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New report suggests that over 1 in 3 Americans face “serious loneliness” during the pandemic, including over 60% of young adults

A new report from Harvard’s Making Caring Common explores deepening loneliness during the pandemic, causes of loneliness, and possible remedies.

Cambridge, Massachusetts – Alarming numbers of Americans—particularly young adults and the mothers of young children—are lonely, according to a new report from [Making Caring Common](#), a project of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Loneliness also appears to have increased substantially since the outbreak of the global pandemic.

The report, “[Loneliness in America: How the Pandemic Has Deepened an Epidemic of Loneliness and What We Can Do About It](#)” is based on Making Caring Common’s recent national survey of approximately 950 Americans. More than 1 in 3 survey respondents (36%) reported “serious loneliness”—that is, feeling lonely “frequently” or “almost all the time or all the time” in the four weeks prior to the survey. A staggering 61% of young adults aged 18-25 and 51% of mothers with young children reported serious loneliness. Loneliness also appears to have increased substantially since the outbreak of the pandemic.

“These levels of loneliness are heartbreaking. We have big holes in our social fabric,” said [Richard Weissbourd](#), lead author of the report, faculty director of Making Caring Common, and Senior Lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and the Harvard Kennedy School. “We need to mobilize coherently and strategically to assure that far fewer Americans are stranded and disconnected.

The report also explores the many types of loneliness, various causes of loneliness, and the potentially steep costs of loneliness, including early mortality and a wide array of serious physical and emotional problems, including depression, anxiety, heart disease, substance abuse, and

domestic abuse. While Americans clearly need to adopt distancing measures to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus, the report authors argue that we also must take steps to alleviate loneliness, particularly for the populations the survey suggests are most affected.

“Young adults and mothers of young children in particular seem to be struggling with loneliness,” said Milena Batanova, Making Caring Common’s research and evaluation manager and co-author of the report. “About half of lonely young people in our survey reported that not a single person in the past few weeks had ‘taken more than just a few minutes’ to ask how they are doing in a way that seemed genuinely caring.”

The report makes recommendations for alleviating loneliness on three fronts:

1. **Providing people with information and strategies**, including public education campaigns, that can help them cope with loneliness, including strategies that help them identify and manage the self-defeating thoughts and behaviors that fuel loneliness.
2. **Building not just our physical but our social infrastructure** at every level of government and in our communities. We need to begin reimagining and reweaving our social relationships in health care, schools, and many other institutions.
3. **Working to restore our commitments to each other and the common good** to renew a founding promise of this country: that we have commitments to ourselves, but we also have vital commitments to each other, including to those who are vulnerable.

The report is based on an online survey of approximately 950 Americans in October 2020. Because of certain data limitations, the data should be considered preliminary. More information is available in the report’s methodology section.

To read the full report and recommendations and learn more about Making Caring Common, visit www.makingcaringcommon.org.

About Making Caring Common: Making Caring Common (MCC), a project of the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE), helps parents, educators, and communities raise children who are concerned about others and the common good, and who work to create a more just world.