Gen Z would rather admit to being anxious than lonely, new research reveals

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Loneliness Awareness Week marks 10 years with UK-wide call to 'Give Loneliness a Voice'

Gen Z would rather admit to feeling anxious than lonely, according to new research from Marmalade Trust, as the charity prepares to mark the 10th anniversary of Loneliness Awareness Week with a theme this year of 'Giving Loneliness a Voice'.

A new survey of 2,000 UK 18-29-year-olds found that nearly twice as many people would rather admit to being anxious than lonely (45% v 26%), suggesting the stigma around loneliness still exists, even among a generation that is increasingly open about mental health.

Marmalade Trust says the result underlines why Loneliness Awareness Week remains needed ten years after the campaign first launched. The annual awareness week, which runs from 15-21 June 2026, is encouraging more open conversations about a feeling many people still find difficult to admit.

Amy Perrin, CEO of Marmalade Trust, said: "Ten years ago, talking about loneliness still felt difficult for many people. This result shows that, despite more open conversations, acknowledging you feel 'lonely', can still feel hard to say out loud.

"That is exactly why Loneliness Awareness Week matters. Our 2026 theme, Giving Loneliness a Voice, reflects how far the conversation has come and how much more there is still to do. We want this anniversary year to help raise awareness of loneliness as a natural human experience, reduce stigma and encourage people to speak more openly and support one another."

The survey also found that London stood out geographically, with fewer respondents saying they would rather admit to feeling anxious than lonely. In London, 38% said anxious and 34% said lonely, compared with the national average of 45% and 26% respectively. This suggests that loneliness may carry less stigma in the capital than elsewhere in the UK.

As part of this year's 10th anniversary campaign, Marmalade Trust is encouraging people across the UK to help create 10,000 connection activities during Loneliness Awareness Week, from coffee mornings and walks to community meals, workplace check-ins and school events. In 2025 there were

6,500 connection events. Communities, organisations and individuals are also being invited to add their events to the campaign's Connection Map, while cities across the UK will compete to be named the most connected city.

A standout new campaign partnership will also see disability activist and broadcaster Lucy Edwards bring Loneliness Awareness Week to life through an original free short story about loneliness, created with her beloved literary character Ella Jones. Aimed at primary school children aged over seven years-of-age, *Ella Jones and the Birthday List* will be available as a digital and audio resource, designed to help children recognise loneliness, understand what it feels like and find the language to talk about it.

Lucy Edwards said: "In *Ella Jones and the Birthday List* I wanted to show that loneliness doesn't always look like an empty room, sometimes it's a noisy kitchen where you're loved from every angle but still feel a million miles away. When Ella finally finds the words for that feeling, and lets the people around her step closer, that's the moment everything shifts, and that's the conversation I hope families will have after reading this together.

"This short story is my letter to any child who's ever sat in a crowded classroom or a busy birthday party and thought, 'Why do I still feel on my own?' Giving loneliness a voice for Ella, and actually using that word on the page - felt really important, because once you can name a feeling you can ask for help with it, and that can be life-changing for a little one."

The story will be available free as a downloadable resource during Loneliness Awareness Week, alongside wider campaign activity designed to help people of all ages recognise loneliness, build connection and start honest conversations.

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