

Three million elderly Britons are dreading a lonely Christmas: Festive period brings back sad memories of lost loved ones

- **Many fear leaving the house because of poor weather, says charity Age UK**
- **Research reveals 840,000 over 65s find Christmas brings back sad memories**

By Steve Robson

Around three million elderly people are dreading the thought of a cold, lonely Christmas, says Age UK.

The charity, which surveyed 1,000 over-65s, said many will be spending it on their own.

The research, commissioned as part of Age UK's Spread the Warmth campaign, suggests that 840,000 find Christmas brings back sad memories of those who had passed away.



Dreading the thought: Millions of elderly people fear spending Christmas cold and alone, research has found (file picture)

More than two million people were worried about not being able to get out of the house because of shorter, darker days and poor weather conditions.

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Even in relatively mild winters, there are around 8,000 extra deaths for every one degree drop in average temperature.



Around 840,000 elderly people say Christmas brings back sad memories of those who have passed away

Michelle Mitchell, of Age UK, said 'Living in isolation and loneliness is a stark reality for too many people in later life.

'The adverse impact on a person's well-being of feeling lonely has been likened to that of obesity and smoking.

'We're calling on everyone to do their bit to help lessen the impact of winter for older people this year. 'There is something simple that everyone can do from popping in to check on an older neighbour or relative to making a donation.'

A survey by Friends of the Elderly last month found over half of older people say the TV is their main form of company, with many out of contact with friends and family. Research shows people who live alone are more likely to be lonely, with charities warning that 3.8 million older people live alone and the figure is rising. Sixty per cent of women and nearly half of people aged 75 and over live alone. By 2033 it is predicted the numbers over 65 living on their own will go up by as much as half - with a rise of 145 per cent among people in their 80s. Age UK's Spread the Warmth campaign is one of the charities benefiting from ITV's three-hour Text Santa show tomorrow night.

Host Christine Bleakley said 'Christmas is a vulnerable time for people who are on their own. 'Our message is a special one - at Christmas it's important to get back to basics and let people know that they're not alone and that there are people out there willing to listen and help. 'We want people to watch the show, hear the stories and if you have anything to spare at all and would very kindly put it in our direction, it will be going towards a good cause.'