

# **Blueprint for a National Prevention Infrastructure to address Behavioral Health Disorders**

**Opportunities for promoting behavioral health in older adults by addressing social isolation and loneliness**

Nancy J. Donovan, MD

Chief, Division of Geriatric Psychiatry, Brigham and Women's Hospital

Director, Neuropsychiatry of Aging Research Group

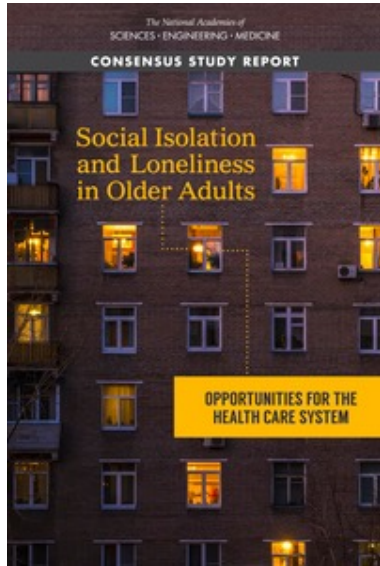
Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School

Member, NASEM Committee on the Health and Medical Implications of SI/L in Older Adults



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**What can health care systems do to identify social isolation and loneliness.**

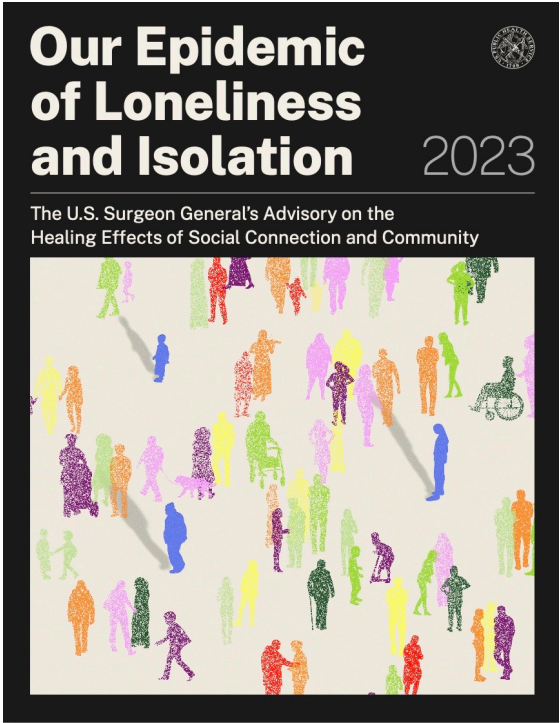
**How to help build a larger infrastructure to reduce SI/L in older adults**

**National Academies Committee on the Health and Medical Implications of Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults.**

**Opportunities for the Health Care System (2020)**

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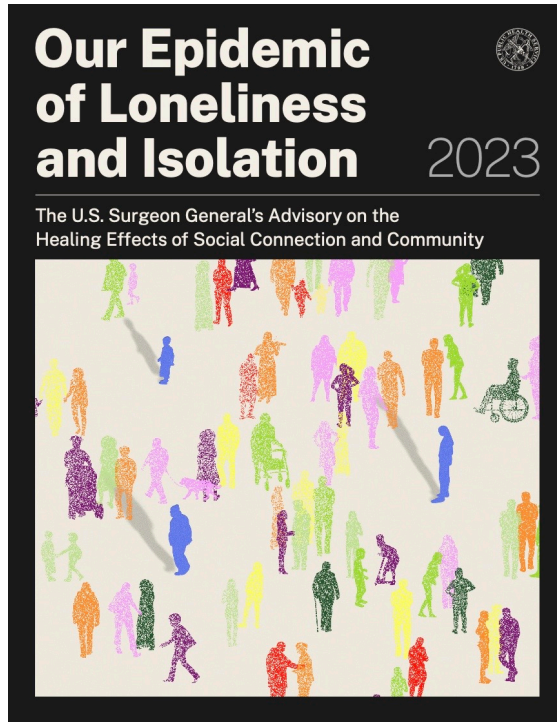


Surgeon General’s Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community (2023)

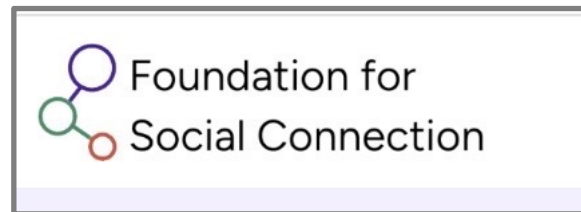
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Opportunities for promoting behavioral health in older adults by addressing social isolation and loneliness



Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community (2023)



# **Blueprint for a National Prevention Infrastructure to address Behavioral Health Disorders**

## **Opportunities for promoting behavioral health in older adults by addressing social isolation and loneliness**

### **Social isolation, Loneliness and Social Connection**

- Definitions
- Prevalence
- Mechanisms
- Interventions
- Key findings and recommendations of the 2020 NASEM report,

# Blueprint for a National Prevention Infrastructure to address Behavioral Health Disorders

## Opportunities for promoting behavioral health in older adults by addressing social isolation and loneliness

**Social connection** is an overarching construct that encompasses other commonly used terms describing human relationships and interactions- their structure, function and quality.

**Social isolation** is the objective lack or limited extent of social relationships or interactions  
-marital/partnership relationship, friend and family relationships, group participation

**Loneliness** is the perception of social isolation or the subjective feeling of being alone

**Social Isolation and Loneliness are related yet different constructs.**

-one can be lonely without being socially isolated ("lonely in a crowd")  
or one can be isolated without being lonely.

Measured by self-report scales

**Loneliness is conceptually distinct from depression**

### **3-Item UCLA Loneliness Scale**

- 1- How often do you feel you lack companionship: hardly ever (1), some of the time (2), often (3)
- 2- How often do you feel left out; hardly ever (1), some of the time (2), often (3)
- 3- How often do you feel isolated from others; hardly ever (1), some of the time (2), often (3)

**Note:** A continuous measure of loneliness. Total score is calculated as the sum of the three item scores; higher score indicates greater loneliness

**Reference:** Hughes et al., 2004; reproduced with permission.

### **Step toe Social Isolation Index**

Five item scale with one point being assigned for each of the following items

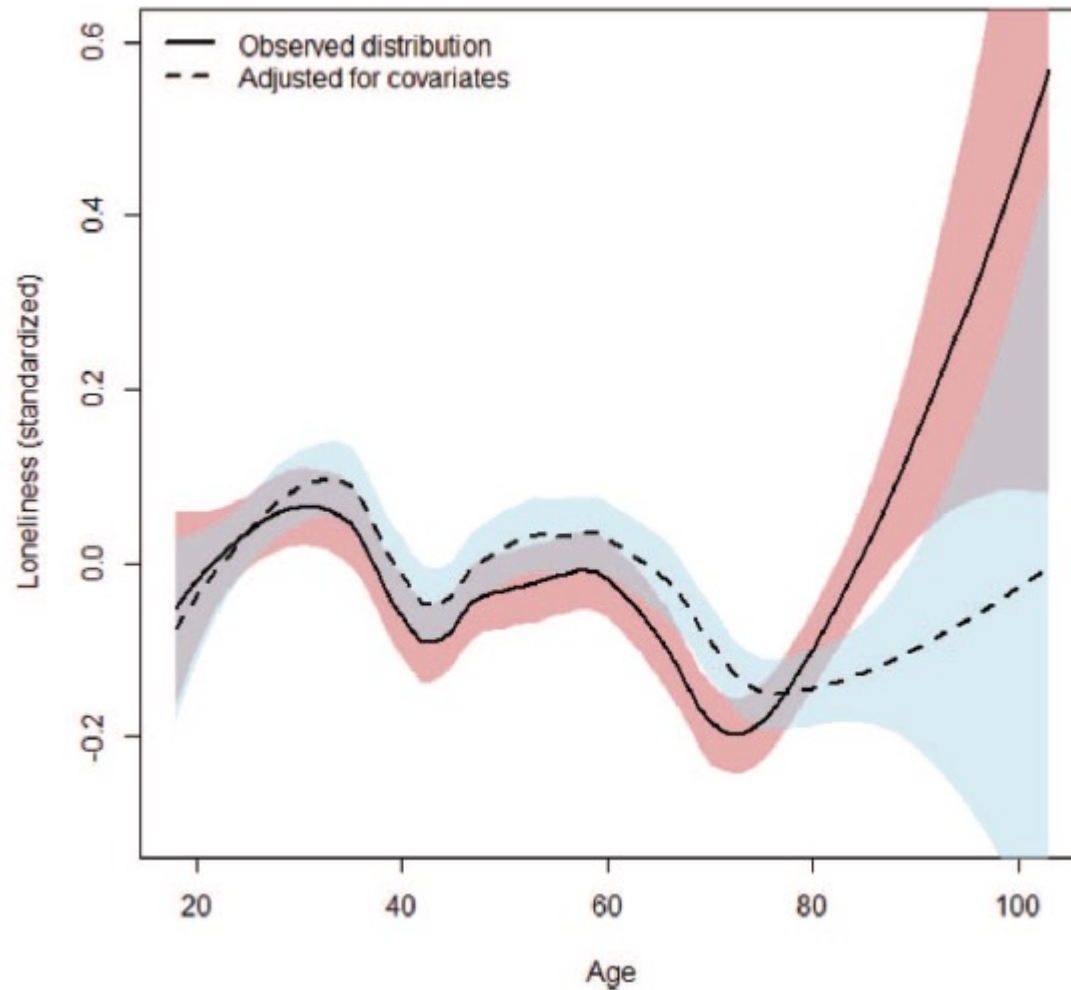
- 1- Being unmarried or not cohabitating
- 2- Less than monthly contact with children (face-to-face, by telephone or writing/email)
- 3- Less than monthly contact with other family (face-to-face, by telephone or writing/email)
- 4- Less than monthly contact with friends (face-to-face, by telephone or writing/email)
- 5- No participation in social clubs, resident groups, religious groups, or committees

A score of 2 or more is defined as socially isolated

Reference: Steptoe et. al, 2013; reproduced with permission



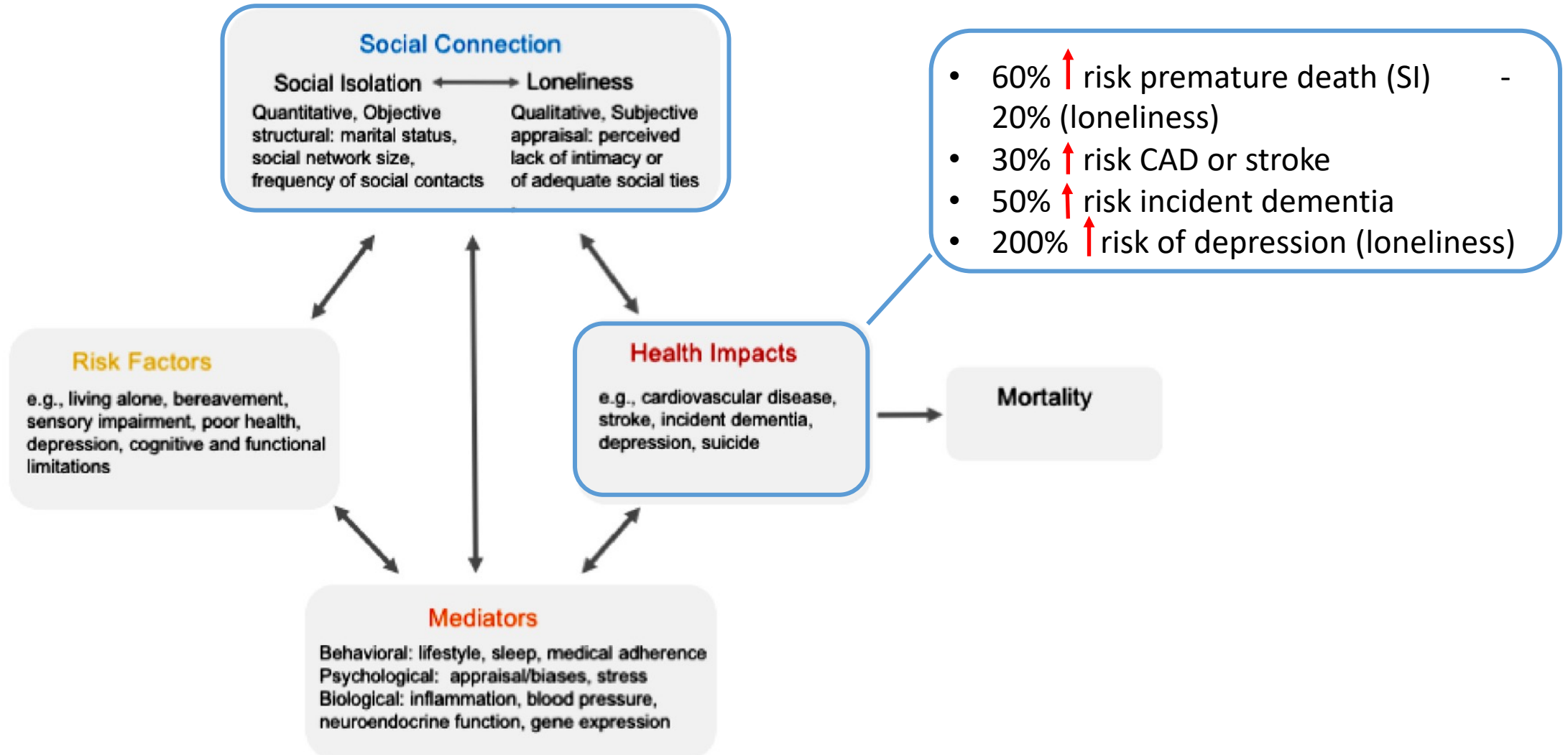
## Loneliness from late adolescence to very old age



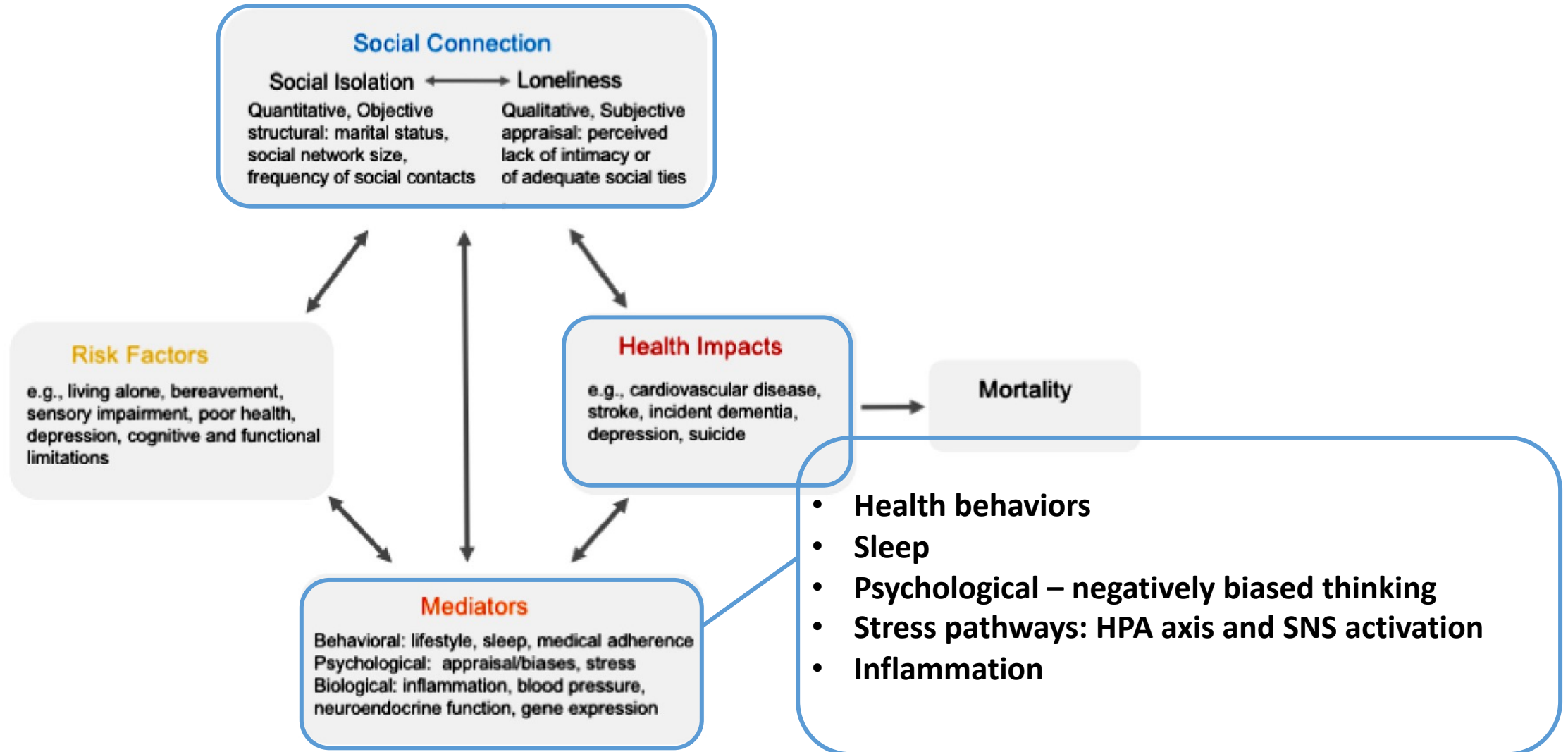
### Risk factors

- Sex **women**
- Socioeconomic status (**income**, education)
- Work status
- Living arrangements (household size, children living in the household)
- Unmarried/unpartnered
- **Functional limitations** (medical morbidities)  
sensory, cognitive, mobility
- *Group participation* (political engagement, volunteering, religious engagement)
- *Number of friends, and contact frequency* (face-to-face contact with friends, face-to-face contact with relatives, contact with people abroad, contact through social online networks).

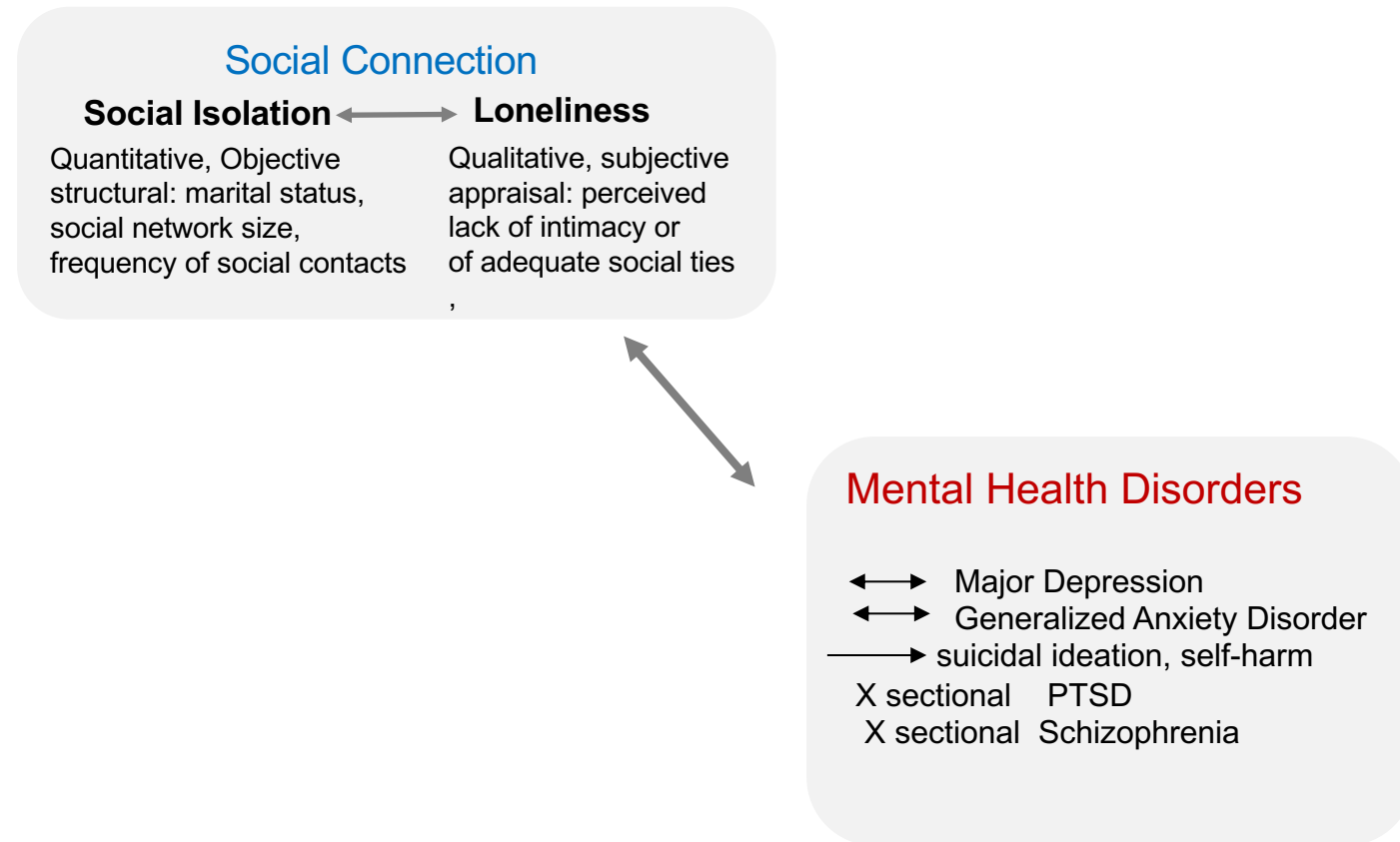
Both Social Isolation and Loneliness are related to poor health outcomes.



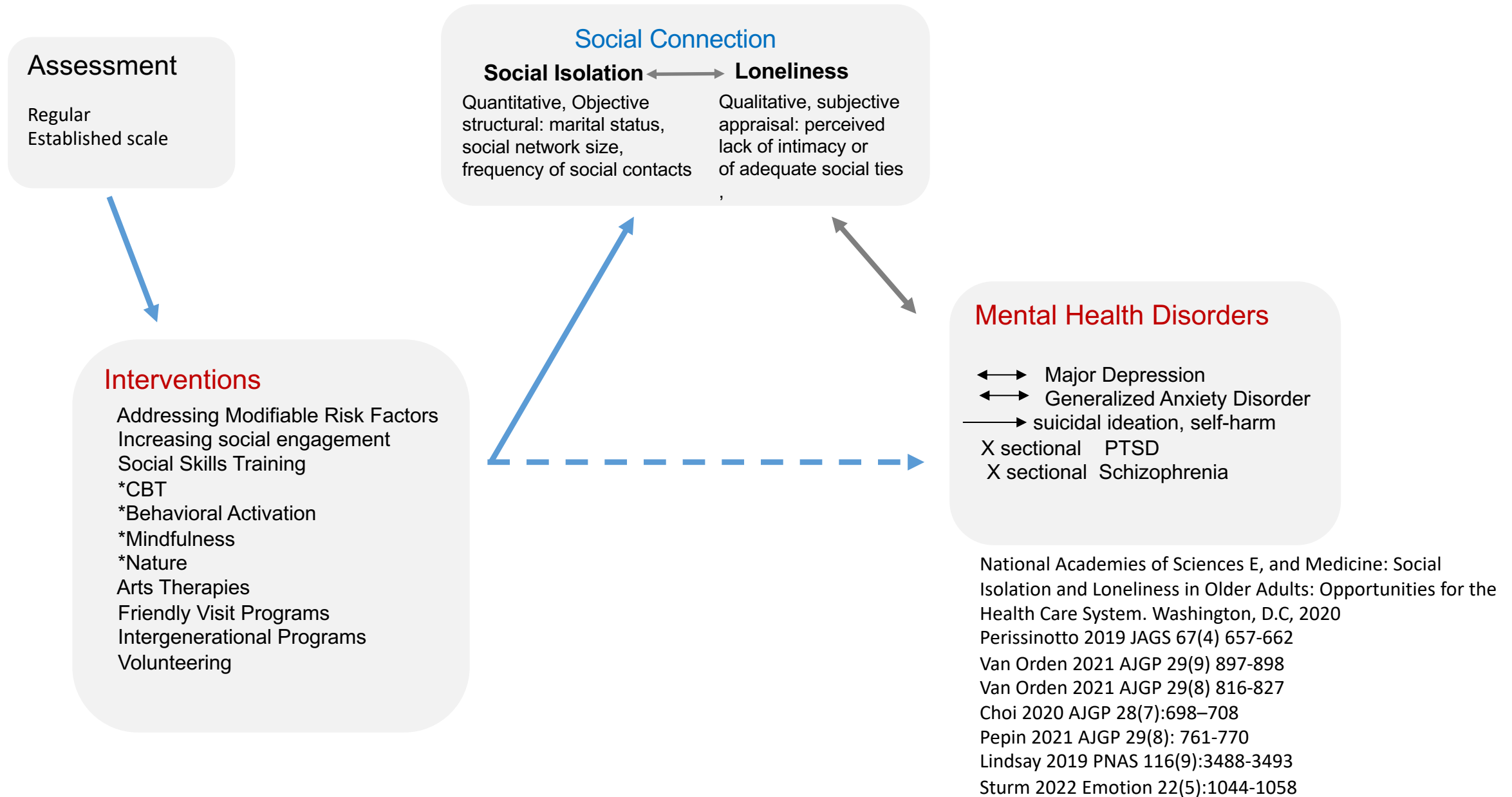
Both Social Isolation and Loneliness are related to poor health outcomes - mediators.



Social Isolation and Loneliness are bidirectionally related to major depression and generalized anxiety disorder



# There is a limited but growing evidence-base for the treatment of social isolation and loneliness



National Academies Committee on the Health and Medical Implications of Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults Key Goals (2020)

**BOX S-1**

**Goals for Enhancing the Role of the Health Care Sector in Addressing the Impacts of Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults**

1. ***Develop a more robust evidence base*** for effective assessment, prevention, and intervention strategies for social isolation and loneliness;
2. ***Translate current research into health care practices*** in order to reduce the negative health impacts of social isolation and loneliness;
3. ***Improve awareness*** of the health and medical impacts of social isolation and loneliness across the health care workforce and among members of the public;
4. ***Strengthen ongoing education and training*** related to social isolation and loneliness in older adults for the health care workforce; and
5. ***Strengthen ties between the health care system and community-based networks and resources*** that address social isolation and loneliness in older adults.

National Academies Committee on the Health and Medical Implications of Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults.

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