

## News & Comments

# Dementia Risk Increases with Social Isolation

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In festivals, jubilees, and other public events, why do we feel energized when we're in large groups?

As per the social brain hypothesis, the human brain evolves for support in favour of social interactions, which is why studies have proved that belonging to a group leads to enhanced well-being and satisfaction with life.

In light of the evidence in favour of human brain evolution for social interaction, it can be expected that those who are lonely or socially isolated, must have an impact on their brain.

Researchers report in the journal *Neurology* that social isolation increases the risk of dementia. As a result of these findings, more people are afraid of social isolation due to working from home. They examined the relationship between social apathy and later-life neurodegeneration.

The study involved 462,619 people with an average age of 57 in the UK over 12 years (before the pandemic). In a study, 1.55% of socially isolated people developed dementia compared to 1.03% of those with regular social stimulation. Considering factors such as age, socioeconomic status, and depression, they found that socially isolated participants were 25% more likely to develop dementia later in life.

Barbara Sahakian, Co-author of the study said, "People who reported high levels of social isolation were more likely to show significant differences in brain volume, in regions that we know are also associated with cognition problems and risk of dementia. This is very concerning and suggests to us that social isolation may be an early indicator of an increased risk of dementia."

There is a difference between social isolation and loneliness that is common among older people. In addition to dementia, depression also increased the risk of dementia but the link was not as strong after depression was considered.

Socialization is important for mental health, according to this study. There is currently no cure for dementia, which affects over 900,000 people in the UK.

### KEYWORDS

Social isolation, dementia, risk, mental health, social isolation, loneliness, cognition, social apathy, neurodegeneration, brain, neurology, neuroscience

