

Alone and At Risk: Exploring the Social Isolation Factors That Threaten Housing Stability for Older Adults

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Introduction to Topic

- Loneliness and housing insecurity are rising public health concerns among older adults in the United States.
- These issues are mutually reinforcing, creating a cycle of vulnerability.
- Older adults are especially susceptible due to fixed incomes, declining health, and shrinking social networks.
- Addressing one issue without the other may lead to incomplete or short-term solutions.



Concept Overview

- **Loneliness can lead to housing instability** by reducing access to support systems and financial help.
- **Housing instability increases loneliness** through displacement and loss of community.
- The relationship is **bidirectional**, meaning each condition worsens the other over time.
- Interventions must be **holistic**, targeting both social and structural determinants.



Loneliness Among Older Adults

- **Over 33% of older adults report regular feelings of loneliness**, with higher rates among women.
- Loneliness is linked to **depression, cognitive decline, and increased mortality**.
- **Living alone and low income** are strong predictors of loneliness.
- Social isolation can **reduce healthspan**, even when lifespan increases



Housing Insecurity in Later Life

- Older adults face **rising rent burdens and limited affordable housing options.**
- Housing insecurity includes **eviction risk, homelessness, and unsafe living conditions.**
- **Rural areas and minority populations** are disproportionately affected.
- Housing instability can disrupt **access to healthcare and social services.**



How Loneliness Fuels Housing Insecurity

- Isolated individuals may lack **advocates or caregivers** to help navigate housing systems.
- Loneliness contributes to **mental health decline**, impairing decision-making and financial management.
- Socially isolated older adults are more vulnerable to **exploitation and elder abuse**.
- Lack of community ties reduces **resilience during housing crisis**.



How Housing Insecurity Fuels Loneliness

- Frequent relocations disrupt **social networks and routines.**
- Unsafe or overcrowded housing discourages **social interaction and community engagement.**
- Homelessness leads to **extreme social exclusion and stigma.**
- Housing instability can cause **emotional trauma,** deepening isolation.



A Promising Future for Housing Solutions and Social Connection

- Older adults experiencing housing instability are **2–3 times more likely** to report chronic loneliness.
- Loneliness increases hospitalization risk, which can lead to **loss of housing**.
- Community housing programs show a **30% reduction in loneliness** when social supports are included.
- **Women with both loneliness and isolation** have a 48% lower chance of healthy aging.



Policy & Program Solutions

- **Screen for social isolation** in housing and healthcare settings.
- Expand **affordable housing with built-in community spaces**.
- Fund **peer support and outreach programs** for isolated older adults.
- Support **aging-in-place initiatives** with wraparound services



Cross-Sector Collaboration

- Health systems, housing authorities, and aging services must **coordinate efforts**.
- Shared data and joint funding can **amplify impact**.
- Community organizations are key to **building trust and reaching isolated individuals**.
- **Integrated care models** can address both housing and social needs.



Call to Action

- Recognize loneliness and housing insecurity as **interconnected public health priorities**.
- Invest in **preventive strategies**, not just crisis response.
- Empower older adults with **stable housing and meaningful social connections**.
- Promote **inclusive policies** that protect vulnerable aging populations.
- Let's build communities where older adults thrive—socially and securely!



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Foundation for Social Connection Ambassador

Advancing social connection nation-wide rooted in evidence for our collective well-being

Learn more and join the movement at www.social-connection.org





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