

People living with dementia who feel they are no longer the 'same person' as before also feel less positive about themselves and about life: findings from the IDEAL cohort

We usually feel we are the 'same person' over time, despite going through many life changes. In contrast, some people with brain damage, for example due to a stroke or accident, feel they are no longer the 'same person'. These individuals have poorer well-being than others who still feel they are still the 'same person' as before.

We investigated how many people living with mild-to-moderate dementia feel they are not the 'same person' they have always been, and how this affects their well-being. We used information from Time 1 of the IDEAL study.

IDEAL participants were asked whether or not they agreed with the statement 'I feel I am the same person that I have always been.' There were 1465 people who answered this question. Of these, about 1 in 5 (312 people; 21%) disagreed.

We then looked at whether there were any differences between those who agreed or disagreed with the statement that they were still the 'same person'.

Regarding general characteristics, there were no differences between the two groups in age, sex, education, social class, living situation, contact with others, type of dementia, time since dementia diagnosis, number of other health problems, memory test scores, ability to do everyday tasks or dependence on others. This shows that whether or not people agreed with the statement cannot be explained away by differences in these characteristics.

We then looked at psychological health. We found that people who felt they were not the 'same person' viewed themselves less positively and were less optimistic, but were more depressed and lonely, than people who felt they were still the 'same person'. They were less satisfied with their lives and experienced lower quality of life and well-being. This means that feeling you are not the 'same person' any more is linked to feeling less positive about yourself and your life.

Sensitively asking people with mild-to-moderate dementia whether they feel they are still the 'same person' could be a useful way of identifying individuals



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who are experiencing poor well-being and who might benefit from additional support.

This is a summary of a [research article](#) which appeared in the **Journal of Alzheimer's Disease** in September 2020.