

Unity Bank Digest

July 7th, 2025

Finance

Economic News

Lifestyle

New tax
framework to
improve living
standards

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Burning Issues

Dangote price cut vs Angola fare hike

On July 7, 2025, Angola raised transport fares by up to 50% following a sharp increase in diesel prices from 300 to 400 kwanzas per litre. This adjustment reflects the government's strategy to phase out fuel subsidies in a bid to reduce fiscal deficits and reallocate expenditure toward critical sectors such as health, education, and infrastructure. By shifting more of the fuel cost burden to consumers, Angola seeks to restore macroeconomic stability and strengthen its fiscal balance. However, the immediate consequence has been a surge in transport and living costs, intensifying inflationary pressures and eroding disposable income.

In contrast, Nigeria has experienced a 4.5% reduction in petrol prices as Dangote Refinery lowered its ex-depot price to ₦840 per litre. This price movement, aided by rising domestic refining capacity from Dangote and other government-owned refineries, marks a temporary improvement in supply-side efficiency and reduced reliance on expensive fuel imports. For small businesses and consumers, this temporary reprieve could translate into lower logistics costs, marginally easing the cost of goods and services.

The divergence between Angola and Nigeria reflects a broader policy contrast: where Angola is constrained by external vulnerabilities and subsidy removal shocks, Nigeria is currently benefiting from endogenous reforms in refining infrastructure. However, the sustainability of Nigeria's price trend is not guaranteed. With crude oil prices softening to \$68/barrel and the naira under slight pressure, any cost shock in Nigeria's refining chain or FX market could reverse current pump price gains and push transport fares upward again. Furthermore, Angola's experience underscores the risk of contagion across oil-dependent economies, and reinforces the need for Nigeria to institutionalize domestic capacity, price transparency, and macroeconomic buffers to shield consumers and microenterprises from future volatility.

Nigeria introduces new tax framework to streamline revenue collection

On June 26, 2025, the Nigerian government enacted a suite of tax reform laws: the Nigeria Tax Bill, the Tax Administration Bill, the Revenue Service (Establishment) Bill, and the Joint Revenue Board (Establishment) Bill to restructure the country's revenue mobilisation framework. At its core, this shift is less about new taxes and more about institutional clarity, administrative streamlining, and a reallocation of the tax burden in a way that is intended to support growth while improving fiscal resilience.

Most notably, the recent tax reform laws introduce clear income thresholds for individuals and firms. Individuals earning less than ₦1 million per year are now exempt from income tax, up from a previous de facto threshold as low as ₦300,000. Moreover, the revised tax regime introduces a progressive income tax structure, with rates increasing alongside income levels. Earnings up to ₦2.2 million are taxed at 15%, income up to ₦9 million at 18%, up to ₦13 million at 21%, and a top rate of 25% applied to incomes exceeding ₦50 million. This progressivity improves vertical equity, shielding lower-income earners while aligning tax liability more closely with ability to pay.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, over 90% of Nigeria's businesses are microenterprises, with the vast majority operating informally and earning below this threshold. Historically, high compliance costs, multiple levies at different tiers of government, and uncertainty in tax enforcement have made registration unattractive for small firms.

For consumers, the revised tax structure provides targeted relief in a context of elevated inflation and constrained household budgets. Headline inflation averaged about 21.34% year-on-year in early 2025, with food inflation alone exceeding 20%. Against this backdrop, the decision to zero-rate essential goods and services such as food, healthcare, education, public transport, and rent for VAT purposes directly shields low-income households, which typically spend over 60% of their income on these necessities.



Tax Relief: What It Means for Your Pocket and Your Business

For most Nigerians, tax reform feels like one of those distant government decisions that gets lost in legal language. But the truth is, the new tax bill signed into law by President Bola Tinubu in June 2025 could affect how much money everyday people have in their pockets, how small businesses grow, and how stable our economy becomes over time.

One of the biggest wins in the new reform is for low-income earners. Anyone earning ₦800,000 per year or less, about ₦67,000 per month, is now completely exempt from personal income tax. That means no more deductions from already tight salaries. This is a real benefit for market attendants, factory workers, entry-level staff, and small earners in the informal sector who often struggle to meet basic expenses.

Even those earning slightly more are not left out. Tax rates have been adjusted so that those in the middle-income bracket, say from ₦800,001 to ₦3 million a year, are taxed at more manageable rates of 15% to 18%. Only the highest earners, like senior executives or high-income professionals, will pay the top 22.5% rate. For many working-class Nigerians, this could

feel like a silent raise. That extra money can go toward food, rent, school fees, or savings, especially in a time where prices seem to keep climbing.

But it is not just workers who stand to benefit. The new law also shifts the landscape for small businesses and traders. Previously, businesses earning more than ₦25 million annually had to pay corporate income tax. That threshold has now been raised to ₦50 million, which means a lot of growing businesses are now completely exempt. Think of tailors, dry cleaners, hair salons, corner shops, and even online vendors, many of them now have room to reinvest in stock, pay staff better, or expand without being weighed down by taxes they could barely afford.

Another major move is the removal of VAT (Value-Added Tax) on essential goods and services. While VAT remains at 7.5% for many items, things like basic food, education, healthcare, transport, electricity, and baby products are now zero-rated. This reduces the pressure on families and small businesses, especially with inflation still eating into daily earnings. In the long run, the government plans to increase VAT to 10%, then 12.5%, and finally 15%

by 2030, but mainly on luxury items. The goal is to protect the poor while increasing revenue from those who can afford more.

There is also a push to make the system easier and more transparent. Tax refunds are to be processed within 90 days. Small businesses no longer need to hire auditors to meet tax requirements. And for the first time, a formal Tax Ombudsman has been introduced, so complaints can be heard and disputes resolved within 14 days. This makes the whole tax experience less intimidating and more human.

But while many welcome these changes, not everyone is celebrating. Some northern state governments have expressed concern that the new VAT sharing formula, which now gives more money to states that generate more VAT, may widen regional inequality. Lagos, Rivers, and other economically active states stand to benefit more, while poorer or less industrialized states could receive less. It's a sensitive balance: rewarding performance while still ensuring national unity.

At the same time, some Nigerians are cautious. There are concerns that certain tax increases, like the new telecom levy, might lead to higher phone and data costs. For many young Nigerians who rely on their phones for work, learning, and connection, that could wipe out some of the gains from income tax relief.

Still, the reforms represent a bold step. Instead of squeezing the same small group of taxpayers, the government is trying to widen the tax net, bring more people and businesses into the formal system while lowering the burden for those who need the relief most. If well-implemented, it could encourage more businesses to register, more jobs to be created, and more Nigerians to trust the system.

In the end, tax relief isn't just about numbers on a government sheet, it's about how much food is on the table, how far a salary can go, and how easy or hard it is to run a business in Nigeria. And for the first time in a long time, the system might just be shifting in favour of the everyday Nigerian.



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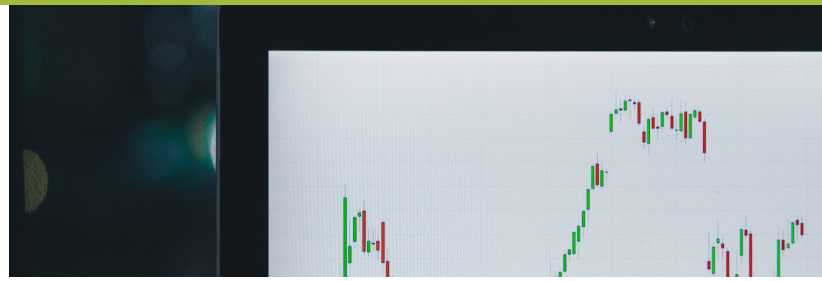


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Direct Abuja–Heathrow flights to begin on October 26, 2025

Nigeria has successfully secured approval for Air Peace to commence direct flights from Abuja to London Heathrow, starting October 26, 2025. This milestone was achieved through strategic negotiations under the Bilateral Air Services Agreement (BASA) with the United Kingdom. While not cargo-focused, the route is economically significant due to its potential to reduce plane tickets, increase labor mobility, and stimulate small-business activity across the informal and microenterprise sectors.

Historically, the cost and complexity of international travel have inhibited many small-scale importers and traders from integrating effectively into global supply chains. High airfare costs, previously ranging between ₦3 million and ₦5 million on foreign carriers, meant only medium to large businesses could afford direct access to markets like the UK. However, Air Peace's pricing disruption on the Lagos–London Gatwick route in 2024, with economy fares dropping by 60% to ₦1.2 million, demonstrated the latent demand for affordable international mobility.

The economic benefits of this new direct route are multidirectional. London Heathrow, with over 80 million annual passengers and connections to 214 destinations across 84 countries, functions as a global aviation hub. A direct Abuja–Heathrow link not only enhances Nigeria's international visibility but also positions Abuja as a strategic gateway into West Africa for global business travelers and diaspora networks. Improved affordability and access to London, home to one of the world's largest Nigerian diaspora communities, enable microenterprises and informal traders to engage more actively in global value chains. This includes attending trade exhibitions, building supplier networks, and entering new consumer markets. These gains in market access and human capital exposure occur without the need for large-scale public investment. Moreover, increased inbound passenger flows facilitate diaspora investment and

knowledge transfer, both of which are empirically linked to productivity growth and entrepreneurial dynamism in emerging economies.



ATM usage drops as POS transactions rise to N223tn in 2024

In 2024, Nigeria's retail payment structure recorded a significant shift in transaction channels, as the value of Point of Sale (POS) transactions rose to ₦223.27 trillion, 102.33% higher than the ₦110.35 trillion recorded in 2023. This shift reflects a deeper migration from Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) to agent-based banking infrastructure, indicating a growing preference for decentralized cash access and digital payment mechanisms among consumers and small-scale enterprises. Compared to the surge in POS transactions, the value of ATM withdrawals in 2024 increased slightly by 3.23% to N29.12tn.

The expansion of POS usage has enabled broader financial inclusion, particularly in underserved areas with sparse traditional banking services. Micro and small business owners, many of whom operate outside the formal financial sector, have adopted POS terminals as tools for daily transactions and as extensions of their service offerings. These terminals allow small traders to bridge liquidity gaps, attract cash-dependent consumers, and earn transactional commissions, all while reducing

the burden of physical cash management. This transformation is economically consequential in an economy where over 65% of transactions are informal.

On the consumer side, the convenience of POS usage, available in markets, kiosks, and mobile setups, has reshaped spending behaviour. This shift has heightened demand for real-time access to funds and reliable payment networks, increasing the relevance of agency banking platforms. However, this convenience came at a cost. POS charges doubled in December 2024, with operators demanding ₦200 per ₦5,000 withdrawal amid widespread ATM cash shortages, a direct consequence of poor liquidity management by commercial banks.

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) responded with punitive measures, fining nine deposit money banks a total of ₦1.35 billion for failing to ensure ATM cash availability. These actions exposed structural inefficiencies in the traditional banking system's ability to support everyday cash needs, pushing more consumers toward POS alternatives. For small businesses, this means higher reliance on third-party agents and reduced direct interaction with bank branches, limiting access to formal credit and other banking products.



Empty containers, FX volatility cost importers \$500m annually

Nigeria is facing mounting pressures as over \$500 million is lost annually due to persistent foreign exchange volatility and the accumulation of more than 100,000 empty containers at the nation's ports. The escalating costs

associated with shipping these containers back to their origin, ranging from \$2,000 to \$6,000 per unit, have become a significant burden on the business community engaged in cross-border trade. These costs are further compounded by port congestion, leading to increased storage and demurrage fees, sometimes reaching ₦60,000 per container monthly.

The ripple effects of these challenges are extensive. Businesses reliant on imported goods are experiencing higher operational expenses, which are often passed on through increased prices of essential products. This, in turn, puts upward pressure on the cost of living, eroding purchasing power and squeezing household budgets. The unpredictability of foreign exchange rates also disrupts planning and cash flow management, making it difficult for enterprises to restock inventory or expand operations.

Port congestion and inefficient container return systems have slowed the turnaround time for goods, resulting in delays that affect supply chains nationwide. Large numbers of unreturned containers, many in poor condition, clogs logistics channels and poses environmental and health risks in port communities.

Efforts to address these issues, such as improving port infrastructure, incentivizing timely container returns, and encouraging export growth, are crucial for restoring efficiency and reducing costs. Streamlining logistics and stabilizing the currency environment would help businesses operate more predictably, ultimately supporting economic resilience and safeguarding livelihoods across the country.

Nigeria recapitalizes Bank of Agriculture with ₦1.5 trillion

Nigeria's ₦1.5 trillion recapitalization of the Bank of Agriculture (BoA) represents a strategic capital injection, not a grant or debt relief. This move is designed to bolster the BoA's lending and investment capacity as a development finance institution, similar in mandate to the

Bank of Industry (BoI). The capital is intended to strengthen the bank's balance sheet, enabling it to extend more credit and investment to agricultural enterprises, rather than serving as a direct subsidy or bailout. The expectation is that BoA will deploy these funds into viable agricultural projects, with returns that support the bank's sustainability and Nigeria's broader economic goals.

This intervention is crucial given the persistent challenge of limited access to finance in Nigeria's agricultural sector. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, over 70% of agricultural producers operate on a small scale and face barriers ranging from climate shocks to insecurity, making commercial credit both scarce and expensive. Historically, agriculture's share of GDP has declined from 24% in 2015 to about 20% in 2024, reflecting both underinvestment and structural vulnerabilities.

The BoA's strengthened capital base aims to reverse this trend. The bank has indicated that priority will be given to businesses involved in crop production, processing, and distribution, with special attention to areas such as rice, maize, and cassava value chains, as well as livestock and aquaculture. While the BoA has not published a comprehensive list of beneficiary companies, it has emphasized support for enterprises that can demonstrate scalability and resilience.

A key component of this strategy is the national farmer registry, launched in early 2025 in partnership with the National Identity Management Commission. The registry targets over 42 million farming households, with an initial focus on high-production states in the North Central, North West, and South West regions. This data-driven approach is expected to improve the targeting of credit and inputs, as well as monitor impact.

The BoA has set a medium-term target of increasing agricultural lending by 40% over the next three years, aiming to contribute at least 2 percentage points to national GDP growth by 2028. If successful, this recapitalization could help stabilize food prices, reduce import dependency, and generate significant employment across the agricultural value chain, reinforcing Nigeria's ambition to lead in regional food security.

NNPCL raises petrol price to N945 in Abuja, N945 in Lagos

Petrol prices have risen by approximately 8% in the last two weeks in Nigeria, driven by a sharp increase in global crude oil prices of about 30% to nearly \$80 per barrel amidst the ongoing Israel-Iran conflict. The Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) recently raised petrol prices to ₦945 per litre in both Abuja and Lagos, up from around ₦925 in Lagos and ₦915 in Abuja just days earlier.

The geopolitical tension centers on Iran's parliament approving measures that could lead to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a critical maritime passage through which roughly 20 million barrels of oil—about 20% of global petroleum liquids—transit daily. While the strait remains open as of late June 2025, the threat has caused shipping costs and insurance premiums to surge, contributing to volatility in oil markets. Financial institutions such as Goldman Sachs have warned that if the strait is partially or fully closed, Brent crude prices could spike to \$110 per barrel or more, intensifying pressure on fuel costs worldwide.

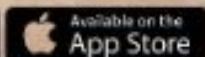
Domestically, the rising fuel prices have increased transportation and production costs, leading to higher prices for goods and services across the country. Energy-dependent activities face greater operational expenses, which may force some businesses to scale back or cease operations. Urban areas are particularly affected, with transport fares and generator fuel costs rising sharply, exacerbating the cost of living.

The potential disruption of oil flows through the Strait of Hormuz threatens to worsen these challenges by destabilizing global supply chains and elevating shipping costs further. Although higher crude prices may boost government revenues, the broader economic impact includes heightened inflation and slower growth, underscoring the urgent need for Nigeria to invest in local refining capacity and diversify its energy sources to reduce vulnerability to external shocks.

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- The Ojude Oba Festival is held annually in Ijebu Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria, on the third day after Eid al-Kabir (Ileya).
- It is a vibrant cultural celebration honoring the Awujale, the traditional ruler of Ijebuland, showcasing the rich heritage of the Ijebu people, a Yoruba subgroup.
- The festival originated over 200 years ago as a Muslim thanksgiving event but has evolved into a unifying cultural celebration for all Ijebu people regardless of religion.
- The 2025 edition attracted nearly twice the crowd size of the previous year, highlighting its growing popularity and need for improved facilities.
- A major highlight is the Regberegbe, or age-grade parade, where groups dressed in coordinated traditional attire perform dances and present gifts to the king.
- Fashion plays a competitive and creative role, with men and women wearing elaborate traditional Yoruba clothing such as agbada, iro and buba, aso-oke, and lace fabrics.
- Horse-riding displays by Ijebu warrior families are thrilling, symbolizing historical military traditions and the influence of Islamic cavalry.
- The festival significantly boosts local tourism and the economy, benefiting hotels, tailors, vendors, and transporters.
- Celebrities from various backgrounds, including actors and musicians, participate to showcase cultural unity and diversity.
- The event is fully sponsored by Ijebu indigenes and corporate sponsors, reflecting strong community support and pride.
- Security and organization are well managed, involving police, paramilitary, and volunteers to ensure safety and smooth proceedings.
- Ojude Oba is increasingly recognized nationally and internationally, with efforts underway to secure UNESCO cultural heritage status for the festival.

'Humans need solitude': How being alone can make you happier

Culled from BBC¹

From spending time by yourself to making the most of being single, flying solo can be fulfilling – a philosophy championed by a new wave of books.

In Wim Wenders' recent film *Perfect Days*, the main character, a Tokyo toilet cleaner, spends many of his hours in solitude; watering plants, contemplating, listening to music and reading. While more characters are introduced as the film develops, for many viewers its earlier moments are perfect; described by the BBC's own Nicholas Barber as a "meditation on the serenity of an existence stripped to its essentials", it really struck a chord. No wonder. Thoughtful and positive outlooks on solitude have been taking up more and more space on our screens, bookshelves and smartphones, from podcasts to viral TikToks. Seemingly, there's never been a better time to be alone.

Several titles on the topic have been released in the past couple of years, with a few more in the works. *Solitude: The Science and Power of Being Alone*, and *Solo: Building a Remarkable Life of Your Own* hit the shelves in 2024, and Nicola Slawson's *Single: Living a Complete Life on Your Own Terms* was published in February. Then last month saw the release of Emma Gannon's much-anticipated novel *Table For One*;

having made her name with non-fiction books questioning traditional ideas of success and productivity, Gannon is now reconsidering modern relationships, in a love story focusing on a young woman finding joy in being alone, rather than with a partner.

Later this year, two more self-help guides, *The Joy of Solitude: How to Reconnect with Yourself in an Overconnected World* and *The Joy of Sleeping Alone*, are coming out, as well as a paperback, English translation of Daniel Schreiber's *Alone: Reflections on Solitary Living*, which originally came out in Germany in 2021.

A shift in attitudes

Packed with keen observations and helpful tips, this new wave of books aims not only to destigmatise solitude, but also to make a case for its benefits and pleasures. Such a powerful stream of publications might come as a surprise, at first, to everyone who has lived through the pandemic and inevitably heard of – or got a bitter taste of – the so-called "loneliness epidemic", a term popularised in 2023 by then US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy. "Post pandemic, there [was] a huge focus on loneliness, for a really good reason," says Robert

<https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20250609-how-being-alone-can-make-you-happier>

Coplan, a professor in psychology at Carleton University in Ottawa and author of *The Joy of Solitude: How to Reconnect with Yourself in an Overconnected World*. But because of the concerns about the effects of loneliness, he says, solitude ended up "with a bit of a bad reputation – throwing the baby out with the bath water, so to speak".

Now, though, the discourse is course-correcting itself. According to Coplan, the distinction between loneliness and solitude is essential, and writers echo this sentiment. "While loneliness is a serious and harmful problem for some people, it is a subjective state very different from solitude, that someone has [actively] chosen for positive reasons," says journalist Heather Hansen. In 2024, she co-authored the aforementioned *Solitude: The Science and Power of Being Alone* with Netta Weinstein and Thuy-vy T Nguyen. Hansen had watched the media telling us we're very lonely for a while; but as a counter to this narrative, she says, "people are reflecting on their own lives and recognising that they are choosing solitude for various reasons that benefit them".

The message of rom-coms, love songs and Jane Austen novels – that we need a partner to be fulfilled – isn't backed by data – Peter McGraw

"I have a theory that since the pandemic we've been able to clearly understand the difference between loneliness and chosen solitude," says Emma Gannon, who is also a big proponent of "slow living". The extremes of the pandemic – being cooped up with all your loved ones, or, contrastingly, going for months without human contact – had prepared us, Gannon says, "to have

nuanced conversations about the differences between isolation and joyful alone time".

Nestled cosily within these timely conversations is Gen Z-ers and millennials' re-evaluation of romantic relationships and enthusiastic embracing of single life, alongside a careful reassessment of interpersonal relationships in general. Gannon's new novel might be a fictional depiction of a young woman reinvesting in a relationship with herself, but it will ring true to many readers who grapple with what are increasingly seen as outdated societal expectations to "settle down". According to a 2023 US survey, two out of five Gen Z-ers and millennials think marriage is an outdated tradition, and in the UK only just over half of Gen Z men and women are predicted to marry, according to the Office of National Statistics.

In April, a viral TikTok, with over one million likes and close to 37,000 comments, showcased one man's perspective on dating women who live alone, and like it this way. Many women deemed the analysis "spot on" and related eagerly. Nicola Slawson, who based *Single: Living a Complete Life on Your Own Terms* on her popular Substack *The Single Supplement*, isn't surprised. "The number of people living alone in the UK has been steadily increasing over the last decade or so," Slawson points out, with this fuelling a cultural shift towards the acceptance of single people, and putting a focus on "freedom and independence, and especially a rejection of domesticity, as women are realising they don't have to put up with things they might have been expected to in previous generations".

Having said that, our cultural fascination with being alone is deeply rooted. Capturing the beauty of

solitude has been a focus for numerous artists over the centuries – from German romanticist Caspar David Friedrich, whose great works include *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog*, (c. 1817), which can be seen in the Hamburger Kunsthalle art museum's collection in Germany, to the revered 20th-Century US artist Edward Hopper, and his paintings of solo city dwellers. A *New Yorker* review of the 2022 Hopper retrospective at the city's Whitney museum noted, "Everything about the urban life he shows us is isolated, uncommunal – and yet his images of apparent loneliness seem somehow anything but grim, rather proudly self-reliant."

Daniel Schreiber believes the correlation between people living alone, sans partner, and being lonely has traditionally been overestimated. "Society understands better now that romantic love is not the only model to live by, or something to wish for," he adds. "There are different ways of life, and it's not as necessary to be in a traditional romantic relationship."

Revel in the soft blanket, the sound of music, the taste of your food. What can you see, smell, touch and sense when you are alone? – Emma Gannon

In *Solo: Building a Remarkable Life of Your Own*, Peter McGraw, a self-titled "bachelor", and professor of marketing and psychology at the University of Colorado, makes a similar point, with gusto. "There's a lot of mythology around single living, and a failure to understand the reasons marriage was invented – mostly as a business arrangement," he says. "Frankly, the message of rom-coms, love songs and Jane Austen novels" – that we need a partner to be fulfilled – "isn't backed

by data," he says, "if we look at the longitudinal data": many studies cited in *Solo* show that even if personal happiness spikes around marriage, it doesn't last.

Even within a relationship, traditional routines can be upended to allow for more alone time, as advocated in *The Joy of Sleeping Alone*. Its author, yoga and meditation teacher Cynthia Zak, noticed that many women prefer sleeping alone to sleeping in the same bed as their partners, and decided to write the book, originally in Spanish, in order to advocate for "more space to express what we need and feel, more opportunities to let go of fears and limiting beliefs, and more freedom to choose".

How to be alone well

If being, and doing things, alone is increasingly widespread – and stigma-free – then how to make the most of it? A couple of key factors everyone agrees on are finding a healthy balance between solo time and communing with others – and having the ability to choose solitude, rather than being forced to experience it. "The greatest indication of success in time alone is that a person has chosen that space believing that there is something important and meaningful there," says Hansen, adding that solitude is a "neutral blob of sculpting clay; it can be whatever we mould it into".

Fittingly, according to McGraw it's perhaps best to not mould said blob into "lying in bed, vaping and ordering Uber Eats". Rather, he suggests channelling alone time into creative pursuits and pastimes that tend to blossom in solitude; a walk or a run, people-watching at a cafe, going to a museum and "taking it all in, as fast or slow as you can". Or how about "sitting in a bath listening to Vivaldi", he

adds more specifically, or taking an online course?

Slawson says one should go into potentially blissful solitude instead of waiting for it to end. "I used to find myself putting off doing things until I 'settled down' or until I found a partner, but you need to live the life you have got and squeeze as much joy as possible from it instead of feeling like you're in a waiting room, waiting for your life to start," she says. And when societal pressure builds? "Don't default to any type of thinking or a script," McGraw suggests. "The nice thing is, that there's now an alternative script."

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More broadly, alone time is full of potential and possibilities. "I think solitude inspires a wonderful sense of creativity, it gets the juices flowing and encourages problem solving," Gannon says. She suggests treating solitude as an adventure – or a chance to reconnect with yourself, through journalling or revelling in your senses: "The soft blanket, the sound of music, the taste of your food. What can you see, smell, touch and sense when you are alone?".

Further turning inward, says Zak, can deepen one's understanding of solitude; she suggests paying attention to moments of solitude, and turning these moments into recurring rituals that aid relaxation and reflection by practice. "Ask yourself, what is the thing that you most enjoy being alone with? Make a jewel of the moment you choose and give yourself the task to cherish this specific space more and more," she says.

And most importantly, if obviously? It's about mixing things up. "Humans do need social interaction – but I would also say that humans need solitude," says Coplan. "Finding the right balance is the key to happiness and wellbeing. Everyone has a different balance that's going to work for them."

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