# Addressing loneliness and associated health risks among university students

A cross-sectional survey study in the Netherlands Van der Heijde, C.M. <sup>1</sup>, Pijpers, J. <sup>1</sup>, De Wildt- Liesveld, R, <sup>2</sup> & Vonk, P. <sup>1</sup>

- Student Health Service, University of Amsterdam Amsterdam, Netherlands
- Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam Amsterdam, Netherlands

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Contributing factors OR

Homesickness

• Self-image

Extraversion

Social anxiety

· Help seeking behavior

Psychological health

problems

"Loneliness is a situation experienced by the individual as one

1,3

2,1

1,5

1,2

2,9

1,8

where there is an unpleasant or inadmissible lack of (quality

Reducing factors

0.6

Sports clubs

0.7

×××

of) certain relationships" (De Jong Gierveld, 1987)

Loneliness is a significant risk factor for the
development of both physical and psychological
issues such as the development of depression and
suicidal risk. University students are an upcoming
risk group for loneliness in the Netherlands (Student
Health Check). However, studies into loneliness in
this specific population group is scarce. In order to
establish effective interventions targeting loneliness,
a better understanding of the mechanisms of
loneliness among students is required. As a
theoretical base The Loneliness among Students
Model (Pijpers, 2017) is used, which is an
elaboration of The Loneliness Model of De Jong
Gierveld (1987), and adaptation to the university
student population.

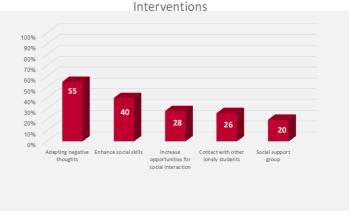
#### **METHOD**

BACKGROUND

The design of this study was a cross-sectional survey research. An online survey was distributed among university students attending various universities in the Netherlands. 481 students participated in the research. Mean age was 22.49 years (SD=2.87). 72% was female. Logistic regression analysis was performed to determine the association between loneliness (assessed with the Loneliness Scale of De Jong Gierveld, 1987) and several potentially associated factors.

Furthermore, university students were asked what kind of interventions they preferred.

Results Logistic regression analysis Students associations



## **DISCUSSION/ CONCLUSION**

Loneliness is a complex subjective phenomenon that is hard to measure since it is highly determined by the way an individual evaluates his or her social network. However, this study indicated homesickness, that personality characteristics and health related factors are associated with loneliness. Awareness about these factors can be raised to address loneliness and associated factors, in order to make student life less lonely and decrease risks. Additionally, students be informed about E-health applications that target loneliness.

#### Message 1

Nearly one out of four university students in the Netherlands experience severe feelings of loneliness.

## Message 2

It is important to raise awareness at university (peers, teachers, counsellors, etc) about the prevalence of loneliness and its associated risks and refer students to E-health applications that target loneliness.

#### REFERENCES

De Jong Gierveld, J. (1987). Developing and testing a model of loneliness. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 53, 119-128.

Pijpers, J. (2017). Loneliness Among Students in Higher Education: Influencing Factors. A quantitative cross-sectional survey research. Student Health Service, UvA.

