

Survey on Loneliness Among Older Adults

Client: AARP

Overview

This study provided a better understanding of loneliness among adults aged 45 and older. In addition to examining prevalence rates across and within groups of older Americans, the study provided a descriptive profile of lonely older adults and examined the relationships between loneliness and health, health behaviors, involvement in a social network, and use of technology for social communications and networking.

The study addressed the following five research questions:

- How many adults 45+ suffer from loneliness? How long have they been lonely? How aware are they of it? Where and when are they most lonely?
- What are correlates of loneliness? Which groups are more likely than others to suffer from loneliness? Are there environmental factors that correlate with loneliness?
- How does health—both physical and mental— affect loneliness, and how is it affected by loneliness? What kinds of physical or mental health problems do lonely individuals suffer from?
- What is the connection between loneliness and social communication technology? What kind of social communication do they use?
- What are older adults' strategies to mitigate and/or prevent loneliness? What steps, if any, do they take to deal with their loneliness?

The study survey included questions about health and health behaviors; current relationships;



size of social network; frequency and methods of communication with people in that network; participation in religious services, hobbies, and community organizations; feelings of loneliness and coping strategies; and use of social communication technology. The analysis used a multivariate model to predict loneliness among older adults and found significant predictors of loneliness included younger age, poor health, fewer social connections and supportive persons in their lives, and lack of sleep.

Products

Final report, *Findings From the 2010 Survey on Loneliness Among Older Adults* (June 2010)

AARP Magazine published results, *Loneliness Among Older Adults: A National Survey of Adults 45+* (2010), available at http://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/general/loneliness_2010.pdf