

Why are people in their 30s and 40s experiencing increased memory problems?

Could our reliance on technology and the sheer amount of information we absorb everyday be making us more forgetful?

According to a recent [article](#) in *The Boston Globe*, people in their 30s and 40s are reporting an unprecedented wave of memory problems.



Professor Cliff Abraham, who teaches psychology at the University of Otago and is the co-lead of the Aotearoa Brain Project, told *Sunday Morning* it comes as no surprise.

"If we think about how memories were formed in the first place and the things that interfere with good memory or good learning and memory retention in terms of, well, a whole variety of issues, including distractions, it would not be surprising to find that people are more sensitive to day-to-day memory issues than they were before."

While the cause has not been pinpointed, and Abraham said there is a lot more information and distractions coming in than ever before.

The brain can store a lot of information, but it is a question of how much is coming in all at once or at one point in time, he added.

"When you're trying to process a lot of information, more or less simultaneously, it will interfere with how you can kind of get into those networks that are storing the information you're trying to and making it hard to retrieve."

Abraham said we tend to think of memory as being some kind of magical automatic process that we don't have to kind of work with, but in fact, it does take some cognitive effort to really store information well.



"Memories are best stored and retained, what we call consolidated, by several principles. One is paying attention to the information, another one is repeating that information in different ways and processing that information.

"And if you don't spend the time to do that, then you won't remember the name of the person you've just been introduced to, you won't remember where you've parked your car, and so forth."

There are other factors too, such as mental health issues - anxiety, depression - drug use, stress, and even being "hyper busy", Abraham said, have significant impacts on brain function.

In regards to an increase in the use of technology, Abraham said periods of not actively using your brain - like watching TV - is "probably not good".

"The brain likes to be used, and lots of helpful neurochemicals are released. If you're just interacting with your TV screen that doesn't produce the same effects."

Listen to the full interview [here](#)

Reference: RNZ

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/532020/why-are-people-in-their-30s-and-40s-experiencing-increased-memory-problems>