



PRESS RELEASE

Research Findings

A Third of Americans Have a Close Relative Who Suffers from Dementia or Alzheimer's Disease

Most Americans say they are interested in taking steps to reduce their own risk of dementia and Alzheimer's disease

Washington, DC, September 22, 2020 — According to a recent online survey of 1,217 Americans conducted by Ipsos on behalf MDVIP, a national network of primary care doctors who focus on delivering personalized, patient-centered medicine and preventive care, finds that one-third of Americans have a close relative who suffers from Alzheimer's disease or dementia (31%). The study also finds that two-thirds of Americans are concerned about their risk of developing dementia and Alzheimer's disease (67%), and that most are interested in mitigating this risk (80%). Half say they already make lifestyle choices in order to reduce this risk (51%). Far fewer Americans feel that developing these conditions is inevitable – only 23% say that dementia and Alzheimer's disease are a natural part of aging, and so there is nothing that can be done to prevent them. Alzheimer's disease (72%) and dementia, and memory loss and retention (71%) are also top of mind when Americans think about brain health.

- Those who have a family member with dementia or Alzheimer's disease are more likely to be concerned about developing dementia or Alzheimer's disease (84%), and 90% are interested in learning ways to reduce the risk.
- Older respondents are more likely to be concerned about their risk of Alzheimer's disease and dementia than their younger counterparts: 69% respectively among those ages 40 to 60 and among those ages 61 and older. For younger respondents, ages 18 to 39, only 61% are concerned by this risk.
- Women (83%) are more interested than men (76%) in taking steps to reduce their risk of these conditions.
- Older respondents are also more interested in reducing their risk of dementia and Alzheimer's disease and are more likely to already make lifestyle choices that reduce their risk.
- African Americans are less likely to be concerned about developing dementia and Alzheimer's disease compared to the general population (45% of African Americans, compared to 67% of the general public). However, African Americans are about as likely as the general public to say they make lifestyle choices to reduce their risk of these conditions (53% and 51%, respectively).
- Across different regions of the country, no significant differences emerge about how knowledgeable Americans think they about behaviors that put brain health at risk, the warning signs of declining brain health, and conditions that mimic dementia. However, those in the Midwest (49%) and South (46%) are more likely to say they know about the relationship between emotional well-being and brain health (compared to 37% in the Northeast, and 39% in the West).



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- Men are twice as likely as women to say that dementia and Alzheimer's disease are a normal part of aging, so there is nothing they can do to prevent them (30% of men, 16% of women).

MDVIP conducted a separate study among 1,005 adults over the age of 18 in August 2020 to gain insight into the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on different aspects of brain health. The *Brain Health COVID-19 survey* found that among Americans who have a close relative or friend who currently suffers from cognitive impairment (from mild to severe), two thirds agree that social distancing and less in-person contact have been especially difficult for their relative/friend (67%). Nearly as many report that their relative/friend has experienced a cognitive decline during the pandemic (63%) and/or increased feelings of depression/anxiety during the pandemic (62%) – and more than half say their relative/friend has experienced a decline in their physical health due to decreased activity/exercise (56%). More than a third also experienced difficulty getting medical care for their friend/relative during the pandemic (36%).

Brain Health IQ

The study also finds that Americans are most likely to say they are very or somewhat knowledgeable about the relationship between emotional well-being and brain health (44%). About two in five report they are knowledgeable about behaviors that put brain health at risk (39%) and the warning signs of declining brain health (37%). Americans are least likely to say they are knowledgeable on conditions and diseases that may mimic dementia (29%). Two in five (39%) say they are aware of their current risk level for Alzheimer's and dementia.

- Those with a family member who has Alzheimer's disease or dementia are slightly more likely to report knowing the warning signs of declining brain health (41%) than the general public (37%) and are more likely to say they are familiar with the behaviors that support brain health (43%) than the general public (38%).
- African Americans (47%) are more likely to say they know about behaviors that put their brain health at risk than the general public (39%).
- Men are more likely than women to say they are aware of their current risk level for dementia and Alzheimer's disease (42% vs. 35%).

With regards to dementia and Alzheimer's disease, just over a third of Americans say they know about the symptoms of these conditions (35%). About a quarter say they are knowledgeable about risk factors (27%), prevention (23%), causes (26%), and different types of dementia (24%).

- Men are more likely than women to say they are knowledgeable about the ways to prevent dementia (29% of men compared to 18% of women). This is also true of Americans with a college degree (27% compared to 21% of those without a college degree).

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Respondents were also asked specific questions about brain health in order to gain a better understanding of how much Americans know about this issue. Grades were assigned based upon the number of questions that respondents were able to answer correctly. Although between 30 and 40 percent of respondents say they are knowledgeable or very knowledgeable about various aspects of brain health, only 12% of respondents received an “A” grade by answering at least 77% of the relevant questions correctly. Thirteen percent of respondents received a “B” grade, answering between 77% and 68% of the questions correctly, 9% of respondents received a “C” grade, and 20% received a “D” grade. Almost half of all respondents (47%) received a “F” grade, getting just 17 or fewer of the possible 39 questions correct.

- Those who received “A” grades are more likely to be college educated (16% of those with a college degree received an “A”, compared to 9% of those without a college degree).
- Those who have a relative with Alzheimer’s disease or dementia are just as likely as the general public to receive an “A” grade (13%) but are less likely to receive a “F” grade (40%, compared to 48% of those who do not have a close relative with dementia or Alzheimer’s disease).
- Those who receive lower grades are generally less likely to take steps to protect their brain health. For example, 51% of those with an “D” and 36% of those with an “F” said they currently make lifestyle choices to reduce their risk of Alzheimer’s disease and dementia, compared to just 69-71% of those with an “A,” “B,” or “C”.
- Men (52%) were more likely than women (42%) to receive a failing grade.
- Grades are evenly distributed across the country, with similar numbers of respondents receiving passing and failing grades in each region.

Knowledge about Maintaining Brain Health

The study also finds that some knowledge about how to protect and support brain health is widely known to the general public, while other factors are less-well known. With regards to what lifestyle habits are effective in supporting brain health, most respondents are aware that doing puzzles (78%), getting regular exercise (78%) and maintaining social connections (71%) are effective in supporting brain health. About half of Americans know that dental care (55%) supports brain health, but just one-third are aware that gum disease is linked to brain health (33%). About two in five Americans (40%) know that receiving regular hearing exams from your doctor also supports a healthy brain. While many know that avoiding trans fats is an effective way to support brain health (42%) and that having high cholesterol may be damaging to the brain (41%), just a quarter of respondents say they know diabetes is a major risk factor for dementia (28%).

- Those with a college degree (40%) are more likely than those without a degree (28%) to say that gum disease is linked to brain health.
- Younger Americans are more likely to be aware that lack of sleep can reduce the size of the brain (40%) than those ages 40 to 60 (35%) and those over the age of 60 (33%).



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Americans generally have greater knowledge about Alzheimer's disease than general brain health habits. Three in five Americans are aware that people who have dementia will not necessarily develop Alzheimer's disease (58%). A majority of respondents are aware that Alzheimer's disease cannot be reversed (62%) and that the disease's progression can be slowed with medications and treatment (69%). About half recognized that Alzheimer's disease is fatal (51%). Approximately two in five Americans did not know that Alzheimer's disease can only accurately be diagnosed by autopsy (44% said this was false).

- Those over age 60 are more likely to say that dementia can be treated (54%) than those ages 18 to 39 (29%) and those ages 40 to 60 (43%).
- Older Americans are also more likely to be aware that Alzheimer's disease's progression can be slowed over time with treatment and medications (79%) than those ages 40 to 60 (73%) and those ages 18 to 39 (56%).
- Just over half of African Americans (59%) say they are aware that Alzheimer's disease can be slowed with treatment.
- Americans in different regions of the country are equally likely to be aware that dementia can be treated (Northeast 43%, Midwest 40%, South 43%, and 38% for the West).

Actions to Protect Brain Health

Respondents were also asked about specific activities and habits they partake in with the intention of reducing their risk of dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Three in five say they currently maintain social connections (60%), actively learn new things (63%) and see their primary care doctor regularly (60%) to promote their brain health. More than half of Americans report they get 7 to 8 hours of sleep every night (54%) and keep a healthy diet (53%) with the intention of protecting their brain's health. A third of Americans plan to continue working as long as they can to keep their brain active and healthy for a long time (34%). Two in five Americans report they exercise 30 minutes a day, at least four times a week to promote brain health (41%). Just 21% of Americans report doing meditation to promote brain health.

- Older people are much more likely to learn new things and keep their minds active for the purpose of keeping their brains healthy. Half (52%) of younger respondents ages 18 to 34 say they do this, compared to two-thirds (65%) of those ages 40 to 60, and three-quarters (75%) of those ages 61 and older.
- Two-thirds of those who received an "A" grade report they maintain social connections (67%), learn new things and keep their brains active (69%), and see their primary care doctor regularly (68%).
- Those who earn an income of \$100K or more per year are much more likely to report they exercise regularly with the goal of promoting their brain health (50%) compared to those who make less than \$50K (33%).
- About a quarter of African Americans (27%) and Hispanics (24%) currently pursue meditation to promote brain health.
- Those in the West (50%) are much more likely to say they exercise in pursuit of a healthy brain (compared to 37% in the Northeast, 38% in the Midwest, and 39% in the South).





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- Two-thirds of women say they currently maintain social connections to promote brain health and prevent dementia and Alzheimer's disease (65%), compared to about half of men (55%).
- Women are also more likely to say they are currently doing puzzles and learning new things (71%) compared to men (55%).
- Women also report seeing their primary care doctor at least once a year (64% compared to 55% of men).
- 58% of women say they get 7 to 8 hours of sleep per night, compared to half of men (50%).

The *Brain Health COVID-19 survey* also found that most Americans have taken steps to specifically improve their brain health/emotional health since social distancing/stay-at-home orders first began around March 2020. This is especially true for women (90% vs. 84% of men), those with a college degree (91% vs. 83% of those with no degree), and younger adults (91% of those age 18-34 vs. 84% of those age 55+).

Getting outside and appreciating nature/the outdoors (47%), keeping in close contact with friends/family (47%), and taking breaks from the news media (45%) are the most common steps taken by Americans to improve brain health/emotional health during the pandemic. At least a third also report that eating a healthy, well-balanced diet (43%), exercising regularly (42%), enjoying a new or existing hobby (39%), and/or get recommended amount of sleep (36%).

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Brain Health

The brain health/emotional health of Americans has been impacted by the pandemic in many ways. Nearly two thirds say the pandemic has had a mild/moderate/severe impact on feelings of depression/anxiety (64%) and more than half say the same thing about sleeping patterns (58%), moodiness/personality changes (57%), being easily agitated (56%), lack of interest in usual activities (54%), and withdrawal from loved ones (51%). Roughly two in five also say they have experienced trouble doing tasks that used to come easily (44%), a change in appetite (44%) and forgetfulness / memory loss ("brain fog") (38%).

- Adults under the age of 35 are significantly more likely to say the COVID-19 pandemic has affected them personally, including greater proportions who have experienced feelings of depression (79%), changes to their sleep patterns (75%), agitation (74%) and moodiness (73%).
- Those who have a friend/relative that currently suffers from cognitive impairment are also significantly more likely to report that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a mild-severe impact on their brain/emotional health in the following ways.





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Concerns about Dementia & Alzheimer's Disease

While four in five Americans are concerned with developing dementia and Alzheimer's disease, Americans are more likely to rank cancer as a more concerning condition or disease (an average of 2.5, with 1 being most concerning and 5 being the least concerning, and 45% of respondents rating it 1 or 2), followed by cardiovascular disease (an average of 2.7, with 41% rating it 1 or 2), brain health, including dementia and Alzheimer's disease (2.9, with 33% rating it 1 or 2), mental and emotional health (3.3, with 29% rating it 1 or 2) and finally diabetes (3.7, with 19% rating it 1 or 2).

- Those with a family member with dementia or Alzheimer's disease have similar concerns to the general public: cancer is ranked as the top concern (2.5, 46% rating it 1 or 2), followed by cardiovascular disease and brain health (both are ranked 2.8, with 41% and 43% rating each issue as 1 or 2, respectively).

When it comes to the specific concerns about a dementia or Alzheimer's disease diagnosis, Americans find the potential loss of independence to be the most concerning (rated an average of 2.8 on a scale of 1 to 6, 1 being the most concerning, and 6 being the least, with 40% of Americans ranking this concern as most important or second most important). This was followed by not recognizing their friends or loved ones (2.9, 40% ranking 1 or 2), and the emotional burden it would put on their families (2.9, 38% ranking 1 or 2). Americans are not as concerned about personality or mood changes (4.2, 13% ranking 1 or 2) that may come from a diagnosis as they are concerned about the financial burden from care and treatment (3.7, 22% ranking 1 or 2). The least concerning aspect would be loss of a job or livelihood (4.5, 14% ranking 1 or 2).

- Men (2.8, 37% ranking 1 or 2) and women (2.7, 43% ranking 1 or 2) are equally likely to be concerned about the loss of independence, but men are more likely to be concerned about their loss of livelihood (4.3 16% ranking 1 or 2) than women (4.7, 12% ranking 1 or 2).

Americans have similar concerns about if a family member were to be diagnosed with dementia. On a scale of 1 to 5, with one being the most concerning and 5 being the least concerning, on average, respondents say that their loved one struggling emotionally (2.6, 40% ranking 1 or 2) is the most concerning to them, followed by loss of independence (2.7, 37% ranking 1 or 2), that their loved one would forget them (2.8, 36% ranking 1 or 2), the burden of caring for them (3.4, 23% ranking 1 or 2) and financial difficulties (3.5, 19% ranking 1 or 2).



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Americans with a family member who has been diagnosed with dementia or Alzheimer's disease share the same concerns as the rest of the public. Those with a family member with dementia or Alzheimer's disease are equally concerned about their loved ones struggling emotionally (2.5, 48% ranking 1 or 2), being forgotten by their loved one (2.7, 45% ranking 1 or 2) and the loss of their loved one's independence (2.8, 38% ranking 1 or 2). Similar to the general public, the burden of caring for their loved one (3.6, 27% ranking 1 or 2) and potential of financial hardship (3.6, 18% ranking 1 or 2) are the least concerning aspects of having a loved one with dementia or Alzheimer's disease diagnosis. This is the case despite the fact that two in five Americans with family members with dementia or Alzheimer's disease say the condition has had at least some financial impact on their family (39%).

Doctor – Patient Relationship

Respondents were also asked about their relationship with their primary care doctors. Three-quarters of respondents feel comfortable talking with their doctors about brain health (74%). About two-thirds say their doctor knows their family history (59%). Half say that their doctor helps them keep track of their medications (56%), that they do not feel rushed while speaking to their doctor (54%), that their doctor has the tools and knowledge to help them identify brain health issues (54%), that their doctor really knows them (49%), and 39% report that they are actively taking steps to keep their brain healthy and their doctor helps them track their activity and progress.

- Fewer younger respondents say their doctor really knows them (38% of those ages 18 to 39, compared to half of those ages 40 to 60 (50%) and 63% of those age 61 or older).
- Those ages 18 to 39 (48%) are also less likely than those ages 40 to 60 (61%) to say their doctor knows their family history, and that they don't feel rushed when speaking to their doctor (43%, compared to 58% those ages 40-60).
- Women are more likely to say that their doctor knows their family history (64% compared to 53% of men).
- Those who had received an "F" grade are less likely to say they felt comfortable talking to their doctor about brain health (66%), compared to those who received an "A" grade (85%).
- Women (64%) are more likely than men (53%) to say their doctor knows their family history.
- Those who earned an "A" grade are more likely than the general public to say they are taking active steps to keep their brain healthy and that their doctor is tracking their activity and progress (57%).
- Few regional differences emerge with respect to doctor-patient relationships, with the exception that those in the West (48%) are less likely to say their doctor has the knowledge and tools to help identify brain health problems than those in the Northeast (58%), Midwest (56%), and South (54%).
- Half of men say that their doctor has the knowledge and tools to help them identify brain issues (52% of men, compared to 56% of women).



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Lifestyle Habits & Health Demographics

With regards to specific interactions they have had with their doctors, about one-third of respondents have been told they are overweight (36%), have high blood pressure (34%) or have high cholesterol (29%). Only 4% have been told they are at high risk for dementia, and the majority (70%) have not been coached by their doctors about specific lifestyle habits that can reduce their risk of Alzheimer's disease or dementia.

- Just 14% of Americans report that they have undergone cognitive testing by their doctors in the past year. People over the age of 60 are only slightly more likely to have had cognitive testing (18%) in the past year than other age groups. African Americans are more likely to report cognitive testing than other ethnic groups (21%).
- About 1 in 20 Americans (6%) report they have had a genetic screening for Alzheimer's disease in the past year. Those with a relative with Alzheimer's disease or dementia are not more likely than the general public to have had this testing completed (7%).
- Men are twice as likely as women to have had a genetic screening for Alzheimer's in the past two years (15% of men, 6% of women). Men are also more likely to have had cognitive testing during the same time period – 28% of men, compared to 18% of women.
- Older respondents are more likely to have been coached by their doctors on reducing their risk of Alzheimer's disease and dementia (27% of those ages 61 and over, compared to 23% of those ages 40 to 60, and just 19% of those ages 18 to 39).
- Women are more likely than men to have been told by their doctor that they are overweight (40% of women compared to 33% of men); but men are more likely to have been told that they are prediabetic (22% compared to 17% of women).
- African Americans are much more likely to report that they have had hearing checks in the past year than the general population (29% compared to 19%), but less likely to have had their cholesterol checked (39% compared to 50%) and their hemoglobin A1c checked (30% compared to 38%) in the same time period.
- Men are more likely than women to have had their hearing checked in the past two years (38% of men, 24% of women).

Respondents were also asked about their current participation in a number of lifestyle habits and activities that are associated with brain health. Half of respondents say that they could do a better job of eating a healthy diet (49%), maintaining a healthy weight (49%) and managing and reducing their stress (49%). A majority say they are doing a good job of minimizing their exposure to tobacco smoke (61%) and alcohol consumption (58%), as well as seeing their doctor regularly (59%), learning new things or reading (59%), and doing puzzles (52%). Only a third of respondents say that they do a good job of exercising regularly (34%) and maintaining a healthy weight (36%).





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- African Americans are more likely to say they are doing a good job practicing mindfulness or meditation (38%, compared to 23% of the general public). However, half of African Americans say they could do a better job of getting 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night, compared to 39% of the general public. Those ages 60 and over are more likely to say they do a good job eating a well-balanced diet (47%) than those ages 40 to 60 (35%) and those ages 18 to 39.
- Those in the Midwest (57%) are more likely to say they could do a better job of eating a healthy diet than the general population (49%).
- Younger people are more likely to say they could do a better job of managing stress (53% for those 18 to 39 and 52% for those ages 40 to 60) than those over the age of 60 (38%).
- Those in the West (40%) are more likely than any other region to report doing a good job of exercising regularly (compared to 30% in the Northeast, 32% in the Midwest, 34% in the South, and 34% of the general public).
- Men are more likely than women to say they don't have a healthy, well-balanced diet (13% of men, compared to 8% of women).
- Men are more likely to say they could do a better job of minimizing alcohol consumption (32%, compared to 18% of women).
- Men are twice as likely to say they could do a better job of avoiding tobacco smoke than women (21% compared to 11% of women)

For more information about this study, please visit: <https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/third-americans-have-close-relative-who-suffers-dementia-or-alzheimers-disease>





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About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between January 21-23, 2020 on behalf of MDVIP. For this survey, a sample of roughly 1,217 adults ages 18+, including an oversample of Americans between the ages of 40 and 60, from the continental U.S. Alaska and Hawaii was interviewed online in English.

The *Brain Health COVID-19 survey* was conducted July 31 – August 4, 2020 on behalf of MDVIP. For the survey, a sample of 1,005 adults ages 18 and over from the continental U.S., Alaska and Hawaii was interviewed online in English.

The sample for this study was randomly drawn from Ipsos' online panel (see link below for more info on "Access Panels and Recruitment"), partner online panel sources, and "river" sampling (see link below for more info on the Ipsos "Amparo Overview" sample method) and does not rely on a population frame in the traditional sense. Ipsos uses fixed sample targets, unique to each study, in drawing a sample. After a sample has been obtained from the Ipsos panel, Ipsos calibrates respondent characteristics to be representative of the U.S. Population using standard procedures such as raking-ratio adjustments. The source of these population targets is U.S. Census 2018 American Community Survey data. The sample drawn for this study reflects fixed sample targets on demographics. Post-hoc weights were made to the population characteristics on gender, age, race/ethnicity, region, and education.

Statistical margins of error are not applicable to online non-probability polls. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error and measurement error. Where figures do not sum to 100, this is due to the effects of rounding. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll has a credibility interval of plus or minus 3.2 percentage points for all respondents (and 3.5 for all respondents in the *Brain Health COVID-19 survey*). Ipsos calculates a design effect (DEFF) for each study based on the variation of the weights, following the formula of Kish (1965). This study had a credibility interval adjusted for design effect of the following (n=1,217, DEFF=1.5, adjusted Confidence Interval=+/-4.7 percentage points and n=1,005, DEFF=1.5, adjusted Confidence Interval=+/-5.0 percentage points).

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