

**ENVIRONMENTAL-RISK (E-RISK) LONGITUDINAL TWIN STUDY  
CONCEPT PAPER FORM**

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**Provisional Paper Title:** Adolescent loneliness and employment outcomes in young adulthood

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**Objective of the study and its significance:**

Loneliness has been identified as a key risk factor for a range of mental and physical health problems, with the productivity losses and the healthcare burden linked with loneliness having the potential for significant economic and societal costs (Mihalopoulos et al. 2020). Loneliness has also been linked to poor performance in education and employment (Lim et al. 2019), with lonely individuals more likely to be unemployed (Morrish & Medina-Lara 2021), less confident in the workplace and less optimistic about their career prospects (Matthews et al. 2018). As such, associations between loneliness and poor occupational outcomes may be an additional way in which loneliness exerts an economic burden.

In particular, findings from a recent study suggested that loneliness could be a force for downward social mobility (Matthews et al. 2018). This study indicated that while they were from similar socioeconomic backgrounds, lonelier young adults were more likely to be out of work and education (NEET) by age 18 than their non-lonely peers. This is of particular concern, as NEET status is associated with mental health problems (Goldman-Mellor et al. 2018), and individuals who experienced a 6-month period of NEET are more likely to experience persistent unemployment later in adulthood (Samoilenko & Carter 2015).

The mechanisms underlying the association between loneliness and poor employment outcomes are unclear, with a range of individual and situational factors potentially explaining this downward movement. Children who are lonely during their school years may experience social and academic difficulties that result in them leaving school with lower qualifications (Matthews et al. 2022), disadvantaging them in the job market. Mental health problems linked with loneliness may also drive this association. Further, as most existing research on the topic has utilised cross-sectional data (Morrish & Medina-Lara 2021), the direction of this association is not well understood. While academic and mental health difficulties associated with loneliness may impede lonely individuals' employment prospects, being unemployed may lead to isolation and feeling rejected by society. Greater clarity on this association using longitudinal data will facilitate the identification of young people at-risk of poor work outcomes and inform intervention strategies.

The majority of research on the association between loneliness and occupational functioning has focused on unemployment (Morrish & Medina-Lara 2021) or NEET status (Matthews et al. 2018). However, an individual's employability and social position are multifaceted and cannot be captured using employment status alone. Employability is the capacity of an individual to gain meaningful and sustainable employment, and depends on the knowledge, skills and attitudes they bring to the job market (Hillage & Pollard 1998). In particular, an individual's employability is composed of factors including their technical skills, 'soft' skills,

qualifications, work experience and job seeking behaviour (McQuaid & Lindsey 2005).

The socioeconomic position of emerging adults is also not well captured using employment status (Goodman et al. 2003). During young adulthood, individuals transition from childhood social status, which is primarily determined by their family's status, and adult social status, which is determined by their own occupation, education and income. As such, employment is not a sufficient indicator of young adults' status, with perceived social status an alternative measure appropriate for this developmental stage (Goodman et al. 2003). Research using detailed measures capturing multiple dimensions of employability and social status is needed to understand the link between loneliness and poor occupational outcomes.

An issue when asking individuals about their perceived employability and social status, is that loneliness could be a source of reporting bias. Loneliness is associated with bias towards threats (Spithoven et al. 2017), which could negatively bias individuals' perceptions of their skills and social status, as well as their optimism about their career prospects. This could become a self-fulfilling prophecy, in which lonely individuals' are less inclined to seek desirable jobs or promotions. Sibling and twin designs offer a method for testing whether the 'effects' of loneliness are accounted for by negatively skewed perceptions. For instance, if an adolescent who has experienced loneliness perceives their prospects to be poorer than a non-lonely sibling who shares the same level of education, employment status and family SES, this would suggest that loneliness is associated with negatively biased perceptions, highlighting an important target for interventions.

The present study aims to address the following research questions:

1. Are lonely children less employable as young adults?  
Associations between early adolescent loneliness and both NEET status and an index of employability at age 18 will be examined.
2. Do lonely children feel more negatively about their social status as young adults?  
Associations between early adolescent loneliness and subjective social status at age 18 will be examined.
3. Do lonely individuals have more negative perceptions of their social status compared to non-lonely individuals with comparable socioeconomic circumstances?  
Sibling control methods using cohabiting twins will be used to further control for household socioeconomic status. Twin discordance in qualification levels and current employment status will also be controlled for.

#### **Statistical analyses:**

1. An exploratory factor analysis of educational attainment, job preparedness, work experience, job search behaviour, attitudes about work and career optimism at age 18 will be conducted to examine the relationship between the variables related to employability. An index of employability at age 18 will be derived using these variables.
2. Linear, logistic, and Poisson models will be used to regress employment status, an index of employability, and perceived social status at age 18 on loneliness at age 12. Age 12 personality, mental health and functioning will be entered into the model as a second step, to test whether any effects detected are accounted for by childhood confounders. Age 18 loneliness, mental health and functioning will be entered as a third step to test whether any associations are explained by covariates that may impact an individual's ability to get a job.
3. Fixed-effects models will be used to regress within-twin pair differences in the age-18 outcomes on within-pair differences in loneliness. This analysis will be limited to twins living in the same home, to hold the SES of the family household constant. Twin differences in qualifications and employment status will also be controlled for.

#### **Variables Needed at Which Ages (names and labels):**

##### **Demographic variables**

FAMILYID	ID	Family
ATWINID	ID	Twin 1
BTWINID	ID	Twin 2

SAMPSEX Sex of twins  
 RORDERP5 Random order variable  
 ZYGOSITY Zygosity  
 SETHNIC Ethnicity of twins  
 SESWQ35 SES  
 SESDISM5 Disadvantage

**Age 12**

**Social status**

STA01EC12 Status within family - Elder  
 STA01YC12 Status within family - Younger  
 STA02EC12 Status within peers - Elder  
 STA02YC12 Status within peers - Younger  
 STA03EC12 Status within school - Elder  
 STA03YC12 Status within school - Younger  
 STA04EC12 Status within country - Elder  
 STA04YC12 Status within country - Younger

**Loneliness**

LONELYE12 Loneliness age 12 - Elder  
 LONELYY12 Loneliness age 12 - Younger

**Mental health and functioning covariates**

CDIE12 Depression Scale - CDI - Elder  
 CDIY12 Depression Scale - CDI - Younger  
 MASCE12 Anxiety Scale - MASC - Elder  
 MASCY12 Anxiety Scale - MASC - Elder  
 DEPRSE12 Depression scale [from CBCL] - P12 - Elder  
 DEPRSY12 Depression scale [from CBCL] - P12 – Younger  
 PE70AM12 Uses drugs for non-medical purposes  
 PE70BM12 Drinks alcohol w/o parents approval  
 PE70CM12 Smokes tobacco'  
 BFINE12 Neuroticism Subscale (BFI) - Elder Twin  
 BFINY12 Neuroticism Subscale (BFI) - Younger Twin

**Age 18**

**Education and employment variables**

NEETE18 NEET: Not in education, employment or training - P18 - Elder  
 NEETY18 NEET: Not in education, employment or training - P18 – Younger  
 DEM2E18 Currently studying - elder  
 DEM2Y18 Currently studying – younger  
 DEM4E18 Reason left education – elder  
 DEM4Y18 Reason left education – younger  
 EDUCACHVE18 Highest educational achievement (based on QCF) - P18 - Elder  
 EDUCACHVY18 Highest educational achievement (based on QCF) - P18 – Younger  
 DEM5E18 Currently working - elder  
 DEM5Y18 Currently working - younger

**Employment history variables** - including raw reasons for leaving job

DEM9E18 Ever paid for work – elder  
 DEM9Y18 Ever paid for work - younger  
 DEM10E18 Ever lost job - elder  
 DEM10Y18 Ever lost job - younger  
 DEM10aE18 Ever lost job (sacked) - elder  
 DEM10aY18 Ever lost job (sacked) - younger  
 DEM10bE18 Ever lost job (redundant) - elder  
 DEM10bY18 Ever lost job (redundant) - younger  
 DEM10cE18 Ever lost job (closed) - elder  
 DEM10cY18 Ever lost job (closed) - younger  
 DEM10dE18 Ever lost job (pay) - elder  
 DEM10dY18 Ever lost job (pay) - younger  
 DEM10eE18 Ever lost job (disliked job) - elder  
 DEM10eY18 Ever lost job (disliked job) - younger  
 DEM10fE18 Ever lost job (progression) - elder  
 DEM10fY18 Ever lost job (progression) - younger  
 DEM10gE18 Ever lost job (boss/co-workers) - elder

DEM10gY18 Ever lost job (boss/co-workers) - younger  
 DEM10hE18 Ever lost job (prison) - elder  
 DEM10hY18 Ever lost job (prison) - younger  
 DEM10iE18 Ever lost job (illness) - elder  
 DEM10iY18 Ever lost job (illness) - younger  
 DEM10jE18 Ever lost job (mental health) - elder  
 DEM10jY18 Ever lost job (mental health) - younger  
 DEM10kE18 Ever lost job (transport) - elder  
 DEM10kY18 Ever lost job (transport) - younger  
 DEM10lE18 Ever lost job (carer) - elder  
 DEM10lY18 Ever lost job (carer) - younger  
 DEM10mE18 Ever lost job (better job) - elder  
 DEM10mY18 Ever lost job (better job) - younger  
 DEM10nE18 Ever lost job - elder  
 DEM10nY18 Ever lost job - younger

**Job search behaviour** – including raw job search items for factor analysis

DEM11E18 Job search behaviour - elder  
 DEM11Y18 Job search behaviour - younger  
 DEM11aE18 Job search behaviour (classifieds) - elder  
 DEM11aY18 Job search behaviour (classifieds) - younger  
 DEM11bE18 Job search behaviour (internet) - elder  
 DEM11bY18 Job search behaviour (internet) - younger  
 DEM11cE18 Job search behaviour (listing) - elder  
 DEM11cY18 Job search behaviour (listing) - younger  
 DEM11dE18 Job search behaviour (CV) - elder  
 DEM11dY18 Job search behaviour (CV) - younger  
 DEM11eE18 Job search behaviour (talking) - elder  
 DEM11eY18 Job search behaviour (talking) - younger  
 DEM11fE18 Job search behaviour (applied) - elder  
 DEM11fY18 Job search behaviour (applied) - younger  
 DEM11gE18 Job search behaviour (interview) - elder  
 DEM11gY18 Job search behaviour (interview) - younger  
 DEM11hE18 Job search behaviour (agency) - elder  
 DEM11hY18 Job search behaviour (agency) - younger  
 DEM11iE18 Job search behaviour (contacted employer) - elder  
 DEM11iY18 Job search behaviour (contacted employer) - younger  
 DEM11jE18 Job search behaviour (training) - elder  
 DEM11jY18 Job search behaviour (training) - younger  
 DEM11kE18 Job search behaviour (nothing) - elder  
 DEM11kY18 Job search behaviour (nothing) - younger  
 DEM11lE18 Job search behaviour (other) - elder  
 DEM11lY18 Job search behaviour (other) - younger  
 DEM12aE18 Hurt chances of getting job (qualifications) - elder  
 DEM12aY18 Hurt chances of getting job (qualifications) - younger  
 DEM12bE18 Hurt chances of getting job (age) - elder  
 DEM12bY18 Hurt chances of getting job (age) - younger  
 DEM12cE18 Hurt chances of getting job (ethnicity) - elder  
 DEM12cY18 Hurt chances of getting job (ethnicity) - younger  
 DEM12dE18 Hurt chances of getting job (economy) - elder  
 DEM12dY18 Hurt chances of getting job (economy) - younger  
 DEM12eE18 Hurt chances of getting job (gender) - elder  
 DEM12eY18 Hurt chances of getting job (gender) - younger  
 DEM12fE18 Hurt chances of getting job (availability) - elder  
 DEM12fY18 Hurt chances of getting job (availability) - younger  
 DEM12gE18 Hurt chances of getting job (relocation) - elder  
 DEM12gY18 Hurt chances of getting job (relocation) - younger  
 DEM12hE18 Hurt chances of getting job (personality) - elder  
 DEM12hY18 Hurt chances of getting job (personality) - younger  
 DEM12iE18 Hurt chances of getting job (health) - elder  
 DEM12iY18 Hurt chances of getting job (health) - younger  
 DEM12jE18 Hurt chances of getting job (looks) - elder  
 DEM12jY18 Hurt chances of getting job (looks) - younger  
 DEM12kE18 Hurt chances of getting job (work record) - elder  
 DEM12kY18 Hurt chances of getting job (work record) - younger  
 DEM12lE18 Hurt chances of getting job (transport) - elder

DEM12IY18 Hurt chances of getting job (transport) - younger  
 DEM12mE18 Hurt chances of getting job (childcare) - elder  
 DEM12mY18 Hurt chances of getting job (childcare) - younger  
 DEM12nE18 Hurt chances of getting job (criminal record) - elder  
 DEM12nY18 Hurt chances of getting job (criminal record) - younger  
 DEM12oE18 Hurt chances of getting job (mental health) - elder  
 DEM12oY18 Hurt chances of getting job (mental health) - younger

**Attitudes about work** – including raw items for factor analysis

DEM13E18 Work attitudes (lottery) - elder  
 DEM13Y18 Work attitudes (lottery) - younger  
 DEM14E18 Work attitudes (important) - elder  
 DEM14Y18 Work attitudes (important) - younger  
 DEM15E18 Work attitudes (bored) - elder  
 DEM15Y18 Work attitudes (bored) - younger  
 DEM16E18 Work attitudes (self-respect) - elder  
 DEM16Y18 Work attitudes (self-respect) - younger  
 DEM17E18 Work attitudes (worst) - elder  
 DEM17Y18 Work attitudes (worst) - younger  
 DEM18E18 Work attitudes (money) - elder  
 DEM18Y18 Work attitudes (money) - younger  
 DEM19E18 Work attitudes (prefer to work) - elder  
 DEM19Y18 Work attitudes (prefer to work) - younger

**Job preparedness and optimism** – including raw items for factor analysis

JPREPSE18 Job preparedness (skills) scale - P18 - Elder  
 JPREPSY18 Job preparedness (skills) scale - P18 - Younger  
 JMP1E18 Job preparedness (skills – word processing) scale - elder  
 JMP1Y18 Job preparedness (skills - word processing) scale - younger  
 JMP2E18 Job preparedness (skills - programming) scale - elder  
 JMP2Y18 Job preparedness (skills - programming) scale - younger  
 JMP3E18 Job preparedness (skills – second language) scale - elder  
 JMP3Y18 Job preparedness (skills - second language) scale - younger  
 JMP4E18 Job preparedness (skills - talent) scale - elder  
 JMP4Y18 Job preparedness (skills - talent) scale - younger  
 JMP5E18 Job preparedness (skills - sales) scale - elder  
 JMP5Y18 Job preparedness (skills - sales) scale - younger  
 JMP6E18 Job preparedness (skills – customer service) scale - elder  
 JMP6Y18 Job preparedness (skills - customer service) scale - younger  
 JMP7E18 Job preparedness (skills - writing) scale - elder  
 JMP7Y18 Job preparedness (skills - writing) scale - younger  
 JMP8E18 Job preparedness (skills - cooking) scale - elder  
 JMP8Y18 Job preparedness (skills - cooking) scale - younger  
 JMP9E18 Job preparedness (skills - trade) scale - elder  
 JMP9Y18 Job preparedness (skills - trade) scale - younger  
 JMP10E18 Job preparedness (skills - business) scale - elder  
 JMP10Y18 Job preparedness (skills - business) scale - younger  
 JMP11E18 Job preparedness (skills - other) scale - elder  
 JMP11Y18 Job preparedness (skills - other) scale - younger  
 JPREPAE18 Job preparedness (attributes) scale - P18 - Elder  
 JPREPAY18 Job preparedness (attributes) scale - P18 - Younger  
 JMP12E18 Job preparedness (attributes – problem solving) scale - elder  
 JMP12Y18 Job preparedness (attributes - problem solving) scale - younger  
 JMP13E18 Job preparedness (attributes – critical thinking) scale - elder  
 JMP13Y18 Job preparedness (attributes - critical thinking) scale - younger  
 JMP14E18 Job preparedness (attributes - leader) scale - elder  
 JMP14Y18 Job preparedness (attributes - leader) scale - younger  
 JMP15E18 Job preparedness (attributes - calm) scale - elder  
 JMP15Y18 Job preparedness (attributes - calm) scale - younger  
 JMP16E18 Job preparedness (attributes - explain) scale - elder  
 JMP16Y18 Job preparedness (attributes - explain) scale - younger  
 JMP17E18 Job preparedness (attributes - tech) scale - elder  
 JMP17Y18 Job preparedness (attributes - tech) scale - younger  
 JMP18E18 Job preparedness (attributes - communication) scale - elder  
 JMP18Y18 Job preparedness (attributes - communication) scale - younger  
 JMP19E18 Job preparedness (attributes - others) scale - elder

JMP19Y18 Job preparedness (attributes - others) scale - younger  
 JMP20E18 Job preparedness (attributes - time) scale - elder  
 JMP20Y18 Job preparedness (attributes - time) scale - younger  
 JMP21E18 Job preparedness (attributes - improving) scale - elder  
 JMP21Y18 Job preparedness (attributes - improving) scale - younger  
 JMP22E18 Job preparedness (attributes – get along) scale - elder  
 JMP22Y18 Job preparedness (attributes – get along) scale - younger  
 JMP23E18 Job preparedness (attributes - adapt) scale - elder  
 JMP23Y18 Job preparedness (attributes - adapt) scale - younger  
 JMP24E18 Job preparedness (attributes - tasks) scale - elder  
 JMP24Y18 Job preparedness (attributes - task) scale - younger  
 JMP25E18 Job preparedness (attributes - team) scale - elder  
 JMP25Y18 Job preparedness (attributes - team) scale - younger  
 JMP26E18 Job preparedness (attributes – reading people) scale - elder  
 JMP26Y18 Job preparedness (attributes – reading people) scale - younger  
 JMP27E18 Job preparedness (attributes – on time) scale - elder  
 JMP27Y18 Job preparedness (attributes – on time) scale - younger  
 JMP28E18 Job preparedness (attributes - creative) scale - elder  
 JMP28Y18 Job preparedness (attributes – creative) scale - younger  
 JMP29E18 Job preparedness (attributes - learner) scale - elder  
 JMP29Y18 Job preparedness (attributes - learner) scale - younger  
 JMP30E18 Job preparedness (attributes - likeable) scale - elder  
 JMP30Y18 Job preparedness (attributes - likeable) scale - younger  
 JMP31E18 Job preparedness (attributes - advice) scale - elder  
 JMP31Y18 Job preparedness (attributes - advice) scale - younger

OPTIME18 Optimism scale - P18 - Elder  
 OPTIMY18 Optimism scale - P18 - Younger  
 OPT1E18 Optimism scale (education) - elder  
 OPT1Y18 Optimism scale (education) - younger  
 OPT2E18 Optimism scale (university) - elder  
 OPT2Y18 Optimism scale (university) - younger  
 OPT3E18 Optimism scale (opportunity) - elder  
 OPT3Y18 Optimism scale (opportunity) - younger  
 OPT4E18 Optimism scale (job market) - elder  
 OPT4Y18 Optimism scale (job market) - younger  
 OPT5E18 Optimism scale (move away) - elder  
 OPT5Y18 Optimism scale (move away) - younger  
 OPT6E18 Optimism scale (money) - elder  
 OPT6Y18 Optimism scale (money) - younger  
 OPT7E18 Optimism scale (family) - elder  
 OPT7Y18 Optimism scale (family) - younger  
 OPT8E18 Optimism scale (background) - elder  
 OPT8Y18 Optimism scale (background) - younger  
 OPT9E18 Optimism scale (work hard) - elder  
 OPT9Y18 Optimism scale (work hard) - younger  
 OPT10E18 Optimism scale (older) - elder  
 OPT10Y18 Optimism scale (older) - younger

**Subjective social status**

SIFAMILYE18 Status within family task - elder  
 SIFAMILYY18 Status within family task - younger  
 SIPEERSE18 Status within peers task - elder  
 SIPEERSY18 Status within peers task - younger  
 SIWORKE18 Status within work task - elder  
 SIWORKY18 Status within work task - younger  
 SICOUNTRYE18 Subjective social status ladder task - elder  
 SICOUNTRYY18 Subjective social status ladder task - younger

**Loneliness**

LONELYE18 Loneliness scale - P18 - Elder  
 LONELY18 Loneliness scale - P18 - Younger

**Mental health and functioning covariates**

MDESXE18 Depression symptoms scale - P18 - Elder  
 MDESXY18 Depression symptoms scale - P18 - Younger

GADSXE18	GAD symptoms scale - P18 - Elder
GADSXY18	GAD symptoms scale - P18 – Younger
BFINE18	Neuroticism subscale (BFI) – Interviewer – P18 - Elder
BFINY18	Neuroticism subscale (BFI) – Interviewer – P18 - Younger
PARENTE18R	Early pregnancy (parent or pregnant at 18) - Elder
PARENTY18R	Early pregnancy (parent or pregnant at 18) - Younger
ANYCRIME18	MoJ - any criminal offence - P18 - Elder
BMI18	BMI – P18 - Elder
BMIY18	BMI – P18 - Younger
AUDSXE18	Alcohol use disorder symptoms scale (DSM5) - P18 - Elder
AUDSXY18	Alcohol use disorder symptoms scale (DSM5) - P18 - Younger
IMDDECILE_P18	Index of Multiple Deprivation Decile, age 18, IMD2015
IMDDECILY_P18	Index of Multiple Deprivation Decile, age 18, IMD2015
COHABE18	Twins living together at age 18 - Elder

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## Data Security Agreement

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Proposing Author	Bridget Bryan
Today's Date	21 September 2022

### ***Please keep one copy for your records***

(Please initial your agreement)

- X I am familiar with the King's College London research ethics guidelines (<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/innovation/research/support/ethics/about/index.aspx>) and the MRC good research practice guidelines (<https://www.mrc.ac.uk/research/policies-and-guidance-for-researchers/good-research-practice/>).
- X My project has ethical approval from my institution.
- X I am familiar with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (<https://mrc.ukri.org/documents/pdf/gdpr-guidance-note-3-consent-in-research-and-confidentiality/>), and will use the data in a manner compliant with its requirements.
- X My computer is (a) encrypted at the hard drive level, (b) password-protected, (c) configured to lock after 15 minutes of inactivity, AND (d) has an antivirus client which is updated regularly.
- X I will treat all data as "restricted" and store in a secure fashion.
- X I will not share the data with anyone, including students or other collaborators not specifically listed on this concept paper.
- X I will not merge data from different files or sources, except where approval has been given by the PI.
- X I will not post data online or submit the data file to a journal for them to post. Some journals are now requesting the data file as part of the manuscript submission process. The E-Risk Study cannot be shared because the Study Members have not given informed consent for unrestricted open access. Speak to the study PI for strategies for dealing with data sharing requests from Journals.
- X Before submitting my paper to a journal, I will submit my draft manuscript and scripts for data checking, and my draft manuscript for co-author mock review, allowing three weeks.
- X I will submit analysis scripts and new variable documentation to project data manager after the manuscript gets accepted for publication.
- X I will delete the data after the project is complete.
- N/A **For projects using location data:** I will ensure geographical location information, including postcodes or geographical coordinates for the E-Risk study member's homes or schools, is never combined or stored with any other E-Risk data (family or twin-level data)
- N/A **For projects using genomic data:** I will only use the SNP and/or 450K data in conjunction with the phenotypes that have been approved for use in this project at the concept paper stage.

Signature:

