Is loneliness influenced by the area- and/ or individual-based characteristics?

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Outline

- Loneliness- predictors and consequences
- Aims of the study
- Methods
- Results
- Conclusions

- Loneliness and isolation are often seen as interchangeable terms
- **isolation** is the objective absence of social relations
- **loneliness** can be considered as a subjective issue = the difference between an individual's desired and actual relations

- Common experience

- Chronic status !!!

Loneliness - predictors

GENDER
- Reported higher by females   (Stokes et al 1986, Victor et al 2006)

PARTNERSHIP STATUS
- Bereavement   (Cattan et al 2005, van Baarsen et al 2002)

HEALTH STATUS
- Limiting physical or mental illness   (Savikko et al 2005)

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS
- Geographical characteristics of living area
       (Wenger & Burholt 2004, Victor & Pikhartova 2020)
- Civic participation/ social network
       (Golden et al 2009, Cheng et al 2002)

(AGE)
- J-shaped distribution of loneliness over life-course
- plateau among those 85+ (Savikko et al 2005, Victor & Young 2012)

UCL

PHYSICAL HEALTH

- Exceeds impact on mortality of factors such as obesity or smoking

(Holt-Lunstad,2010)

- Increase the risk of high blood pressure, CHD

(Hawkley et al, 2010, Valtorta et al, 2016, Smith et al 2018)

- Increased risk of disability   (Lund et al 2011)

MENTAL HEALTH

- Greater chance of cognitive decline   (James et al 2011, Bowling et al 2016)
- Likelihood to develop clinical dementia   (Holwerda et al 2012)
- Increased chance of depression   (Cacioppo et al 2006)
- Increased likelihood of suicide in later life   (O'Connell et al 2004)

=> **Increase in:**

- **Health service utilization (independent on chronic diseases)**

- **Earlier entry to residential / nursing homes**

- to examine the relationship between two self-

  reported types of loneliness (individual and

  connected with area of residency) and distinct

  dimensions of the living environment: deprivation,

  area classification (urban or rural), and geographical

  regions

- **E**nglish **L**ongitudinal **S**tudy of **A**geing data
  http://www.elsa-project.ac.uk/documentation

- Those who took part in wave 3, 6 and 7
- in wave 7 lived at the same address as in wave 6
- 4,663
- 56% of females
- Age mean w3: 65.5
  w7: 73.8

- Dimensions of living environment:

    - Index of Multiple Deprivation

    - Urban/ rural distribution

    - Geographical regions

- Adjusted for:
    – Social network (marital status, close relationships, civic participation, part of job market)
    – Health status (SRH, depressive symptoms, ADL/IADL, long-term limiting illness)
    – Mutual adjustment

Loneliness in ELSA

- **SHORT FORM OF UCLA SCALE**   (Russel et al 1994)
  - How often do you feel lack of companionship
  - How often do you feel left out
  - How often do you feel isolated from others

  response: hardly ever/never
                   some of the time
                   often

  Scores 3-9 ; higher=worse feelings of loneliness

- **'I OFTEN FEEL LONELY LIVING IN THIS AREA'**
  response: 7-point Likert scale 'strongly agree to strongly disagree'

  Scores 1-7 ; reversed & higher = worse feelings of
                                           loneliness

Both dichotomised for meaningful interpretation

Results

- UCLA …...…..17.6%

- 'I often feel lonely living in this area'……….. 24.6%

- Females reported loneliness higher

- Example of congruency

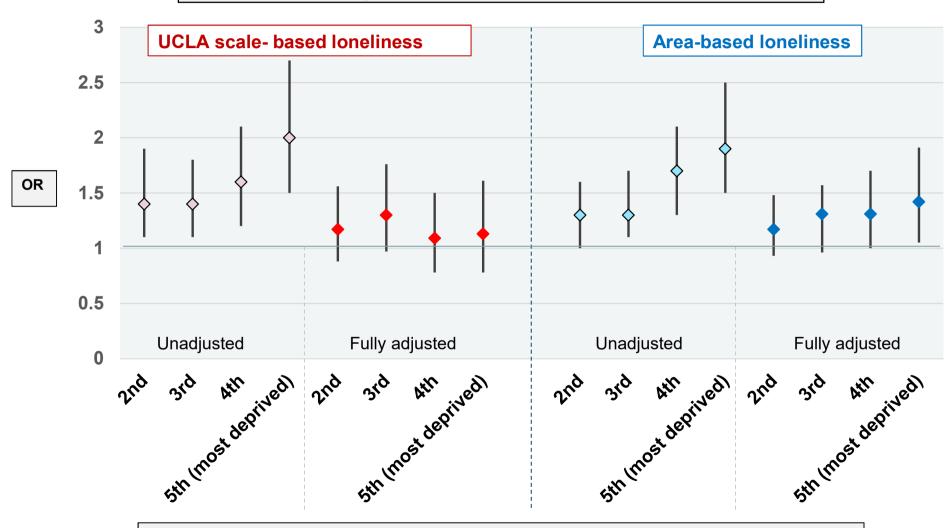| w7		I often feel lonely living in this area	
		No	Yes
UCLA loneliness	No	67.6	15.0
	Yes	8.0	9.4

Demographical characteristics:

- IMD
  - 26% lived in the least deprived area
  - 11% lived in the most deprived area

- Urban/ rural
  - 73% lived in the urban area

- GOR
  - 9% lived in London

Results

Association between loneliness measure and area deprivation characteristics

UCLA scale- based loneliness

Area-based loneliness

OR

Unadjusted   Fully adjusted   Unadjusted   Fully adjusted

2nd   3rd   4th   5th (most deprived)   2nd   3rd   4th   5th (most deprived)   2nd   3rd   4th   5th (most deprived)   2nd   3rd   4th   5th (most deprived)

Living-area deprivation quintile (1st-least deprived) = ref category

- Once all individual-level influencing factors were adjusted for there was no relationship between the area-level variables and the UCLA score but remained significant between IMD and the area-based loneliness measure

- Loneliness is higher in the most deprived areas independently of individual-level factors

- Further and profound research is needed to understand all meso- and macro-level of factors which can influence loneliness feeling

=>could help to narrow policy implications

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Thank you for your attention

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