

**Title:** Cognitive Challenges and Education Level

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**Background:** Higher education levels may lessen the severity of the cognitive challenges that older people experience. However, that benefit may differ for adults located in rural or resource-poor areas. So, is education level a significant predictor of cognitive challenges in old age?

**Methods:** Responses from 6,599 West Virginians from the 2021 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System data were used to examine the association of age and education with cognitive challenges.

**Results:** The logistic regression equation was significant,  $\chi^2$  (DF=9, N= 6,599 )= 1907.7,  $p < .001$ . Relative to mid-life, adults over age 65 were less likely to report decision difficulty (OR= 0.75). No significant results for other ages were seen. Education was associated with cognitive difficulties, ( $X^2$  (DF=9, N= 6,599 )= 1907.7,  $p < .001$ ). People with less than high school education were more likely to experience cognitive challenges (OR: 1.76-19.79). Those with a college degree were less likely to report experiencing cognitive difficulties (OR=0.39).

**Conclusion:** Even in a low-resource area, education may buffer the effects of cognitive decline. Thus, an emphasis on lifelong education and learning new skills for people 65+ may be helpful when dealing with cognitive challenges.