

# Loneliness in the digital age: From virtual girlfriends to the Luh Twizzy's

 By [Karabo Ledwaba](#)

6 Sep 2023

Loneliness among millennials has become a prevalent and concerning issue in today's hyperconnected but often isolating digital world. Despite being the generation that grew up with social media, millennials often find themselves battling the paradox of feeling more connected online while experiencing profound loneliness offline.



Source: [www.unsplash.com](http://www.unsplash.com)

Flux Trends' Bronwyn Williams who shared their 'Future Of Us' presentation last month in Cape Town, says this loneliness epidemic can be seen in our online behaviours.

## Connections

"There is a global loneliness epidemic, people are simply not dating or even having friends. One of the most shocking statistics for me came out of the Pew Research Center in 2019, which found out that one in four millennials have no friends at all and no friends to rely on.

"And increasingly people are getting married later or not getting married at all, they are not hooking up and not having children. So loneliness is a double-edged sword because on the one hand, we are very connected digitally, but on the other hand we don't have any [real-life] close ties."

This means that people are more inclined to be attracted to extremist groups such as incel forums and other hate groups which can create national security risks.

This loneliness has also led to a rise of AI being used to fulfill our need for meaningful connections.



Bronwyn Williams: #BizTrends2023: The impact of social contracts - home, work and State

30 Jan 2023



“There are Instagram models who have created an AI chatbox to replicate themselves, so you can pay a subscription to have a fake relationship with a real woman who has hundreds of thousands of boyfriends. She can send you nice texts and send you pictures.”

Williams says a similar phenomenon is happening with women who are paying for virtual boyfriends who text women with voice messages and they create real emotional connections with the AI.

However, she adds that the so-called ‘sex recession’ has declined which points to the fact that society is realising that real human connection cannot be replaced.

“As of 2021 30% of women and around 20% of men from the age of 18 to 35 weren't having sex at all, as of this year it declined to only 10%. It looks like we are finally connecting again which might mean these sorts of trends towards artificial replacements of relationships are not necessarily giving us everything we need,” she says.

## GenZ's face own hurdles

Williams adds that we are seeing these same lonely behaviours in GenZ's such as the Luh Twizzy movement.

“Youth groups in SA who are fans of some obscure American rappers very quickly evolved into online and offline mobs of chaos which has made mall managers across the country quite afraid. What the movement does is they organise online in chat groups and TikTok and decide to mob a particular mall like Sandton City and pitch up there at a particular time to scare the middle-aged shoppers.”

She says this is a generation that is being plagued by apathy and nihilism but at the same time a generation that is full of activists such as Greta Thunberg and locally [Othembele Dyantyi](#).

“There is a weird dichotomy between apathy and activism. In the workplace, this is also been seen as the lying down flat movement, doing as little bit as possible to get by. It is this anti-ambition movement that originated in China and spread to the rest of the world. People are just opting out of the rat race.”

## ABOUT KARABO LEDWABA

Karabo Ledwaba is a Marketing and Media Editor at Bizcommunity and award-winning journalist. Before joining the publication she worked at Sowetan as a content producer and reporter. She was also responsible for the leadership page at SiMug, Sowetan's lifestyle magazine. Contact her at [karabo@bizcommunity.com](mailto:karabo@bizcommunity.com)

- ARB rules in favour of Woolworths in rBST-free milk ad dispute - 20 May 2024
- Netflix reaches 40m users for ad supported plan - 16 May 2024
- Bumble apologises for celibacy ad - 14 May 2024
- #AfricaMonth: Dumisani Moyo, marketing director at SAP, envisions innovation in Africa - 10 May 2024
- 5 key moments that are solidifying Tyla's brand - 9 May 2024

[View my profile and articles...](#)