

Alzheimer Society

C A N A D A

Almost 50% of Canadians would not want others to know if they had dementia, says new survey Alzheimer Society campaign aims to end stigma

TORONTO, ON, January 8, 2018 – The Alzheimer Society announced today that while awareness about dementia has increased, stigma and negative attitudes around it continue to persist. The Society is releasing findings of a new survey to coincide with Alzheimer’s Awareness Month in January and to kick off its new social awareness campaign – **I live with dementia. Let me help you understand** – to spark conversations and encourage Canadians to see dementia differently.

The Leger-led survey, which questioned 1500 Canadians between the ages of 18 and 65 online, also reveals that 46% of respondents would feel ashamed or embarrassed if they had dementia, while 61% of those surveyed said they would face discrimination of some kind. The survey also shows that one in four Canadians believe that their friends and family would avoid them if they were diagnosed with dementia, and only five per cent of Canadians would learn more about dementia if a family member, friend or co-worker were diagnosed.

“These results validate our thinking, that stigma is one of the biggest barriers for people with dementia to live fully with dignity and respect,” says Pauline Tardif, CEO at the Alzheimer Society of Canada. “The findings underscore the work we must still do to end stigma once and for all. There is no shame in having dementia. We can’t let negative perceptions stand in the way of people with dementia seeking help and support. Life without discrimination is a right for anyone affected by this disease.”

To tackle stigma, the Alzheimer Society is letting the experts do the talking—people living with dementia. People like Roger Marple. For this proud father and grandfather, who developed young onset Alzheimer’s three years ago at age 57, his diagnosis was a tough pill to swallow. But with time, Roger overcame his initial shock and sadness. He had too many dreams to pursue. “I still do things that have meaning in my life, like getting out, playing golf and travelling. I’ll continue to enjoy life for as long as I possibly can to the best of my abilities. Isn’t that what we all aspire to do?”

Roger and others invite Canadians to hear their inspiring stories and take a few pointers from them on how to be open and accepting towards people with dementia.

Their stories are featured on a dedicated campaign website, where visitors will also find tips on how to be more dementia-friendly, activities to test their knowledge, and other resources to take action against stigma and be better informed about a disease that has the potential to impact every single one of us.

To help stop stigma and read the full survey, visit **ilivewithdementia.ca** – and use the **hashtag #ilivewithdementia** to help spread the word.

Additional survey results

Canadians believe that people with Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia are likely to

- be ignored or dismissed (58%);
- be taken advantage of (57%);
- have difficulty accessing appropriate services or supports (56%); and
- feared or met with distrust or suspicion (37%).

Other highlights

- 56% of Canadians are concerned about being affected by Alzheimer's disease.
- Of greatest concern is their fear of being a burden to others, losing their independence and the inability to recognize family and friends.
- Only 39% would offer support for family or friends who were open about their diagnosis.
- Three-in-ten Canadians (30%) admit to using dementia-related jokes.

Quick facts

- Today, over half a million Canadians have dementia (including Alzheimer's disease).
- In less than 15 years, an estimated 937,000 Canadians will have dementia
- Alzheimer Societies across Canada provide programs and support services for people with all forms of dementia, including Alzheimer's disease, and their caregivers.
- The Alzheimer Society is a leading Canadian funder of dementia research and has invested to date, over \$50 million in bio-medical and quality-of-life research through the Alzheimer Society Research Program.

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