

You are the most popular at age 25

[Society & Culture](#)^[1]

[Society & Culture](#)^[1][Finland](#) ^[2][Forskning.no](#) ^[3]

Our social networks are most extensive when we are in our mid-twenties.

Researchers have studied telephone calls of 3.2 million persons in a single European country in the course of a year. They were interested in how often people called someone and how many incoming calls they took.

The researchers discovered that the average number of persons we call or receive calls from peaks out at age 25.

Numbers of our social contacts go downhill from there and level out at age 45.

As social beings we humans tend to experience various life phases. These phases – childhood, adolescence, adult parent, adult childless – are so distinctively difference as to be traceable through the use of mobile phones, presumed the researchers at Aalto University in Finland and Oxford University in Great Britain.

Their anticipations were confirmed.

Rocketing in the teens

The overview of phone conversations with others whom we have the most contact with indicates a veritable explosion of such social communication from the late teens and into the early twenties.

It peaks at around the age of 25. The mobile logs of the 3.2 million people using a specific telecom carrier in one European country indicate a rapid drop from there.

That's the way it goes when people move in with a partner, get married and have children, a home, a car and maybe a dog.

Young men call more friends

But the researchers could see from the mobile phone logs that people slowly but surely begin to be more social again after reaching the age of 45. Much of such exchanges on the phone involve keeping in contact with one's own children who are growing up.

A rather remarkable finding in this study is that men seem to have a rather wider circle of friends than women do.

Most women do not get a larger circle of acquaintances they call to than men have until they are in their forties.

Only telephone calls

Another gender difference seen was that when women are well into adulthood they have more telephone contact with grownup children and stepchildren than men have.

Women are also much better at staying in contact with their own ageing parents than men are, if mobile phone usage can be used as evidence in this respect.

This research was limited to what the scientists could construe from the quantity and lengths of mobile phone calls. They did not survey text messages and chatting.

Many people hardly even use their phones for direct conversations but maintain enormous contact through texting and smart phone functions.

Few close friends

Another conclusion in this study is that the average number of persons we have frequent contact with is really fairly limited.

The researchers saw that most of us limit our telephone contact to about 15 persons. Earlier studies corroborate that finding ? the typical number of persons the average citizen has face-to-face contact with in the course of a month is about the same.

In this sense, the researchers conclude, mobile phones have not contributed to a significant change in our social world.

They saw that mobiles are primarily used to stay in contact with persons we already had close contacts with. Phones are not used much as a tool for getting in touch with people on the periphery of or outside our circles of friends and acquaintances.

Parents call children, not vice versa

Another interesting finding in the study is that by age 50 we clearly tend to have phone conversations with persons who are a generation younger. Of course, these mainly tend to be our children.

That said, it should be no surprise that people aged about 50 call up 25-year-olds twice as often as 25-year-olds call 50-year-olds.

Mobile data used in research

A mounting number of scientific studies are being based on the huge amounts of data gleaned from cell phone calls.

Earlier studies have also concluded that phones get surprisingly little usage in the expansion of people's social networks. We use the phone to stay in contact with people we already know, according to the study by Jari Saramäki and colleagues. This research group concluded that we humans are not very good at maintaining relations with more than a small circle of family, friends and acquaintances. The time we have at our disposition and our "emotional capital" both limit the close contact we have with others.

But studies of people's social behaviour are often complicated.

Researchers find it hard to say anything with certitude about our group behaviour because we are always doing so much and we are all individuals who act in a variety of ways. Added to that, we move through phases of life in disparate ways. Studies of social behaviour tend to be riveted with ifs, ands and buts. Such

research can be quite ambiguous.

But the enormous amount of data from mobile phone call logs make it easier for researchers to see the big patterns regarding how we behave toward one another. This is why so many social scientists are eager to use the data from cell phone use.

Beste friend is the opposite gender

In a study led by Vasyly Palchhykov, also of the the Aalto University in Finland, researchers looked at what sort of people comprise a person's closest friends during a seven-month period.

The researchers ploughed through two billion phone calls and half a billion text messages.

Amongst other things, they found that until the age of 50, our closest friend ? on the basis of mobile phone use ? is a person of the opposite sex.

Men aged up to 30 often have enormous contact with a specific female. Evidenced in the same way, women tend to have a male as their best friend a little longer, until the guy has to play second fiddle to a female best friend.

Our second best friend on the mobile is generally a person of our own gender. This holds true for both women and men.

 [Humans are social animals. But our social contacts with one another vary greatly in the course of life. A study of 3.2 million mobile phone users shows that young people are engaged in far more social contact than adults are. That might not raise any eyebrows, but oddly, men are more social during much of their lives than women are. \(Illustrative photo: goodluz / Shutterstock / NTB scanpix\)](#) [4]

 [For many, the mobile phone has become the major tool for engaging in human contact. Telephone calls are doggedly logged by carriers. Without the use of taps or eavesdropping they reveal information and provide data for behavioural studies linked to gender and age. \(Illustrative photo: racorn / Shutterstock / NTB scanpix\)](#) [5]

 [telefon-1.jpg](#) [6]

[The power of popularity: impact of the cool kids on teaching](#) [7]

[Kunal Bhattacharya et al.: ?Sex differences in social focus across the life cycle in humans?, Royal Society Open Science, 6 April 2016.](#) [8] [Jari Saramäki et al.: ?Persistence of social signatures in human communication?, PNAS 2014 111 \(3\) 942-947.](#) [9] [Vasyly Palchhykov mfl: «Sex differences in intimate relationships», Scientific Reports, 2012;2:370.](#) [10]

[Bård Amundsen](#) [11]

Glenn Ostling

April 30, 2016 - 06:20

This field is not in use. The footer is displayed in the mini panel called "Footer (mini panel)"

Source URL: <http://sciencenordic.com/you-are-most-popular-age-25>

Links:

[1] <http://sciencenordic.com/category/section/society-culture>

- [2] <http://sciencenordic.com/category/countries/finland>
- [3] <http://sciencenordic.com/category/publisher/forskningno>
- [4] <http://sciencenordic.com/sites/default/files/telefon-1.jpg>
- [5] http://sciencenordic.com/sites/default/files/eldre_dame.jpg
- [6] http://sciencenordic.com/sites/default/files/telefon-1_0.jpg
- [7] <http://sciencenordic.com/power-popularity-impact-cool-kids-teaching>
- [8] <http://dx.doi.org/10.1098/rsos.160097>
- [9] http://www.pnas.org/content/111/3/942?ijkey=5fb57a34ce36cf5fc8d8edd9e164ee4768ff4dc4&keytype2=tf_ips
- [10] <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3329793/>
- [11] <http://sciencenordic.com/content/b%C3%A5rd-amundsen>