

LONELINESS & WELL-BEING



Implications for Children and Youth



LONELINESS

- Loneliness is the discrepancy between desired and perceived relationships.¹
- Humans are social creatures; we are "wired" to belong for survival, making social connections a **fundamental human necessity**.²
- When we are socially isolated, feelings of loneliness can arise, which is a **normal reaction**.

HOW DO THEY RELATE?

- **Social relationships are important for positive well-being**.³
- **Loneliness** in childhood and adolescence is a **risk** for poor well-being.⁴

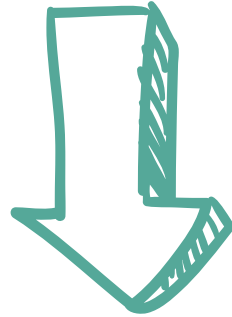
WELL-BEING

- Well-being is an overarching term that describes **overall mental health and global well-being**.
- Well-being encompasses **internalizing** (e.g., anxiety and depression) **and externalizing** (e.g., substance abuse) **symptoms**.
- Poor well-being can have longterm implications for physical and mental health.



Current Study:

Systematic review of cross-sectional (n=30) and longitudinal studies (n=11) that examined child and adolescent loneliness and well-being throughout the pandemic.



A total of 41 studies were included in the review. Child (n=3) and adolescent (n=27) samples (both=11) were examined from community and clinical populations around the world (Europe, US, China, Canada, etc.)

COVID-19 GREATLY IMPACTED SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

Approx. **90% of world's children and adolescents**⁵ were impacted by school closures and **5.7 million Canadian students**⁶ were affected. These measures prevented youth from seeing their friends, peers, and broader social networks.

Greater loneliness was associated with:

Cross-sectional findings:

- ↑ Depression symptoms
- ↑ Anxiety symptoms
- ↑ Internalizing symptoms
- ↑ Mobile/gaming addiction
- ↑ Sleep problems
- ↓ Overall well-being

38.7% OF YOUTH IN AUSTRALIA WERE MODERATELY TO EXTREMELY LONELY DURING THE PANDEMIC.⁷

Longitudinal findings:

Loneliness increased during the pandemic and was associated with poorer well-being (compared to pre-pandemic levels).⁸



SOLUTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

1. Prioritize meaningful, healthy, and supportive relationships.
2. Afford more opportunities to increase connection and quality relationships (e.g., physical exercise, social hobbies, entertainment).^{9,10}
3. Collaboration between agencies to promote sustainable ways to engage in culturally sensitive practices that encourage connectedness in youth populations.¹¹

This infographic was created by Mollie Eriksson and is based on:

Farrell, A.H ; Vitoroulis, I.; Eriksson, M.; Vaillancourt, T. (2023) Loneliness and Well-Being in Children and Adolescents during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Systematic Review. *Children*, 9

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