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Local Area Research + Intelligence Association

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LARIA: Autumn Webinar Series 2026

Understanding and modelling loneliness among older adults at the neighbourhood level

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LARIA: Autumn Webinar Series 2026

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Understanding and **modelling** loneliness among older adults at the neighbourhood level

Understanding:

- Pre- and post-loneliness
- Pre: What are the drivers or risk factors?
- Post: What are the consequences of loneliness (health risks, economic costs etc)?

Modelling (measuring):

- Can loneliness be measured at a suitably fine enough resolution to aid policy?
- How can this be achieved?
- How can it support policy?

Loneliness vs. Social Isolation

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Loneliness: Subjective – a discrepancy between actual and desired levels of social connection.

Social isolation: Objective – A lack of social contacts and relationships.



Ageing population

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- People living longer, ageing in place
- Over half (51%) of all people aged 75 and over live alone.
- 59% of all people aged over 85 live alone in England and Wales.
- 17% of older people are in contact with family, friends and neighbours less than once a week and 11% are in contact less than once a month
- Two fifths all older people (about 3.9 million) say the television is their main company.
- 59% of adults aged over 52 who report poor health say they feel lonely some of the time or often, compared to 21% who say they are in excellent health.

Loneliness consequences

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- Reports claim that social isolation has similar health implications to that of alcoholism or smoking 15 cigarettes a day (Sample, 2010).
- A lack of quality social relationships can mean a person is more likely to develop heart disease or suffer a stroke (Valtorta et al., 2016).
- A lack of social interaction can be more damaging than not undertaking regular exercise and is twice as harmful as obesity (Macrae, 2015).
- Loneliness closely aligned to depression (Aylaz et al, 2012).
- ‘Social isolation’ is listed as one of the nine lifestyle factors affecting dementia risk (Livingstone, 2017).

WHO report 2021

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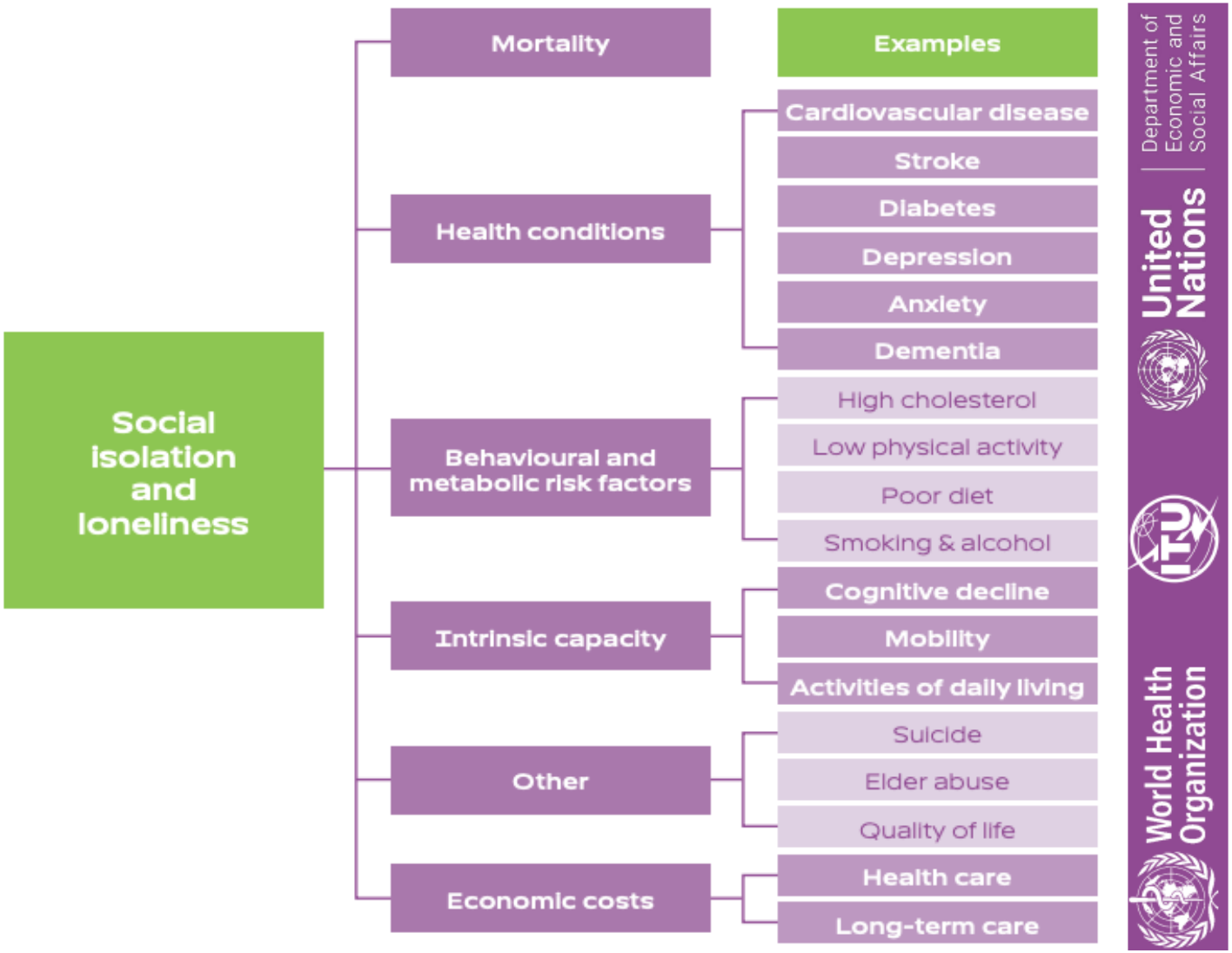


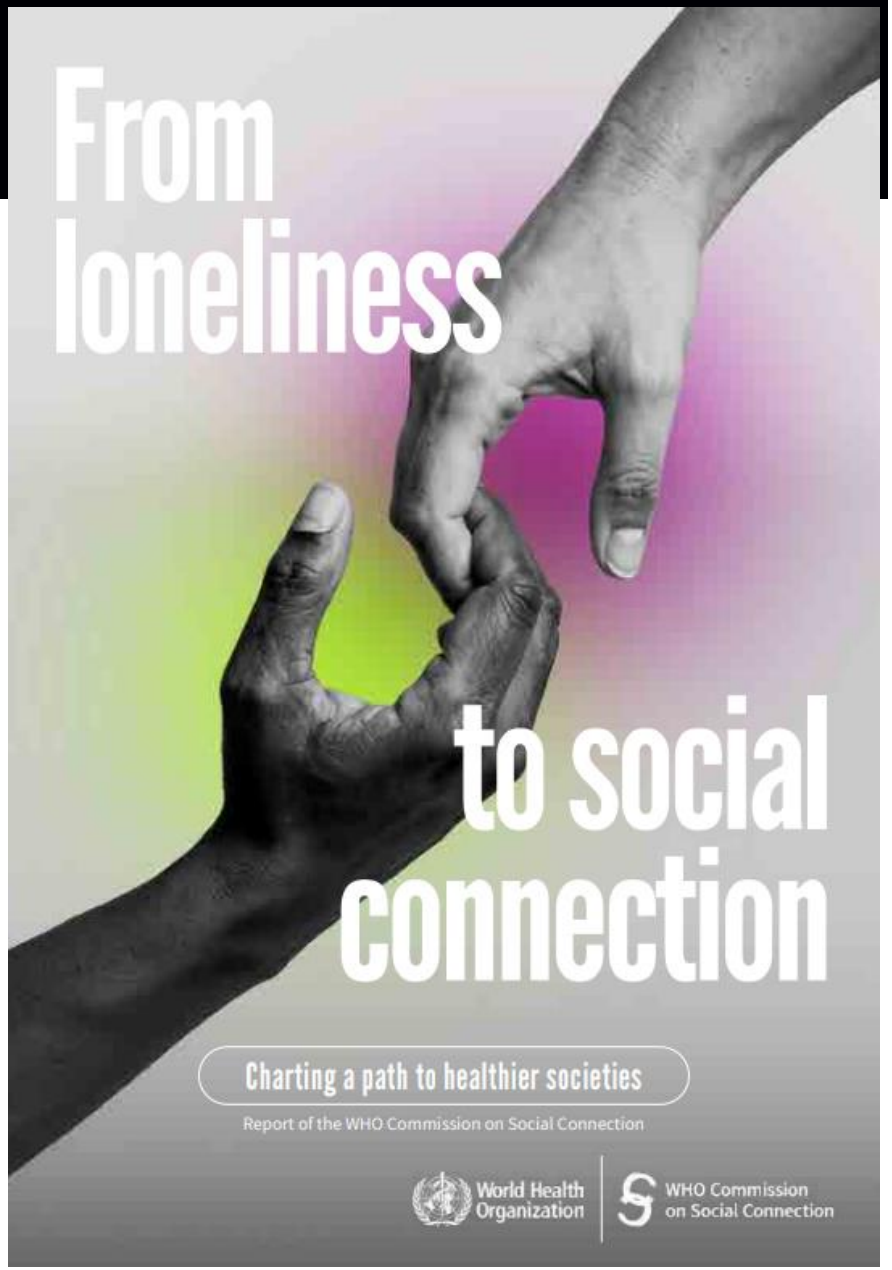
WHO: Social Connection

WHO declares loneliness a 'global public health concern'

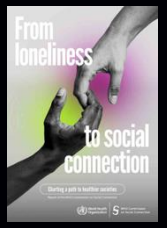
The World Health Organization has launched an international commission on loneliness, which can be as bad for people's health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day



November 2023



June 2025



WHO 2025 report headline findings

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- Loneliness impacts nearly 1 in 6 people, including older people
- Loneliness is attributed to around 871,000 deaths per year
- The COVID-19 pandemic and concerns about digital technology usage have further highlighted the issue, including from governments.
- The WHO report has three key messages.

1) Social disconnection is widespread, in all regions and all age groups.

2) Its consequences are severe and under-recognised, impacting mortality, physical and mental health, well-being, education, the economy and wider society. Its widespread occurrence and its severe consequences make it a serious global public health issue.

3) Effective strategies to foster social connection exist and should be scaled up now.

Early loneliness work (2016/17)

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Gerontology and Geriatric Medicine
Volume 3, 2017
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https://doi.org/10.1177/2333721417714876

SAGE journals

Article

Devising a Composite Index to Analyze and Model Loneliness and Related Health Risks in the United Kingdom

Laetitia Lucy, MSc[1], and Luke Burns, PhD[2]

Abstract

Objective: This research presents a framework through which a spatial composite index is devised to determine areas of potential loneliness and associated health risks. The research is evidenced on the London borough of Southwark in the United Kingdom but is designed such that it could be applied more widely. **Method:** The work adopts a quantitative approach through the combination of census and accessibility variables at a small area level. The output is a scoring system whereby each area is assigned a value indicating the likely presence of loneliness and potentially corresponding health risks. **Results:** Findings imply that loneliness is quantifiable and that this correlates with socioeconomic and accessibility measures. A strong clustering is evident in Southwark. **Discussion:** This research builds on previous attempts to locate and quantify loneliness with favorable results. The outcome provides a replicable solution to assist the public service with the targeting of areas deemed most at risk from loneliness and resultant mental and physical health conditions at a time when such issues are high on the political agenda.

Keywords

loneliness, population aging, composite index, quantitative, spatial analysis

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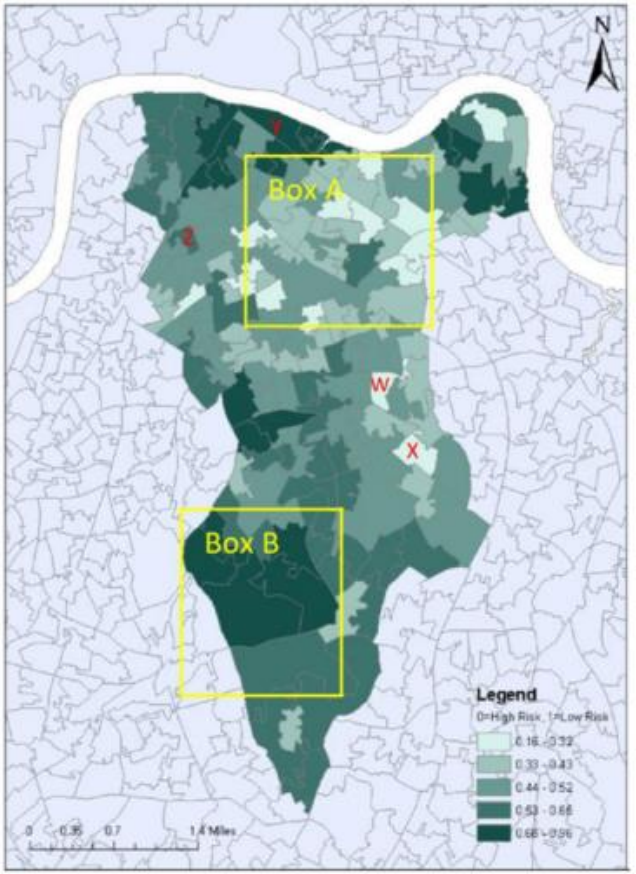
[2]University of Leeds, UK



Loneliness in the media

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INDEPENDENT

How loneliness is costing the taxpayer up to £850 a year

Loneliness is increasing with projections from Age Uk suggesting the number of people aged 65 and over who report frequent loneliness could reach 1.2 million by 2034



Loneliness linked to higher NHS healthcare costs and poorer health in the UK

Loneliness in the media

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SCIENCE HEALTH FUTURITY CULTURE ENVIRONMENT SUBSCRIBE



LONELINESS AND ISOLATION COULD COST YOU 6 YEARS OF HEALTHY LIFE

SEPTEMBER 28TH, 2026

POSTED BY ADDISON DEHAVEN - TULANE

(Credit: Getty Images)

Loneliness in the media

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Loneliness, Isolation Can Strip Away Years Of Healthy Life, Large Study Finds

By HealthDay | Sept. 25, 2026, at 9:48 a.m.

Save | Add us on | Share



Factors impacting loneliness (WHO)

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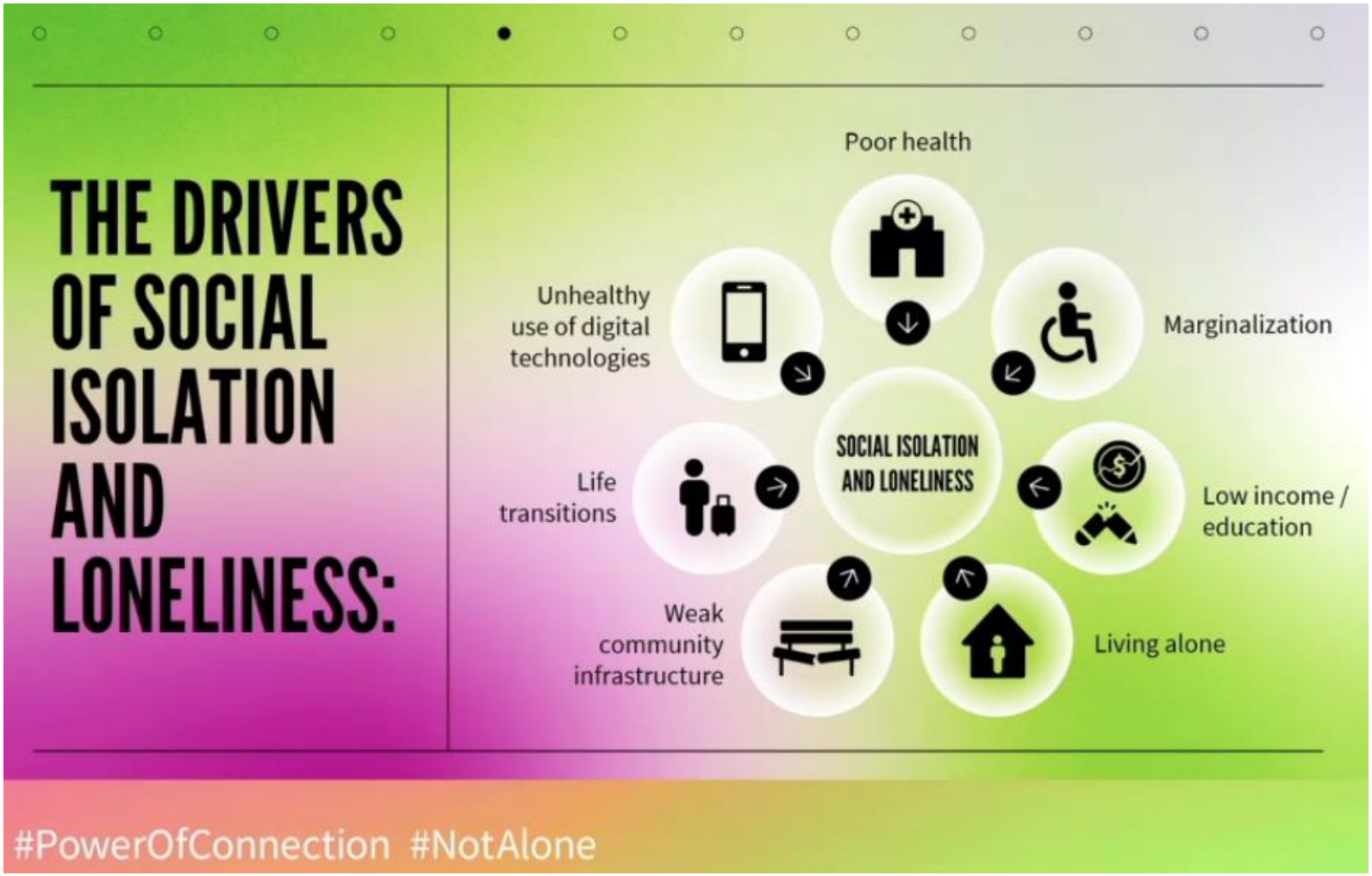

Factors impacting loneliness

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Characteristics frequently associated with loneliness	Characteristics sometimes associated with loneliness	Characteristics rarely associated with loneliness
Oldest age	Substance Use	Gender
Ethnic minorities	Provision of informal care	Employment
Migration	Low quantity of social contacts	Community engagement
Single marital status (especially widowhood)	Socioeconomically deprived neighbourhood	Use of the internet
Living alone	Poor community integration	Rurality
Living in care	Frequent use of amenities and leisure facilities	
Poor health	Education	
Low income		
Low frequency of social contact		
Low quality of social contact		
Poor subjective evaluation of local area		
Poor perception of community integration		
Poor accessibility of local environment		

Loneliness Index 2025

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Variable #	Loneliness Index 2025 **All variables include <u>persons aged 65 and over</u> only, unless otherwise stated:**
1	Persons providing 20 or more hours of unpaid care
2	Persons never married or in a civil partnership
3	Persons separated or divorced
4	Persons widowed
5	Persons with Poor English language capabilities
6	Persons with poor self-reported health
7	Persons with a disability
8	Persons with no or low qualifications
9	Persons who live alone (aged 66+)
10	Households with no access to a car
11	National Public Transport Access Nodes (NaPTAN)
12	Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index (IDAOPI)

Loneliness Index 2025

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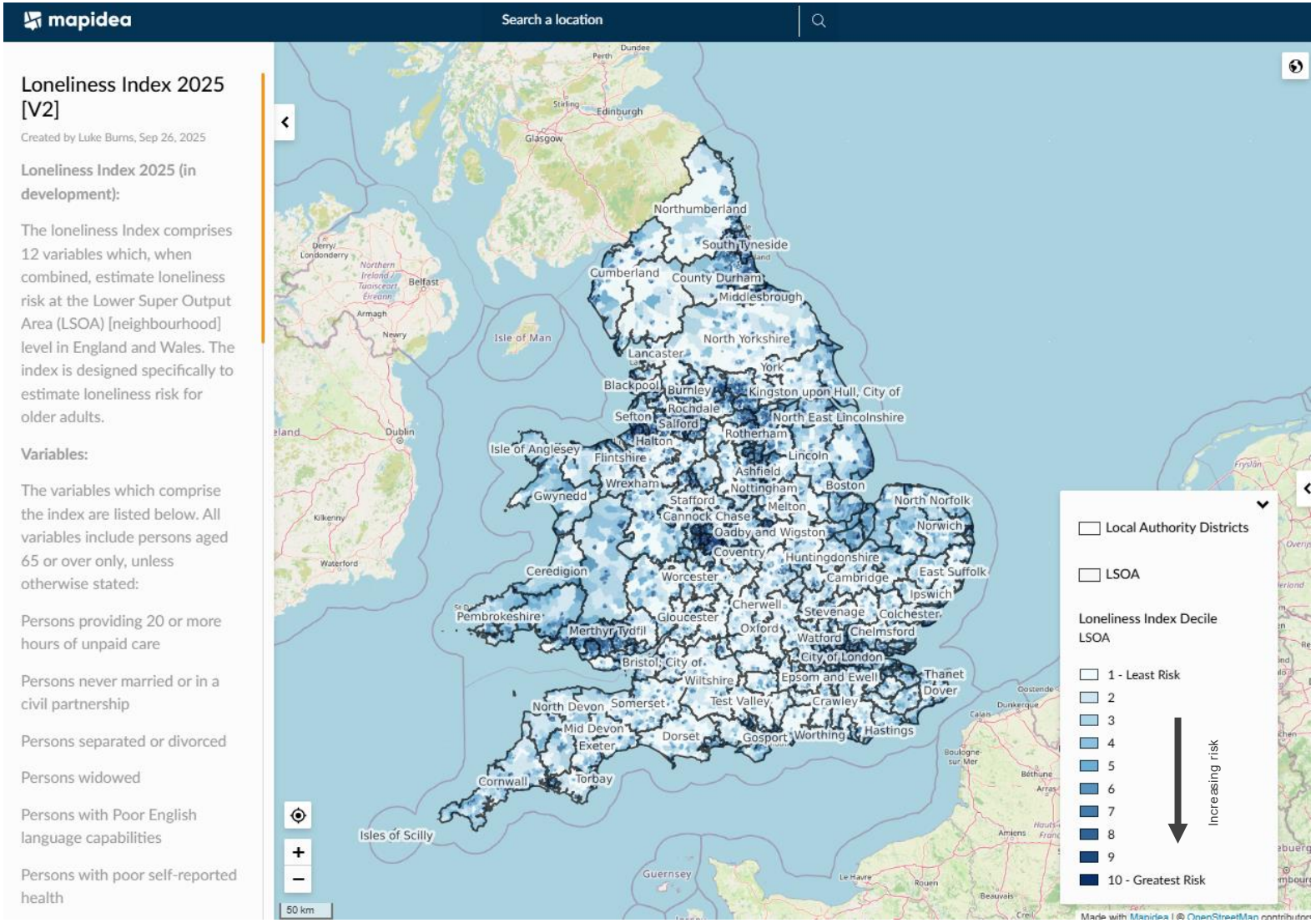

Loneliness Index 2025

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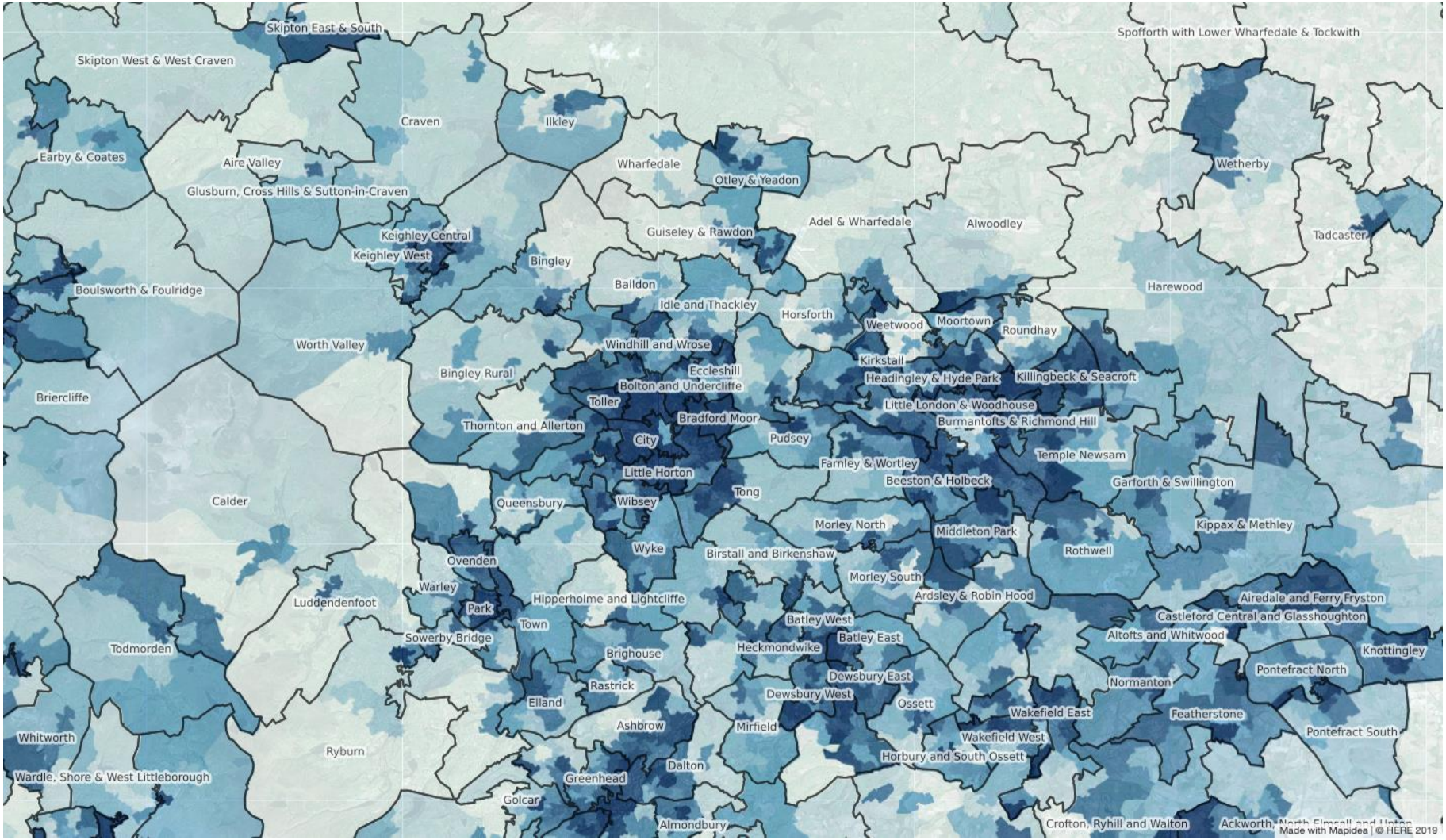

Loneliness Index 2025

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Loneliness Index 2025

74.91 Loneliness Index Score	10 - Greatest Risk Loneliness Index Decile
406 Loneliness Index Rank (of 35,672)	E01011429 LSOA Code
Gipton & Harehills Ward	Leeds District

Population and Household Counts

175 Total Persons 65+	736 Total Households

Normalised Data (all aged 65+ unless stated)

20+ hours of unpaid care	15.43
Never married	23.65
Separated or divorced	17.14
Widowed	29.14
Poor English	32.57
Poor health	60.00
Disability	53.33
Low/no qualifications	74.91
One person hhold (aged 66+)	19.03
No car	23.37
NAPTAN (polarised)	95.09
Income deprivation (IDAOPI) (...	71.38

Loneliness Index 2025

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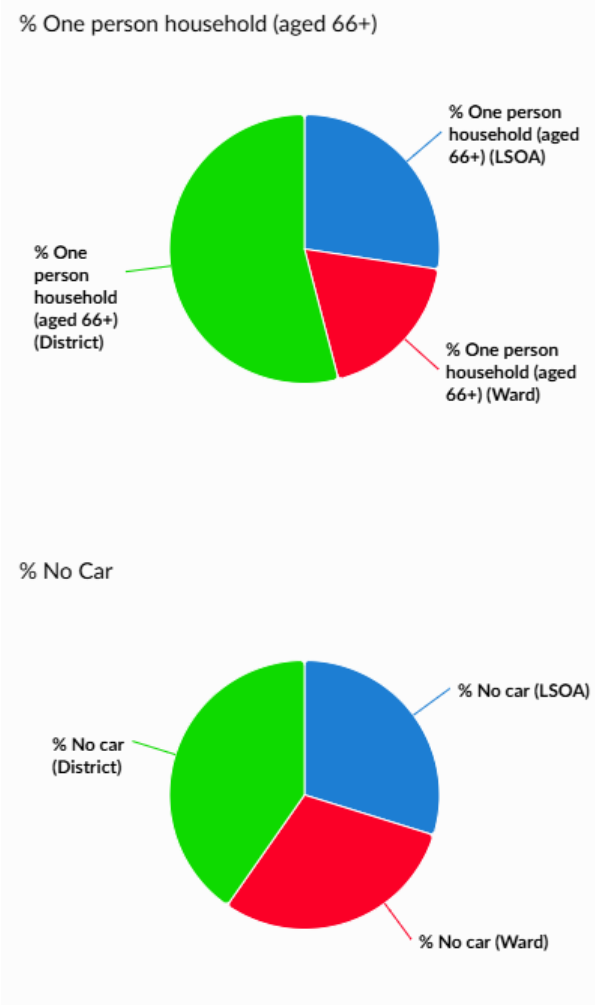
LSOA ('neighbourhood')

Ward

District



Loneliness Index 2025

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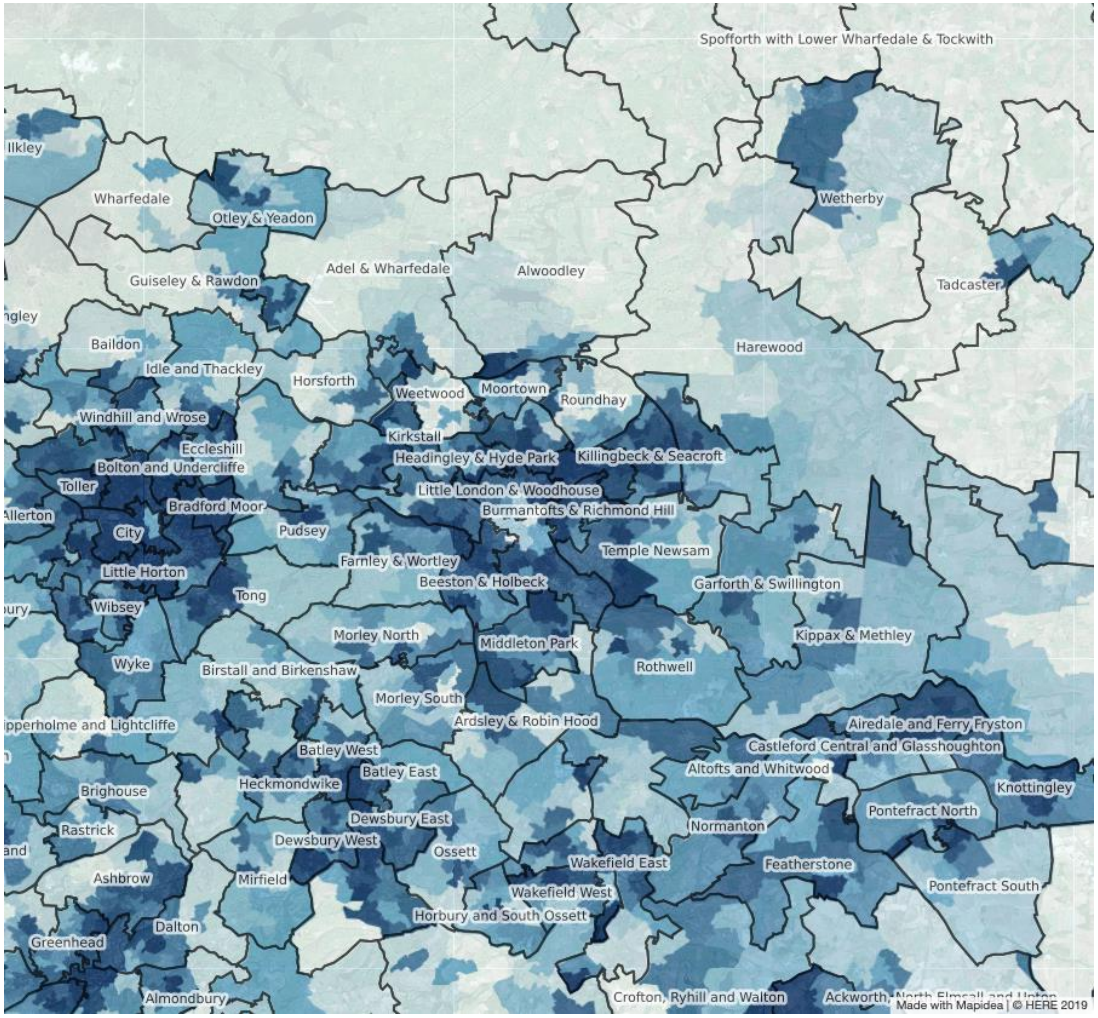
EXPLORE FURTHER

Scan me!



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Parnters (and interest-holders)

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Next stages…

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- Currently exploring funding opportunities and/or interested collaborators to help with…

- Reviewing variables ‘currently’ included in the index
- Considering additional variables (non-demographic), including assets and digital engagement
- Considering weights
- Further developing output(s) and dashboard
- Developing case studies and examples of use
- Supporting interventions
- Working towards covering the full life course

- Workshops so far have started the above process

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Contact me

Explore the Loneliness Index