Changes over time in social isolation and connection

social isolation vs. loneliness
### Health Implications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Risk of Mortality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lonely (vs. not lonely)</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live alone (vs. with others)</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socially isolated (vs. connected)</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Holt-Lunstad et al, 2015

### Changes Over Time in Social Isolation
% US households with only 1 person

[Graph showing the percentage of US households with only 1 person from 1960s to 2010s, with data points indicating an increase in this percentage over time.]

https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/demo/tables/families/time-series/households/hh4.xls

Decline in US marriage rates, 1960 to 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% unmarried</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% in 20s unmarried</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>average age of marriage:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>women</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>men</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

US Census; Pew Social Trends
average # of confidants, by generation, 1985 to 2004


1985 survey  2004 survey

changes over time in loneliness
measuring loneliness

“A lot of the time I feel lonely.”

“I often feel left out of things.”

“I often wish I had more good friends.”

1978 2009
1991 2012
13,000+ college students
385,000+ high school students
changes over time in social connectedness

health implications

% increased likelihood of survival

- Drug treatment for hypertension, age >59 yrs
- BMI: Lean vs. obese
- Physical activity (controlling for adiposity)
- Flu vaccine in adults (for pneumonia mortality)
- Alcohol consumption: None vs. excessive...
- Smoking <15 cigarettes daily
- Social relationships: High (vs. low) social support
- Social relationships: Overall findings

Holt-Lunstad et al, 2010
changes in spending time together

spending time with others

1960s to 2000s:
↓ socializing with neighbors
↓ socializing with coworkers
↓ voluntary association participation
  ↓ labor unions
↓ religious participation
  ↓ family sizes
  ↓ time with friends

No change:
time with relatives and family members
spending time with others

deep investments in fewer close connections
e.g. family, relatives

increasing number of shallow connections

changes over time in trust
% of Americans saying that most people can be trusted

changes over time in empathy
perspective taking

konrath, o'brien, & hsing, 2011

72 samples; almost 14,000 college students

empathic concern

concern for others

1966 to 2009:
national samples of high school seniors & 1st year college students

twenge, campbell, & freeman, 2012

“I get very upset when I see other people treated unfairly.”

“It’s not really my problem if others are in trouble and need help.”

“I find it hard to be sympathetic toward starving people in foreign lands, when there is so much trouble in our own country.”
changes over time in mental health

↑ depressive symptoms

Twenge et al, 2010; Twenge, 2015; Twenge et al, 2018; Olfson et al, 2014; Mojtabai & Olfson, 2014

*117 samples
*over 60,000 college students
Culture of Burnout

why?
social media?

leisure deficit?
economic insecurity?

thanks!

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