

## New UK-Study Reveals a Generation Plagued by ‘Brain Rot’

*Three in five Gen Z say they struggle to concentrate, pointing to mental overload, brain fog and a feeling of emptiness – Austria invites to join a 5-day analogue self-experience*

**London, 30 March 2026** – A growing number of Brits are struggling to focus, switch off and feel mentally rested in an increasingly digital and overwhelming world. New research reveals that so-called ‘**brain rot**’ – a state of cognitive overload driven by constant digital stimulation – is affecting younger generations in particular.

The study of over 1,000 people in the UK highlights a clear generational divide between Gen Z and baby boomers: Over half (53%) of Gen Z spend more than four hours a day on screens outside of work or education, compared to just 23% of baby boomers. While 72% of Gen Z want to spend less time on screens, only 38% actually take daily breaks. This shows a significant gap between desire and behaviour, which does not apply to boomers. 60% of UKs Gen Z struggles to concentrate for a longer period without checking their phones, which is more than twice the proportion of Babyboomers (28%).

### Constant digital stimulation leads to mental overload

The difference is even bigger when it comes to mental overload: 38% of Gen Z experience mental overload caused by digital content often or very often – compared to just 6% of the older generation. Finally, seven in ten baby boomers can easily switch off mentally in the evening, compared to just 58% of Gen Z. This leads to lower energy during the day: A whole three in five (60%) in Gen Z do not feel well-rested in the morning.

Dr Bardia Monshi, psychologist and performance coach, explains: “Constant digital stimulation is putting our attention systems under strain, leading to reduced focus, mental exhaustion and rising stress levels. Many people recognise the problem but struggle to change their behaviour.”

Rather than simply reducing screen time, experts point to the importance of meaningful, real-life experiences. Activities that engage multiple senses, require focus or involve physical interaction help the brain to reset and form new neural connections.

That’s where Austria comes in.

### New ‘Anti BRAIN ROT’ initiative

Austria invites people to actively step out of digitally driven routines and into experiences that demand focus, presence and participation. Whether it’s hiking through alpine landscapes, learning traditional crafts or working alongside local communities, these are not

passive holidays but hands-on experiences that engage both mind and body - offering a meaningful counterbalance to overstimulated, screen-heavy daily life.

To bring this to life, Austria Tourism, the country's national tourism organisation, has created the **"ANTI BRAIN ROT" initiative** – a five-day, screen-free experience designed specifically for Gen Z participants from the UK. The aim of this self-experience is not only to help young people switch off, but to enable real transformation, allowing them to return with new perspectives and lasting memories.

Participants will take part in a curated programme of activities including sunrise hikes, cooking and baking, and hands-on farm experiences – all without digital devices. Throughout the experience, they will be supported by the two experts Dr Bardia Monshi and Dr Bernd Hufnagl, receive scientific insights and will reflect on their mental wellbeing, focus and sleep.

Neurobiologist Bernd Hufnagl adds: "Experiences that we actively engage in are more deeply embedded in memory. They create the kind of attention and lasting impressions that our brains increasingly lack in a digital environment."

The initiative will also explore how stepping away from screens impacts concentration, mental exhaustion and overall wellbeing before and after the experience. Applications are now open, with five places available for Gen Z participants (aged 18-29 inclusive), in the UK. Those interested have three weeks, until Monday 20 April, to get their entries in [austriansynapse.com](https://austriansynapse.com).

## Notes to editors

For the study, 1,000 people in the UK were asked to reflect on their daily lives. Five key factors were assessed: daily screen time on working days and days off; the ability to work with focus without digital interruptions; feelings of mental overload or 'brain fog' caused by digital stimuli; sleep quality and the ability to switch off mentally in the evening; and consciously planned offline time spent in nature or through analogue activities.

The concept of travel as a transformative experience lies at the heart of Austria Tourism's current campaign, 'The Austrian Synapse'. A holiday in Austria is presented as a profoundly impactful experience with a lasting resonance. The campaign has been launched in ten key European markets, including the UK.

\*Representative online survey, Feb/Mar 2026, n=1,000, ages 18–75 (as referenced in the study materials).

\*Gen Z, people born between 1997 and 2007.

### **About Austria Tourism**

Austria Tourism (Österreich Werbung) is Austria's national tourism organisation. It promotes Austria internationally as a travel destination and inspires visitors with Austria's Lebensgefühl: authentic experiences across nature and landscapes, culture and culinary experiences— 365 days a year.

More information: <https://www.austria.info/en-gb/>

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