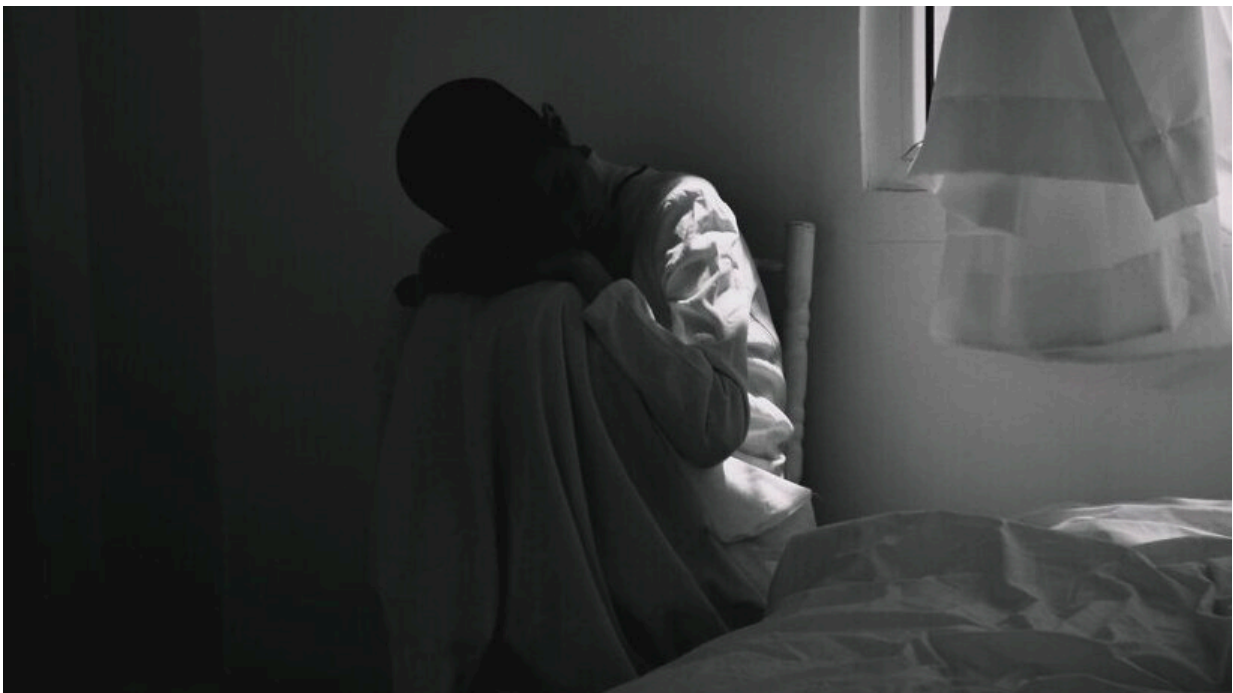


Loneliness increases risk of premature death for those with cardiovascular disease, finds systematic review

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New research from University of Limerick in Ireland has revealed that loneliness, social isolation, and living alone is associated with premature death for those with cardiovascular disease.

Results from the new international study, just published in the journal of *Psychosomatic Medicine*, found that people with [cardiovascular disease](#) that have higher levels of loneliness, [social isolation](#), and that live alone, tend to die prematurely.

The research, which encompasses studies from around the world, sheds new light on the negative health impact of loneliness, social isolation, and living alone for people with cardiovascular disease, which is among the leading causes of death and disability in Ireland.

Cardiovascular disease most commonly refers to [coronary heart disease](#), stroke, and other blood vessel diseases.

The research was led by Róisín Long, a student on the Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology at UL, under the supervision of Dr. Páraic Ó Súilleabháin and Dr. Ann-Marie Creaven.

Working with a team of collaborators from the Department of Psychology at UL, the College of Medicine at Florida State University, and the Department of Psychology at Humboldt University Berlin, the researchers wanted to investigate if loneliness, social isolation, and living alone status would predict long-term mortality risk in people living with cardiovascular disease.

"Social health factors such as loneliness and social isolation have gained a significant amount of attention recently and are really important to think of within the context of cardiovascular health," explained lead author Róisín Long, who is a professional clinical psychologist.

"What was unclear is to what degree they impact how long people live when they have been diagnosed with cardiovascular disease. Our review found that each of these factors are critically important to consider in the treatment of cardiovascular disease, as increased levels of loneliness,

social isolation, and living alone appears to lead to premature death.

"There are likely several reasons for this ranging from support from another individual to how an individual biologically responds to stress."

The review included studies that followed people for decades across multiple regions including Europe, North America, and Asia. Each factor was found to be predictive of mortality risk.

Interestingly, the effects of living alone appeared stronger in European countries, perhaps reflecting the large number of those living alone in parts of Europe.

"While supporting public health concerns surrounding [loneliness](#) and social isolation, the study points to the need for rigorous research in this area across a greater range of geographical regions," the researchers concluded.

Research coordinator on the Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology and Director of the Personality, Individual Differences, and Biobehavioural Health Laboratory (Pathlab) at UL Dr. Páraic Ó Súilleabháin explained, "This work provides very important insights into the importance of these factors in health and longevity. On our Doctoral Program we place a strong emphasis on the importance of rigorous research that has international impact, and this work clearly represents this."

"These are clear factors that need to be considered and resulting development of interventions for anyone with cardiovascular disease."

More information: Róisín M. Long et al, Loneliness, Social Isolation, and Living Alone Associations With Mortality Risk in Individuals Living With Cardiovascular Disease: A Systematic Review, Meta-Analysis, and

Meta-Regression, *Psychosomatic Medicine* (2022). [DOI: 10.1097/PSY.0000000000001151](https://doi.org/10.1097/PSY.0000000000001151)

Provided by University of Limerick

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