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Are we all getting dumber?

Whatever incredibly stupid things humanity **got up to** in the 20th century, we all had at least one thing to 1. _____: as measured by IQ tests humans were steadily getting smarter. But recent research has worrying news: this trend appears to be 2. _____. Humanity is now officially getting dumber.

It probably shouldn't worry us if some fraction of the population **saw a decline in** IQ, but according to this new study it isn't a small number. It appears to be the entire nation of Norway. When scientists analyzed some 730,000 IQ tests given to Norwegian men before their compulsory military service from 1970 to 2009, they found that each generation of Norwegian men appear to be getting around seven IQ points dumber.

That's pretty horrifying news for fans of progress, but it also 3. _____ one incredibly important question: Why? What's causing IQ scores to start **heading in the wrong direction**?

You might first wonder if it's genetic. Maybe some **change in the makeup** of a particular group being studied has caused the decline (**crudely**, you could call this the 'dumb people have more babies' hypothesis). But that seems to be 4. _____ by the new research, which shows that even within single families IQ has declined.

So we know that the 5. _____ is **nurture rather than nature**, but scientists are still **baffled** as to what exact aspect of modern life is **driving the decline**. Some have proposed that our tech obsession might **be to blame**, but as the decline started in the 1970s, well before everyone spent their days staring at screens, that can't be the whole story. Other proposed explanations are unhealthy modern diets, increasingly trashy media or a decline in the quality of schooling.

Although the exact cause of the decline is 6. _____ in mystery, we should all probably start worrying about what our sedentary, screen addicted, junk food-munching lifestyles might be doing to our brains.