Our Epidemic of Loneliness & Isolation

Overview of the U.S. Surgeon General's advisory on the prevalence, health impact and action to address isolation and loneliness

Source: Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community -https://bit.ly/46eHucj

Wisconsin Coalition to End Social Isolation & Loneliness

Wisconsin Coalition to End Social Isolation & Loneliness

Wisconsin Social Isolation & Loneliness Awareness Week

November 12-18, 2023

About the Wisconsin Coalition to End Social Isolation & Loneliness (WCESIL)

Statewide coalition dedicated to addressing social isolation and loneliness among older adults and people with disabilities in Wisconsin. Work includes:

- Raising public awareness
- Detecting and responding to those experiencing or at risk for SI&L
- Curating research and measurement of SI&L prevalence and interventions
- Developing policy initiatives and advocacy efforts

**Wisconsin
Social Isolation
& Loneliness
Awareness Week**

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Join the Movement

- Visit our Facebook page and share content

Tip for Building Connections:
How's Your Neighbor?

Is there someone in your family or community who may be lonely and isolated? There are simple ways to help.

Stop by, call, schedule a video chat. Invite them to an event or over for coffee.

Reach out. Stay in touch!

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Tip for Building Connections:
Getting around is a game-changer

Driving isn't just about getting to where you're going. Reliable transportation — riding with others or offering others a ride — helps everyone stay connected. Don't let a lack of transportation hold you back.

Reach out for a ride! Offer a ride!

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- Personally reach out to family and/or friends to provide a meaningful connection
- Share opinions/provide feedback/stay informed

Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation 2023
The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community

Definitions

Social isolation (SI)

Commonly defined as an objective measure of the number of relationships and contacts a person has

Loneliness (L)

A subjective feeling about the gap between a person's desired levels of social contact and their actual level of social contact

Both are associated with negative physical and mental health impacts.

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of Loneliness
and Isolation 2023

The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the
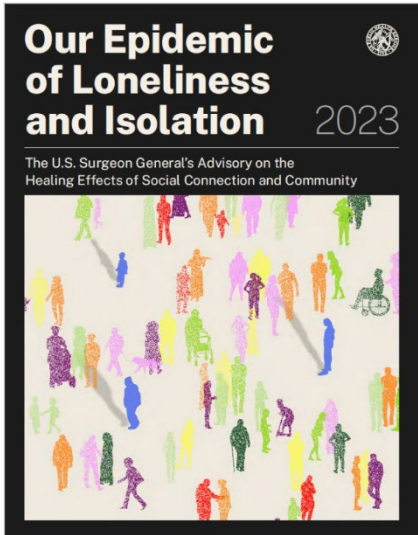Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community
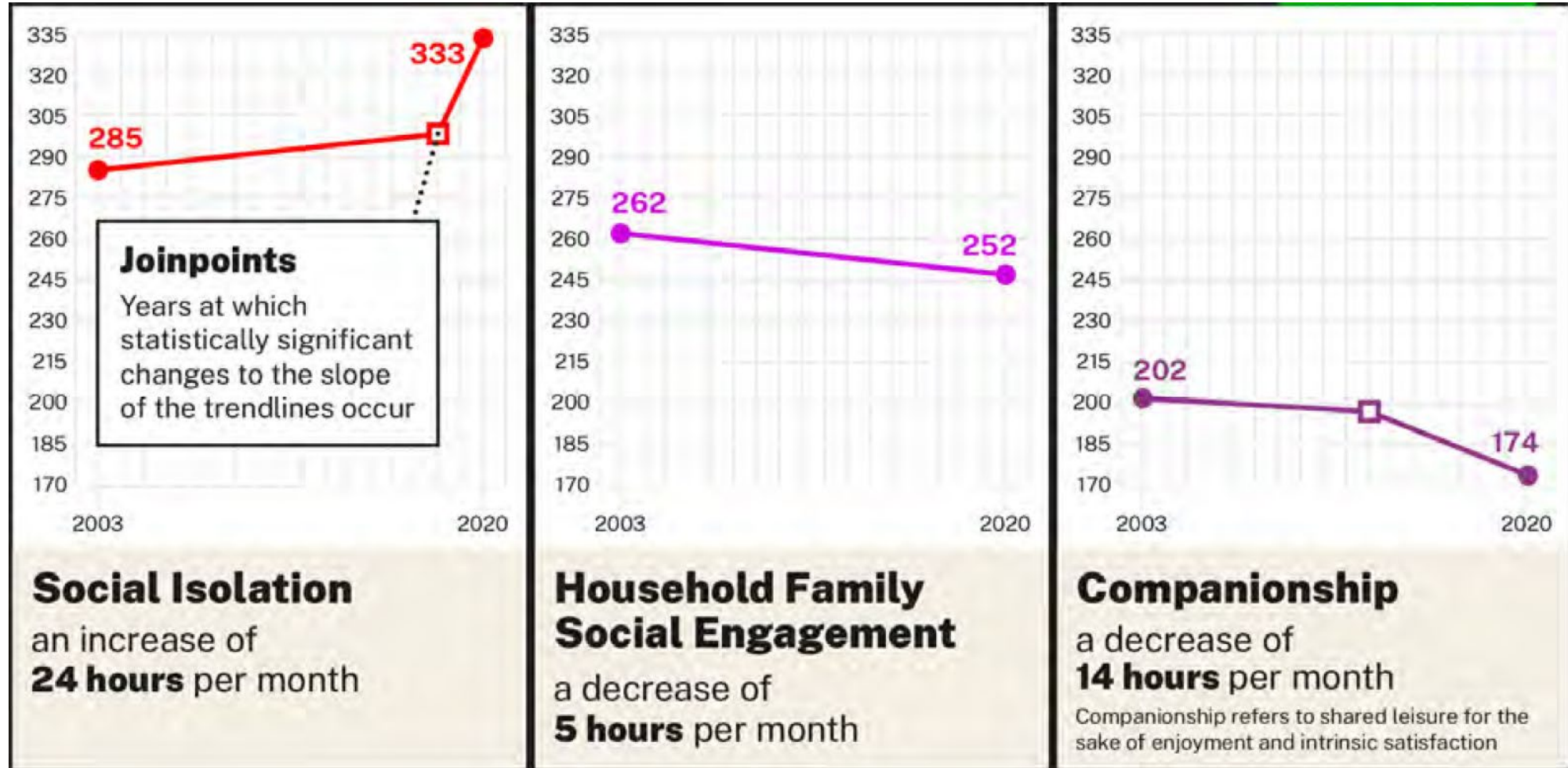
Definitions

Social connectedness

The degree to which people have and perceive a desired number, quality, and diversity of relationships that create a sense of belonging, being cared for, valued, and supported.

National Trends in Connection
From 2003 - 2020

Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation 2023

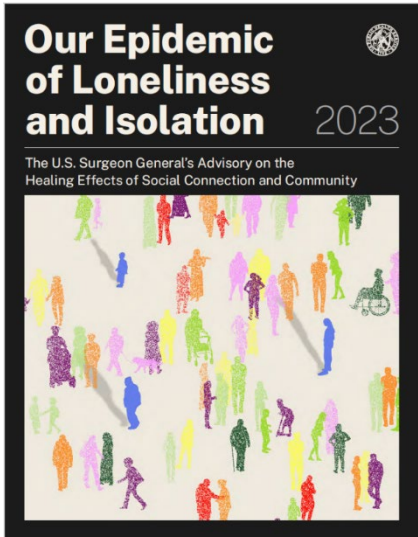The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community

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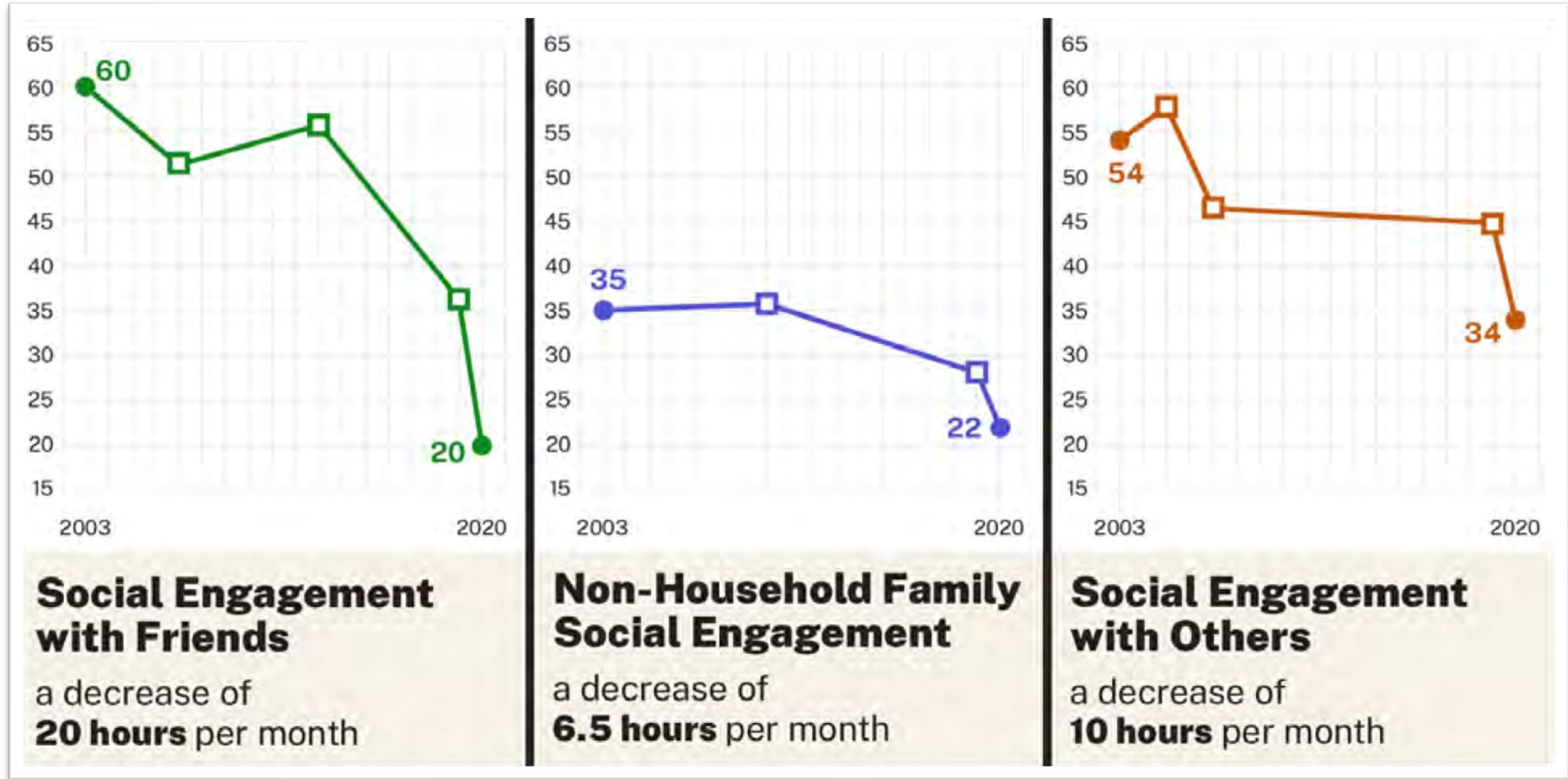

Joinpoints
Years at which statistically significant changes to the slope of the trendlines occur

Social Isolation
an increase of
24 hours per month

Household Family Social Engagement
a decrease of
5 hours per month

Companionship
a decrease of
14 hours per month
Companionship refers to shared leisure for the sake of enjoyment and intrinsic satisfaction

National Trends in Connection
From 2003 - 2020

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Social Engagement with Friends

a decrease of **20 hours** per month

Non-Household Family Social Engagement

a decrease of **6.5 hours** per month

Social Engagement with Others

a decrease of **10 hours** per month

Factors that impact social connection

In the Individual

- Physical health problems/chronic conditions
- Sensory & functional impairment
- Mental health challenges
- Tech use
- Personality
- Race
- Gender
- Socioeconomic status
- Life stage

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Factors that impact social connection

Based on Relationships

- Structure, function and quality
- Household size
- Characteristics and behaviors of others

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Factors that impact social connection

Based on Community

- Outdoor space
- Housing
- Schools
- Local business & workplace
- Local government
- Community organizations
- Health care
- Transportation

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Factors that impact social connection

Based on Society

- Norms and values
- Public policies & civic engagement
- Historical inequities

Public Health Implications

The mental, physical and societal impacts of loneliness, isolation and lack of connection include:

- Half of U.S. adults experience loneliness even before the pandemic.
- Increase the risk for early death as much as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day – more than obesity.

Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation 2023

The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community

Public Health Implications

People who lack connections experience serious health impacts including:

- 29% increased risk of heart disease
- 32% increased risk of stroke
- 50% increased risk of dementia
- Significantly increased risk for depression and anxiety
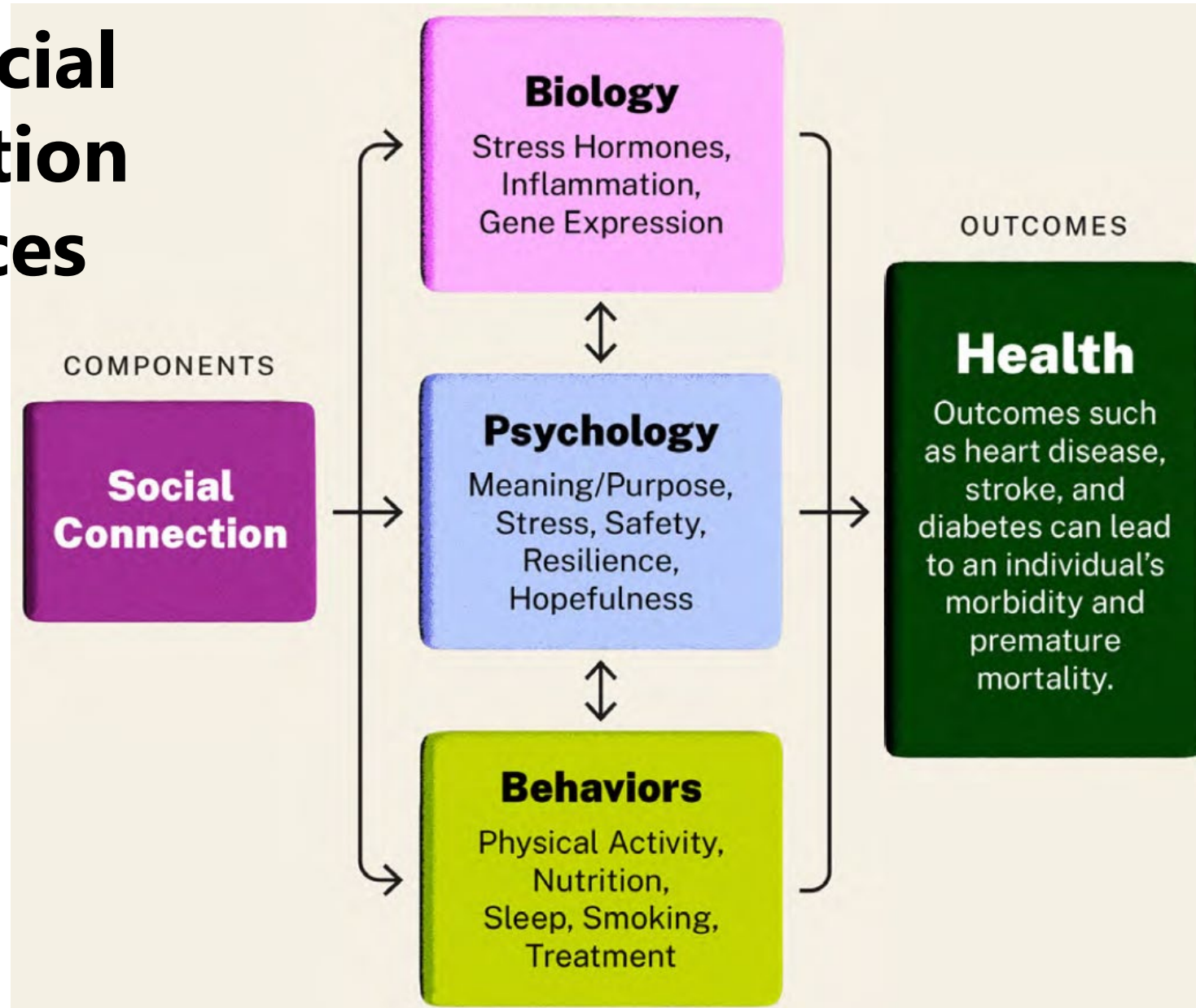- Increased susceptibility to infectious disease

How Social Connection Influences Health

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COMPONENTS

Social Connection

Biology
Stress Hormones, Inflammation, Gene Expression

Psychology
Meaning/Purpose, Stress, Safety, Resilience, Hopefulness

Behaviors
Physical Activity, Nutrition, Sleep, Smoking, Treatment

OUTCOMES

Health
Outcomes such as heart disease, stroke, and diabetes can lead to an individual's morbidity and premature mortality.

Source: Our Epidemic of Loneliness and
Isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's
Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social
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Public Health Implications: The Pandemic Effect

- Two-thirds of U.S. adults report experiencing social isolation
- 66% agree that the COVID-19 pandemic caused their anxiety levels to increase
- Only 11% turned to a medical professional when feeling down or sad, and almost 1/3 of adults 50+ reported that they did not look to anyone for support

Pillar 1
Strengthen Social Infrastructure in Local Communities

Design the built environment to promote social connection

Layout of communities – livable communities movement

- Housing
- Transportation
- Community/green spaces
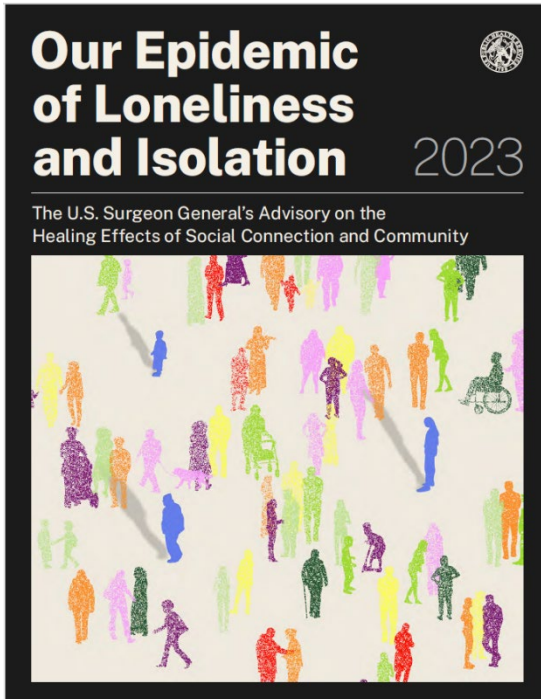
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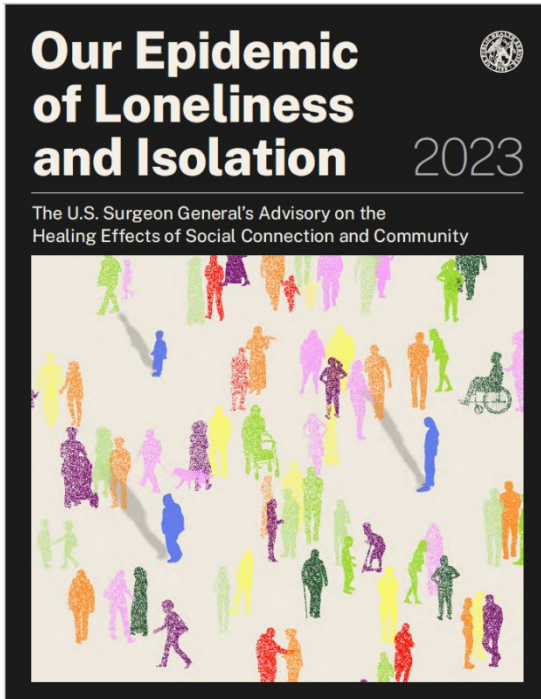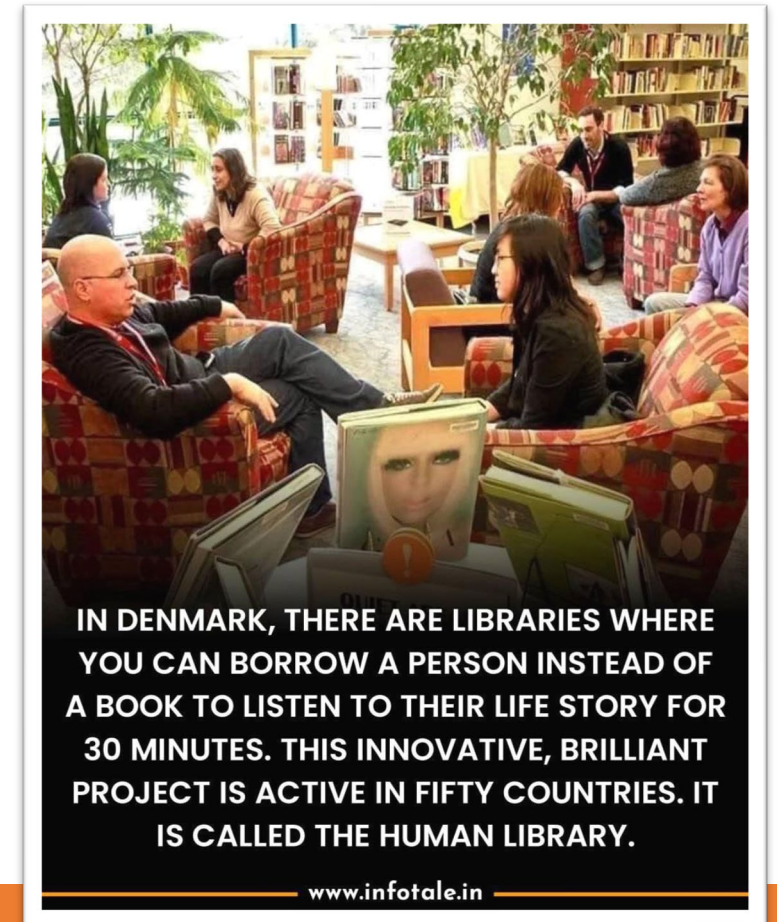
Pillar 1
Strengthen Social Infrastructure in Local Communities

Establish and scale community connection programs or activities that provide:

- Volunteer opportunities
- Interpersonal connections
- Intergenerational connections
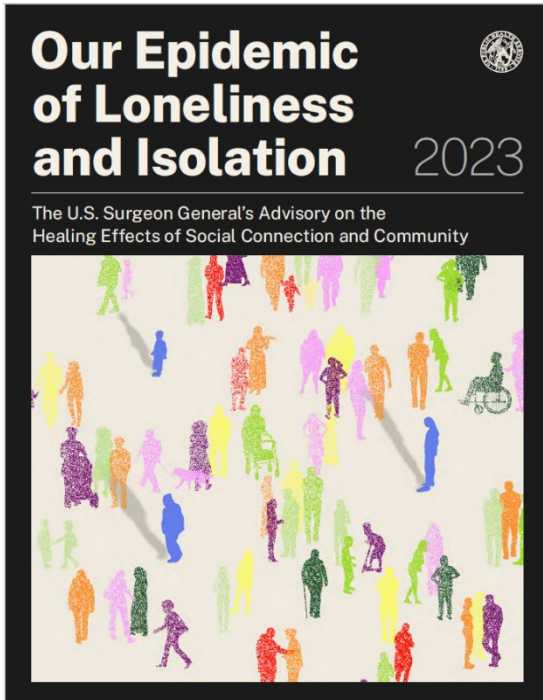
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Pillar 1
Strengthen Social Infrastructure in Local Communities

Invest in local institutions that bring people together

- Libraries
- Senior centers
- Community centers

IN DENMARK, THERE ARE LIBRARIES WHERE YOU CAN BORROW A PERSON INSTEAD OF A BOOK TO LISTEN TO THEIR LIFE STORY FOR 30 MINUTES. THIS INNOVATIVE, BRILLIANT PROJECT IS ACTIVE IN FIFTY COUNTRIES. IT IS CALLED THE HUMAN LIBRARY.

www.infotale.in

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Pillar 2
Enact Pro-Connection Public Policies

Adopt a "Connection-in-All-Policies" approach

- Establish cross-departmental leadership at all levels of government that makes connection a priority by developing and overseeing an overarching social connection strategy

Pillar 2
Enact Pro-Connection Public Policies

**Work to establish policies that create or enhance connection – examples:**

- Improved access to broadband
- Community-led initiatives

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Pillar 3
Mobilize the Health Sector

Train health care providers

- Invest in education on the physical and mental health benefits of social connection, as well as the risks associated with social disconnection
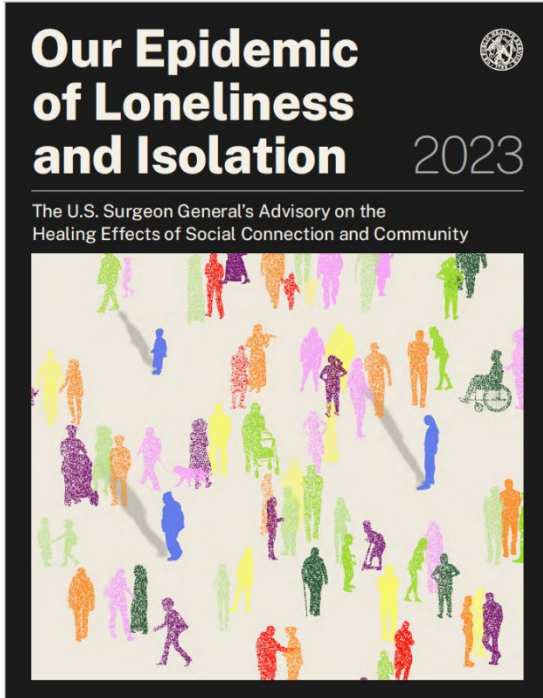
Pillar 3
Mobilize the Health Sector

Assess and support patients

- Incentivize health care providers to educate patients as part of preventative care
- Assess for social disconnection and respond to patients' health-relevant social needs with referral both in system and to CBOs
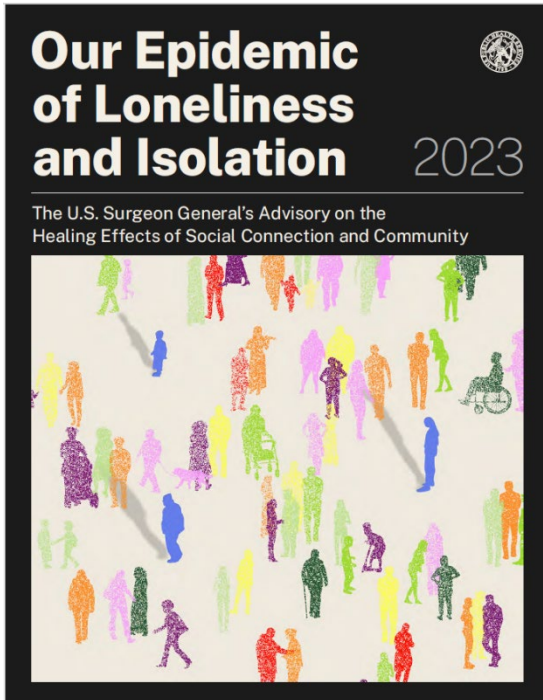
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Pillar 3
Mobilize the Health Sector

Expand public health surveillance and interventions

- Develop tracking systems
- Promote best practices and community solutions
- Emphasize prevention

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Pillar 4
Reform Digital Environments

Require data transparency & safety standards

- Ensure that data is being used with integrity, lawfully, fairly and traceably, for valid purposes.
- Individuals should know what data is being collected, who can access it, how it's being used and how they can interact with it.
- Rigorous monitoring and continual improvements in online safety

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Pillar 4
Reform Digital Environments

Support development of pro-connection technologies – examples:

- Voice-controlled virtual assistants (such as Alexa or Siri)
- Social media platforms
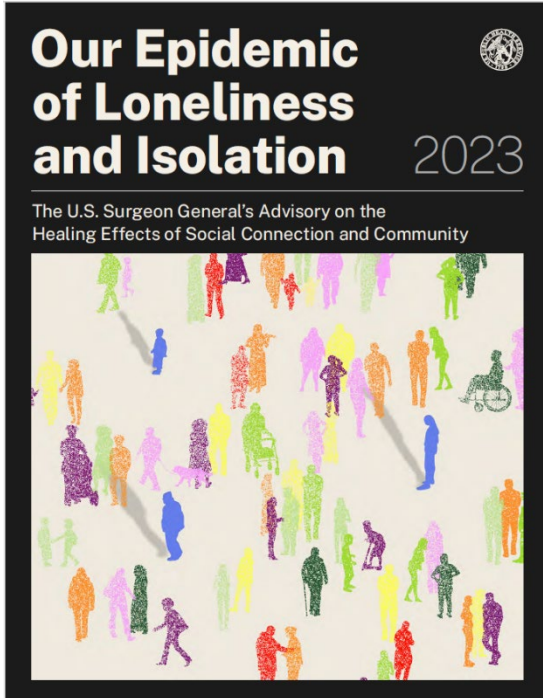
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Pillar 5
Deepen our Knowledge

Develop and coordinate a national research agenda

- Make research a priority
- Commit to advancing our understanding of the causes and consequences of social connection, trends, populations at risk, and the effectiveness of interventions and other efforts to advance connection
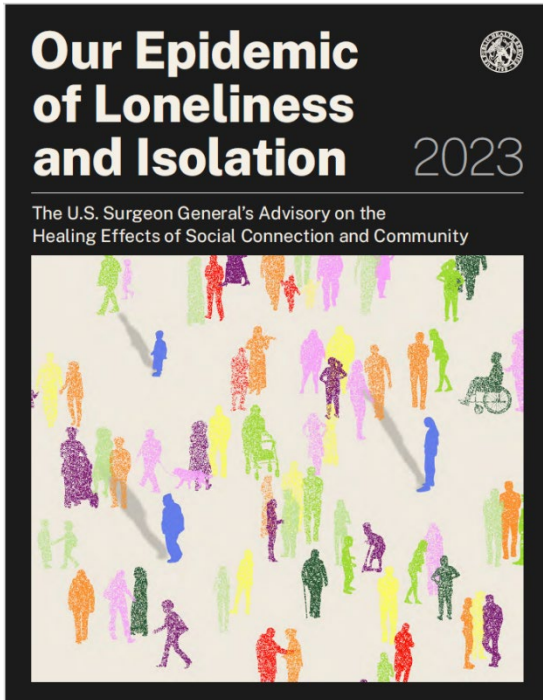
Pillar 5
Deepen Our Knowledge

Accelerate research funding

- Allocate funds for research commensurate with public health impact
- Identify evidence-based strategies and interventions that can be deployed and scaled

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Pillar 5
Deepen Our Knowledge

Increase public awareness

- Common understanding of the essential role of social connection in health and well-being
- Common understanding of the strategies that people can employ to establish meaningful connections
- Starting in childhood and reinforced throughout life

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Pillar 6
Cultivate a Culture of Connection

Cultivate values of kindness, respect, service, and commitment to one another

- Infuse the values of kindness, respect, service and commitment to one another into the informal practices of everyday life—the norms and culture of how we engage one another
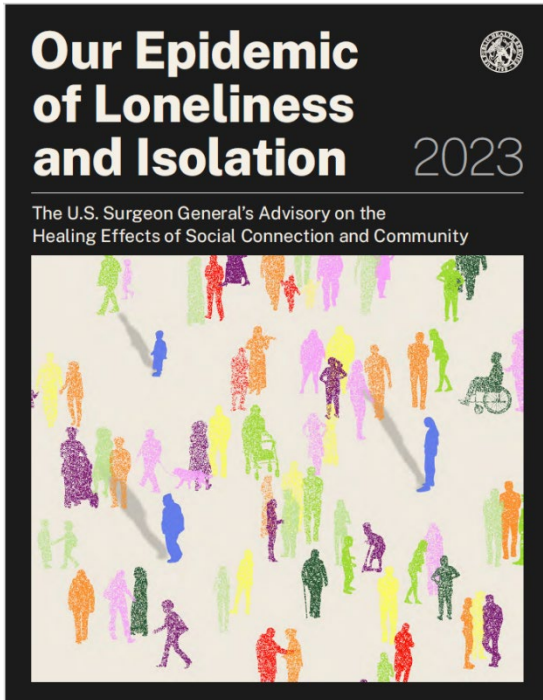- Modeled in leadership at all levels and institutions
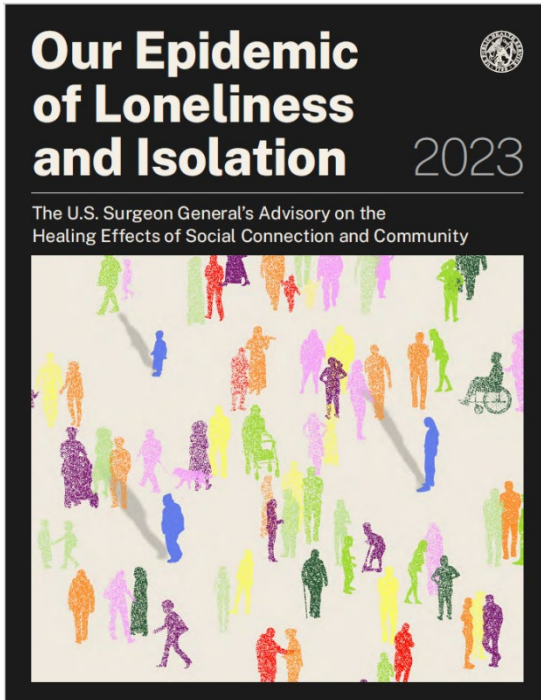
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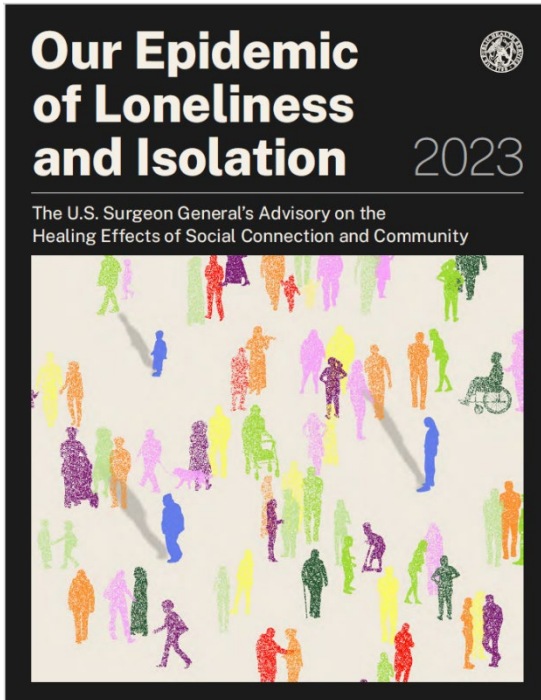
Pillar 6
Cultivate a Culture of Connection

Expand conversations on social connection in schools, workplaces, and communities

- Create venues and forums for dialogue
- Involve people of all generations, cultural groups, socio-economic groups

Breakout Time!

Pick a room:

Pillar 1: Strengthen Social Infrastructure in Local Communities
Pillar 2: Enact Pro-Connection Public Policies
Pillar 3: Mobilize the Health Sector
Pillar 4: Reform Digital Environments
Pillar 5: Deepen Our Knowledge
Pillar 6: Cultivate a Culture of Connection

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Join the WCESIL Movement

- Become active in the WCESIL
- Personally reach out to family and/or friends to provide a meaningful connection
- Share opinions/provide feedback/stay informed

To join, please fill our brief partner engagement survey:

https://bit.ly/3G1z7X2