engAGED Social Isolation Virtual Summit

September 24, 2020
Welcome and Purpose Setting

Sandy Markwood, CEO, National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
Welcome

Greg Link, Director, Office of Supportive and Caregiver Services, Administration on Aging, U.S. Administration for Community Living
Socially Distant and Socially Isolated

Julianne Holt-Lunstad, PhD
2020, Social Isolation on a Global Scale
Social Isolation and Loneliness were public health concerns before the pandemic
• **Social Isolation**: Is objectively being alone, having few relationships, or infrequent social contact.

• **Loneliness**: Is subjectively feeling alone. The discrepancy between one’s desired level of connection and one’s actual level.

• **Social Connection**: An umbrella term that encompasses the structural, functional, and quality aspects of social relationships.
Loneliness Prevalence Rates Pre-COVID19

The Problem

1 in 3 U.S. adults age 45 and older are lonely.

Since 2010, approximately 5 million more midlife and older adults are lonely due to growth in this age group among the population.

Note: up from 46% in 2018 survey

Loneliness across Ages

Sources: AARP 2018; Cigna Loneliness in America Survey 2020; BBC Survey of 55,000 adults 2018
Living Arrangements

Households smallest in Europe, biggest in Africa

Average individual resides in a household of ____ people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Size</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East-North Africa</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia-Pacific</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America-Caribbean</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


"Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER
Loneliness during COVID-19

Those feeling more lonely because of the pandemic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Always or Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Always or Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gen Z (18-23)</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennials (24-39)</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen X (40-54)</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boomers (55-75)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart: Emily Barone/Elijah Wolfson for TIME • Source: Social Pro • Get the data • Created with Datawrapper

The Trajectory of Loneliness in Response to COVID-19

Martina Luchetti, Ji Hyun Lee, Damaris Aschwanden, Amanda Sesker, Jason E. Strickhouser, Antonio Terracciano, and Angelina R. Sutin
Florida State University College of Medicine

Changes in loneliness and social contacts, 2018 to 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>October 2018</th>
<th>March–June 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Felt a lack of companionship</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt isolated from others</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had infrequent social contact</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

National Poll on Healthy Aging, Sept 2020, http://hdl.handle.net/2027.42/162549
Why should we care about social isolation & loneliness?
Social Isolation & Loneliness are Deadly
3.4 million people

Loneliness
Increases earlier death by 26%

Social Isolation
Increases earlier death by 29%

Living Alone
Increases earlier death by 32%

Source: Holt-Lunstad et al, 2015
308,849 people

Social Connection → 50% increased survival

Source: Holt-Lunstad, Smith & Layton, 2010
The influence of Social Isolation on Health and Economy

**Physical Health**
- Cardiovascular Disease
- Type 2 Diabetes

**Mental & Behavioral Health**
- Depression & Anxiety
- Suicidality
- Addiction

**Cognitive Health**
- Cognitive decline
- Dementia
- Alzheimer’s Disease

**Economic Health**
- $6.7B in Medicare Spending
- Lower productivity
- More Absenteeism
- Lower quality of work

Sources: Holt-Lunstad et al, 2015; NASEM, 2020; AARP, 2017; CIGNA, 2020
Potential immediate consequences
Humans are social beings...
We aren’t meant to be alone
Loneliness as a biological drive much like hunger and thirst

The need to connect: Acute social isolation causes neural craving responses similar to hunger

L. Tomova, K. Wang, T. Thompson, G. Matthews, A. Takahashi, K. Tye, R. Saxe

doi: https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.03.25.006643
Problematic Behaviors

- SUBSTANCE USE
- SLEEP
- EATING HABITS
What about Viruses?
Loneliness Is a biological cue like thirst: Unique Challenges to Reducing Isolation and Loneliness
There is no quick fix or “gold-standard” solution.
Staying Socially Connected While Physically Distant

If you live with others, spend quality time together

Offer support to others

Express Gratitude

Spend time outside in nature/neighborhood
Older Adults who regularly engaged in healthy behaviors were less likely to experience loneliness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Felt lack of companionship</th>
<th>Felt isolated from others</th>
<th>Frequency of social contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hardly ever</td>
<td>Some of the time/often</td>
<td>Hardly ever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eat healthy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every day/several times a week</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week or less</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Get exercise</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every day/several times a week</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week or less</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Get enough sleep</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every day/several times a week</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week or less</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social Technology
Tech Based Solutions

• Evidence is primarily based on in person contact
• COVID19 points to clear need for remote means of connection

• **Community dwelling older adults in SF**
  (Kotwol, Holt-Lunstad, et al, 2020)
  • Most older adults used telephones
  • 76% had little or no video contact
  • 26% no internet

• Reaching those most in need

• **National Poll on Healthy Aging**
  • 59% older adults connected to friends via social media, 31% videochat
  • Those who used social media more likely to report feeling isolated, no effect of video

• Evaluation of effectiveness
Social Interventions on Medical Patient Survival: A Meta-analysis
(Smith & Holt-Lunstad et al, under review)

- 140 RCTs including 52,864 patients
- 15% increased likelihood of survival for intervention participants compared to controls (112 RCTs)
- 32% increase in survival time (29 RCTs)
- Strength of evidence mixed
What works and what doesn’t

• More successful
  • Interventions shown to improve psychosocial outcomes were most likely to increase patient survival.

• Not successful
  • Psychotherapy interventions did not improve patient survival to an extent comparable to other psychosocial interventions
  • Interventions consisting only of remote or home visits did not improve patient survival
We’re all in the same boat
We are all in the same storm, different boats
Who is most Vulnerable?

Risk factors for loneliness appear similar before and during the pandemic

- **UK Household Longitudinal Study & COVID-19 Social Study**
  - Adults Pre-pandemic n= 31,064; During pandemic n=60,341)
  - Young, women, low-income or education, unemployed, living alone, urban at higher risk.

- **National Poll on Healthy Aging**
  - older adults in US (n=2074)
  - Consistent with UK, + poor physical and mental health at higher risk

Source: Bu, Steptoe & Fancourt, 2020
The medical and healthcare implications
Feb 27, 2020
# NASEM 2020 Report Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Develop</th>
<th>Develop a more robust evidence base</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Translate</td>
<td>Translate current research into health care practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve</td>
<td>Improve awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen</td>
<td>Strengthen ongoing education and training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen</td>
<td>Strengthen ties between the health care system and community-based networks and resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Working together towards solutions
Thank you

Additional Resources

• NASEM 2020 report

• Meta-Analyses of Mortality Risk
  • https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1000316
  • https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25910392

• Social Connection as a Public Health Priority
  • https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5598785/

More about my work on Social Connection/Isolation:

• http://julianneholtlunstad.byu.edu/

Twitter @jholtlunstad
COVID Adaptations to Address Social Isolation
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How Technology is Fostering Engagement During Coronavirus
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For More Information

engAGED: The National Resource Center for Engaging Older Adults

• https://www.engagingolderadults.org/
• Best Practices, Videos, Customizable Resources, Innovations from the Field, Social Engagement Toolkits

Administration for Community Living: Staying Engaged and Avoiding Social Isolation

• http://acl.gov/engage
• Tips for consumers and Aging Network organizations
Thank you for attending today’s engAGED Social Isolation Summit!