Understanding the calamity of Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults

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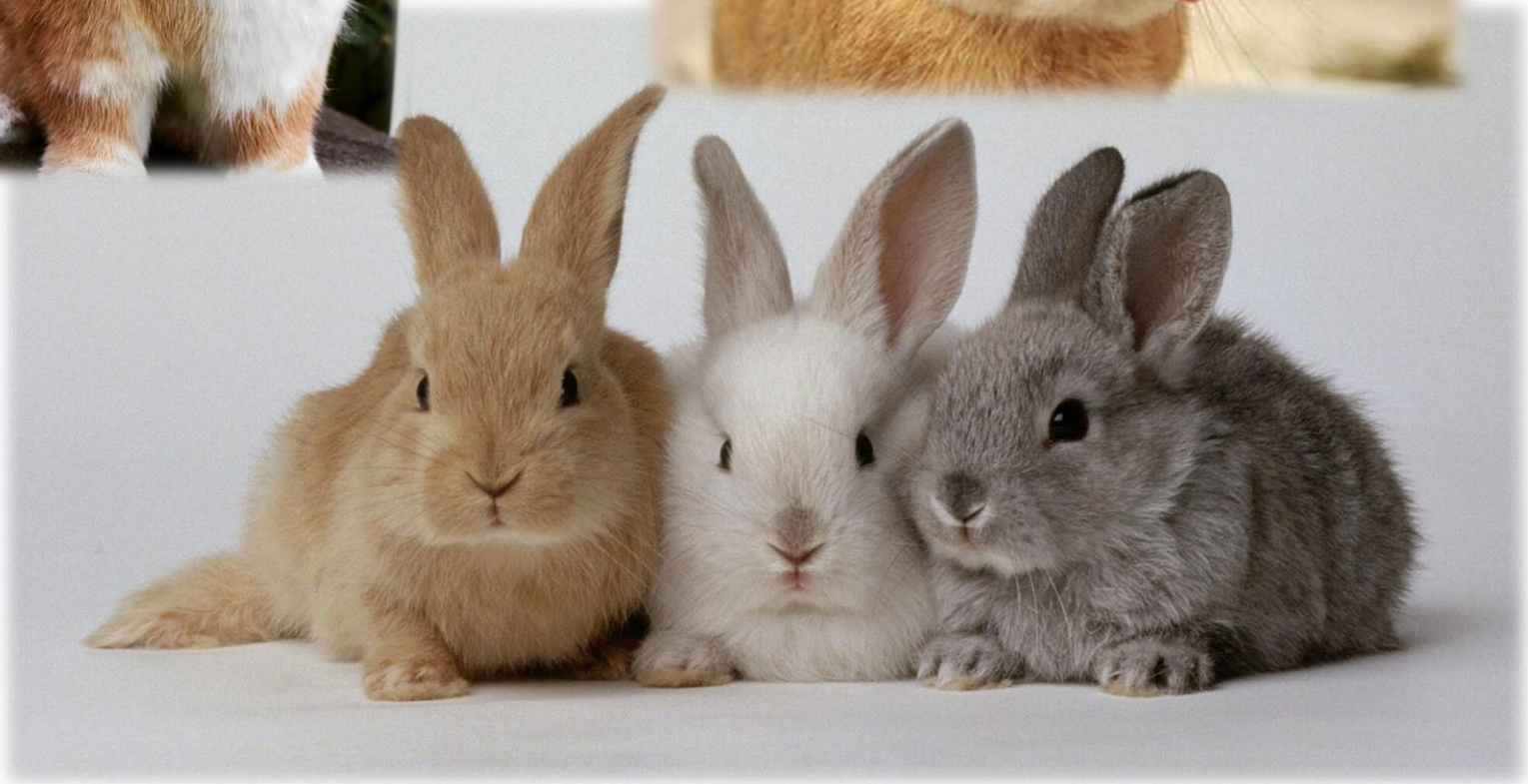
Pause...



Covid-19 Logistics

- March 11, 2020 – Worldwide Pandemic was condemned
- Entire population was affected, just like the 6% or 2 million seniors that were already homebound

Terms to Know

Homebound: Limited opportunities to leave home over the past month.

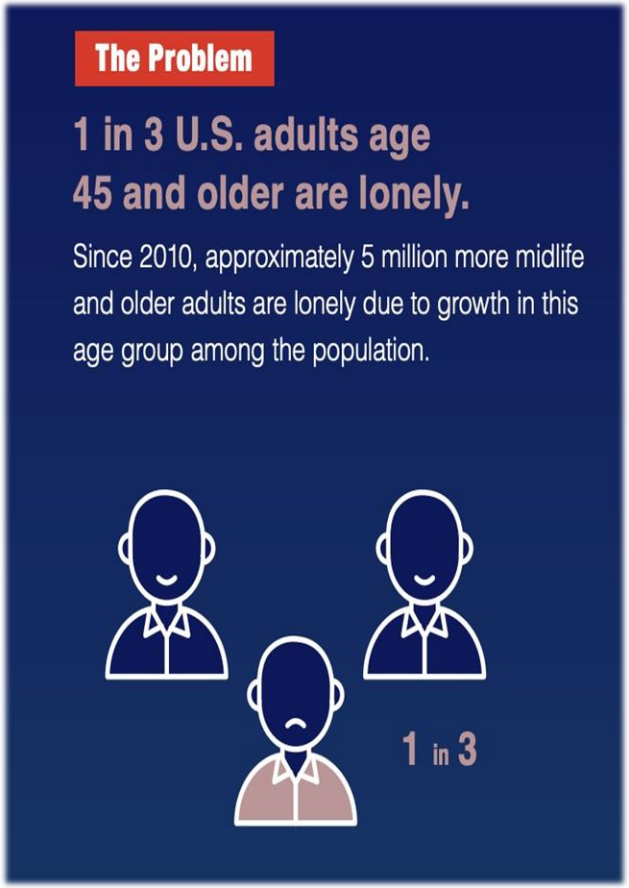
Social Isolation: Is objectively being alone, having few relationships, or infrequent social contact.

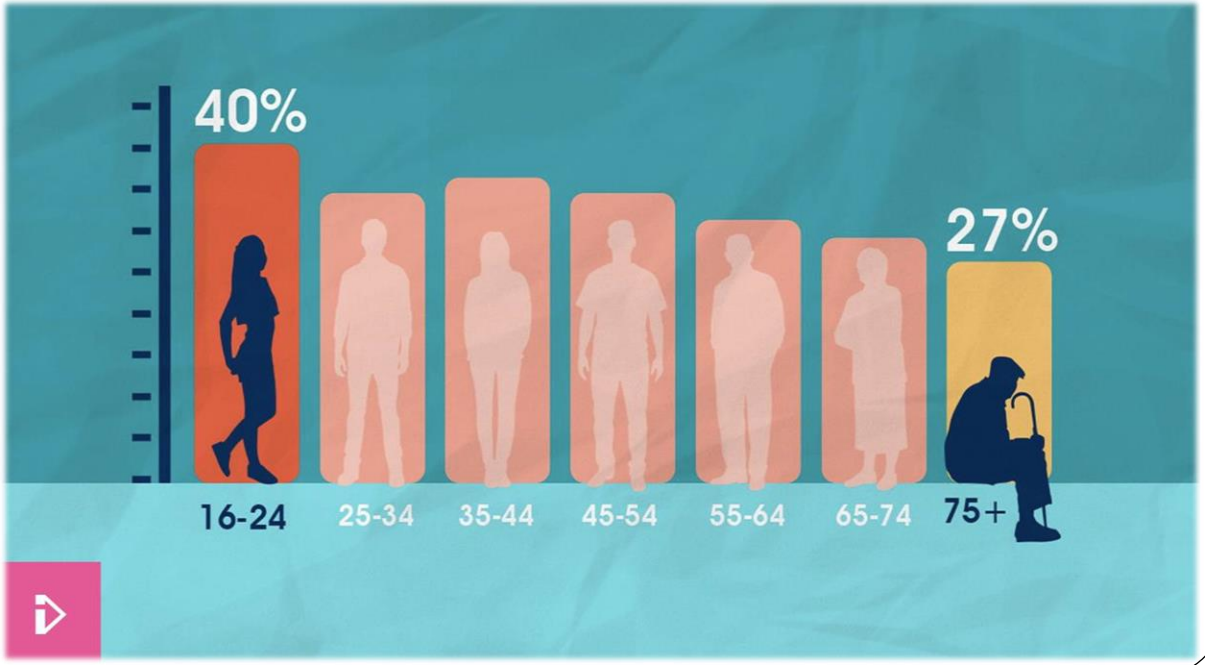
Loneliness: Is subjectively feeling alone. The discrepancy between one's desired level of connection and one's actual level.

Social Connection: An umbrella term that encompasses the structural, functional, and quality aspects of social relationships.

Isolation

- Isolation across the age spectrum is a **global concern**
- Isolation is increasing in all ages on the spectrum
- Isolation has been on the rise even before pandemic





Loneliness

Loneliness can occur:

- Age
- Income
- Living situations
- Gender

Rates are higher amongst:

- Younger population
- Lower income
- Those with chronic health conditions
- Those who are isolated

Our focus today:

Isolation Among Aging Adults

Loneliness: Research

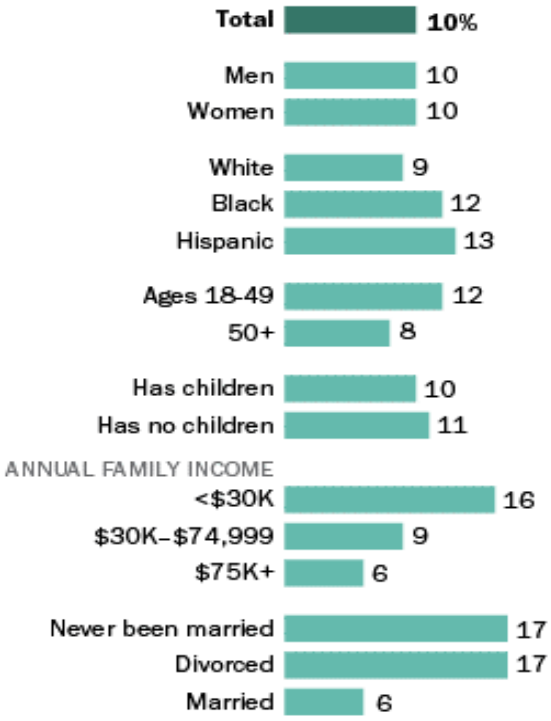
Loneliness: Research (cont.)

Studies Show:

- Older adults with lower income are at greater risk to experience loneliness
- Individuals earning less than $25,000 a year are 50% more likely to be lonely
- 36 million older adults are struggling
  - over 10 million are already living in poverty

One-in-ten U.S. adults say they feel lonely frequently; shares rise for low income and unmarried

% saying they feel lonely or isolated from those around them all or most of the time



Note: Whites and blacks include those who report being only one race and are non-Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 26-March 11, 2018.

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Loneliness: Research (cont.)

The size of one's social network and being physically isolated are the top predictors of loneliness.

Loneliness: Research (cont.)

- Chronic lonely adults are more likely to turn to isolated activities for coping.
- The ways in which older adults cope with loneliness vary depending on how *frequently* they feel lonely.

Loneliness: Research (cont.)

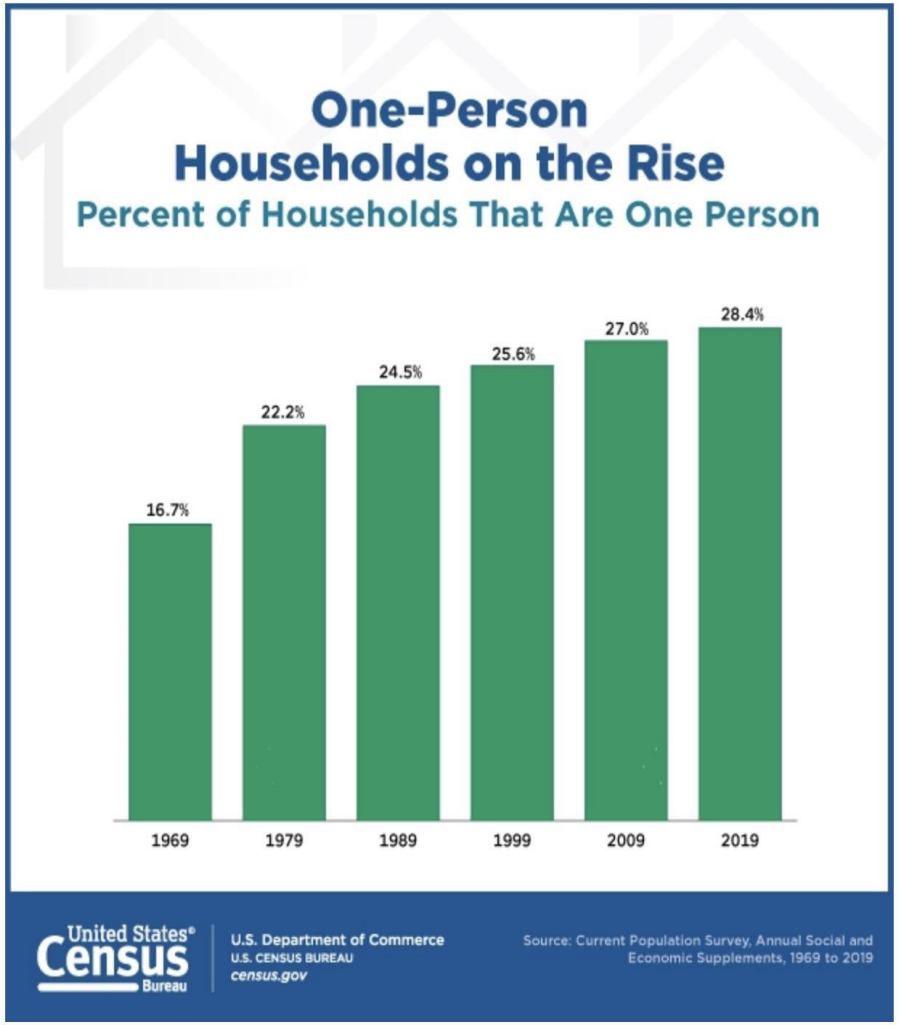
Loneliness is not usually caused by a single event and it affects everyone, thus presenting multiple opportunities to intervene.

Loneliness: Research (cont.)

Few have discussed feelings of loneliness with their health care provider.

Loneliness: Research (cont.)

NOVEMBER 19, 2019



Living Arrangements

Households smallest in Europe, biggest in Africa

Average individual resides in a household of ____ people

	Household Size
Sub-Saharan Africa	6.9
Middle East-North Africa	6.2
Asia-Pacific	5.0
Latin America-Caribbean	4.6
North America	3.3
Europe	3.1
World	4.9

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
"Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

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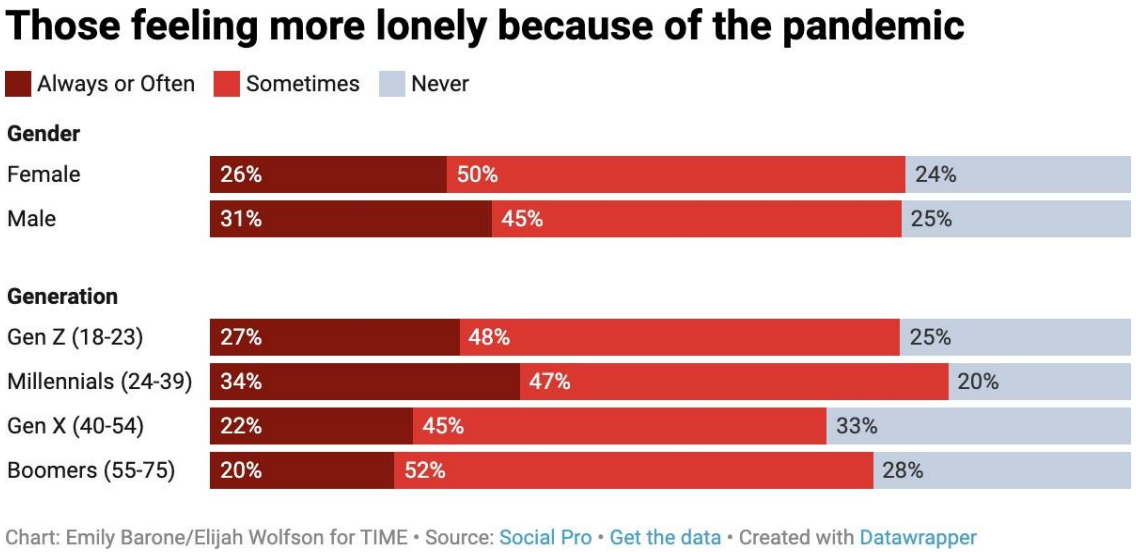
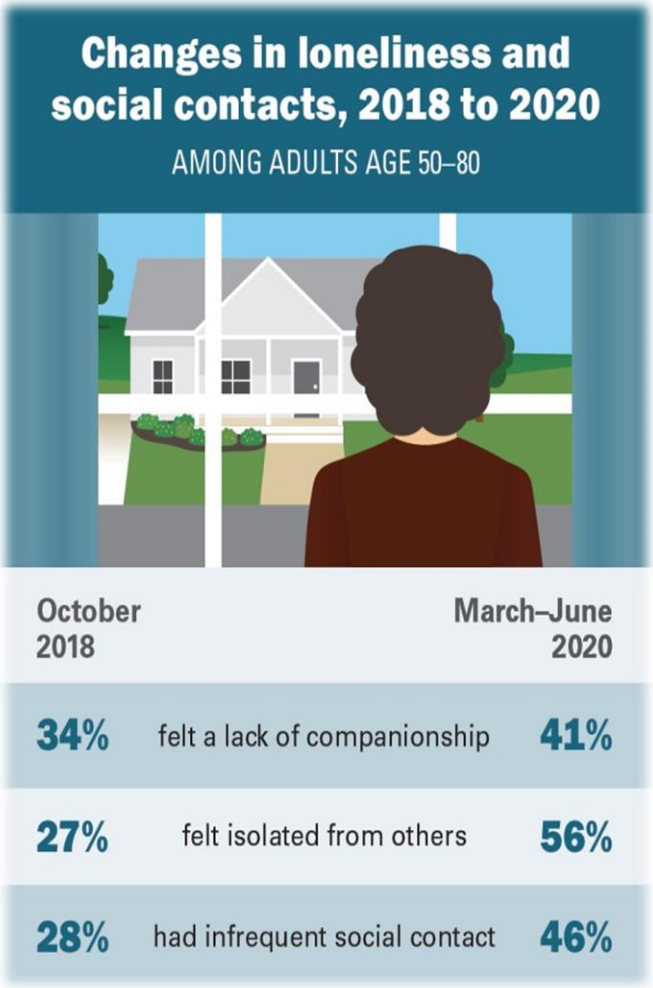
Loneliness During Covid-19



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



National Poll on Healthy Aging, Sept 2020: http://hdl.handle.net/2027.42/162549

Why should we care about social isolation & loneliness?

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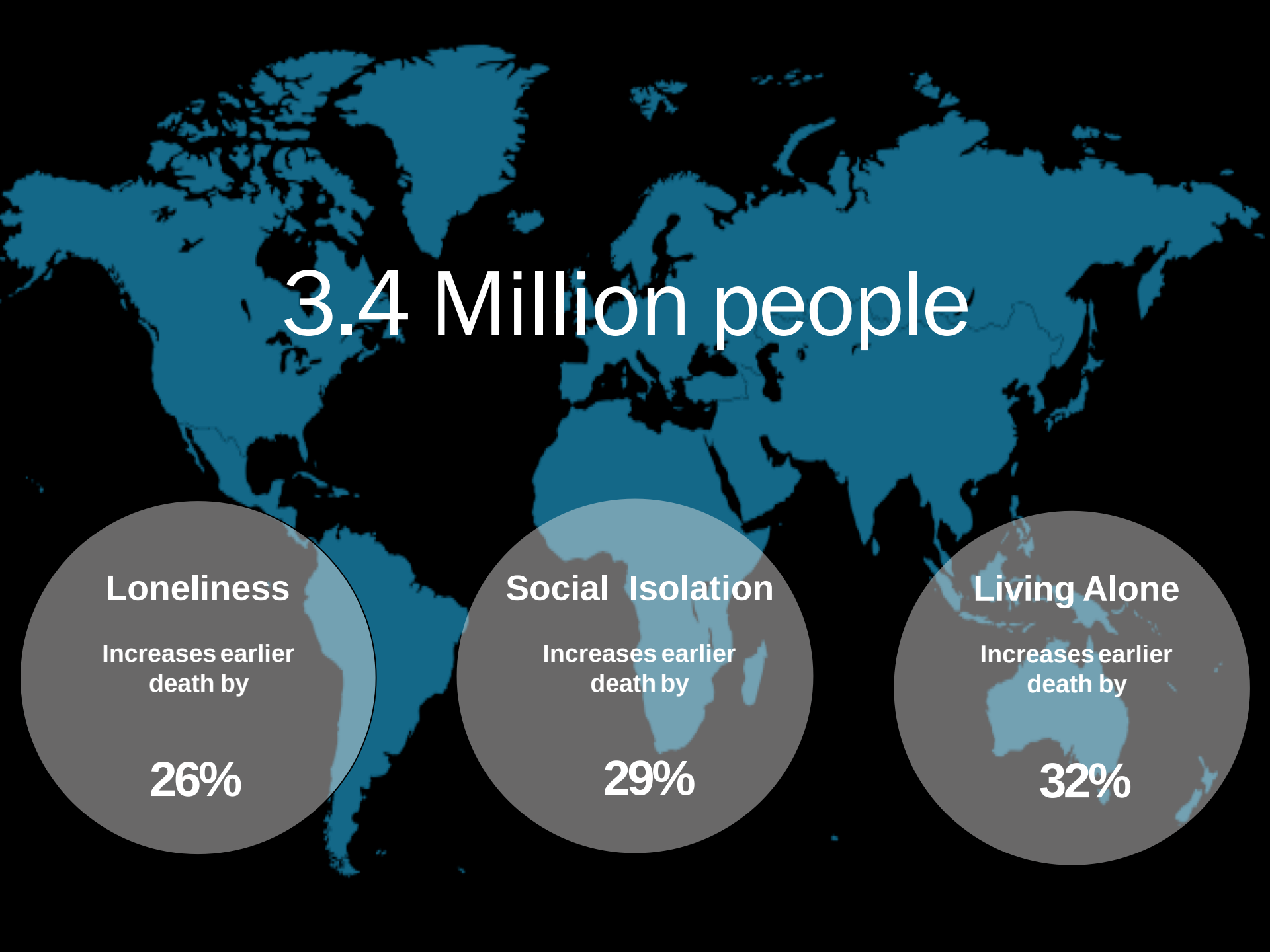
Social Isolation & Loneliness
are Deadly


3.4 Million people
Loneliness
Increases earlier death by
26%
Social Isolation
Increases earlier death by
29%
Living Alone
Increases earlier death by
32%

308,849 people
Social Connection → 50% increased survival

Influence of Social Isolation on Health and Economy

Physical Health

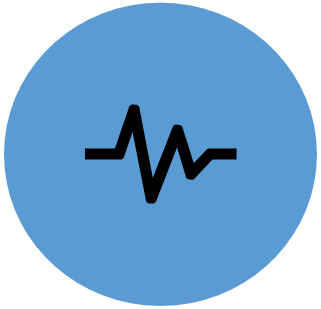
- Cardiovascular Disease
- Type2 Diabetes

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

WE ARE MADE TO

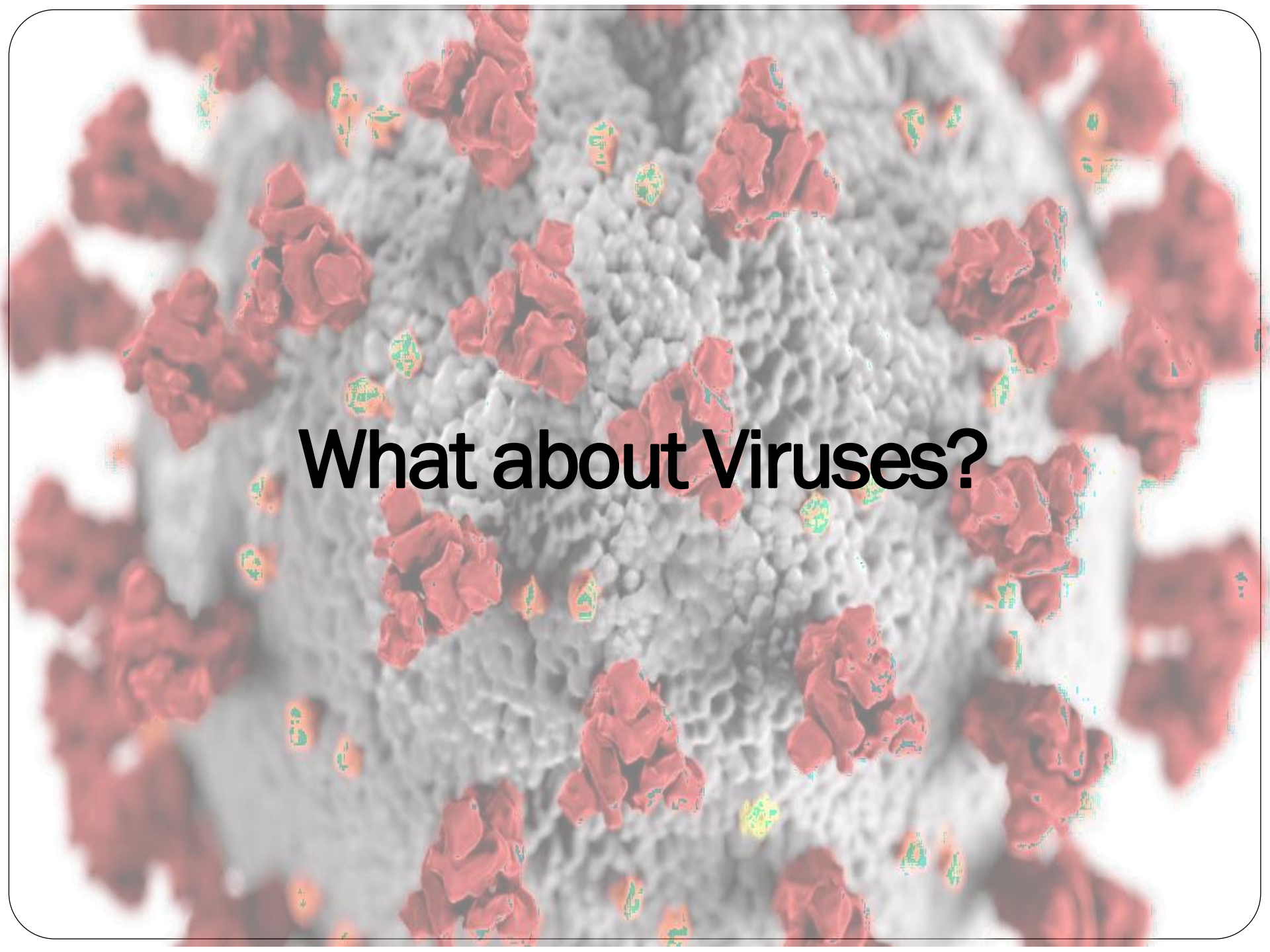
CONNECT

Problematic Behaviors

Substance Use

Sleep

Eating Habits


What about Viruses?

Loneliness *is* a biological cue like thirst:

Unique Challenges to Reducing Isolation and Loneliness

Socially Connected while Physically Distant

If living with others, spend quality time together

Offer support to others

Express Gratitude

Spend time outside in nature/neighborhood

get to know your

NEIGHBORS

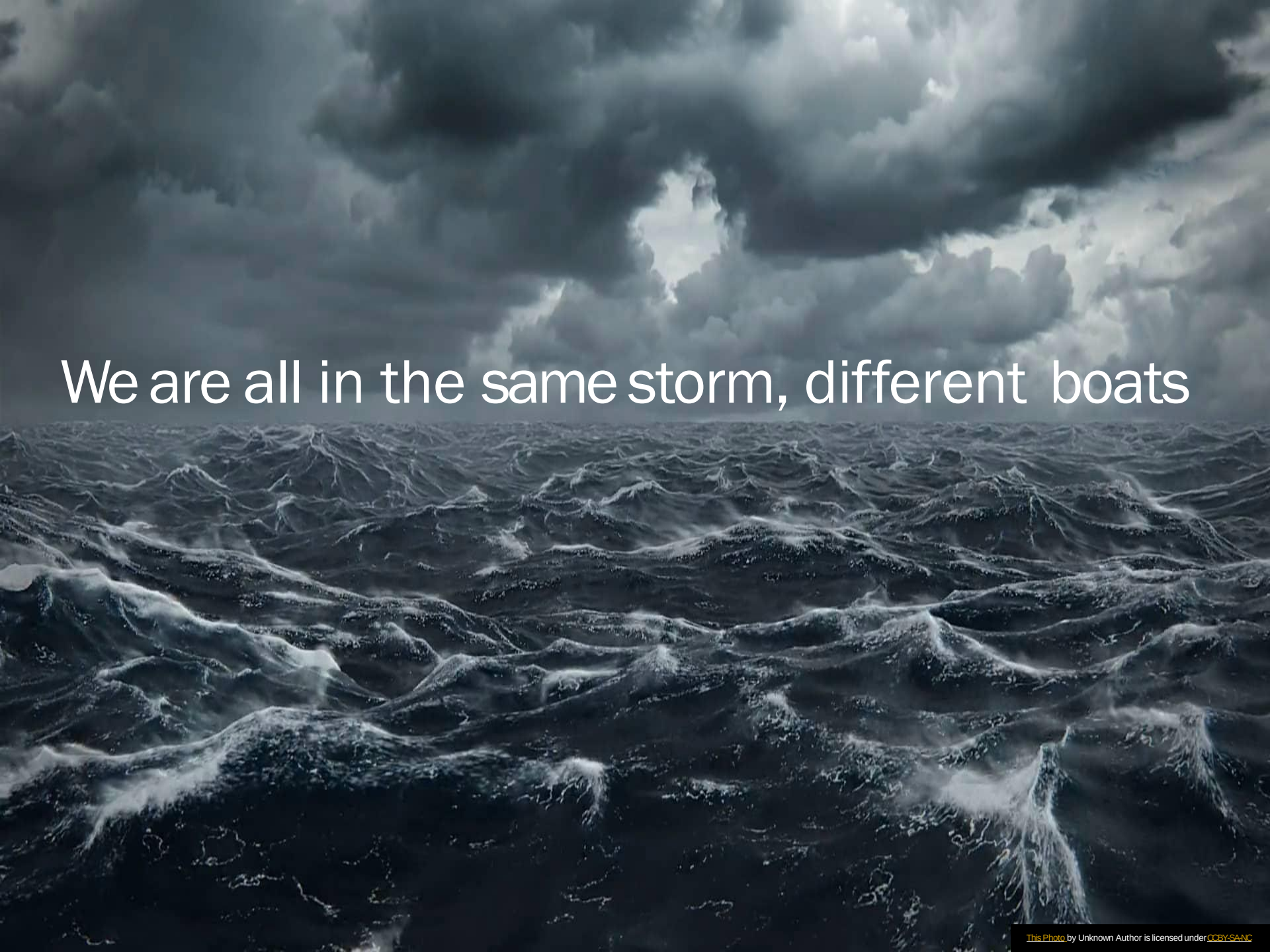
Older Adults who regularly engaged in healthy behaviors were less likely to experience loneliness

	Felt lack of companionship		Felt isolated from others		Frequency of social contact	
	Hardly ever	Some of the time/often	Hardly ever	Some of the time/often	Every day/ several times a week	Once a week or less
Eat healthy						
Every day/several times a week	60%	40%	45%	55%	57%	43%
Once a week or less	53%	47%	42%	58%	44%	56%
Get exercise						
Every day/several times a week	63%	37%	46%	54%	59%	41%
Once a week or less	52%	48%	41%	59%	46%	54%
Get enough sleep						
Every day/several times a week	62%	38%	47%	53%	56%	44%
Once a week or less	45%	55%	35%	65%	45%	55%
Total	59%	41%	44%	56%	54%	46%

Tech-Based Solutions

- **Technology** helps reduce loneliness and isolation, however, ***is not a substitute for human interaction.***
- Technology must be paired with other services and support.

Are we all in the same boat?



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KNOXVILLE-KNOX COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION COMMITTEE

AmeriCorps Seniors

Senior Companion Program
Volunteers Empowering Seniors

O'CONNOR SENIOR CENTER
Add life to your years

AmeriCorps Seniors

Retired & Senior Volunteer Program
Volunteers Building Communities

senior care calls

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KNOXVILLE-KNOX COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION COMMITTEE

COUNCIL ON AGING VIRTUAL PROGRAMS

(n.) the ability to find, create, and share information

DIGITAL INCLUSION

Anyone can support a digitally inclusive community – including you; it's easy!

DAILY LIVING CENTERS
ADULT DAY SERVICES

VOLUNTEER ASSISTED TRANSPORTATION

Humans are social beings…
We aren't meant to be alone.

Special Thanks and Slide Credits

Slide Credit (includes but not limited to):

- AARP – A National Survey of Adults 45 and Older: Loneliness and Social Connections
- Dr. Julianne Holt-Lunstad, Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT – engaged Social Isolation Virtual Summit
- CIGNA 2020 Survey - Loneliness and the Workplace

Thank you!

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