

Loneliness in post-secondary Metro Vancouver students



BACKGROUND

What is loneliness?

an emotional or mental state, measured by a lack of meaningful relationships but also a lack of a sense of belonging in a community/support network

did you know...

33rd

Vancouver placed **33rd out of 33** Canadian census metropolitan areas in average life satisfaction

53%

53% of young adults reported feeling depressed due to loneliness in a survey conducted by the UK Mental Health Foundation

88%

170 out of 190 survey respondents reported feeling lonely within the last six months

Research Methods

16 User Interviews
29 Expert Interviews
195 Survey Responses
Academic Literature Review
Government Reports & Publications

240 Research Participants

“isn't it weird how everyone wants to make friends, but at the same time **we're all too afraid to make them?**”

Anonymous Student



Problem Landscape

four main causes of loneliness

loneliness often arises as a sum of many factors and interactions in an individual's life

"grades are the **top priority** for me because I want to have a good future"

Stephanie Chiakwelu

Student Community Leader

(1) Financial, Academic & Societal Pressures

the high value for work in Vancouver in combination with the cost of living means students struggle to balance work and study, often feeling the need to sacrifice social life



40% of survey respondents cited time as the number one barrier to creating better connections

(2) Stigma

loneliness is often met with feelings of shame, which may lead to a cycle of even more isolation and withdrawal



Vancouver Culture & Environment (3)

Vancouver has what many describe as a "**cold**" culture; as one expert put it, "there is a difference between 'politeness' and 'friendly'" and **Vancouverites are more polite than friendly**. in addition, factors like the wide geographical distribution of Vancouverites presents further barriers towards connectivity such as lengthy commute times

what **students** are saying...

"**i don't think people know** where to go when they're sad or lonely. Or who to reach out to or where or why"

Anonymous Student

Communication (4)

students struggle to engage on campus because events and services are announced in a decentralized manner.



Solution

Landscape

tackling **loneliness** requires collaboration and communication between multiple sectors of society



“when we acknowledge that **the people have the solutions**, they’re not afraid to tackle it and bring about a solution that works for them”

Amie Peacock
Beyond the Conversation

Academic Institutions



offer **support services** (such as counselling and health services) and a place to find peers who have similar experiences through **student-led groups**



various initiatives by professors and faculty to support students and promote **healthier spaces** on campus

Government



strategies such as the **Mayor’s Engaged City Task Force** designed to increase a sense of belonging and inclusion in Vancouver



changes to grade school education, with inclusion of topics like personal responsibility and well-being

Community



organizations directly working with communities to create **solutions by the people and for the people**

Example: Beyond the Conversation

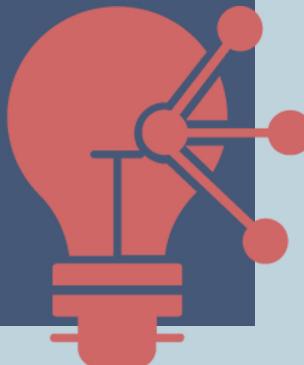
a non profit association with the goal of **ending social isolation** by building strong community through conversation

Innovative

includes **technology-based solutions**, groups using **unconventional means** to bring people together, and **healthcare solutions** such as social prescribing

Example: MySSP

app allowing Simon Fraser University students to access online counselling and mental health services 24/7





Gaps & Levers of Change

these opportunities for change could be effective in reducing **loneliness** and building greater community

Academic Institutions



Gaps

lack of **dialogue** and **education** about loneliness in academia



Levers

increase **engagement around the topic of loneliness** in the classroom from students and instructors

lack of **centralized communication** and collaboration



create an easily accessible **centralized hub** of information for campus and club events

Government



lack of **framework/strategy** to address loneliness in young adults and post secondary students



coordinate **regional and campus-wide strategies** to tackle loneliness

Mental Health Services



long waitlists in counselling & mental health services



increase **collaboration** between mental health services and other groups working towards reducing loneliness

Community



neglecting the impact of loneliness on youth and young adults



increase focus and research on **loneliness** in youth and young adults