

Alone, Together: The Social Consequences of COVID Confinement

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“Emperor Frankenstein”



Source: *A General Theory of Love* (Lewis, Amini, & Lannon, 2000)

Our Plan

01

Making the
Case for
Connection

02

Aloneness,
Isolation, or
Loneliness

03

Loneliness
Trends Pre-
and Post-
COVID

04

Where Do
We Go?



01

Making the Case for Connection

“Statistically, this [social support and relationships] is one of the strongest areas under study. What isn’t clear is how it works. How does a relationship get into the body and influence biological processes? All we know at this point is, something very important is happening.”

—Dr. Leonard Syme, professor of epidemiology at UC-Berkeley

“”

What is social support?

- Being cared for and loved (shared intimacy)
- Being esteemed and valued (self -worth)
- Sharing companionship, communication and mutual obligations (sense of belonging)
- “Informational” support (access to information, appraisal, advice, and guidance)
- Access to physical or material assistance

Source: *Health Psychology* (Taylor, 2019)



Primary Risk Factors for CV Disease

	Relative Risk (RR)	Prevalence
Hypertension	2.1	47%
Cholesterol	2.4	38%
Inactivity	1.9	25%
Smoking	2.5	12.5%
Social Isolation	2.8	??%

Source: Centers for Disease Control, 2021

Famous Studies in Social Connection

Tecumseh, MI

10-year study of 3,000 adults in Michigan. 4x mortality for socially isolated.



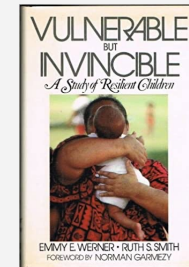
Roseto, PA

Italian-American community with 1/6 incidence of heart disease



Honolulu, HI

650 at-risk youth over two decades. 25% were “transcenders .”



Source: *Mind/Body Health: The Effects of Attitudes, Emotions, & Relationships* (Karren et al., 2006)



02

Aloneness vs. Isolation vs. Loneliness

Aloneness

- [Objective] experience of not being with another individual
- Can be positive, negative, or neutral

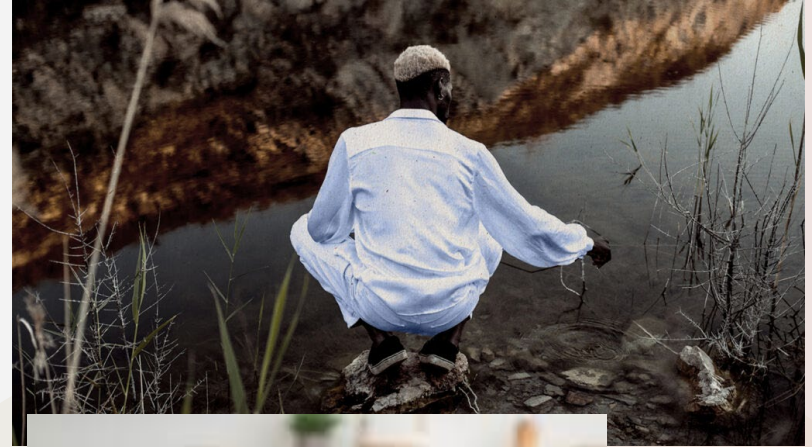
Social Isolation

- Lack of social contacts
- Few social interactions

Loneliness

- [Subjective] experience of distress from being alone or separated
- Gap between desired and actual relationships

Aloneness



Social Isolation



Loneliness



The UCLA 3-Item Loneliness Scale

Scale

3

This scale comprises 3 questions that measure three dimensions of loneliness: relational connectedness, social connectedness and self-perceived isolation. The questions are:

1. How often do you feel that you lack companionship?
2. How often do you feel left out?
3. How often do you feel isolated from others?

The scale generally uses three response categories: **Hardly ever / Some of the time / Often**

Health Risks of Loneliness

Health risks associated with loneliness and social isolation are comparable to the dangers of smoking and obesity

Loneliness increases
the risk of death by

26%

Social isolation
increases death risk by

29%

Living alone increases
death risk by

32%

Being socially
connected reduces
death risk by

50%

Design for Social Health
National Forum for Black Public Administrators | 2020

HKS

Source: Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Layton, 2010; Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015

Cornell Institute for
Healthy Futures

“Just as diabetes disrupts our ability to self-regulate the level of sugar in the “internal environment” of our blood, loneliness can disrupt our ability to self-regulate in the external, social world.”

“”

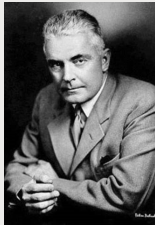
—Drs. John Cacioppo & William Patrick

Source: *Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection* (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008)

Famous Failures in Social Connection

John Watson

“Never hug and kiss them. Never let them sit in your lap. If you must, kiss them once on the forehead when they say goodnight.”



Germ Theory

Mortality rates in some “so-called sterile” nurseries were 75-100%



Math Stressor

Measured cortisol levels of girls given false feedback on math test.



Source: Wikipedia; *A General Theory of Love* (Lewis, Amini, & Lannon, 2000); Seltzer, Proski, Ziegler, & Pollak (2012)

Limbic Resonance & Regulation

- Humans are not fully self-regulating
- More opiate receptors in limbic brain than anywhere else
- Lieberman & Eisenberger (2015) fMRI study on social rejection (social pain = physical pain)
- Social isolation syndrome impairs brain development



Source: *A General Theory of Love* (Lewis, Amini, & Lannon, 2000)

Health Effects of Isolation and Loneliness During Pandemic



Physical Health

Cardiovascular
Disease
Obesity & diabetes
Weakened immunity



Mental & Behavioral Health

Depression & Anxiety
Suicidality
Sleep



Cognitive Health

Cognitive impairment
Dementia
Alzheimer's Disease



Economic Health

6.7B medical spending
Lower productivity
More absenteeism

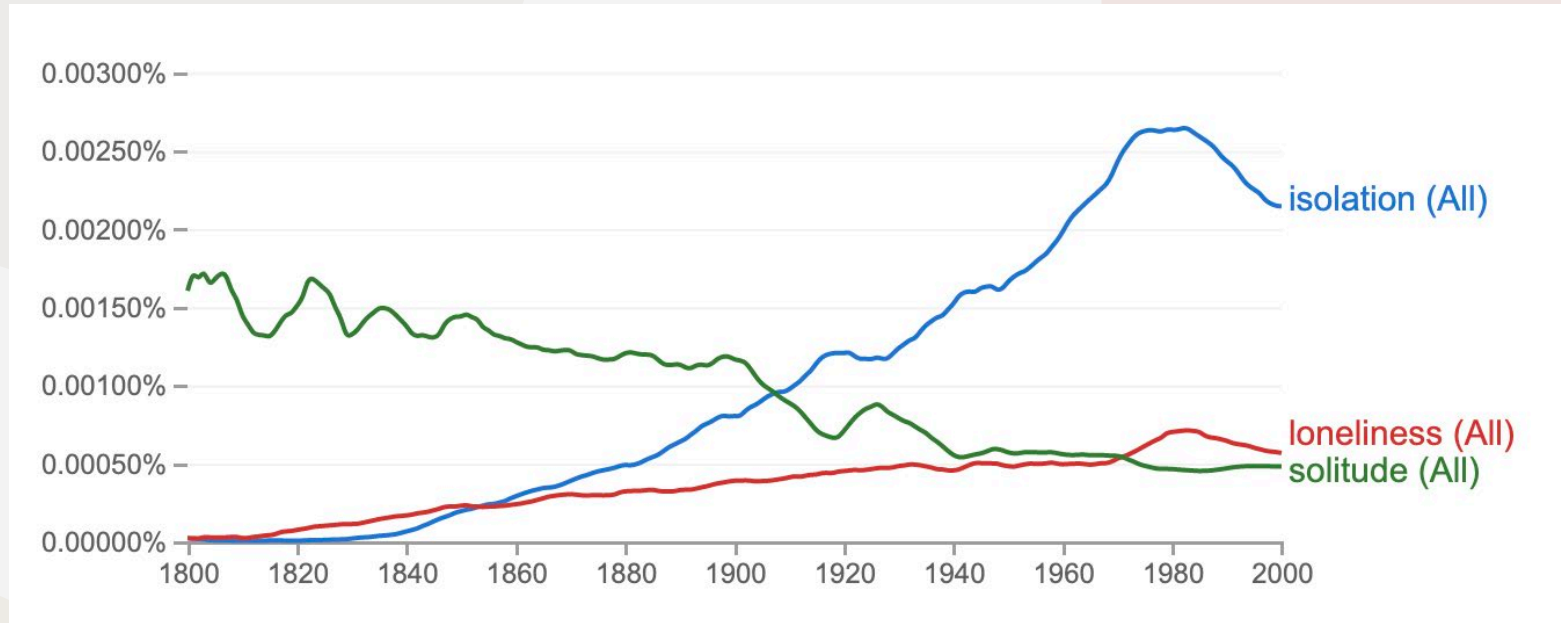
Source: Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015; Ong, Uchino, & Wethington, 2015; NASEM, 2020; AARP, 2018



03

Loneliness Trends Pre and Post-COVID

Occurrence of loneliness, solitude, and isolation in writing from 1800-2000



Source: Lepore, 2020

Living in the U.S.A

Source: Clearvue Health, 2019

We've Become a lot Lonelier

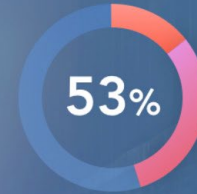
We have fewer friends who we can have deep conversations with. More Americans have no close friends.

Americans with no close friends outside of family (%)

1985



2004



Average # of Confidants

1985



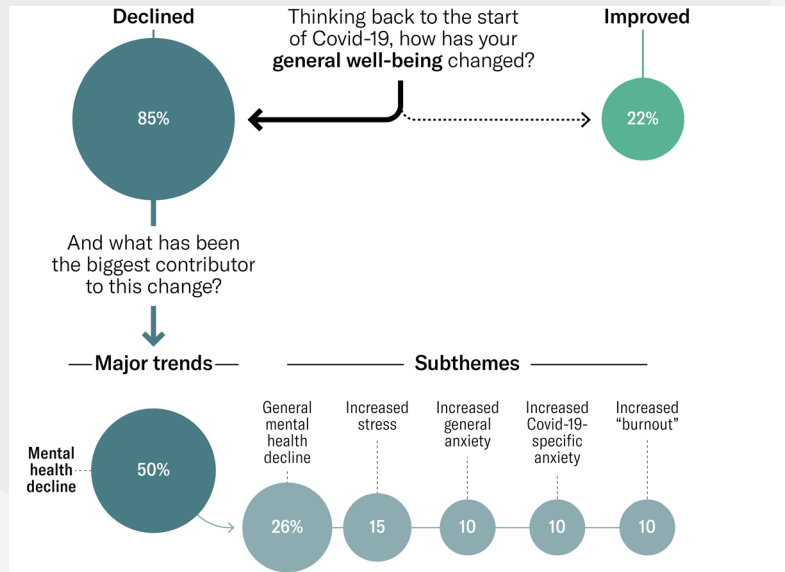
2.94

2004

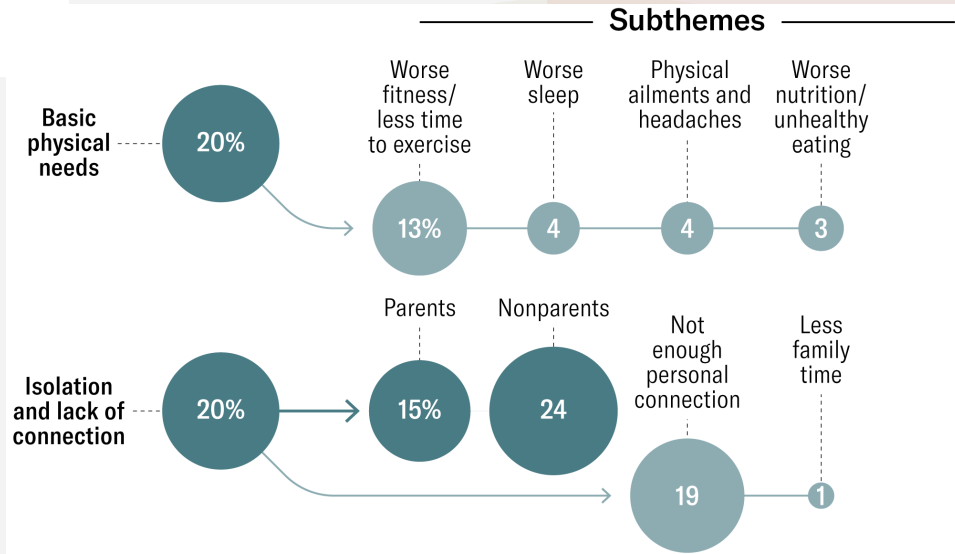


2.08

McPherson et al

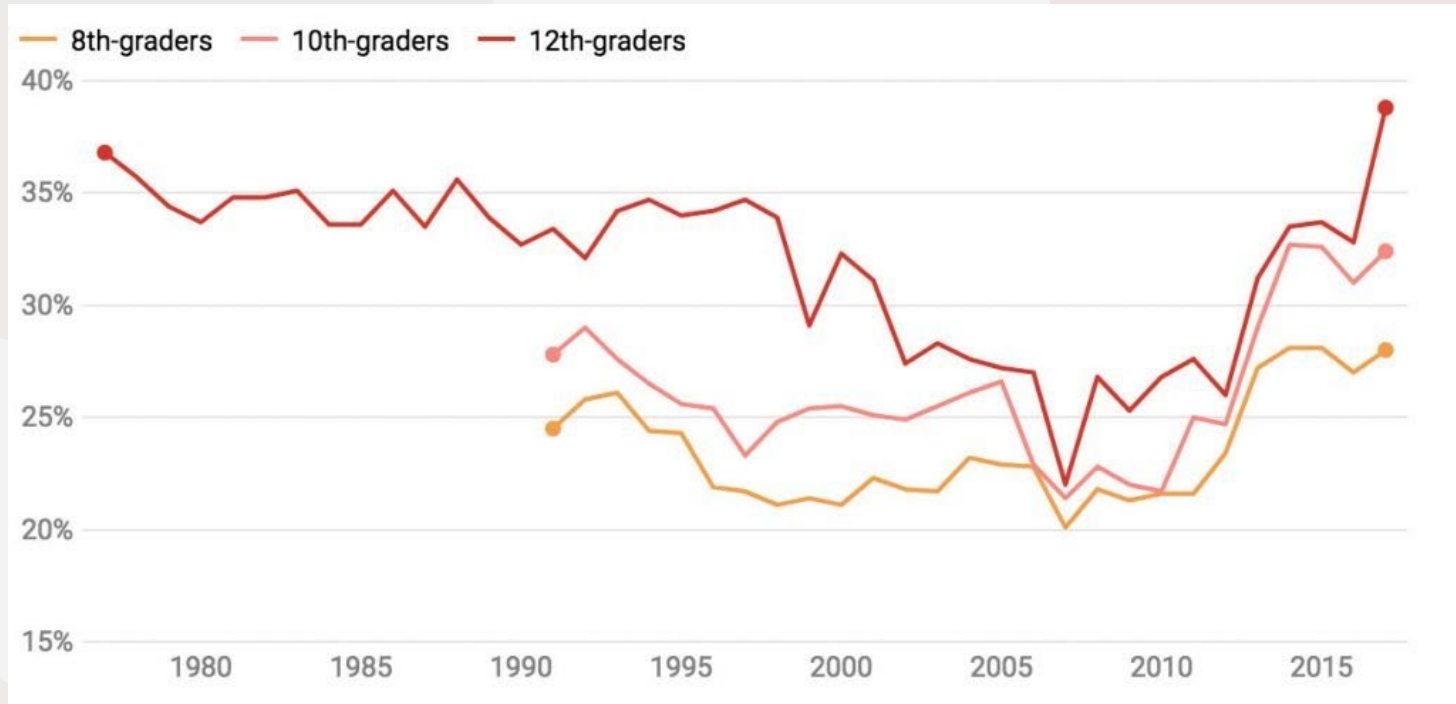


One more view during pandemic



Source: Campbell & Gavett, 2021

Loneliness in Teens

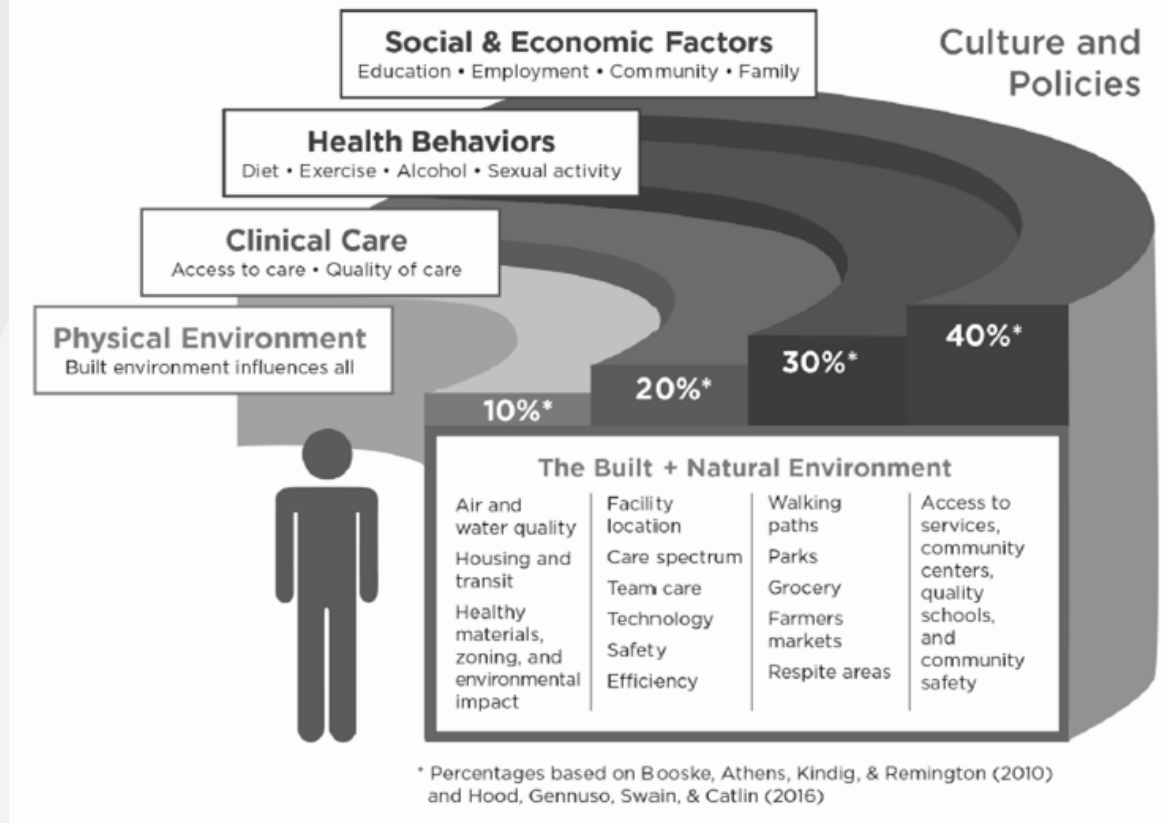


Source: Monitoring the Future (MTF): A Continuing Study of American Youth, 2019

04

Where do we go?

Built Environment as a Social Determinant of Health



Social Determinants of Health



Source: Peavey, 2020

THANKS!

On to the sessions...



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