

## **OAPs 'spend 100 days a year on their own' as campaigners warn of 'loneliness epidemic' among nation's elderly**

- **Every day over-65s spend six and a half waking hours alone**
- **Survey found a quarter of OAPs felt lonely**
- **One in five can go a whole weekend without seeing anyone**

By John Stevens

Solitude of age: A study has found that elderly people the equivalent of spend 100 days alone every year

Pensioners spend nearly 100 days alone each year according to a study warning of a 'loneliness epidemic'. Each day the over-65s spend an average of 6.4 waking hours alone, the study found - the equivalent of 99 days a year.

The survey of 1,030 people aged over 65 found that a quarter of people (24 per cent) felt lonely some or most of the time.

Almost one in five (18 per cent) of over-75s said that they sometimes go a whole weekend without seeing and speaking to another person.

Over half of respondents (54 per cent) said they felt unable to talk about this loneliness with their family or their children (46 per cent).

While London was found as the loneliest place in the country to grow old, with over 65s spending an average of 7.8 hours on their own each day.

The survey challenged the widely held belief that the main concern for older people is staying in their own home.

When people were asked what worried them most about getting old, poor health came out top (32 per cent), while having to leave the family home most concerned just four per cent of those surveyed.

Jon Gooding, chairman of the Associated Retirement Community Operators, which commissioned the research, said: 'We are in the grip of a loneliness epidemic. People are fearful of their declining health, and yet appear to be unprepared for old age.'

'Couple this with the fact that in 2033 there will be 3.3million people over the age of 85 in the UK and it becomes clear that we face a momentous challenge.'

The emergence of this brand new generation, who want more and expect more from their retirement, calls for an entirely different approach to housing and care.

London was found to be the loneliest place to grow old, with pensioners spending nearly eight of their waking hours in solitude

'Today's survey shows that whilst people have legitimate concerns about getting older, they are not so worried about being able to stay in the family home.'

'We know that the decision to 'stay put' is often associated with a complete lack of choice. We need to wake up as a country and ensure that people are aware of, and have access to, a variety of options for high quality housing, care and support in old age.'

'Now is the time for the Government to support growth in the housing with care sector, helping older people make the right move at the right time, having access to the support they need whilst maintaining their right to their own front door.'

Time's arrow: Poor health was found to be the greatest fear among those of advancing years, according to the research