

Growing up lonely? Risk factors and correlates of loneliness among adolescents and young adults in Germany

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Background and measurement of loneliness in AID:A

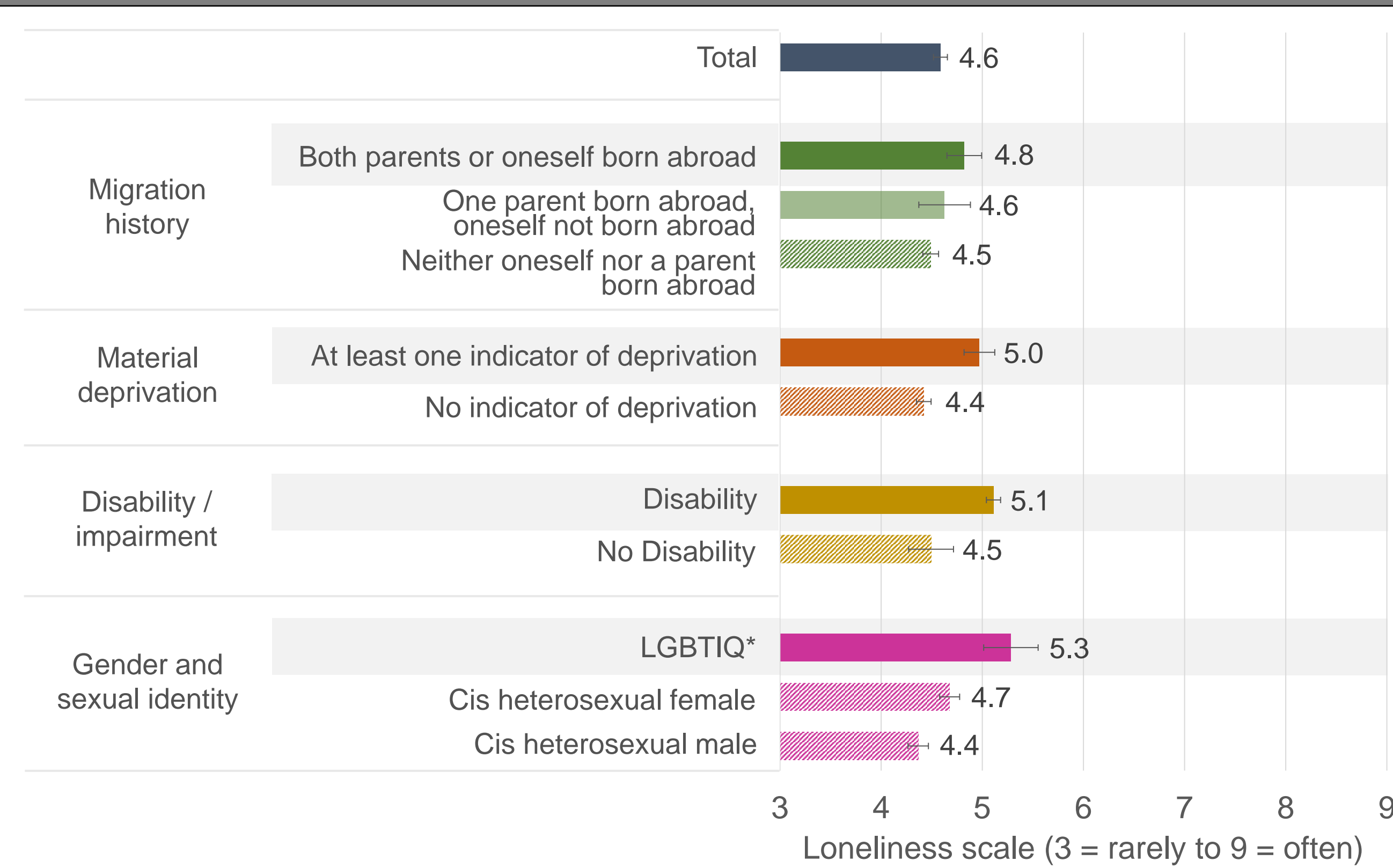
- Loneliness¹ has for some years been acknowledged as a growing **global social issue that affects all age groups**, and increasing attention has been directed toward its **health-related consequences**.
- Loneliness among young people has increasingly become a topic of public concern, especially **during and following the COVID-19 pandemic**.
- Adolescence and young adulthood are generally regarded as a **phase of life with good social integration, but also as a period of transitions and development** with many uncertainties.
- AID:A 2023:** Nationwide, representative data on feelings of loneliness among young people (especially between the ages of 12 and 32) and differentiation according to typical youth life situations, everyday practices and diversity characteristics
- Short scale of the **UCLA-Loneliness Scale (UCLA-LS)**²:
1. "How often do you feel that you lack companionship?", 2. "How often do you feel left out?", 3. "How often do you feel isolated from others?"; response categories: (1) "rarely", (2) "sometimes", (3) "often"
→ Sum scale from (3) rarely to (9) often

AID:A
AUFWACHSEN IN DEUTSCHLAND:
ALLTAGSWELTEN

AID:A
2023



Feelings of loneliness are unequally distributed



Source: AID:A 2023; weighted, age group: 12 to 32 years, n = 4,490-4,767; own calculations.³

- Young people who feel excluded or frequently experience discrimination or bullying feel lonely more often. Young LGBTIQ* people and young people with disabilities or impairments are particularly likely to feel lonely.
- Deviations from normative forms of growing up, feelings of 'being different' and not belonging play a central role in loneliness.^{3,4,5}
- There are no systematic differences between adolescents and young adults.

³ Read more



Does growing up make you lonely?

- Young people who report more frequent stress and time pressure in relation to age-typical challenges experience feelings of loneliness more often.
- The connection between time pressure and loneliness may be due to the fact that (a) the young people concerned have less free and self-determined time available for themselves and social relationships in general, or (b) the experience of social isolation leads to an increased burden in coping with age-typical challenges.⁴

⁴ Read more



Source: AID:A 2023; weighted, n = 4,014-4,746; own calculations.⁴

Good friends protect against loneliness, but many good friends do not necessarily mean less loneliness
Young people with fewer than two good friends feel particularly lonely; with two friends, loneliness decreases significantly – but more than two friends do not noticeably reduce loneliness.³

Loneliness as a health risk factor



Source: AID:A 2023; weighted, age group: 12 to 32 years, n = 4,478-4,489; own calculations.

- Loneliness is linked to key aspects of young people's well-being.
- Among young LGBTIQ* people, the connection between loneliness and well-being, general life satisfaction and subjectively perceived state of health is particularly evident.

Outlook

- Further analyses with the AID:A 2023 data** on correlations between loneliness in adolescence and young adulthood and social integration, media use, political trust and political participation as well as age-typical life events and transitions
- Future plans: Longitudinal data collection using the UCLA Loneliness Scale (**panel and trend**) as part of AID:A 2027, 2029, and 2031

Sources for further reading

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