Secondary data analysis on bereavement: Insights and challenges

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What happens next
Key points for today

• Exploring bereavement in secondary data
• Key findings from ELSA
• Implications for policy
Bereavement and secondary data

- Rich survey data exist in the UK, covering a wide range of topics
- Few focus on the experience of bereavement
  - VOICES – unpaid carers’ views on quality of care
- Greater challenges in understanding the impact of bereavement over time
Research on bereavement

- *Good grief* – 2018 report from Independent Age

- ILC provided quantitative analysis using the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA)

- Focus on partner loss between waves
  - Limitations due to interval censoring

*Image of Good grief report*
Key findings from ELSA

- Only a small proportion of people aged 50+ lost their partners between waves: 1.7% in 2014/15 to 2.9% in 2010/11
- Differences may relate to refreshing the sample
- Overall, 9.7% across the period 2002-2015
- Of those bereaved, 47% were aged 65-79; but nearly a quarter of those 80+ were bereaved
- The bereaved reported worse outcomes across a range of health- and wellbeing-related indicators – especially depression
Key findings from ELSA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not Bereaved</th>
<th>Bereaved</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not lonely (3-4)</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately lonely (5-6)</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>7706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly lonely (7-9)</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not isolated (0)</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately isolated (1-2)</td>
<td>54.0%</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
<td>6964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly isolated (3-4)</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Implications for policy

• Need for robust, representative data over time

• Specific challenges for underrepresented groups (e.g. BAME, migrants, LGBT+)

• Bereavement in later life may take a different shape than bereavement earlier in the life course – will consequent impacts on people’s ability to cope and the kinds of support needed.
Thank you
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