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## People with dementia in Malta expected to double by 2050

Government launches seven-year national strategy to address the condition

NationalHealthMental healthGovernment

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The number of elderly people in Malta is expected to shoot up. Photo: Chris Sant Fournier

The government launched a national strategy on Tuesday to combat the growing problem of dementia, as the number of people with the condition in Malta is expected to more than double between 2018 and 2050.

A total of 6,552 were registered to have dementia in 2018. That figure is expected to reach 14,117 by 2050.

The increase is due to a significant rise in the number of people aged over 75 and particularly those over 85 years, which is expected to more than triple by 2050, according to the experts behind the initiative.

Health Minister Jo Etienne Abela, who launched the strategy, said one of the main reasons dementia has become more prevalent is increased longevity, which is a major risk factor for the development of the condition.

"The more we improve our healthcare system, the longer people will live, the higher the number of people who make it to an advanced age, and the more likely they become to develop dementia," he said on Tuesday.

"This is a paradox we cannot escape from, but I am thoroughly proud of the improvements we've made in this sector."

### 'Reaching new heights'

The seven-year National Dementia Strategy aims to "reach new heights" by significantly improving the quality of life and services of people with the condition.

The strategy will strive to increase awareness and understanding of dementia, educate the public and train healthcare personnel to detect the symptoms and diagnose it as early as possible, help diagnosed people live well with dementia and increase general awareness on how to reduce the risks.

Dementia is an umbrella term that refers to several conditions and symptoms associated with a decline in memory or other thinking skills, severe enough to reduce a person's ability to perform everyday activities.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia, causing problems with memory, thinking and behaviour. Symptoms usually develop slowly and get worse over time, becoming severe enough to interfere with daily tasks.

Precautionary measures include reducing obesity, promoting balanced diets, quitting smoking and alcohol consumption, encouraging social engagement, and preventing or managing diabetes, hypertension and depression.

The latest studies show such measures could help the population reduce the risk of developing the condition, the strategy said.

According to Eurostat data published last October, Malta recorded the [highest rate](#) of deaths caused by dementia in Europe, with just over 80 deaths per 100,000 people in 2020.