

Key findings

The data, evidence, and case studies from this 2024 World Alzheimer Report highlight the complex and persistent nature of stigma and dementia worldwide. Our 2019 report provided an unprecedented baseline of global stigma data. Five years on, new data help us reflect on what has changed (or not), but certainly on what needs to change if we are to improve

outcomes for people living with dementia worldwide. Here, we distil key findings into three categories: knowledge about dementia, attitudes and beliefs, and behaviours. This framework enables us to describe how knowledge about dementia can influence attitudes and beliefs – and ultimately behaviour toward people impacted by dementia.

Knowledge

- 80%* of the general public think dementia is a normal part of ageing, a dramatic increase compared to 66% in 2019.
- 65%* of health and care professionals (HCPs) believe dementia is a normal part of ageing, up from 62% in 2019.
- Over 96% of the general public believe in the value of a medical diagnosis.
- Over 93% of the general public believe there are things we can do to improve the lives of people with dementia.
- Over 58% of the general public believe dementia is caused by an unhealthy lifestyle. This number increased since 2019 across high-income countries (HICs) and upper-middle income countries (UMICs) but decreased dramatically in lower-income countries (LMICs).
- Over a quarter of people globally believe there is nothing we can do to prevent dementia, with an increase from 2019 to 37% in LMICs.
- Over 43% of the general public believe, at least in part, dementia is caused by lack of family support, a dramatic increase since 2019, especially in HICs.

Our 2024 World Alzheimer Report has revealed the troubling reality that nearly 80% of the general public and, more worryingly, 65% of health and care professionals, still believe that dementia is a normal part of ageing. This is a concerning increase from our 2019 survey numbers, as we know that this lack of understanding can delay diagnosis and access to treatment and support.

There are also varying degrees of understanding around causal attributions of dementia; with a dramatic increase of people in high-income countries believing that lack of family support can cause dementia and over a quarter believing there is nothing we can do to prevent dementia.

The news regarding levels of knowledge is not all bad, however. The number of people who believe that dementia is caused by an unhealthy lifestyle has increased to over 61%, suggesting that messaging around the importance of dementia risk reduction is gaining traction. Finally, an overwhelming majority of the general public believe in the value of a medical diagnosis and that there are things we can do to improve the lives of people living with dementia.

Attitudes

- Between 29% (HICs) and 32% (LMICs) of the general public felt that people with dementia are dangerous more often than not – an increase from 2019.
- Over 64% of the general public believe people with dementia are impulsive and unpredictable, a slight increase from 2019, especially in UMICs.
- Over a quarter of respondents from the general public expressed a belief that moving a family member with dementia to a care home, even against their wishes, would be the best option. This number increased significantly in LMICs since 2019.
- Over 60% of the general public believed it is important to remove family responsibilities from people with dementia to avoid stressing them, an increase from 2019 data, especially in LMICs.
- Over 80% of general public respondents indicated a willingness to take a genetic test to determine their risk of developing dementia.
- More than 90% of carers and respondents from the general public said they would be encouraged to get a diagnosis if a disease-modifying treatment was available.

* This is an average of global data. For breakdowns by World Bank income groups, please see Chapter 2.

- Over 85% of health and care professionals said they would be encouraged to *give* a diagnosis if there was a treatment that could prevent or slow the progression of dementia.
- More than 80% of the general public believes that they can change the support provided to people with dementia through their vote.

There were some real changes in overall attitudes toward people living with dementia since 2019. There was a general increase in the view that people living with dementia are dangerous and unpredictable in their behaviour, as well as an increased perception that it is important to remove family responsibilities from people with dementia to avoid stressing them. Significantly, more than 27% of respondents from the

general public expressed a belief that moving a family member with dementia to a care home, even against their wishes, would be for the best.

In contrast, the majority the general public showed a willingness to be proactive in determining their own health journeys in relation to dementia, with over 80% of respondents indicating a willingness to take a genetic test to determine their risk of developing dementia, and more than 90% of respondents saying they would be encouraged to get a diagnosis if a disease-modifying treatment was available. Equally, over 85% of health and care professionals said they would be encouraged to *give* a diagnosis if there was a treatment that could prevent or slow the progression of dementia.

Behaviour

- 88% of people living with dementia indicate experiencing discrimination, up from 83% in 2019.
- 36% of the general public in LMICs are willing to keep their dementia a secret, a significant increase from 19% in 2019.
- Carers and people living with dementia tended to report higher levels of loneliness than the general population.
- Over 50% of people with dementia and their carers experienced anticipated discrimination.

For people with dementia:

- 36% stopped applying for or continuing work
- 29% avoid or discontinue close personal relationships
- 24% (nearly quarter) avoid seeking help, care, or treatment due to concerns about treatment by pharmacists or other customers.
- 22% avoid visiting banks due to fear of judgement
- 31% avoid social situations due to concerns regarding the reactions of others

For carers:

- 43% stopped inviting friends over due to concerns about how they might treat their loved one
- 47% stopped accepting invites to visit friends or family
- 40% avoided joining social groups or activities due to concerns about reactions to their loved one

- 34% avoided going out in public with the person they care for due to fears of perception
- 41% of carers avoid travel or taking vacations due to concerns that the person they care for could be treated negatively

Not surprisingly, these findings strike to the heart of the World Alzheimer Report. Behaviour outlines the 'real-world' impact of stigma – it stems from public and structural stigma and can often manifest as discrimination. It is important to note that this report outlines experiences of discrimination by others, but also levels of 'anticipated discrimination,' which can hinder and individual from participating fully in life due to fear of rejection. In this report, the experience of anticipated discrimination was most profound in family carers. It is clear that people living with dementia, and those who care for them, are experiencing high levels of discrimination and/or fear of discrimination, which is impacting severely on their quality of life. This is significant.