



**BRIEFING PAPER**

Number 8632, 5 August 2019

# Loneliness: a reading list

By Alexander Bellis

**Contents:**

1. Definitions of loneliness
2. General
3. European studies
4. Age-related studies
5. Carers and parents
6. Veterans
7. Housing and homelessness
8. Disabled persons
9. Migrants, refugees and BAME
10. LGBT persons
11. Links to health (general)
12. Links to mental health
13. Social media
14. Costs of loneliness
15. Loneliness interventions



# Contents

<b>Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Definitions of loneliness</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. General</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. European studies</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4. Age-related studies</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5. Carers and parents</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6. Veterans</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>7. Housing and homelessness</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>8. Disabled persons</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>9. Migrants, refugees and BAME</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>10. LGBT persons</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>11. Links to health (general)</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>12. Links to mental health</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>13. Social media</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>14. Costs of loneliness</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>15. Loneliness interventions</b>	<b>9</b>

## Summary

Below is a non-exhaustive reading list of research to which the Library has access: there have been many other studies published in other journals. Due to the volume of work, this reading list focusses mainly on research published since 2010. Not all are based on data from the UK.

These are categorised into several themes. However, many publications are cross-cutting and discuss both direct and indirect links to outcomes, both social isolation and loneliness or both causes and interventions.

This publication complements the Library paper on [Tackling loneliness](#) (CBP 8514), which looks further at the possible causes and impact of loneliness, as well as the Government's Loneliness Strategy, [A connected society: A Strategy for tackling loneliness – laying the foundations for change](#), published in October 2018.

## 1. Definitions of loneliness

Cacioppo, Stephanie et al. [Loneliness: clinical import and interventions](#), Perspectives on psychological science : a journal of the Association for Psychological Science vol. 10:2 (2015): pp238-49

Tzouvara, Vasiliki et al., [A narrative review of the theoretical foundations of loneliness](#), British Journal of Community Nursing, Vol 20, No 7 (July 2015)

de Jong Gierveld, J. and van Tilburg, T., [6-Item Scale for Overall, Emotional, and Social Loneliness: Confirmatory Tests on Survey Data Research on Ageing](#) Research on Aging, Volume 28 Number 5 (2006), pp582-598

## 2. General

The Campaign to End Loneliness has a website on [Loneliness Research](#).

Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness, [Combatting loneliness one conversation at a time: A call to action](#), December 2017

National Assembly for Wales, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee, [Inquiry into loneliness and isolation](#), December 2017.

British Red Cross and Co-op Foundation, [Trapped in a bubble: An investigation into triggers for loneliness in the UK](#), December 2016

British Red Cross, [Isolation and Loneliness: An overview of the literature](#), January 2016

Campaign to End Loneliness, [Alone in the crowd: loneliness and diversity](#), 2014

Liverpool Public Health Observatory, [Loneliness: Rapid Evidence Review](#), 2014

Ami Rokach, [Loneliness of the Marginalized](#), Open Journal of Depression, 2014, 3, pp149-150

## 3. European studies

Béatrice D'Hombres et al., [Loneliness-an unequally shared burden in Europe](#), EU Commission, December 2018

Thomas Hansen and Britt Slagvold, [Late-life loneliness in 11 European countries: Results from the Generations and Gender Survey](#), Social Indicators Research, 124(1) (2015), pp1-20

## 4. Age-related studies

Evans, Isobel E. M., [Living alone and cognitive function in later life](#), *Archives of Gerontology and Geriatrics*, Volume 81, March–April 2019, pp222-233

Age UK, [All the Lonely People: Loneliness in Later Life](#), September 2018

Kobayashi, Lindsay C. et al., [Social Isolation, Loneliness, and Health Behaviors at Older Ages: Longitudinal Cohort Study](#), *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 52(7) (July 2018): pp582–593

Gale, Catharine R. et al., [Social isolation and loneliness as risk factors for the progression of frailty: the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing](#), *Age and Ageing*, Volume 47, Issue 3, May 2018, pp392–397

Co-op Foundation, [All our emotions are important: Breaking the silence about youth loneliness](#), 2018

Action for Children, [It starts with hello](#), 2017

Luhmann, Maike and Hawkey, Louise C. [Age Differences in Loneliness from Late Adolescence to Oldest Old Age](#), *Developmental Psychology*, 23 February 2016

Davidson, Susan and Rossall, Phil, [Evidence Review: Loneliness in Later Life](#), Age UK, 2015

Kempton, James and Tomlin, Sam, [Ageing alone: Loneliness and the 'Oldest Old'](#), Centre Forum, April 2014

Martin, Karen Emma et al., ['I Don't have the Best Life': A Qualitative Exploration of Adolescent Loneliness](#), *Journal of Child and Adolescent Behaviour*, 2:5 (2014)

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs/TNS BMRB, [2013 Rural Ageing Research Summary Report of Findings](#), 2013

Samaritans, [Loneliness, suicide and young people](#), undated

## 5. Carers and parents

Vasileiou, Konstantina al., [Experiences of Loneliness Associated with Being an Informal Caregiver: A Qualitative Investigation](#). *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8:585 (2017)

Lee, Katherine et al., [Lonely within the mother: an exploratory study of first-time mothers' experiences of loneliness](#), In Press, *Journal of Health Psychology*, 2017

Carers UK, [The world shrinks: Carer loneliness](#), 2017

Carers UK, [Alone and Caring](#), January 2015

## 6. Veterans

Royal British Legion, [Loneliness and social isolation in the armed forces community](#), July 2018.

Wilson, G., Hill, M. and Kiernan, M. D., [Loneliness and social isolation of military veterans: systematic narrative review](#), *Occupational Medicine*, 68 (9) (2018). pp. 600-609.

## 7. Housing and homelessness

Matthews, Timothy et al., [Loneliness and Neighborhood Characteristics: A Multi-Informant, Nationally Representative Study of Young Adults](#), Psychological Science 1–11 (2019)

Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA), [Co-Living and the Common Good](#), March 2018

National Housing Federation, [Breaking the Mould](#), 2018

Kearns, Ade et al., ['Lonesome town'? Is loneliness associated with the residential environment, including housing and neighborhood factors?](#) Journal of Community Psychology, Vol. 43, No. 7 (2015), pp849–867

Shelter, ['I was all on my own': experiences of loneliness and isolation amongst homeless people](#), 2015

Smith, Brett and Caddick, Nick, [The health and wellbeing of spinal cord injured adults and the family: Examining lives in adapted and unadapted homes](#), Loughborough University / Aspire, 2015

## 8. Disabled persons

Burholt, Vanessa et al., [A Social Model of Loneliness: The Roles of Disability, Social Resources, and Cognitive Impairment](#), The Gerontologist, Volume 57, Issue 6, December 2017, Pages 1020–1030

Sense, ["Someone cares if I'm not there"](#), 2017

Warner, David F. and Adams, Scott A., [Physical Disability and Increased Loneliness among Married Older Adults: The Role of Changing Social Relations](#), Soc Ment Health. 6(2) (July 2016): pp106–128.

Gilmore, Linda and Cuskelly, Monica, [Vulnerability to Loneliness in People with Intellectual Disability: An Explanatory Model](#), Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities Volume 11, Number 3, September 2014, pp192–199

## 9. Migrants, refugees and BAME

Red Cross and Co-op Foundation, [Barriers to Belonging: an exploration of loneliness among people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds](#), June 2019

Refugee Action, [Safe but Alone: the role of English language in allowing refugees to overcome loneliness](#), October 2017

The Forum, [This is how it feels to be lonely](#), 2014

## 10. LGBT persons

Kim, Hyun-Jun and Fredriksen-Goldsen, Karen I., [Living Arrangement and Loneliness Among Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Older Adults](#), *The Gerontologist*, Volume 56, Issue 3, June 2016, Pages pp548–558

Mereish, Ethan H. and Poteat, V. Paul, [A Relational Model of Sexual Minority Mental and Physical Health: The Negative Effects of Shame on Relationships, Loneliness, and Health](#), *Journal of counseling psychology* vol. 62,3 (2015): pp425-437;

Jacobs, Robin J. and Kane, Michael N., [Correlates of Loneliness in Midlife and Older Gay and Bisexual Men](#), *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 24:40–61, 2012

## 11. Links to health (general)

Schrepft, Stephanie et al., [Associations between social isolation, loneliness, and objective physical activity in older men and women](#), *BMC Public Health*, 19:74 (2019)

Beller, Johannes and Wagner, Adina, [Loneliness, Social Isolation, Their Synergistic Interaction, and Mortality](#), *American Psychological Association*, Vol. 37, No. 9 2018, pp808 – 813

Hakulinen, Christian et al., [Social isolation and loneliness as risk factors for myocardial infarction, stroke, and mortality: UK Biobank cohort study of 479,054 men and women](#), *Heart*. 104(18) (September 2018), pp1536-1542

Rico-Urbe, Laura Alejandra et al., [Association of loneliness with all-cause mortality: A meta-analysis](#), *PLoS ONE* 13(1): e0190033 (2018)

Elovainio, Marko et al., [Contribution of risk factors to excess mortality in isolated and lonely individuals: an analysis of data from the UK Biobank cohort study](#), *The Lancet*, Volume 2, Issue 6, June 2017, ppe260-e266

Leigh-Hunt, N. et al., [An overview of systematic reviews on the public health consequences of social isolation and loneliness](#), *Public Health*, 152 (2017) pp157-171

Crewdson, James Alexander, [The Effect of Loneliness in the Elderly Population: A Review](#), *Healthy Aging & Clinical Care in the Elderly* volume 8, 2016, pp3-4

Ong, Anthony D. et al., [Loneliness and Health in Older Adults: A Mini-Review and Synthesis](#), *Gerontology*, volume 62 (2016) pp443–449

Valtorta, Nicole K. et al., [Loneliness and social isolation as risk factors for coronary heart disease and stroke: systematic review and meta-analysis of longitudinal observational studies](#), *Heart Online First*, published on April 18, 2016

Holt-Lunstad, J. et al., [Loneliness and social isolation as risk factors for mortality: A meta-analytic review](#). *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 10 (2015), pp227-237

Burholt, Vanessa and Scharf, Thomas, [Poor Health and Loneliness in Later Life: The Role of Depressive Symptoms, Social Resources, and Rural Environments](#), *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, Volume 69, Issue 2, March 2014, pp311–324

Jaremka, Lisa M et al. [“Marital distress prospectively predicts poorer cellular immune function.”](#) *Psychoneuroendocrinology* vol. 38,11 (2013): pp2713-9

Shankar, Aparna et al., [Loneliness, Social Isolation, and Behavioral and Biological Health Indicators in Older Adults](#), Health Psychology, Vol 30, No. 4 (2011) pp377-385

Cacioppo, John T. and Hawkley, Louise C. [Loneliness Matters: A Theoretical and Empirical Review of Consequences and Mechanisms](#), Ann Behav Med. 40(2) (October 2010)

## 12. Links to mental health

Tatsi, Eirini et al., [Emotion dysregulation and loneliness as predictors of food addiction](#), Journal of Health and Social Sciences, 4,1 (2019) pp43-58

Hyland, Philip et al., [Can the REBT theory explain loneliness? Theoretical and clinical applications](#), Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, 2018, pp1651-2316

Wang, Jingyi et al., [Associations between loneliness and perceived social support and outcomes of mental health problems: a systematic review](#), BMC Psychiatry, 18:156 (2018)

Matthews, T. et al., [Sleeping with one eye open: loneliness and sleep quality in young adults](#), Psychological Medicine, 47 (2017), pp2177–2186.

Mushtaq, Raheel et al., [Relationship Between Loneliness, Psychiatric Disorders and Physical Health ? A Review on the Psychological Aspects of Loneliness](#), Journal of Clinical and Diagnostic Research. 8(9) (September 2014), WE01–WE04.

Mental Health Foundation, [The Lonely Society](#), 2010

Cacioppo, John T. and Hawkley, Louise C. [Perceived Social Isolation and Cognition](#), Trends in Cognitive Science. 13(10) (October 2009), pp447–454.

Qualter, Pamela et al., [Childhood loneliness as a predictor of adolescent depressive symptoms: an 8-year longitudinal study](#), European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 19(6) (2009), pp493-501

## 13. Social media

Clark, Jenna L. et al., [Social Network Sites and Well-Being: The Role of Social Connection](#), Current Directions in Psychological Science, Vol. 27(1) 2018, pp32–37

Rebecca Nowland et al., [Loneliness and social internet use: Pathways to reconnection in a digital world?](#) Perspectives in Psychological Science, 13, (2018) pp70-87

Primack, Brian A. et al., [Social Media Use and Perceived Social Isolation Among Young Adults in the U.S.](#), Am J Prev Med. 53(1) (July 2017) pp1–8;

Barry, C.T. et al., [Adolescent social media use and mental health from adolescent and parent perspectives](#), Journal of Adolescence 61 (2017) 1e11

van Schalkwyk, Gerrit I. et al., [Social Media Use, Friendship Quality, and the Moderating Role of Anxiety in Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder](#), Journal of Autism and Development Disorders, September 2017

Shensa, Ariel et al., [Social Media Use and Perceived Emotional Support Among US Young Adults](#), Journal of Community Health, 41(3) (June 2016) pp541–549



Pittman, Matthew and Reich, Brandon, [Social media and loneliness: Why an Instagram picture may be worth more than a thousand Twitter words](#), Computers in Human Behavior 62 (2016) 155e167

Hutto, C.J. et al., [Social media gerontology: Understanding social media usage among older adults](#), Web Intelligence 13 (2015) 69–87

## 14. Costs of loneliness

Mihalopoulos, Cathrine et al., [The economic costs of loneliness: a review of cost-of-illness and economic evaluation studies](#), Social Psychiatry Psychiatric Epidemiology (2019) pp1-14.

New Economics Foundation and the Co-operative Foundation, [Cost of Loneliness to UK Employers](#), February 2017

Social Finance, [Investing to Tackle Loneliness](#), June 2015

## 15. Loneliness interventions

The What Works Centre for Wellbeing, following its 2018 systematic review of studies from across the world ([Tackling Loneliness](#)), explained several problems with the evidence regarding the effectiveness of interventions:

- Social isolation and loneliness are often treated interchangeably in the literature. Loneliness was often not the only outcome measured: related concepts such as social isolation and social support were also assessed. How loneliness interacts with these other factors needs to be explored.
- Differing measures and types of loneliness are used, and results are often reported inconsistently, making it difficult to compare results.
- There is less data regarding interventions aimed at earlier life stages: most studies have looked at the over 55s.
- Studies have tended not to explore their impact amongst different population groups (ie according to age, sexuality, vulnerability and so forth).
- Various unpublished studies look at how to build on existing community assets and networks, but this is largely ignored by the published studies, so this work has not been compared to other strategies.
- More “large-scale, controlled study designs are required to draw any solid conclusions.”<sup>1</sup>

The Centre’s briefing on Tackling Loneliness outlines in greater detail the sorts of interventions that have been tried for individuals, groups and wider communities. More information can be found on its [webpage on Loneliness](#).

Below is a selection of intervention-based research, literature reviews and case studies.

---

<sup>1</sup> [Tackling Loneliness](#), What Works Centre for Wellbeing, October 2018

## 10 Loneliness: a reading list

Forsman, Anna K. et al., [Promoting mental wellbeing among older people: technology-based interventions](#), Health Promotion International, Volume 33, Issue 6, December 2018, pp1042–1054

Hopwood, H and Mann, F, [Cohousing Project for Older Women and Implications for Loneliness](#), June 2018

Clare Gardiner et al., [Interventions to reduce social isolation and loneliness among older people: an integrative review](#), Health and Social Care in the Community 26(2), 2018, pp147–157

Mann, Farhana et al., [A life less lonely: the state of the art in interventions to reduce loneliness in people with mental health problems](#), Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, Volume 52, Issue 6, June 2017, pp 627–638

Action for Children, [It Starts with Hello](#), 2017, (see page 20)

Stojanovic, Jovana et al., [Decreasing loneliness and social isolation among the older people: systematic search and narrative review](#), Epidemiology Biostatistics and Public Health, Volume 14, Number 2, 2017 Suppl 1

LGA and the Campaign to End Loneliness, [Combating loneliness: A guide for local authorities](#), 2016: see in particular pages 21 to 30 of the report.

Chen, Y. R. R. and Schulz P. J., [The Effect of Information Communication Technology Interventions on Reducing Social Isolation in the Elderly: A Systematic Review](#), J Med Internet Res 18(1) 2016; e18

Khosravi, Pouria et al., [The impact of technology on older adults' social isolation](#), Computers in Human Behavior 63 (2016) 594e603

Susan Davidson and Phil Rossall, [Evidence Review: Loneliness in Later Life](#), Age UK, 2015  
Campaign to End Loneliness, [Promising approaches](#), 2015

Sharma, Dhruv et al., [Developing Radical-Digital Interventions to Tackle Loneliness Amongst the Elderly](#), Lancaster University Research Directory, 2015

Kempton, James and Tomlin, Sam, [Ageing alone: Loneliness and the 'Oldest Old'](#), Centre Forum, April 2014: see pages 31 to 49 of their report.

Masi, Christopher M. et al., [A Meta-Analysis of Interventions to Reduce Loneliness](#), Personality and Social Psychology Review. 15(3): August 2011

### About the Library

The House of Commons Library research service provides MPs and their staff with the impartial briefing and evidence base they need to do their work in scrutinising Government, proposing legislation, and supporting constituents.

As well as providing MPs with a confidential service we publish open briefing papers, which are available on the Parliament website.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publicly available research briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email [papers@parliament.uk](mailto:papers@parliament.uk). Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing only with Members and their staff.

If you have any general questions about the work of the House of Commons you can email [hcenquiries@parliament.uk](mailto:hcenquiries@parliament.uk).

### Disclaimer

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties. It is a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. The House of Commons or the author(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice.

The House of Commons accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. This information is provided subject to the [conditions of the Open Parliament Licence](#).