



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

tilda

Staidéar Fadaimseartha na
hÉireann um Dhul in Aois

The Irish Longitudinal
Study on Ageing

NEWSLETTER | 2020

Dear TILDA Participant,

A warm welcome to TILDA's newsletter for 2020. This has been a year marked by challenge and adversity as the world grapples with the outbreak of COVID-19; but thanks to remarkable efforts of cooperative scientific research, the global community has come a long way in its understanding of the virus, and 2021 brings with it a renewed hope for reliable vaccines to protect our communities.

Regretfully, in line with the public health measures necessary to contain the coronavirus, we had to take the difficult decision to revise the timeline for Wave 6 data collection. We have changed the way we collect data for this wave, and we will now contact you in 2021 to conduct a telephone interview instead of the usual home interview. Please find more information in the newsletter.

During this difficult time, our research teams worked quickly to translate the valuable data that you have provided into a series of critical reports to support and inform COVID-19 policy and planning by Government and health authorities. I am delighted to share these research findings, together with news of upcoming events and our plans for the next wave of data collection.

We would like to thank you for the fantastic response to our COVID-19 questionnaire that we sent out to you over the summer months. We are currently analysing the data and plan to release our first findings in January 2021. This project will give health authorities, policymakers, researchers, and the general public valuable insight into the effects of the pandemic and identify gaps in services for older adults in Ireland.

We have received funding for another data collection project to commence in January 2021, and will contact you to ask if you would provide us with a saliva sample to test for COVID-19. As you know, the severity of COVID-19 infection varies, from no symptoms to serious illness. We would like to collect saliva samples to assess the rates of infection in our TILDA community, which will enable us to estimate infection rates in the older population nationally and examine risk factors beyond age. Please see more information on this on page 3.

As we enter a new year, we are filled with motivation and hope for the future. We are eager to commence the next wave of data collection which will run throughout 2021. On behalf of the TILDA team, thank you sincerely for your ongoing support and the time that you have devoted to TILDA over the years. We very much look forward to speaking with you again in Wave 6.

Rose Anne Kenny

Professor Rose Anne Kenny, Principal Investigator

TILDA Contributing to COVID Research: Key Highlights

To assist with COVID-19 response planning and provision of health services in Ireland, the TILDA team produced a set of key reports. These reports covered a range of topics including identification of those at higher risk of severe COVID-19 infection; physical frailty in the older Irish population; patterns of health service utilisation; internet access and use; and levels of vitamin D. We also documented the enormous contributions that older adults make to society. Here's some of what TILDA research shows:

Find all of our COVID-19 research and reports here: <https://tilda.tcd.ie/CovidData/>

ADULTS OVER 70 ARE THE FABRIC OF THEIR COMMUNITIES

CAREGIVING

132,200

adults over 70 provided help and care for their spouses, relatives (apart from grandchildren), friends and neighbours.

131,700

parents over 70 take care of their grandchildren

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

128,600

parents over 70 provide financial assistance to their children



800

adults over 70 provide financial assistance to their parents

ENGAGING IN THE COMMUNITY

206,800

volunteered in the last year



75,200

volunteer every week



330,400

enjoy regular social and leisure activities

As social distancing measures were introduced from March, TILDA partnered with age charity ALONE to produce a joint report outlining how loneliness and social isolation might impact the resilience that earlier TILDA research had shown was characteristic of the older population.

Our research shows that before the pandemic, 71% of older adults never or rarely felt lonely, highlighting the resilience of older adults. The data from ALONE's helpline suggest that the pandemic had taken a toll on older people, with 26,174 calls to ALONE's helpline at the height of the crisis from March 9th to July 5th.

PREVALENCE OF LONELINESS IN OLDER ADULTS



71%

OF ADULTS HARDLY EVER OR NEVER FEEL LONELY



LIVING ALONE

31%

ARE **LEAST LONELY**, 32% **MODERATELY LONELY** AND 37% **MOST LONELY**.



24%

OF ADULTS FEEL LONELY SOME OF THE TIME AND JUST 5% OFTEN FEEL LONELY.



LIVING WITH OTHERS

49%

ARE **LEAST LONELY** 30% **MODERATELY LONELY** AND 21% **MOST LONELY**

COVID-19 PANDEMIC & LONELINESS IN OLDER ADULTS

55%

OF CALLS WERE FROM OVER 70'S, THE COHORT ADVISED TO 'COOON'.



ALONE HAS SEEN A RISE IN CALLERS REPORTING NEGATIVE EMOTIONS, INCLUDING SUICIDAL IDEATION DURING THE PANDEMIC.

75%

OF CALLERS TO THE HELPLINE WERE LIVING ALONE.



THERE HAS BEEN AN INCREASE IN CALLERS WHO ARE PUTTING OFF MEDICAL TREATMENT OR EXAMINATION, INCLUDING AFTER FALLS.

Vitamin D Deficiency in Ireland

TILDA data shows that 20% of adults aged 55+ are deficient in vitamin D during winter. This increases to 27% in adults aged 70+ and 47% aged 85+. Vitamin D is a potent immune modifying micronutrient and if vitamin D status is sufficient, it could benefit the immune system of all adults. TILDA strongly encourages taking a vitamin D supplement to support the immune system.

WHAT ARE THE RATES OF DEFICIENCY?

1 in 8	13%	older adults in Ireland are deficient = 149,000 adults
1 in 5	20%	older adults in Ireland are deficient in winter = 224,000 adults
Almost 1 in 2	47%	of those over 85 are deficient in winter = 31,500 adults
1 in 4	27%	of the over 70s 'cocooning' are likely to be deficient = 115,500 adults

WHERE IS IT FOUND?



In rich food sources like oily fish, eggs liver and fortified foods



Vitamin D can be produced from 10-15 minutes of sun exposure from late March to late September

HOW MUCH VITAMIN D SHOULD BE TAKEN TO PREVENT DEFICIENCY?

- 10 UG (400 IU) IS THE RECOMMENDED INTAKE IN WINTER
- BETWEEN 15-20 UG (600-800 IU) PER DAY IS RECOMMENDED FOR 'AT-RISK' GROUPS

Internet access and use among older adults



1,000,000

71%

adults aged 50+ have access to the internet in their homes.



870,000

85%

adults with home internet access use the internet weekly.



900,000

64%

adults aged 50+ have access to smartphones/tablets (and so to apps).



700,000

68%

adults with home internet access use the internet daily.

Home internet access decreases with age:

86% aged 50-69 years

66% aged 70-79 years

38% aged 80+ years

New TILDA COVID-19 Research – Who and Why?

Starting in January 2021, we will ask you to again support us with a critical piece of COVID-19 research to understand the “who and why” of COVID-19 infection.

We will send out a kit to collect a saliva sample, and from this we will be able to determine “who” in TILDA has been infected by assessing antibodies to the virus, along with a questionnaire to complete asking if you were tested for, diagnosed with or suspected that you had COVID-19.



As you know, a confusing factor of this virus is that some people don't have any symptoms or very mild symptoms, while other people have a very severe infection. Using the data from the saliva sample, the questionnaire included, the previous questionnaire we sent to you over the summer, and the extensive data that you have contributed to TILDA over the years, will enable us to unravel the “why” - what are the factors that contributed towards COVID-19 risk and help us understand more about the biology of this disease. This project will advance understanding of COVID-19 and also how better to support all of us into older age to better fight against infections.

We thank you in advance for supporting this research by sending us back the saliva sample. As always, your data will be fully protected, and you will find further information on data protection steps in the kit.

TILDA in 2021 - News and Events

TILDA Wave 6 Data Collection in 2021

We are delighted to announce that we will begin data collection for Wave 6 shortly. TILDA will be conducting telephone interviews instead of face-to-face interviews for Wave 6, now scheduled to take place during 2021. A trained interviewer will call you to ask you to answer questions on a range of topics such as health, social activities, work, retirement and pensions. The interview should last about 1 hour and 45 minutes. Telephone interviews are new for all of us, and perhaps we may retain this as an option in future data collection waves for those of you who prefer the telephone. We greatly appreciate your continued participation and support for TILDA and we look forward to speaking with you soon.

Changes to Wave 6 Health Assessment

We are unable to carry out a full Health Assessment during Wave 6 but we do hope to re-commence our health assessments during Wave 7. Instead, at Wave 6, in addition to the saliva sample, a small sample of participants will also be asked to provide a stool sample so that we can examine the bacteria that live in the gut and possible associations with health. If this works well, it may be included for all participants at Wave 7.

Did you know that TILDA has new social media channels?

For more updates on our research and to read about these exciting studies visit www.tilda.ie or follow TILDA on our social media channels.



@tilda_tcd



@tildatcd (The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing)



@TheIrishLongitudinalStudyonAgeing

TILDA Healthy Cognitive Ageing Project (HCAP)

The Healthy Cognitive Ageing Project (HCAP) aims to investigate dementia risk using a harmonised cognitive assessment protocol, as part of an international research collaboration funded by the National Institute on Aging.

HCAP aims to produce comparable data on cognition, mild cognitive impairment and dementia, to help better understand healthy cognitive ageing and identify risk factors and prevention strategies for cognitive decline. HCAP has already been conducted in the UK, US, Mexico, India, China, and South Africa.

TILDA will run HCAP in 2021 in collaboration with colleagues in Northern Ireland to assess cognitive ageing north and south. We will randomly select individuals to participate in this study, so look out for invitations to join HCAP in 2021.

If you have recently changed your phone number or address, please let us know and we will update your information.

KEEP IN TOUCH

If you have changed address, or will be away from the address that we have on record for you for a period of time, please let us know by writing, calling or emailing us. We want to make sure that you will not miss out on participating in the next wave of TILDA. We also welcome any comments you may have on the study.

CONTACT US

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TILDA is supported by:

