

What is prosopagnosia?

Prosopagnosia, also known as "face blindness", is the inability to recognise faces.



Faces are an important social stimulus, and we use faces to quickly determine the identity, gender, age, emotion, race, and attractiveness of other people. Coming from the Greek words for “face” and “lack of knowledge”, the term prosopagnosia refers to the lack to identify faces, even familiar ones.

Some people with this lack of face recognition are unable to recognise certain facial expressions - a key to communication. Depending upon the degree of prosopagnosia, some people aren't able to recognise family members, partners or friends; others may not even recognise their own face in the mirror or in photos.

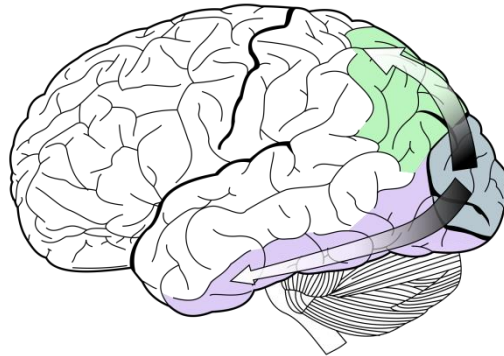


Illustration Erica Molli

(<http://ericamolli.tumblr.com/post/114771473862/prosopagnosia-also-called-face-blindness-is-an>)

It can be congenital or it can be acquired after a brain injury such as tumors, trauma, surgical lesions, hemorrhages and cerebral infarcts. (Use more theoretical terms?). People affected by congenital prosopagnosia are those who have never been good at

recognising faces, lack not related to memory dysfunction, memory loss, impaired vision, or learning disabilities. It is related to an abnormality (Which word is better to use here? Damage is not good for the congenital type) at the brain region related to face recognition, located at the occipital-temporal area. (Can we use an image from google?)



It has been proposed that the 2.5% of the population could be affected by congenital prosopagnosia. If this is correct, circa 1.5 Million people in UK could suffer from it.

People are quite good at recognising familiar faces. For example, we can quite immediately recognise an old school mate even when we have not seen them for many years and when they have a new haircut, even if sometimes everybody make mistakes recognizing people of forgetting people's names.

However, some people find it difficult to recognise very familiar people – such as their mother and father, children and work colleagues. People who have persistent trouble to recognise familiar faces may be prosopagnosic.

If you, or a friend or family member, believe you have face recognition difficulties, please contact the UEL prosopagnosia research group, or register online at the “UEL Prosopagnosia Register”:

We can arrange a meeting with you, we can talk about your problems and we can quantify them using behavioural assessment.