

Q-Step Internship: Social isolation amongst older people at Age UK

Lara Johnstone, BA Criminology



Social isolation is defined as an objective measureable state of having minimal contact with other people, such as family, friends or the wider community.



Objectives

The aim of the research project that I was working on was to identify what the reasonable predictors of social isolation amongst older people are, and whether there are any similarities between these predictors, and the predictors of loneliness.

Method

I used two datasets from the English longitudinal study of ageing (ELSA); wave 5 (2010) and wave 7 (2015). I devised a list of identified risk factors associated with social isolation and loneliness using the Age UK's evidence review of loneliness in later life, the predicting the prevalence of loneliness in older ages report and the University of Sheffield literature review. I used this list of risk factors to analyse wave 5 and wave 7 of ELSA.

Social isolation was defined in terms of physical contact with friends, family and children. those who reported to having contact 3+ times a week, once or twice a week and once a month, were categorised as not isolated, and those who reported to only having physical contact every few months and only a couple of times a year or less, were categorised as isolated.

The methods of analysis I used were logistic regression, I also carried out a series of tests such as the goodness of fit test, and the linktest, in order to test for any specification error

Software used

STATA - used to carry out all of the analysis and to clean the data

Excel - used for formatting and presenting the data clearly

Key Findings

- The statistically significant factors for both wave 5 and 7, are: age, gender, difficulty with activities of daily living (ADL), employment status, eye conditions, access to public transport and self reported health
- 70-74 year olds are 1.20 times more likely to be socially isolated compared to those ages 65-69
- Females are 0.67 times less likely to be socially isolated compared to men
- Those who do not have car access, are 1.42 times more likely to be socially isolated than those who do have car access
- Life satisfactiopn is a good predictor of social isolation, those who report to be dissatisfied are 1.55 times more likely to be socially isolated that those who are satisfied

- Age is a predictor of both loneliness and social isolation, but different age groups are most at risk from social isolation and loneliness.
- Being widowed is a predictor of being lonely and socially isolated, those who are widowed, are 1.03 times more likely to be lonely, but 0.72 times less likely to be socially isolated that those who are single

Wave 5 logistic regression results - reduced from extended model
Dependant variable = Social Isolation

Variables	Odds ratio	Standard error	P values
Age 70 - 74 (vs. age 65-69)	1.20	0.11	0.050
Female (vs. male)	-0.67	0.05	0.000
Marital status - widowed (vs. single)	-0.72	0.12	0.059
Fair hearing (vs. excellent hearing)	-0.72	0.09	0.010
Employed (vs. retired)	1.40	0.19	0.011
No car access (vs. car access)	1.42	0.16	0.002
Housing tenure - rent free (vs. own it outright)	1.80	0.51	0.043
Never using public transport (vs. every day)	1.21	0.12	0.069
Life satisfaction (dissatisfied) (vs. satisfied)	1.55	0.17	0.000
Life satisfaction (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied) (vs. satisfied)	1.56	0.20	0.001



Conclusion

The findings showed that as expected, there were no real similarities between the predictive factors of social isolation and loneliness, nor was there a relationship between loneliness and social isolation, but the research is still on going and therefore the research question does not yet have a definitive answer.