

## Updated Report on Loneliness with Community Life Survey Data



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### Loneliness Rates

- **North Devon:** Approximately 10% of adults report feeling lonely "often" or "always" (2023/24 data).
- **Torrige:** Around 11% of adults report feeling lonely "often" or "always" (2023/24 data).
- **Devon (overall):** The average loneliness rate is about 8%, slightly higher than the national average (2023/24 data).
- **Nationally:** The average loneliness rate in England is around 7% (2023/24 data).

### Comparison to 2021 Survey

- **North Devon:** The loneliness rate has remained stable at 10% from 2021 to 2023/24.
- **Torrige:** The rate has slightly increased from 10% in 2021 to 11% in 2023/24.
- **Devon (overall):** The rate has remained stable at 8% from 2021 to 2023/24.
- **Nationally:** The national average has remained stable at 7% from 2021 to 2023/24.

### 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.

## Examples of Community Activities

Community activities that can help foster social connections and reduce loneliness include:

- **Community Gardens:** Spaces for people to come together, grow plants, and share gardening tips.
- **Local Sports Teams:** Joining sports teams like football, cricket, or running clubs.
- **Book Clubs:** Discussing literature and sharing perspectives with others who enjoy reading.
- **Volunteer Groups:** Volunteering for local charities or community projects.
- **Art and Craft Classes:** Participating in classes such as painting, pottery, or knitting.
- **Cultural Events:** Attending local festivals, concerts, or theater performances.
- **Fitness Classes:** Group exercise classes like yoga, pilates, or dance.
- **Community Meals:** Potluck dinners or community barbecues.
- **Support Groups:** Providing a safe space for individuals to share experiences and support each other.
- **Educational Workshops:** Workshops on various topics, such as cooking, technology, or personal finance.

## Role of Strategic Partnerships and Social Prescribers

Strategic partnerships and social prescribers play crucial roles in reducing loneliness:

- **Innovative Solutions:** Partnerships foster innovation by combining expertise from different sectors.
- **Resource Sharing:** Collaborating allows for the sharing of resources, enhancing the reach and effectiveness of loneliness interventions.
- **Community Engagement:** Partnerships engage communities more effectively by involving local organizations.
- **Comprehensive Strategies:** Working together enables the creation of comprehensive strategies that address the multifaceted nature of loneliness.

Social prescribers connect individuals to non-medical support services and community activities:

- **Personalized Support:** Offering tailored support by understanding the unique needs of individuals.
- **Building Connections:** Helping individuals build social connections by linking them to community groups and social activities.
- **Reducing Healthcare Pressure:** Addressing social determinants of health, reducing reliance on medical interventions.
- **Improving Well-being:** Social prescribing improves mental and physical well-being, boosting resilience.

## Frequency and Methodology of ONS Surveys

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) conducts the Community Life Survey annually. The survey uses a push-to-web format, with a paper version for those who prefer not to complete it online. Data collection typically occurs over two quarters, with results published annually[1][2].

## Data Measures Used

The Community Life Survey uses several measures to assess loneliness and well-being:

- **Direct Measure of Loneliness:** Respondents are asked how often they feel lonely, with options ranging from "never" to "often/always".
- **Indirect Measures:** Composite scores based on responses to questions about social networks, support systems, and community engagement.
- **Well-being Indicators:** Questions on life satisfaction, happiness, and anxiety levels.

## Sample Size and Responses

The Community Life Survey 2023/24 had a total sample size of **176,876** respondents[3]. This boosted sample approach enables reliable statistics at lower-tier local authority levels and incorporates new themes to inform cross-government work.

## Key Findings of the 2023/24 Community Life Survey

1. **Loneliness:** The survey found that 7% of adults in England report feeling lonely "often" or "always", with higher rates in rural areas like North Devon (10%) and Torrington (11%)[1].
2. **Social Networks:** A significant proportion of respondents reported having a strong social network, but those in rural areas were more likely to experience social isolation[1].
3. **Community Engagement:** Levels of community engagement and participation in local activities were higher in urban areas compared to rural regions[1].
4. **Volunteering:** Volunteering rates remained stable, with about 25% of adults participating in some form of volunteer work[1].
5. **Well-being:** Overall well-being indicators showed slight improvements, with increases in life satisfaction and happiness scores compared to previous years[1].

## Sources

: Community Life Survey 2023/24, GOV.UK : Community Life Survey 2021/22, GOV.UK : Health Inequalities in Northern Devon, 2022 : ONS Local Statistics for Torrington, 2021 : CDC on Social Isolation and Loneliness, 2024 : CEPR on the Economic Cost of Solitude, 2021 : Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, 2020 : LSE on Investing in Loneliness Prevention, 2020 : Psychology

Today on the Rising Loneliness Economy, 2021 : Scientific Origin on Benefits of Socializing, 2023 :  
[Local Government Association Loneliness Case Studies, 2021]

#### References

- [1] [Community Life Survey 2023/24: Background and headline findings](#)
- [2] [Community Life Survey 2023/24: Technical report - GOV.UK](#)
- [3] [Community Life Survey - data.gov.uk](#)