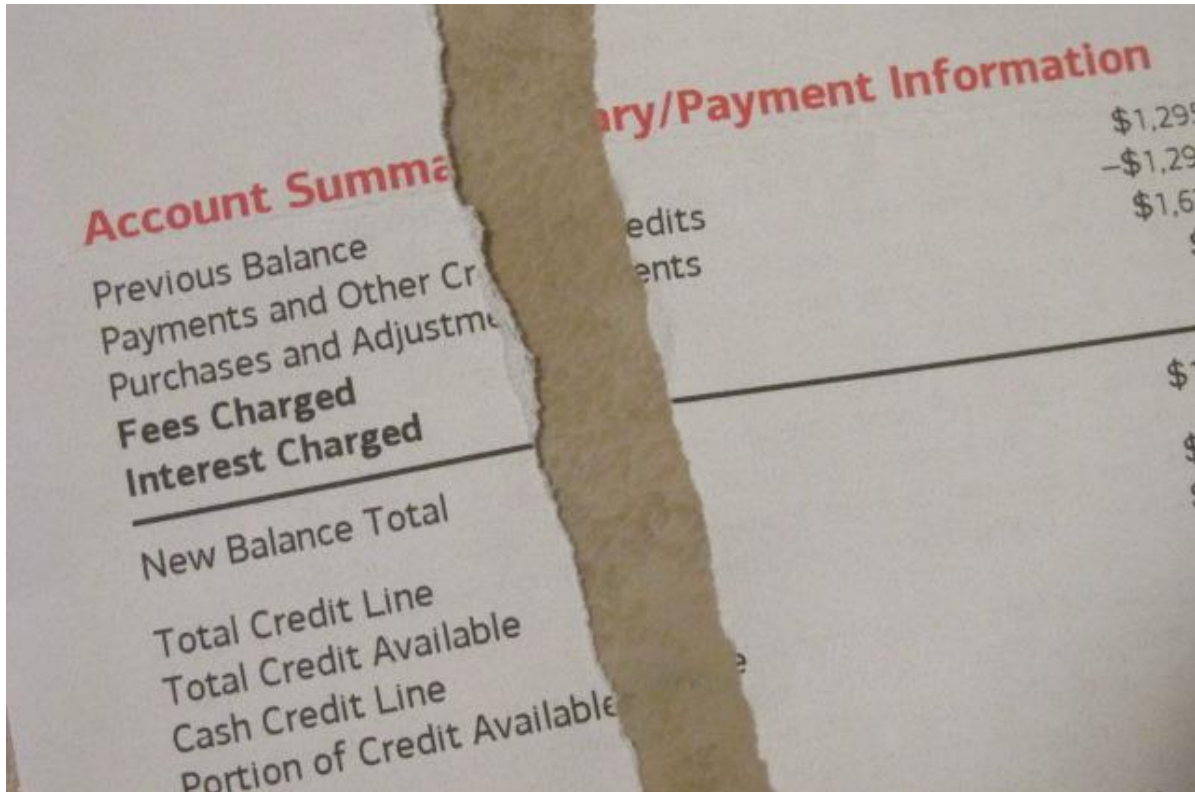


## **The forced digitalization makes life difficult for people with severe electrical hypersensitivities**



**The world has gone digital, which causes a lot of trouble for those who are severely electrically hypersensitive.**

*Keywords: electrical sensitivity, electrical hypersensitivity, disability, access, barrier, computer*

People with severe electrical sensitivities have difficulty using computers and other electronic devices. As the world has embraced the digital revolution, people with this disability have become marginalized. This is extremely difficult for others to comprehend. Here we describe some of the barriers that are newly erected to block access to basic services.

Some countries are further ahead, showing the rest of us what is coming.

### **Schools**

## 2 *Forced digitalization*

Schools are heavy users of wireless technologies. This has forced families to homeschool their electrically sensitive children, or find a school not married to the wireless lifestyle, such as a Montessori school. Families have had to move in order to be near such a school.

It can be very tough to stay in a regular school. There is tremendous peer pressure and the teachers can be quite nasty. The British teenager Jenny Fry was driven to suicide when her school was unwilling to accommodate her disability.

Slowly, the authorities and some parents are realizing the smartphones are harming their children. They are blaming the mental health epidemic on social media rather than on the radiation, which is still too scary to even consider. But any reduction in the use of the screens is helpful, regardless of the reason given.

### **Transportation**

Modern cars are loaded with computers and other electronics, which are right in front of the driver. Most electrically hypersensitive are able to ride in the back seat of some cars, especially older models. The electric vehicles have inverters to run the motor, which are even worse.

Airplanes are highly electric environments, especially those with onboard Wi-Fi service. The radiowaves keep bouncing between the aluminum walls, thus enhancing them.

In the past, people who could not tolerate the radiation on an airliner have crossed oceans on cruise ships, but today they too are saturated with wireless signals bouncing around the metal walls.

### **Banks**

Banks are moving away from sending out monthly statements on paper. Many small banks don't offer them at all, while large banks are slowly phasing them out. What used to be standard and free is now optional, with a fee charged for each paper statement.

Cheques are being phased out in Australia. In Sweden and Denmark they have not been used for years already. Only cash and electronic payment remains. In Denmark, some bank branches are now open to in-person customers for just *one hour a week*, with long lines, to "encourage" people to go digital.

The long lines mean people will amuse themselves with their smartphones while they wait, so an electrically hypersensitive person cannot be there. Besides, the banks now exact fees for the in-person services, adding another burden on people on a fixed income.

And if you talk to the bank on the phone, they want to verify your phone number by sending you a text message, which only works on a cell phone.

## **Postal services**

Sending a personal letter has been replaced by e-mails and social media for most people. The result is that the postal services sees a lot less business and are coping by raising their prices and lowering their services.

Sending a letter cross-county in the United States used to take about three days. Now it takes a week. International mail has also slowed down.

Hardest hit is Denmark, where the rate for a basic domestic letter in 2024 is \$7, or nearly ten times the cost for the same service in the United States. And Denmark is a tiny country where the mail doesn't have to travel very far. On top of that, the delivery of mail is only once a week to Danish residences.

In 2024 the Danish postal system abolished stamps. Instead, a customer must login on a website to register the recipient's address and pay the postage, then a label is printed on their home printer. The alternative is to go to a convenience store and pay them to do it.

## **News media**

Today's newspapers have shrunk dramatically. The Sunday editions used to be brick-sized, with lots of advertising, but no more.

The weekly newsmagazines *Newsweek* and *U.S. News and World Report* have gone all-digital several years ago. *The Economist* has said they expect to go all-digital at some point. They continue to publish a printed edition, but the cost of subscription has risen sharply. In August 2024 they published one week's edition in digital format only (had it been a single PDF file that could be printed out, that would have been better).

For people who cannot use digital media, the rising cost and dwindling availability of analog media makes it hard to stay informed. It makes the forced social isolation worse.

In 2024 the satirical newspaper *The Onion* resumed publishing a printed edition after ten years of digital-only content. They did it for those “too stupid or infirm to use the internet,” as they wrote satirically.

## **Government**

Government agencies are also going digital in their interactions with their citizens.

In Denmark the conversion has been complete for years already. Every citizen is issued a special electronic mail account that is encrypted and accessed using one-time code pads. They are called NemID.

The United States is slower to do the conversion, but it is progressing. One example is the Internal Revenue Service (tax office).

Tax forms used to be easy to get. There'd be a pile at the post office and other places. Then they were only available at the libraries. Then they arrived later and later at the library, eventually as late as March (with tax filings due mid-April). Then the library would have only one set which you had to photocopy manually. The alternative was to get a computer user to order the forms from the tax office (IRS) to be mailed directly to you. But they too arrived later and later. One year they arrived a week before the deadline for filing the taxes. The current work-around is to get someone to download the forms and booklets and send them to a photocopy shop to be printed (at your expense). But now the IRS has announced they are phasing out tax forms on paper altogether.

## **The medical system**

Hospitals and doctors' offices have taken full advantage of the digital revolution. When you go there, you will likely be handed a tablet computer with the registration form to fill in, rather than a form on paper. And if you object, the response may not be friendly and accommodating, even though it would not be much extra work on their part to sit at a distance and fill it out for you.

If you are admitted to a hospital, they may attach all sorts of monitors to your body. These used to communicate through a cord, but now they transmit wirelessly. Likewise, there'll be a computer next to each hospital bed, also connected wirelessly. The computer is used to update your records (and bill) each time they give you a pill.

Telemedicine is becoming more common, where the patient talks to the physician via a computer. One day insurance companies may require telemedicine for some appointments, as it is cheaper without the need for a clinic building. Seeing a doctor in person may well become an “extra.”

The telecom industry touts telemedicine as a reason to build more towers, even though it can just as well be done through a computer with cabled internet connection.

### **Telephone service**

Telecom firms are dismantling telephone landlines in many places. It is cheaper for them to maintain the towers instead.

In Sweden the law guarantees that everyone has access to telephone service, but the courts say that if there is a cell phone signal, that means the law is adhered to. They have so far not supported the people who must have a landline if they cannot use a cell phone.

Public pay phones have now disappeared, making it difficult for people who are living in cars, vans or trailers to be away from the electrosmog. It is also a problem when traveling long-distance, or if the car breaks down.

### **Electrosmog**

Before smartphones were introduced around 2012, wireless phones were just used for talking and texting. Most people used a corded landline as their main phone at home and at work.

There was much less need for wireless capacity, so the towers were few and far between. People with severe electrical hypersensitivity could live in cities, if they moved to an area without a tower.

Now people have become addicted to streaming videos on their phones wherever they are. This mostly frivolous activity takes up a lot of bandwidth so many more towers are erected. There are no safe places in the cities anymore, or even in small towns. People can be forced to move away when a tower is erected near their homes.

There is no recourse, as telecom lobbyists in the U.S. basically wrote the 1996 Telecommunications Act. Its section 704 forbids local municipalities from rejecting a tower based on the health effects it has on the neighbors.

Nearly all the government agency personnel involved in writing the bill got well-paid jobs in the telecom industry afterwards.



*Demonstrating wireless radiation from a gas pump's NFC payment system, even when it is not in use. It measures 229,200 uW/m<sup>2</sup>.*

There are many other sources of electrosmog today, from wireless payment systems at stores and gas stations to the neighbor's private Wi-Fi network.

### **Other problems**

In Copenhagen, Denmark, the public restrooms are only available to people who have a smartphone. The phone is used to pay a small fee and then unlock the door.

Motorists trying to park in Copenhagen can no longer pay using a coin-operated meter. A smartphone is now needed. There are little kiosks to pay at instead, but they are few and far between.

The city of Copenhagen is discouraging car use by removing a lot of parking spots, so it can be impossible to find one near a pay kiosk. The long walk can be a major barrier for the elderly.

The city operates van services for the elderly, but they are shared with others who will be carrying smartphones.

## **Ignored**

The plight of people disabled by electrical hypersensitivity is ignored. The health authorities simply pretend that the disease doesn't exist.

In the United States, the Access Board is the government agency that issues guidelines on how to comply with the laws requiring "reasonable accommodation" of people with disabilities.

The agency briefly recognized the existence of "electromagnetic sensitivities" in the *Federal Register* (September 3, 2002, page 56353), but that is all it has done.

In 2024, the agency issued new guidelines for accessing electronic devices. Nothing in them is helpful to people with electrical hypersensitivity. They do not even require websites to be printable on paper so their information can be read without a computer.

Just like for other injustices, past and present, it is all political. Perceptions have to change.

## **Coping and paying**

There are ways to cope with some of these many barriers. Sometimes it is possible to ask for an accommodation, but many times it is too "inconvenient." People don't like to do it, some may even make snide remarks, such as "learn to use a computer." Any explanation of the problem is likely to be ignored by uncomprehending minds.

If your car breaks down and leave you stranded, it works to flag down another motorist and ask them to call for help.

But asking someone to fully power down the smartphone so you can be near them, is like asking a meth addict to go cold turkey.

Many coping methods are really an accommodation of the majority's wish to force the digital world upon everyone. They do not accommodate you, you have to accommodate them.

An example is to bring a friend along to a medical clinic, who can then do the registration on the tablet computer and sit in the waiting room while you wait outside, away from the other people and their smartphones.

Another is to beg friends and family to do the computer work. Or hire someone to do it. But how to find someone reliable, who will do the work in a timely manner and not misuse your credit card? And some websites do not print well – some are wider than the paper while others print gibberish.

Some shield their houses to accommodate the world's "need" for towers everywhere. That costs money, which they have to pay themselves. People have had to sell their homes and move away. The polluters do not pay the cost they impose on others.

When we ask to continue getting printed statements from the bank, or keeping a non-wireless electrical meter from the utility, they say that is an extra service. It must be paid extra for. The cost does not come out of the savings they get from converting their other customers.

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, businesses cannot charge extra for accommodating a disability. They cannot charge a wheelchair user for using a ramp, for instance.

But when it comes to electrically sensitive people, the courts have so far not been sympathetic. A judge in California ruled such charges are fine, as long as they are levied against anyone who asks for such "extra" service. So it is okay to charge for the use of a wheelchair ramp, as long as they also charge for baby carriages/prams and roller skates?

Many problems simply have no realistic solution. Asking the next-door neighbor to use cords for their house network is unlikely to be received well, and may result in harassment. The telecom providers will fight any request for accommodation tooth and nail, as that could set a precedence and be an acknowledgment of the health effects.

### **The elder advantage**

One saving grace is that some older people have never learned how to use a computer. So for another decade or two, there will be some work-arounds to the digital onslaught.

Some banks will waive the fee for sending the monthly statement on paper, if the account holder is a senior person. But what about younger people?



The Danish government, with its onerous “no paper” policies, do allow seniors to communicate with public offices by letter. They do have to go to an office and apply for this privilege. Whether they will accept a younger person with severe electrical sensitivity is not known to this writer.

## **Future outlook**

It will get worse before it gets better. How bad it will become is anyone’s guess.

It was fully clear by 1963 that tobacco kills, but it took fifteen years before the use of tobacco peaked in the United States. Hopefully, there will eventually be a peak wireless too, followed by a steep decline, as the public becomes more aware of the dangers. As it was with tobacco, the governments are too beholden to lead, they will only follow.

The telecom and electronics industries will fight as hard as the tobacco industry. They can never concede that there are any health effects from their wares as their house of cards will then quickly come tumbling down.

The lobbyists will be busy greasing the hands of politicians to keep the industry exempt from liability. The tobacco industry was hit hard by lawsuits in the late 1990s, and then Congress made them immune from further attacks. Something similar will happen again.

Information technologies have tremendous advantages for humanity. We should not stop using them, but we should use them wisely and in a way that does not harm children or exclude people with disabilities. That is really no different from how buildings are now better designed, without the frivolous steps that architects used to love placing everywhere, especially at the entrances to make them look impressive.

A hopeful development is that people are realizing that a lot of screentime is bad for children, even though the radiation is not yet blamed for it.

This is similar to when a century ago swamps were drained to fight malaria. It was believed the vapors from the stagnant water caused the disease. The draining actually removed the breeding places for the mosquitoes that carried malaria, so the measure was effective even though it wasn’t for the reason believed.

## **More information**

Other articles about the difficulties of living with environmental disabilities on [www.eiwellspring.org/intromenu.html](http://www.eiwellspring.org/intromenu.html).