

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# MIND THE GAP:

## Investing in Dementia as an Opportunity to Extend Healthspan

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We are living in an era of remarkable longevity gains. In high-income countries, the average life expectancy has more than doubled over the past century, with many individuals expected to live well into their eighties. But this longevity boom masks a critical problem: the growing gap between lifespan and “healthspan”—the years lived in good health. This disconnect leaves many people, especially women, spending a decade or more in poor health at the end of life.

A key contributor to the healthspan–lifespan gap is dementia, which is an age-related chronic condition but not a part of normal aging. By 2050, more than 150 million people globally are projected to live with dementia unless treatments are discovered.

The Milken Institute launched the [Alliance to Improve Dementia Care](#) (the “Alliance”) in 2020 and convenes a coalition of more than 135 organizations from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to transform and improve the fragmented care systems that people at risk for or living with dementia and their caregivers must navigate.

This report advances the opportunities discussed in the 2021 Alliance report, [Roadmap for Investment in Dementia Care](#), and highlights recent clinical innovations resulting from decades of historical research and funding. It makes the case for increasing investment in addressing dementia, given its increasing prevalence, devastating impact on individuals and their families, and increasing economic challenges.

The recent Food and Drug Administration approval of blood tests for Alzheimer’s detection, a deeper understanding of modifiable risk factors, and the arrival of disease-modifying therapies offer new hope and raise the stakes for continued progress. With nearly 140 drugs currently in the Alzheimer’s pipeline, we may be on the cusp of more waves of therapies targeting a range of biological mechanisms of aging that underlie or contribute to dementia. However, if research and investment in addressing dementia do not increase or, worse yet, are not maintained at current levels, progress will not continue, and the field is at risk of setbacks.

Investing urgently in a dementia-ready world requires a growing global recognition of the need for action. In May 2025, the 78th World Health Assembly extended the World Health Organization Global Dementia Initiative through 2031, with a focus on improving care, accelerating diagnosis, and promoting innovation. But progress is uneven and too slow. Without sustained investment, especially in public funding, the gains we have made will stall.

In this report, we identify four key domains for continued strategic funding and research:

- **Global prevention** by investing in initiatives that address the global awareness of known modifiable risk factors to lower the projected increasing cost and prevalence trends.
- **Detection and diagnosis** by investing in tools and programs for early detection, integrated into clinical pathways to support timely and accurate diagnosis.
- **Targeted treatments** by investing in understanding the molecular and genetic basis of dementia to advance the biomarker and therapeutic developments for more effective treatments.
- **Care and support** by investing in equitable and accessible care and social support programs for people living with dementia and their caregivers to improve their quality of life.

To address dementia at scale, we must embrace bold, coordinated action. Governments, companies, philanthropic funders, private capital, and research institutions must collaborate to close gaps in research funding compared to other major diseases, such as cancer. This includes treating dementia not as an inevitable aspect of aging but as a solvable set of conditions requiring targeted intervention.

If we are serious about longevity, we must be serious about addressing dementia because it is a crucial limiting factor of healthspan. This report invites readers, especially longevity investors and funders of aging research, to place dementia at the core of their strategy. Together, we can shape the 21st century not only as an age of extended lifespans but also as the Century of Thriving.

View the full report in August 2025 at:

<https://milkeninstitute.org/content-hub/research-and-reports/reports/mind-gap-investing-dementia-opportunity-extend-healthspan>

