Social Isolation & Loneliness in Society

- According to the AARP Foundation, social isolation affects more than 8 million age 50-plus adults and is growing as 10,000 Americans a day turn 65.

- Approximately 1/3 of Americans older than 65 live alone, and half of those over 85 do.¹

- According to a recent study by the National Council on Aging, an estimated 17% of all Americans over the age of 65 are isolated because they live alone and face one or more barriers related to geographic location, language, or disability.

- People with poorer health – particularly those with mood disorders like anxiety and depression – are more likely to feel lonely.²

Health Impacts of Social Isolation & Loneliness

- Loneliness is a major risk factor for depression, which accelerates decline and increases mortality.³

- The strength of social isolation as a predictor of mortality is similar to that of well-documented clinical risk factors, such as smoking and high blood pressure.⁴

- Research indicates that loneliness is a risk factor for, and may contribute to, poorer overall cognitive performance, faster cognitive decline, poorer executive functioning, increased negativity and depressive cognition, heightened sensitivity to social threats, a confirmatory bias in social cognition that is self-protective and paradoxically self-defeating.⁵

- Loneliness can impair health by raising levels of stress hormones and inflammation, which in turn can increase the risk of heart disease, arthritis, Type 2 diabetes, dementia and even suicide attempts.⁶

- Individuals who lack social connections or report frequent feelings of loneliness tend to suffer higher rates of morbidity and mortality, as well as infection, depression, and cognitive decline.

- One recent study found that isolation increases the risk of heart disease by 29% and stroke by 32%.⁷

- Social relationships – both quantity and quality – affect mental and physical health. Adults who are more socially connected are healthier and live longer than their more isolated peers.⁸

¹ https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/22/upshot/how-social-isolation-is-killing-us.html?_r=0