

Associations of living alone in old age in Europe and engaging in social activities on dementia risk

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Background

- Many older people are socially isolated
- Social isolation an established risk factor for dementia
- Participating in social activities is associated with reduced dementia risk
- It is not clear to what extent participating in social activities can lead to reduced dementia risk among those living alone

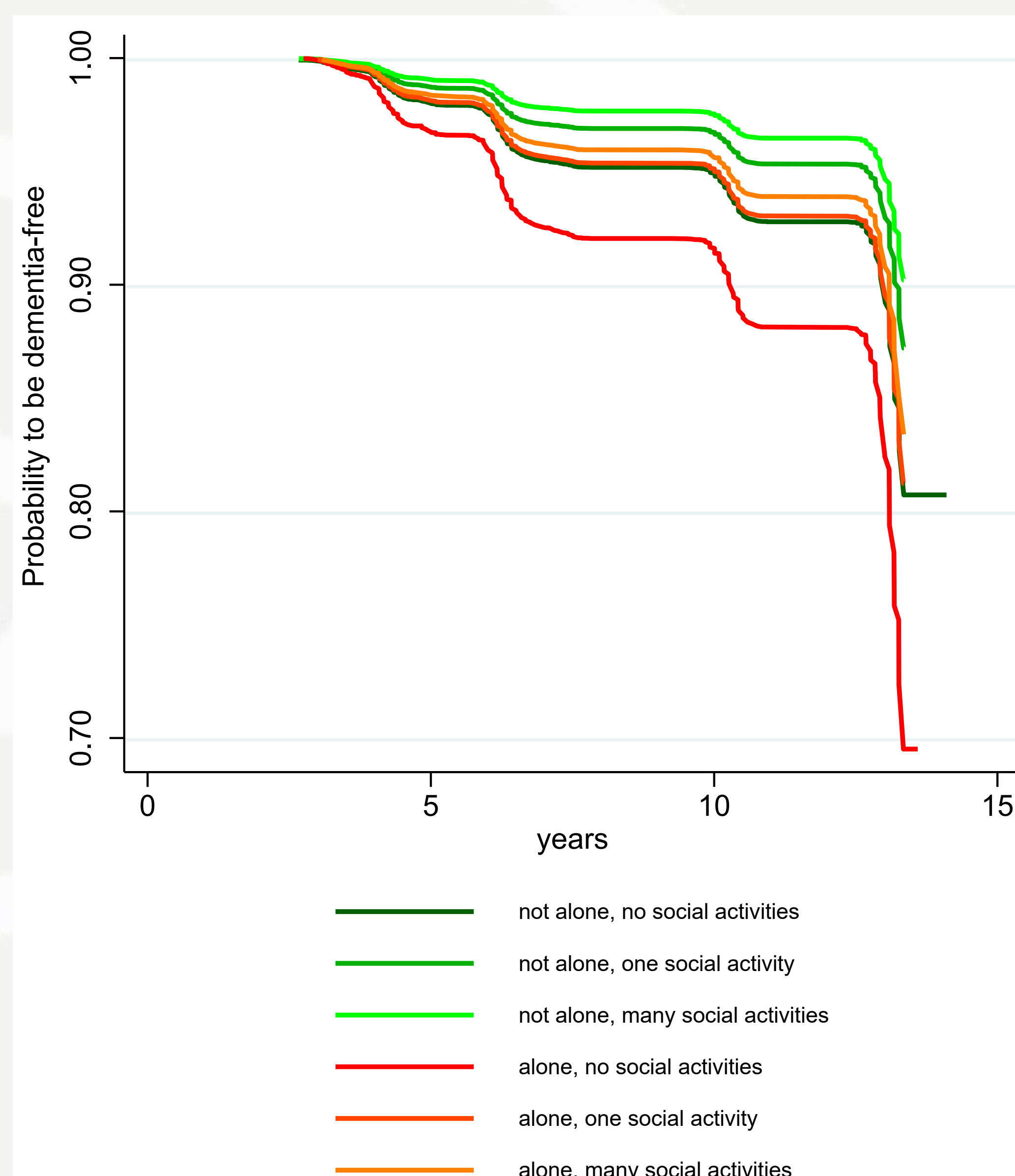


Methods

- Participants aged 50+ of the *Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE)* (n=23,074)
- Up to 14 years of observation
- Cox regression analyses adjusted for gender, age, years of education, household size, diabetes, heart attack, high blood pressure, depression, stroke, and country

Aim

To investigate whether participating in social activities could be beneficial for those living alone with regard to dementia risk



Results

- 1 Fewer of those engaging in social activities (HR=0.49, CI95% 0.41-0.60; p<0.001; REF: not engaging in social activities) developed dementia
 - 2 More of those living alone (HR=1.62, CI95% 1.42-1.84; p<0.001, REF: not living alone) developed dementia
- Adjusted analysis:**
- 3 Engaging in social activities remained significantly associated with a lower risk for developing dementia (HR=0.77, CI 95% 0.62-0.94; p=0.011), but there were no significant effects for living alone (HR=0.94, CI95% 0.79-1.11; p=0.481)
 - 4 Interaction effects between living alone and engaging in social activities were not significant.

Conclusions

- Engaging in social activities may be important for people living alone to reduce their risk for dementia
- To validate causal effects, intervention studies are needed

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