

# Welcome!

*Please feel free to introduce  
yourself in the chat!*

# Addressing Social Isolation, Loneliness, and Connection: Promising Strategies for Youth and Families

*September 2024*

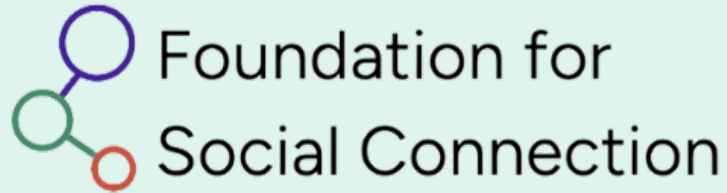
Morgan Marler,  
Innovation and Implementation Manager  
The Foundation for Social Connection

# Moment of Connection

*What does a socially connected and resilient community look, sound, or feel like to you?*

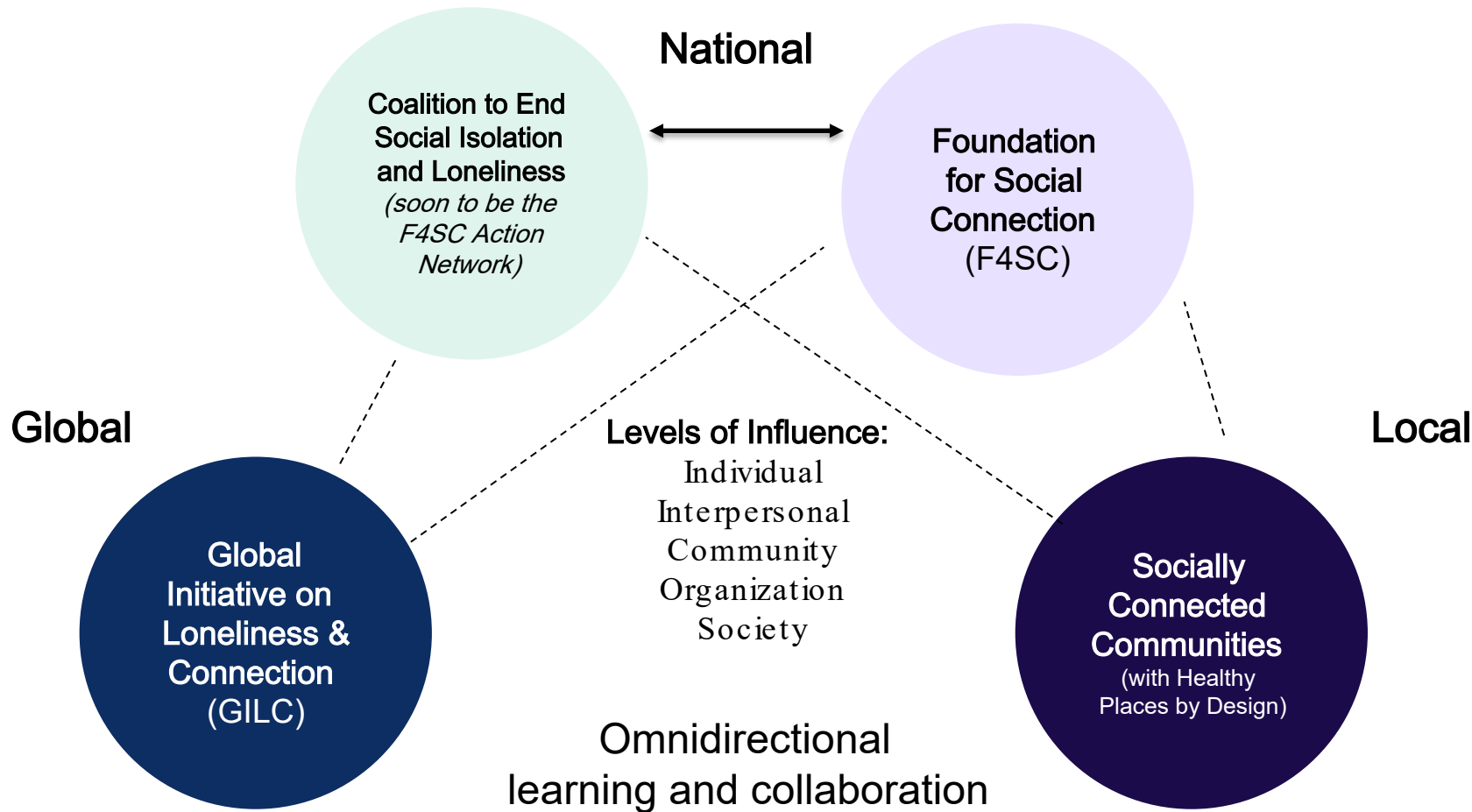
# Today's Conversation

- Who We Are & What We Do
- Social Isolation, Loneliness, and Social Connection (SILC) 101
- Promising Strategies to Address SILC
- The Action Guide for Building Socially Connected Communities
- Where Do We Go From Here?



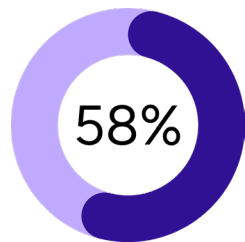
**Mission:** Advance social connection nation -wide rooted in evidence for our collective well-being.

**Vision :** A vibrant society where social connection is at the heart of how we live.

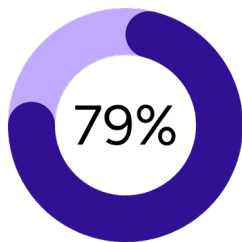


# We are facing a global crisis of disconnection.

Millions of Americans are socially isolated, lonely, or both, which negatively impacts quality of life and health outcomes. This is common across the globe.



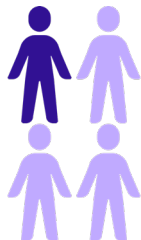
Post-pandemic, 58% of Americans experience loneliness - consistent with pre - pandemic rates.



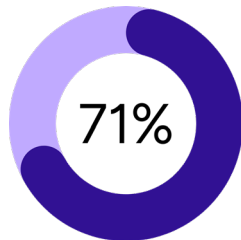
Gen Z (people born after 1996) is the loneliest generation.



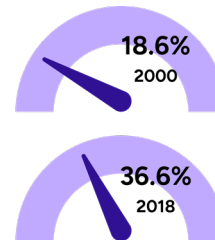
In 2023, 1 in 3 adults age 50-80 reported feeling isolated from others.



Globally, 1 in 4 people report feeling lonely.

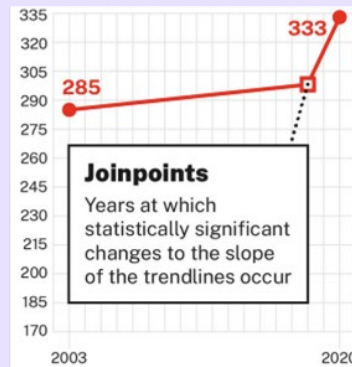


Millennials (born 1981-1996) are the second loneliest generation.

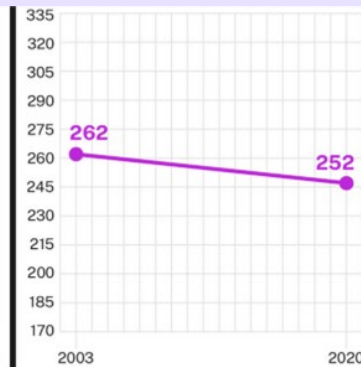


School loneliness has increased from 18.6% to 36.6%, with most of the increase occurring after 2012.

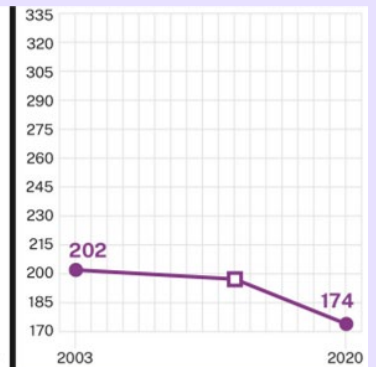
# National Trends for Social Connection



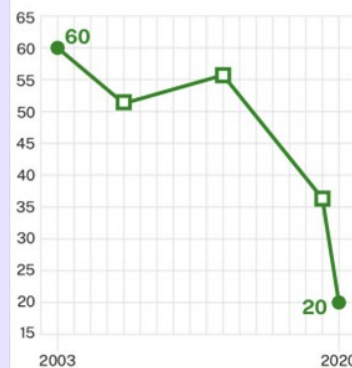
**Social Isolation**  
an increase of  
**24 hours** per month



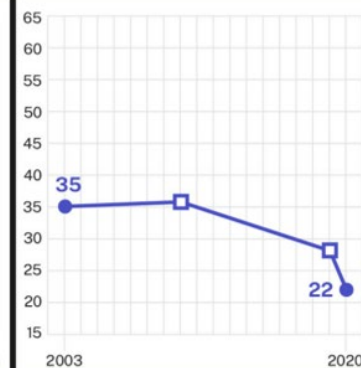
**Household Family Social Engagement**  
a decrease of  
**5 hours** per month



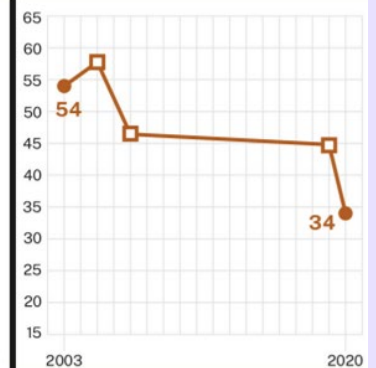
**Companionship**  
a decrease of  
**14 hours** per month  
Companionship refers to shared leisure for the sake of enjoyment and intrinsic satisfaction



**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



# **(Some of the) Root Causes**

- **Hyper-individualism**
- **Mobility**
- **Speed & Efficiency**
- **Religious Disaffiliation**
- **Civil Society Deserts**
- **Technology Distractions**
- **Overwork and Precarity**
- **Valuing Youth over Aging**
- **Tribalism**

# The Impact of Social Isolation, Loneliness, & Connection

## Socially Disconnected Communities



### Physical Health

Cardiovascular disease  
Stroke  
Type 2 Diabetes



### Cognitive Health

Cognitive decline  
Dementia  
Alzheimer's disease



### Mental & Behavioral Health

Depression and anxiety  
Suicidality  
Addiction



### Economic Health

Higher Medicare spending  
More absenteeism at work  
Lower productivity/quality of work

## Socially Connected Communities

### Healthier

Reduced stigma around seeking health services  
Stronger preventative care  
Better health outcomes reported with feeling of belonging

### Safer and more resilient

Stronger preparedness/ recovery from emergencies  
Better equipped to coordinate emergency response plans  
Lower rates of crime and violence

### Inclusive & engaged

Stronger sense of belonging linked collaboration with neighbors  
Lower rates of mistrust among community members  
Greater feedback loops supporting more representation in policy

### More economically prosperous

Higher GDP growth  
Less absenteeism at work  
Higher rates of job retention

# The Effect on Youth and Young Adults

- Can lead to self-isolation, depression, poor sleep, and lower academic achievement
  - 63% of young adults who experience loneliness also experience significant anxiety or depression symptoms
- May decrease one's self-esteem, instill fear of others, and increase the likelihood of becoming radicalized



# Key Social Connection Awareness and Advocacy Efforts

2021:

- Surgeon General released advisory on youth mental health and social media

2023:

- **Surgeon General declared loneliness an epidemic** & releases advisory with national framework to advance connection
- Senators Murphy and Smith introduced the National Strategy for Social Connection Act
- WHO declared loneliness a public health threat & launches Commission on Social Connection

2024:

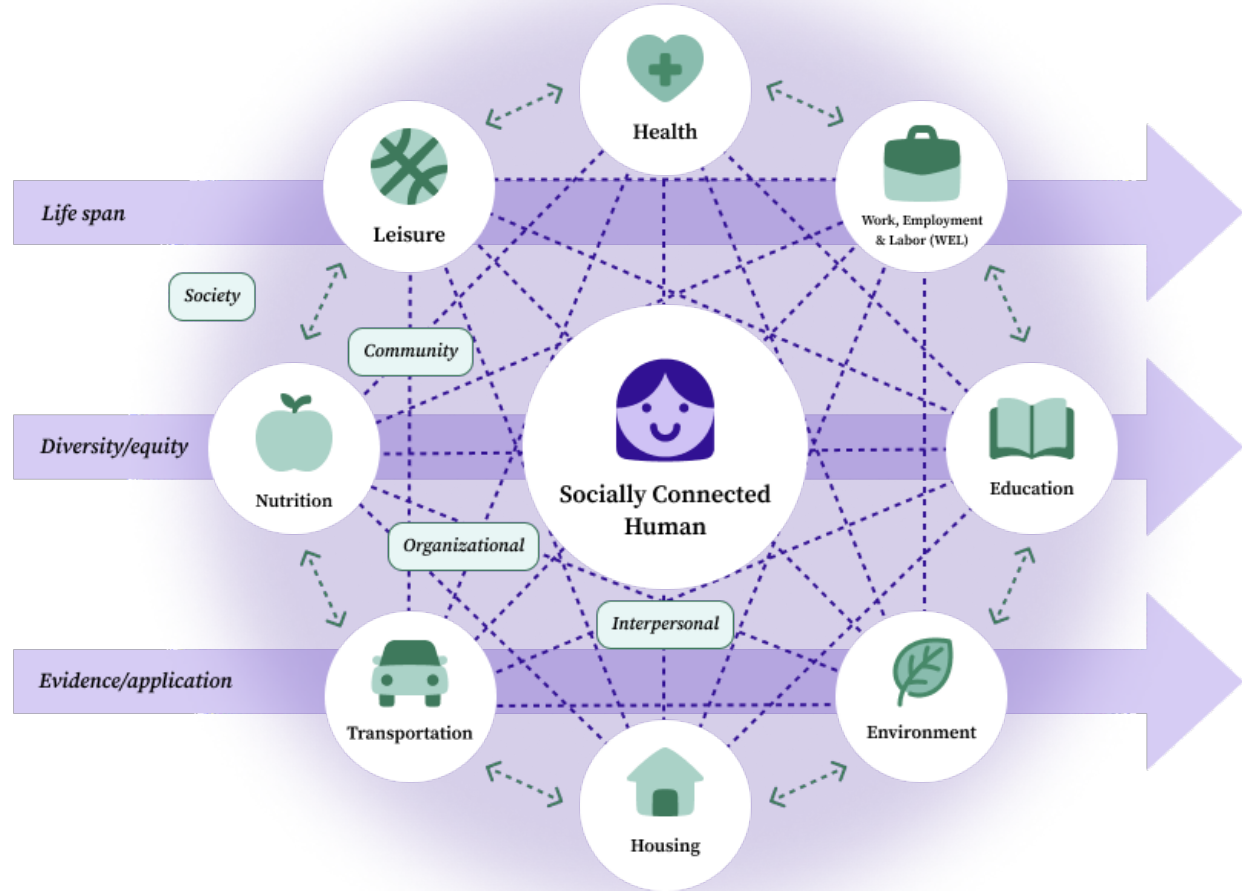
- San Mateo became first city to declare loneliness a public health emergency, dedicates \$1 million to addressing
- Representative Moulton (D-MA) announced intention to introduce legislation to foster community resiliency
- Surgeon General released advisory on addressing parental mental health and well-being

# Putting Research into Practice

- **SOCIAL Framework Sector Reports**
  - Health
  - Education
  - Work, Employment, and Labor
  - Built Environment
    - Housing, Transportation, and Environmental
  - *Upcoming: Arts & Culture*
- **The Action Guide for Building Socially Connected Communities**
  - Promising Strategies Catalog

# SOCIAL Framework

Systems  
Of  
Cross-Sector  
Integration and  
Action across the  
Lifespan



# Individual Approaches

K E V I N  
**LOVE FUND**

## Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

- Learn how to self-regulate behavior
- Develop prosocial skills

## Mindfulness and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

- Orient towards positive mindset and reduce self-defeating behaviors
- Promote emotional regulation



# Interpersonal Approaches

## Peer Learning/Mentoring

- Promote peer support and relations
- Reduce bullying and prejudice
- Improve mental health and academic outcomes

## Volunteering

- Promote sense of purpose, meaning, and belonging
- Increase community cohesion, social interaction, and self-esteem

## Early Relational Health

- Increase feelings of trust and safety
- Lower risk of depression and stress
- Increase availability of social support through challenging times



**AARP** Foundation<sup>®</sup>  
**Experience Corps**



**The  
Basics**<sup>™</sup>



# Community and Societal Approach

## Intergenerational Communities

- Increase sense of belonging and well-being
- Encourage social interactions and support
- Build social networks

## Shared-Use Spaces and Green Spaces

- Strengthen sense of community, increase feelings of safety and security
- Improve mental health
- Foster natural/casual interaction

## Social Prescribing

- Increase community participation
- Broaden social networks and direct individuals to resources



Project  
for Public  
Spaces



# Fostering Collaboration

- *What strengths can we leverage to foster connection and resiliency?*
- *What barriers exist?*
- *Who can we partner with?*
- *What are 1-3 of the most pressing concerns we should prioritize?*
- *What strategies, initiatives, or programs might best address our community's needs?*

# Discussion

*What is one question, wondering, or a -  
ha moment from today?*

# Learn More & Take Action

Read Our  
SOCIAL Framework  
Reports



Explore the Action  
Guide



Register for the Action  
Guide Anniversary  
Webinar



Join Our  
Mailing List



Contact us: [info@social-connection.org](mailto:info@social-connection.org)