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**“ Reads the same book
over and over ”**

***Making reading more relevant for
the UK's dementia community***

For more information on dementia, please visit www.alzheimers.org.uk

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Matt Singleton, Director of **Cognitive Books**, has been working closely with Alzheimer's Society Accelerator Programme to research the reading habits of people living with dementia.

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Cognitive Books and **Alzheimer's Society Accelerator Programme's** research into the reading habits of people living with dementia provides compelling insights.

One finding is certain – for many, there's a desire to read more than they currently do, but they face barriers to achieving this. What's more, these barriers can be overcome:

- We can make **books easier to follow** by simplifying text, covering familiar subject matter and making sure each page works individually, as well as collectively as a story
- We can make **books more accessible** by providing audio versions and ensuring the design supports people with physical barriers to reading, such as eyesight issues
- We can find ways to **ensure books can be enjoyed together** and are **easy to locate** when required

Cognitive Books is developing titles which address these identified challenges.

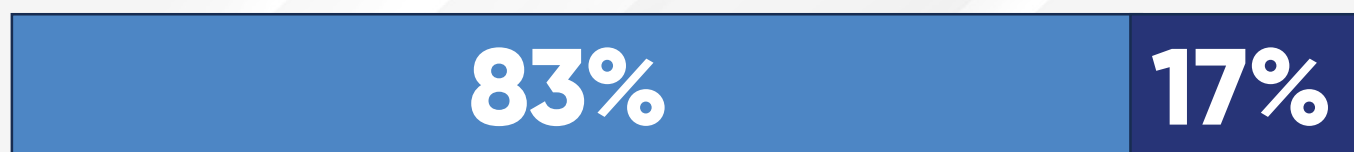
Research participants



The online research took place between 16th June and 31st August 2023. 53 people participated in the research. Whilst this number is quite low, and we should be cautious about over-relying on the results, the research paints a picture of the issues faced by people with dementia when it comes to reading.

Who answers:

83% answer on behalf of someone with dementia (ie a loved one / carer)



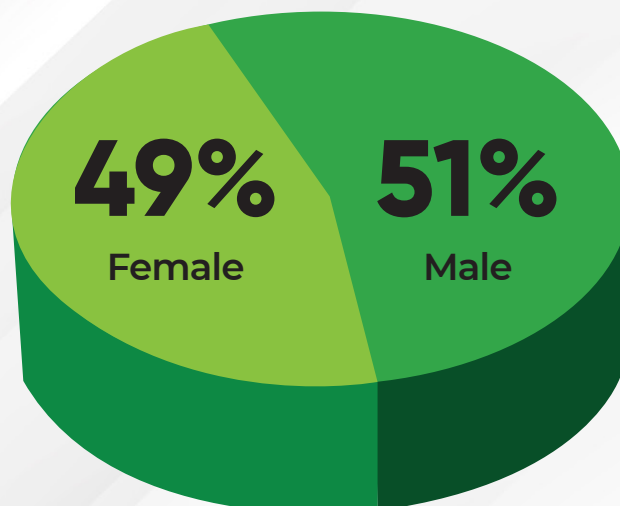
■ Answering on behalf of someone with dementia

■ Living with dementia

The following is an overview of the characteristics of the people living with dementia who contribute to the findings (either directly or via a loved one / carer)

Gender:

Participants living with dementia are roughly evenly split by gender

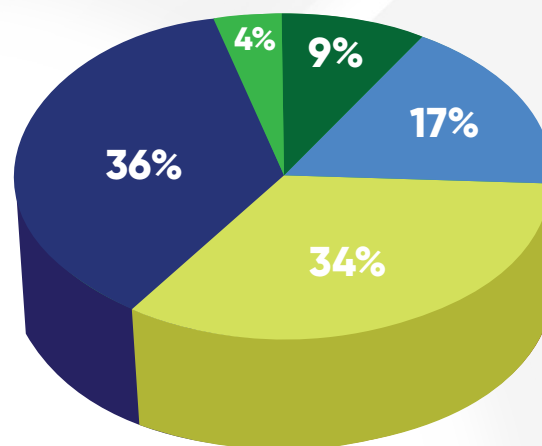


Research participants

(continued)

Age:

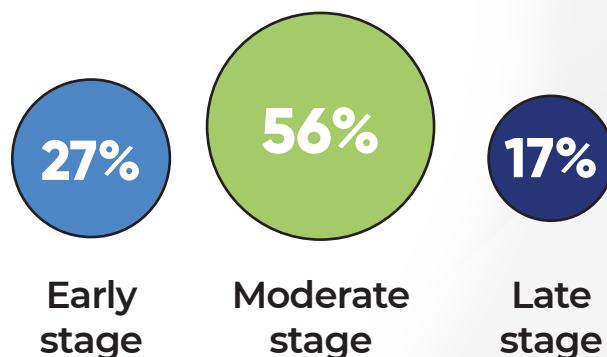
70% of participants with dementia are aged between 71 and 90 – a good reflection of the UK's dementia community



■ Under 60 ■ 61-70 ■ 71-80 ■ 81-90 ■ 91 and over

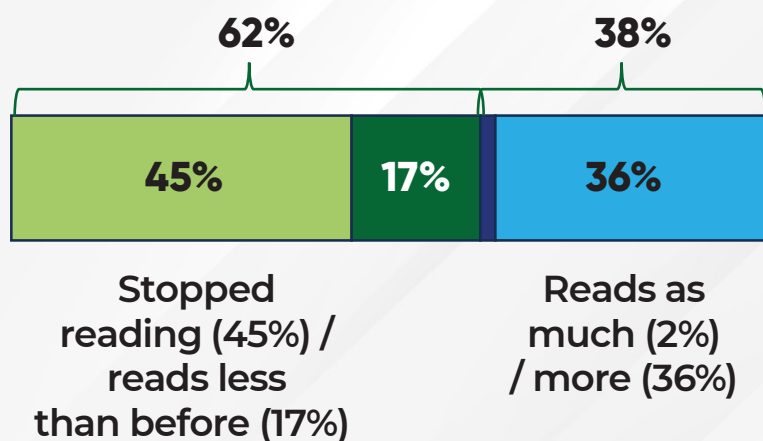
Stage of dementia:

Participants are mainly at a moderate stage of dementia



Cognitive Books' work currently focuses on those aged 71-90 with mild-to-moderate dementia through delivering titles that will stir reminiscence in that age group. However, those with more severe dementia are catered for through simplified aspects and ways to enjoy books with their loved ones. In addition, those under age 70 will be a focus of future titles.

What did our participants tell us about reading habits?



How reading habits have changed since onset:

62% of respondents have stopped reading completely or read less; 38% read as much as, or more than, before their dementia onset



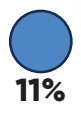






People living with dementia would read more if... (categories relating to cognitive challenges / a book's content)

	The story is easier to follow	The story is shorter	They could find books of interest
Total	58%	47%	38%
Stopped reading / reads less	70%	48%	42%
Reads as much / more	40%	45%	30%



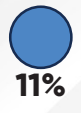





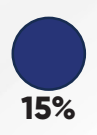
What did our participants tell us about reading habits?

(continued)

People living with dementia would read more if...
(categories relating to physical challenges / a book's format)

	There was an audio version	They could see things better	They could open book / turn pages easily
Total	 36%	 26%	 11%
Stopped reading / reads less	 27%	 24%	 9%
Reads as much / more	 50%	 30%	 15%

People living with dementia would read more if...
(relating to other challenges)

	They could read with others	They could recall story and share	They knew where books are kept
Total	 23%	 15%	 11%
Stopped reading / reads less	 6%	 18%	 9%
Reads as much / more	 50%	 10%	 15%

What we can conclude from these results

The **main barriers** to people living with dementia reading more are **cognitive**. This is particularly the case for those who have stopped reading altogether / read less than they did previously. The **primary issue is the complexity of the story**, but its **length and the interest level of the subject matter are also important**.

Given the older ages of many with dementia, **physical barriers** also present themselves. An **audio version of a book can help**, as well as **larger text** and – for some – **ease of turning pages** etc.

Although reading is often a solitary pursuit, for 1 in 4 people with dementia, **being able to share a story is a benefit** – especially those who read the same as / more than before their dementia's onset. Finally, for around 10%, **locating where relevant books are kept** is a requirement.

...his attention span is short and he cannot concentrate for long enough to follow story lines

I may be interested in books on Rock & Roll and Pop Music, if it was light reading

Love audio ♥

...he tries to read the small print but not able to do so. He does have a form of macular degeneration

...Mum and Dad used to read plays aloud, taking different parts ... children joining in as well

Loves to handle a book and have one at hand

How Cognitive Books overcome these issues

Cognitive Books' policy of co-creation – developing products with the support of people living with dementia – means we've successfully tested features which address the challenges outlined in this research.

Issue

Cognitive Books' answer



Cognitive issues

Simpler stories
Shorter story / pages
Interesting subject matter

- Books and pages are of consumable length
- Pages work individually as well as collectively as a story
- Books are on familiar subjects recommended by people living with dementia / their loved ones



Physical issues

Require audio versions
Easier to make out words
Easier to turn pages

- Audio versions will be available
- Larger font
- Paper and font colours to support eyesight issues
- Thicker, heavier paper to help page turning



Other issues

Sharing experience
Locating books

- Books can be enjoyed with loved ones
- Exercises based on Cognitive Stimulation Therapy
- Hardback books
- Supporters' guide with recommendations

A huge thank you from **Cognitive Books** and **Alzheimer's Society** **Accelerator Programme**

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to all those who participated in this research. The findings have reinforced the direction Cognitive Books is taking. They have also given us fresh ideas on how to overcome the challenges faced by people living with dementia when it comes to reading.



There's no doubt that many with dementia are capable of reading and have a desire to read more. Indeed, a lot of people continue reading after their dementia's onset. This research demonstrates we can overcome the barriers people face, so we can ensure the joy of reading remains an important part of people's lives for as long as possible.

Matt Singleton,
Cognitive Books

Lindsey Jarrett,
Alzheimer's Society



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