



The UK Loneliness Report

A national study on loneliness and
the role of shared living

2026



Why this research exists

When we created COHO, the idea was never to just build another platform. It was to build something that, if we got it right, might make a few corners of the world a bit better for the people living in shared homes. Loneliness has always been one of those corners. I've seen firsthand the positive influence a well-balanced and well-run shared home can have on how someone feels.

We've seen how powerful shared living can be when homes encourage connection, shared space, and community. But this survey isn't about proving shared living works. It's about understanding loneliness first. How often it shows up, how it affects mental health, and whether the home environment plays a bigger role than people realise.

If loneliness is going to be tackled properly, the starting point has to be clarity on what people are feeling, not assumptions about why they're feeling it.

The intention behind this report is straightforward. If shared living is going to play a meaningful role in improving loneliness in Britain, then everyone involved - property managers, landlords, tenants, councils, policymakers - needs better insight into the problem itself.

We can't design better homes or build better communities without understanding what's actually driving people's isolation. This research is that starting point.

For COHO to contribute to creating environments where people feel less isolated and more connected, it starts with knowing what they're up against.

Vann Vogstad
COHO Founder & CEO



What we found

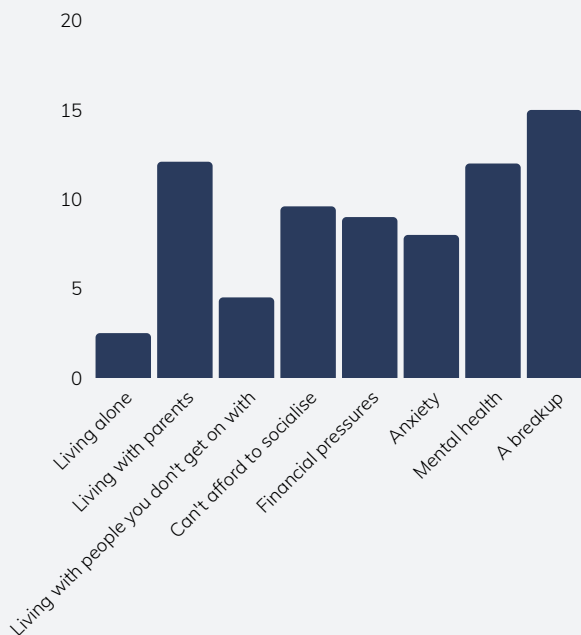
Loneliness in the UK isn't occasional. It's persistent, widespread, and affecting people far more regularly than most would assume.

More than half of people who experience loneliness (57%) feel it at least once a week. For 16%, it's every single day. This isn't an occasional low moment. It's a recurring state that shapes how people live and work.

1 in 5 people aged 26-35 feel lonely every single day, the highest rate of any demographic. These are working-age adults, many of them in shared housing or living with partners, surrounded by people but feeling increasingly disconnected.

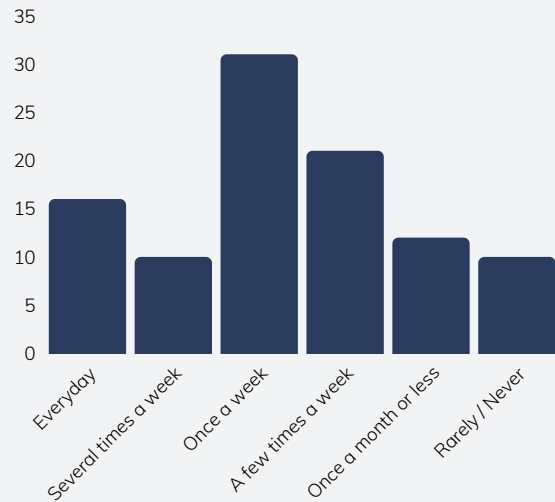
15%

say that living with parents or people they don't get on with is a major contributor to feeling alone.



57%

feel lonely at least once a week



And yet, despite how common loneliness is, the vast majority of people suffering from it don't talk about it. 63% keep their feelings to themselves. Nearly 1 in 5 told us they're too ashamed or embarrassed to admit they're lonely, even to friends or family.

What drives loneliness is more complex than most people assume. 1 in 5 cite mental health issues (11.5%) and anxiety (8.3%) as the root cause. But there's another factor that often gets overlooked: living situations.

Around 15% say that living with parents (12.1%) or living with people they don't get along with (4.5%) is a major contributor to feeling alone.

What we found, again and again throughout this research, is that loneliness isn't about being alone. It's about feeling alone. And the factors driving that feeling are more complex - and more solvable - than most people realise.

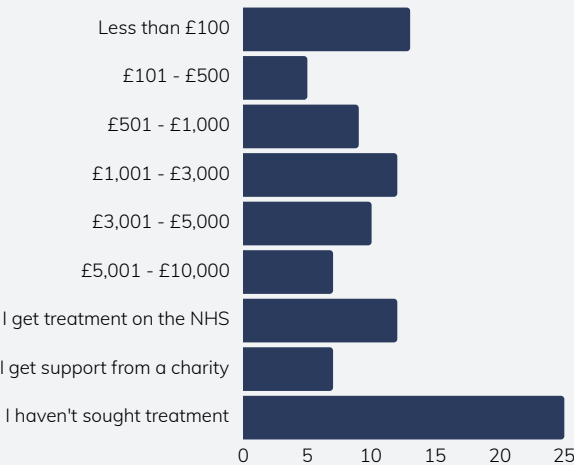
The financial cost of loneliness

Loneliness doesn't just take an emotional toll. It comes with a financial cost that most people don't talk about, and many can't afford.

When we asked people how much they've spent on treatment to help ease symptoms connected with loneliness, the numbers were stark. 56% have paid for private treatment at some point, with costs ranging from under £100 to £10,000 over a lifetime.

That's not money spent solving the root cause. It's money spent managing the symptoms - therapy sessions, medication, wellness programs - trying to cope with feelings of isolation that, for many, stem from circumstances that could actually be changed.

56%
have paid for private treatment



Meanwhile, 12% are relying on the NHS for treatment. That's 1 in 8 lonely people adding to an already overstretched system, seeking help for a condition that's as much about their environment and circumstances as it is about their mental health.

And then there's the 25% who haven't sought any help at all - a figure that rises to 29% among those aged 60 and over. Not because they don't need it, but because they either don't know where to turn, can't afford it, or are too ashamed to ask.

The broader cost goes beyond what individuals are spending. Research shows that chronic loneliness carries health risks comparable to smoking 15 cigarettes a day. It contributes to depression, anxiety, cardiovascular disease, and cognitive decline. When people aren't getting help, or are spending thousands treating symptoms rather than causes, the problem compounds.

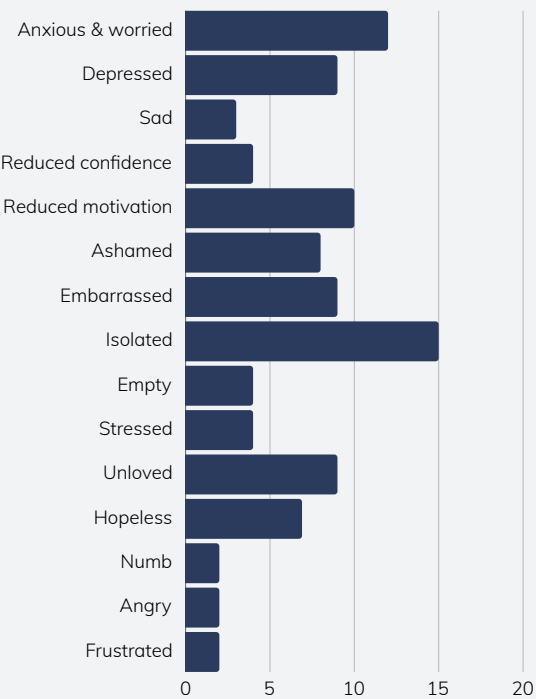
Loneliness isn't just a personal crisis. It's an economic one. And much of that cost could be avoided if we addressed the factors driving it in the first place.

The shame spiral

Loneliness doesn't just make people feel isolated. It triggers a cascade of emotions that makes the problem harder to escape.

When we asked people how loneliness makes them feel, the most common response was feeling isolated and left out.

But what follows is revealing: 11.7% feel anxious and worried, 10.3% lose motivation entirely, 9% feel embarrassed, 8.6% feel depressed, and 8.3% feel ashamed.



Here's the problem. When loneliness makes you feel embarrassed or ashamed, you're far less likely to talk about it. And when you don't talk about it, the isolation deepens. The shame becomes part of the loneliness itself, creating a cycle that's incredibly hard to break.

63% of lonely people don't speak to anyone about how they're feeling. Nearly 1 in 5 told us they're too ashamed or embarrassed to admit it. They assume they're the only ones struggling, that there's something wrong with them. The reality is that more than half of people who've ever felt lonely experience it at least once a week.

The stigma around loneliness is part of what perpetuates it. People suffer quietly, thinking they're alone in feeling this way, when the data shows they're surrounded by others going through exactly the same thing.

The silence makes the problem invisible. And invisible problems don't get solved.

The root cause - it's not what you think

When most people think about loneliness, they picture someone living alone in a flat with no one to talk to. What actually drives loneliness is more complex.

The leading cause isn't isolation - it's mental health.

1 in 5 people experiencing loneliness say that existing mental health issues (11.5%) and anxiety (8.3%) are at the root of their isolation. Loneliness and mental health are deeply intertwined. Each one feeds the other, creating a cycle that's hard to break.

But mental health isn't the only factor. When we asked what else causes loneliness, the answers revealed a mix of living situations, financial pressures, and relationship breakdowns.

Living with parents (11%)

The impact goes beyond just feeling stuck. 1 in 10 of those living with parents say it directly cramps their love life, affecting privacy, independence, and their ability to move relationships forward. For 18-25 year olds, this figure is even higher.

Living with people you don't get along with (5%)

Being surrounded by people you don't connect with (or actively clash with) can be lonelier than living alone. You're stuck in a shared space with no genuine connection, avoiding communal areas, keeping to your room.

A relationship breakup (15%)

The sudden loss of connection, the shift in daily routine, the grief of losing someone who was central to your life - break-ups are destabilising.

Can't afford new clothes to socialise (12%)

This isn't just about being skint. It's about feeling presentable and confident. When you can't afford to look the part, you stay home. Financial barriers become social barriers.

Can't afford to socialise at all (10%)

Not just clothes or haircuts, but the actual cost of meeting friends for a drink or going out for dinner.

Financial pressures (9%)

Work stress, health issues, and moving to a new area also play a role, each adding to the sense of being overwhelmed and disconnected.

The common thread is disconnection. You can be lonely in a crowded house if you don't feel connected to the people around you. You can be lonely in a city full of people if you can't afford to participate in social life.

Loneliness isn't about being alone. It's about feeling alone. And the living environment often plays a bigger role than people realise.

What this means

This research has implications for everyone involved in housing, from councils making planning decisions to landlords and agents managing properties.

For Councils and Planners

Loneliness is a public health crisis with measurable economic costs. 12% of lonely people are already accessing NHS treatment, and 56% have paid for private treatment. These are costs that could be reduced if we addressed the root causes rather than just treating symptoms.

The default view of HMOs is often that they take from communities, that they're poorly managed, and don't contribute to local communities. But the question shouldn't be whether HMOs exist in your area. It's what kind of HMOs you're approving.

Quality shared housing with proper communal spaces don't drain communities, they create them. When people living in shared homes feel connected to their housemates, they're less isolated, less likely to need NHS support, and more likely to engage with the wider community.

When you're assessing HMO applications, the question shouldn't be "how do we limit these?" It should be "are we approving homes that will actually help the people living there?" Proper communal areas, thoughtful design, and professional management separate HMOs that create community from ones that contribute to isolation.

Done well, shared housing addresses multiple crises at once: loneliness, affordability, housing supply, and pressure on local services.

For Landlords and Agents

There's a massive untapped market here. Mental health and living situations are significant drivers of loneliness, but only 18% of people have recognised shared housing as a solution. That gap exists because shared housing has a reputation problem.

Your HMOs aren't just accommodation. When run well, they're addressing a genuine social need.

Compatibility matters. Throwing five strangers together because they can all afford £800pcm doesn't create community, it creates tension and people hiding in their rooms.

Communal spaces matter. A shared kitchen that's too small, poorly equipped, without enough space for people to sit or eat together or never cleaned isn't a space for connection - it's something people avoid.

Professional management matters. When maintenance requests go unanswered, when issues between housemates aren't addressed, shared housing becomes a last resort rather than a choice.

If you're already running HMOs, you're halfway there. The question is whether you're running them in a way that actually helps people feel less isolated, or whether you're just providing beds.

The landlords and agents who get this right aren't just running better businesses. They're solving a problem that's costing the UK billions and affecting millions of people's wellbeing.

When done properly, shared living directly addresses loneliness.

About the research

This report is based on a national survey of 3,000 UK adults conducted between 3rd and 5th December 2025. All respondents had experienced loneliness at some point in their lives.

The sample included:

- 500 residents from Gloucestershire
- 500 residents from Greater Manchester
- 2,000 residents from elsewhere in the UK

Respondents were surveyed across all adult age groups (18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-59, 60+) and asked about the frequency, causes, and emotional impact of their loneliness, as well as their current living situations and whether they'd considered shared housing as a potential solution.

About COHO

COHO is a property management software founded in 2019 by Vann Vogstad. We help landlords and agents run better HMOs, and we run a tenant listing site that matches people based on compatibility, not just budget.

We commissioned this research to understand loneliness properly. What causes it, how it affects people, and what role housing actually plays. The shared living sector can only improve if we're working from real insight, not assumptions.

This report is designed to give property professionals, councils, and policymakers the data they need to make better decisions about shared housing in their areas.

If you'd like to discuss this research or how COHO can help improve shared living in your properties, get in touch: conversations@coho.life.

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COHO