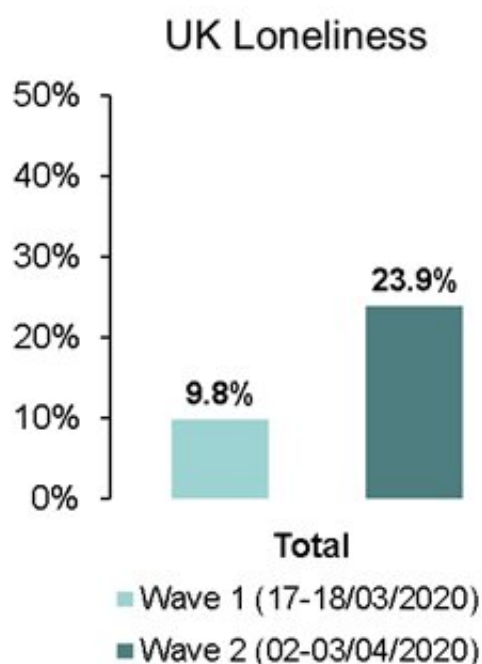


Almost a quarter of adults living under lockdown in the UK have experienced loneliness

April 22 2020, by Craig Brierley



Credit: University of Cambridge

One in four adults (24 percent) in the UK have felt lonely because of coronavirus, according to a longitudinal study that is tracking mental health across the pandemic.

The most affected group were [young people](#) aged 18-24 years, with

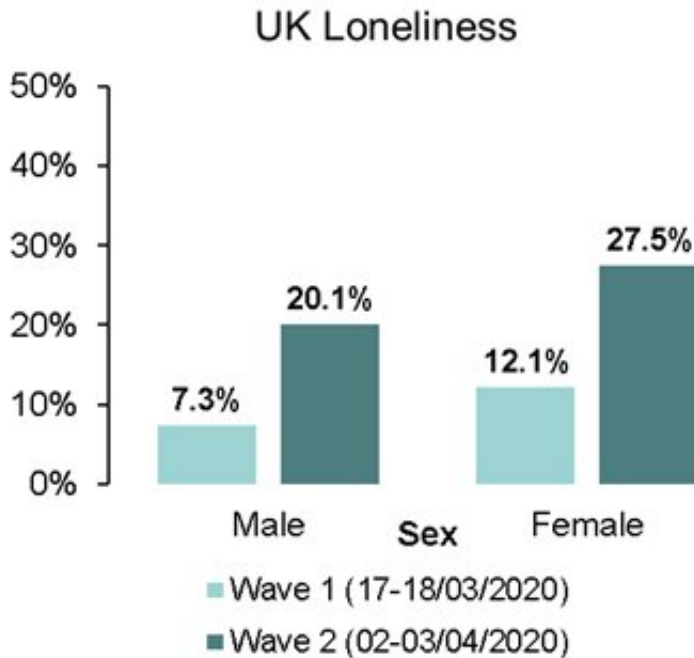
more than four in ten (44 percent) saying they felt lonely, according to the research study. The next most affected group were adults aged 25–34, with more than one third (35 percent) saying they had experienced [loneliness](#) as a result of coronavirus.

One in six older people aged over 55 said they had felt lonely as a result of coronavirus, according to the study.

The [survey data](#), from 2,221 UK adults aged 18 and over, were collected as part of Coronavirus: Mental Health and the Pandemic, a UK-wide longitudinal research project.

The survey was carried out on 2-3 April and asked people whether they had felt loneliness in the "previous two weeks."

The UK-wide project is being led by the Mental Health Foundation in partnership with the University of Cambridge, Swansea University, University of Strathclyde and Queen's University Belfast. The charity is seeking to track changes in the UK's mental health in real time and target issues as they emerge.



Credit: University of Cambridge

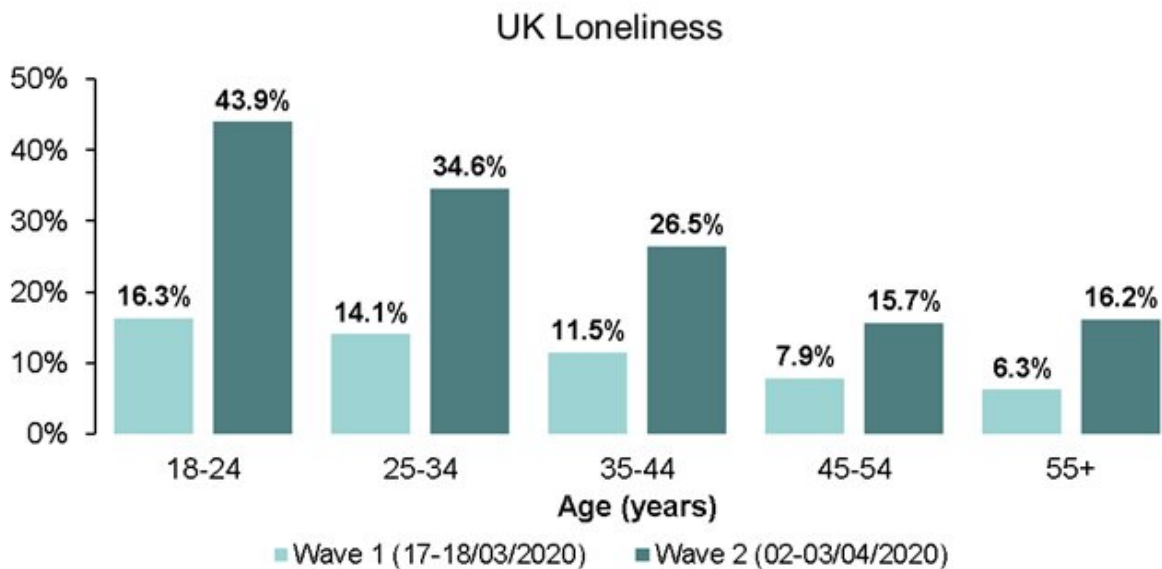
The research also revealed a major surge in feelings of loneliness, which more than doubled across the lockdown period. When the researchers carried out the first round of the survey in March, shortly before lockdown started, 10 percent of UK adults said they had felt lonely. This figure rose to 24 percent of all UK adults by the beginning of April.

Similarly, shortly before lockdown, 16 percent of young people aged 18-24 said they had felt loneliness because of coronavirus. This figure rose to 44 percent of young people after lockdown had been in force for almost two weeks.

Professor Tine Van Bortel from the Cambridge Institute of Public Health at the University of Cambridge said: "It might feel surprising but what our research shows is that the group most likely to be experiencing these feelings are young people.

"It is worrying that close to half of them said they are concerned about feeling lonely, and special attention should be given to young people. However, we shouldn't forget that loneliness is also clearly affecting very large numbers of people of all ages."

The Coronavirus: Mental Health and the Pandemic research project is carrying out ongoing analysis of the data, which cover approximately 20 topics including the unequal impact on the mental health of at-risk groups, the key drivers of risk to mental health and how people in the UK are coping. Qualitative data is to be added via a Citizen's Jury and regular detailed briefings will be produced.



Credit: University of Cambridge

Dr. Antonis Kousoulis, director at the Mental Health Foundation, says, "Our data reveal that millions of people in the UK are experiencing

feelings of loneliness—which is a key risk factor for developing or worsening mental health problems.

"The concern is that the longer the pandemic goes on, the more feelings become long-term. The impact of long-term loneliness on mental health can be very hard to manage.

"While the initial priority must be to prevent loss of life, we fear that we may be living with the [mental health](#) impacts of the [coronavirus](#) situation for many years to come. This is especially true of vulnerable groups and it is critical that governments and others are mindful of this in developing policy as we go forward."

For the latest wave of data-gathering, total sample size was 2,221 UK adults aged 18 and above. Fieldwork to gather the new data was undertaken between 2 and 3 April 2020. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18 and above).

The previous wave of data-gathering was as follows: Total sample size was 2,126 UK adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 17 and 18 March 2020. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18 and above).

More information: More at Mental Health Foundation UK: www.mentalhealth.org.uk/

Provided by University of Cambridge

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