mobile phone—which doesn't count the many others (across age groups) who sometimes get to *use* mum's or dad's.

From here, the gender difference begins: at age eight or nine, an additional 12% of girls get their own mobile, lifting their total ownership to 14%. Meanwhile only another 5% of boys get their own phone at this age, up to 8% total. The gap between girls and boys becomes starkest at age 10 and 11, when an additional 17% of girls get a phone, compared with 15% of boys: for totals of 31% and 23% respectively.

The tween years of 12 to 13 are when the lion's share of Aussie kids (around four in 10 overall) get to lay claim to their first privately held mobile phone: a further 41% of boys and 38% of girls—still enough to keep the girls ahead overall (69% vs 64%).

Growth in Mobile Phone Ownership among Australian Boys and Girls



Sources: Roy Morgan Young Australians Survey, July 2015-June 2016, sample n = 2,876 Australians aged 6 to 13 (asked if they use a mobile phone and, if so, if it's their own); and, Roy Morgan Single Source, January-June 2016, sample n = 1,743 Australians aged 14 to 19 (asked if they use a mobile phone).

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Another 19% of girls get a phone at age 14 or 15 (up to 88%)—and again more boys have to wait until age 16 or 17 to become independently mobile, and (almost) catch up with the girls: 96% to 97%.

After they can legally drink, vote, gamble and play Grand Theft Auto V, a final 2% of late-adopting young men and women get independently mobile. By the end of their teens, virtually all Australians today have a mobile phone: 98% of men and 99% of women.

Kids' attitudes to mobile phones

So why do many girls get a mobile phone before boys? Do parents think they are more mature and responsible—or more in need of protection? Looking at the attitudes of younger mobile phone owners six to 13 years old, it may be in part because girls aren't so picky about the handset and, according to the kids themselves, girls' parents are more likely than boys' to want to keep tabs on them to know they are safe.

Girls with their own mobile phone are more likely than boys to agree they are “happy to have any mobile I can get”, and that their parents wanted them to have a phone “so that they know I am safe”. They are also slightly more likely to agree, “I like being able to talk to my family and friends wherever I am”.

Instead, boys with a mobile phone are more likely than girls to believe it's important to get advice from friends when deciding which mobile phone to buy, that it's more important for the device to be built to last than looks good, and that price is the top deciding factor when choosing a handset.

A number of attitudes are equally shared between girls and boys: 38% of each group agree the way a mobile looks is important; 56% agree that the brand is important; and (according to them) only 24% reckon their parents think they spend too much on their mobile phone.

Different Mobile Phone Attitudes among Boys and Girls

Girls more likely to agree	About the same	Boys more likely to agree
I would be happy to have any mobile that I can get	The way a mobile phone looks is important to me	Getting advice from my friends is important to me when deciding which mobile phone to buy
My parents want me to have a phone so that they know I am safe	The brand of mobile phone is important to me	Having a phone that is tough and built to last is more important than the way it looks
I like being able to talk to my family and friends wherever I am	My parents think I spend too much on my mobile phone	Price is the most important thing when deciding which mobile phone to buy

Sources: Roy Morgan Young Australians Survey, July 2015-June 2016, sample n = 830 Australian mobile phone owners aged 6 to 13

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Michele Levine, CEO – Roy Morgan Research, says:

“The average age at which Aussie kids gets their first mobile phone is around 11 or 12—around the end of primary school and start of high school.

“Roy Morgan’s Young Australians Survey shows that from age eight onwards, girls are more likely to have a mobile than boys—a trend that continues all the way to adulthood. One of the key drivers behind girls getting a mobile phone earlier is that parents are more likely to want them to have a phone for safety reasons.

“This gender disparity is backed up by the mobile phone attitudes among parents of teenage girls and boys in the Single Source survey—which further reveals that the sex of parents also plays a big part.

“Dads with teenage daughters are around 12% more likely than dads with teenage sons (and also more likely than the girls’ mothers) to agree they want family members to carry a mobile phone for security reasons. Mums have a fairer view of their boys and girls mobile phone needs, and are more keen to have family members carry a phone overall.

“It’s perhaps a dynamic that many families already understand full well: when they want their first mobile phone, girls should go to dad and boys should go to mum.

“All these pieces fit together when we look at how kids got their first mobile phone. 54% of girls with their own mobile phone received it as a gift, either as a present or because their parents purchased it for them, compared with less than half of boys. Instead, boys are more likely to have to buy a mobile themselves or wait for a hand-me-down.

“Creating and maintaining customer loyalty is crucial in the handset market. Mobile owners of all ages are far more likely to want to upgrade within the same handset brand than switch to a different one. Two thirds of kids already own a mobile by the time they become teenagers, whether it was a new Samsung Galaxy under the Christmas tree, a hand-me-down iPhone 4, or a prepaid Telstra Tempo to be used only to text when soccer practice has finished. Handset manufacturers clearly need to learn all about what their youngest and newest customers want in a phone, what they use them for, how they obtained them, and their attitudes to branding, style and function.”

To learn more about Roy Morgan’s mobile phone data call (+61) (3) 9224 5309 or email askroymorgan@roymorgan.com

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About Roy Morgan Research

Roy Morgan Research is the largest independent Australian research company, with offices throughout Australia, as well as in Indonesia, the United States and the United Kingdom. A full service research organisation specialising in omnibus and syndicated data, Roy Morgan Research has over 70 years’ experience in collecting objective, independent information on consumers.

Margin of Error

The margin of error to be allowed for in any estimate depends mainly on the number of interviews on which it is based. Margin of error gives indications of the likely range within which estimates would be 95% likely to fall, expressed as the

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number of percentage points above or below the actual estimate. Allowance for design effects (such as stratification and weighting) should be made as appropriate.

Sample Size	Percentage Estimate			
	40%-60%	25% or 75%	10% or 90%	5% or 95%
5,000	±1.4	±1.2	±0.8	±0.6
7,500	±1.1	±1.0	±0.7	±0.5
10,000	±1.0	±0.9	±0.6	±0.4
20,000	±0.7	±0.6	±0.4	±0.3
50,000	±0.4	±0.4	±0.3	±0.2

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