



# Digital Amnesia Revisited

---

**A look at how Digital  
Amnesia is affecting  
our minds over time.**

**kaspersky**



# Introduction

In May 2015, [Kaspersky conducted research](#) to find out how the use of the internet and internet-enabled devices were transforming people's everyday lives and relationships. The research found that due to the increasing reliance on technology to constantly connect us to a variety of knowledge, people were unable to remember simple and important information. To describe this phenomenon, the company coined the term **Digital Amnesia**: the experience of forgetting information that you trust a digital device to store and remember for you.

In addition, the research showed that even though internet-enabled devices were becoming more significant, people were still not taking the proper precautions to make sure that their digital lives were protected.

Since the release of the first report, Digital Amnesia has been a widely talked about subject and in some cases referred to as the '[Google Effect](#).' In addition, more people are now using smartphones. [According to Pew Research](#), 81% of Americans own a smartphone.

Along with the evolving discussion around people's increasing dependency on devices and the internet as an extension of their brains, devices have also gotten smarter. In just four years, phones have developed facial recognition as passwords, can serve as a wallet, have intellectual virtual assistants and apps for almost every task imaginable.

With more opportunities for people to store information on devices and rely on that storage for daily tasks, Kaspersky revisited some of the main questions within the initial research, to find out if people continue to suffer from Digital Amnesia. Also to see if this phenomenon has caused any positive correlation with people protecting their devices.

## Key findings include:

- In 2019, 60% of participants can recall their significant others' phone number, which is a decrease of 10% compared to results in 2015 (70%).
- People are still just as likely to depend on their phones to call friends. In 2015, 51% said they could not recall friend's numbers and in 2019, 49% said the same.
- In 2019, over three quarters of respondents (76%) agreed that they are very reliant on technology in their personal life.
- However, only 52% of consumers protect their mobile device with a password and 24% said they use a security solution on their devices.

# Research Methodology

In December 2018, research firm Opinion Matters, conducted a quantitative research study that surveyed online over 2,500 consumers in the United States and Canada, aged between 16 and 55, split equally between male and female.

## Research Findings

### *Committing less to memory*

The survey results showed that the effects of Digital Amnesia are becoming more common among people across the U.S. and Canada. Interestingly, this is seen in the ability to remember phone numbers, especially of those belonging to partners, siblings and friends.

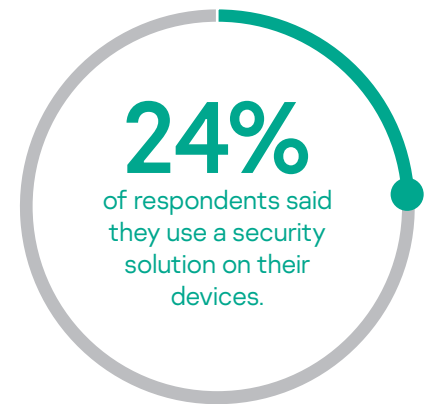
In the original report, there were personal phone numbers that a majority of participants were able to recall without first looking them up. When revisiting the survey, the findings showed that these numbers were still remembered, but with a lower percentage of people who could actually do so.

According to the survey, in 2015, when asked to recall their partners' phone number, 70% of people were able to do so. Now, four years later, that number has decreased to 60%. In addition, initially 68% of people could call their parents without looking up the number, while today that amount has gone down to 64%.

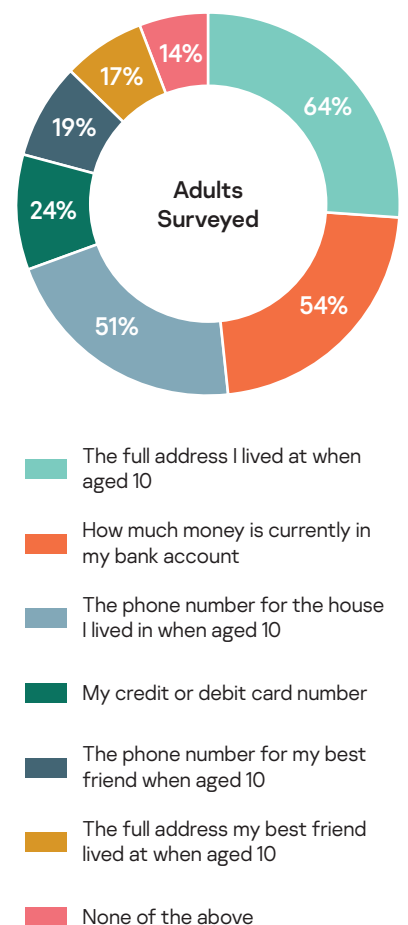
Although the amount of people who can recall their children's numbers has remained relatively the same at 34%, the findings show that people may not be as willing to commit those numbers to memory. In the time between the two reports, there are now more people (29%) who said they could not remember their children's numbers without first looking it up, than when initially asked (22%).

Revisiting Digital Amnesia also highlighted that pieces of information people did not consider important to commit to memory in 2015, remain low priority information in 2019.

When looking to call friends, people are still just as likely to depend on their phones for the number versus their brains. In 2015, 51% of respondents said they could not recall friend's numbers without first looking it up and in 2019 that percentage remains relatively the same at 49%. This also applies to some family, with the same percentage of respondents (44%) stating that they couldn't call their siblings.



**Can you recall the following information without looking it up?**

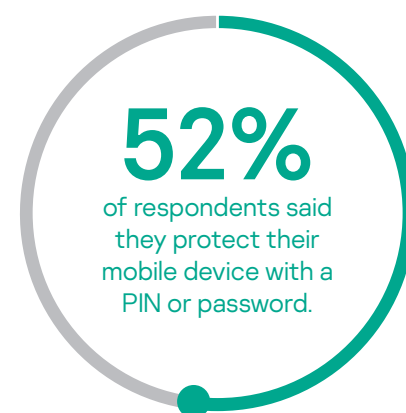




## *Still not properly protecting*

When asked, over three quarters of respondents (76%) agreed that they are very reliant on technology in their personal life. Despite this, the study found that many people are still not taking the proper precautions to protect their personal information and devices from cybercriminals. Less than a quarter (24%) said they use a security solution on their devices. Moreover, the number of participants installing IT security on their phones has decreased from 31% to just 24% since 2015.

Alarming, when asked about how one protects their online devices, only 52% of respondents said they protect their mobile device with a PIN or password. Also, just over a fifth (22%) said they educated themselves about cybersecurity and online privacy to protect their personal information.



## Conclusion

From the first report, Kaspersky established how, while connected devices are able to provide us with unlimited knowledge, and the ability to recall important information at the touch of a button, they also open us up to the potentially risky phenomenon of Digital Amnesia.

Four years later, asking consumers again about their dependency on technology highlights that the development of Digital Amnesia continues to progress over time. The findings show that as technology becomes easier to use, more accessible and seamlessly intertwined in daily activities, people are more inclined to rely on digital devices and less on their own memory than ever before. Yet, less people are taking security precautions.

With no end to Digital Amnesia in sight, it is now more important than ever that consumers protect their devices.

Just as in 2015, Kaspersky is committed to helping people understand the risks their data could be exposed to, and empower them to protect their digital lives.

# About Kaspersky

Kaspersky is a global cybersecurity company founded in 1997. Kaspersky's deep threat intelligence and security expertise is constantly transforming into innovative security solutions and services to protect businesses, critical infrastructure, governments and consumers around the globe. The company's comprehensive security portfolio includes leading endpoint protection and a number of specialized security solutions and services to fight sophisticated and evolving digital threats. Over 400 million users are protected by Kaspersky technologies and we help 270,000 corporate clients protect what matters most to them. Learn more at [usa.kaspersky.com](https://usa.kaspersky.com).