



# Bridge and its benefits to Society

## **Bridge and Older People**

Bridge provides both mental stimulation and social engagement.

Recent research has found that playing bridge has a **statistically significant positive effect on wellbeing**. Researchers at Stirling University, in conjunction with English Bridge Education and Development, as part of their ongoing work on the health and wellbeing benefits of playing bridge, undertook a survey of over 7,000 people, most of whom were bridge players. A majority of respondents indicated that playing bridge brought benefits to them personally in the form of the game having a competitive element, facilitating socialising with friends, and – most commonly – being mentally stimulating and deriving enjoyment from the activity. This contributed to a greater sense of wellbeing than average – comparison was possible with data from the English Longitudinal Study of Aging.

- McDonnell, D., Punch, S. and Small, C. (2017) *Individual Wellbeing and Bridge: An Empirical Analysis*, Aylesbury: English Bridge Education & Development (EBED), [a summary](#); [the full report](#)

Research at the University of Leipzig also showed that “people who came up with ‘well-being’ strategies that involved other people were more satisfied with their lives one year later...(than) people who came up with strategies that did not explicitly involve others”. Playing card games with others is cited as an example of an activity which some of those in the former category has taken up ([link](#)).

It has been proven that undertaking some form of activity that tests mental agility on a daily basis helps to protect our older population from dementia and Alzheimer’s. There is also a body of research which demonstrates that social interaction amongst the elderly can stave off cognitive decline. Although not a cure for dementia, there is evidence that playing bridge can contribute to helping to keep the brain healthy:

*“A Nov. 2000 study by a University of California, Berkeley researcher, Marian Cleaves Diamond, found that playing contract bridge leaves people with higher numbers of immune cells. “Contract bridge was ideal for what we were after,” she said. “It is the closest activity to a challenging card-sorting task that also contains multiple factors that should stimulate the dorsolateral cortex. Bridge players plan ahead, they use working memory, they deal with sequencing, initiation and numerous other higher order functions with which the dorsolateral cortex is involved.”*

[Diamond, M. C. 2003. Bridge and its effect on the immune system. University of California, Berkeley](#)

*“Seniors who regularly engaged in pastimes that stretched their minds... lowered their risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias by as much as 75 percent, compared with those who didn’t exercise their minds....Vergheze’s team also solved a chicken-and-egg problem... Do mental activities really prevent dementia, or does dementia cause people to lose interest in mental activities? By screening out anyone who might have had dementia at the outset from their analysis, the researchers showed that leisure activities influenced dementia in their study, and not the other way around.”*

[Washington Post, 2003 reporting on; Vergheze, J. 2003. The effects of mind games on Alzheimer’s and dementia. Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx. USA](#)

Social Disengagement and Incident Cognitive Decline in Community-Dwelling Elderly Persons - Accessible through *Annals of Internal Medicine*, American College of Physicians. <http://www.annals.org/cgi/content/abstract/131/3/165>

Association of Daily Intellectual Activities With Lower Risk of Incident Dementia Among Older Chinese Adults - JAMA Psychiatry, <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/article-abstract/2681169?resultClick=1>