

# Key Facts About Social Isolation and Older Adults



COMMIT TO  
Connect



## The Health Effects of Social Isolation and Loneliness, While Harmful at Any Age, Are Especially So for Older Adults.

- Even before COVID-19, nearly 1 in 4 older adults suffered from the effects of social isolation. More than half of people over 50 reported being socially isolated during COVID-19.
- 43% of those over age 60 report feeling lonely.
- 25% of adults age 65 and older are experiencing social isolation.
- 21% of older people between the ages of 55 and 99 had no contact with any friends living outside the household during the pandemic.
- An estimated 4 million older adults enrolled in traditional Medicare are socially isolated, costing the federal government almost \$7 billion in additional spending every year.

**Sources:** Loneliness in Older Persons: A Predictor of Functional Decline and Death, Archives of Internal Medicine; NORC at the University of Chicago; AARP



## Why Does Social Isolation and Loneliness Impact Older Adults?

Aging can bring on a series of life changes, disruptions or physical challenges, including:

- Retirement
- New role as caregiver
- Loss of loved ones
- Physical disability
- Cognitive decline
- Impaired mobility
- Illness
- Hearing, vision or memory loss

Each of these transitions makes it increasingly difficult to maintain social ties.



## What Can Be Done?

To connect and engage with others, try these ideas:

- **Volunteer** — Helping others lets you give back, stay busy and meet others.
- **Take a class** — Sign up for a virtual or in-person course on a subject that interests you.
- **Use technology** — Call, text or video chat with relatives or friends.
- **Write** — Use a journal or write letters to family members and others.
- **Adopt** — Consider adopting a pet if you're able to care for one.
- **Join** — Boost your connections by joining a support group, club or social organization.
- **Seek help** — Speak to a mental health professional if social isolation or loneliness are affecting your quality of life.