



ALL THE LONELY PEOPLE (Where do they all come from?)

We value achievement more than attachment.

VIVEK MURTHY, MD,
former U.S. surgeon general
and author of the forthcoming
book *Together*

"In my conversations with people around the country, I realized that no matter their health challenges, their underlying stories were often about loneliness and emotional pain. Our connections are the foundation for everything. To repair that foundation, we need to focus on people and not allow the pursuit of work and wealth to undermine that. My parents came here from India because America is a place of opportunity where someone like me, a poor farmer's grandson, can become surgeon general. That's the power of this country. But we've lost sight of a thing my grandfather used to say: 'We are responsible for each other.' We're also bombarded with cultural messages that we're not enough, which may lead us to believe we don't deserve connection. The key is to know that we are worthy."

We're left too much to our own devices.

SHERRY TURKLE, PhD,
psychologist, MIT professor, and author of *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*

"We're living in bubbles, going online to stream entertainment, buy books, order dinner. Technology tempts us with convenience and makes us forget what we know about life. It's nice to sit opposite somebody in a restaurant. It's nice to take your kid to a movie. It's nice to go with a friend to a bookstore. These things are part of the joy of human community. Just because tech *can* do something doesn't mean we should let it."

We don't join organizations anymore.

TIMOTHY P. CARNEY,
journalist and author of *Alienated America: Why Some Places Thrive While Others Collapse*

"Rotary clubs, churches, and civic organizations allow us to be part of something, but Americans don't join as much as they used to—and those without college degrees are far less likely to do so. I think that alienation is behind so much working-class struggle. A community offers peace of mind, because we know others will be there to help, but the flip side is just as important: Having people rely on us gives us purpose. Life can't be fulfilling unless we feel needed."

We're social animals forced into self-reliance.

AMY BANKS, MD,
senior scholar at the International Center for Growth in Connection in Lexington, Massachusetts, and author of *Four Ways to Click: Rewire Your Brain for Stronger, More Rewarding Relationships*

"Everything from our immune system to our stress response is modulated by our relationships. But we're fixated on the idea that to be psychologically healthy, we have to stand on our own two feet. Although our brains contain mirror neurons that are designed to reflect others' emotional states, we're excessively concerned with setting boundaries, and dismiss those who are sensitive to others' feelings as weak. If an adult regularly seeks comfort from other adults, she's labeled 'codependent.' But if human brains self-regulated, solitary confinement wouldn't be torture. Instead of shaming people for neediness, we should be talking about how to bridge the space between us. That's the rich work of relationships."



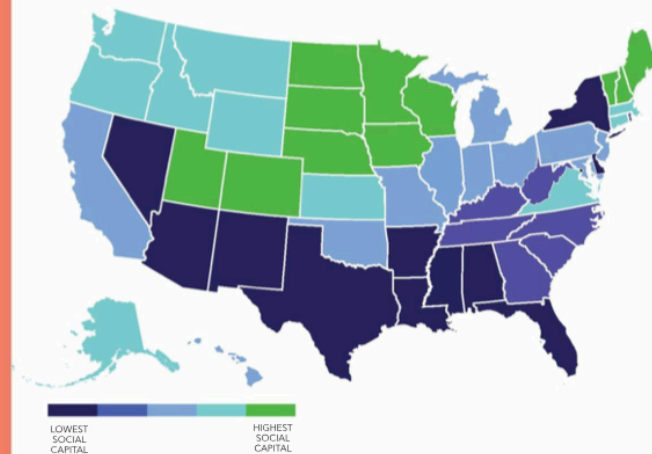
1 IN 5
NUMBER OF
AMERICANS
WHO SAY
THEY RARELY
OR NEVER
FEEL CLOSE TO
PEOPLE.

SOURCE: CIGNA
U.S. LONELINESS
INDEX, 2018



**INCREASED
RISK OF EARLY
DEATH FOR THOSE
SUFFERING
FROM LONELINESS.**

SOURCE: "LONELINESS AND
SOCIAL ISOLATION AS RISK
FACTORS FOR MORTALITY: A
META-ANALYTIC REVIEW" 2015



THE MOST UNITED STATES Long for stronger social bonds? Consider a change of scenery.

Geography isn't necessarily destiny, but those who live in the green states may be less lonely. They're the regions highest in *social capital*, a term that refers to the value found in the trust and cooperation we receive when we're part of a community, according to the Social Capital Project of the U.S. Joint Economic Committee, spearheaded by Republican senator Mike Lee. The project team spent a year analyzing social, economic, religious, health, and other data from state and county records, including responses to questions such as how much time kids spent on devices, whether parents felt they had adequate emotional support, and how many people had voted in major elections or volunteered. The winner? Utah (Lee's state, incidentally), followed by Minnesota and Wisconsin.