

# Dementia and Alzheimer's behind one in eight deaths

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There were 533,253 deaths registered last year, the highest since 2003 PATRICK LANDMANN/GETTY IMAGES

Dementia and Alzheimer's disease accounted for more than one in eight deaths in England and Wales last year, figures show.

The conditions were the leading cause of death, before heart disease. Researchers said that the trend would continue as people lived longer and survived other diseases.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) said that 67,641 deaths were attributed to dementia and Alzheimer's last year, up from 62,948 in 2016. The proportion rose from 12 per cent to 12.7 per cent. Better understanding and improved diagnosis were also likely to have led to increased reporting of dementia on death certificates, it added.

Heart diseases accounted for 10.9 per cent of deaths. Vasita Patel, a statistician with the ONS, said: "Dementia and Alzheimer's disease remained the leading cause of death in 2017 for the third consecutive year. Chronic lower respiratory diseases, which affect the lungs, are now the third leading cause of death, overtaking cerebrovascular diseases. This follows a long-term decline in deaths from cerebrovascular diseases, such as strokes and brain haemorrhages."

The figures showed that the proportion of young people who died by “suicide and injury or poisoning of undetermined intent” rose in both boys and girls. Among boys aged 5 to 19 the rate increased from 15.2 per cent of deaths in 2016 to 16.2 last year. For girls the figure rose from 9.6 per cent to 13.3 per cent.

The overall number of deaths was the highest since 2003, with 533,253. The ONS said that with increases in both the size and age of the population the number was expected to rise further.