

# Greater loneliness in young people during lockdown

## Summary

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Many people are concerned about loneliness during the pandemic. Social distancing measures, lockdowns, and greater working/studying from home has led to more people being socially isolated and lonely. Looking at data from the CovidLife and TeenCovidLife projects, we found that younger people report more loneliness than older people across the pandemic.

Young people age 12 - 17 in the TeenCovidLife project were lonelier than adults in the CovidLife project at all stages of the pandemic. To find out if this has changed a year on from the start of the pandemic, we are inviting more young people to join the latest TeenCovidLife survey, please see the link below to find out more.

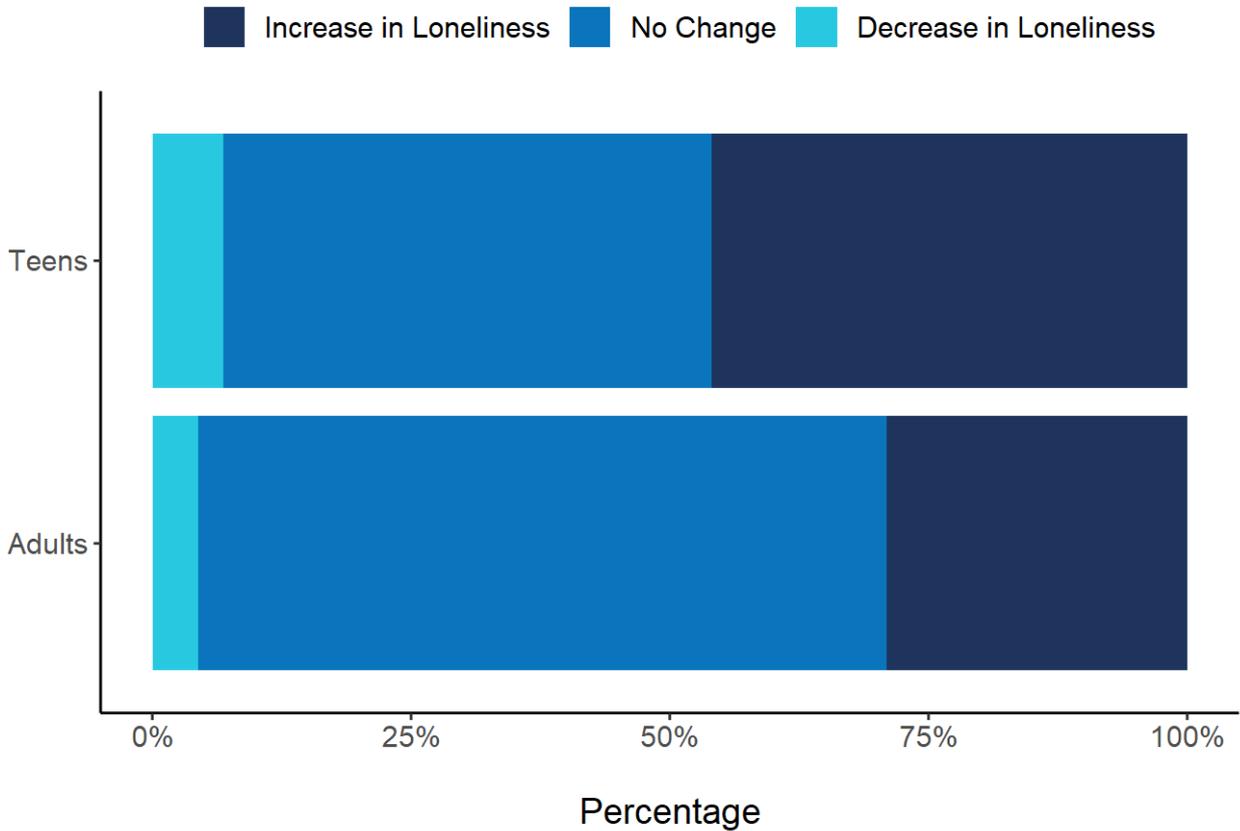
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## Loneliness in the First Lockdown

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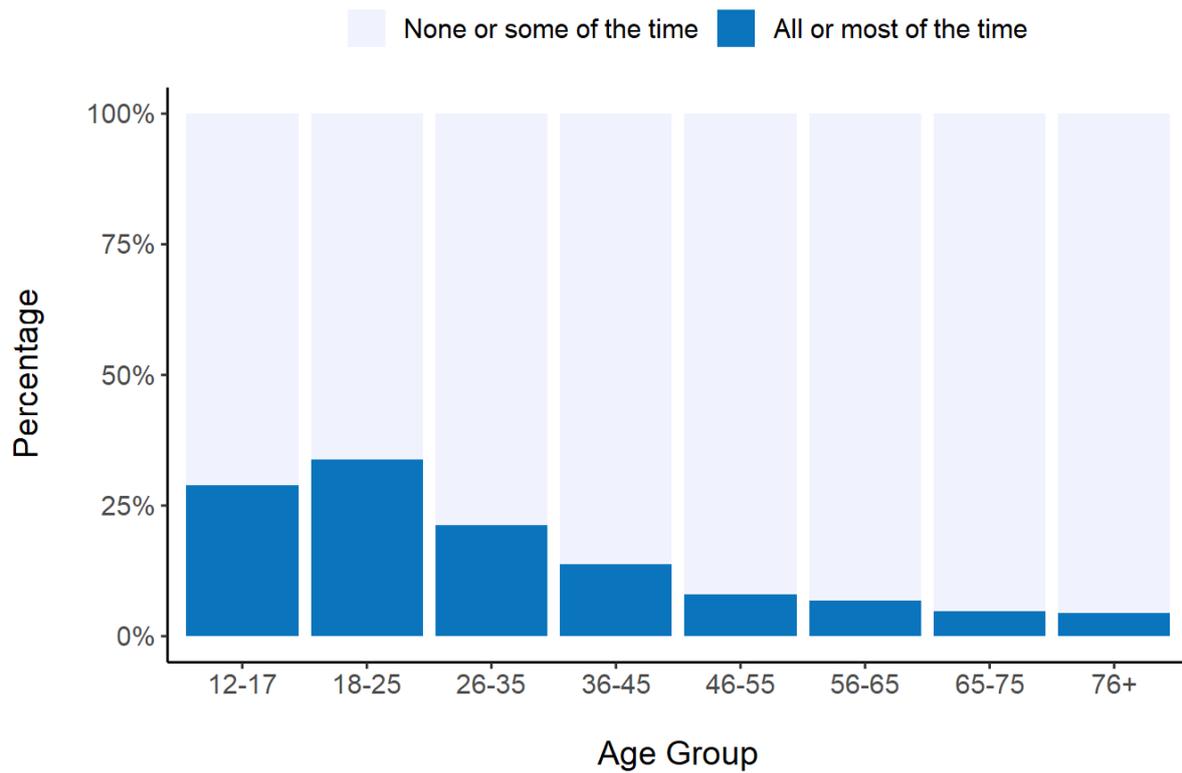
A pressing concern during the first lockdown from March 2020 was the impact the social distancing, isolation and school/work closures would have on loneliness and mental health. **45%** of teens reported an increase in loneliness, compared to **29%** of adults, see below.

## Change in Loneliness in the First Lockdown



During the first lockdown, younger people showed greater levels of loneliness compared to older people, see below. **Over a quarter of young people** age between 12-17 and 18-25 reported feeling lonely **most** or **all** of the time during the first national lockdown in 2020. Younger people may be more likely to rely on school, university and jobs for socialisation, and thus are negatively affected by the pandemic restrictions.

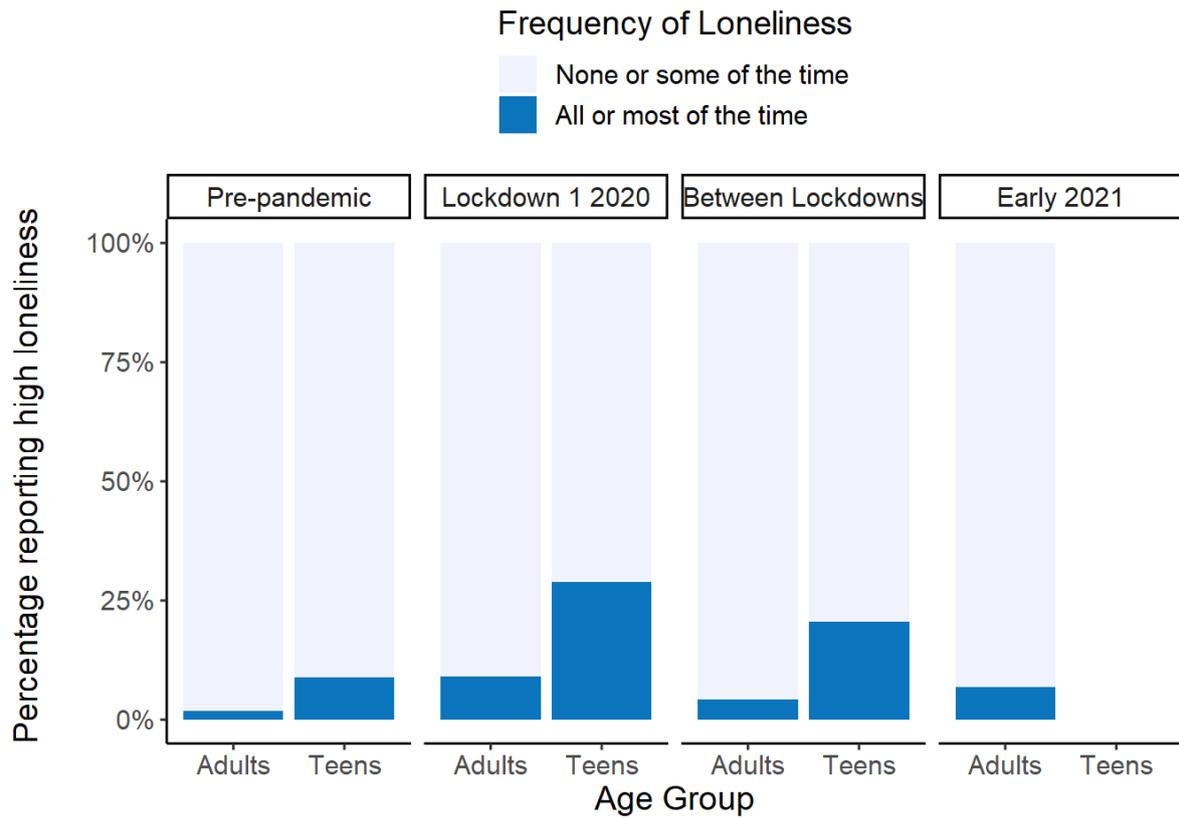
## Frequency of loneliness during the first lockdown



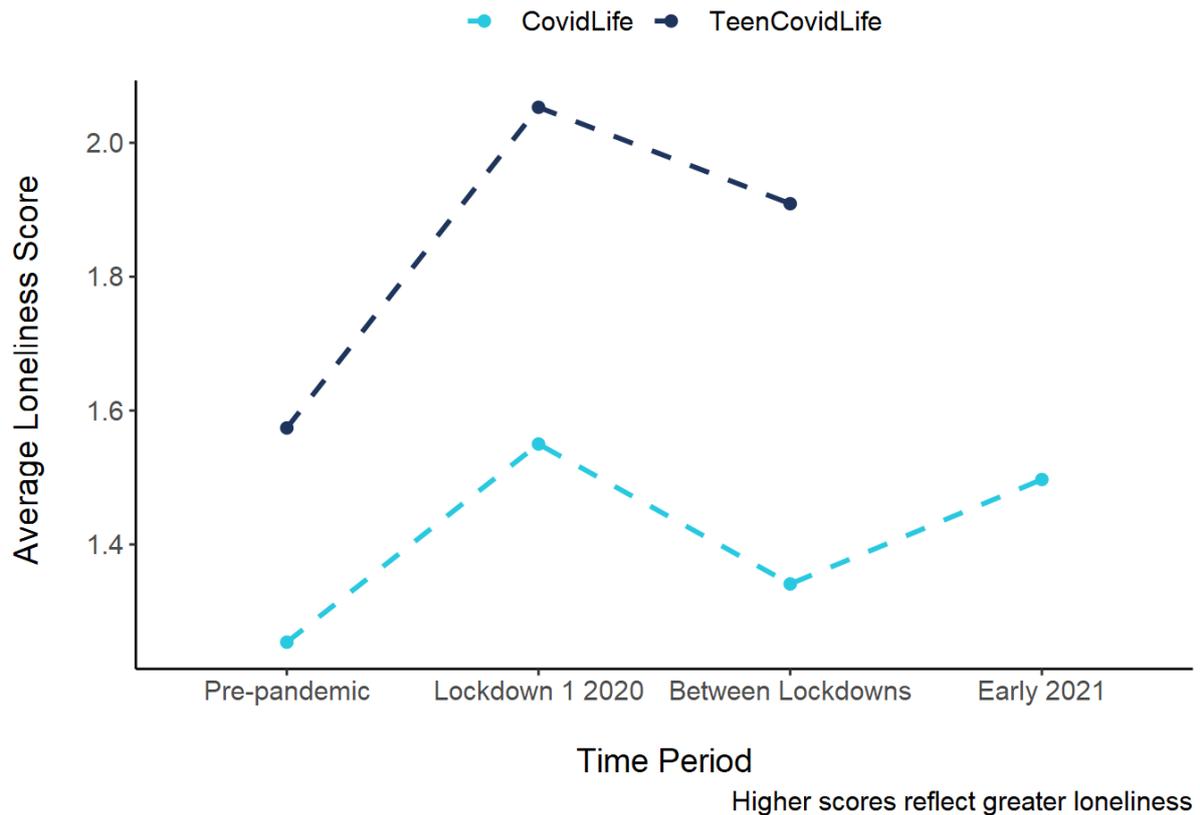
## Across the Whole Pandemic

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Across the pandemic, **more** TeenCovidLife participants reported feeling lonely **all** or **most** of the time compared to the adult TeenCovidLife participants, see below.



Loneliness increased from pre-pandemic levels, and then decreased after lockdown measures began to ease in summer 2020, see plot below. In the adult participants in CovidLife, loneliness increased again during the second lockdown in February 2021. For teens, there was a steeper increase in loneliness pre- and post-pandemic. We still don't know if loneliness has increased again as a result of the second lockdown.



## Support for Loneliness

Social support is vital to protect against the effects of loneliness. Young people's main sources of social support are from friends, family, and adults at school. In our on-going work, we are looking at what type of support best helps young people before, during and after a national lockdown.

At each stage of lockdown, a different type of social support has the biggest effect of loneliness. Peer support was most protective **before** lockdown, while family support was most protective **during** lockdown. However, the most important type of social support **after** lockdown was school support.

After lockdown, social support in school from teachers or other adults was the most important predictor of loneliness. Young people who had better social support in school are estimated to be **15%** less likely to be lonely after lockdown. Teachers and schools may play a crucial role in helping young people recover from the effects of lockdown.

## Ongoing Work

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The question remains how loneliness has changed in 2021 for young people in Scotland. Even when loneliness decreased in summer 2020 after the lockdown measures eased, they did not return to pre-pandemic levels. Young people may be finding it harder to “bounce back” after lockdown.

Right now, **TeenCovidLife Survey 3** is open to all young people age 12 to 17 in Scotland. If you are interested in finding out more, please follow the link below!

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## What is CovidLife?

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**CovidLife** and **TeenCovidLife** are a series of surveys ran by Generation Scotland, to assess the impact of the pandemic on adults and teens in Scotland. Over the past year, we have collected data from over 18,000 adults and over 5,000 teens about their experiences in the COVID-19 pandemic. There have been three CovidLife surveys, and two TeenCovidLife surveys, with the latest TeenCovidLife survey underway now.

### CovidLife Survey 1

Collected from April to June 2020, during the first national lockdown in the UK. We asked about well-being and coping during the COVID-19 pandemic, collecting data from the general public and Generation Scotland members.

### CovidLife Survey 2

Collected from July to August 2020, after lockdown measures first began to ease in the UK.

### **CovidLife Survey 3**

Our most recent Survey, we collected this in February 2021, during the second national lockdown.

### **TeenCovidLife Survey 1**

Collected from May to July 2020, during the first national lockdown in the UK. We asked about well-being and the impact of school closures on young people age 12 to 17 in Scotland.

### **TeenCovidLife Survey 2**

Collected from August to October 2020, as lockdown measures eased and many young people returned to school.

### **TeenCovidLife Survey 3**

Launched 12th May 2021 and still collecting data! Our aim is to assess how young people are coping a year after the pandemic began, and the impact of it on their education and well-being.

This report summarises how the pandemic has affected *loneliness* in young people and adults.