




**Social Isolation and Loneliness:
What Older Adults are Telling Us**
Comprehensive Needs Assessment Findings



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Introduction

Why We're Here



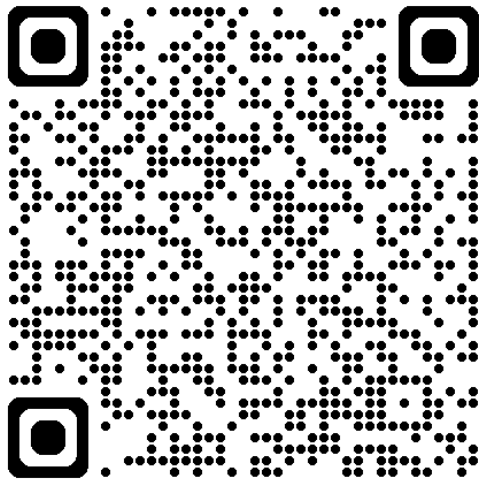
Goals for Today

- Our Findings
 - Recap data shared during our February 25 Town Hall
 - A closer look at social isolation findings
- Open Discussion
 - Are there programs you've seen work well – big or small?
 - Are there particular groups that you think are most at risk for isolation in your community?
 - What challenges or barriers do you see to helping people feel connected?
 - Do you or your organization measure isolation or belonging?
- What's Next?
 - Post Meeting Survey & Feedback



Access our Needs Assessment Reports

www.ageoptions.org/news-and-events/ageoptions-new-comprehensive-needs-report/



The screenshot shows the AgeOptions website with the following elements:

- Header:** AgeOptions logo, navigation links (About AgeOptions, Advocacy, News and Events, Contact, Account), a language selector, and a search bar.
- Secondary Navigation:** Links for "For Older Adults, Families & Caregivers", "For Professionals & Partner Agencies", "How Can We Help?", and a "Donate" button.
- Main Content:**
 - Section Header:** "AgeOptions Comprehensive Needs Report and Survey"
 - Text:** "AgeOptions commissioned the University of Illinois Chicago Department of Disability and Human Development to report on the changing demographics of the 50+ population in suburban Cook County in *Aging in the Suburbs, A Comprehensive Needs Assessment of County Suburbs 50+ Population*. An accompanying demographic analysis website was commissioned from Rob Paral and Associates."
 - Text:** "See the findings here:"
 - List-Group:**
 - *Aging in the Suburbs, A Comprehensive Needs Assessment of County Suburbs 50+ Population report.*
 - *Aging in the Suburbs, A Comprehensive Needs Assessment of County Suburbs 50+ Population accompanying demographic analysis website* by Rob Paral and Associates.
 - Text:** "AgeOptions thanks Rob Paral, the researchers, community-based organizations, houses of worship, community groups, and general members of the population who participated in the research by completing surveys and attending focus groups. Because of your participation, we are in a better position to plan for the future and meet our population's needs."
 - Text:** "This publication is prepared and printed in part with federal Older Americans Act, State of Illinois General Revenue, and funds from the Michael Reese Health Trust. The Illinois Department on Aging and U.S. Administration on Aging are recognized for their support of AgeOptions. Neither is responsible for the content of this publication."
- Image:** A graphic titled "Aging in the Suburbs" showing a collage of diverse older adults.
- Text:** "Posted on June 27, 2023"
- Text:** "View More..."

- Footer:** A link to "2024 Needs Assessment (The Polco Survey)" is located at the bottom left of the page.



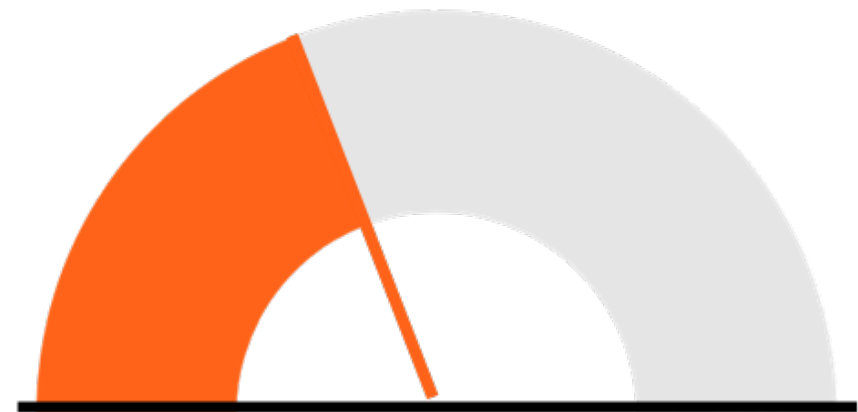
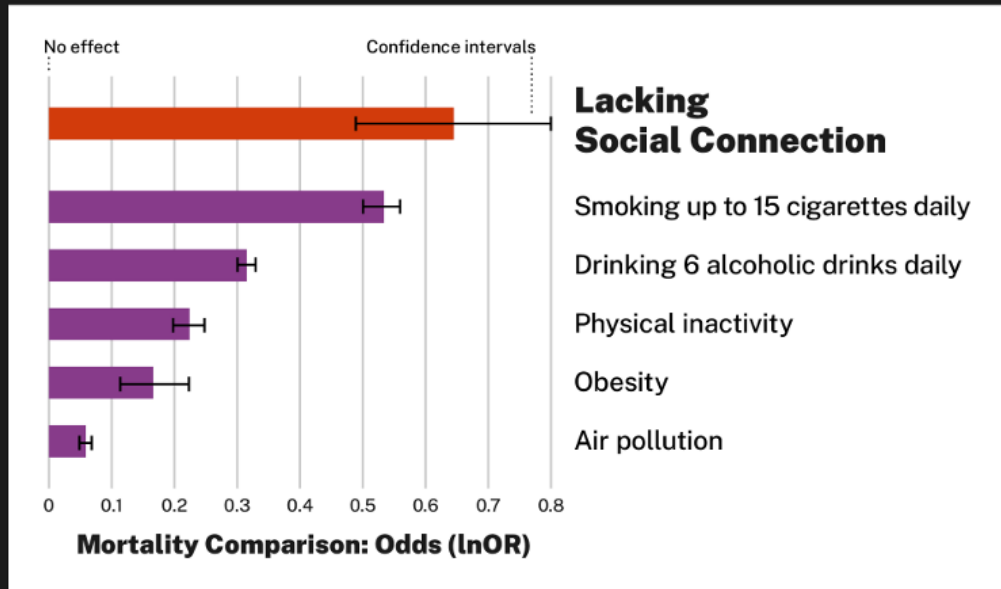

Introduction

- **Why this matters:** Isolation and loneliness increase risk for premature death, chronic disease, cognitive decline, and reduced quality of life.
- **Our approach:** Center older adults' voices and real experiences to guide our philosophy, objectives, and programming.
- **Our goal is to build a community where:**
 - Older adults feel a sense of belonging, dignity, and visibility.
 - Services are inclusive, responsive, and culturally affirming.



Introduction

Lacking social connection is as dangerous as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day.



39% said feeling lonely or isolated was a problem



Introduction

Older adults experiencing loneliness were more likely to...

Feel Stigma

More than **2x** as likely to feel stigma (shame or humiliation) related to seeking older adult services.

Transit Challenges

More than **2x** as likely to experience transportation challenges or have services that are too far.

Have No One to Help Find Services

Almost **2x** as likely to have no one available to help them locate or understand eligibility for services.

Feel Depressed

Almost **5x** as likely to report feeling depressed as a problem.

Have Trouble Getting the Healthcare They Need

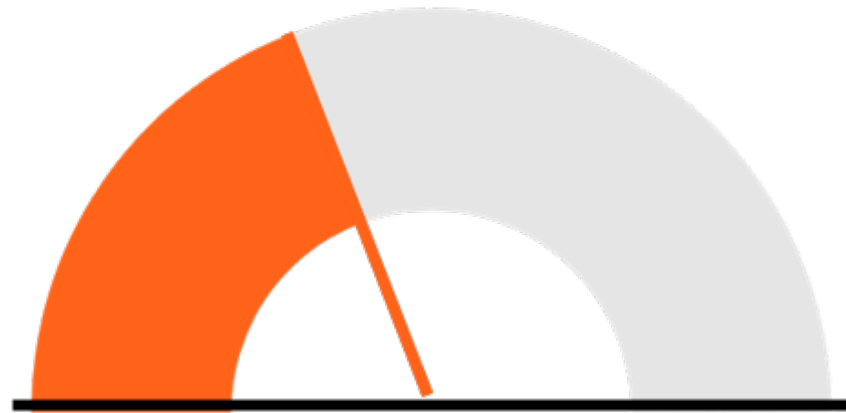
3x as likely to report getting the health care you need as a problem over the last year.



Our Findings

A Closer Look at the Data

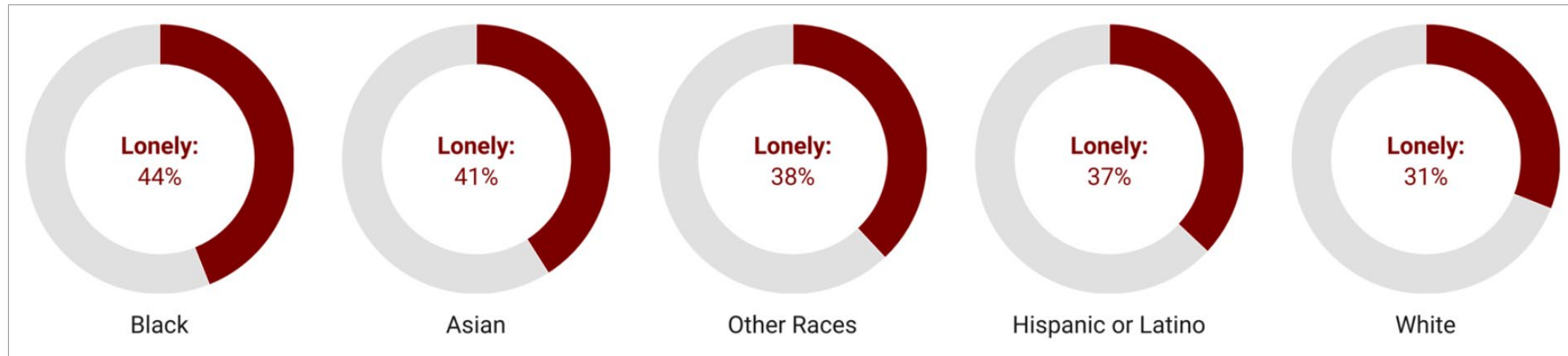
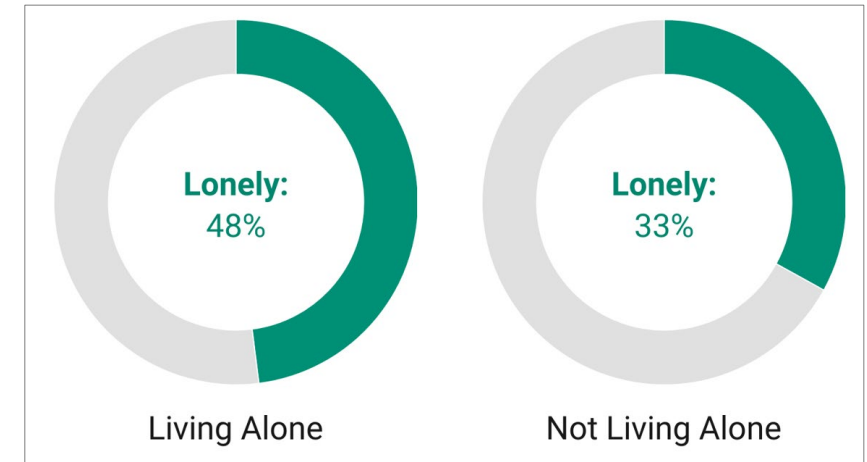
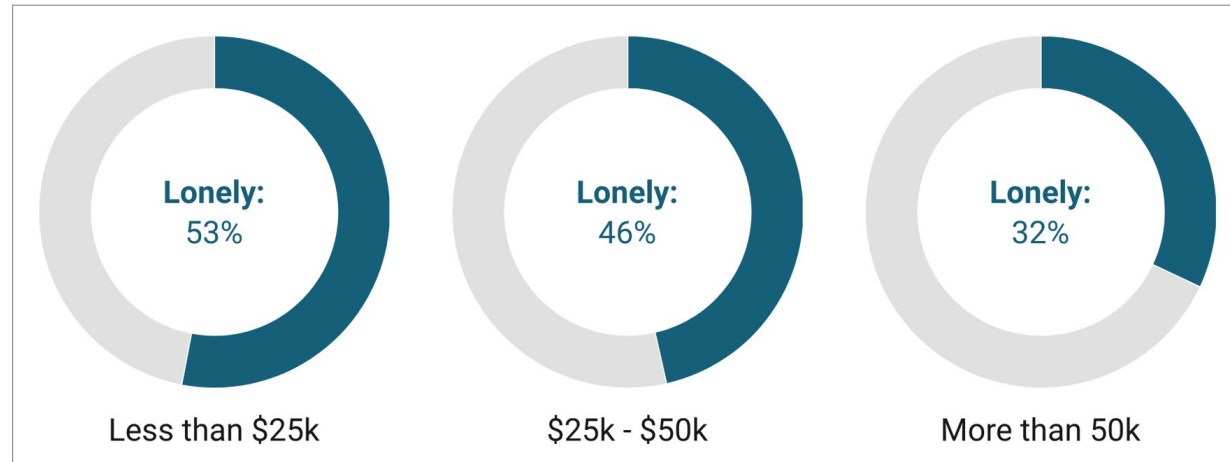
Prevalence of Loneliness



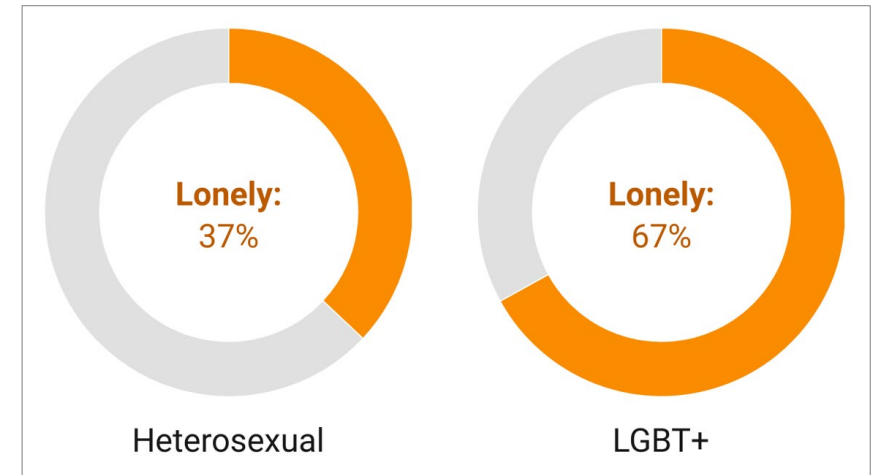
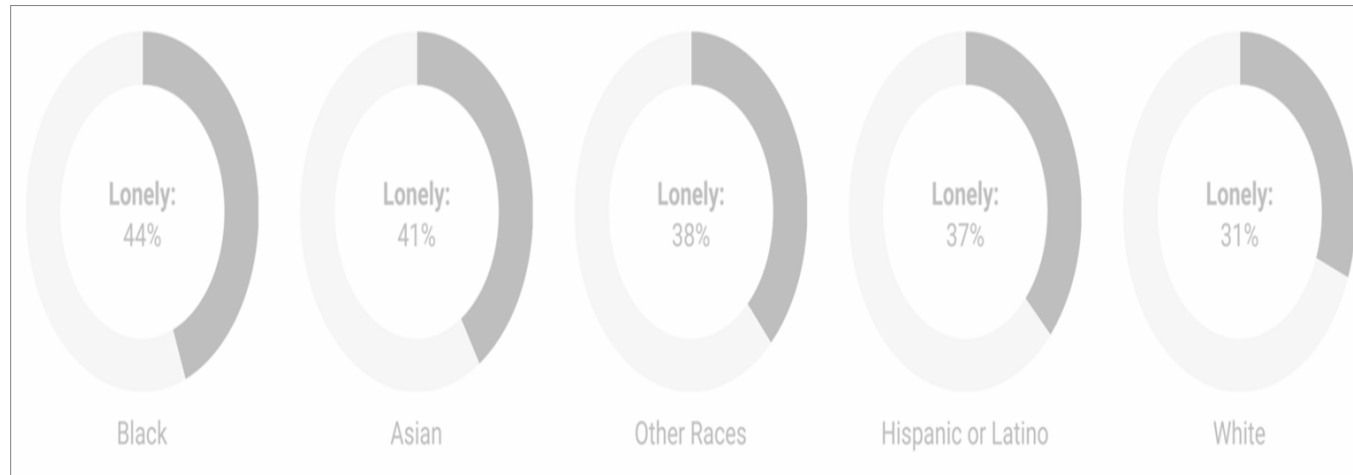
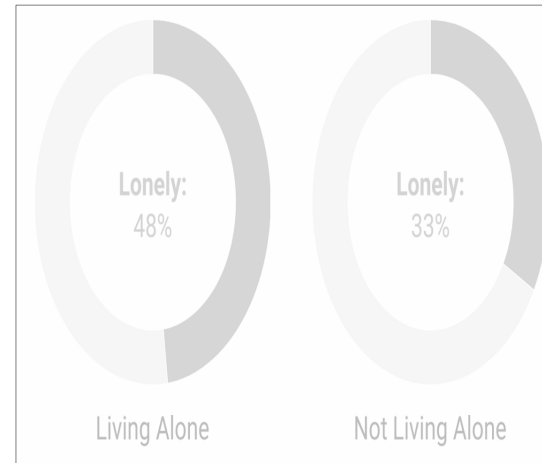
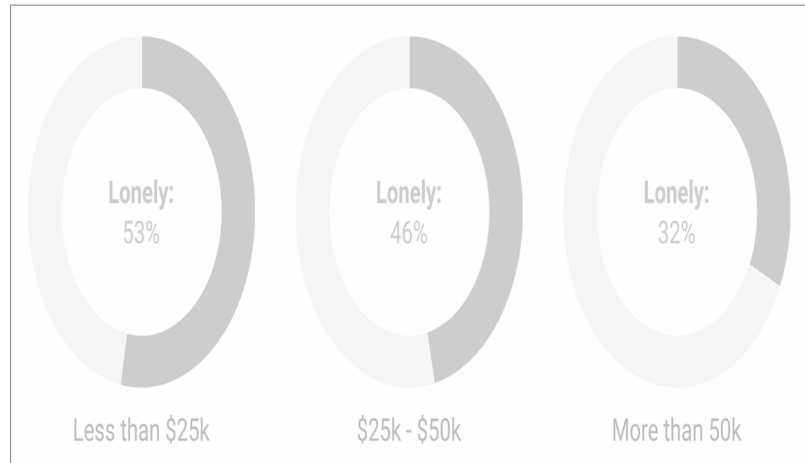
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Prevalence of Loneliness



Prevalence of Loneliness



The Impact of Loneliness

Loneliness Older Adults Other Older Adults

Sense of Community



Quality of Life



Physical Health



Emotional Well-being



Tying Loneliness to Belonging and Voice

Older adults experiencing loneliness...



65%

Have trouble finding
meaningful things to do



53%

Feel like they don't belong



48%

Feel like their voice isn't
heard in their community



Barriers to Connection and Services

■ Loneliness older adults

Don't know what services are available

70%



Barrier	Percentage
Don't know what services are available	70%
Home-delivered meals	58%
In-home care	59%
Social services or case management	55%
Counseling and mental health programs	54%

Home-delivered meals

58%

In-home care

59%

Social services or case management

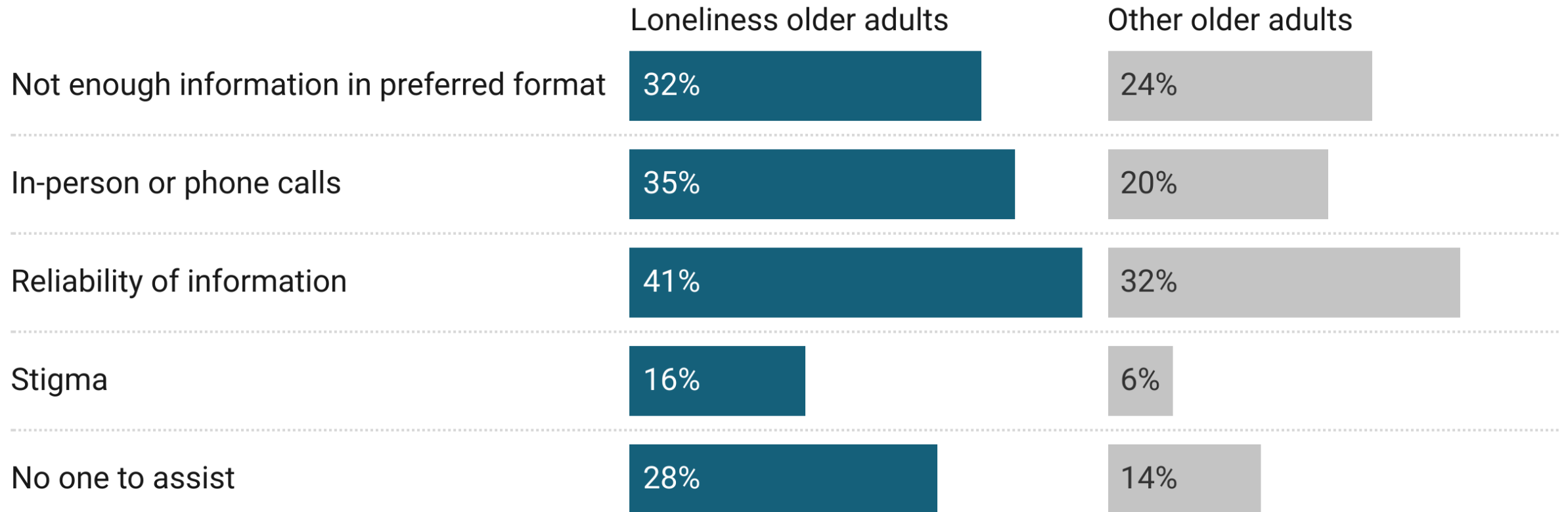
55%

Counseling and mental health programs

54%

What We Heard About Preference

■ Loneliness older adults ■ Other older adults

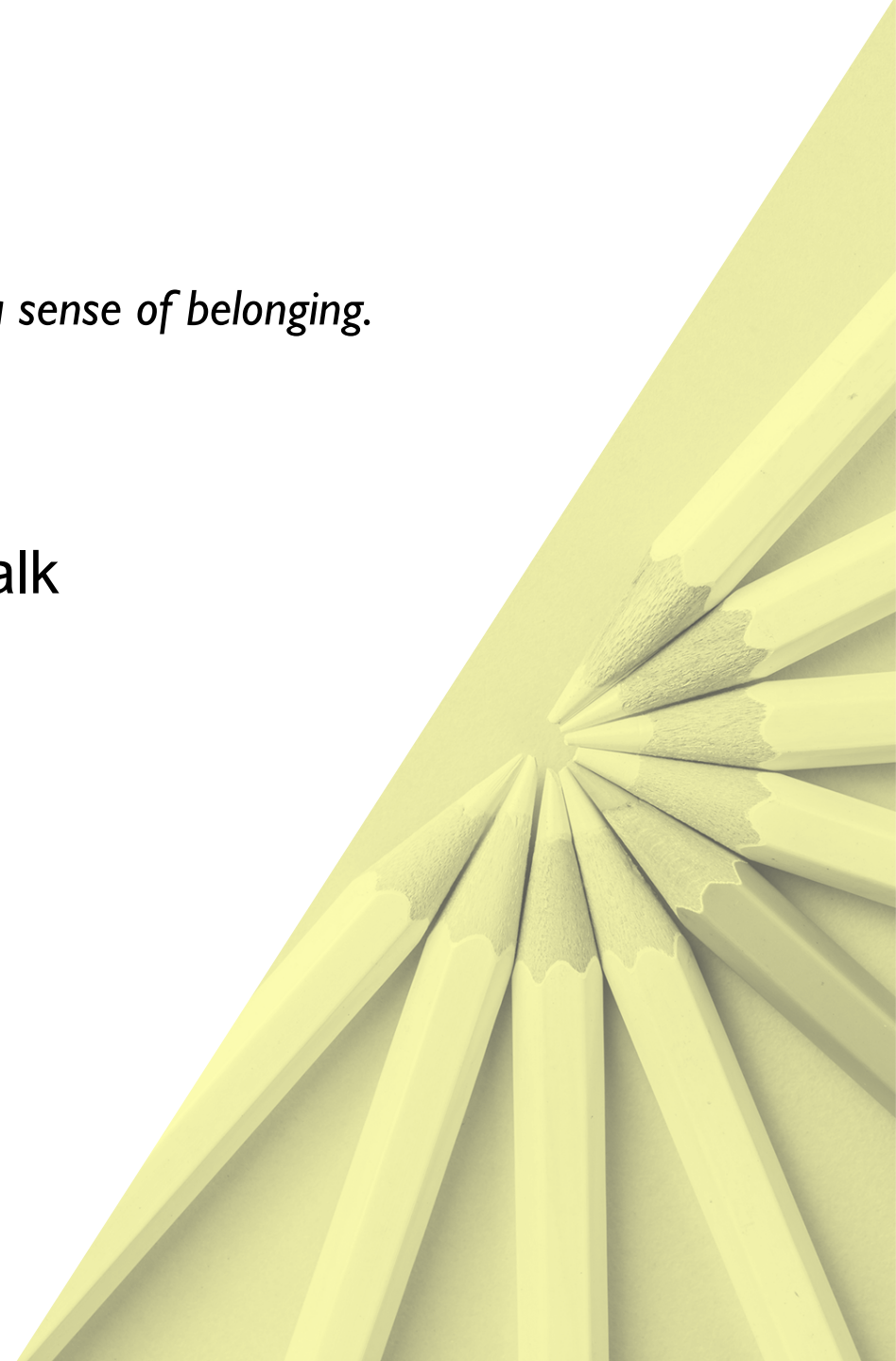


What Can We Do Together

Loneliness is deeply interwoven with safety, access, mental health, and a sense of belonging.

Where might we go next?

- **Bring visibility to loneliness and isolation:**
make loneliness and belonging part of how we talk about wellbeing – not just a side issue or secondary objective



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- **Build belonging into services:** from transportation to nutrition to caregiver support, every program is a chance to build connection

Caring Together,
Living Better 
by AGEOptions.



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- **Bring visibility to loneliness and isolation:** make loneliness and belonging part of how we talk about wellbeing – not just a side issue or secondary objective
- **Build belonging into services:** from transportation to nutrition to caregiver support, every program is a chance to build connection
- **Measure what matters:** How can we better measure social isolation and loneliness (and the different occasions for this to exist throughout the lifespan).





Discussion

What have you seen?

Discussion

1. Do these findings resonate with what you are seeing or experiencing?
2. Are there programs you've seen work well – big or small?
3. Do you or your organization measure isolation or belonging?
4. What ideas do you have to make services more visible or approachable for isolated older adults?



Discussion

5. Are there particular groups that you think are most at risk for isolation in your community?
6. What challenges or barriers do you see to helping people feel connected?
7. Five years after COVID, what does social isolation look like now in 2025?



Please Fill Out Our Survey

Quick Reflection - We Value Your
Voice!



- <https://forms.office.com/r/CQ3N4KTfsX>

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Thank you!

