

# Loneliness and the society - Loneliness and in the political realm

**Loneliness in the European Union: Policies at work**  
**Brussels, 6th June 2023**

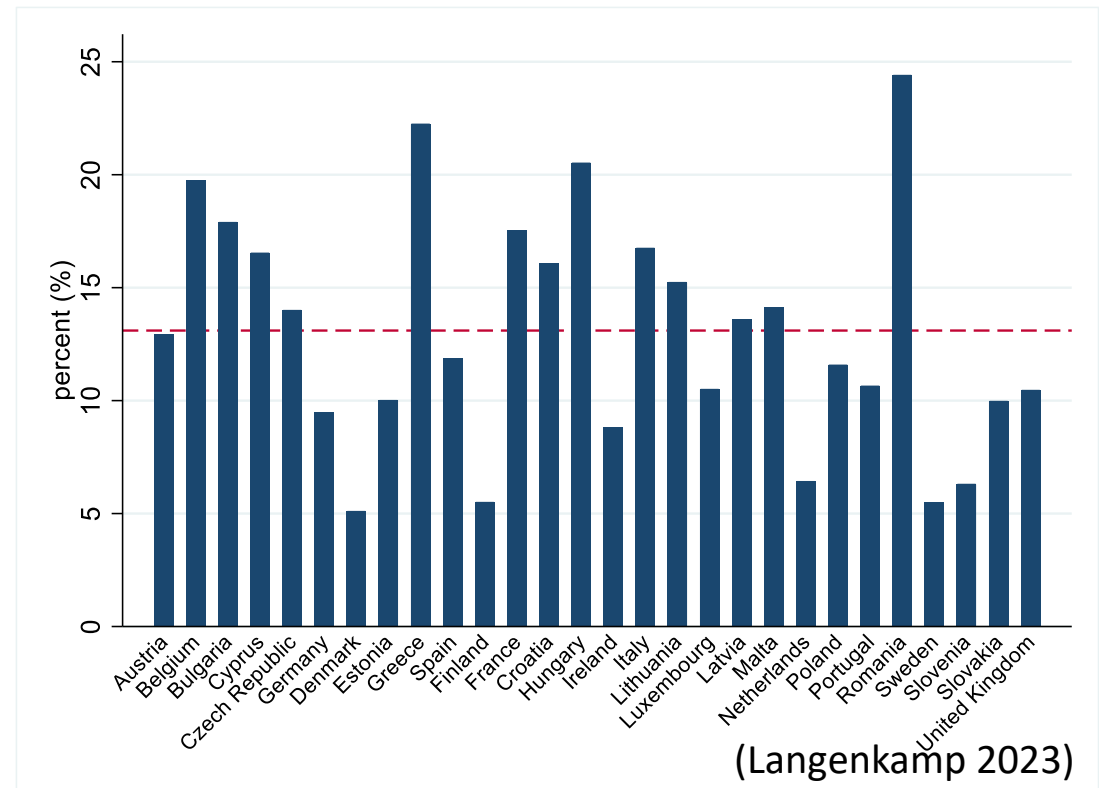
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# Loneliness and society – a question of legitimacy

- Democracies rely on a constructive, active citizenship
- Consequences of loneliness beyond health?
  - Social cohesion
  - Social attitudes
  - Social Participation
  - ....



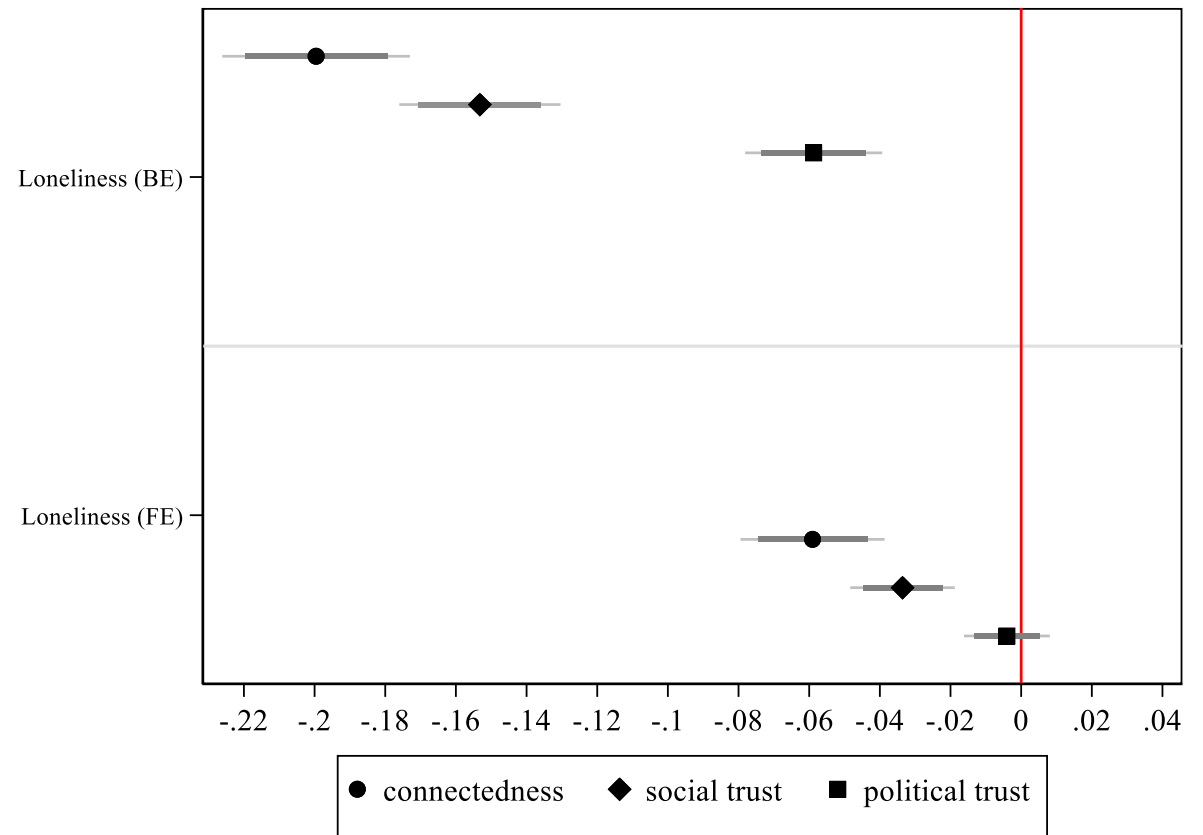


# The intuitive connection:

- Loneliness is an emotional warning signal for insufficient belonging
  - Signals social insecurity
  - Signals exclusion
- Not limited to immediate social ties
  - Feel detached from others → feel detached from society
  - Detachment → distrust

# Loneliness & Social Capital / Cohesion

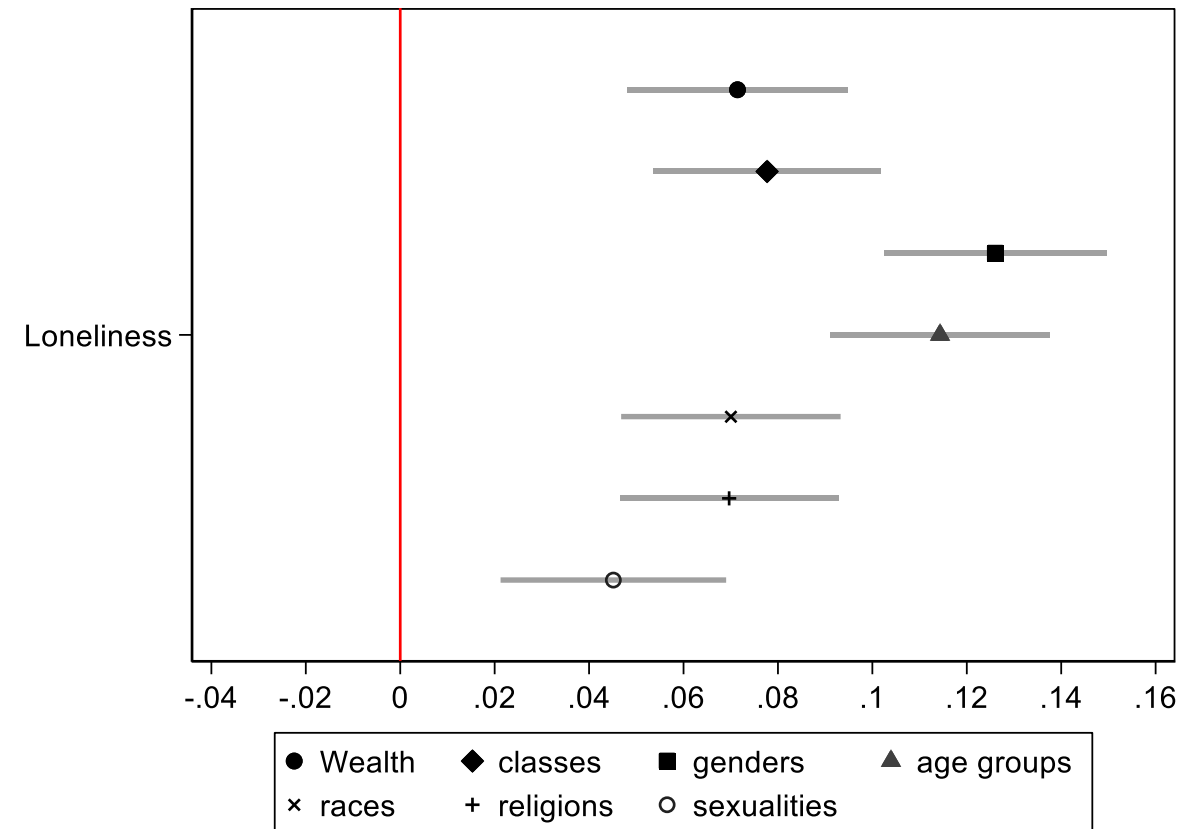
- Panel Data from the Netherlands (LISS)
- Lonely individuals are less trusting and feel less connected
- Growing loneliness is associated with less social trust and connectedness



(Langenkamp 2022)

# Loneliness & perceived social tension

- European Quality of Life Survey
- Loneliness = perception of more tension between groups
- Loneliness erodes perceived social cohesion



Preliminary findings – own calculation

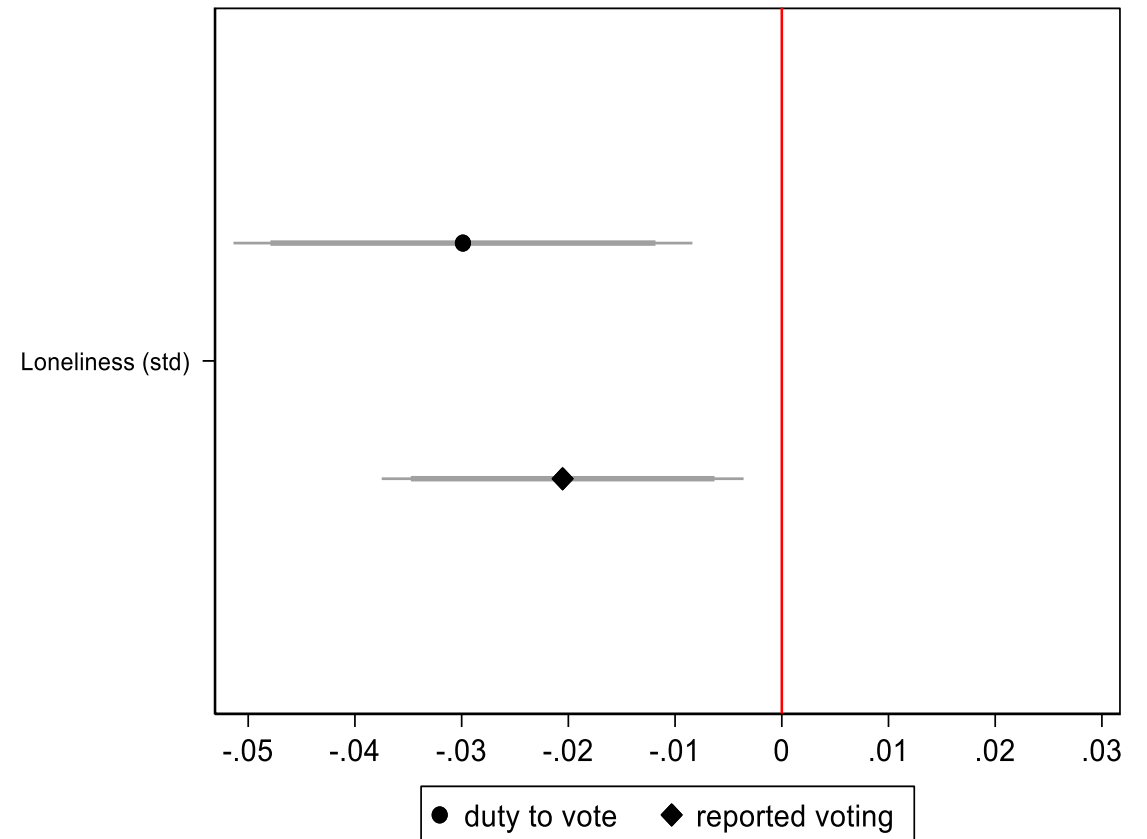


# In consequence...

- Loneliness causes distrust and alienation
- Links to participation
  - If I am not part of society...
  - If society is not trustworthy...
    - Why would I be morally obligated to take part in society?

# Loneliness & Voting

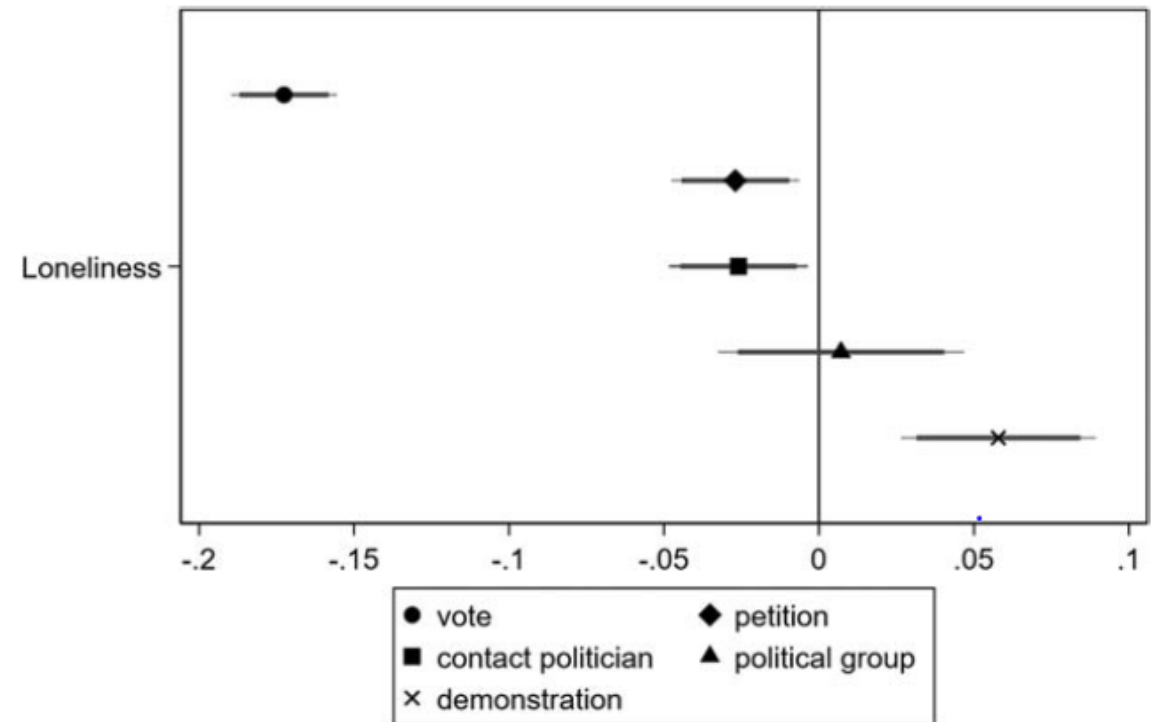
- Data from Germany (ALLBUS 2018)
- Lonely individuals are less likely to see voting as civic duty
- Lonely individuals are less likely to vote



(Langenkamp 2021 a)

# Loneliness & political participation

- European Social Survey
  - Loneliness mostly negatively correlated with participation
  - However, more likely to protest
- Complex relationship, not fully understood



(Langenkamp 2021 a)



# Conclusion



- Limited empirical studies suggest that...
  - Loneliness erodes trust and social cohesion
  - Loneliness seems to demobilise citizens in several forms of political actions
- Relationship complex and underexplored
  - Loneliness on polarization?
  - Impact on protest?

# Practical Implications



- Political interventions against loneliness are...
  - Health prevention
  - Means of democracy promotion
- Relevant already in early age groups
- Increasing focus on young cohorts needed

Thank you



# References

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