

Smart tech taking over from dumb humans?

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We're becoming a society of smart-tech operators. Our young people have grown up with the tech, but what about those of us who remember dial-up, fax machines and film cameras? Apparently today's mature adults are catching on very quickly. A recent study conducted by Environics noted that 58% of Canadians aged 65+ and almost 8 in 10 (78%) aged 50-64 own smart phones. The findings show that Canadians over the age of 65, just like those aged 50 to 64, are feeling confident about using technology and many feel the impact on society is positive, says Bridgette Murphy, managing director and COO of AGE-WELL. We also found strong interest among respondents in using technologies to stay healthy, engaged and living independently for as long as possible. The poll found that more than 8 in 10 Canadians over the age of 65 believe technological advances can help older adults stay safe, in their own homes longer and stay independent. And, 7 in 10 agree that technological advancements can help older adults stay active and manage health better as they age and can reduce social isolation. When they have difficulties with technology, 53% of respondents turn to their children and 18% to their grandchildren. Been there. We all have our unique talents and specialties. In our household, my wife is the iPhone expert and I'm a bit of a slow learner in phone tech. In my opinion, a phone is a phone, but I do love the services that provide maps and directions. I use my iPad for games and shopping and my computer at work for, well, work. I don't want to respond to emails on my phone, but I have sent a photo or two to my desktop at work. The majority (74 to 80%), according to the study feel confident using current technology; Only 15% of Canadians over the age of 65 and 50-64 believe the impact of technology on society is negative; 6 in 10 (61%) over the age of 65 believe the impact of technology on society is positive. Almost all (93%) of smart phone owners aged 65+ find them easy to use and 98% of those owning smart phones aged 50-64 find them easy to use. The majority of Canadians have at least one social media account. Most of us are familiar with the computing power in our hands, on our wrists and on our desks. But one of the most common computer we operate daily is our vehicle. Today's automobiles are almost like smart computers on wheels. Almost every system today is monitored, tweaked and adjusted by the on-board computers. Car's today can have as many as 50 different computer systems in them. These control a huge number of things in your car including engine controls for emissions; safety features and comfort and convenience features. We like to think we're in total control of our vehicle, but are we? My wife's mini-van has an econ button that adjusts the shift timings making it shift harder at low speeds and easier at high speeds. So it increases fuel economy when driving longer distances in the 2 mile-per-gallon range. Perfect when we visit our daughter at university in London. My wife had a very weird incident with her mini-van recently. After hitting the remote to unlock the car during her lunch hour, the locks went crazy, locking, unlocking in quick repetition for more than 30 minutes. Like an Olympic gymnast, she sprinted, in between locks, and made it inside. Try as she may, she couldn't tame the beast. Again, she timed her exit perfectly, making it out alive! I've read Stephen King's Christine, but come on! A search on Google revealed this is more common than you'd think, yet our mechanic had yet to encounter, or reproduce, such a thing. In my experience over decades of car ownership, electrical woes are the worst to locate, diagnose and fix. While trouble-shooting with scanners, and even remote scans via iPads are easier, fixing all those codes caused by bad sensors remains troublesome. One loose wire in our car and we're toast! We're putting our lives into the buttons of tiny, smart gizmos. If our TV remotes give into the tech gods, they can really ruin our lives. I've had a few occasions, where I just couldn't change channels or adjust the volume. It was as if the remote simply refused my commands! How ungrateful! The smarter our gadgets get the dumber we get. We're just putting ourselves at the mercy of circuits and flashes of light. We've even forgotten how to get up out of our chair and adjust something manually. It is deja vu all over again? Common sense would tell us that smoking and vaping isn't good for us. It would also suggest that handing over the keys to your home and car to a machine is just plain dangerous. The skepticism over technology has always been with us. Ever since the industrial revolution, we've been fearful of just how far technology can take us. Technology will continue to improve, and I'm looking forward to advances in medicine to help people who die young and needlessly from illnesses that plague us. Of course, living longer will have ramifications for our planet, but that's a topic for another discussion. There's no doubt in my mind that science and technology will help further humankind. But we must be cautious, for one frayed wire, one loose connection and we'll go from the top of the food chain to the bottom! But at least we can watch armageddon live on our smart phone!

