



Community Development L and D Strategic Steering Group

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Loneliness Report - Rates and Impacts

Loneliness Rates

- **North Devon:** Approximately 10% of adults report feeling lonely "often" or "always" (2021 data).
- **Torridge:** Around 11% of adults report feeling lonely "often" or "always" (2021 data).
- **Devon (overall):** The average loneliness rate is about 8%, slightly higher than the national average (2021 data).
- **Nationally:** The average loneliness rate in England is around 7% (2021 data).

Impacts of Higher Levels of Loneliness

Higher levels of loneliness can have significant impacts on both mental and physical health, including:

- **Mental Health:** Increased risk of depression, anxiety, and stress.
- **Physical Health:** Higher risk of heart disease, stroke, and Type 2 diabetes. Loneliness can also impair cognitive performance and compromise the immune system.
- **Overall Well-being:** Poorer sleep quality, increased levels of cortisol (a stress hormone), and a higher likelihood of developing dementia.

Economic Impact of Loneliness

Loneliness can have substantial economic impacts, including:

- **Economic Cost of Solitude:** Regions with higher levels of loneliness tend to experience lower aggregate economic growth.
- **Cost-of-Illness and Economic Evaluations:** Loneliness and social isolation can lead to significant economic costs, including increased healthcare expenses and reduced productivity.
- **Investment in Loneliness Prevention:** Investing in actions to prevent and tackle loneliness can reduce healthcare costs and improve overall economic outcomes.

Demographics Most Affected by Economic Impacts

Certain demographics are more affected by the economic impacts of loneliness:

- **Older Adults:** Higher healthcare costs due to chronic illnesses and mental health issues.
- **Young Adults:** Impact on productivity and economic contributions due to higher rates of depression and anxiety.
- **Low-Income Individuals:** Financial stress and limited access to social activities leading to higher healthcare costs and reduced productivity.
- **Unemployed Individuals:** Social isolation and mental health issues affecting employment opportunities.
- **People with Disabilities:** Social isolation exacerbating health issues and increasing reliance on healthcare services.

Successful Case Studies on Reducing Loneliness

Several successful case studies highlight effective approaches to reducing loneliness:

- **Calderdale Council:** Community-based program leveraging local knowledge and community strengths.
- **Leeds City Council:** Neighborhood networks providing support and continuing activities throughout the pandemic.
- **Middlesbrough:** Big Lottery-funded program creating an age-friendly environment.
- **Norfolk Libraries:** Healthy Libraries scheme running initiatives to impact social isolation and loneliness.

Positive Impact of Community Development

Community development has a significant positive impact on reducing loneliness and improving overall well-being:

- **Enhanced Social Connections:** Creating spaces and opportunities for people to connect.
- **Improved Mental Health:** Boosting mental health by providing a sense of belonging and purpose.
- **Economic Benefits:** Fostering local businesses, creating job opportunities, and encouraging local investment.
- **Healthier Lifestyles:** Promoting healthier lifestyles through community initiatives.
- **Resilience and Support:** Strong social ties supporting each other during times of crisis.

Sources

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