



TOPICS-MDS



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This brief is based on data derived from The Older Persons and Informal Caregiver Survey Minimum Data Set (TOPICS-MDS). TOPICS-MDS is an excellent resource for data on the health and wellbeing of a large number of frail older persons and their caregivers across the Netherlands, collected under the National Care for the Elderly Programme (NPO). TOPICS-MDS data briefs provide updates on TOPICS-related research findings relevant for health professionals, policy makers and other health agencies.

Learning to count past one: Exploring patterns of multimorbidity

Compared to previous generations, older persons are more likely to have multiple chronic morbidities and often require care from several health care specialists. Ideally, care is coordinated on an institutional level to allow smooth transitions between different care providers and health care settings. Yet, despite international initiatives to enhance integrated health care solutions, in practice, the single-disease medical model remains pervasive in modern medicine and clinical research. This leads to disengagement between different health care specialists and consequently fragmented care for older persons.

To overcome these obstacles, understanding the interaction between individual morbidities and their combined impact on older persons' overall wellbeing has been established as an important research objective for future studies on multimorbidity. Such research lays an important foundation for integrated care by revealing the extent to which morbidity patterns impact health

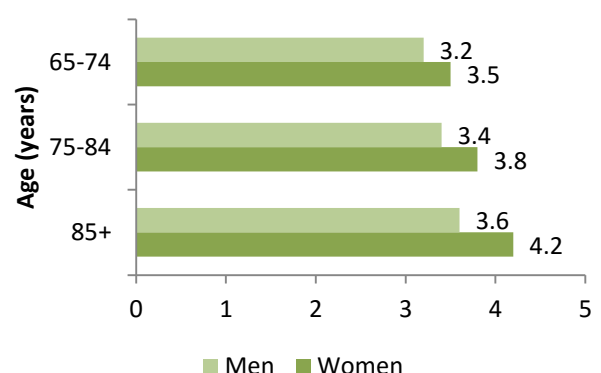
and wellbeing. Ultimately, this can help guide health care specialists to choose appropriate treatment pathways in everyday practice.

Table 1: Characteristics of selected study population (N=12,755, older persons 65+ years with ≥ 2 conditions)

Sampling frame	Percentage (%)
Women	64
Marital status	
Married/Cohabiting	48
Widowed	41
Single/divorced	11
Education	
Primary or less	35
Secondary training	48
Some college/College	17
Residence	
Independent, alone	45
Independent, with others	46
Residential care facility	8
Nursing home	1

To understand morbidity patterns in TOPICS-MDS, a latent class analysis was performed using 17 morbidities. A latent class analysis is an advanced statistical technique which examines the pattern of relationships between individual morbidities and classifies older persons with similar morbidity patterns into distinct subgroups (also referred to as "latent classes").

Figure 1: Average number of morbidities by gender



TOPICS-MDS is a pooled dataset with information on approximately 40,000 older persons from 40 different NPO research projects. For the purposes of this analysis, data are based on 12,755 older persons from 18 NPO projects who were 65 years or older and had reported having two or more chronic morbidities.

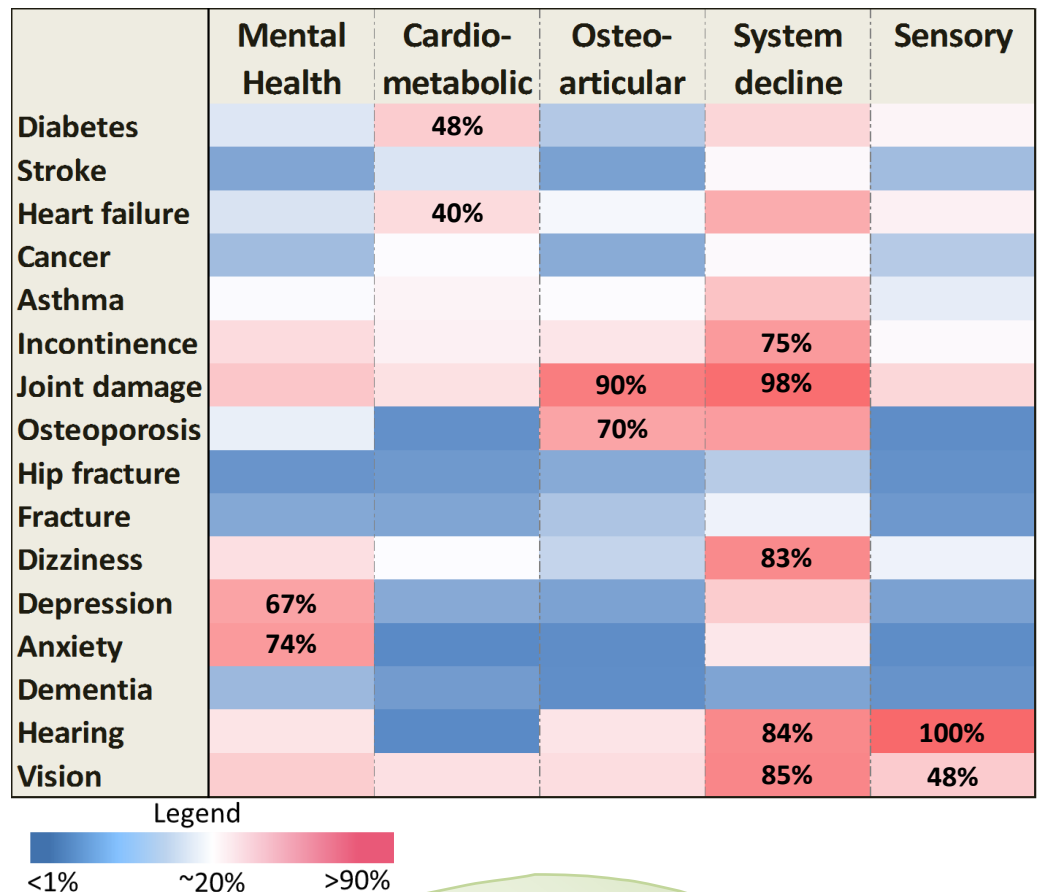
The average age was 79 years (SD 6). Two-thirds of sampled older persons were women (Table 1); nearly half were married or cohabiting with their partner. Less than 10% lived in an institutional care setting. Across all age groups, women on average reported having more morbidities than men (Figure 1).

Overall, five morbidity patterns were identified (Figure 2). Based on the high prevalence of certain conditions, they were classified as: mental health issues (n=920), cardio-metabolic (n=2,627), osteoarticular (n=4,486), system decline (n=840), and sensory issues (n=3,882).

Similar patterns have been observed in other settings. A recent systematic review found that in particular cardio-metabolic, mental health issues, and musculoskeletal disorders are persistent multimorbidity patterns (Prados-Torres et al. Multimorbidity Patterns: a systematic review. *J Clin Epi.* 2014; 67(3): 254-66). Exploring the impact of these patterns on the wellbeing of older persons and their caregivers is an important next step. Moreover, since selected morbidities were based on the *Lokale Gezondheid Monitor*, this analysis can be replicated in other data sources in the Netherlands to allow for comparative analyses.

To learn more about multimorbidity patterns, tune in to TOPICS webinar, "Learning to count past one: A webinar exploring patterns in multimorbidity" at the link below: https://ssl.webinar.nl/topicsmds/#!/topicsmds/20160628_1. This webinar is available for streaming until June 2017.

Figure 2: Heat map showing prevalence of morbidities by multimorbidity subgroup



Are you interested in using data from TOPICS-MDS?
 Visit www.topics-mds.eu for more information on available data and details about the data application procedure.

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