

# Depending on PTSD symptoms, traumas have a negative or positive impact on loneliness

January 24 2018

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After traumatic events, some victims suffer from loneliness. Victims with very severe PTSD symptom levels more often suffer from loneliness than victims with very low levels. But non-victims more often suffer from loneliness than victims with very low PTSD-symptom levels.

These are the main outcomes of a large prospective study among about 1800 adults in the Netherlands conducted by Tilburg University. For the present study, data was extracted from the large Longitudinal Internet for the Social Sciences-panel (LISS-panel) based on a traditional random sample of the Dutch population. This study focused on recent traumas, and not on chronic traumas or traumatization during childhood.

The level of loneliness among victims and non-victims was assessed during a period of three years, with a one-year time interval. We assessed to what extent pre-trauma loneliness and pre-trauma mental health predicts post-event loneliness one and two years later (post-event). We also examined differences between victims and non-victims. The analyses showed that existing loneliness is the strongest predictor for post-event loneliness.

To date, this is the first large prospective study on the effects of [traumatic events](#) on loneliness. Most studies on trauma and loneliness are cross-sectional or conducted after the events, while this study included non-retrospective measures of pre-event loneliness. Because of this

design, the precise impact of trauma on loneliness compared to other variables could be determined (such as existing [loneliness](#)).

## Social support

The results are in line with studies on the relationships between social support and PTSD symptoms: Very severe PTSD symptoms undermine [social support](#) at later stages. The finding that victims with very low PTSD [symptom](#) levels are less lonely than non-victims seem to suggest that the less [victims](#) suffer from PTSD symptoms, the easier it is for family and friends to provide attention and support.

**More information:** Peter G. van der Velden et al. Potentially traumatic events have negative and positive effects on loneliness, depending on PTSD-symptom levels: evidence from a population-based prospective comparative study, *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* (2017). [DOI: 10.1007/s00127-017-1476-8](https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-017-1476-8)

Provided by Tilburg University

Citation: Depending on PTSD symptoms, traumas have a negative or positive impact on loneliness (2018, January 24) retrieved 7 March 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-01-ptsd-symptoms-traumas-negative-positive.html>

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