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Loneliness Crisis Deepens for Young Australians

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A growing number of young Australians are reporting frequent feelings of loneliness, according to new findings from the latest *Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA)* Survey.

The annual study, conducted by the University of Melbourne and funded by the federal government, reveals that over one in seven Australians feel lonely on a weekly basis. The issue appears to disproportionately affect younger demographics, particularly those aged 15 to 24.

According to the report, 14% of Australians aged 15 and over regularly experience loneliness, while nearly 20% report feeling socially isolated. Among adolescents, the figures are especially concerning one in six teenagers and one in three young adults describe their loneliness as a significant problem.

Loneliness levels have been rising steadily since 2012, with the most significant increases recorded during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The disruption to education, employment, and social routines appears to have deepened the sense of disconnection, particularly among younger Australians.

Ending Loneliness Australia, a non-profit coalition aimed at reducing social isolation, highlighted that young people transitioning from adolescence to adulthood are at higher risk of prolonged loneliness. The group is calling for a coordinated national strategy to address the issue, including policy reforms and increased funding for community-based support.

Separately, Suicide Prevention Australia's 2024 Community Tracker report identified loneliness as the leading driver of emotional distress, surpassing concerns about housing affordability for the first time. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has also linked persistent loneliness to a greater risk of depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts, especially among youth.

Mental health experts suggest that increasing reliance on digital communication and reduced in-person interaction may be contributing factors. Orygen, a youth mental health organisation, notes that while social media and technology facilitate connection, they do not always foster meaningful relationships.

Advocacy groups are urging the federal government to take stronger action to combat the growing crisis. Proposals include integrating loneliness awareness into school programs, expanding access to youth mental health services, and funding research into social well-being.

As the latest HILDA findings draw national attention, experts stress that addressing youth loneliness will require sustained public investment, community engagement, and a renewed focus on building supportive social networks.