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Loneliness is on the rise and younger workers and social media users feel it most, Cigna survey finds

by Marie DeFreitas



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The Cigna U.S. Loneliness Index survey that was released on Thursday found that three out of every five adults, or 61% report that they sometimes or always feel lonely. These individuals reported that they feel left out, are poorly understood or are lacking companionship. The survey also came to the conclusion that workplace culture may contribute to these statistics.

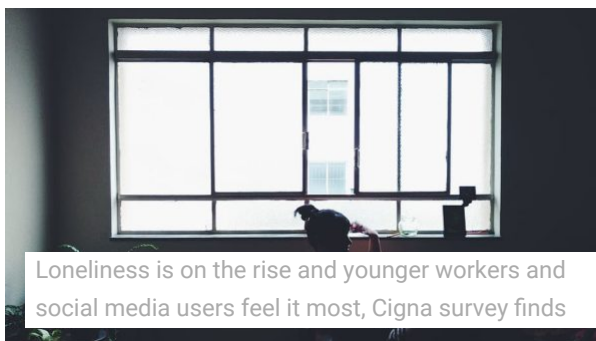
The second annual Cigna U.S. Loneliness Index, which is based on a survey of 10,000 adults, according to *CNBC News*. The stats are up 7% from when the first survey was conducted a year ago.

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For young people, these numbers ranked even higher. According to *CNBC News*, workers aged 18-22, known as Gen Z, 73% reported sometimes or always feeling alone, up from 69% a year ago.

“We had a hypothesis that society – the U.S. specifically – was dealing with an elevated level of loneliness, disconnection,” explained Cigna CEO David Cordani. “We can start to see those disconnections manifest themselves in other health issues showing up for individuals ... whether you think about it through the lens of depression, stress ... or more heavy, complex behavioral issues.”

One of the reasons for this loneliness may be because of social media use, the survey found. Seven out of 10 heavy social media users, (71%), reported feelings of loneliness, This is up from 53% one year ago. That compares to 51% of light social media users feeling lonely, up from 47% a year ago.



The survey also found that men appear to feel much more isolated than women. Forty percent of men reported feeling a general sense of emptiness when they're at work, compared to 29% of



Feelings of isolation were prevalent across generations, reported *NPR*. Gen Z (18-22) years old had the highest loneliness scores, while boomers had the lowest.

Entry level employees had higher levels of loneliness in the office, much more than experienced workers, middle managers and executives.

In addition to this, the survey also saw loneliness at the higher end of the corporate ladder too. Fifty-six percent of senior executives reported feeling there's no one they can talk to, with 69% saying that no one really knows them well.

Employees should definitely pay attention to these numbers. Cigna researchers estimate that employees who feel socially isolated miss work as much as five times more than their connected co-workers due to stress, and are twice as likely as to think about quitting their jobs, according to

CNBC News.

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"In-person connections are what really matters," says Doug Nemecek, chief medical officer for behavioral health at Cigna. "Sharing that time to have a meaningful interaction and a meaningful conversation, to share our lives with others, is important to help us mitigate and minimize loneliness."

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