

Short description of the research project – Prominent Reduction of loneliness among Older Migrants through Interventions and Social Engagement (PROMISE)

Older migrants represent a substantial segment of the aging population, and their numbers are anticipated to increase significantly in the upcoming years. Additionally, older migrants face increased vulnerabilities (Fokkema, 2019; van Wieringen, 2014), including in the social sphere. They experience loneliness at a higher rate than older adults without a migration background (El Fakiri & Bouwman-Notenboom, 2015; Uysal-Bozkir et al., 2017; ten Kate et al., 2020; van Tilburg & Fokkema, 2021). This vulnerability underscores the pressing need for targeted research, practical tools and interventions to address the unique challenges faced by this group. In addition to their increased susceptibility to loneliness, it is crucial to recognize that loneliness itself is often accompanied by a robust taboo, a phenomenon that is even more pronounced among older migrants (Dahlberg, 2009; Fokkema, 2023; Killeen, 1998). The concept of taboo encompasses the silence and stigma surrounding a topic deemed inappropriate for discussion, carrying a sense of shame both for individuals and within their social environment, including family and community. Despite its significant impact, however, the role of taboo in both scientific inquiry and practical interventions has received limited attention.

This project aims to break the silence of loneliness among older migrants. Innovative qualitative methods will provide detailed insights into the causes of older migrants' reluctance to talk openly about loneliness, the contexts in which this reluctance occurs, and how children and the larger community perceive and respond to this taboo. Additionally, by utilizing existing survey data, we aim to quantify the variation in underreporting loneliness among older migrants for the first time. In co-creation with experts by experience and societal actors, these new insights will be applied in practice by culturally adapting the training program 'In conversation about loneliness' for professionals and volunteers.

Furthermore, this project aims to identify subgroups of older migrants at a particularly high risk of loneliness by reusing existing survey data. In co-creation sessions, these subgroups will be translated into Personas, which will not only raise awareness of the multifaceted manifestation of loneliness among older migrants but also facilitate the development of tailored interventions. Some well-designed and described interventions will be modified based on the new knowledge and evaluated for their effectiveness.

References

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Vacancy text

Vacancy Announcement: PhD Student in Sociology

We are seeking a highly motivated and qualified PhD student to join our research project PROMISE, focusing on the taboo surrounding loneliness among older migrants, as well as the cultural adaptation and evaluation of interventions. This pioneering project aims to shed light on and understand the often-overlooked issue of loneliness among older migrants, coming from non-European backgrounds. By delving into the diverse manifestations and underlying factors contributing to this loneliness, we aim to gain new scientific insights. Ultimately, we seek to understand the nature and origins of the taboo surrounding loneliness for migrants and develop culturally sensitive interventions to address it. This new knowledge will be translated into practical tools and adjusted interventions to effectively reach and support lonely older migrants. The project and the PhD position are expected to commence on 01.09.2024.

Key Responsibilities:

- Conduct qualitative and mixed-methods research to explore the taboo surrounding loneliness among older migrants.
- Conduct in-depth interviews with older migrants from diverse backgrounds, utilizing the photo-elicitation method, and their children.
- Support in developing a training program for professionals and volunteers to break the taboo surrounding loneliness among older migrants and evaluation of this program.
- Development of taboo-related elements in loneliness interventions.
- Support in adjusting existing interventions and evaluating them.
- Write and publish scientific articles reporting research findings resulting in a PhD thesis defended at the University of Groningen.
- Share scientific knowledge with the general public through various communication channels.

Requirements:

- (Almost) completed a Research Master program in Sociology, Interdisciplinary Social Science, or a comparable field.
- Proficiency in qualitative research methods and methodologies.
- Fluency in English and Dutch, with proficiency in another language spoken by the interviewee groups from China, Iran, and Turkey. Dutch proficiency is an essential

requirement as the PhD project focuses on and involves close cooperation with societal partners in the Netherlands, concentrating on loneliness among older migrants.

- Strong interpersonal skills and creativity.
- Excellent writing and presentation skills, in both English and Dutch.
- Passion for research and a desire to make a meaningful contribution to addressing loneliness among older migrants.

This is a full-time position for 48 months based at the University of Groningen with a substantial amount of time to be spent at NIDI in the Hague. The initial appointment will be for a period of 1 year. After positive evaluation, the appointment will be extended for another 3 years. The successful candidate will work closely with a multidisciplinary team of researchers and stakeholders. We offer a stimulating collaborative research environment and opportunities for professional development.

To apply, please submit a cover letter, CV, one sample of written work (copy of master dissertation, published article, or coursework) and contact information of three references to b.bilecen@rug.nl and fokkema@nidi.nl by **April 30, 2024**. In your cover letter, please address your qualifications and motivation for this position, as well as your experience with qualitative research methods.

University of Groningen and NIDI are equal opportunity employers and encourage applications from individuals of diverse backgrounds.

We look forward to receiving your application!