

# *Perspectives in Public Health* proposed special issue: **Loneliness: A Public Health Concern**



Loneliness is a subjective, unpleasant, or distressing feeling arising from the lack of connection to others, or the desire for more meaningful and fulfilling social relationships (GILC, 2022). Loneliness is related to, but is distinct from social isolation, which refers to having objectively few social relationships, social roles, group memberships, and infrequent social interactions (GILC, 2022).

While loneliness can serve as a signal to reconnect with others, persistent loneliness (often referred to as “chronic” loneliness) can become harmful and negatively impact health, well-being and perpetuate social withdrawal and isolation. This persistent type of loneliness has been associated with several harms, including physical inactivity, smoking, poor sleep quality, increased risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and cognitive decline.

Although loneliness can be experienced by anyone at any time of their life, the Office for National Statistics has shown that loneliness is more prevalent in younger adults (aged 16–29 years) than those in older age groups in the UK (ONS, 2025).

## **Global Insights on Loneliness**

The 2025 World Health Organization (WHO) report on social connection showed that:

- Approximately 1 in 6 people globally (≈15.8%) report feeling lonely.
- Among adolescents (aged 13–29), 17–21% experience loneliness, with the highest rates observed in teenagers.
- In low-income countries, 24% of people feel lonely compared to 11% in high-income nations.
- Social isolation affects around 1 in 3 older adults and 1 in 4 adolescents.
- An estimated 871,000 deaths per year globally—equating to more than 100 deaths every hour—are linked to loneliness.

## **Call for Contributions**

This special issue will focus on the experience and prevalence of loneliness across the life course and showcase best practices for interventions aimed at improving social connections and mitigating the health impacts of loneliness.

## **Suggested Topics**

The Special Issue welcomes submissions on the following (but not limited to):

- Thought leadership and analysis of existing policies and programs
- Measurement challenges in loneliness research
- Identification of risk and protective factors
- Persistent/harmful loneliness and its impact on health and wellbeing
- Original research on interventions to reduce loneliness
- Analysis of societal factors contributing to loneliness
- Evaluation or evidence synthesis of interventions aimed at reducing loneliness, especially in at-risk groups

The issue aims to feature approximately five or six front matter articles (current topics, opinions, features, or practice-based insights) and four to five peer-reviewed research articles that include primary data or systematic literature reviews/metanalyses.

If you would like to express an interest, please contact:

- Guest Editor, Alison Iliff (Health and Wellbeing Programme Lead, Yorkshire and the Humber, Department of Health and Social Care): [alison.iliff@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto:alison.iliff@dhsc.gov.uk)
- Guest Editor, Dr. Antonia Ypsilanti (Associate Professor in Cognitive Psychology, Institute of Social Sciences, Sheffield Hallam University): [a.ypsilanti@shu.ac.uk](mailto:a.ypsilanti@shu.ac.uk)

The deadline for submissions is 15 January 2026. Authors should submit via our online submissions system: <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/pph>. Please contact [publications@rsph.org.uk](mailto:publications@rsph.org.uk) for more information.