

# Loneliness and Social Connections: A National Survey of Adults 45 and Older<sup>i</sup>

Presented by

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Loneliness and social isolation are public health issues that affect millions of older adults in the U.S.

## 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.



## Who is affected

**Unpaid caregivers, low-income individuals, and those who identify as LGBTQ are at increased risk for chronic loneliness.**

For individuals earning under \$40,000 per year, the gap in loneliness is 13 percentage points higher than for those earning over \$40,000.



## Tech helps

**Technology holds promise to help reduce loneliness and social isolation, but it is not a substitute for human interaction.**

Individuals who have met their “online friends” in person are less likely to identify as lonely than those who are keeping the relationship strictly online (37% vs. 46%).



## Talk to your neighbors

**Getting to know one’s neighbors can help reduce loneliness and increase social connections.**

Lonely adults are twice as likely to consider their neighbors “strangers” than those who are not lonely (26% vs. 13%).



## Did you know?

**Social isolation and loneliness have serious financial implications. Medicare spends an estimated \$6.7 billion in additional spending each year on socially isolated older adults.<sup>iii</sup>**



**The health risks of prolonged isolation are equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.<sup>ii</sup>**

**National Good Neighbor Day** — Friday, September 28 — is an opportunity for us to celebrate our neighbors and the communities we live in while showing the many benefits — such as improved health — of connecting with people around us.

Visit **Connect2Affect.org** for additional information on loneliness and social isolation in older adults.

For the full report visit: <https://doi.org/10.26419/res.00246.003>

<sup>i</sup> G. Oscar Anderson and Colette E. Thayer, “Loneliness and Social Connections: A National Survey of Adults 45 and Older,” Washington, DC: AARP Research (September 2018), <https://doi.org/10.26419/res.00246.001>.

<sup>ii</sup> Julianne Holt-Lunstad, Timothy B. Smith, and J. Bradley Layton, “Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-analytic Review,” PLoS Med, vol. 7, no. 7 (2010), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1000316>.

<sup>iii</sup> Lynda Flowers, et al., “Medicare Spends More on Socially Isolated Older Adults,” AARP Public Policy Institute Insight on the Issues 125 (2017).