

Campaign to
EndLoneliness

CONNECTIONS IN OLDER AGE

Virtually alone: the future of human connection

Aspen Institute

13 August 2020

Robin Hewings – Director of Campaigns, Policy and Research

Supported by



Agenda

- Who we are
- What loneliness is and why it matters
- The impact of Covid-19

Who we are

We've been experts in the field of loneliness and connection since 2011.

We share research, evidence and knowledge with thousands of other organisations and the public to drive positive change in older people's lives.

We inspire everyone to connect and bring communities together across the UK.



What loneliness is

How it is different to social isolation

- **Loneliness: is subjective - the unwelcome feeling of a gap between the social connections we want and the ones we have:**
 - Perlman and Peplau, 1981
- **Isolation: is objective – a measure of the number of contacts or interactions**
 - Fischer and Phillips, 1982

Why it matters

Around one in five people are chronically lonely



“Until it happens to you, you don’t realise how bad it is, and it is bad. I hate going home... I’ll go home when it is time to go to bed.”

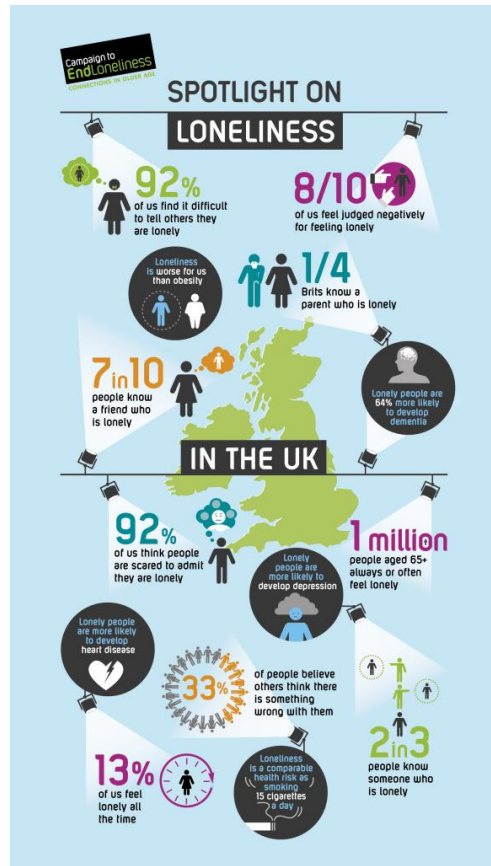
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Why loneliness matters

The impact on health



- Impact on physical health: increased risk of high blood pressure, stroke and coronary heart disease.
- Impact on mortality can be seen to be comparable to other major health risk factors
- Impact on mental health: increased risk of cognitive decline, depression and dementia.

Risk factors

Transitions

- Transitions in life pose a significant risk of loneliness: bereavement, illness, disability, retirement, sensory loss
- Loneliness can be experienced at any age but there are more of these risk factors at particular times of life
- There are 1.2 million chronically lonely older people in the UK with it set to increase.

Risk factors

Communities and psychology

Communities:

- Transport, amenities such as toilets and community buildings, and housing, fear of crime and high population turnover
- Not living near family

Psychological factors:

- Mental health problems and social cognition
- Loneliness can become a downward spiral where it affects how we think about social relationships

Loneliness and Covid-19

Impact and response

- Large UK study found loneliness worsened in those with existing risk factors and eased for those without
- Having a loneliness minister and strategy meant decision-makers saw the importance of the issue and led to specific government funding for loneliness services
- Technology helped a lot of people and community organisations have tried to reach people who are digitally excluded

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Email Us info@campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk

Call Us +44 203 865 3908