



Loneliness and Social Isolation in Older Adults in The UK and USA

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Introduction

In this report, I will discuss the impact of loneliness and isolation in the UK and USA

Being alone or distant from one's group or society is a common definition of loneliness. It is regarded as a depressing and unhappy state of mind as well as a risk factor for several mental illnesses, including chronic stress, anxiety, depression, dementia, adjustment disorder, and even insomnia in later life. Elderly people experience loneliness frequently, which increases their risk of depression and suicide. Numerous credible studies have demonstrated the negative effects on the mental health of prolonged confinement or quarantine for illness. (Debanjan and Mayank, 2020)

The health of older adults can be adversely affected by loneliness and social isolation. Even if you live alone and it's hard to leave the house, there are strategies for dealing with loneliness. In our country, hundreds of thousands of older people, especially those over the age of 75, feel socially isolated and lonely. According to Age UK (2020), more than 1 million older people say they haven't spoken to a friend, neighbour, or family member in over a month, and more than 2 million people over 75 live in the UK alone. increase. Older people are often too proud to ask for help because of the stigma attached to loneliness. The fact that loneliness can and does affect people of all ages should always be kept in mind. (NHS, 2022)

Statistics

The United Kingdom's population is aging quickly. Over 11 million people 22% of the population—are over the age of 65, and that number will increase to 13 million in ten years. Over a million older adults go more than a month without speaking to a friend, neighbour, or family member, and over 2 million people over 75 in England and approximately 13.8 million in the United States live alone, according to Age UK. As people get older, a greater percentage of them experience poverty, prejudice, and poor health.

We are attempting to drive the necessary modifications to react to this changing age population. These necessitate new ways across society, as well as a shift in how we all think, feel, and behave regarding aging. (Centre for Ageing, 2023)

In 2020, over 16.9% of the US population will be over the age of 65, and this proportion is expected to rise to 22% by 2050. This is a significant increase from the 1950s, when only 8% of the population was over the age of 65.

Amid expectations for retirement and changes in working styles, the aging of the population in the United States has become a matter of concern in recent years. If the population is expected to live longer than previous generations, the economy will have to change to meet their needs. And as the U.S. birth rate has declined, fewer young people are replacing those who leave the labour market.

over the past 20 years. The world's population is aging, as is not just the American population. By 2020, the median age of the world's workforce is expected to have increased from 33.8 years in 1990 to 39 years. Additionally, it's anticipated that by 2050, there will be more than 3 million people in the world who are 100 years or older. (Erin, 2022)

Relevant Theories

Giddens' structuration theory is used to investigate how the socially isolated maintain or perhaps worsen their position in society. Several basic concepts of Giddens' theory are

examined in greater depth, as they are extremely useful for a theoretical approach to social isolation. These themes were chosen based on theoretical considerations as well as the information and insights gained from a practical study of social isolation. Practical and discursive consciousness, norms and resources, routinization, and unintended consequences of acts can all help us better understand the mechanisms that underpin the establishment and maintenance of social isolation.

It becomes obvious that the formation and maintenance of social isolation is an unintentional result of people's behaviour. The socially isolated elderly behaves primarily via their practical consciousness, drifting away from the goals they wish to achieve for themselves. This method frequently leads to increased isolation. This theoretical approach is as crucial as the explanations and experiences of socially isolated people to arrive at a theory that gives points of reference for policy and treatments. (Machielse, 2017)

Comparison between the countries

More than a fifth of people in the US (22%) and UK (23%) often or always feel alone, unsociable, left out, or isolated I answer yes. People experience loneliness and isolation differently, and while some may not see it as a problem, most people in the US and the UK report loneliness. Loneliness is her 1 in 20 'big' problem in the world. In the US and UK, many people think that loneliness may or may not be a minor problem for them.

According to the National Library of Medicine (2020), social isolation is a serious but underestimated public health problem, that affects a substantial portion of the elderly population. A quarter (24%) of community-dwelling Americans over the age of 65 report feeling socially isolated, and most older Americans (35% of adults) feel lonely. I am reporting that there are 43% of adults over 45 and over 60). Although there is ample evidence that many older adults experience social isolation and loneliness that are harmful to their health, quantifying these conditions can be difficult.

Loneliness and social isolation among older adults in USA is a major public health problem that increases the risk of dementia and other serious illnesses for many people. According to a study by the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM), more than a third of adults over the age of 45 feel lonely, and about a quarter of adults over the age of 65 feel socially isolated. I'm here. Older people are more likely to feel lonely and socially isolated because of living alone, chronic illness, loss of family or friends, and hearing loss. (CDC, 2021)

Loneliness seems to match descriptions of real-world challenges and situations. In both countries, nearly 6 in 10 people say they are lonely for a specific reason, but when asked what the exact cause is, the answers vary widely. More than a tenth of loneliness is due to the loss of a loved one, parent, or someone else, and 12% in the US and 8% in the UK attribute it to physical health problems. I am answering Few people believe that divorce, family separation, or mental health issues are causes of loneliness. (Bianca, 2018)

A major reason for loneliness and isolation in the UK and the US is the death of a loved one or health problems. For example, the death of a loved one from loneliness is 18% in the US and 16% in the UK, health problems are 8% in the UK and 12% in the US, and divorce and separation from a significant other are both 4. Case % country of origin. (Edward and Rachel, 2022)

Some bad life experiences can exacerbate feelings of loneliness or put people at risk. The results show that loneliness is associated with real-world disabilities. those who reported feeling ill were significantly more likely than others to have experienced a deterioration in

economic conditions, a change in housing, a serious accident or personal illness, or a job loss in the past two years. Become. (NIA, 2021)

About half of people in the US and UK say they've felt lonely or disconnected from those around them for at least three years. compared to a fifth in the US (22%) and UK (20%).

Legislation and Policy

Several important local players have a strong obligation under the 2014 Care Act to fight loneliness and isolation. This entails carrying out the newly assigned preventative duties as well as the care and support needs identified during evaluations. The Care Act's Statutory Guidance (the Guidance) outlines how authorities are to fulfil their new obligations. (Legislation.gov.uk, 2014)

The "well-being principle" established by the Act makes promoting well-being the main objective of local government's care and support initiatives. It will make it easier to spot people whose well-being is at risk due to social isolation and loneliness. Additionally, it will increase the likelihood of early intervention because of the new requirement to evaluate anyone who appears to need care and support, regardless of eligibility.

For instance, NHS Outcomes Framework is just one of the primary health and well-being outcomes frameworks that are likely to benefit from interventions intended to combat loneliness. This includes but is not limited to, the effects of social interaction. Integrated personal commissioning (IPC), another component of health and social care reform, is likely to encourage the delivery of services and supports to combat loneliness. Initiatives to treat or prevent social isolation are likely to be a part of packages commissioned under IPC, according to the program prospectus, which was published in September 2014. Think Local, Act Personal guidelines for the system, which make use of the Rotherham Social Prescribing system as a model.

The Act established the "well-being principle," which makes encouraging well-being the primary goal of local government's support and care functions. Well-being is described as a set of variables that include social well-being, societal contribution, and personal and family connections. Given this description, as well as the evident linkages between loneliness and bad health, the implementation of care and support functions must involve measures to combat loneliness and isolation.

The law mandates local governments to take steps to avoid the development of care and support requirements. Given the well-documented effects on mental health, action on loneliness, as well as physical health, should be a significant aspect of our endeavour. This argument is reinforced by guidance, which promotes "primary" avoidance of loneliness and social isolation through the provision of programs such as companionship and community events.

New minimum requirements for care and support eligibility are established by the Act. Maintaining and making family or other interpersonal contacts is on the list of specified outcomes that may result in eligibility, which implies that loneliness is a qualifying need. Services to combat loneliness will probably be vital as part of care and support packages as a result.

Local governments must therefore prepare to respond to these demands with efficient measures, as discussed in Promising Measures and the Campaign to End Loneliness. According to the law, local governments need to become results-oriented, as a means of achieving and exceeding desired choices such as prevention, remedy, methods of

combating social and emotional isolation and loneliness, and people's needs. Emphasis should be placed on promoting the self-reliance of It is filled.

The idea that local governments must promote well-being while fulfilling their obligations of care and support to individuals is codified in law. The Wellbeing Principles aim to put the individual's needs and desired outcomes at the centre of care and support systems.

The law defines happiness as:

Protection from abuse and neglect; respect for personal dignity; physical, mental, and emotional well-being; economic and social progress; employment, education, training or participation in recreational activities; Domestic, family, and interpersonal relationships. and housing justice. (Campaign Against Loneliness, 2015)

A US politician has proposed a new law that he will allocate \$250 million to combat social isolation and loneliness among the elderly. For example, the Secretary of Health and Human Services should award grants to regional agencies on aging (AAA) and other community-based organizations. These organizations will use their funding to design, implement and evaluate programs that foster connectivity. (Kassley, 2021)

There is already a trend in the United States to build more socially integrated neighbourhoods. For example, the Department of Community Affairs, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Health, and the AARP Foundation recently created Commit to Connect, where my colleagues and I partnered with the Social Health Lab and the Social Connections Foundation to host a free public event. A series about solutions. Far From Alone campaigns are on the rise. In 2018, the End Social Isolation and Loneliness Coalition was formed, bringing together stakeholders across industries dedicated to the issue. Leaders in urban planning, healthcare, and other industries have also begun to support the movement.

Use of Technology for the Provision of Care for the Elderly

Technology modernization has been a useful tool in tackling these public health problems among older people. Nevertheless, the use of this tool ought to be tailored to specific situations, considering contextual factors and human needs, especially the growing impact of Covid-19. Different technology programs and techniques are acceptable for different types of loneliness.

Available therapies such as web-based cognitive behavioural therapy can reduce loneliness due to anxiety, and online connectivity such as video conferencing can reduce loneliness due to a lack of social interaction. (Christina et al., 2020) Studies show that people who don't use the internet are more likely to feel lonely. This is especially true for less mobile people. For them, the internet can improve their well-being by fostering a sense of community through virtual connections with people with similar interests. (Davide, 2021)

The Age UK network offers personalized support to do and has run several digital inclusion initiatives over the years, including class-based programs, occasional drop-in sessions or large community awareness events, and cross-generational projects. The Digital Angels project is an example of how a common theme in implementing digital inclusion projects has emerged in recent years. Digital Angels help people get online and connect with their communities, including by hosting digital tea parties in community centers and libraries. Currently, 614 elderly people are participating. One Digital Project trains Digital Champions and encourages them to motivate others to come online. This has already reached 8,241 elderly people.

Digital inclusion helps older adults stay connected with family and friends, find activities and support to get involved in, and socially connect with people who share similar interests and outlooks on life. (Old Britain, 2020). In the United States, Intuition Robotics: This proactive cognitive artificial intelligence device can help the elderly stay connected with family and close friends, engage in healthy behaviours (for instance, encouraging them to take medicine), and stay connected to the outside world. Start a helpful discussion. Using AI in Neurorehabilitation Each VR activity is customized to the patient's individual therapeutic needs and abilities. Personalized virtual therapeutic exercises monitor kinematic and physiological responses and record patient progress with scores and indicators over time. A more covert way to monitor falls is the VitalBand, an emergency call and fall detection watch that also records important signs like heart rate, respiration rate, oxygen saturation, physical activity, and sleep quality. It also works as a reminder to take your medication. (Juliet, 2019)

Recommendations

Here are some strategies for helping older adults socialize and rediscover their sense of value and worth.

- Invite friends for tea: It's easy to get lonely and depressed when no one wants to come. However, it is often appreciated to invite friends, family, and neighbors to spend time together. We often host free Sunday afternoon tea parties for seniors who live alone and would love to have others host them. (Kimberly 2022)
- Stay in touch by phone. Talking to friends and family may be the next best thing to being there.
- Smartphones and tablets are very useful when you can't walk around. Because it can be close to your hand or placed comfortably in your lap, and the screen is crisp and bright. If your family (grandkids) and friends are living far away, a computer, smartphone, or tablet can help you stay connected or in touch with them.
- Send photos, and emails to friends and relatives, make free video calls through Skype, Zoom, FaceTime, and Viber, and make new "friends" online, and access Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. and reconnect with existing family or friends on social media sites such as Similar to Internet forums.
- Depending on where you live, you may be able to participate in local community activities including walking groups, singing, reading clubs, quizzes, bingo, bridge, evenings, and faith-based organizations. (Christina et al, 2009)
- Planning and putting activities in your schedule to look forward to each day, like visits to sports facilities, the library, local coffee shop, movies, or museum, might help you feel less lonely. Befriending, social skills training, community and support groups, and cognitive behavioural therapy are all options. (WHO, 2021)
- Get out there and meet people; don't wait for them to come to you; go see them. Being older has certain benefits, like lower pricing on public transport. Over 65s in England are entitled to free local bus riding. (NHS, 2022)

Conclusion

People are innately social creatures, and having a strong social network can help them live longer and be happier. When it comes to identifying loneliness and preventing illnesses that are linked to it, the healthcare system is an essential but underutilized partner. Most people aged 50 and over interact with the healthcare system in some way. For a person without social ties' only face-to-face interactions may be a doctor's appointment or a home health nurse visit. Clinicians have a small window of opportunity to identify patients faced with the risk of loneliness and isolation.

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