

## People reporting poor mental health five times more likely to feel lonely, major UK survey finds

- Major UK study finds people reporting poor health far more likely to lack close friends, be lonely and disconnected
- The *2026 Belonging Barometer* showed that approximately 2.9 million people with poor mental health feel lonely often or always
- Nearly two-thirds (64%) of people with poor mental health reported high anxiety yesterday, compared with 29% of those in good mental health

London, UK, [DATE] – People reporting poorer physical and mental health are far more likely to have no close friends and report significantly higher levels of loneliness and greater anxiety, according to new research from the Belonging Forum.

The *2026 Belonging Barometer* is the Belonging Forum's third annual report examining belonging in the UK, looking at people's connections to others, to the places they live, to the institutions and systems that shape their lives, and to meaning and purpose in everyday life. The findings draw on a nationally representative survey of 10,000 adults conducted by Opinium.

The research found that one in five people reporting poor physical health (20%) and poor mental health (21%) say they have no close friends. This compares with 13% of those in good physical health and 8% among those with good mental health.

The research also reveals a clear gap in how people experience belonging through friendships and social networks. While more than three-quarters of those with good mental health (76%) say they are satisfied with their friendships, this falls to 52% among those reporting poor mental health.

Two in five people with poor mental health report feeling lonely often or always, highlighting how poor health can weaken people's sense of belonging with other people. This is equivalent to about 2.9 million people –

roughly the population of Greater Manchester. This compares to just 3% of people with good mental health.

Health is also one of the strongest drivers of anxiety. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of UK adults with poor mental health reported high anxiety yesterday, rising from 47% among those in poor physical health. This compares with 35% in good physical health and 29% in good mental health.

The *2026 Belonging* Barometer also finds a striking gap in people's sense of purpose – an important foundation of belonging. People with good physical health are more than twice as likely to say the things they do in life are worthwhile as those reporting poor physical health (83% vs 38%).

The gap is even wider when looking at mental health. Only 27% of those reporting poor mental health say the things they do are worthwhile, compared with 85% of those in good mental health.

People rating their physical health as poor are significantly more likely to report having no hobbies (15%) than those in good health (5%). This highlights how poor health limits opportunities to take part in activities that give people purpose, enjoyment and connection to others.

The research also found that people with poor mental health are twice as likely to be disconnected from the place they live. Two in three (65%) of people with good mental health report a strong sense of belonging to their neighbourhood/street, compared with 33% of those reporting bad mental health.

Health also shapes whether people feel their voice counts in political decision-making. Those with good physical health are more than twice as likely as those in bad physical health to say the UK Government represents their views and interests as a voter (22% vs 8%).

Taken together, the findings show that health is one of the strongest divides in belonging in the UK today. People in poorer health are more likely to lack strong relationships, struggle to participate in meaningful activities, feel disconnected from the places they live, and feel less heard by political institutions.

**Kim Samuel, Founder and Chief Architect of the Belonging Forum, said:**

*“Health and belonging are closely connected. When people struggle with their physical or mental health, they are much more likely to experience loneliness, weaker friendships, and higher levels of anxiety.*

*“These findings show that belonging is not only about community or identity. It is also about wellbeing. When people are unwell or facing barriers in their daily lives, it becomes harder to build and maintain the relationships that help us be connected and supported.*

*“A society where people cannot participate fully in social life is a society where belonging becomes harder to sustain.”*

ENDS

#### NOTES TO EDITOR

For media inquiries and interviews, or further information, please contact:  
[press@belongingforum.com](mailto:press@belongingforum.com)

#### About the Belonging Barometer:

- The research was carried out by Opinium on behalf of the Belonging Forum and surveyed a nationally representative sample of 10,001 UK adults. The survey was conducted between 1<sup>st</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> December 2025.
- Mental and physical health are based on respondents’ self-reported health status (good, fair or poor).
- From the nationally representative sample, the weighted numbers for the physical health breakdown was:
  - 5866 reported to be in good physical health
  - 2845 reported fair physical health
  - 1168 bad physical health
- From the nationally representative sample, the weighted numbers for the mental health breakdown was:
  - 6143 reported good mental health
  - 2511 reported fair mental health
  - 1241 reported bad mental health

- Estimates of the number of people affected are based on the latest mid-year population estimates, which put the UK adult (18+) population at 55,022,253.
- Estimated population figures are therefore calculated by applying survey percentages to the latest UK mid-year adult population estimates, and are indicative estimates based on the nationally representative sample.
- The polling analysed figures from the general population and broken down by demographics including gender, age, socioeconomic status, and working status.
- The full findings of the third edition of the Belonging Barometer can be viewed [here](#).

### **About the Belonging Forum**

The Belonging Forum is a global non-profit advancing the right to belong – a birthright that connects us to one another, to the places we call home, to the systems that shape our lives, and to a shared sense of purpose.

We bring together research, advocacy, and action to ensure belonging is embedded in policies, institutions, and everyday life. Through collaboration with thought leaders, community builders, and changemakers around the world, we turn ideas into impact and build a world where everyone can flourish.

The Belonging Forum was founded by Kim Samuel – activist, author, educator, and leading voice in the global movement for belonging.