

JANUARY 2022

A newsletter for people
interested in overcoming
loneliness, particularly
in South Australia

Not Alone

EDITION 2



Welcome to the second edition of the Not Alone newsletter – bringing together information about the efforts to overcome loneliness in South Australia.

This occasional update is shared with participants from the Overcoming Loneliness workshop held in March 2021. Contact us to receive future newsletters, share updates or provide feedback.

Save the date
March 2022

Overcoming Loneliness workshop 2

At U City Function Centre, 43 Franklin Street

On Wednesday 2 March 2022, 9am – 1 pm

Co-hosted by Community Centres SA and Uniting Communities.

Discussion topics:

- pre-election panel on how to strengthen connections (to overcome loneliness)
- young people and loneliness, responses
 - the art and skills of a 'Connector'

Don't leave loneliness alone.

www.unitingcommunities.org/loneliness
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What's happening in South Australia?

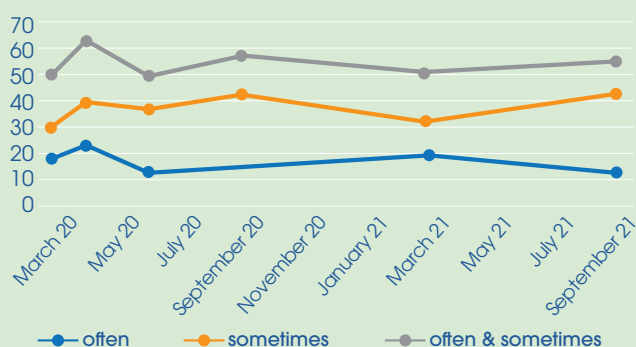
Loneliness Warriors

Sonya Feldhoff spoke with Kylie Ferguson, CEO of Community Centres SA about the connection between loneliness and poverty and how they are taking action with a pilot program called Loneliness Warriors. Listen to the recording on the [Community Centres SA website](#).

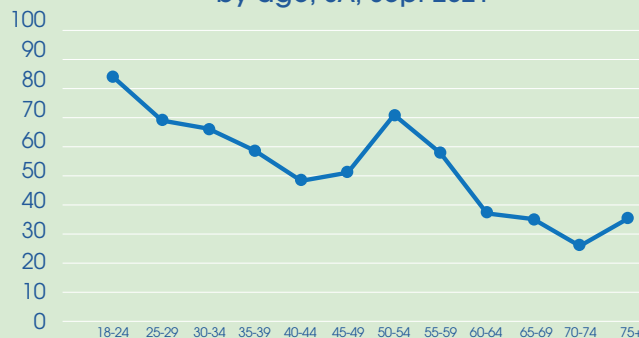
Latest data

Data updates from the September/October 2021 survey undertaken by Uniting Communities.

Feel isolated from others often and sometimes, % population, SA, 2020-21, selected months



Lonely % "Often" and "Sometimes," by age, SA, Sept 2021



Similar results were reported for the survey question about feelings of 'loneliness.'

% of people who feel 'left out,' "often" by income, SA, 2020-21, selected months



The September 2021 age related results are a little different from previous survey results, with a more pronounced trend in reduction of loneliness and isolation measures by age. The highest levels of loneliness continue to be reported for people in the 18-24 and 50-54 age cohorts.

The results for all six surveys show that loneliness levels, in general, decrease as income rises.

South Australian Election

Uniting Communities has created a proposal for political parties to consider in the upcoming state election, offering suggestions for activities to help overcome loneliness. These include:

1. 1000 fetes, festival, and frolics for local communities

A program of grants of up to \$10,000 made available to local government and community groups to increase participation in local events. Applicants must describe how the event will seek to involve isolated people.

2. Funding for connectors

Increase funding for community service organisations, including disability, mental health, aged care and other community services, to employ 'connectors' to identify and connect people who are isolated and unable to make community connections on their own.

While many South Australians have 'bounced back' from isolation over 2020 and 2021, some people have struggled to reconnect with their communities and others continue their pre-COVID loneliness. The rapid rise in reported COVID cases in early 2022 is also creating anxiety and isolation again.

Rebuilding connections across the state throughout 2022 and beyond, will be helped through activities that provide an opportunity for people to reconnect. Employing people to identify those who are unable to overcome their loneliness on their own will be vital for connecting people to their communities and necessary services.

Community Centres SA - The Loneliness Cure Award

On 20 November 2021, Community Centres SA presented the Loneliness Cure Award at the 2021 Community Achievements Awards Gala dinner. Seventy organisations and individuals were nominated for the award.

Community Centres SA, through the Loneliness Cure Award, promotes conversation that moves us past the silence and stigma that prevents us from fully acknowledging its significance. It recognises the part that grass roots, real life initiatives led by community centres, local community groups or not for profits play in connecting people up.

Winner:

Uniting SA Taperoo Community Centre

They introduced an innovative literacy skill development program in response to the impact of the COVID pandemic. Several of the participants experience learning challenges, mental health issues, and other significant health issues and come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Poetry was used as a simple way of expression and storytelling. The program resulted in increasing the participants' literacy, performance skills, friendships and community connection.

Finalists:

Robertstown War Memorial Community Centre of Robertstown

They run a monthly coffee morning for all ages to meet, chat and keep each other company. After receiving a grant, they purchased a coffee machine to give locals a chance to sit and chat with proper coffee prepared by volunteer baristas. The seniors invite younger members of the town to talk together and learn how to upgrade digital skills.

Silver Citz of Hackham West

They began as a social group for older people in the community in response to an identified need of an ageing population. The group operates every Thursday during the school term and now has around 80 participants ranging from 50 to 92 years old. The group provides social interaction, information, and help for health, welfare and transport to those who need it.

Winner and finalist descriptions provided by Community Centres SA.



What's happening in Australia?

Ending Loneliness Together campaign

Ending Loneliness Together – a national network of organisations who have come together to address the growing problem of loneliness in people living in Australia – have recently published an article addressing the '5 myths about loneliness.'



Read the responses to these myths on their [website](#).

They have also created a 'Guide to Measuring Loneliness for Community Organisations.'



A Guide to Measuring Loneliness for Community Organisations

By measuring loneliness at the start and at the end of your service, you will be able to evaluate whether the levels of loneliness in your service users have changed or not. In adopting this guidance, you will be

helping to build the evidence base on loneliness in Australia and the most effective solutions to reducing it.

Read more on the [Ending Loneliness website](#).

Young people and loneliness

The 'Stronger Together' report was published in November 2021 by Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre and Curtin University. The report found that, "loneliness is associated with poor health behaviours and costs up to \$2.7 billion each year." Key findings from the report which relate to young people and loneliness:

Looking at social connectedness over the life course, we find that social connectedness drops significantly for young men and women between ages 15 and 24.

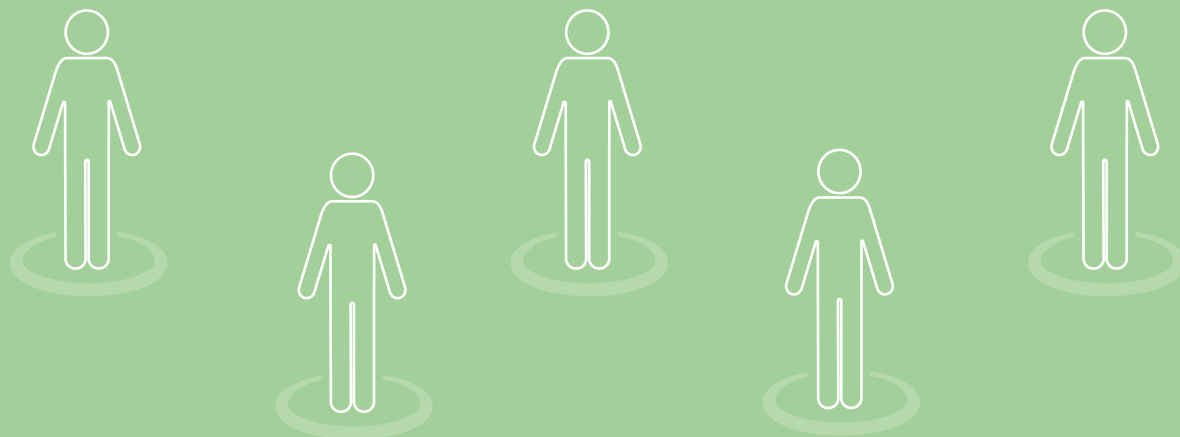
The decline is predominantly linked to a reduction in social interactions.

The transition from school to work results in declining trust and social support for young men and women.

Looking at social capital and connectedness by age highlights the significant challenges faced by young people transitioning from school to work, and with it from childhood to adult roles and responsibilities.

Our findings seem to suggest that social media was a poor substitute to direct contact for those struggling with isolation.

[Read the full report.](#)



The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare – snapshot of social isolation and loneliness in Australia.

On 16 September 2021, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare posted a snapshot of social isolation and loneliness in Australia, including a research summary of the impact of loneliness on our physical and mental wellbeing.

[View the snapshot.](#)

Telstra – ‘Talking Loneliness’ campaign

On 7 October 2021, Telstra released a campaign addressing the growing issue of loneliness in Australia.

Their Talking Loneliness report revealed 44 per cent of Australians regularly feel lonely, and nine in ten have experienced loneliness, with half (48 per cent) too embarrassed to admit it. To help start the conversation and destigmatise loneliness, Telstra has released a video series featuring nine real Australians sharing their own stories of loneliness and a dedicated hub with resources and support tools. telstra.com/loneliness

In an article by BT Magazine, Telstra discussed their Talking Loneliness report and included data from this report:

- more than half (54 per cent) of Australians say they ‘often’ or ‘sometimes’ lack companionship
- a quarter (24 per cent) of Australians don’t feel they have anyone to talk to, with Gen Z (32 per cent) and Millennials (26 per cent) the most likely age groups to feel this way

- over a third (35 per cent) of Australians admit they rarely or never feel like they are part of a group of friends
- almost two in five (38 per cent) Australians say they have never felt lonelier than they have felt in lockdown.

Telstra CEO, Andrew Penn said:



Sadly, there are many people in our community who are reluctant to speak up about something that is having significant consequences – it could be your brother, neighbour or workmate and you may never know. That’s why we wanted to challenge the preconceptions about who might be lonely and to encourage Australians to find a sense of connection through their shared experience.”



Find out more about the [Talking Loneliness campaign.](#)



What's Happening beyond Australia?

United Kingdom

On 18 November 2021, the UK Campaign to End Loneliness held an international online conference entitled 'Loneliness Beyond Covid-19'. Find out more [about the conference](#) and listen to their [podcast series on loneliness](#).

They also partnered with TransPennine Express with the rail provider adding a series of the Campaign to End Loneliness podcasts to their free on-board entertainment service Exstream. Each podcast explores a different theme, helping to raise the awareness of the issue of loneliness. 'Chatty benches' have also been set up in their stations, to encourage people to have a chat with other customers when they are passing through the station.

[Find out more.](#)

UK organisation, The Cares Family have had success with their Love Your Neighbour programme which brings older and younger neighbours together to build one-to-one friendships and to help people build memories and meaning. Friends spend one or two hours a week having a chat, playing board games or sharing a meal to gain a little extra reflection and pause – bringing the outside world in for people who can struggle to get out.

[Find out more.](#)

Social prescribing, is where clinicians identify patients experiencing loneliness and refer them to local community groups and activities. The United Kingdom has embraced this strategy, promising to roll it out nationwide by 2023. [Find out more.](#)

The United States

In August, policymakers introduced a new bill that would allocate \$250 million to address social isolation and loneliness among older adults. Notably, it would require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to provide grants to Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and other community-based organisations, which in turn would use the funds to develop, implement, and evaluate programs that foster connectedness. [Find out more.](#)

The Coalition to End Social Isolation and Loneliness, and the Foundation for Social Connection partnered to create a 2021 online Action Forum in October to end social isolation and loneliness which involved national and international speakers on loneliness, including advocacy, impacts and solutions.

[Find out more.](#)

Netherlands

A Dutch supermarket chain has had such great success with its 'chat checkouts', it has decided to roll the initiative out to 200 of its stores across the Netherlands. 'Chat checkouts' are supermarket checkouts for customers who are not in a hurry and where the cashiers take a little extra time to converse with customers. [Find out more.](#)

Canada

In November 2021, the Canadian organisation, HelpAge created the initiative 'F.A.S.T Track'.

"Lack of appropriate transportation options is a critical concern for Canada's fastest-growing demographic", says Gregor Sneddon, Executive Director of HelpAge Canada. "Older people who can't get around easily suffer isolation and loneliness—primary barriers to physical and mental health, as well as quality of life. F.A.S.T. Track will accelerate the launch of innovative transportation solutions for seniors across Canada."

[Find out more.](#)