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Loneliness amongst older people in Europe: a comparative study of welfare regimes

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Table 1. Descriptive information about socio-demographic, quality of living conditions, level of social integration and loneliness characteristics.

	Anglo-Saxon (n=1363)	Continental (n=3468)	Eastern (n=3234)	Nordic (n=2272)	Southern (n=1052)
<i>Age</i>					
60-74	71.0	71.2	72.2	70.4	61.9
75+	29.0	28.8	27.8	29.6	38.1
<i>Gender</i>					
Men	47.9	50.9	41.1	50.2	48.7
Women	52.1	49.1	58.9	49.8	51.3
<i>Educational level</i>					
Primary	49.7	27.6	48.7	35.3	80.0
Secondary	15.4	39.7	35.4	27.3	6.8
Tertiary	35.0	32.6	15.9	37.4	13.2
<i>Self-rated health</i>					
Good	61.4	52.5	27.4	61.0	38.0
Poor	38.6	47.5	72.6	39.0	62.0
<i>Household size</i>					
1	32.0	24.7	25.5	30.9	15.7
2	56.7	66.0	47.3	64.5	52.1
3 and above	11.3	9.3	27.2	4.5	32.2
<i>Feeling of safety</i>					
Safe	72.9	75.9	77.4	86.8	78.8
Unsafe	27.1	24.1	22.6	13.2	21.2
<i>Marital status</i>					
Married/partnered	62.5	70.7	59.0	61.0	69.6
Divorced/separated	11.8	9.1	6.5	15.3	5.1
Widowed	19.7	15.7	30.8	15.0	21.2
Single (never married)	5.9	4.5	3.7	8.8	4.1
<i>Frequency of being social</i>					
Less than once a month	10.0	7.2	31.7	4.8	10.6
Once a month or more	26.3	39.5	36.1	31.7	17.9
Once a week or more	63.7	53.3	32.1	63.5	71.5
<i>Number of confidants</i>					
0-1	21.7	15.9	34.4	17.9	23.0
2-3	39.3	40.1	38.6	40.9	38.8
4 and above	39.0	44.0	27.0	41.3	38.3
<i>Loneliness</i>					
None or almost none of the time	74.0	76.4	59.3	79.7	68.5
Some of the time	19.8	17.8	22.6	15.9	19.9
Most of the time	3.3	3.3	12.4	2.1	7.5
All or almost all of the time	2.9	2.6	5.7	2.3	4.1

Table 2. Prevalence of absence of loneliness by welfare regimes and quality of living conditions and level of social integration variables.

[illegible]

0-1	67.9	≤0.001	61.3	≤0.001	52.5	≤0.001	73.8	0.153	59.1	≤0.001
2 to 3	72.0		74.9		58.8		80.1		64.1	
4 and above	79.0		83.1		71.1		82.1		79.8	

Table 3. Odds ratios (OR) and 95 per cent confidence intervals (95% CI) for the absence of loneliness.

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5			Model 6		
	OR		95% CI	OR		95% CI	OR		95% CI	OR		95% CI	OR		95% CI	OR		95% CI
Good self-rated health	1.98	***	(1.80-2.19)	1.79	***	(1.61-1.98)							1.81	***	(1.64-2.01)	1.71	***	(1.54-1.90)
Household size:																		
2	5.27	***	(4.72-5.07)	5.48	***	(4.90-6.12)							2.74	***	(2.34-3.22)	2.91	***	(2.48-3.42)
3 and above	3.70	***	(3.19-4.30)	4.54	***	(3.88-5.31)							2.21	***	(1.84-2.65)	2.61	***	(2.16-3.16)
Feeling of safety	1.31	***	(1.17-1.46)	1.36	***	(1.21-1.52)							1.26	***	(1.13-1.42)	1.3	***	(1.15-1.46)
Marital status:																		
Married/partnered							5.53	***	(4.90-6.25)	5.42	***	(4.79-6.12)	2.70	***	(2.28-3.18)	2.54	***	(2.15-2.99)
Divorced/separated							1.46	***	(1.23-1.73)	1.34	**	(1.13-1.60)	1.37	**	(1.15-1.63)	1.27	**	(1.06-1.52)
Single							1.66	***	(1.33-2.06)	1.55	***	(1.24-1.92)	1.50	***	(1.20-1.88)	1.42	**	(1.14-1.78)
Frequency of being social:																		
Once a month or more							1.41	***	(1.21-1.65)	1.27	***	(1.09-1.49)	1.34	***	(1.14-1.58)	1.23	*	(1.04-1.45)
Once a week or more							1.61	***	(1.38-1.86)	1.43	***	(1.23-1.67)	1.5	***	(1.28-1.75)	1.37	***	(1.17-1.61)
Number of confidants:																		
2-3							1.44	***	(1.27-1.63)	1.41	***	(1.24-1.59)	1.39	***	(1.22-1.58)	1.36	***	(1.19-1.55)
4 and above							2.13	***	(1.86-2.43)	2.07	***	(1.81-2.36)	2.00	***	(1.75-2.30)	1.94	***	(1.69-2.23)
Welfare regimes:																		
Anglo-Saxon				1.45	***	(1.21-1.73)				1.35	**	(1.14-1.61)				1.44	***	(1.20-1.73)
Continental				1.44	***	(1.23-1.69)				1.28	**	(1.09-1.49)				1.40	***	(1.19-1.65)

Eastern		0.75 ** (0.63-0.88)		0.82 * (0.74-1.06)		0.94 (0.79-1.13)
Nordic		1.91 *** (1.49-2.44)		1.80 *** (1.44-2.33)		1.88 *** (1.47-2.42)
Log likelihood	10014.166	9897.519	10077.75	10021.45	9575.434	9522.057
Cox & Snell R2	0.15	0.16	0.15	0.15	0.17	0.18
Nagelkerke R2	0,22	0,23	0,22	0,22	0,25	0,26

Note: Reference categories: self-rated health "poor"; household size "1"; feeling of safety "unsafe"; marital status "widowed"; frequency of being social "less than once a month"; number of confidants "0-1"; welfare regimes "Southern". Welfare regimes are dummy variables. Age group, gender and educational level are controlled for in all models.

Significance levels: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001.

Table 4. Odds ratios (OR) and 95 per cent confidence intervals (95% CI) for joint effects of welfare regime and quality of living conditions and level of social integration variables on the absence of loneliness.

	Anglo-Saxon			Continental			Eastern			Nordic			Southern		
	OR		95% CI	OR		95% CI	OR		95% CI	OR		95% CI	OR		95% CI
<i>Quality of living conditions:</i>															
Good self-rated health	1.77	***	(1.39-2.26)	2.01	***	(1.72-2.35)	1.68	***	(1.29-2.19)	1.65	*	(1.10-2.48)	1.07		(0.82-1.38)
Household size:															
2	2.74	***	(2.08-3.62)	2.98	***	(2.38-3.58)	3.41	***	(2.51-4.62)	2.72	***	(1.77-4.19)	3.18	***	(2.21-4.58)
3 and above	1.28		(0.86-1.91)	2.83	***	(2.05-3.91)	2.59	***	(1.87-3.59)	2.11		(0.73-6.08)	4.29	***	(2.89-6.38)
Feeling of safety	1.22		(0.94-1.58)	1.48	***	(1.25-1.76)	1.13		(0.86-1.47)	1.10		(0.64-1.90)	1.17		(0.87-1.58)
<i>Level of social integration:</i>															
Marital status:															
Married/partnered	1.86	***	(1.36-2.54)	2.53	***	(2.01-3.20)	3.33	***	(2.53-4.38)	1.92	*	(1.12-3.29)	2.20	***	(1.62-3.01)
Divorced/separated	0.94		(0.64-1.37)	1.62	***	(1.26-2.15)	0.94		(0.59-1.49)	1.10		(0.61-2.00)	1.01		(0.57-1.77)
Single	1.40		(0.85-1.31)	1.71	**	(1.21-2.40)	1.02		(0.56-1.85)	1.15		(0.57-2.04)	1.08		(0.57-2.04)
Frequency of being social:															
Once a month or more	1.33		(0.87-2.01)	0.91		(0.67-1.23)	1.44	*	(1.09-1.91)	1.60		(0.65-3.92)	1.44		(0.90-2.31)
Once a week or more	1.95	**	(1.32-2.87)	0.96		(0.71-1.29)	1.12		(0.85-1.49)	1.92		(0.81-4.53)	2.00	**	(1.34-2.98)
Number of confidants:															
2-3	1.37	*	(1.01-1.88)	1.62	***	(1.32-2.00)	1.16		(0.90-1.51)	1.36		(0.78-2.35)	1.16		
4 and above	1.63	**	(1.18-2.54)	2.45	***	(1.97-3.04)	1.5	**	(1.11-2.02)	1.32		(0.76-2.93)	2.22	***	(1.59-3.10)

Note: The results are based on six different specifications for each welfare regime, where we in each model with all main effects of welfare regimes have included also the joint effects of quality of living conditions and level of social integration variables. Control variables included in the estimates are gender, age, educational level, self-rated health, household size, feeling of safety, marital status, frequency of being social and number of confidants. Reference

categories: self-rated health “poor”; household size “1”; feeling of safety “unsafe”; marital status “widowed”; frequency of being social “less than once a month”; number of confidants “0-1”.

Significance levels: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

