Re:Cognition Health
Brain and Mind Experts

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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Three in Four Americans Say Some Memory Loss Is a Typical Part of Aging

Brain health expert cautions against dismissing memory changes as an inevitable consequence of getting older

Fairfax, Virginia, [November 2026] — Americans are nearly as likely to consider memory loss a typical part of aging as hearing loss and declining muscle strength, according to a new national survey commissioned by Re:Cognition Health and conducted by YouGov. Dr. Emer MacSweeney, neuroradiologist and co-founder and CEO of Re:Cognition Health, says this finding highlights an important misunderstanding about aging.

The survey of 2,093 U.S. adults found that 75% agree that "some memory loss is a typical part of aging," compared with 77% who agree that "some hearing loss is a typical part of aging" and 80% who agree that "reduced muscle strength is a typical part of aging."

Hearing and muscle strength have been proven to decline with age. However, memory is more complicated. Mild changes, such as taking longer to retrieve information, forgetting a word, or misplacing something, can occur with healthy aging. However, persistent or progressive memory loss cannot and should not automatically be attributed to age.

"Occasional forgetfulness and memory loss are not the same thing," said Dr. MacSweeney, who has long advocated for earlier investigation of changes in memory and cognition, particularly as advances and treatments make identifying disease in its earliest stages increasingly important.

"The danger in normalizing memory loss is that people often wait until symptoms have become disruptive to their lives before seeking an evaluation, and by then it could be too late to benefit from new treatment options," she said. "Memory problems can have many causes, and not all of them are Alzheimer's disease. But we can't know the cause unless we investigate it. And when neurodegenerative disease is the culprit, early action is critical."

Older Americans More Likely to View Memory Loss as Typical

The survey also uncovered a notable generational divide in perceptions of aging. Almost eight in 10 Boomers (79%) agree that some memory loss is a typical part of aging, compared with 68% of Gen Z adults, an 11-percentage-point difference.

Agreement rises across the generations:

- Gen Z (18-28): 68%
- Millennials (29-44): 73%
- Gen X (45-60): 78%

- Boomers (61-79): 79%

The findings do not necessarily indicate that younger Americans have a clearer understanding of memory and aging. Gen Z respondents were considerably more uncertain: 26% of Gen Z adults neither agreed nor disagreed or said they were not sure, compared with just 13% of Boomers.

“The generational differences are fascinating because younger adults appear less willing to accept memory loss as simply part of getting older, but they are also much less certain about what aging should look like,” Dr. MacSweeney said. “That tells me we have an education opportunity across generations to help people understand the changes that can accompany healthy aging versus those that are potentially indicative of a problem.”

Age-Related Changes: What’s Typical and What Deserves a Closer Look
The survey intentionally asked Americans about memory alongside two physical changes commonly caused by advancing age. However, changes in memory and cognition are more nuanced and require more extensive investigation.

The National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders describes age-related hearing loss, or presbycusis, as hearing loss that gradually occurs as people grow older and is one of the most common conditions affecting older adults. The National Institute on Aging notes that muscle mass and strength generally begin declining during adulthood, and that decline speeds up with age.

The National Institute on Aging reports that while it is normal to forget things once in a while at any age, there is a difference between mild age-related forgetfulness and more serious memory issues.

For Dr. MacSweeney, that distinction has become increasingly urgent as the landscape of Alzheimer’s diagnosis and treatment has changed.

“For decades, there had been little that could be done when receiving an Alzheimer’s diagnosis in terms of treatment. As a result, people accepted some memory loss as normal and often wouldn’t go see a doctor about it until their symptoms were quite advanced,” she said. “Fortunately, that is no longer the case, and we must revisit our assumptions. We can identify the disease earlier, have a much clearer understanding of biomarkers and risk, and can offer new treatments and therapies designed for eligible people in the early symptomatic stages of Alzheimer’s disease.”

About the Survey
The survey was conducted by YouGov on behalf of Re:Cognition Health among 2,093 U.S. adults. Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statements: “Some hearing loss is a typical part of aging,” “Some memory loss is a typical part of aging,” and “Reduced muscle strength is a typical part of aging.”

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. The total sample size was 2093 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between September 29 and October 1, 2026. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all U.S. adults (aged 18+).