

S. AARTS, S.T.M. PEEK, E.M.J. WOUTERS. **The relation between social-network site-usage and loneliness and mental health in community-dwelling older adults.** *Gerontechnology* 2016;15(suppl):144s; doi:10.4017/gt.2016.15.s.576.00 **Purpose** Loneliness is expected to become an even bigger social problem in the upcoming decades, because of the growing number of older adults¹. It has been argued that the use of social network sites can aid in decreasing loneliness and improving mental health². The purpose of this study was to examine whether and how social network sites usage is related to loneliness and mental health in community-dwelling older adults. **Method** The study population included community-dwelling older adults aged 60 and over residing in the Netherlands (n=626) collected through the LISS panel³. Univariate and multivariate linear regression analyses, adjusted for potentially important confounders, were conducted in order to evaluate the predictive value of social network sites usage on (emotional and social) loneliness and mental health. **Results & Discussion** More than half of the individuals (56.2%) reported to use social network sites at least several times per week. Social network sites usage appeared unrelated to loneliness in general, and to emotional and social loneliness specifically. Social network sites usage also appeared unrelated to mental health (*Table 1*). The results of this sample, which was representative for the Dutch population, indicate that a simple association between social network site usage and loneliness and mental health as such, cannot automatically be assumed in community-dwelling older adults.

References

1. Boyd DM, Ellison NB. Social network sites: Definition, history and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 2007;12(1):210-230; doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.
2. Brandtzaeg PB. Social Networking Sites: Their Users and Social Implications - A Longitudinal Study. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 2012;17(14):467-488; doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2012.01580
3. www.lissdata.nl; retrieved January 2014l

Keywords: social media, mental health, loneliness, community-dwelling older adults
Address: Fontys University of Applied Sciences, Eindhoven, Netherlands;
E: S.Aarts@fontys.nl

Table 1. Regression coefficients and p-values describing the relation between SNS (Social Network Site) usage and loneliness (corrected for sex, age, education, living arrangements, medical conditions, difficulties in ADL and satisfaction with social contacts); a=Reference group consisted of age group 60 to 64 years; b=Reference group consisted of participants with low education; c=Reference group consisted of 'low SNS use'

Parameter	Emotional loneliness		Social loneliness		Loneliness	
	Estimate	p	Estimate	p	Estimate	p
Sex	0.005	0.918	-0.257	0.004	-0.257	0.006
Age						
Age 65 to 74 ^a	-0.057	0.278	-0.017	0.855	-0.087	0.369
Age 75 and older	-0.221	0.004	-0.025	0.851	-0.204	0.142
Education ^b						
Medium	-0.110	0.073	-0.065	0.542	-0.229	0.037
High	0.058	0.344	-0.347	0.002	-0.298	0.008
Living arrangement	0.003	0.998	0.012	0.887	-0.072	0.411
Medical conditions	-0.021	0.466	0.020	0.716	-0.003	0.962
Difficulties in ADL	<0.001	0.988	<0.001	0.991	<0.001	0.329
Satisfaction with social contacts	<0.001	0.772	<0.001	0.749	<0.001	0.308
SNS use ^c						
Medium	-0.143	0.076	0.168	0.241	0.019	0.898
High	-0.061	0.279	0.081	0.420	0.036	0.728