

Closing the digital divide – technology as the new fountain of youth

[Life, Adolescence](#)



Generally speaking human beings are social creatures, this fact can be evidenced throughout history and can be highlighted with a myriad of examples some of which include; patriotism, religion, education even the nuclear family. These are but a few examples all of which require a certain level of social interaction to maintain and function.

Due to our nature interaction with other people is a core component in maintaining a balanced and healthy life. Several studies have been conducted that show how an individual's quality of life can deteriorate if they become socially isolated. The deterioration in social, spiritual and mental wellbeing often creates a negative impact on a person's physical wellbeing; making them less youthful.

The digital divide, how long will it last?

According to the U. S. Census bureau the number of people ages 65 and older was 46. 2 million in 2014, this number is predicted to reach 82. 3 million by 2040 and 98. 2 million by 2060. Furthermore, in recent years there has been a shift towards older adults maintaining independence and remaining in their homes for longer.

It is important to note that those that will be 65+ in 2040 are currently in their late 30s early 40s and those who will be 65+ in 2060 are 20-25 now, both of these demographics utilise computers and current tech readily. It is reasonable to conclude that the present digital divide will be less apparent in the future because younger generations have grown up with computers, it will be second nature when they are older. If we can consider this, it is fair to say that the digital divide will gradually close of its own accord. We will

probably see a rapid close in the digital divide within the next 5-10 years as the aging population will comprise of a lot more people who use computers on a daily basis now.

Can tech compensate?

The role that technology has to play in this arena has yet to be fully determined. Some would argue that there is no substitute for actual human contact. Others would argue that the virtual world and interactions therein are just as meaningful to an individual and their wellbeing. Situations like this are now becoming common place.

Although technological interaction is not for everyone, it can be evidenced that virtual interaction and community have a positive impact as opposed to complete isolation.

The solution for the current divide

Waiting for the digital divide to heal itself is not a practical solution.

It is important to understand why the current digital divide exists and what can be done to bridge the gap sooner. One of the main barriers to uptake in new technologies is the rate in which technology is progressing. Due to the high rate of progression many older adults cannot always keep up with ever changing user interfaces or the devices that are being used.

The solution is simple; create platforms and devices that bridge the gap by using older technologies that older adults are comfortable with and at the same time incorporate modern solutions into them. By retrofitting devices

with modern design principles and functionality you will find that the benefits of new technology can be brought to a wider audience.