

One in three people born in 2015 will develop dementia, new analysis shows

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Diagram of the brain of a person with Alzheimer's Disease. Credit: Wikipedia/public domain.

Alzheimer's Research UK has renewed its call for urgent action on dementia as new analysis estimates that one in three people born this year will develop the condition during their lifetime.

The findings, revealed on World Alzheimer's Day (21 September), foreshadow a looming national health crisis as the UK population ages, and underlines the need for global efforts to develop new treatments to succeed.

Dementia affects 850,000 people in the UK and is caused by brain

diseases, most commonly Alzheimer's, which result in the loss of brain cells and impair the brain's ability to function properly. Early symptoms can include problems with memory and thinking, but as [brain cell death](#) becomes more widespread, physical functions such as walking and even swallowing can be affected. Currently there are no treatments able to stop or slow Alzheimer's disease or other dementias in their tracks.

With age the biggest risk factor for [dementia](#), the number of people living with the condition is expected to rise as the population ages and life expectancy increases. The latest research, commissioned by Alzheimer's Research UK and carried out by the Office of Health Economics, set out to calculate the number of people born today who could be expected develop the condition during their lifetime. The analysis took into account life expectancy estimates for people born in 2015, as well as estimates of dementia incidence in men and women of different ages. The report estimates that:

- 32% of people born in the UK 2015, or one in three, will develop dementia during their lifetime
- 27% of males born in 2015 will develop the condition
- 37% of females born in 2015 will develop the condition

Previous research from the team estimated that a treatment capable of delaying the onset of dementia by five years would reduce the number of dementia cases by a third. As the UK's leading dementia research charity, Alzheimer's Research UK has launched several major initiatives to help speed up the development of new treatments, including a network of Drug Discovery Institutes and a Global Clinical Trials Fund.

Amanda Franks, from Swindon, a Champion of Alzheimer's Research UK, whose mum Cathy was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's six years ago, said:

"My mum was only 58 when she was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's. Up until then we had no idea this devastating disease could affect someone so young. Simple day-to-day tasks like making a cup of tea, getting dressed and eating soon became a huge challenge for Mum. Dad cared for her at home with family help for five years by which time things were getting out of hand with her violent behaviour and hallucinations – life became extremely stressful.

"As a mum myself, I would dearly love to see preventions and new treatments found to defeat Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, giving hope to people now and future generations. These new statistics are terrifying but they will open everyone's eyes to the enormity of the situation. Research can beat dementia and, with more investment, Alzheimer's Research UK can drive the next breakthrough so urgently needed."

Dr Matthew Norton, Head of Policy at Alzheimer's Research UK, said:

"These figures underline a stark reality: as people are living longer, more and more people will develop dementia in the future if action is not taken now to tackle the condition. It's wonderful news that each generation is living longer than the last, but it's important to ensure that people can enjoy these extra years in good health. Dementia is our greatest medical challenge and if we are to beat it, we must invest in research to find new treatments and preventions. If we could delay the onset of dementia by five years, we could reduce the number of people living with the condition by a third. Research has the power to transform lives, and our actions now will help determine the future for children born today. The hundreds of thousands of families affected by dementia now deserve to know that we are fighting for them."

Provided by Alzheimer's Research UK

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