

Is dementia on the decline? Research suggests it might be

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Despite fears that the coming silver tsunami will trigger a dementia epidemic, a surprising new study suggests that it may be possible to delay - or even prevent - some kinds of dementia.

Dementia rates in the United States dropped by 44 percent from the late 1970s to 2010, according to the Boston University study.

In addition, the average age when people showed symptoms rose from 80 to 85, researchers discovered.

Their findings were published recently in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

The report analyzed data from a long-running study of thousands of people in a small Massachusetts town.

While scientists don't know the exact reason for the decrease in dementia cases, they highlight two contributing factors: education level and [heart health](#).

People in the study who earned at least a [high school diploma](#) had a much lower dementia risk than those with less education. Other studies have revealed a link between higher levels of education and better overall health.

The largest decrease was reported in dementia cases caused by stroke

and other vascular diseases. People in the study who improved their heart health saw a reduction in their dementia risk.

Currently, about 5.3 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease, the most common form of [dementia](#).

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