

## A Quantitative Investigation of the Relation between Gender and Different Types of Loneliness among Adults in Flanders, Belgium

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**Abstract :** Loneliness is increasingly considered a major public health threat. Feelings of severe loneliness negatively affect the social network, physical and mental health, mortality, and quality of life. Although loneliness is generally associated with old age, loneliness is of all ages, and young adults often have the highest risk of loneliness. Further, it is crucial to take the specific types of loneliness into account when studying and developing loneliness interventions. At the moment, little is known about how age interacts with this specific relation while taking into account various dimensions of loneliness (social, emotional, and existential) among adults of all ages. Nevertheless, it is crucial to take the life course perspective into account when studying the relation between loneliness and gender because research shows that several characteristics of the life course depend on gender. Therefore, this study investigates the relation between gender and different types of loneliness (social, emotional, and existential) among adults of all ages in Flanders, Belgium, while taking into account its interaction with age. In this respect, we make use of a representative large-scale survey conducted in 2024 among 3756 adults (18+) in Flanders, Belgium. Preliminary results show that the relation between gender and loneliness depends on the specific type of loneliness. For the youngest age group (18-25 years), we find, for example, no difference between men and women with respect to social loneliness, but women are significantly more emotionally lonely at that age period than men. Further, we find that there is no association between gender and loneliness for all age groups, except for young adults (25-34 years), where men are significantly more lonely than women, which is entirely explained by men being significantly more socially lonely than women. Knowledge about the specific relationship between gender and the different types of loneliness, which is dependent on age, is crucial when setting up interventions that aim to prevent or alleviate loneliness. Indeed, policymakers should always take into account the different types of loneliness when setting up loneliness interventions for a specific target group.

**Keywords :** adults, emotional loneliness, gender, loneliness, social loneliness

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