



Addressing the Epidemic of Loneliness & Isolation in Wisconsin



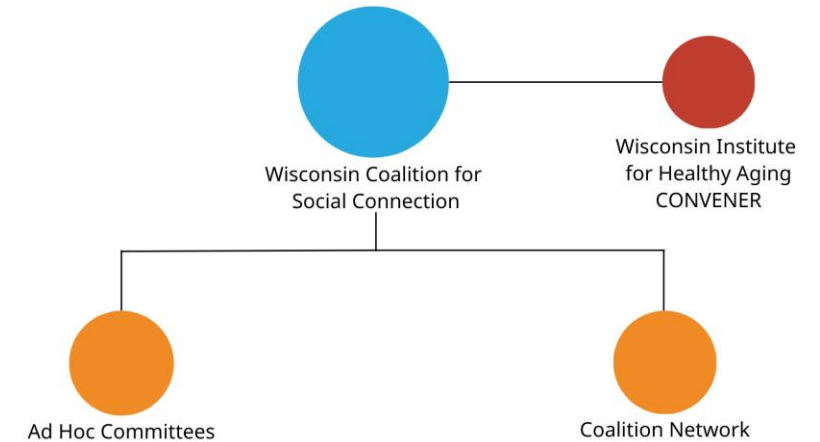
Objectives

1. Coalition overview
2. What is social isolation, loneliness & social connectedness?
3. National trends
4. What impacts connection?
5. Health impacts
6. How to help
7. Wrap up & questions

Coalition Overview

Work includes:

- Raising public awareness of the issue
- Detecting and responding to those experiencing or at risk for SI&L
- Curating research, data and interventions
- Developing policy initiatives and advocacy efforts



Mission: Engage diverse partners in reimagining how we can combat the root causes and adverse consequences of social isolation and loneliness among older adults and people with disabilities in WI.

Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation

2023

The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the
Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community



Surgeon General's Report

Definitions

Social Isolation is commonly defined as an *objective* measure of the # of relationships and contacts a person has.

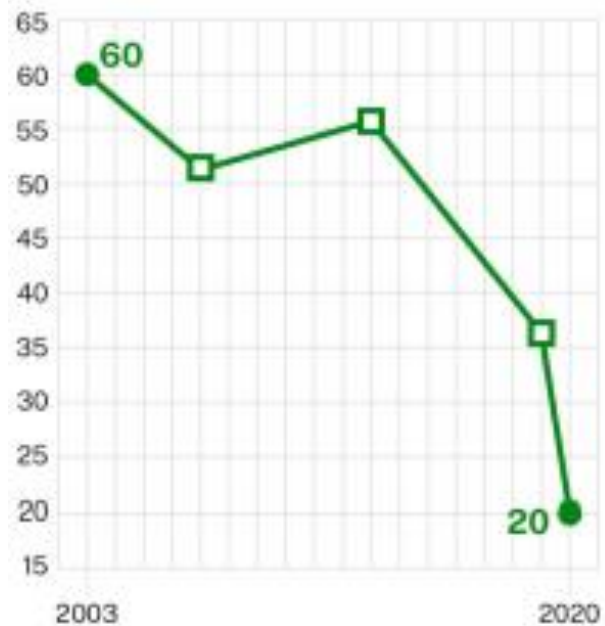
- **Being** isolated – physically separate from other people
- May not be unpleasant for the person; they may choose to isolate

Loneliness is a *subjective* feeling about the gap between a person's desired levels of social contact and their actual level of social contact.

- **Feeling** isolated
- Distressing for the person
- Can be felt regardless of social contact

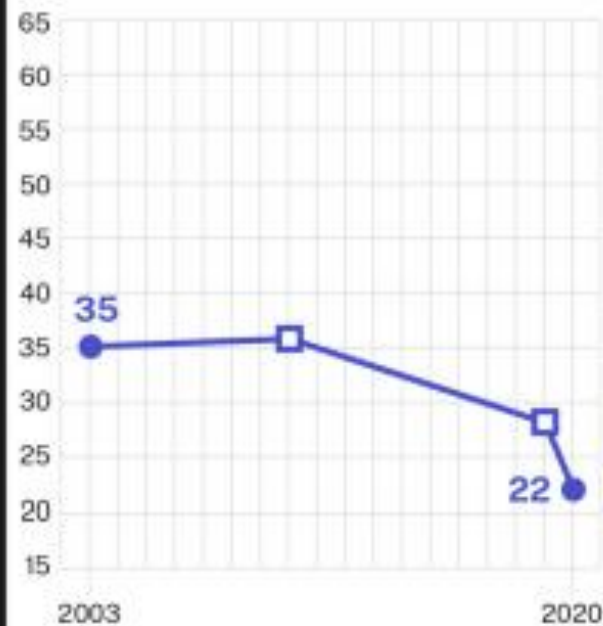
Social Connectedness refers to the degree to which people have and perceive a desired number, quality, and diversity of relationships that create a sense of belonging, being cared for, valued, and supported.

Trends in Connection



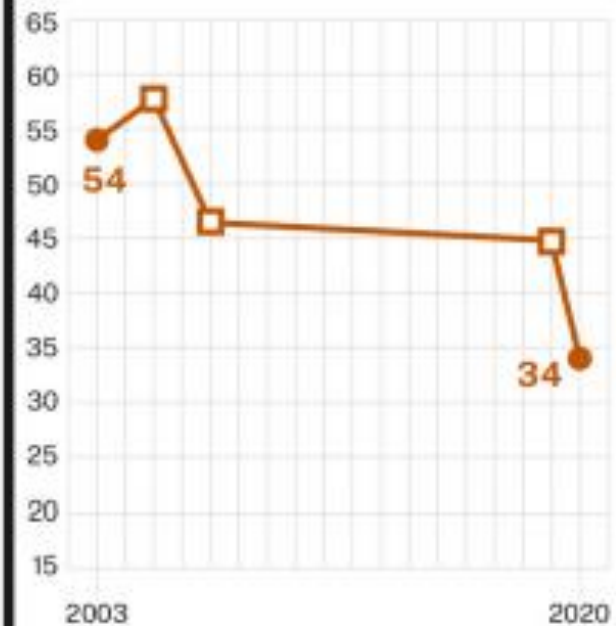
Social Engagement with Friends

a decrease of
20 hours per month



Non-Household Family Social Engagement

a decrease of
6.5 hours per month



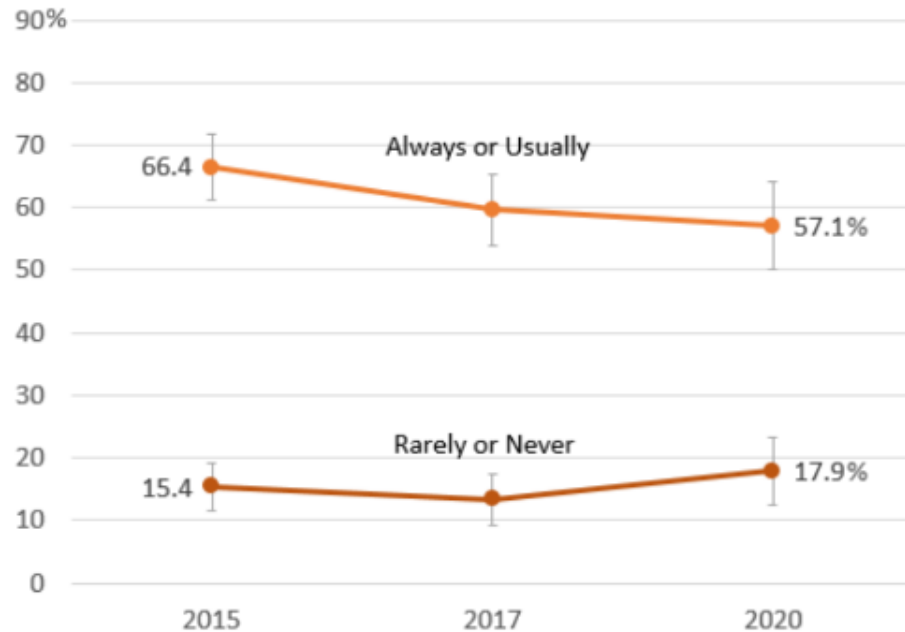
Social Engagement with Others

a decrease of
10 hours per month

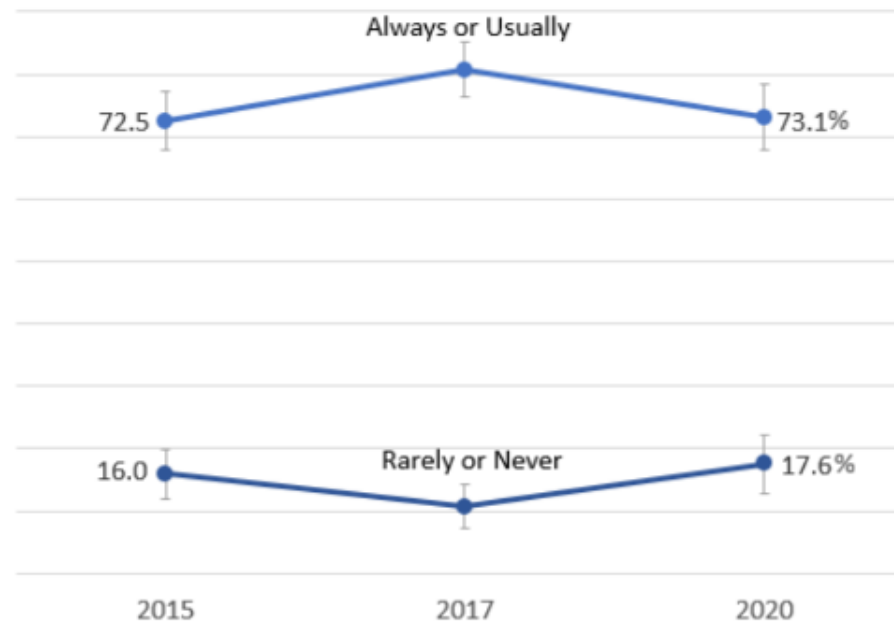
Trends in Connection

In recent years levels of social support have been trending worse for adults with disabilities and remaining steady for older adults.

Percentage of adults with disabilities (ages 18–64) by frequency of **social and emotional support** and by year, WI



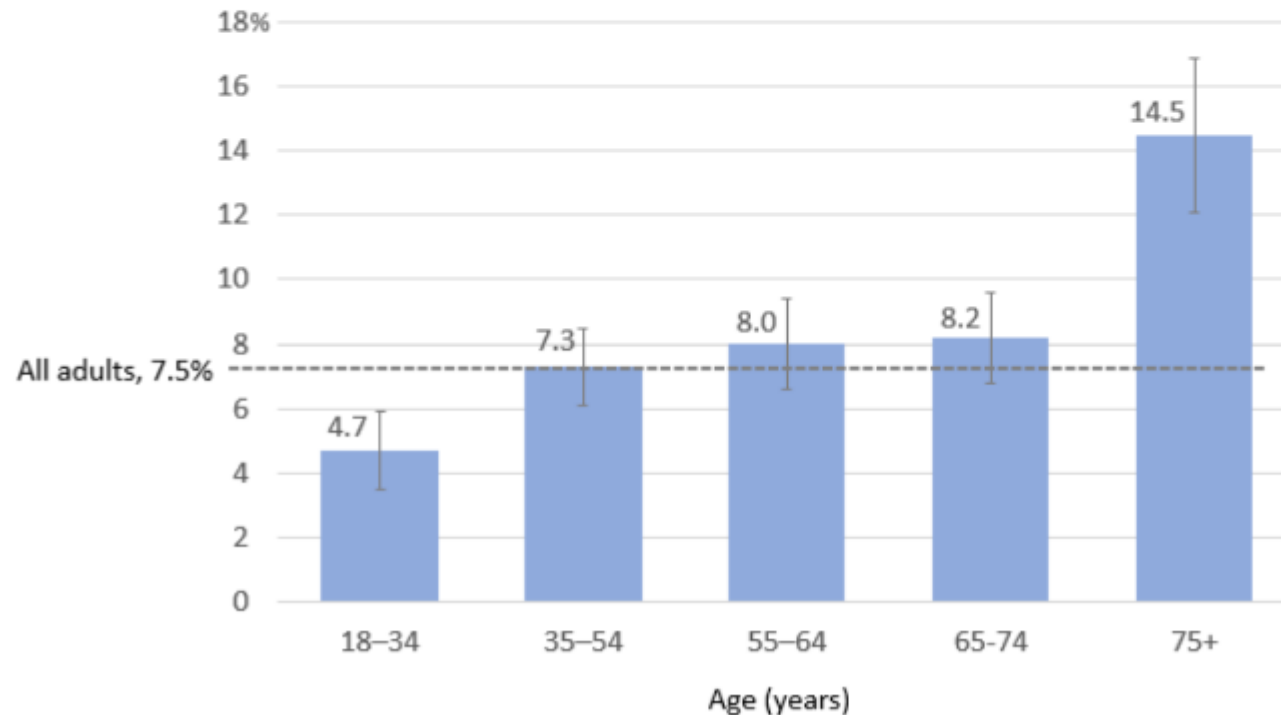
Percentage of adults ages 75 and older by frequency of **social and emotional support** and by year, WI



Trends in Connection

Adults ages 75 and older were the most likely to lack the social support they needed.

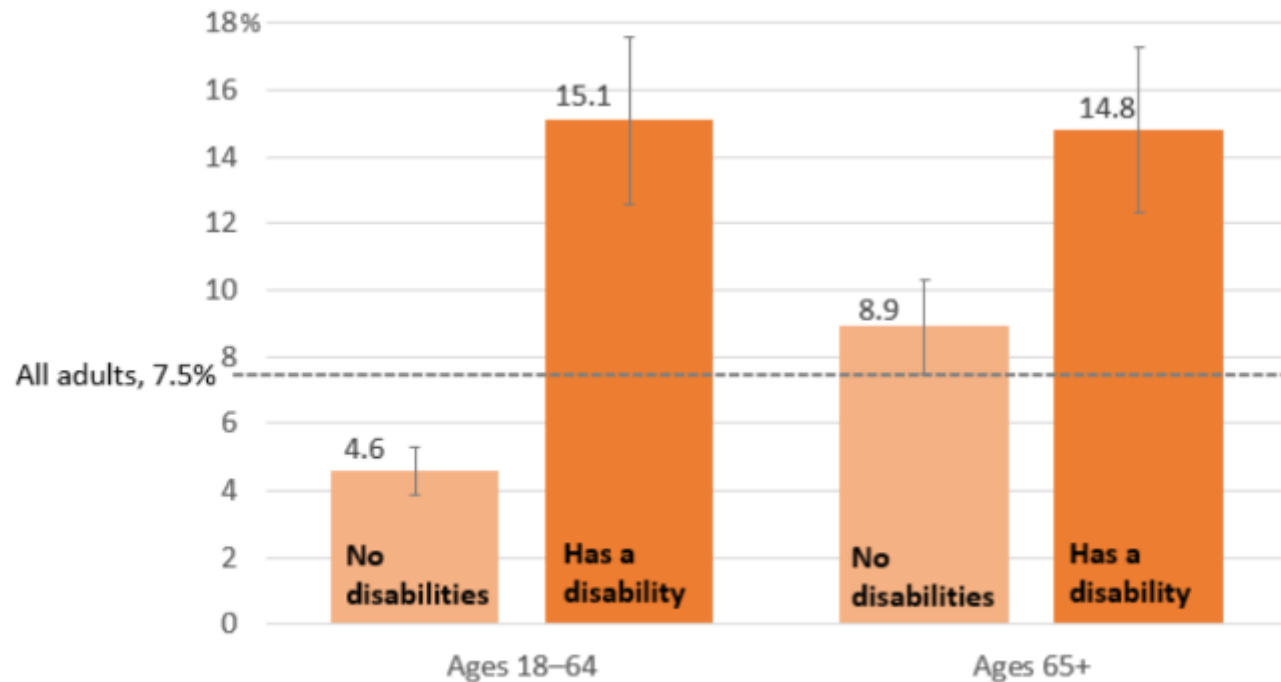
Percent of adults who **rarely or never get the social and emotional support they need** by age group, WI, 2015, 2017, and 2020 combined



Trends in Connection

Adults with disabilities were more likely to lack the social support they needed regardless of age.

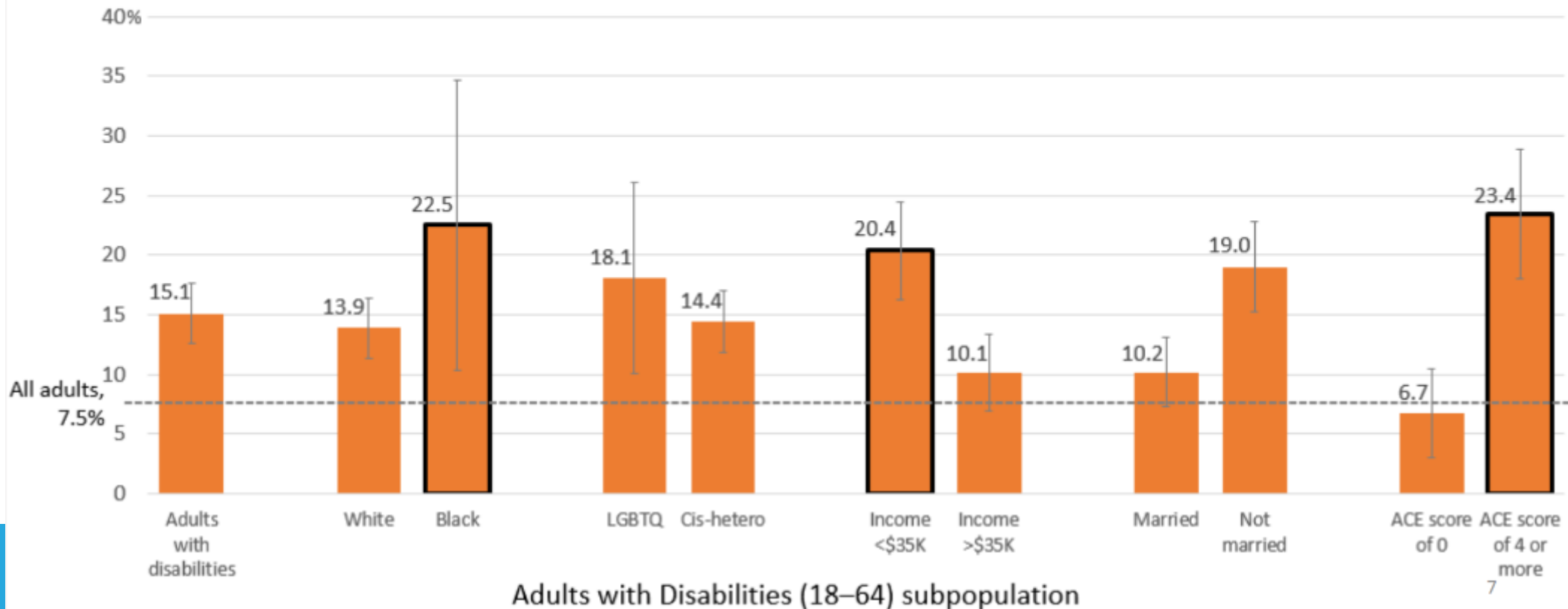
Percent of adults who **rarely or never get the social and emotional support they need** by age group and disability status, WI, 2015, 2017, and 2020 combined



Trends in Connection

Among adults ages 18–64 with disabilities, those who were Black, had low income, and an ACE score of 4 or more were the most likely to lack the social support they needed.

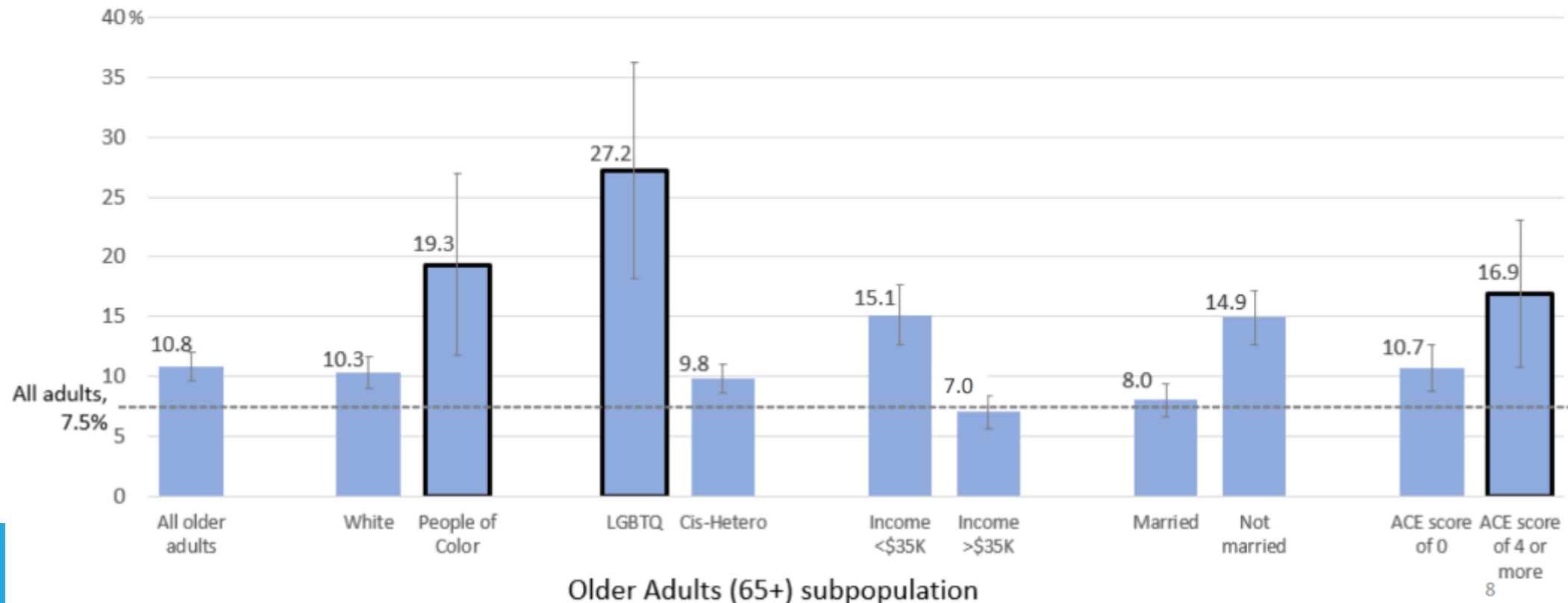
Percent of adults with disabilities ages 18–64 who **rarely or never get the social and emotional support they need** by select characteristics, WI, 2015, 2017, and 2020 combined



Trends in Connection

Among adults ages 65 and older, those who were LGBTQ, people of color, or had an ACE score of 4 or more were the most likely to lack the social support they needed.

Percent of adults ages 65 and older who **rarely or never get the social and emotional support they need** by select characteristics, WI, 2015, 2017, and 2020 combined



Factors that Impact Connection

In the Individual

- Physical health problems/chronic conditions
- Sensory & functional impairment
- Mental health challenges
- Tech use
- Personality
- Race
- Gender
- Socioeconomic status
- Life stage

Based on Relationships

- Structure, function and quality
- Household size
- Characteristics and behaviors of others

Based on Society

- Norms and values
- Public policies & civic engagement
- Historical inequities

Based on Community

- Outdoor space
- Housing
- Schools
- Local business & workplace
- Local government
- Community organizations
- Health care
- Transportation

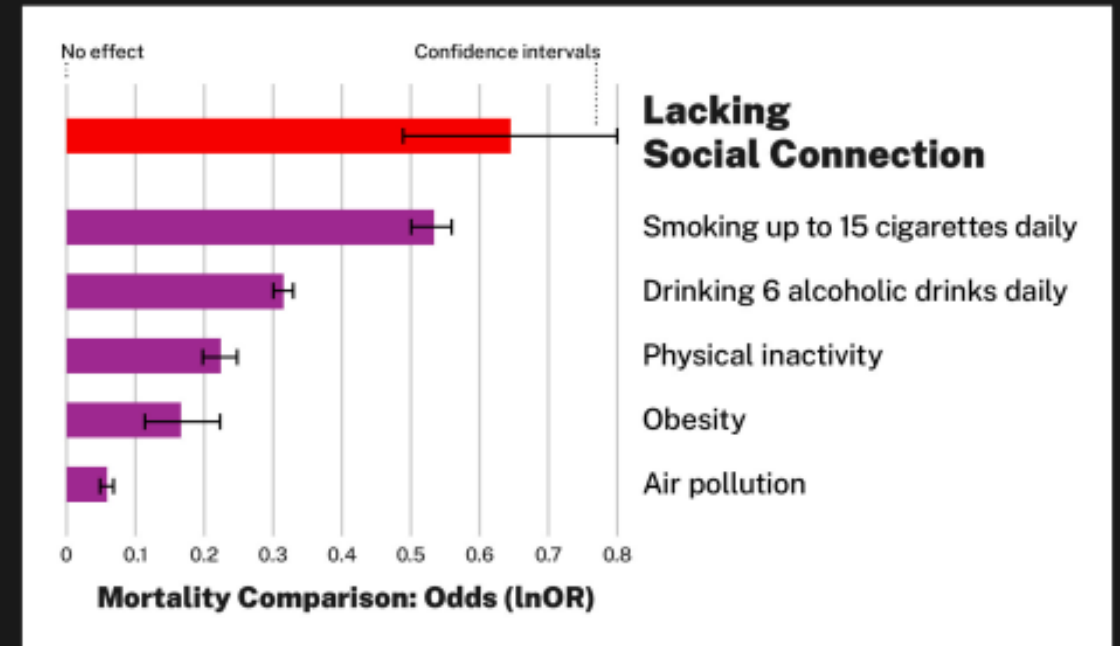
Health Impacts

People who lack connections experience serious health impacts including:

- 29% increased risk of heart disease
- 32% increased risk of stroke
- 50% increased risk of dementia
- Significantly increased risk for depression and anxiety
- Increased susceptibility to infectious disease

Increases the risk for early death as much as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day – more than obesity.

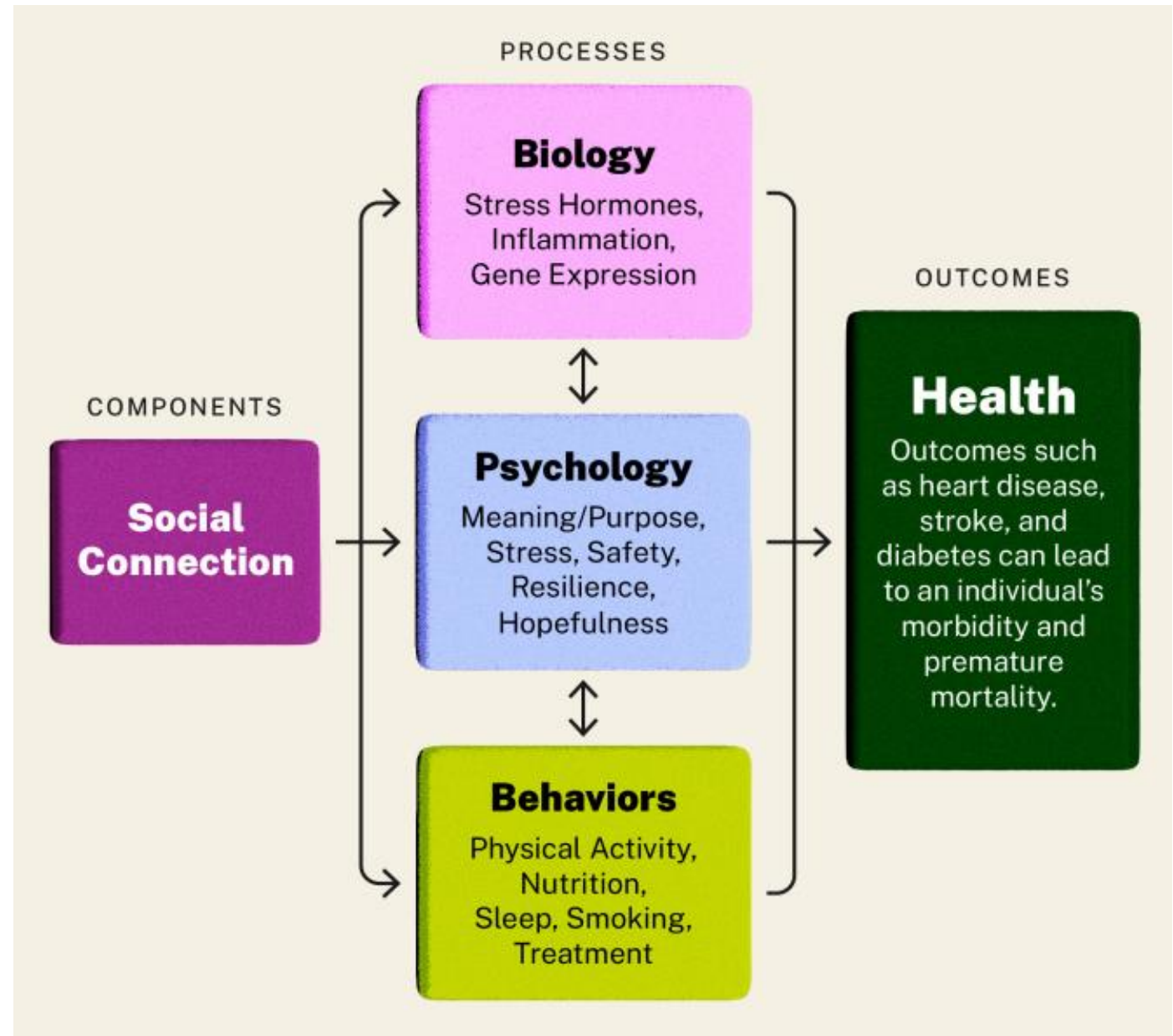
Lacking social connection is as dangerous as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day.



Comparison groups: Complex measures of social integration: high v. low; not smoking v. smoking < 15 cigarettes daily; alcohol abstinence v. drinking > 6 alcoholic drinks daily; physical activity v. inactivity; low BMI v. high BMI; low air pollution v. high air pollution.

Source: Holt-Lunstad J, Robles TF, Sbarra DA. Advancing Social Connection as a Public Health Priority in the United States. *American Psychology*. 2017;72(6):517-530. doi:10.1037/amp0000103. This graph is a visual approximation.

How Social Connection Influences Health



Pillar 1

Strengthen Social Infrastructure in Local Communities



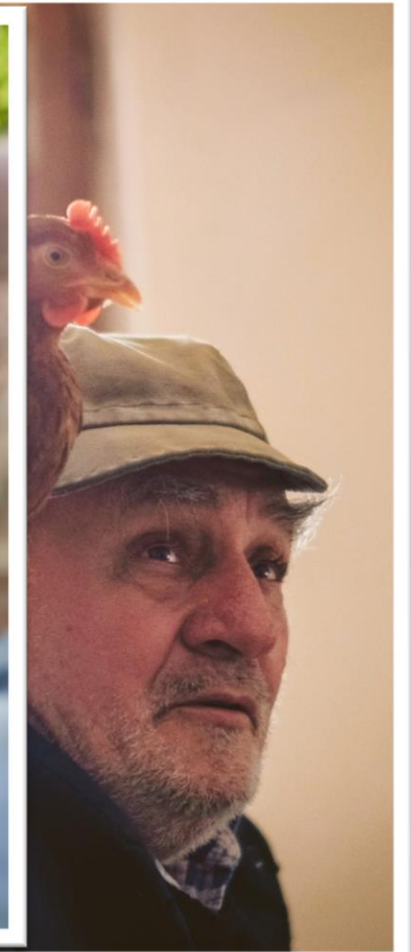
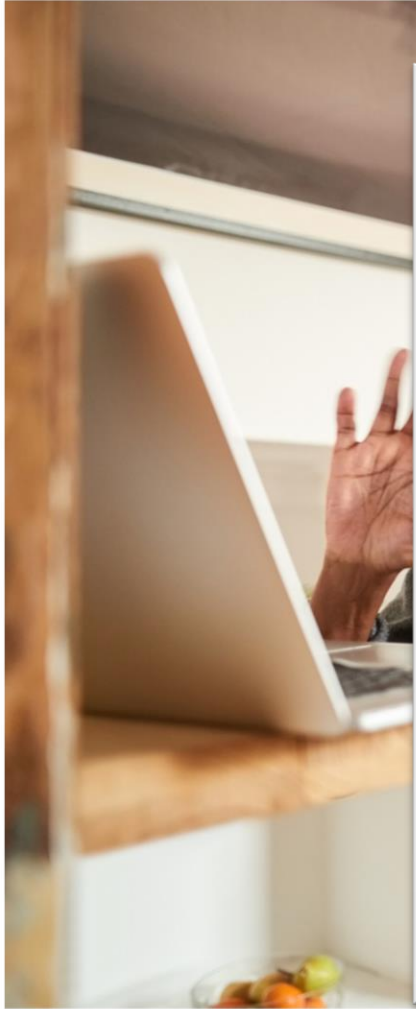
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- Design the built environment to promote social connection
- Establish and scale community connection programs and activities
- Invest in local institutions that bring people together

Programs Designed for Connection



Leveraging Existing Programs to Create Connections



Pillar 2

Enact Pro-Connection Public Policies

- Adopt a “Connection-in-All-Policies” approach
- Work to establish policies that create or enhance connection



Pillar 3

Mobilize the Health Sector

- Train health care providers
- Assess and support patients
- Expand public health surveillance and interventions



Pillar 4

Reform Digital Environments

- Require data transparency & safety standards
- Support development of pro-connection technologies



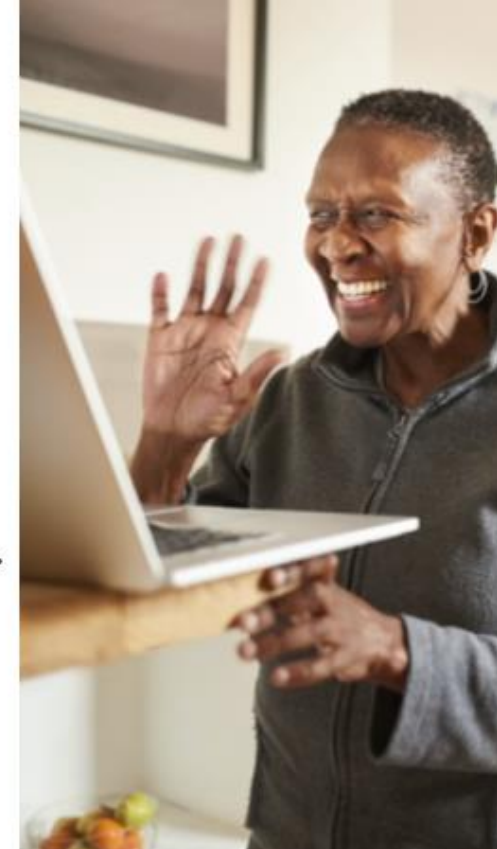
Pillar 5

Make your random act of kindness a **Random Act of Connection**

Is there someone in your family or neighborhood who may be lonely and isolated? There are simple ways you can help.

Call, stop by, call, schedule a video chat. Give a ride. Invite them to an event or over for coffee.

Reach out. Stay in touch!



**Wisconsin
Social Isolation
& Loneliness
Awareness
Week**

Held annually in
November

Pillar 6

Cultivate a Culture of Connection

- Cultivate values of kindness, respect, service, and commitment to one another
- Expand conversations on social connection in schools, workplaces, and communities

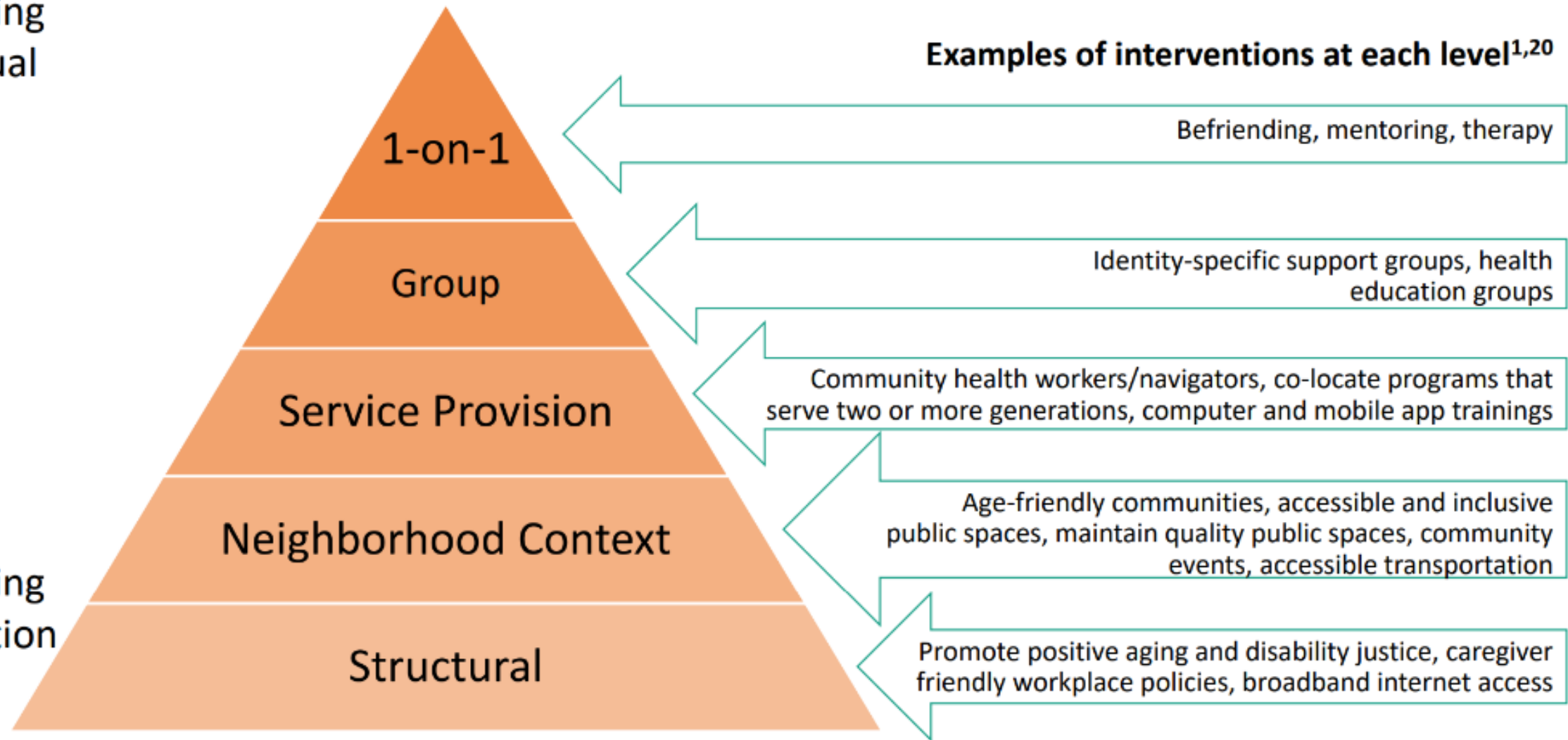


Loneliness Impact Pyramid

Increasing individual effort



Increasing population impact



What Can You Do?

- Join the WCSC movement:
connectwi.org/join/
- Consider how your business, industry or organization can play a role
- Personally reach out to family and/or friends to provide a meaningful connection
- Join the Nationwide Network of Champions:
<https://committoconnect.org/become-champion/>



Thank you!

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connectwi@wihealthyaging.org



connectwi.org/join/