



# Social Connection in America™



## 2025 Survey Report



# About This Project

This survey will catalyze a broad and lasting impact—transforming how we define, prioritize, and support social connection in America.

This survey is led by Dr. Julianne Holt-Lunstad and [a small core team](#) and sponsored by the [Barnes Family Foundation](#). Oversight is provided by an advisory group of subject matter experts with specialties in the various survey topics. The *Social Connection in America*<sup>™</sup> survey project prioritizes transparency, scientific integrity, and public benefit.

# Social Connection in America™

## 2025 Survey Report

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### **SUGGESTED CITATION**

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# Executive Summary



In recent years, a U.S. Surgeon General’s [advisory](#)<sup>1</sup> and a World Health Organization global commission [report](#)<sup>2</sup> identified social connection as an urgent public health priority. Indeed, social connection is as essential to our health as exercising and maintaining a healthy diet. Strong, healthy connections are associated with a 50% increase in odds of survival.<sup>3</sup> Without them, we are at risk of early death, heart disease, poor mental health, and more. **When we are socially connected, we live longer, but we also live safer, healthier, and more prosperous lives.**

Despite the importance of social connection, the United States lacks consistent, long-term, nationally representative data on this fundamental need. **The Social Connection in America™ survey fills that gap.**

**This landmark survey is designed to track the state of social connection across the U.S. over 25 years.** Rigorous data collection will provide a scientific foundation to advance a number of objectives:

- Contribute to national standards for defining and measuring social connection comprehensively through scientifically rigorous survey items.
- Set reliable national estimates for social connection and track trends over time.

- Inform evidence-based strategies for strengthening connection at the individual, local, and societal levels.

Just as national data have been essential to advancing public health in areas like smoking, nutrition, and physical activity, comparable data are urgently needed to inform action on social connection. This project will provide the data we need to confront the urgent risks that loneliness, isolation, and disconnection pose to the American public. Over the years, this will serve as a vital tool to sharpen our understanding of how we are faring and exactly how, as a nation, we can evolve.

**What makes this survey unique is its breadth, scientific rigor, and long-term scope:**

- This is the first national survey, spanning 25 years, that will measure several key components of social connection—not just social isolation and loneliness—at both the individual and community levels.
- It includes validated, standardized measures to align with federal measurement efforts and global recommendations, thereby creating a trusted benchmark for national and state-level comparisons.
- It will serve as a cornerstone for a much-needed agenda that addresses gaps in the evidence base needed to inform action.

Long-term, high-quality, nationally representative data, such as these, are essential for better understanding the association between social disconnection and adverse health and societal outcomes—and for guiding effective, evidence-based solutions.

Over the next quarter century, this survey will serve as both a mirror and a map, reflecting the changing nature of our social lives, and helping to chart a path toward a more connected and thriving America.



# Major Findings

Loneliness remains common across the U.S. Forty-one percent of American adults say they feel lonely at least some of the time. However, our survey results suggest that the problem we face goes beyond loneliness. A more comprehensive assessment of the state of social connection in our nation reveals additional concerns of disengagement, many of which are on a far larger scale.

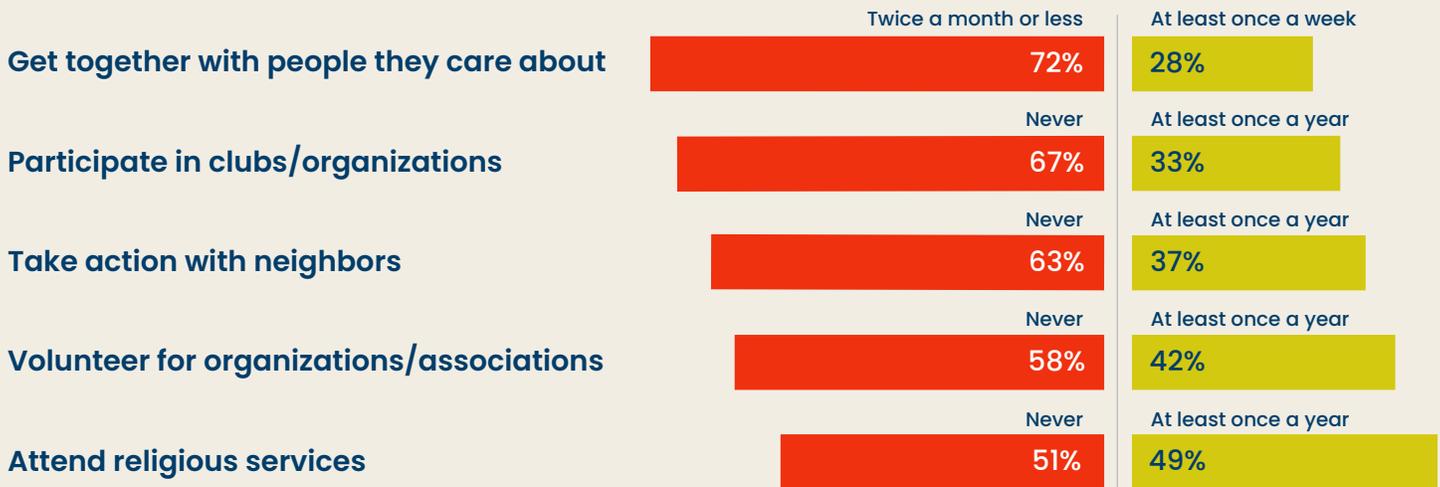
Together, the findings suggest the structural foundation of social connection in America is dangerously weak, with disengagement as the norm, not the exception. The major findings are summarized below with two main areas of concern and a potential sign of hope.

**There is widespread social isolation in the U.S.**, with too little social interaction, few relationships, and disengagement from community life. Lacking these objective aspects of connection points to a major vulnerability, because we cannot have positive, nourishing human connection if we don't have *enough* connection.

- **Infrequent contact.** Nearly three-quarters of Americans get together with their close relationships twice a month or less, and 29% rarely or never talk with them through phone or video calls.
- **Small social networks.** Many Americans have small social networks (39% with two or fewer close relationships; 40% with five or fewer acquaintances).
- **No social participation is the norm.** Across club or religious attendance, organized volunteering, or taking action to do something positive for the neighborhood or community, the majority of American adults report never participating. Only a small percentage of adults participate even infrequently.

**Some groups are especially socially disconnected.** People who have less education, have lower income, never married, identify as LGBTQ+, or belong to certain racial and ethnic groups tend to score below average on many indicators of social connection.

## Disengagement is the norm, contributing to widespread social isolation



- Those with high school education or less and those who make less than \$75,000 scored below the national average on nine of the 12 indicators of social connection at the individual level.
- Those who are never married scored below the national average on 10 of the 12 indicators of social connection.
- Certain gender identity groups (transgender, nonbinary, or other) scored below the national average on 11 of the 12 indicators of social connection, while certain non-white racial and ethnic and sexual orientation groups (gay, lesbian, bisexual, or other) scored below the national average on all 12 indicators of social connection.

**Signs of strength and opportunities for growth live in local communities.** While most Americans are objectively disengaged from their local communities, there are hopeful indications of building blocks to repair the social fabric of the nation.

- Most report a sense of belonging (72%) in their local communities and neighborhoods.
- More than half report that they get along with their neighbors (59%) and perceive that others are willing to help each other (58%). Nearly half report that people in their neighborhood can be trusted (49%).

# Why Social Connection Matters



# Why Social Connection Matters

Concerns about low rates of social connection, coupled with evidence of significant health consequences, prompted the U.S. Surgeon General to issue an [advisory](#)<sup>1</sup> in 2023. It was an urgent warning about the public health crisis that loneliness, isolation, and disconnection pose to the American public.

## Lacking Social Connection Can Harm Health and Well-Being

Lacking social connection can lead to damaging effects on mental, physical, and cognitive health.<sup>6</sup> For example, it has been associated with:

- **Increased risk of earlier death**<sup>7</sup>— by 32% from social isolation and 14% from loneliness.<sup>8</sup>
- **Higher rates of physical and mental illness**, including increased risk of heart disease by 29%, stroke by 32%,<sup>9</sup> and dementia by 50%;<sup>10</sup> it is also linked to increased risk

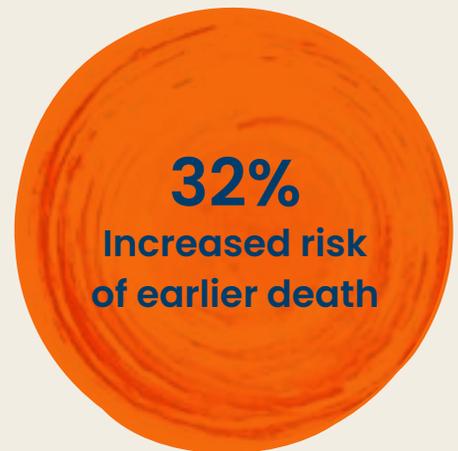
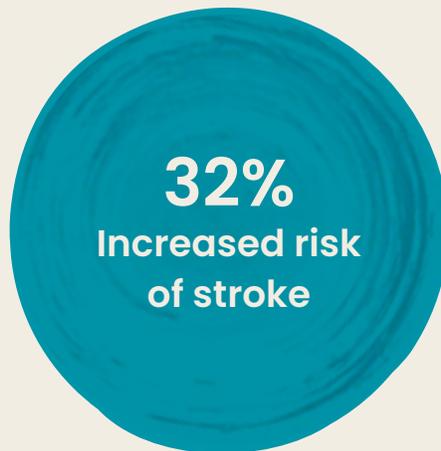
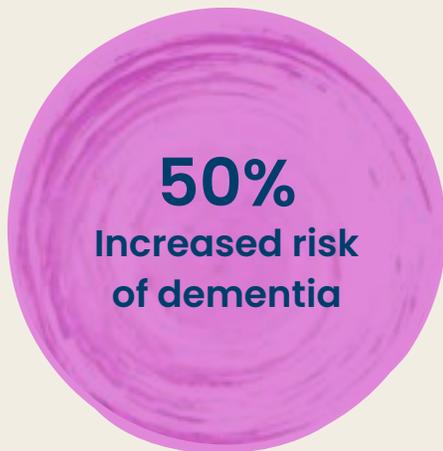
for type 2 diabetes, depression, anxiety,<sup>11</sup> addiction,<sup>12</sup> suicidality, and self-harm.<sup>13</sup>

- **Economic losses**, up to \$25.2 billion each year to the U.S. economy, due to healthcare use and productivity losses due to social isolation and loneliness.<sup>14</sup>
- **Stress-related work**—absences attributed to loneliness cost U.S. employers an estimated \$154 billion in 2020.<sup>15</sup>

If social disconnection remains unmeasured, it will continue unchecked, affecting our health and economy.

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## Lacking social connection can lead to serious health risks



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### Social Connection Can Extend and Improve Lives

Social connection is a critical driver<sup>4</sup> of individual health and resilience,<sup>5</sup> as well as thriving communities. Research indicates that social connection contributes to people living longer, healthier lives. Connecting with others is a fundamental human need that is essential for individual and community well-being, physical and mental health, safety, and economic prosperity.<sup>3,7,8,16-18</sup> When people have healthy social connections with stable,

supportive relationships, they have better mental and physical health outcomes. Supportive relationships offer benefits at both the individual and community level. They protect our mental well-being, reduce the risk of violence and harm, and foster the trust and cooperation that make communities safer and more resilient.<sup>1</sup> Connection also drives economic stability, helping people access opportunities, stay employed, and recover from setbacks.<sup>19</sup>

# What Is Social Connection?



# What Is Social Connection?

Social connection is an umbrella term that covers a wide variety of types of relationships and interactions. Standard definitions are:

**Social connection** is a continuum of the size and diversity of one's social network and roles, the functions these relationships serve, and their positive or negative qualities.<sup>20</sup> It is the feeling of belonging and having enough support and care.<sup>21</sup>

**Social disconnection** reflects deficits in relationships and roles, including their functions and quality.<sup>1,22</sup> There are many forms of disconnection, but two have been most closely studied.

- Social isolation is an objective state of having few social relationships, limited social roles, and infrequent group memberships, as well as minimal social interaction.<sup>1,20</sup>
- Loneliness is a subjective, distressing emotional experience resulting from perceived isolation or inadequate meaningful connections, where inadequate refers to the discrepancy or unmet need between one's desired and actual experience of connection.<sup>1,23</sup>

## Components of Social Connection for Individuals

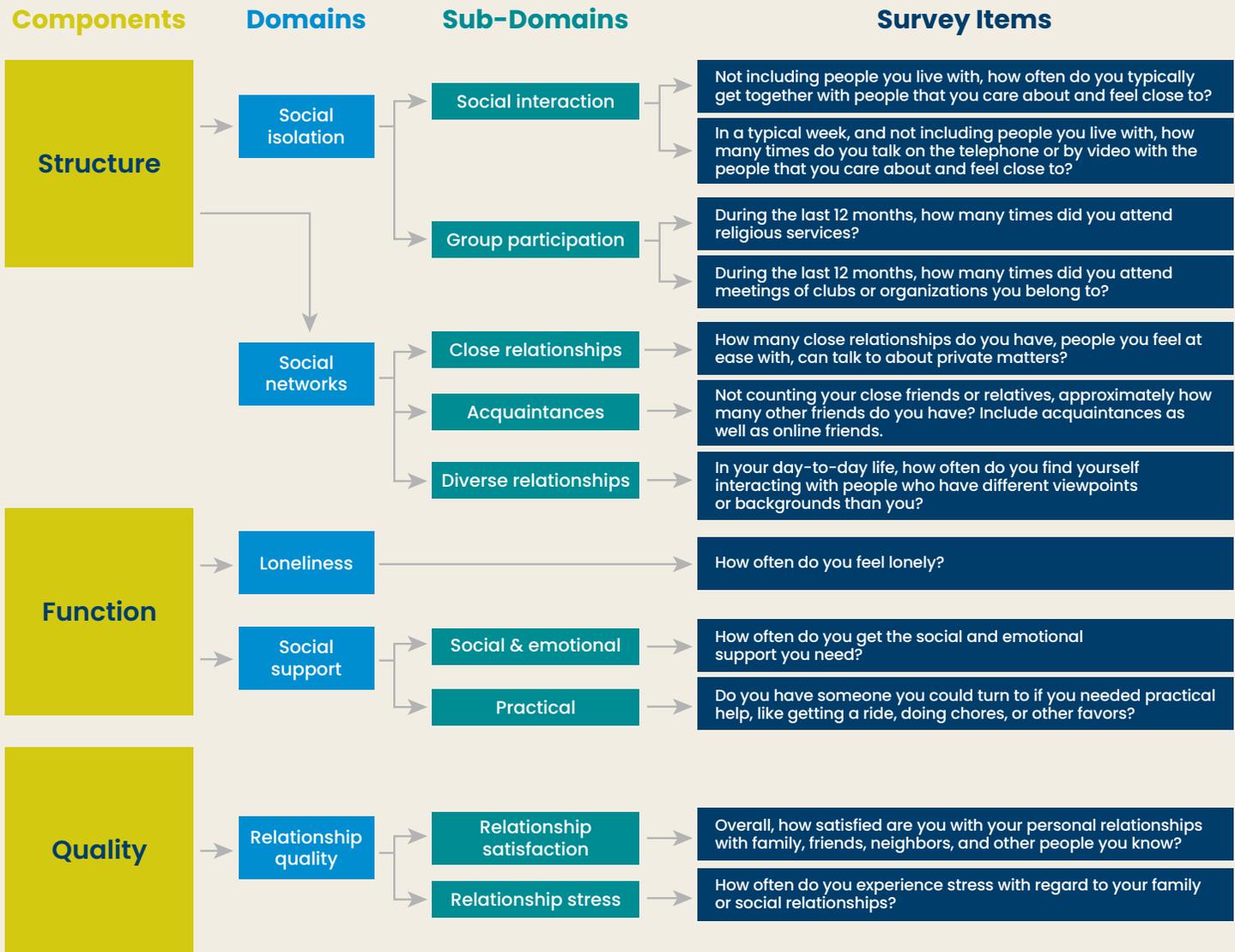
There are three vital components of social connection, each of which has been linked to important health outcomes.<sup>17</sup> Deficits in any one of these may pose a health risk. Items in this survey were selected to measure all three of these components at the individual level.

**Structure:** This refers to the number and variety of relationships a person has, and the frequency of their social interactions. These items reflect objective aspects of social connection that can be measured quantitatively. This is where *measures for social isolation* are categorized.

**Function:** This refers to the extent to which our relationships meet various needs. These items reflect subjective indicators of social connection, measured by perceived support. This is where *measures for loneliness* and *social support* are categorized.

**Quality:** Social connection is also about the quality of our connections—whether our relationships and interactions are positive or negative.

# Three Vital Components of Individual Social Connection

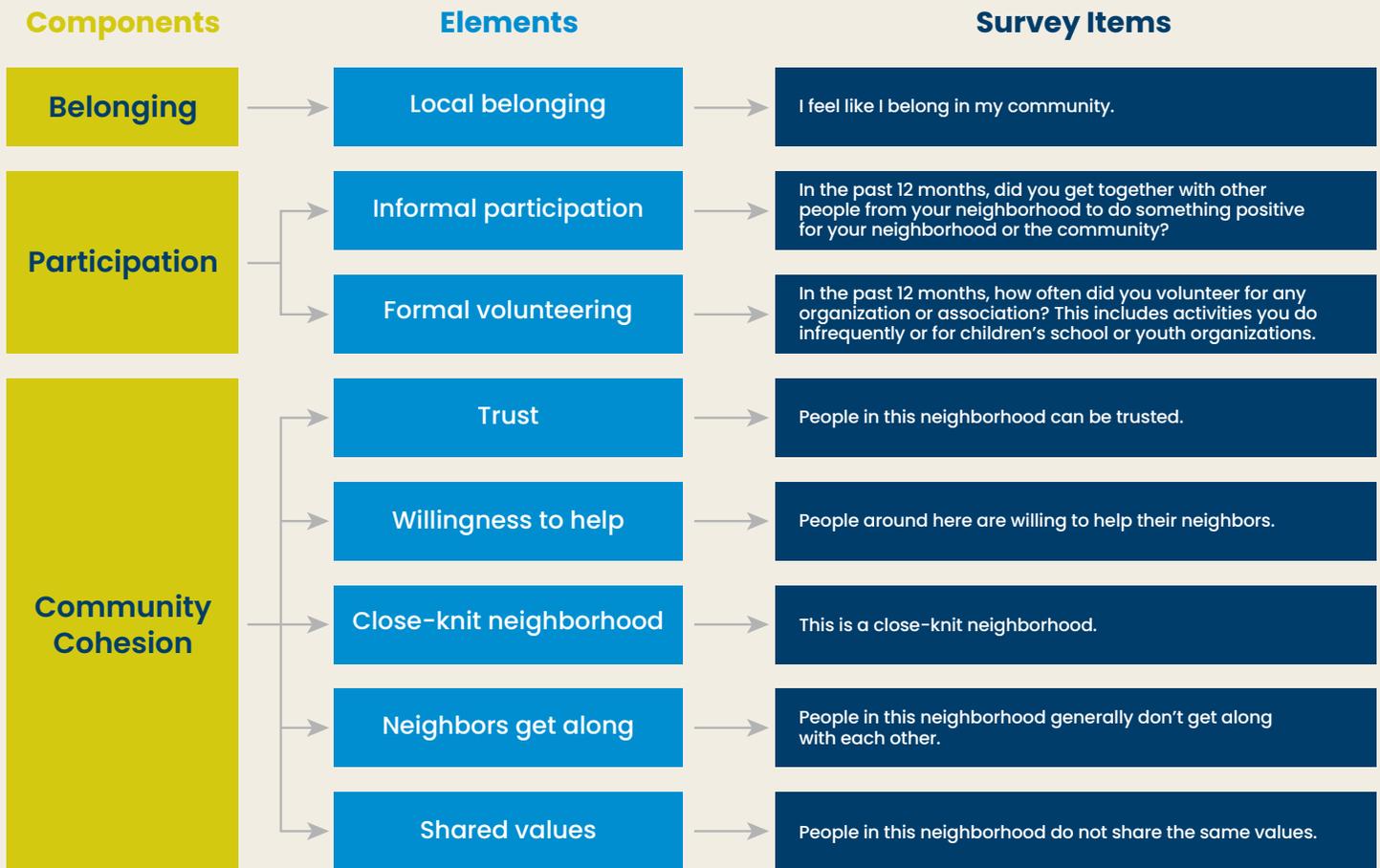


## Components of Social Connection for Communities

The benefits of social connection extend beyond individual health and well-being. Positive community relationships and interactions build trust and create vibrant

neighborhoods and towns that are healthier, safer, more prosperous, and better equipped to withstand natural and financial disasters.<sup>1</sup> Feeling a sense of community, belonging, and supportive relationships is associated with a variety of positive outcomes.<sup>24</sup>

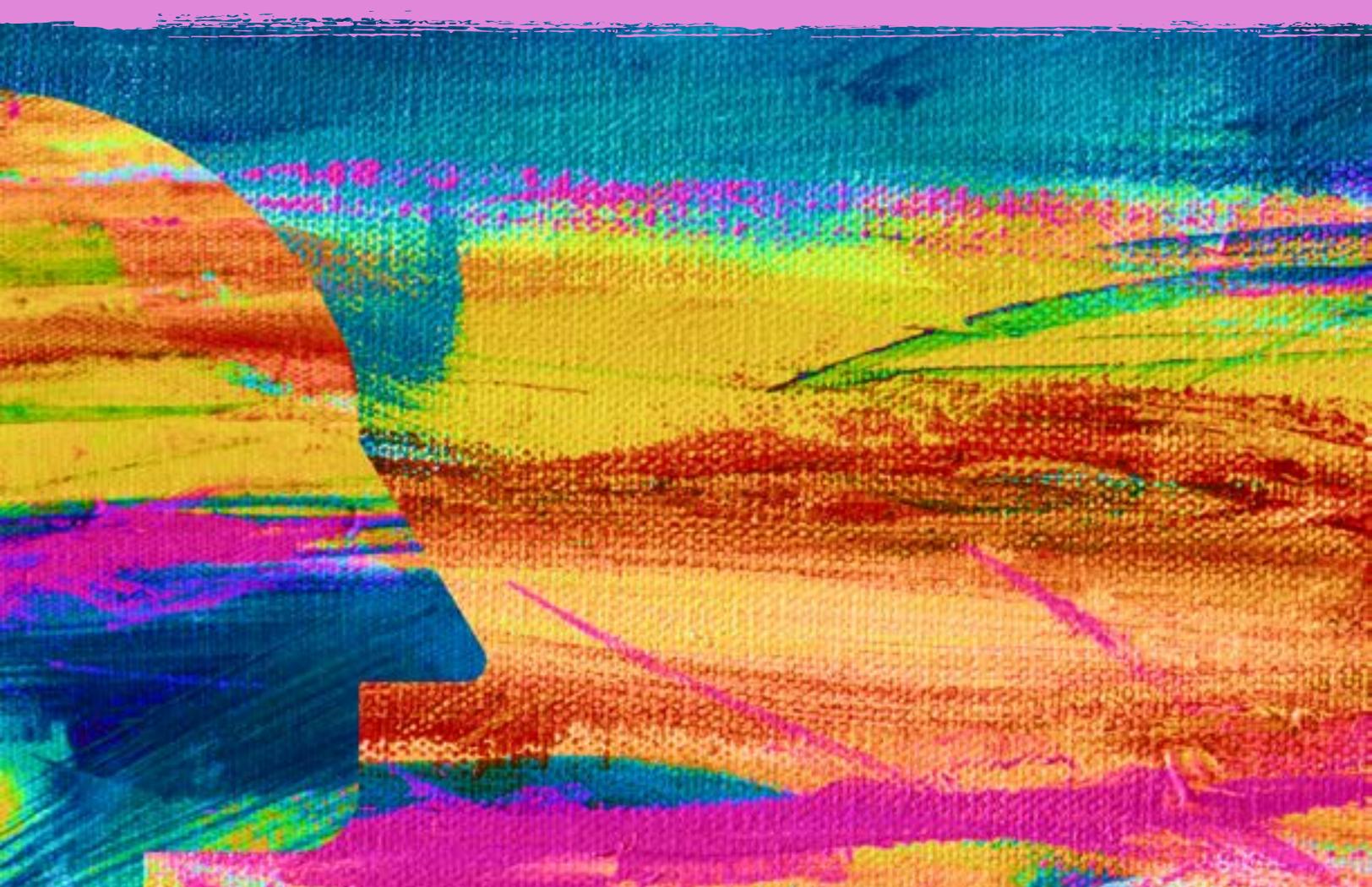
## Components of Community Social Connection



There are several frameworks for understanding connection at the community level. Researchers use concepts such as social capital, social cohesion, and collective efficacy to explain how social connection benefits communities. These frameworks for community connection sometimes diverge in important ways, but they often rely on overlapping core elements, such as trust, belonging, and local participation.

There is strong evidence that these aspects of connection are essential to thriving local communities.<sup>1</sup> That is why this report includes some of the most crucial domains of community connection.<sup>25</sup> Over the coming years, data from the *Social Connection in America™* survey can help inform a path toward further clarifying these concepts.

# The Current State of Social Connection in America: 2025 Survey Findings



# Survey Results for Individual Social Connection

People can lack social connection in a wide variety of ways. The *Social Connection in America*<sup>TM</sup> survey provides a broader and more accurate picture of social connection among U.S. adults by examining a wide range of aspects of connection. It provides a holistic and more nuanced assessment of how Americans view their relationships and interactions and highlights differences across groups.

*Complete charts for all survey items and demographic groups can be found in [Appendix C](#).*

## **STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS: What Do Americans’ Relationships Look Like?**

Our social networks—made up of family, friends, colleagues, and neighbors—and our engagement with them are the backbone of social connection. We sometimes take them for granted, but when they are missing from our lives, the consequences can have a significant impact on us.<sup>3</sup> Understanding the variety of relationships in our lives, how often we connect with them, and in what ways, illuminates the patterns of social interactions that create the foundation for establishing and maintaining social relationships. Tracking these patterns is essential for

identifying where social connection is thriving—and where it may be fraying.

## **How Often Are Americans Interacting Socially?**

To capture how often people interact, the survey includes four items that measure the frequency of social interaction and group participation. People connect in many ways. For example, interactions can occur in person, on the phone or via video chat, and in various structured group settings. The items that we used were adapted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention from the Berkman-Syme Social Network Index,<sup>26</sup> which has been validated and used extensively in public health research for several decades.

## In-Person Socializing (Other Than Those We Live With)

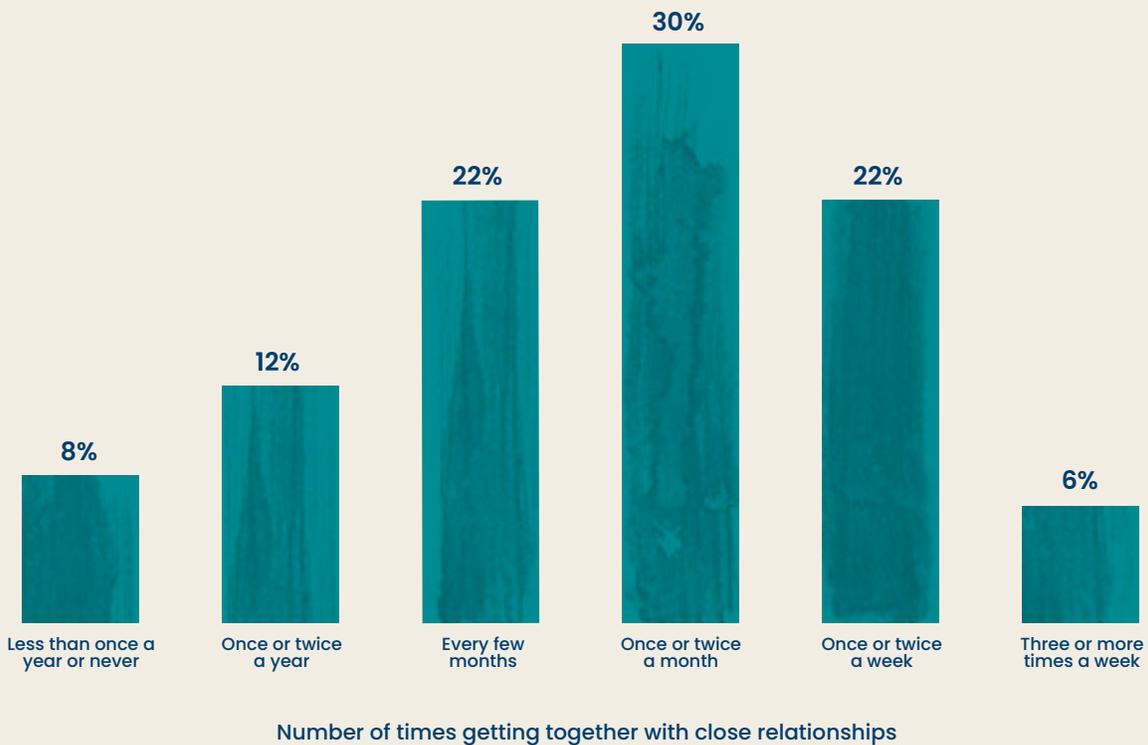
Spending time face-to-face with the people we care about and feel close to is important for maintaining close relationships, but it is a rare experience for many. Results show that spending time together with others whom we don't live with is not the norm.

**Nearly three-quarters of U.S. adults get together with people they care about and feel close to twice a month or less, with 42%**

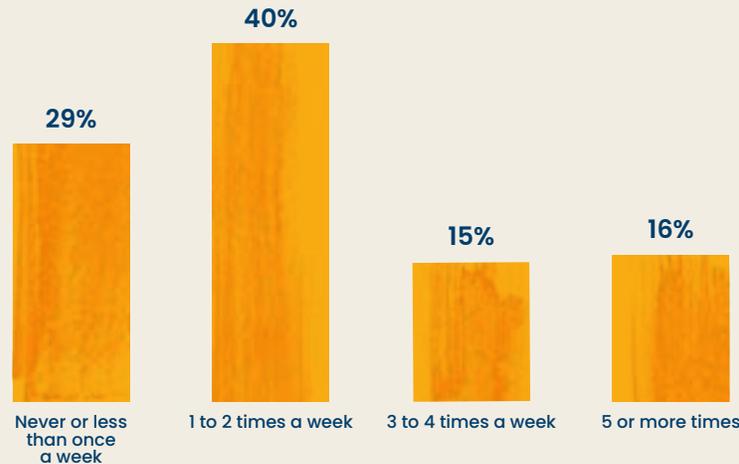
of Americans getting together with others less than once a month. Fifty-eight percent of Americans get together with those they are close to at least once a month, and 28% of Americans get together with those they are close to at least once per week or more.

In-person socializing varies across groups. Older adults, those with higher education and income, and females were more likely than the average person to socialize in person.

### Most Americans get together with people they care about twice a month or less



## Most Americans talk to people they care about twice a week or less



Number of phone or video calls with close relationships

### Talking by Phone or Video With People We Care About and Feel Close to (But Don't Live With)

While people are more likely to connect with those they care about via phone or video than to get together in person, many still rarely do so. More than one in four (29%) U.S. adults say they talk to the people they care about and feel close to less than once a week, or never. Thirty-one percent are talking to others three or more times per week. Those who are middle-aged, have higher education and income, are married, and are male are even less likely than average to talk to those they are close to on the phone.

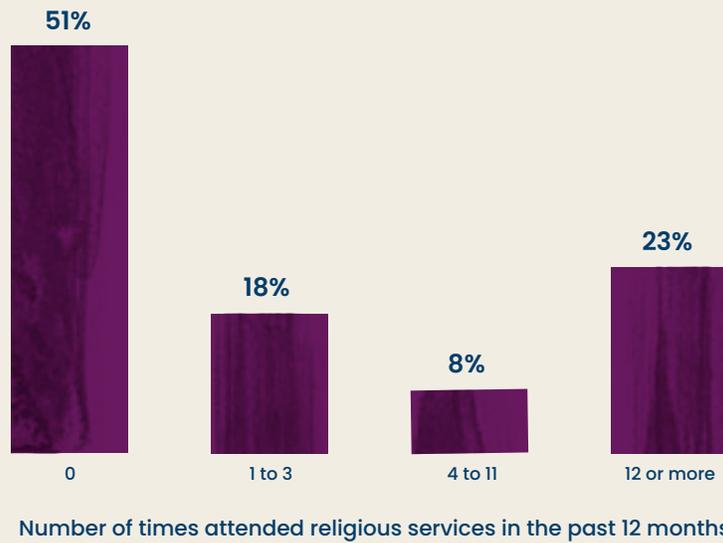
### Are Americans Participating in Groups?

There are **low rates of social engagement in the groups and institutions** that can foster belonging and civic engagement among U.S. adults.

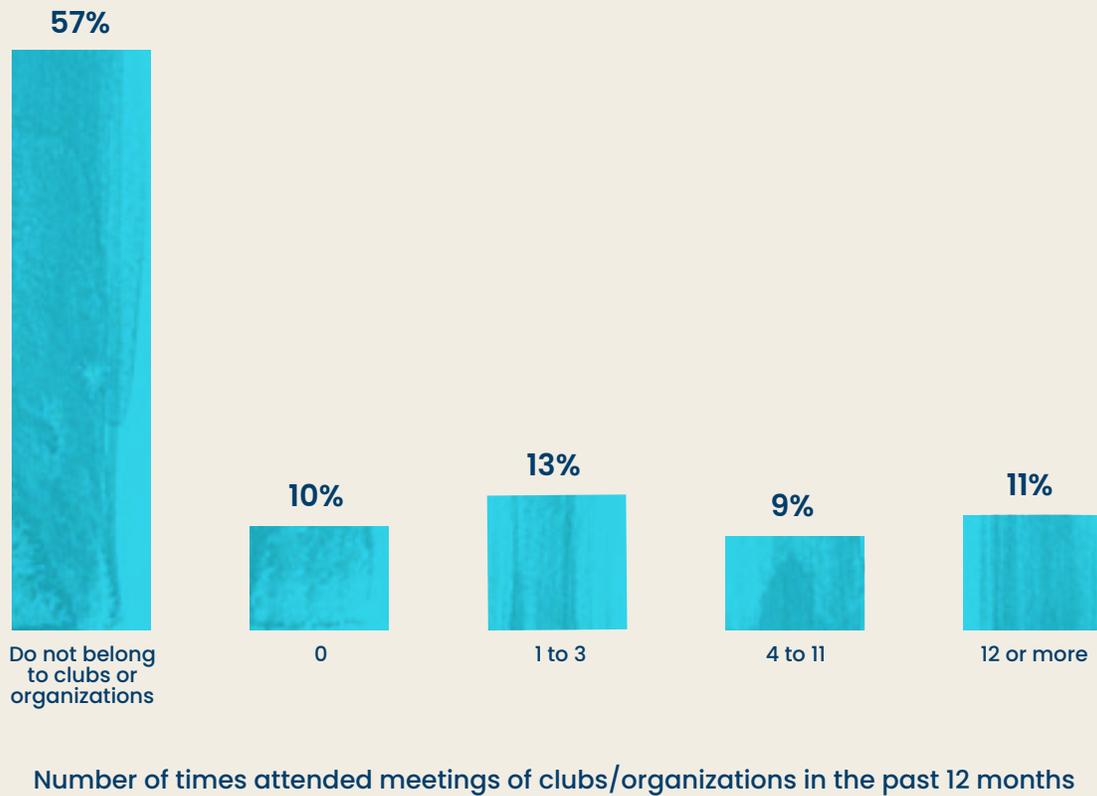
The majority of adults are not participating in social or religious groups, historically important sources of social connection. More than half (51%) of U.S. adults **never attend religious services**, and more than three-quarters (77%) attend less than monthly.

**Two-thirds (67%) do not belong to, or never attend a meeting of, a club or organization**, with only one-third attending at least once a year. Rates are higher among certain groups, such as older adults, those with higher education and income, and married individuals, but overall, there is widespread disengagement from social groups. Across all demographic groups, more than half report never participating in a social group. The only exception is a narrow majority (52%) of those with graduate or professional degrees.

## Most Americans don't attend religious services



## Most Americans do not belong to clubs or organizations



## What Do Americans' Social Networks Look Like?

People with stronger social networks tend to be less lonely, have better self-rated health, greater life satisfaction, and are generally happier. To better understand these networks, the survey includes three items that measure the size of the social networks—both close relationships and acquaintances—and the diversity of people who comprise their networks.

### Number of Close Relationships

Although scientific consensus is still being built on how many relationships are necessary for health and well-being, we present the following classification of survey results based on prior research:<sup>27</sup>

- More than one-third (39%) of Americans have two or fewer close relationships, while 4% report having no close relationships at all.
- Forty-four percent of U.S. adults have three to five close relationships.

- Seventeen percent of U.S. adults have six or more close relationships. Some studies suggest this confers additional health benefits and may be ideal; however, it may be that there is a threshold beyond which benefits diminish.<sup>28</sup>

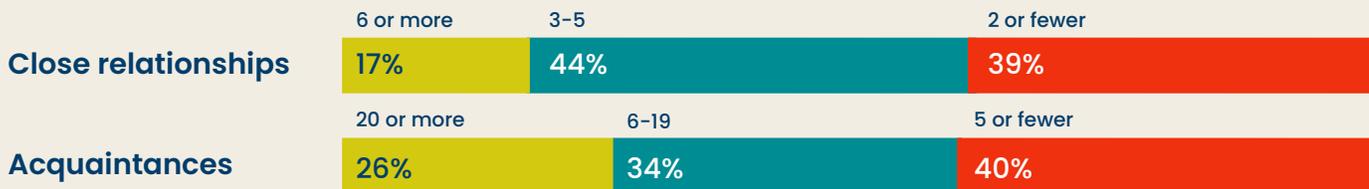
### Number of Acquaintances

To get a full picture of Americans' social networks, we asked how many acquaintances and online friends respondents have beyond close friends and relatives. Approximately a quarter of Americans have 20 or more acquaintances; however, 40% of U.S. adults have five or fewer acquaintances. Young adults, those with low education, low income, and those who are never married, report having fewer acquaintances than the national average.

### Interactions With People of Different Viewpoints and Backgrounds

Different people can provide us with different kinds of information, advice, resources, support, and more. Having larger and more diverse social networks, with different types

## Small social networks are typical for many Americans



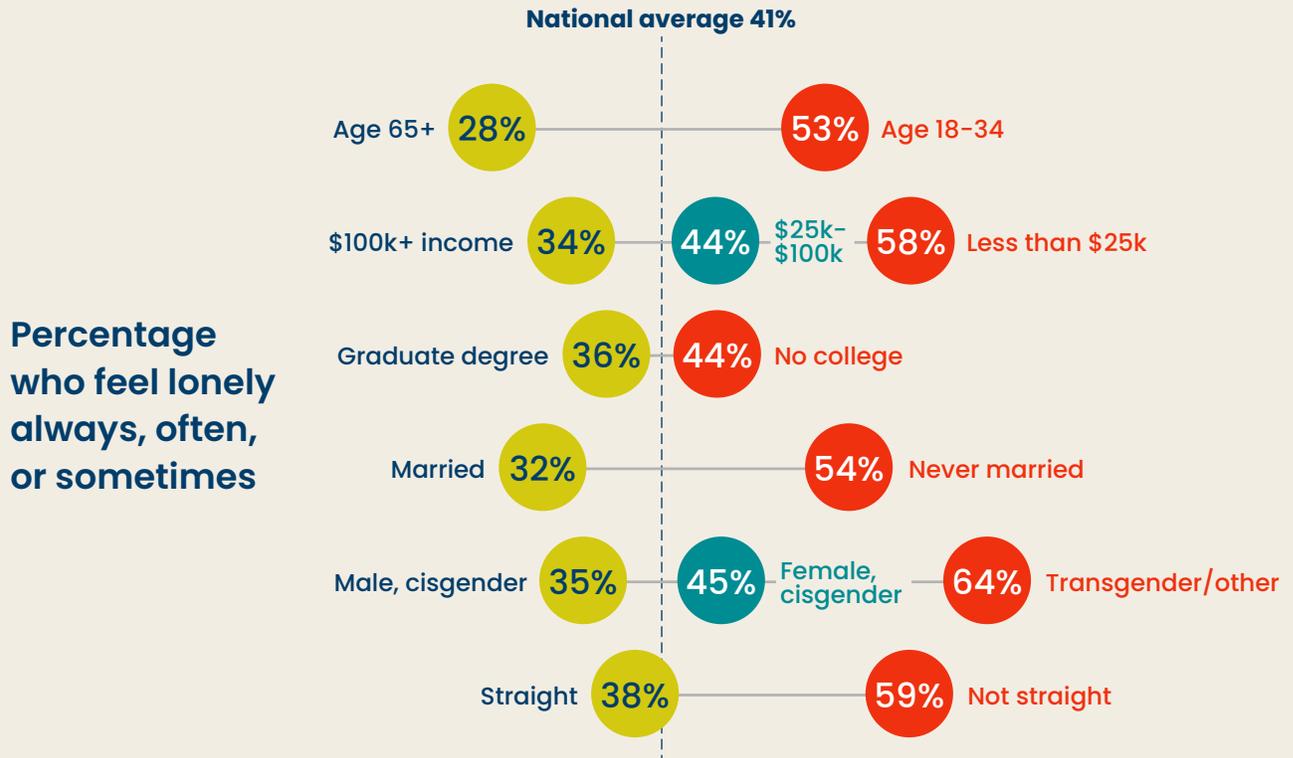
of relationships, can meet a wider range of needs and is linked with better health outcomes.<sup>29</sup> For example, when someone who has always lived in a large city becomes friends with someone from a rural area, this relationship opens up opportunities to learn about different values and ways of living and seeing the world.

The survey found that approximately one in five adults rarely or never interacts with people with different viewpoints and backgrounds. This varies across age, with middle-aged adults most likely and older adults least likely to engage with others who differ from themselves, although most adults interact with people of different viewpoints or backgrounds at least sometimes, including 26% who do so often and 11% who do so all the time.

### Structure Summary

The structural component of social connection in the U.S. is dangerously weak. Most adults have limited contact with their close relationships other than those they live with, almost no involvement in social and religious groups, and relatively small social networks. More than one-third of adults report low numbers of people in their lives—both close relationships and acquaintances. Almost 20% of adults report rarely or never engaging with people from different backgrounds. Together, these findings document widespread isolation, disengagement, and thin social networks, pointing to vulnerabilities in the structural foundation of social connection.

## Loneliness is widespread and varies by group



### FUNCTIONAL COMPONENTS: Are Americans' Relationships Meeting Their Needs and Expectations?

The functional component of social connection—whether our relationships meet our needs—can directly shape our health, well-being, and even how long we live. Supportive relationships can ease stress, offer help when needed, and make us feel cared for.<sup>30</sup> The following items assess the extent to which others meet our expectations, including perceptions of loneliness, and whether they can be relied upon for emotional and practical help.

### How Lonely Are Americans?

Consistent with similar surveys, such as the Household Pulse Survey,<sup>31</sup> a high percentage of Americans (41%) report feeling lonely at least sometimes, with one in 10 reporting feeling lonely usually or always.

Loneliness varies across demographics:

- Lower-than-average loneliness is reported by older adults, those with higher incomes and education, and married individuals.
- Higher than average loneliness is reported by those who are under age 45 (Gen Z and millennials), have low education or income,

are unmarried, and identify with certain racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, and gender groups (i.e., all non-white, gay or lesbian, bisexual, transgender, nonbinary, other).

- Males reported significantly lower loneliness than females.

## How Much Social Support Do Americans Feel They Have?

### Social and Emotional Support

More than half (56%) of adults report usually or always getting the social and emotional support they need. However, a significant portion (44%) say they sometimes, rarely, or never receive such support.

### Practical Support

Nearly three-quarters (73%) of adults report that they usually or always have someone they can turn to for practical help. Still, more than a quarter (27%) of adults sometimes, rarely, or never have someone they can turn to.

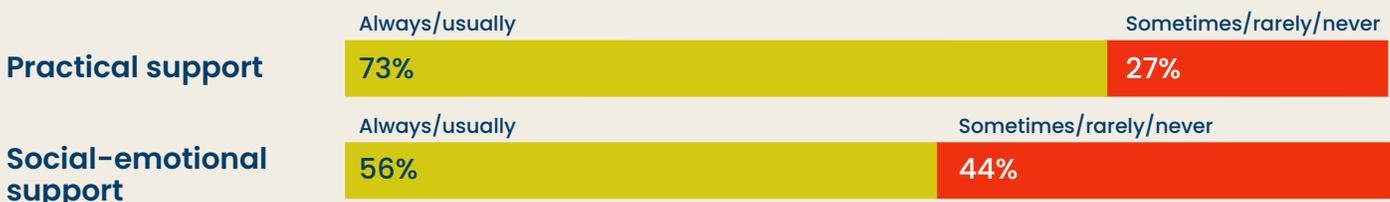
Having both emotional and practical social support also varies by demographic characteristics.

- **Higher levels of social support** are reported by older adults, those with higher incomes and education, and married individuals.
- **Lower levels of social support** are reported by those with lower than a high school education, lower income, never married, and those who are LGBTQ+.

### Function Summary

Although more than half of Americans report having social, emotional, and practical support, a large portion still experience gaps. Forty-one percent of adults report experiencing loneliness at least sometimes, 10% report experiencing loneliness usually or always, and a significant portion do not feel they have people to turn to for support when they need it. These challenges are not evenly distributed across different groups.

## More Americans get practical support than social and emotional support



## QUALITY COMPONENTS: Are Americans' Relationships Satisfying or Stressful?

The survey captures an often-overlooked aspect of social connection: the degree to which relationships and interactions with others are positive or satisfying, or whether they are negative, unsatisfying, or stressful. While positive qualities have been associated with protective effects on health, negativity and strain in relationships have been associated with poorer health.<sup>28,32</sup> We included the following two items that help understand this aspect of connection, although it would be better to have additional rigorously tested items.

### Relationship Satisfaction

The majority of adults are satisfied with their relationships with family, friends, neighbors, and other people in their lives (62%). Older adults, those with higher incomes, and married individuals tend to report greater satisfaction.

### Relationship Stress

Forty-three percent of adults report experiencing stress with regard to their family or social relationships sometimes, often, very often, or always. However, most adults (56%) report never, almost never, or rarely experiencing relationship stress.

- Older adults, married individuals, and males report significantly lower relationship stress.

- Relationship stress is highest among lower-income (51%), middle-aged (53% for ages 35-44), and some LGBTQ+ groups (58% for transgender/nonbinary adults; 59% for bisexual adults).

## WHICH GROUPS ARE MOST AND LEAST SOCIALLY CONNECTED?

Research suggests that reporting low levels on any of these social connection indicators (see page 34, and Appendix C) can pose risk. Therefore, it's important to understand which groups are faring better or worse.<sup>5,28,32</sup>

### Age

Despite social isolation and loneliness being viewed as issues primarily affecting older adults, our survey suggests that older adults are generally more connected than the average person across the core components, with one notable exception. Older adults are less likely to interact with people who have different values and backgrounds than the national average (30% of those ages 65-74, 23% for those ages 75 and older).

The prevalence of loneliness was not just higher among Gen Z but higher among adults ages 45 and younger. More than half of adults under the age of 35 (52% of adults ages 18-24, 54% of adults ages 25-34) and 45% of adults ages 35-45 report loneliness. Gen

## Most Americans are satisfied with their relationships and experience low stress



Z was also more likely to report having few acquaintances, but the prevalence of other indicators of connection was consistent with the national average.

### Sex

A mixed picture emerged across indicators of social connection between the sexes. The prevalence of loneliness was significantly lower among men (35%) than the national average (41%), and as compared to women (45%). The prevalence of getting together was higher among women than men (61% vs. 56% for once a month or more), as was talking with close relationships (37% vs. 26% for three times per week or more).

### Race

Certain racial and ethnic groups (e.g., Asian, Black, Hispanic, multiracial, or other) scored below the national average on all 12 indicators of social connection.

### Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Certain gender groups (transgender,

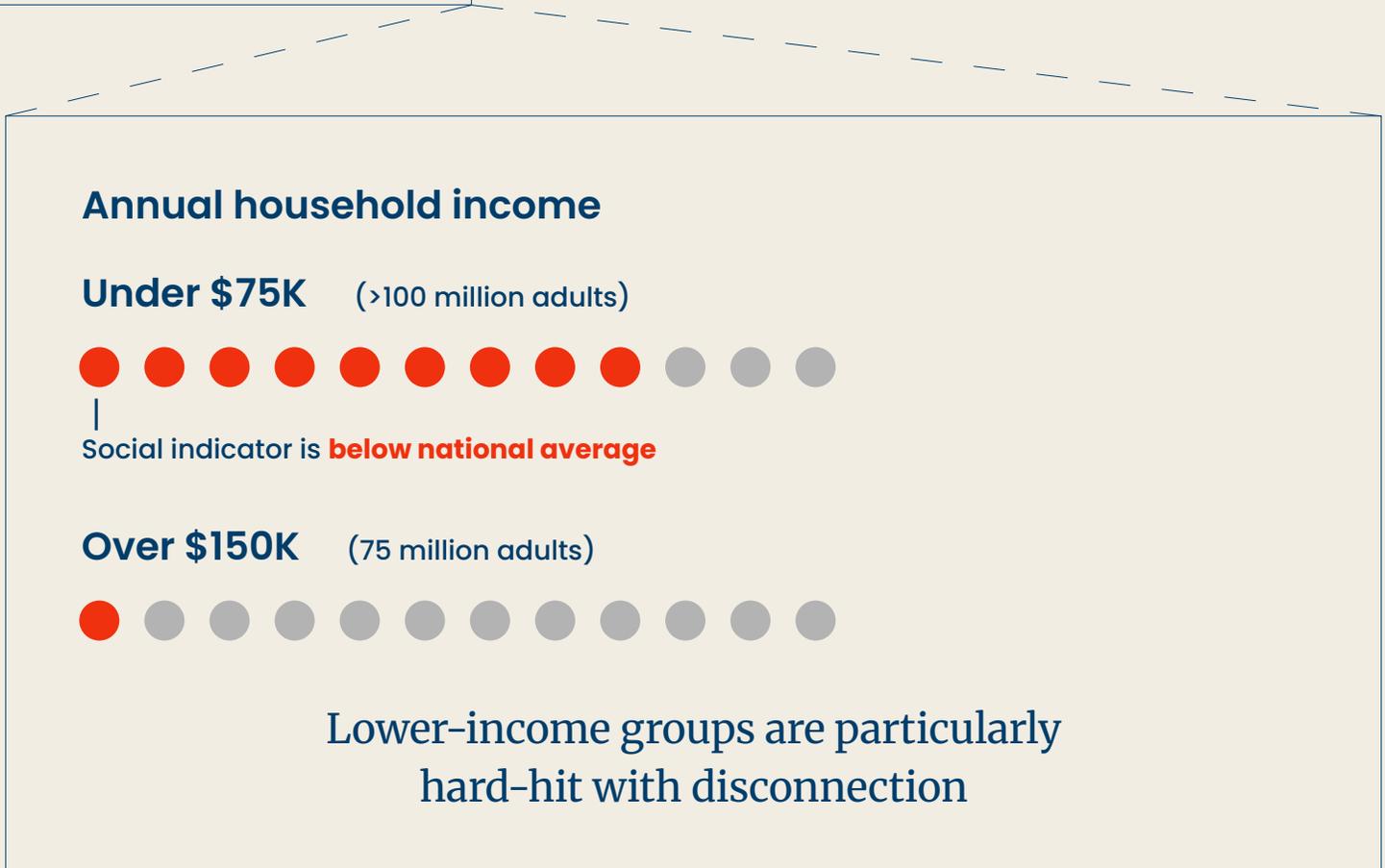
nonbinary, or other) scored below the national average on 11 of the 12 indicators of social connection, while certain sexual orientation groups (gay, lesbian, bisexual, or other) scored below the national average on all 12 indicators of social connection.

### Marital Status, Education, Income

A fairly consistent pattern has emerged across most domains of social connection: social connection is lower among those who never married and those with lower income and education.

- Those who are never married scored below the national average on 10 of the 12 indicators of social connection.
- Those with high school education or less and those who make less than \$75,000 scored below the national average on nine of the 12 indicators of social connection. This reflects a stark comparison to households with income over \$150,000, who scored above the national average on all but one of the 12 indicators.

# The most socially disconnected groups



# Survey Results for Community Connection

Decades of research have shown that communities with better social connection and participation have better outcomes in many areas, including population health, safety, economic prosperity, and resilience in the face of disasters.<sup>1</sup> This part of the survey examines community engagement and how individuals feel about their neighbors and the communities where they live.

## Do Americans Feel Like They Belong in Their Local Communities?

### Sense of Belonging

Nearly three-quarters of respondents (72%) report feeling a sense of belonging in their local community, while over a quarter of adults (28%) do not.

## How Engaged Are Americans in Their Local Communities?

### Taking Action With Neighbors

Thirty-six percent of U.S. adults report that they get together with people in their neighborhood at least once a year to do something positive for the neighborhood or community, while 63% report never getting together to take action for the neighborhood.

### Formal Volunteering

Formal volunteering is similarly uncommon. Roughly one in five (22%) U.S. adults

say they volunteer for organizations or associations at least once per month, while most never do (58%).

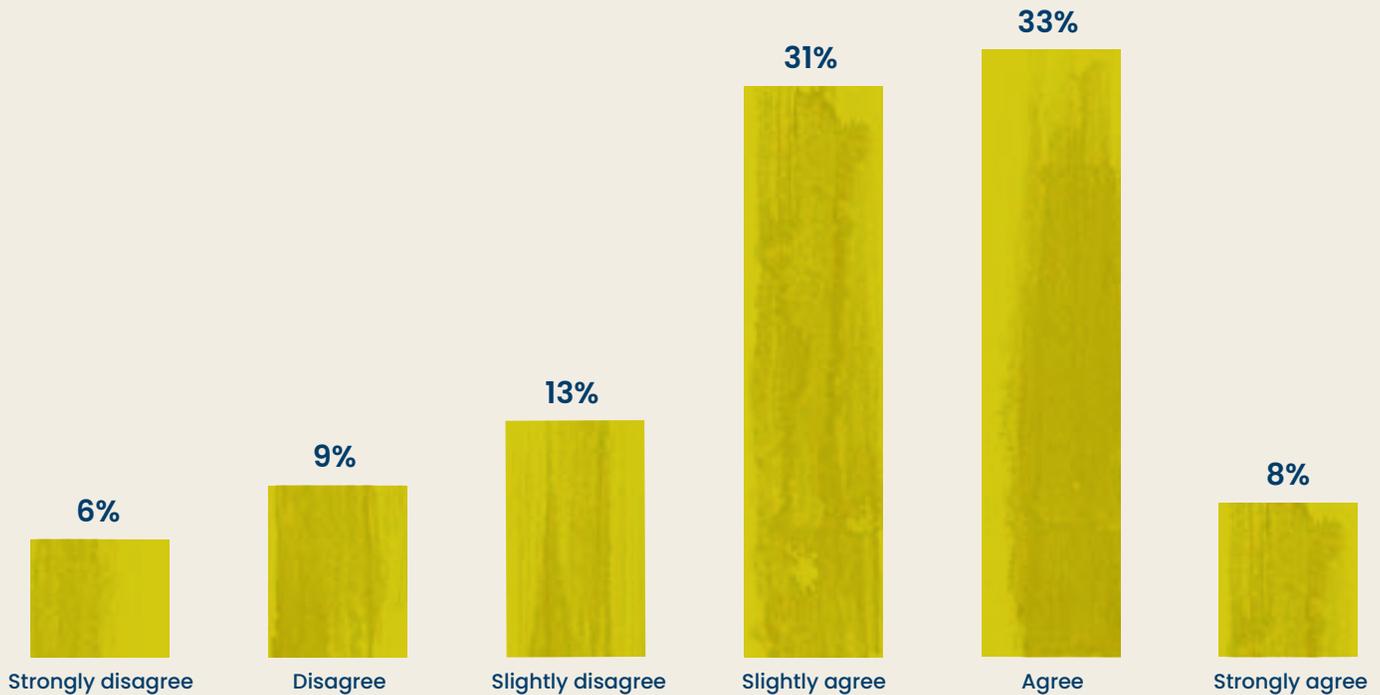
## How Cohesive Are Americans' Local Communities?

Community cohesion is typically measured through a validated five-item module of questions about trust, shared values, and other concepts, to assess how connected respondents feel to their neighborhoods.

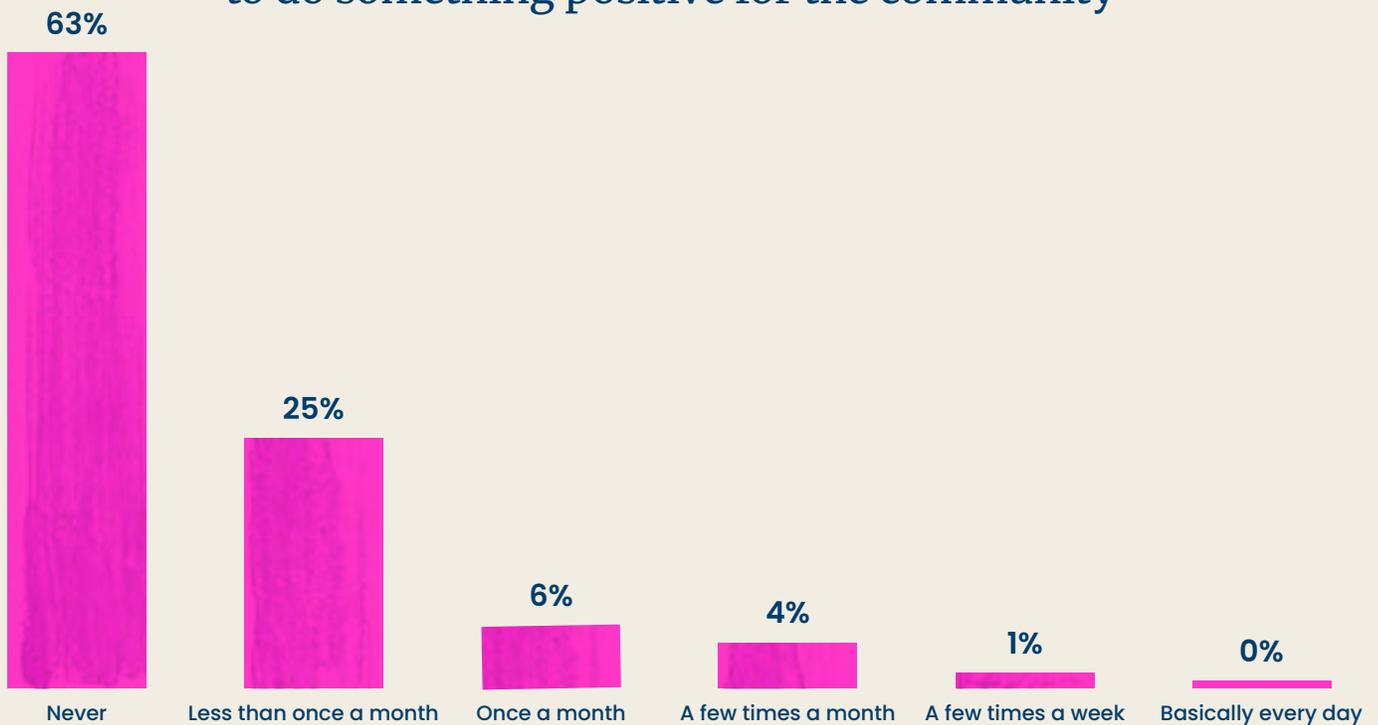
### Trust

Nearly half of U.S. adults (49%) report feeling that they can trust the people in their neighborhood, while 39% of Americans say they “neither agree nor disagree” or don’t know whether others in their neighborhood can be trusted. One in 10 (11%) do not believe people in their neighborhoods can be trusted.

## Most Americans feel a sense of belonging in their community



## Most Americans don't get together with neighbors to do something positive for the community



### Willingness to Help Neighbors

More than half of U.S. adults (58%) perceive their neighbors as willing to help each other. While a small percentage (8%) disagree, roughly one-third of adults say they “neither agree nor disagree” or don’t know whether people in their community are willing to help their neighbors.

### Close-Knit Neighborhoods

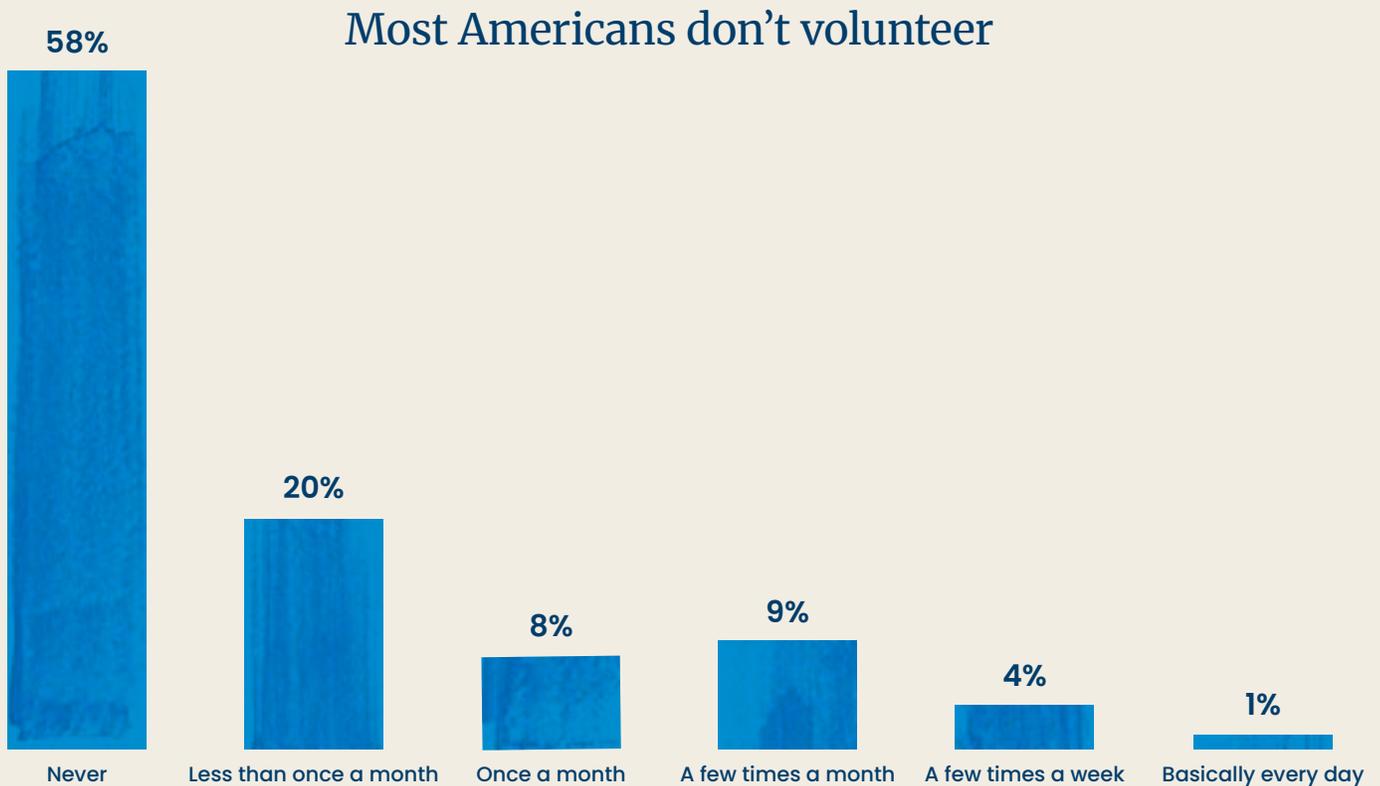
The largest percentage of people say they “neither agree nor disagree” or don’t know whether their neighborhood is close-knit (48%). While 27% of U.S. adults report having a close-knit neighborhood, 25% report that they do not.

### Neighbors Get Along

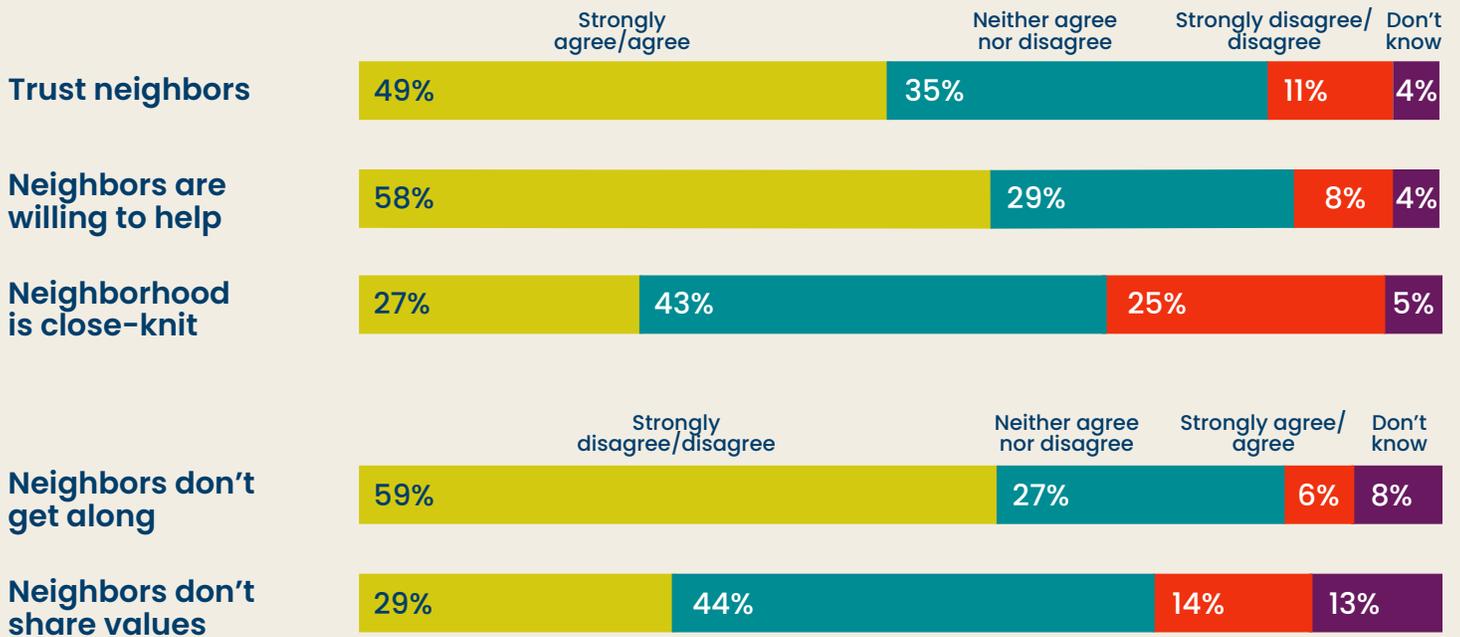
More than half of U.S. adults (59%) report that people in their neighborhood generally get along, while 6% report they do not. More than one-third (35%) say they “neither agree nor disagree” or don’t know.

### Shared Values

The largest percentage of respondents say they “neither agree nor disagree” or don’t know whether people in their neighborhood share the same values (57%). While 29% of U.S. adults report that people in their neighborhood share the same values, 14% report they do not.



## Community Cohesion



When all five community cohesion items are combined (see Appendix B),<sup>33</sup> 22% of Americans live in neighborhoods on the higher end of the cohesion scale (scoring a four or more out of five), while 18% live in neighborhoods on the lower end of the cohesion scale (scoring less than three). But the majority of respondents—60%—land right in the middle of the scale at or around a three out of five.

### Community Connection Summary

These findings suggest both signs of strength and opportunities for growth in community connections. The majority of U.S. adults feel a sense of belonging in their local communities (72%), perceive that people are willing to help

each other (58%), and get along with their neighbors (59%). Almost half feel that people in their neighborhood can be trusted (49%). However, this does not translate into more formal action: the majority never get together with neighbors to do something positive for their neighborhood or community (63%), and never volunteer for any organization or association (58%). Also, only 27% report feeling that their neighborhood is close-knit and 48% say they “neither agree nor disagree” or don’t know, while 29% report that they share the same values and 57% say they “neither agree nor disagree” or don’t know.

# Conclusion





A more complete picture of the social connectedness of U.S. adults is emerging. Although several national surveys report on specific aspects of social life (e.g., loneliness, social capital), by measuring critical components of social connection, at both individual and community levels, this survey provides a more comprehensive view of how Americans are really faring socially.

Consistent with comparable national surveys, a sizable portion (41%) of the U.S. population reports experiencing loneliness at least some of the time—a prevalence that has garnered substantial public health concern. Yet loneliness may just be the tip of the iceberg. Even more troubling, these data reveal even higher prevalence rates of other indicators of disconnection.

### **Widespread Social Isolation and Disengagement Threaten the Structural Foundation of Social Connection in America.**

This survey reveals widespread social disengagement in both the structural aspects of relationships and in community participation, with multiple indicators suggesting significant social isolation. This signals a public health risk because social isolation is a stronger predictor than loneliness of premature death from all causes.<sup>8</sup>

Social isolation isn't just about being alone; it is defined by having few relationships and infrequent social interaction. Many adults have few people in their lives: 39% have two or fewer close relationships, and 40% have five or fewer acquaintances. Only 17% of adults report having six or more close relationships, a level associated with health benefits,<sup>28</sup> which means that most fall short. Even when relationships exist, people are also infrequently interacting with them. Other than those they may live with, three-quarters do not get together with the people they care about and feel close to, and 29% don't speak to them at least weekly.

Many Americans are also not participating socially—at all—across several domains. Over the past year, the majority of U.S. adults report never participating in clubs and organizations (67%), religious services (51%), getting together with neighbors to do something positive in their neighborhood (63%), or formal volunteering (58%). Among those who do, engagement is infrequent.

As one example, 77% of U.S. adults report attending religious services less than monthly. In another example, 22% report volunteering at least once a month. Only 11% of U.S. adults participate in groups or clubs at least monthly. This lack of social and civic participation poses significant risks for physical health, as well as community health, economic, and safety outcomes. These structural deficits point to a fragile foundation for social connection in America.

### **Certain Groups of Americans Are Even More Socially Disconnected.**

People of any age, race, or background can experience social disconnection at times, but some groups are more disconnected than others. Those with high school education or less, lower income, never married, and certain sexual orientation, gender identity, and racial and ethnic groups score low across nearly all areas of social connection—lower on nine to 12 indicators out of 12—placing them at higher risk for poor health outcomes. Understanding the potential challenges these groups face is critical for addressing the barriers that impede strong social connection.

### **Signs of Strength and Opportunities for Growth Live in Local Communities.**

While the structural foundation of social connection in the U.S. is fractured, with disengagement evident in both personal

relationships and within community life, signs of strength can also be found. Most say that they feel a sense of belonging in their communities, get along with their neighbors, and perceive that others are willing to help one another. These are the elements that allow people to create strong connections with each other in their communities. These assets are important building blocks for developing more connected lives. Ultimately, when we feel like we can turn to the people next door, we have a pathway to greater social connections at both individual and community levels.

### **Summary**

This survey highlights both serious concerns and opportunities for action. Loneliness, social isolation, and social disengagement are widespread, with especially low levels of social participation. At the same time, many adults still report feeling satisfied with their close relationships and a sense of belonging within their local community. The structural foundation of our social connection in America is weak, but there are assets to build upon. Taken together, these findings point to the need for a comprehensive approach—one that moves beyond simply alleviating loneliness to rebuilding and fortifying the structure necessary for individual and community health.

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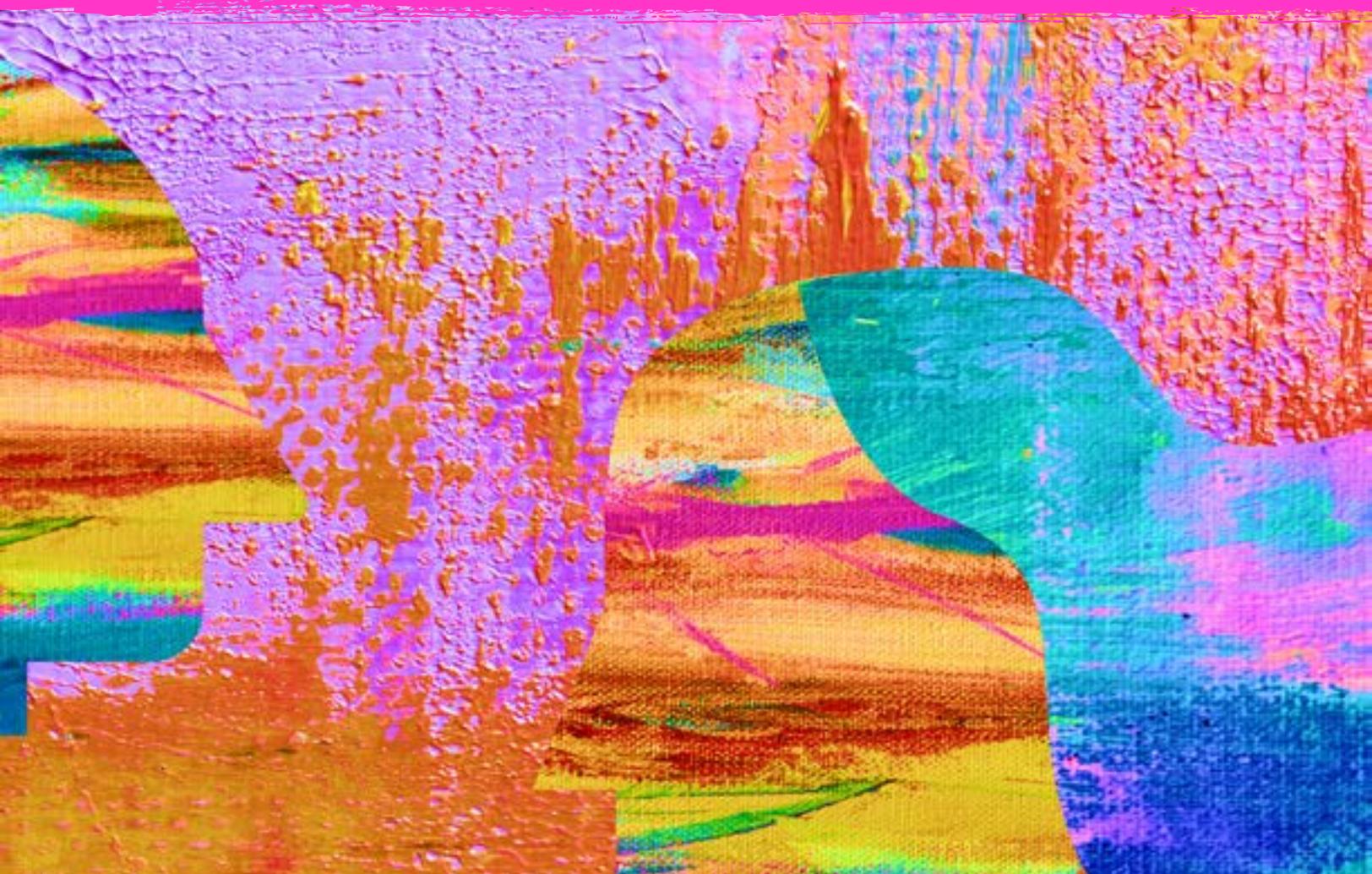
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# Acknowledgments



# Acknowledgments

## Project Team

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## Advisory Group

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### Technical Advisors

*The analyses used to validate our measurement model benefited from the valuable input of our technical advisors.*

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### Sponsor



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# Appendices



# Appendices

## Appendix A: Survey, Design, and Data Sharing

Please visit [this link](#) for the survey items, sources, and item copyright information.

While the full survey included 26 items—21 focused on social connection and five on well-being—the public report presents analyses of results for 20 social connection items. For research purposes, we included two items on relationship satisfaction, but reported on only one in the public report because the two items were highly correlated. Additional analyses are being planned for the five items that measure well-being (life satisfaction, direction and purpose, general physical and mental health, and history of depression) to be included in a future report supplement.

### Criteria for Item Selection

The survey items included in this report were designed to capture the core components of social connection—structure, function, and quality—at the individual level (12 items) and at the community level (8 items). A variety of demographics, well-being items, and other variables of interest were also included (see Appendix C). Criteria used were:

- 1) **Evidence-based.** Most items have been rigorously tested and used in population-based surveys. When a well-validated item was not available, items were selected to provide preliminary data to inform future testing and item identification.
- 2) **Grounded** in the most recent conceptual understanding of social connection.
- 3) **Readily available in the public domain.** Only a few items were bound by copyright, and those were easily secured.
- 4) **The fewest number of items** required to assess a domain.
- 5) **Actionable.** Items with the potential to be relevant for community outcomes were highly sought, particularly if they could be tied to outcomes.
- 6) **Harmonized with existing datasets.** Priority was given to items that enabled harmonization with federal government surveys, such as the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s [Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System](#)<sup>34</sup> and [National Health Interview Survey](#),<sup>35</sup> the U.S. Census Bureau’s [Household Trends and Outlook Pulse Survey](#),<sup>31</sup> and the University of Southern California’s [Understanding America Study](#).<sup>36</sup>

### Data Sharing

We maintain the highest standards of scientific integrity while ensuring participant privacy and compliance with all relevant regulations. To maximize the impact, transparency, and reproducibility of our research, we are committed to making our data accessible to the broader scientific community through sharing data, study preregistration, and documenting the data collection methods. After an embargo period, the de-identified data generated in this survey will be made available through the [Open Science Framework](#). Please visit this link for our [Data Sharing Statement](#). See Appendix C for downloadable data supplements.

## Appendix B: Survey Methodology and Limitations

For detailed information on survey methodology, please visit [this link](#) for the Ipsos Public Affairs Project Report for the *Social Connection in America™*, 2025 survey.

The survey was administered by Ipsos, which provides statistically valid online research through [KnowledgePanel®](#), the original and most well-established online panel in the United States. This panel relies on probability-based sampling methods for recruitment, providing a representative sampling frame for adults aged 18 and older residing in the United States. The sampling method was designed to provide national and modeled state estimates.

The Ipsos recruitment process utilizes an address-based sampling methodology derived from the latest Delivery Sequence File of the U.S. Postal Service—a database providing comprehensive coverage of all delivery points in the U.S. As such, samples from KnowledgePanel® cover all households regardless of their phone status, providing fully representative online samples to the research community. For those who agree to participate on the Ipsos KnowledgePanel® who did not already have Internet access, Ipsos provided a tablet and data plan at no cost. This methodological rigor is backed by Ipsos experts in survey research methods and applications who work closely with our team throughout the project’s execution and delivery. Relying on proper statistical methodologies, survey results from KnowledgePanel® samples are often used for government and academic research purposes and publications in scientific journals.

Of the 10,107 participants who completed the main survey, 83 were cleaned from the dataset by Ipsos

due to consistently refusing to answer items or unrealistically speedy responses. The final N was thus 10,024 who responded between April 29 and May 13, 2025. The survey was administered in English (96% of responses) and Spanish (4%).

### Community Cohesion Scoring

The five community cohesion items can be combined into a single score. Each item can be scored on a 1–5 scale where higher values indicate more community cohesion. For positively worded items, strongly disagree is scored 1 and strongly agree is scored 5. Negatively worded items are reverse-scored so that strongly agree is scored a 1 and strongly disagree is scored 5. The combined scale averages the five items, and “don’t know” responses are counted as a 3, the same as “neither agree nor disagree” following the conventions of Sampson et al. (1997).<sup>33</sup>

### Limitations

The survey size was limited to 26 items and in some cases there were no single-item indicators validated for use alone to measure several subdomains, such as social network size, diversity, and relationship quality. This may limit the ability to provide a complete view in those instances. For example, all the ways people from diverse communities engage may not show up in such indicators, especially as it relates to civic engagement (e.g., formal volunteer groups) and sense of belonging. More work needs to be done to improve these measurements, and we are working toward identifying and testing additional items that better fit the model.

Additionally, the two items that measure social interactions in person and by phone or video do not include contacts within the household, so the measures only reflect socialization outside the home.

These data are not the result of an experiment, nor are they longitudinal (i.e., they are not the result of following the same individuals over time). We can only present social connection results associated with different groups, but we can't conclude that those group characteristics cause the social outcomes.

The validity and reliability of in-person, telephone, and online surveys depend on several factors, including sampling methods, response rates, item sensitivity, and the target population. Each method has strengths and weaknesses based on the research context.

## Appendix C: Data Supplements

Download our [sample characteristics sheet](#).

The data supplement includes weighted and unweighted N and weighted percentages for our overall sample and for demographic groupings: age, education, income, marital status, race and ethnicity, sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation.

Certain sparsely populated demographic categories were combined to create a single larger category for analytical purposes:

“Previously married” includes widowed, divorced, and separated.

“Hispanic (any race)” includes Cuban/Cuban-American, Mexican/Mexican-American/Chicano, Puerto Rican, and Other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino.

“Other Non-Hispanic” includes American Indian/Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

Under “Gender identity,” cisgender male is abbreviated to “male,” cisgender female is abbreviated to “female.” Transgender, nonbinary, and other gender identities are combined into a single group.

Download the [response distribution histograms for all items](#).

For all charts in this report and supplement, missing data (representing those who refused or were not presented with a given survey item) are eliminated on a per-chart basis. Figures are rounded to the nearest percent, or nearest tenth of a percent when there are sparse categories present. Bar heights are not rounded. Some percentage totals may not add perfectly to 100% due to rounding and weighting.

Download the [data tables for all items with distributions by demographic groupings](#).

We list weighted and unweighted N's to show the effect of weighting. The percentages displayed are based on the weighted N. Some percentage totals may not add perfectly to 100% due to rounding and weighting.

Download the [charts for our 20 social connection items with distributions by demographic groups](#).

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