



Isolation and Loneliness

GENERAL BACKGROUND

DEFINITIONS

Social Isolation: inadequate quality and quantity of social relations with other people at the individual, group, community, and larger social environment levels where human interaction takes place. Models of social isolation include both objective social contact and subjective perceived adequacy of contact ([Jingyi Wang 2017](#)).

Loneliness: Loneliness is a painful subjective emotional state occurring when there is a discrepancy between desired and achieved patterns of social interaction. It is conceptualized as a subjective state, not necessarily dependent on the quantity of someone's social relations ([Jingyi Wang 2017](#)).

- “It is important to differentiate social isolation—being alone or away from family and friends, which is what is occurring now—from loneliness, which is a person's perception of the quality rather than the quantity of their social interactions.” Older people, less likely to be connected via social media, may find social distancing especially difficult ([Geriatrician, YaleMedicine](#)).
- According to a February report released by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, even before the pandemic began, an alarming number of older Americans were so socially isolated and lonely that their health was at risk ([American Psychological Association](#)).
- Pre-pandemic, loneliness already affected the lives of elderly shut-ins and those who can no longer age in place as well as the many seniors whose immediate family and relatives maintain little or no contact with them ([Washington Post](#)).

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RESOURCES

AARP

[How to Fight the Social Isolation of Coronavirus](#)

CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

[Coping with Stress](#)

MAGELLAN HEALTH INSIGHTS

[Coping with isolation during COVID-19](#)

WASHINGTON POST

[Four ways to help prevent loneliness while you're social distancing](#)

VERYWELLMIND

[How to Cope with Loneliness During the Coronavirus Pandemic](#)

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN

[How to Prevent Loneliness in a Time of Social Distancing](#)

VICE

[How to Be OK With Being Alone Right Now](#)

THE ATLANTIC

[The Art of Socializing During a Quarantine](#)

FORBES

[Five Tips to Decrease Social Isolation for Older People During COVID-19](#)

For Providers

AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

[COVID-19 isn't just a danger to older people's physical health](#)

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