# Article information:

Screening for loneliness in representative population samples: Validation of a single-item measure | PLOS ONE  
<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0279701>

# Article summary:

1. Loneliness is a significant public health issue with negative implications for mental and physical health outcomes, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. A single-item measure of loneliness, "I am frequently alone/have few contacts," was validated in two representative German population surveys, showing a prevalence of 23.4% reporting some degree of loneliness.

3. The single-item measure demonstrated construct validity through associations with depressive symptoms, anxiety symptoms, satisfaction with life, household size, and partnership, making it suitable for use as a brief screening measure in large-scale population assessments.

# Article rating:

May be slightly imbalanced: The article presents the information in a generally reliable way, but there are minor points of consideration that could be explored further or claims that are not fully backed by appropriate evidence. Some perspectives may also be omitted, and you are encouraged to use the research topics section to explore the topic further.

# Article analysis:

The article "Screening for loneliness in representative population samples: Validation of a single-item measure" published in PLOS ONE addresses the important issue of loneliness as a public mental health concern. The study aims to validate a single-item measure of loneliness, "I am frequently alone/have few contacts," for use in large-scale population surveys.

One potential bias in the study could be related to the definition and measurement of loneliness. Loneliness is described as the emotional response to a perceived discrepancy between desired and actual social relationships. While this definition captures an important aspect of loneliness, it may oversimplify the complex nature of this phenomenon. Loneliness can be influenced by various factors such as social support, quality of relationships, and individual coping mechanisms, which may not be fully captured by a single-item measure.

The study reports a prevalence rate of 23.4% for some degree of loneliness and 3.4% for severe loneliness based on the single-item measure. These findings are consistent with previous research indicating high levels of loneliness in the general population. However, it is essential to consider potential biases in self-report measures of loneliness, as individuals may underreport or overreport their feelings of loneliness due to social desirability bias or stigma associated with admitting feelings of isolation.

The article discusses associations between loneliness and other mental health outcomes such as depressive symptoms, anxiety symptoms, and satisfaction with life. While these associations provide valuable insights into the impact of loneliness on overall well-being, it is crucial to acknowledge that causality cannot be inferred from cross-sectional data. Loneliness may contribute to poor mental health outcomes, but it can also be a consequence of pre-existing mental health conditions or other underlying factors.

Furthermore, the study highlights sociodemographic characteristics such as age, sex, partnership status, household size, and income as potential risk factors for loneliness. While these factors have been identified in previous research as correlates of loneliness, it is important to recognize that individual experiences of loneliness are multifaceted and influenced by personal circumstances beyond demographic variables.

In conclusion, while the study provides valuable insights into the prevalence and correlates of loneliness in representative population samples, there are potential biases and limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. Future research should continue to explore the complexity of loneliness and its implications for mental health outcomes in diverse populations.

# Topics for further research:

* Factors influencing loneliness beyond social relationships
* Longitudinal studies on the relationship between loneliness and mental health
* Cultural differences in the experience of loneliness
* Interventions to address loneliness in different age groups
* Loneliness in marginalized populations
* Technology and its impact on feelings of loneliness

# Report location:

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