

CARP Dementia Poll Report February 21, 2013

Key Findings

The wide majority of members know someone with dementia, more than a third know a caregiver to someone with dementia (including one tenth of members) and a quarter claims to have a history of dementia in their family.

Remaining active and social is seen as the key to avoiding the onset of dementia, which may be foreshadowed by symptoms including getting lost in familiar surroundings and losing the ability to perform simple tasks.

The vast majority would seek testing from their doctor if they experienced any of these symptoms, and about a third claim they already have experienced them.

Testing, and remaining socially active are seen to be the best solutions to the onset of dementia, as well as learning about managing and living with the condition.

Three quarters are concerned about the onset of dementia, mostly for themselves and another (presumably a spouse). The majority thinks a stigma is associated with dementia in society but not in the family.

Members agree Canada is not prepared for the increase in cases of dementia that will occur as the Boomers age, and more think the Boomers are more susceptible to dementia than previous generations than think otherwise.

Members say the government could best lessen the impact of dementia by funding home care and relief, providing more access to geriatricians and training more of them. More research, which was featured in the recent federal budget, is not seen to be the highest priority.

Electoral Preference

The Liberals maintain their lead over the Conservatives in our latest wave of polling, while the NDP remain a distant third.

Detailed Findings

CARP members are familiar with dementia, and 7-in-10 know someone who suffers from it (71%), including a small minority who consist of the member (1%), a spouse (4%) or sibling (3%).

Has someone close to you or someone you know been diagnosed with some form of dementia?

YES	71%
Someone I know	34%
More than one person I know	30%
Spouse	4%
Sibling	3%
Myself	1%
No	29%

One tenth are caregivers to someone with dementia (9%), and a further 3-in-10 know someone who is (19%) for a total of almost 4-in-10 (38%).

Are you a caregiver to someone with dementia or do you know someone who is?

YES	38%
I am	9%
Someone I know	29%
No	62%

Just more than a quarter admit to a history of dementia in their family (28%).

Do you have a history of dementia in your family?

Yes	28%
No	59%
DON'T KNOW	13%

Members are equally likely to say the best way to avoid the onset of dementia is to remain social (25%), remain active (22%) or exercise one's brain with puzzles and games (22%). Very few see medication as the answer (1%).

What is the best way to prevent the onset of dementia?

Remain social/cultivate friendships	25%
Remain active	22%
Exercise brain/do puzzles	22%
Mass screening for early diagnosis	6%
Good nutrition	4%
Speak another language	3%
Stay involved in community/activities	3%
Medication	1%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	15%

Three quarters of members agree that the listed signs (taken from the Alzheimer's Society checklist) are in fact early indicators of dementia (74%), although most say just some of them are (46%).

These are some of the potential indicators for the onset of Alzheimer's or dementia: easily distracted/lose train of thought, repeat stories/anecdotes, difficulty following conversations with more than one person, forgetting simple words, getting lost in familiar surroundings, difficulty completing simple consecutive tasks, like making tea, inability to plan or organize and a general lack of interest in life. As far as you concerned, are these the signs of dementia onset?

YES	74%
All of them, if taken together	26%
Some may be predictive	48%
NO	19%
Need proper testing to determine onset	13%
Common signs of aging	6%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	6%

Getting lost in familiar surroundings is the indicator most members see as definitive (44%), followed by difficulty completing simple tasks (24%).

Which one of the following would cause you the most concern as a potential indicator for the onset of dementia if it occurred to you?

Getting lost in familiar surroundings	44%
Difficulty completing simple tasks/making tea	24%
Inability to plan or organize	8%
Lack of interest in life	7%
Forgetting simple words	5%
Repeating stories/anecdotes	3%
Difficulty following multi-person conversations	2%
OTHER	2%
DON'T KNOW	1%

The vast majority of members would ask about or be tested if they encountered any of these indicators (81%), although half would ask about testing before initiating it (48%).

If you experienced one or more of these potential indicators, would you have yourself tested for Alzheimer's or dementia onset?

YES	81%
Would ask doctor for a test	33%
Would ask doctor if testing were necessary	48%
NO	13%
Wouldn't worry too much	11%
Wouldn't worry at all	2%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	7%

One third of members say they have experienced some of these early indicators of dementia.

Have you yourself experienced any of these potential indicators?

Yes	32%
No	68%

Further testing would be the first thing one half of members would do if they thought a family member was showing signs of dementia (50%), while one quarter say they would take active steps to slow the onset (25%) and somewhat fewer would educate themselves about living with and managing dementia (17%).

If you suspected a family member was experiencing the onset of dementia, how would you plan for this?

Encourage further testing/go to doctor	50%
Take active steps to slow/stop onset	25%
Learn more about living with/managing dementia	17%
Arrange home care assistance	2%
Wait for the inevitable	1%
Put patient in care	1%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	5%

Two thirds say they are actively taking steps (presumable those listed earlier) to avoid the onset of dementia (67%).

Are you actively taking steps to prevent the onset of dementia?

Yes	67%
No	33%

In total, three quarters of members are concerned about the onset of dementia (75%). One third of members are concerned that they and someone they know will suffer dementia (34%), about one quarter worry this about only themselves (22%) and about one fifth are concerned just for another (19%). In each case, members tend to be “concerned” rather than “very concerned”.

How concerned are you that you or someone you know will be subject to dementia?

CONCERNED	75%
FOR MYSELF	22%
Concerned	14%
Very concerned	8%
FOR SOMEONE I KNOW	19%
Concerned	10%
Very concerned	9%
FOR MYSELF AND SOMEONE I KNOW	34%
Concerned	21%
Very concerned	13%
Not concerned for myself or anyone I know	19%
DON'T KNOW	6%

The majority of members think there is a stigma in society associated with dementia (71%), but only one third think this stigma extends to family (33%).

Do you think there is a stigma associated with dementia in society/in the family?

	Society	Family
Yes	71%	33%
No	21%	54%
DON'T KNOW	8%	13%

The vast majority of CARP members disagree Canada is prepared for the coming wave of cases of dementia as the boomers age (81%), and as many as 4-in-10 express their views in the strongest terms (strongly disagree - 42%).

Do you agree or disagree Canada is prepared for the increase in cases of dementia which may occur as the Boomers age?

AGREE	10%
Agree strongly	3%
Agree	7%
DISAGREE	81%
Disagree	39%
Disagree strongly	42%
DON'T KNOW	9%

More troubling, six times as many members think boomers will be more susceptible to dementia (34%) than think this is not the case (6%), despite all the media attention to the better prospects of aging for boomers than their parents.

Do you think the generation aging now in Canada, the Boomers, is going to experience more dementia, less dementia or just as likely to experience dementia as previous generations?

More likely to experience dementia	34%
Neither more nor less likely	53%
Less likely to experience dementia	6%
MORE MINUS LESS	+28
DON'T KNOW	6%

The one thing actually included in the budget related to dementia is more funding for research, but as few as one tenth of CARP members think this is needed (11%). They are twice as likely to opt for funding for home care and relief for caregivers (22%) or increasing access to geriatricians (19%) and equally likely to think training more geriatricians is the answer (11%).

The most recent Speech from the Throne promised to renew investment in tackling dementia. Which one step could government take to reduce the impact of dementia?

Fund home care/relief	22%
More access to geriatricians	19%
Train more geriatricians	11%
More research	11%
Fund dementia care in nursing homes	10%
Train PCWs in dementia care	8%
Fund dementia training for families	7%
Train first responders in dementia	4%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	7%

Electoral Preference

Since the surge in Liberal popularity noted five months ago, when they peaked at 49%, the Conservatives and the Liberals have converged again, with the Liberals in the lead at 44% and the Conservatives in second at 34%. The NDP are the third party at 17%.

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are needed to see this picture.

More than 2400 CARP Poll™ panel members responded to this poll between February 7 and 10, 2014. The margin of error for a probability sample this size is about plus or minus 2%, 19 times out of 20