

# Digital literacy reduces cognitive decline in older adults, experts find

August 12 2014

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Researchers have found a link between digital literacy and a reduction in cognitive decline, according to a study published in *The Journals of Gerontology, Series A: Medical Sciences* on July 8th.

Led by Andre Junqueira Xavier at the Universidade do Sul de Santa Catarina, this is the first major study to show that digital literacy, or the ability to engage, plan and execute digital actions such as web browsing and exchanging emails, can improve memory. Drawn from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing, the study followed 6442 participants in the UK between the ages of 50 and 89 for 8 years.

The data measures delayed recall from a 10-word-list learning task across 5 separate measurement points. Higher wealth, education and digital literacy improved delayed recall, while people with functional impairment, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, depressive symptoms or no digital literacy showed decline.

The researchers' findings suggest that "digital literacy increases brain and [cognitive reserve](#) or leads to the employment of more efficient cognitive networks to delay [cognitive decline](#)." The authors write, "countries where policy interventions regarding improvement in DL are implemented may expect lower incidence rates for dementia over the coming decades."

**More information:** The paper, "English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA): Can internet/email use reduce cognitive decline?," can be

accessed here: [www.oxfordjournals.org/page/5759/14](http://www.oxfordjournals.org/page/5759/14)

Provided by Oxford University Press

Citation: Digital literacy reduces cognitive decline in older adults, experts find (2014, August 12)  
retrieved 10 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-08-digital-literacy-cognitive-decline-older.html>

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