

Swimming against the stream.

Non-normative family transitions and loneliness in later life across 12 nations

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Abstract

This study aims to examine whether non-normative family-life events in young adulthood are associated with loneliness at older ages, and whether the manifestations of loneliness and its determinants vary across countries. The analyses use micro-level data from the Generations and Gender Survey Wave 1 for 12 countries: Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Germany, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russia and Sweden. The sample comprises a total of 59,448 European inhabitants aged 50-85. Loneliness is measured by the short De Jong Gierveld loneliness scale. Analyses show that individuals who experienced the transitions to marriage and parenthood are less lonely at older ages. Whereas early cohabitation/marriage and parenthood have no consequences on loneliness in later life, a delay of these family related events (parenthood in particular) is associated with higher levels of loneliness. The use of meta-analysis revealed variations in the effects across the 12 nations.