

Loneliness can affect anyone, whatever their background or age. Most people will feel lonely at some point during their lives but when this is the case frequently or all of the time it can seriously affect health and wellbeing. It is linked to increased likelihood of readmission to hospital or a longer stay and to early death. There is evidence that lonely people are more likely to visit the doctor or Emergency Department and more likely to enter Local Authority funded residential care. ([Office for Health Improvement and Disparities](#))

## Why is this important?



Loneliness adversely affects both physical and mental health, reducing quality of life. Females, young people and those living in deprived areas are more likely to feel lonely.

## What is the local context?



7.0% of Torbay adults say they are often/always lonely (6.8% in England), 58.9% say they are never or hardly ever lonely, reported in the 2021/22 Active Lives Survey.

## What should we do?

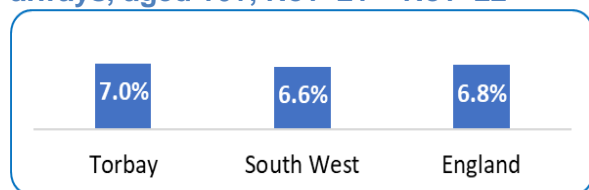


Raise awareness of ways to increase social interaction and of support networks available. Reduce stigma & feelings of shame about loneliness.

There is a national measure of loneliness developed by the Office for National Statistics which is used in a number of surveys, asking people if they feel lonely often/always, some of the time, occasionally, hardly ever, or never.

**The Active Lives Survey:** In Torbay 7.0% of those aged 16+ said they were often/always lonely (2021/22). This is almost the same as the England average (Fig 1). Previous years are suppressed for Torbay due to low numbers.

**Fig 1: Percentage who feel lonely often/always, aged 16+, Nov '21 – Nov '22**



**Fig 2: Levels of loneliness in the population, aged 16+, Nov '21 – Nov '22**

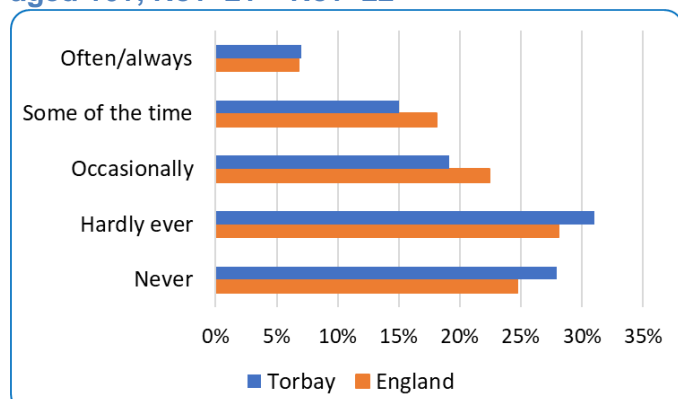
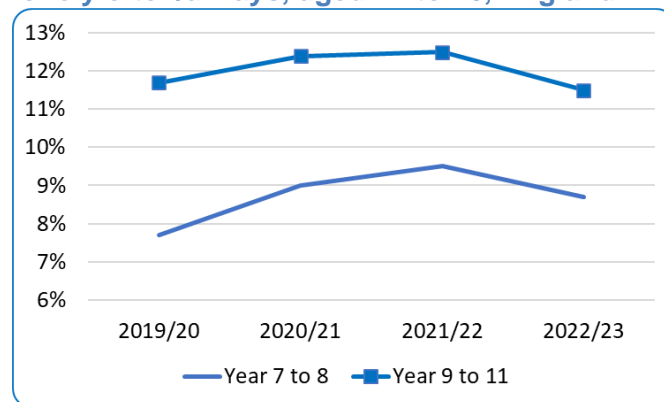


Fig 1 & 2 source: Sport England- [Active Lives Adult Survey](#)

Fig 2 shows that a higher proportion of Torbay adults say they are hardly ever or never lonely compared with England but a lower proportion than England are lonely occasionally or some of the time. Nationally, 2021/22, compared with 2 years ago in 2019/20, has seen increases in the percentage who feel lonely often/always, some of the time and occasionally, and decreases in those who are hardly ever or never lonely.

**Fig 3: Percentage of young people who feel lonely often/always, aged 11 to 16, England**



Source: Sport England- [Active Lives Children and Young People Survey](#), uses academic years

In England, the Active Lives Survey shows that chronic loneliness is seen at higher levels in older children (Fig 3). Within this, girls report higher levels of loneliness than boys in both age groups.

**Key groups at risk:** Research finds that amongst people aged 16+ in England the key groups at risk of loneliness include:

- Women
- Young people- the risk of loneliness decreases as people get older
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual people and those identifying with an 'other' sexual orientation
- People on lower incomes
- People with a disability or long standing health condition
- People with poor mental wellbeing
- People out of work
- Those not living with a partner
- Those recently moved to their current address

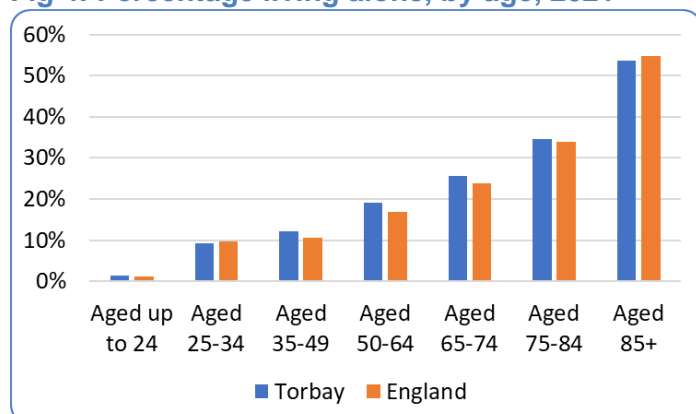
[National Centre for Social Research](#), 2022

**Living alone:** The [Health Survey for England](#)- of adults aged 16+, reported in 2021 that those who live alone were more than twice as likely to feel chronically lonely (lonely often or always) as

those who live with others. Adults living alone were almost twice as likely to feel lonely at least some of the time.

The 2021 census records Torbay with significantly higher proportions of 35 to 74 year olds living alone than England (Fig 4). Torbay has significantly higher proportions of 50 to 74 year old women and 35 to 74 year old men living alone compared with the England average. In Torbay and nationally, a higher proportion of males up to the age of 64 live alone than females and from 65+ this switches to a higher proportion of females living alone than males.

**Fig 4: Percentage living alone, by age, 2021**

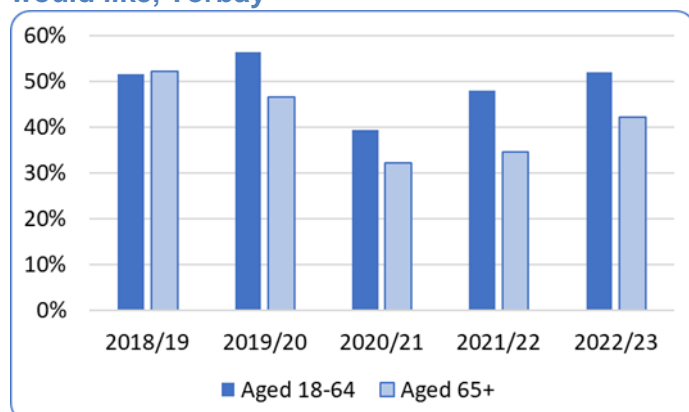


Source: Office for National Statistics- [Census 2021](#)

Meaningful social contact is important for health and wellbeing and for people to fully participate in school, work and society.

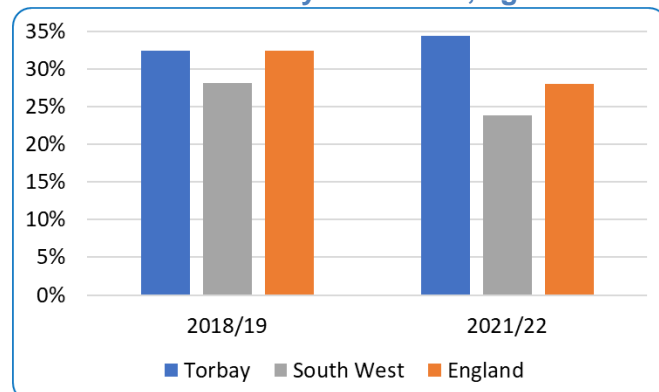
**Adult Social Care users:** It is reported that Torbay service users aged 18 to 64 are more likely than their counterparts aged 65+ to have as much social contact as they would like (Fig 5). In 2021/22 and 2022/23 combined, Torbay is higher proportionally than England for 18 to 64 year olds and similar to England for those aged 65+.

**Fig 5: Percentage of Adult Social Care users who have as much social contact as they would like, Torbay**



Source: NHS England- [Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework](#), from the Adult Social Care Survey

**Fig 6: Percentage of carers who have as much social contact as they would like, aged 18+**



Source: NHS England- [Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework](#), from the Survey of Adult Carers in England

**Unpaid carers:** The biennial survey of unpaid carers known to local social services, who care for adults aged 18+, shows Torbay in 2021/22 with a significantly higher percentage than England saying they have as much social contact as they would like (Fig 6) but this does still only equate to around 1 in 3 people.

**Deprivation:** Surveys find that adults (aged 16+) living in England's most deprived areas are more than twice as likely to feel lonely often/always than those in the least deprived areas ([Active Lives Survey](#) and [Community Life Survey](#), 2021/22). This is relevant to Torbay which has high levels of deprivation with Torbay ranked as the 38<sup>th</sup> most deprived upper-tier Local Authority out of 151 in England in the 2019 [Index of Multiple Deprivation](#).

**National strategy:** A cross-government strategy- [A connected society: A strategy for tackling loneliness](#) was produced in 2018. Examining progress against the strategy is a [report](#) produced in March 2023.

**Torbay Together:** This community hub at <https://devonconnect.org/torbay> is a way for people to connect by finding out what's on in their community, accessing volunteer opportunities and exchanging skills in a timebank.

### References:

- Dept for Culture, Media and Sport: [Community Life Survey 2021/22: Wellbeing and loneliness](#), May 2023
- National Centre for Social Research: [Investigating factors associated with loneliness in adults in England](#), June 2022, for Dept for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport
- NHS England: [Health Survey for England, 2021 part 2- Loneliness and wellbeing](#), May 2023
- Office for Health Improvement and Disparities: [Public health profiles](#), August 2021

References/links to data used are throughout the profile.