

# A New Type of Dementia Plagues America

By John Mac Ghlionn, The Epoch Times, Edition 11/21/2023

In the United States, it's estimated that at least 7 million people older than the age of 65 have dementia. If current trends continue, by the end of the decade, more than 9 million Americans are expected to suffer from this loss of cognitive functioning—that's equivalent to the population of New York.

Memory impairment isn't just affecting the elderly. By 2050, the number of U.S. adults older than the age of 40 living with dementia is expected to more than double, to 10.5 million from 5.2 million. To compound matters, there's a new type of dementia plaguing Americans, one that's affecting people much younger than 40. It's called digital dementia, and millions of unsuspecting, young Americans are at risk.

A major health epidemic, digital dementia occurs when one part of the brain is overstimulated and another part of the brain is understimulated. When we mindlessly use digital devices, the frontal lobe, which is responsible for higher-level executive functions, gets little, if any, use. Meanwhile, the occipital lobe, the visual processor located at the back of the brain, gets bombarded with sensory input. Slouched over and spaced out, people, both young and old, are abusing their brains, day in and day out. Preteens and teens are particularly at risk for two reasons:

- American 8- to 12-year-olds spend an average of 4.7 hours per day scrolling their lives away. That's about 70 days in a given year.
- The prefrontal cortex, the brain region responsible for planning and decision-making, doesn't fully develop until the age of 25. Digital dementia impedes both short-term and long-term memory. Moreover, as research shows, excessive screen time during brain development increases the risk of Alzheimer's disease, the most common form of dementia, in adulthood. Not surprisingly, excessive screen time is intimately associated with digital addiction. This, in turn, fuels digital dementia, which results in the shrinking of the brain's gray matter. White matter facilitates communication between gray matter areas. But without gray matter, which plays a critical role in emotions, memories, and movements, there's really nothing to communicate. White matter helps the traffic get from A to B. Gray matter, on the other hand, is the traffic.

It gets worse. As Gurwinder Bhogal, an excellent British-Indian writer, recently noted, not only is "gray matter shrinkage in smartphone-addicted individuals" a growing problem, but also the Western average IQ is declining—rapidly.

This has been the case for decades. The decline of brain power has been particularly notable in the United States. Lead exposure and, more recently, the effects of draconian lockdowns, have had deleterious effects on Americans' IQs. As technology continues to rise, IQ continues to decline. Is there an association? The answer appears to be yes.

What we're witnessing is the Flynn effect in reverse. Named after James R. Flynn, the renowned intelligence researcher who passed away in 2020, the Flynn effect refers to a steady upward shift in IQ test scores across generations. In recent times, however, that steady upward shift has transformed into a spiraling nosedive. This isn't surprising. In fact, as our lives become more intertwined with technology and as we outsource more of our thinking and doing to search engines and ChatGPT-like systems, we should expect this nosedive to increase in velocity.

As Mr. Bhogal noted, common sense suggests that the decline in IQ is “at least partly the result of technology making the attainment of satisfaction increasingly effortless, so that we spend ever more of our time in a passive, vegetative state.”

“If you don’t use it,” he said, “you lose it.” Indeed. By “it,” of course, he means your brain. But brain function isn’t the only thing being lost.

The rise of digital dementia, digital addiction, and lower IQ scores is a reflection of a much broader problem. The United States isn’t just struggling with demographic decline; it’s also wrestling with the unholy trinity of spiritual, psychological, and intellectual decline. The country is becoming fatter, sicker, older, and dumber. The movie “Idiocracy” wasn’t a parody; it was a prophecy.

As intelligence levels continue to plummet and test scores continue to fall in the likes of math and reading, the United States risks becoming a society of brainless, aimless individuals, a nation consisting of millions of obese zombies. Contrary to popular belief, societal collapse doesn’t occur overnight; it occurs in increments. It’s a death by a thousand cuts. The biggest threat to the United States isn’t necessarily external; it’s posed by the numerous digital devices in our hands and homes. Technology has consumed both our minds and our souls; are we going to get either of them back?

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