

Single, **But not Lonely**

In the past couple of decades, living alone has become one of the most rapidly increasing social trends.

For singletons, this has become the no 1 idea that is changing and shaping our lives, the single life –for men and women and it is becoming one of the most popular lifestyle choices all over the world.

Most people confuse living alone with being alone...

Living alone, feeling alone, being lonely and being isolated are four distinct conditions but we often combine them. Singletons (people who live alone) are generally neither lonely nor isolated. They are actually more likely to spend time with friends and neighbours than married people, and volunteer in civic organisations too. Social isolation is worrisome and so is loneliness. But living alone need not be.

Does living alone for a long time make it difficult to adjust to living with a partner or spouse later?

Yes, it takes adjustment but there is no real evidence that it is harder for people who have lived alone for a long time to stay married.

Why are more and more people finding the singleton life so appealing?

Most people do live with a partner for at least some part of their lives. A singleton's life brings freedom, control over one's own time and space and the capacity to socialise on own terms which is appealing to millions of people around the world. Today, people live alone wherever they can afford to do so and have the freedom to determine their own fate.

Is this generation more equipped to deal with the challenge of a solo life?

The answer is probably Yes because there is less stigma. The generation has grown up in a private bedroom, which means they know how to be alone. Moreover social media has

ensured that people live alone yet stay intensively connected to others –not just on the screen but face to face as well. For all our anxieties about the problem of internet addiction, the heaviest users of social media are actually the people most likely to spend time with others face to face.

It is often thought that soloists are people who have not found their match and are always on the lookout.

Probably most singletons are interested in finding the perfect partner. They probably get annoyed when their married friends and family members talk to them as if that's all that matters in life. Too often, we project our own anxieties onto single people rather than simply trying to understand their own desires and needs.

Which gender handles living alone better?

Women are more likely to live alone mostly because they outlive men. Women also do a better job of maintaining relationships with friends and family and are less isolated and more socially active.

Are people who live alone happier and enjoy life more than married counterparts?

This is hard to say –people who are successfully married do relatively well on conventional measures. Do they enjoy life more? That is difficult to assess but then there are those who marry and then divorce or separate. People who live alone tend to be happier than them.

What is the main disadvantage of leading a single life?

It is expensive, can be lonely and if you get depressed while living alone, the problem can spiral out of control. Aging alone can also be brutal especially in old age. But there is nothing lonelier than living with the wrong person. And human history is full of people living, trapped in marriages that are lonely and isolating. Living alone can be a way of escaping that.