

EDUCATION, SKILLS AND LEARNING

IQs are falling - and have been for years

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It's official, we are getting dumber.

IQ levels are falling, and have been for decades, [according to a new study](#).

The paper, co-authored by Bernt Bratsberg and Ole Rogeberg of the [Ragnar Frisch Centre for Economic Research](#) in Oslo, Norway, looked at the IQ test results of more than 730,000 Norwegian men.

The men had all reported for national service between 1970 and 2009, for which a mandatory IQ test takes place.

Analysis showed that the men born in 1962 had higher scores than those born in 1991.

Those born in 1991 scored five points lower than those born in 1975, and three points lower than those born in 1962.

This is the opposite of what happened during much of the 20th century when IQ scores rose by around 3% a year.

This is known as [the Flynn Effect](#), named after James Flynn, the scientist who discovered the trend. His research, published in 1981, showed that IQ scores had risen steadily over the 20th century, with an 18-point gap over two generations.

Flynn concluded that this was down to culture – society as a whole had become more intelligent as it got to grips with bigger ideas.

It's not clear what's causing the drop in IQ.

The study included different generations from the same family, which suggests that the decline is not genetic — children are performing worse than their parents.

The authors of the study suggest that it could be due to environmental factors. These could include anything from what we eat, to the air we breathe, to other daily lifestyle choices.

It could be that as technology does more and more tasks for us we become less intelligent. It's possibly due to changes in how mathematics and languages are taught, or even because we spend so much time on smartphones and computers.

The drop in IQ scores isn't limited to Norwegians: the authors say that this trend is evident in several other countries.

What is intelligence anyway?

Perhaps it could be that our intelligence can't be measured accurately by the old systems anymore.

In fact, for as long as IQ testing has been around, there have been arguments both for and against it. One of the criticisms of the test is that it [unfairly discriminates](#) against certain communities. In addition, some argue that intelligence is culture-specific. In other words, what is perceived as intelligence by some communities is not relevant to others.

Scientists, philosophers and educators have long debated the meaning of “intelligence”, and there's no clear conclusion about [whether IQ tests are the right way to measure it](#).

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