

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-003088/25
to the Commission
Gerald Hauser (Pfe)
(25 July 2025)**

Subject: Loneliness during the COVID-19 lockdowns and the impact on health and mortality

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), one in six people worldwide is affected by loneliness. This was reported by a WHO Commission dealing with social relations. Loneliness and social isolation cause physical illness and, according to the WHO, contribute to the deaths of around 871 000 people globally each year.

Loneliness also significantly increases the risk of strokes, heart attacks, diabetes, depression, anxiety disorders and suicide.

1. Can the Commission say: What effect have the COVID-19 lockdowns had on loneliness and thus on the health of people in the EU?
2. Can the Commission say: How many people in the EU died during the lockdowns as a result of the effects of loneliness?
3. Can the Commission say: How many suicides were recorded in the EU in relation with the lockdowns?

Submitted: 25.7.2025

**Answer given by Ms Zaharieva on behalf of the European Commission
(14 October 2025)**

Loneliness is an important topic, and the Commission paid special attention to it during the COVID-19 pandemic. An analysis ⁽¹⁾ of the Commission's own Joint Research Centre (JRC) shows that social distancing increased loneliness across the EU. In 2016, about 12% of Europeans reported feeling lonely 'most or all of the time', whereas during early lockdowns this share doubled to roughly 25%.

It should be noted though that the increase of loneliness during the pandemic period as a result of (different) social distancing measures implemented by the Member States at the time had to be balanced with the need to contain the spread of the virus in order to prevent further direct health impacts, including lethal, of a scale which often overwhelmed public health systems.

No official data exist on how many people died in the EU specifically 'as a result of the effects of loneliness' during lockdowns nor is there specific data available tracking suicides in relation with the lockdowns. The data available by Eurostat shows that suicides did not increase in the EU 27 during the period 2020 and 2021. ⁽²⁾ Looking at a larger time span, it can be observed that suicides in the EU decreased by 10% between 2011 and 2021.

Importantly, the study also found that poor health and unfavourable economic conditions are critical loneliness risk factors, and that loneliness of individuals in poor health is mostly chronic, i.e. persistent over time, with no statistically significant variations between normal and exceptional circumstances.

⁽¹⁾ <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC130751>.

⁽²⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00122/default/line?lang=en&category=t_hlth.t_hlth_cdeath.