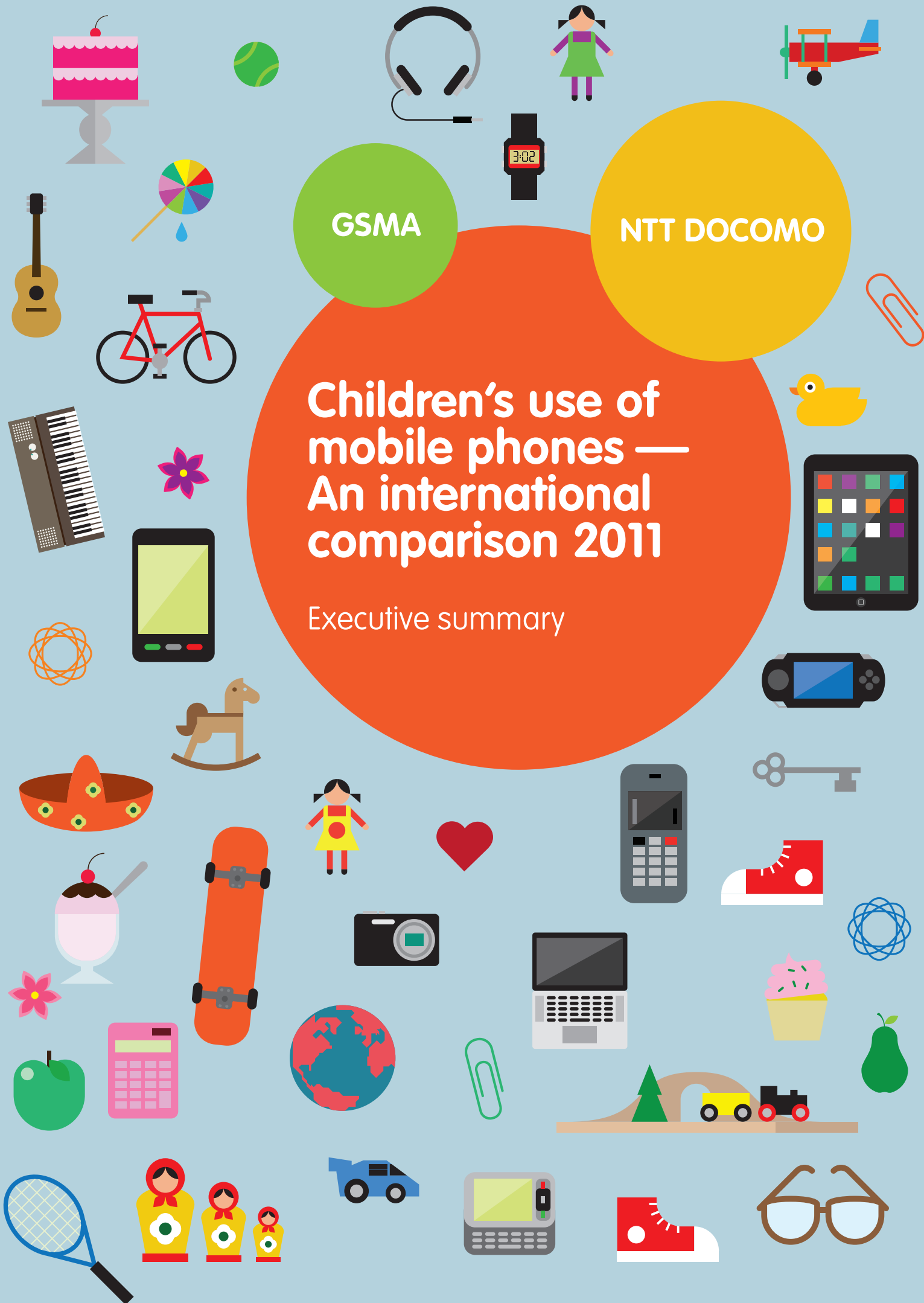


GSMA

NTT DOCOMO

# Children's use of mobile phones — An international comparison 2011

Executive summary





# Children in a mobile world

Children around the globe are increasingly confident and passionate users of mobile technology. They are embracing the opportunities provided by mobile phones in ways that could not have been predicted a decade ago — and beyond that of their parents and teachers.

The GSMA and NTT DOCOMO's Mobile Society Research Institute have partnered to investigate the growing use of mobile phones by children across the globe.

The *Children's use of mobile phones — An international comparison 2011* report provides a detailed picture of mobile phone use by children from the age of eight to 18, comparing use across geographically widespread markets at differing levels of development.

New research has been conducted with more than 3,500 pairs of children and parents in Japan, India, Paraguay and Egypt. Now in its third year, the research builds on the previous two studies conducted in Japan, India, Mexico, Cyprus, China and Korea. The research is sponsored by mobile phone operators in each country, and has covered more than 15,500 pairs of children and their parents.

The three reports are available online  
[gsmworld.com/myouth](http://gsmworld.com/myouth)



## Research focus

To enable year-on-year comparisons, standard questions were posed to children and their parents, including:

- Age of first mobile ownership
- Reasons for getting a mobile phone
- How they feel about their mobile phone
- Parents concerns over their children's use of mobile phones.

Additionally, topics for the 2011 survey included:

- **Social networking:** How many children use social networking services on mobile phones, how often do they access these services, how many contacts do they have and how does this compare to their parents?
- **Privacy:** Are children and parents aware of what information they are making public via their mobile phones and do they set passwords or restrict access?
- **Services and mobile application use:** What type of services and apps are used by children and how often? Are they downloading apps, playing games, or using GPS, e-money and other services?
- **Smartphone and tablet usage:** What is the take-up of the latest device technology by children and their parents and how are they using it?

## Key findings: Ownership and usage

Mobile phone ownership by children aged eight to 18 is high: almost 70% in all four countries, with Egypt the highest at 94%.

Children increasingly own new phones, rather than second-hand or handed-down phones. Only one in five children now uses a second hand or handed-down phone.

Overall, 12% of children own smartphones and generally have a higher rate of smartphone use than their parents. Tablet use is low, with three of the four countries surveyed showing less than 6% of children are using them. Only Egypt shows greater take-up, with 18% of children using tablet devices.

There is no evidence that family income levels or parents' educational background have a significant impact on children's mobile phone ownership or usage.

Calling and texting habits of children differ across countries and by age. Generally, younger children use their mobile phone initially to make calls rather than send text messages. However their use of text messaging overtakes calling as they get older, with the proportion of children who send six or more text messages per day rising steadily from 27% at age 10 and peaking at 55% at age 15.

As in previous years, the research shows that children generally prefer to communicate via text message with one another; however, they choose to call when communicating with their parents.

Since using text messaging, 88% of children say that existing close friendships have been reinforced and 76% say less close friendships have improved.



The most popular mobile phone functions used by children are cameras (51%), music players (44%) and movie/video players (26%). Children use more phone functions than their parents, and more than half of children will use a function if it is available or installed on their device.

### Key findings: Mobile internet

Many children are confident and passionate users of the mobile internet: 40% of children aged eight to 18 access the internet from mobile phones. The rate of use generally increases as children get older, for example, nearly 80% of 18-year-olds in Japan use the mobile internet.

Over 40% of children who access the internet on their mobile phones do so at least once a day. Japanese children use it most frequently, with 83% accessing the mobile internet at least once a day.

Children with smartphones are much more likely to use it as their primary device to access the internet: 56% in Japan, 42% in India and 41% in Paraguay.

An exception is Egypt, where only 3% of children owning smartphones use it as their main device to access the internet — instead 30% of Egyptian children use a games console as their main device to access the internet.

### Key findings: Social networking

The use of social networking services on mobile phones is high; overall 73% of children who use their phones to access the mobile internet use these services. This use increases with age, and 72% of children who access the mobile internet are already using social networking services at age 12.

Social networking use on mobile phones is even more common among children who use smartphones, with 85% using social networking from their smartphones.

Children use social networking on mobile phones more than parents, with just 43% of parents using it. The number of social networking contacts differs greatly between countries. In general, children have wider networks in India and Japan, whereas parents have wider networks in Paraguay and Egypt.

### Key findings: Safer mobile use

There is a consistently high-level of parental concern about children's use of mobile phones: 70 to 80% of parents are concerned about issues such as overuse of mobile phones, usage costs and privacy.

Overall, 80% of children protect their social networking profile by limiting the viewing of their profile to friends or friends of friends. However, this still means one in five children have a completely open profile available to anyone who wants to see it — and in Paraguay, this rises to nearly a third of children who use social networking services.

There is significant concern among parents about disclosure of their children's personal information. Nearly 70% of parents say they are worried about their children's privacy when using mobile phones. This is not determined by the child's age, with parents concerned about their children's use of mobile phones from early childhood to late teens.

About 60% of parents have a family agreement or rules about what their children may do or not do on their mobile phones. However, interestingly, while 60% of children use a password or PIN function for their mobile device, only 50% of parents protect themselves this way.

As children get older they look to their parents less and to friends more for guidance and advice on mobile issues. Children younger than 13 look predominantly to their parents for advice but children aged 15-year-old and older look to their friends. Very few seek advice from their schools, regardless of age.



### Further information

The mobile generation is here. To learn more about this growing cohort of junior mobile phone users, download the full *Children's use of mobile phones — An international comparison 2011* report at [www.gsmworld.com/mYouth](http://www.gsmworld.com/mYouth) or email [myouth@gsm.org](mailto:myouth@gsm.org)

#### For more information on the research please contact:

Natasha Jackson  
Head of Content Policy, GSMA  
[njackson@gsm.org](mailto:njackson@gsm.org)

#### Future research

To be included in the next report on children's use of mobile phones, please contact: Sarah Gaffney, Project Manager, GSMA, at [sgaffney@gsm.org](mailto:sgaffney@gsm.org).





The GSMA represents the interests of the worldwide mobile communications industry. Spanning 219 countries, the GSMA unites nearly 800 of the world's mobile operators, as well as more than 200 companies in the broader mobile ecosystem, including handset makers, software companies, equipment providers, Internet companies, and media and entertainment organisations. The GSMA is focused on innovating, incubating and creating new opportunities for its membership, all with the end goal of driving the growth of the mobile communications industry. For more information, please visit [www.gsmworld.com](http://www.gsmworld.com)

## NTT docomo

NTT DOCOMO is Japan's premier provider of leading-edge mobile voice, data and multimedia services. With more than 58 million customers in Japan, the company is one of the world's largest mobile communications operators.

Since 2004, NTT DOCOMO's Mobile Society Research Institute (MSRI) within NTT DOCOMO has been studying the social impact of mobile phone use. The research institute, which operates independently from NTT DOCOMO, conducts research studies into both present and future influences of mobile communications. Its findings are widely disclosed to the public through reports, publications and symposia. For more information, please visit [www.moba-ken.jp/english](http://www.moba-ken.jp/english)

