

Does social isolation affect older adults' risk of developing dementia?

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New research published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* indicates that social isolation is common among older U.S. adults, and it increases their likelihood of developing dementia.

Among 5,022 participants of the National Health and Aging Trends

Study, a longitudinal and nationally representative study of older adults in the United States, nearly one-quarter (1,172 participants, or 23.3%) were socially isolated. After adjusting for demographic and health factors, being socially isolated (versus not socially isolated) was associated with a 28% higher risk of developing dementia over 9 years, regardless of race or ethnicity.

"Social connections are increasingly understood as a critical factor for the health of individuals as they age. Our study expands our understanding of the deleterious impact of [social isolation](#) on one's risk for dementia over time," said corresponding author Thomas K.M. Cudjoe, MD, MPH, of Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. "I hope this serves as a wakeup call for all of us to be more thoughtful of the role of social connections on our cognitive health."

More information: Social isolation and 9-year dementia risk in community-dwelling Medicare beneficiaries in the United States, *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* (2023). [DOI: 10.1111/jgs.18140](#)

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