

# Loneliness

## an unequally shared burden in Europe

Population ageing, the rising number of people living alone and the increased use of digital technologies for communication have led many to posit that loneliness is on the rise. The European Commission's Joint Research Centre has analysed the incidence and the determinants of loneliness across Europe.



### How lonely are Europeans?

Loneliness is measured with two indicators:

- Lonely individuals** are those who report feeling lonely 'most of the time', 'almost all' or 'all of the time' in the past week



7% frequently feel lonely

- Socially isolated individuals** are those who meet socially with friends, relatives or work colleagues at most once a month

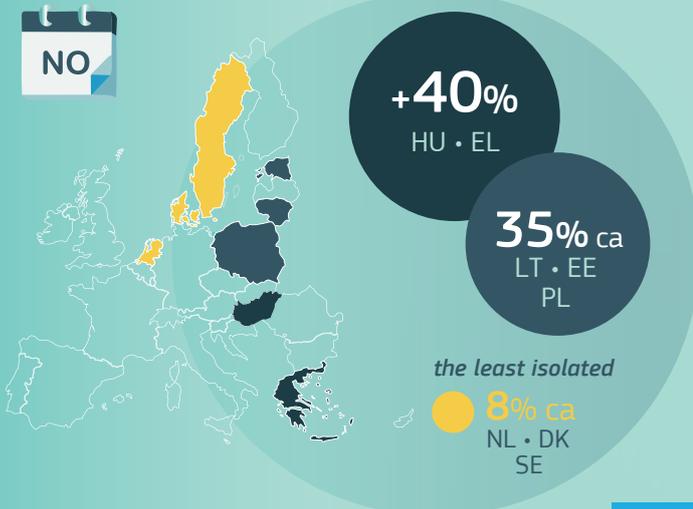


18% meet others at most once a month

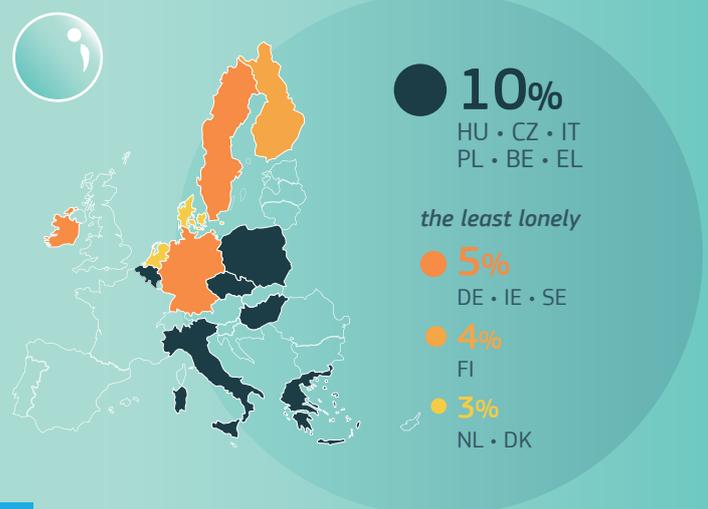
of all Europeans aged over 15

Eastern and Southern Europeans are lonelier and more socially isolated than Western and Northern Europeans

People not socialising more than once a month\*



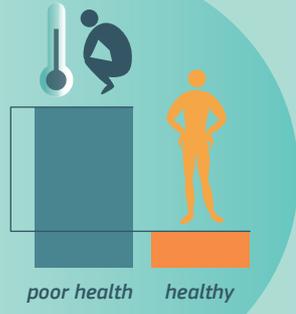
People frequently feeling lonely\*



People in poor health, the unemployed and those with low incomes suffer more from loneliness

Individuals with **poor health conditions** are more likely to be frequently lonely\*

+10  
percentage  
points



The **poor unemployed** face a higher risk of frequent loneliness\*

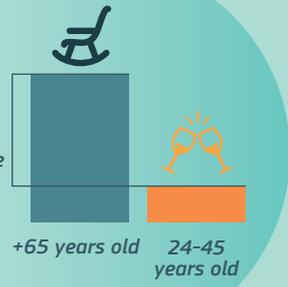
+7  
percentage  
points



Elderly people may be more socially isolated but they are not feeling lonelier

**Elderly people** are less likely to engage often in social activities\*

+9%  
percentage  
points



Nevertheless, they are **not more likely to be frequently lonely**



Europeans living in cities are not any more lonely or isolated than everyone else

The proportion of people feeling lonely in **rural areas** is comparable to that in **urban areas**\*



Why does loneliness matter?



poor health



mental problems



Lonely people are often stigmatised as socially inept.



Lonely people are more likely to have



poor cognitive performance



pessimistic judgments

and to feel more **threatened by life situations**



\* all other individual characteristics are kept constant. Multivariate analyses have been used for calculations.