

Read the text and answer the questions that follow.

## A NEW LOOK AT LONELINESS

- I In January 2018, the British government did something unusual. It recognised loneliness as a problem to be seriously addressed.
- II This was a response to an official UK study which found that loneliness affected around 14% of the country's population – about nine million people. Another study, conducted by researchers at King's College London and the National Citizen Service, a non-profit organisation, found that over 50% of the nation's teens were "sometimes lonely", and one in 20 saw friends only in school. Among people 65 and older surveyed by the group Age UK, more than 350,000 hadn't spoken with a friend or relative for a week, and 200,000 hadn't done so for a month.
- III To understand these figures, we must first define loneliness. For some, it results from true social isolation – lack of family, friends and structures such as work, school or community. Others feel lonely because they can't share their real feelings with friends and family. And some who spend a lot of time on social media can experience a form of loneliness that results from envying other people's lives.
- IV Whatever the cause, chronic loneliness has health consequences. In elderly people, it has been linked to higher risks of heart disease. And in all age groups, loneliness increases the body's stress-related neurochemical activity. This, in turn, lowers sleep quality, which can affect concentration and cause other problems.
- V However, as psychologist John Cacioppo has pointed out, *occasional* loneliness can be a beneficial biological signal that we need more social interaction. This can lead to positive changes, such as involvement in new activities.
- VI When reading the figures in the studies mentioned above, it's important to keep in mind that other studies have got different findings. Because of varying research and data analysis methods, it may be impossible to truly know whether loneliness has actually increased or there's simply more willingness to report it.
- VII Clearly, however, we are becoming more aware of loneliness and its problems. It remains to be seen whether the British government's focus on the issue will mean more funding for social services and meeting places such as libraries and after-school programmes. And if this growing awareness of loneliness also encourages a greater sense of community, everyone will benefit.

### 1 Choose the correct answer.

- 1 What was one finding of the official UK study?
  - a Loneliness rates have increased by 14%.
  - b Nine million people in the UK experience loneliness.
  - c Nearly 50% of teens are sometimes lonely.
- 2 According to Age UK, .....
  - a most teens see friends outside school
  - b at least 350,000 elderly go a week without talking with a friend or relative
  - c only 200,000 elderly people see a friend or relative monthly
- 3 What cause of social isolation is NOT mentioned?
  - a being without friends or relatives
  - b unemployment
  - c not knowing the language

### 2 Decide if the following sentences are true (T) or false (F). Find evidence in the text to support your answers.

- 1 Loneliness affects our neurochemistry. ....  
.....
- 2 According to John Cacioppo, loneliness has no biological purpose. ....  
.....

**3** Rewrite the sentences without changing the original meaning.

- 1** In January 2018, the British government did something unusual.

In January 2018, something unusual .....

- 2** For some people, loneliness results from social isolation.

For some people, loneliness is .....

**4** Answer the question.

Why do studies on loneliness have different results?

.....

**5** Find words or expressions in the text that mean:

- 1** dealt with (paragraph I) .....

- 2** being jealous of (paragraph III) .....

- 3** be aware of (paragraph VI) .....

- 4** not yet certain (paragraph VII) .....