Abstract

Purpose
The purpose of this paper is to investigate factors associated with loneliness amongst people aged 55 and over living in Coventry, a medium-sized city in the Midlands, UK.

Design/methodology/approach
Quantitative community survey of residents, involving postal and online questionnaire and distribution of questionnaire to local community resources used by older people and "ballot boxes" for completed questionnaires in these locations.

Findings
Using multivariate regression analysis the study found that living alone, not enjoying life, needing help with personal care and not being in touch with people as often as liked all predicted loneliness.

Research limitations/implications
Survey was commissioned by a range of local statutory and voluntary sector providers and had a wider focus than loneliness. Some evidence of under-representation of males, minority ethnic groups and possibly people from lower socio-economic groups is reported. Further qualitative research is needed to better understand consequences and causes of loneliness.

Practical implications
The study identified factors associated with loneliness that could be used to identify people who may be lonely in general or, for example, NHS or social care service populations.

Originality/value
Loneliness is slowly becoming more recognised as a social problem in its own right and a contributory factor in poor health and well-being. This paper explores the relationship between lonely and “not lonely” people and a range of factors clustered within the four thematic areas of demographic background, reported health and well-being, access to personal resources and use of community resources of survey participants.

Keywords
Loneliness, Older people, Health and well-being, Social care