





### LONELINESS & ISOLATION AMONG SENIORS

May 2022

#### BACKGROUND

#### **Research Goals**

The research was conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Patient Access Network (PAN) Foundation, hereafter PAN, to understand the burden of loneliness and isolation among seniors. The research also sought to identify changes in the concern around mental health and barriers to mental health resources among seniors on Medicare with at least one chronic condition since May 2021.

#### Methodology

This poll was conducted between May 6-May 7, 2022 among a sample of 1,000 seniors. The interviews were conducted online and the data were weighted by gender, age, race/ethnicity, education level, and region. Results from the full survey have a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. A subsample of 222 seniors on Medicare with at least one chronic condition is also examined in this survey. The subsample data are unweighted and results have a margin of error of plus or minus 7 percentage points.

An original poll was conducted between April 22-May 4, 2021 among a sample of 1,000 seniors on Medicare with chronic conditions. The interviews were conducted online and the data unweighted. Results from the full survey have a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. Data from the 2021 poll is compared to the 2022 unweighted subsample of seniors on Medicare with at least one chronic condition for trending purposes.

#### **Screening Criteria**

Age 65+

For simplicity, the subsample is referred to as seniors on Medicare with a chronic condition, and the full sample of 1,000 seniors is referred to as seniors.



#### **KEY FINDINGS: LONELINESS & ISOLATION AMONG SENIORS**

- A majority of seniors on Medicare are concerned about addressing their health conditions (68%) and preventing the transmission of COVID-19 (61%). Seniors on Medicare with a chronic illness indicate their mental health impacts every tested area of their lives, consistent with 2021.
- 2. The cost of ongoing therapy, seeing a healthcare provider, and the cost of prescription medications are top barriers among seniors on Medicare with a chronic condition to seeking treatment for their mental health conditions.
  Additionally, more seniors in 2022 than 2021 say the cost of seeing a health care provider (28%, +8%) and the cost of prescription medications (26%, +9%) are obstacles to seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition.
- 3. Mental health conditions are prevalent among seniors. Fifteen percent of seniors say they have been diagnosed with a mental health condition, and a quarter (23%) say they have considered seeking counseling or treatment for a mental health condition.
- 4. Seniors trust their primary care doctor, therapists, counselors, and family members for information on mental health, loneliness, and isolation. Care coordinators from patient advocacy organizations are also seen as trusted resources by

- nearly three in five (59%) seniors for information on mental health and loneliness and isolation.
- 5. Symptoms of anxiety and depression, including feelings of loneliness and isolation, are prevalent among those that have been diagnosed with a mental health condition, cancer, or a chronic illness. A fifth (22%) of all seniors say have experienced feelings of isolation and loneliness during the last year, compared to 47% of seniors diagnosed with a mental health condition and 33% of seniors diagnosed with cancer or a chronic illness.
- 6. Feelings of loneliness and isolation hurt seniors' well-being. Seniors who have experienced feelings of isolation and loneliness during the past year say they feel depressed more often (42%), don't leave their home to visit friends/family (40%), and worry about their ability to remain healthy (39%).
- 7. Companionship and one-on-one therapy could be helpful solutions to feelings of loneliness. Seniors say a companion or friend to regularly talk to (74%) and one on one therapy (61%) would be helpful to feel more socially connected.



#### TRACKING FROM 2021

## ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES LONELINESS & ISOLATION

RESPONDENT PROFILE



#### AMONG SENIORS\*...

Seniors say they are personally concerned about preventing the transmission of COVID-19 (55%) and addressing their health conditions (51%).

Seniors say their mental health impacts their overall life satisfaction (43%), their ability to handle their health conditions (35%), and their relationships with friends and family members (34%).

Two-thirds (63%) of seniors say they are comfortable seeking help or treatment for mental health conditions.

Seniors also say the costs of ongoing therapy (29%), seeing a health care provider (22%) and prescription medications (20%) along with their insurance not covering needed services (20%) are all barriers to seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition.

<sup>\*</sup>For simplicity, the subsample for tracking is referred to as seniors on Medicare with a chronic condition, and the full sample of 1,000 seniors is referred to as seniors. This slide references the full sample.

#### AMONG SENIORS ON MEDICARE WITH A CHRONIC CONDITION...

... they are personally concerned about preventing the transmission of COVID-19 (61%) and addressing their health conditions (68%).

... half (49%) say their mental health impacts their overall life satisfaction.

... two-thirds (67%) say
they are comfortable
seeking help or
treatment for mental
health conditions.

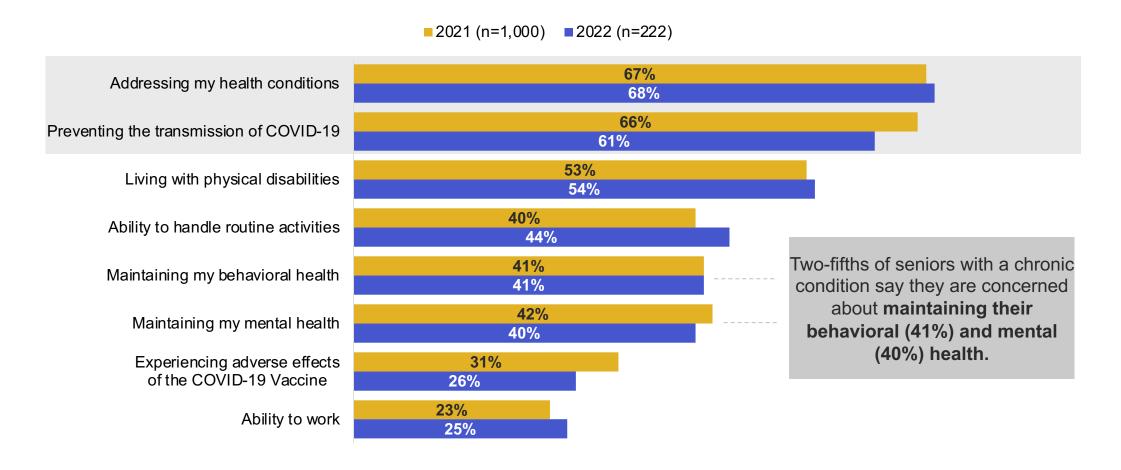
medications (26%)
along with their
insurance not
covering needed
services (25%) are all
barriers to seeking
help or treatment for a
mental health condition.

<sup>\*</sup>For simplicity, the subsample is referred to as seniors on Medicare with a chronic condition, and the full sample of 1,000 seniors is referred to as seniors. This slide references the subsample.

#### **TRACKING FROM 2021**

Of the options tested, seniors on Medicare with a chronic condition are most likely to say they are concerned about addressing their health conditions (68%) and preventing the transmission of COVID-19 (61%), consistent with 2021 results.

How concerned are you personally about the following, if at all? *Total Concern* **SENIORS ON MEDICARE WITH A CHRONIC CONDITION** 

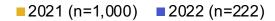


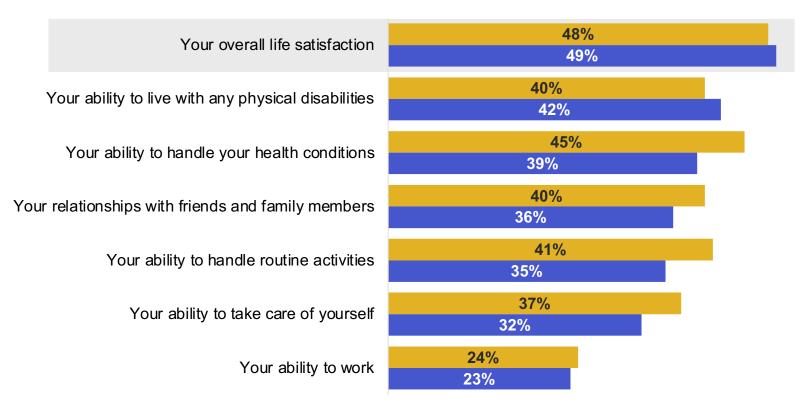


#### **TRACKING FROM 2021**

Seniors on Medicare with a chronic condition say their mental health impacts various aspects of their lives, including one in two (49%) who say their mental health impacts their overall life satisfaction. These findings are consistent with 2021.

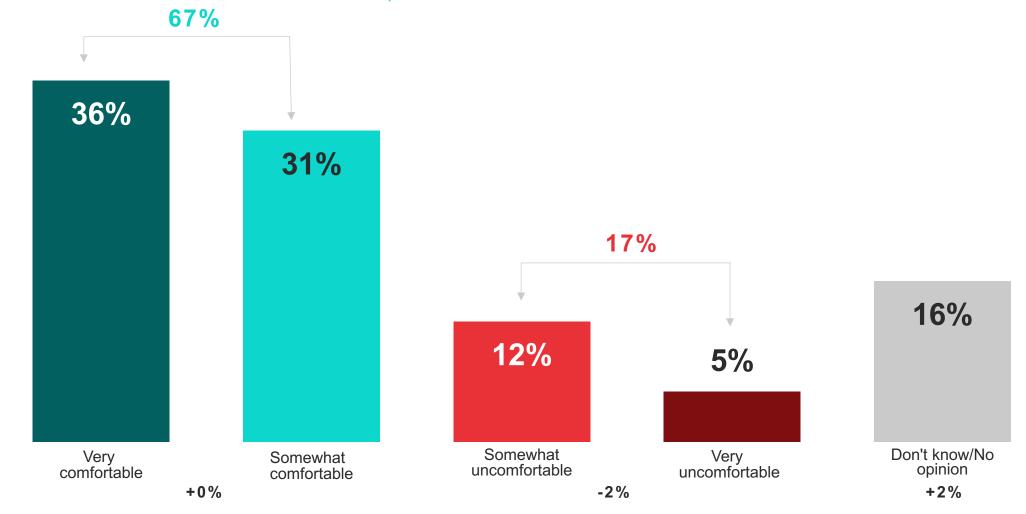
Based on your experience, how much does your mental health impact each of the following, if at all? *Total Impact* SENIORS ON MEDICARE WITH A CHRONIC CONDITION





Two-thirds (67%) of seniors on Medicare with a chronic condition say they are comfortable seeking help or treatment for their mental health conditions, consistent with 2021 results.

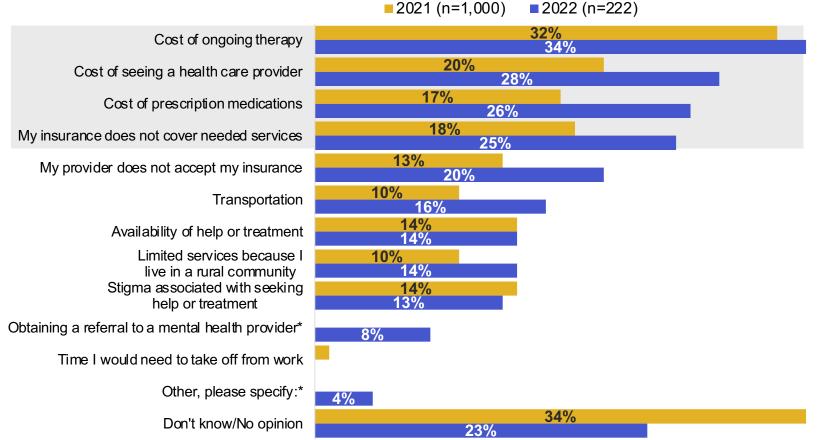
How comfortable or uncomfortable are you seeking help or treatment for mental health conditions? **SENIORS ON MEDICARE WITH A CHRONIC CONDITION**, n=222



#### **TRACKING FROM 2021**

The cost of care and medication and the lack of insurance coverage for needed services are obstacles for seniors on Medicare with a chronic condition to seeking help or treatment for their mental health conditions.

Some say the following are obstacles to seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition. Which of the following would be an obstacle for you if you were seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition? Please select all that apply. **Selected**SENIORS ON MEDICARE WITH A CHRONIC CONDITION



- Seniors on Medicare with a chronic condition are more likely in 2022 than in 2021 to say the cost of seeing a health care provider (+8%) and the cost of prescription medications (+9%) are an obstacle to seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition.
- A fifth of seniors with a chronic condition say the largest obstacle to seeking treatment would be that their insurance does not cover the needed services (20%) and concern about the cost of ongoing therapy (17%).

AGENDA

#### TRACKING FROM 2021

#### ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

LONELINESS & ISOLATION

RESPONDENT PROFILE



#### LONELINESS & ISOLATION SNAPSHOT



Say they have experienced feelings of loneliness or isolation during the last year.



Say compared to last year, they are personally experiencing more feelings of loneliness and isolation.

# 15%

Of seniors say they have been diagnosed with a mental health condition.

# 23%

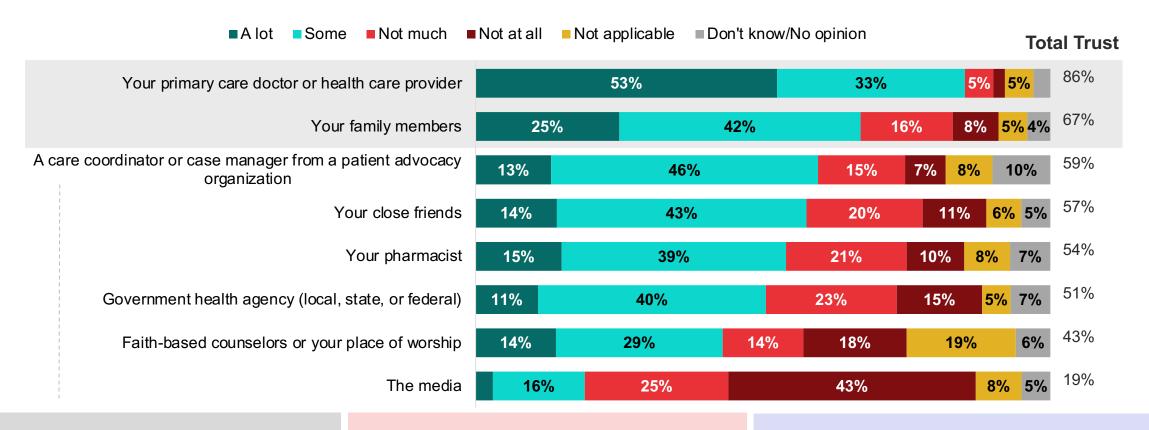
Of seniors say they have considered seeking counseling or treatment for a mental health condition.

# 35%

Of seniors with cancer or a chronic illness say they have considered seeking counseling or treatment for a mental health condition.

Seniors are especially likely to trust their primary care doctor or health care provider (86%) and family members (67%) for information on mental health.

How much do you trust, if at all, the following sources for information on **mental health**?



Three in five seniors also say they would trust a care coordinator or case manager from a patient advocacy organization (59%) and their close friends (57%).

Seniors diagnosed with a mental health condition are especially likely to trust their primary care doctor or health care provider (90%) and their family members (61%).

Seniors diagnosed with cancer or a chronic illness are especially likely to trust their primary care doctor or health care provider (92%) and a care coordinator or case manager from a patient advocacy organization (67%).



How much do you trust, if at all, the following sources for information on **mental health**?

Total Trust	Seniors	White (Non- Hispanic)	Hispanic	Black (Non- Hispanic)	Asian + Other (Non- Hispanic)	Under 50k	50k-100k	100k+	Urban	Suburban	Rural
MOE (+/-)	3%	4%	11%	10%	9%	4%	6%	9%	6%	4%	6%
Your family members	67%	65%	79%	70%	71%	64%	71%	74%	67%	69%	65%
Your close friends	57%	56%	66%	52%	63%	57%	57%	59%	51%	59%	59%
Your primary care doctor or health care provider	86%	87%	89%	82%	84%	83%	91%	92%	85%	86%	89%
Your pharmacist	54%	53%	64%	46%	57%	53%	55%	55%	46%	56%	58%
A care coordinator or case manager from a patient advocacy organization	60%	59%	72%	69%	43%	57%	64%	61%	56%	61%	60%
The media	19%	15%	28%	30%	30%	20%	16%	22%	18%	21%	16%
Government health agency (local, state, or federal)	50%	48%	62%	53%	57%	49%	53%	49%	51%	50%	49%
Faith-based counselors or your place of worship	44%	44%	31%	61%	37%	44%	43%	45%	40%	44%	46%

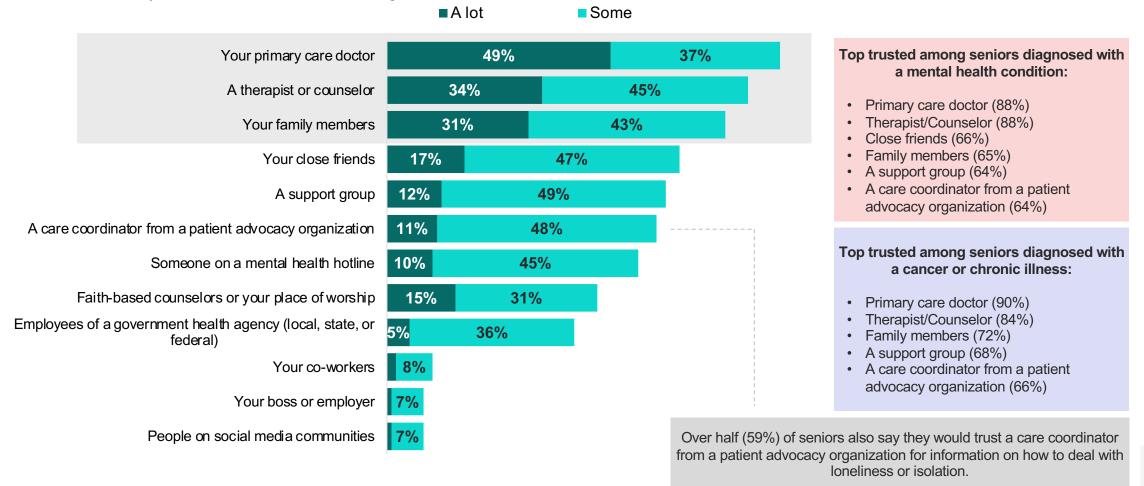
<sup>•</sup> Hispanic (72%) and Black (69%) seniors are more likely than white, Asian, and other seniors of color to say they trust a case coordinator or case manager from a patient advocacy organization.

<sup>•</sup> Low-income seniors are less likely than high income seniors to say they would trust their family members.

<sup>•</sup> Black seniors (61%) are especially likely to say they trust faith-based counselors or their place of worship for information on mental health.

Seniors are most likely to say they trust their primary care doctor (86%), therapist or counselor (79%), and family members (74%) for information on how to deal with loneliness or isolation.

How much do you trust, if at all, the following sources for information on how to deal with loneliness or isolation?



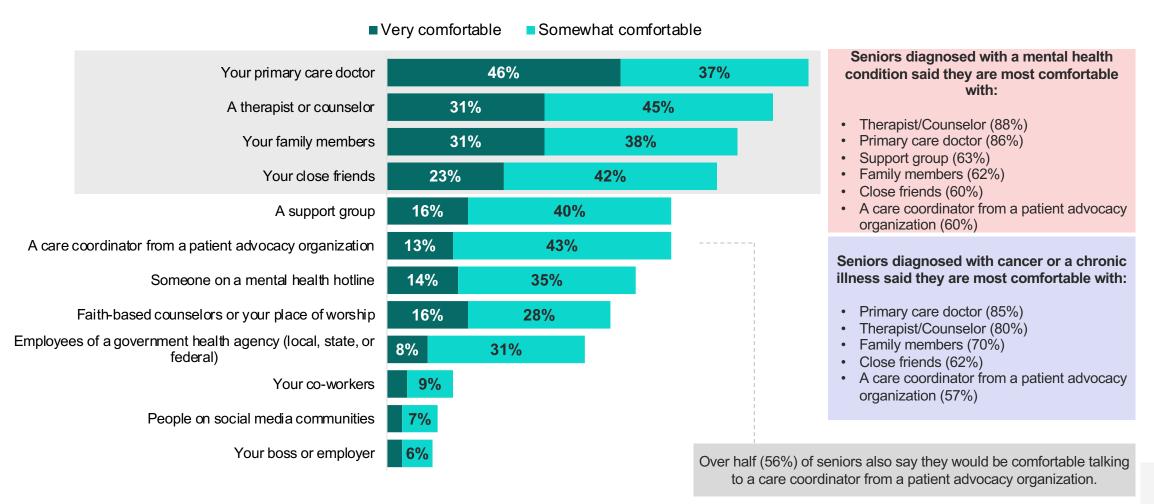
How much do you trust, if at all, the following sources for information on **how to deal with loneliness or isolation**?

Total Trust	Seniors	White (Non- Hispanic)	Hispanic	Black (Non- Hispanic)	Asian + Other (Non- Hispanic)	Under 50k	50k-100k	100k+	Urban	Suburban	Rural
MOE (+/-)	3%	4%	11%	10%	9%	4%	6%	9%	6%	4%	6%
Your family members	73%	73%	74%	83%	67%	73%	76%	71%	72%	74%	74%
Your close friends	65%	65%	78%	60%	52%	65%	67%	59%	60%	65%	68%
Your co-workers	10%	8%	16%	16%	11%	9%	10%	13%	14%	9%	6%
Your primary care doctor	86%	87%	90%	84%	75%	84%	90%	85%	84%	85%	91%
Your boss or employer	8%	6%	17%	15%	10%	9%	8%	9%	10%	10%	4%
Someone on a mental health hotline	55%	53%	77%	58%	48%	51%	58%	66%	52%	54%	59%
Employees of a government health agency (local, state, or federal)	41%	40%	57%	36%	37%	38%	45%	42%	43%	40%	41%
Faith-based counselors or your place of worship	46%	47%	38%	65%	28%	45%	46%	48%	39%	47%	50%
People on social media communities	8%	8%	18%	5%	7%	11%	5%	8%	7%	9%	9%
A therapist or counselor	79%	81%	88%	71%	62%	74%	87%	83%	79%	77%	83%
A support group	61%	63%	73%	57%	36%	57%	65%	69%	55%	63%	62%
A care coordinator from a patient advocacy organization	59%	58%	77%	66%	37%	54%	64%	63%	62%	56%	60%

- Hispanic seniors are especially likely to say they trust their close friends (78%), a care coordinator from a patient advocacy organization (77%) and someone from a mental health hotline (77%) for information on how to deal with loneliness or isolation.
- Black seniors (65%) are especially likely to say they trust faith-based counselors or their places of worship compared to seniors of other ethnicities

If they were dealing with loneliness or isolation, regardless of their diagnosis, seniors would be comfortable speaking with their primary care doctor (83%), a therapist or counselor (76%), family members (69%) and close friends (65%).

If you were dealing with loneliness or isolation, how comfortable or uncomfortable would you be talking with each of the following?





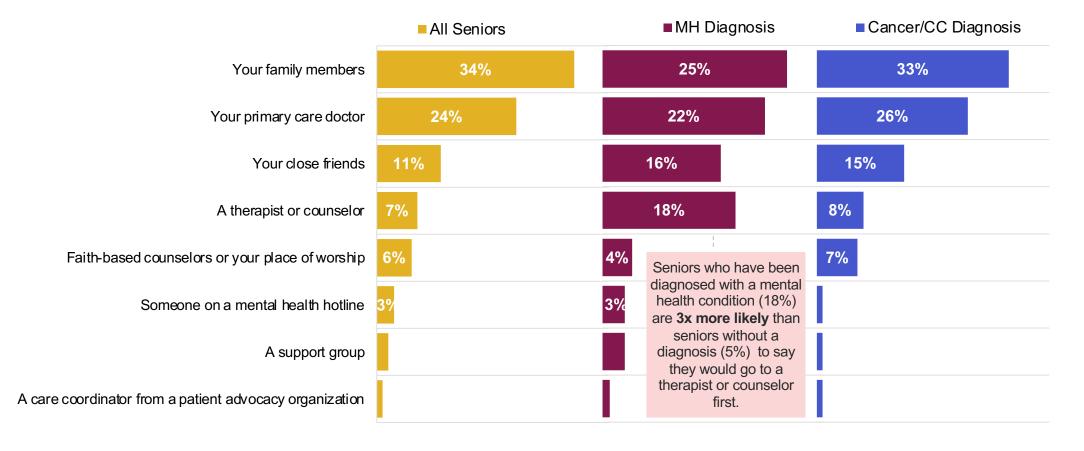
If you were dealing with loneliness or isolation, **how comfortable or uncomfortable** would you be talking with each of the following?

Total Comfortable	Seniors	White (Non- Hispanic)	Hispanic	Black (Non- Hispanic)	Asian + Other (Non- Hispanic)	Under 50k	50k-100k	100k+	Urban	Suburban	Rural
MOE (+/-)	3%	4%	11%	10%	9%	4%	6%	9%	6%	4%	6%
Your family members	69%	69%	73%	72%	64%	69%	72%	68%	64%	72%	69%
Your close friends	65%	65%	74%	59%	55%	65%	64%	66%	63%	64%	68%
Your co-workers	14%	11%	24%	21%	12%	12%	13%	19%	17%	13%	10%
Your primary care doctor	83%	85%	85%	89%	61%	81%	88%	82%	85%	82%	83%
Your boss or employer	9%	8%	15%	17%	8%	8%	8%	15%	8%	11%	7%
Someone on a mental health hotline	49%	46%	65%	64%	45%	45%	53%	57%	51%	49%	46%
Employees of a government health agency (local, state, or federal)	38%	36%	58%	47%	30%	37%	40%	39%	42%	38%	36%
Faith-based counselors or your place of worship	45%	44%	35%	72%	31%	45%	43%	45%	38%	43%	54%
People on social media communities	10%	10%	17%	6%	6%	10%	8%	16%	10%	9%	11%
A therapist or counselor	76%	77%	84%	84%	59%	71%	83%	82%	78%	78%	72%
A support group	56%	57%	64%	58%	40%	53%	57%	64%	53%	59%	53%
A care coordinator from a patient advocacy organization	56%	56%	68%	63%	37%	52%	61%	60%	56%	57%	54%

<sup>•</sup> Black seniors (72%) and rural seniors (72%) are especially likely to say they are comfortable talking to faith-based counselors or their places of worship compared to seniors of other ethnicities and community types.

Regardless of their diagnosis, if seniors were dealing with loneliness or isolation, a plurality would likely go to family members (34%) or their primary care doctor first (24%). Despite seniors saying they would be comfortable talking to a therapist or counselor, a small percentage (7%) of seniors say they would go to a therapist or counselor first.

And, if you were dealing with loneliness or isolation, which of the following would you go to first?





And, if you were dealing with loneliness or isolation, which of the following would you go to first?

Selected	Seniors	White (Non- Hispanic)	Hispanic	Black (Non- Hispanic)	Asian + Other (Non- Hispanic)	Under 50k	50k-100k	100k+	Urban	Suburban	Rural
MOE (+/-)	3%	4%	11%	10%	9%	4%	6%	9%	6%	4%	6%
Your family members	34%	33%	42%	36%	37%	35%	33%	33%	30%	36%	33%
Your close friends	11%	12%	9%	2%	20%	12%	12%	6%	12%	9%	16%
Your co-workers	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Your primary care doctor	24%	26%	21%	24%	16%	23%	28%	19%	25%	24%	25%
Your boss or employer	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Someone on a mental health hotline	3%	2%	7%	9%	0%	3%	1%	6%	2%	3%	2%
Employees of a government health agency (local, state, or federal)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Faith-based counselors or your place of worship	6%	5%	4%	15%	3%	5%	6%	11%	8%	4%	8%
People on social media communities	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%
A therapist or counselor	7%	8%	2%	6%	2%	6%	8%	11%	8%	8%	4%
A support group	2%	2%	0%	0%	0%	2%	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%
A care coordinator from a patient advocacy organization	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%
Other, please specify:	2%	1%	0%	0%	9%	2%	1%	4%	3%	1%	3%
None of the above	5%	4%	12%	5%	6%	6%	4%	3%	2%	6%	4%
Don't know/No opinion	5%	6%	0%	2%	8%	6%	5%	4%	7%	5%	4%

<sup>•</sup> There are no statistically significant differences across demographic groups regarding where seniors would go first if they were dealing with loneliness or isolation.

AGENDA

### TRACKING FROM 2021

#### ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

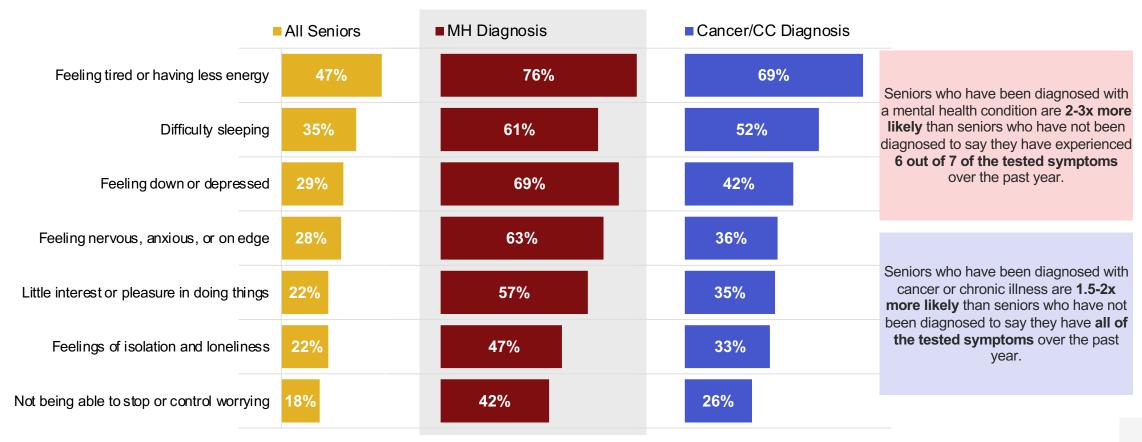
LONELINESS & ISOLATION

RESPONDENT PROFILE



Symptoms of depression and anxiety such as feeling tired or having less energy, difficulty sleeping, and feeling down or depressed are prevalent among all seniors, but especially seniors that have been diagnosed with a mental health condition, cancer, or chronic illness.

Have you experienced any of the following during the last year? Selected





Have you experienced any of the following during the last year?

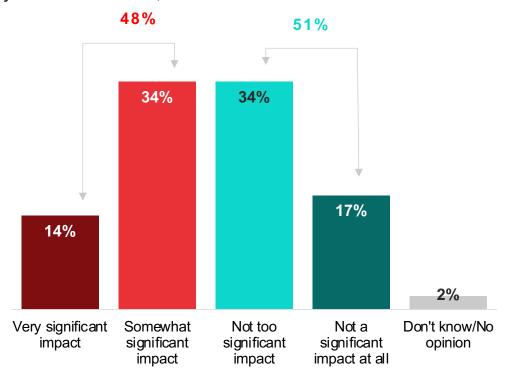
% Yes	Seniors	White (Non- Hispanic)	Hispanic	Black (Non- Hispanic)	Asian + Other (Non- Hispanic)	Under 50k	50k-100k	100k+	Urban	Suburban	Rural
MOE (+/-)	3%	4%	11%	10%	9%	4%	6%	9%	6%	4%	6%
Difficulty sleeping	35%	37%	35%	39%	18%	38%	34%	29%	39%	32%	39%
Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge	28%	31%	18%	30%	11%	29%	26%	28%	28%	26%	32%
Not being able to stop or control worrying	18%	19%	17%	18%	13%	19%	18%	15%	22%	16%	18%
Feeling down or depressed	29%	31%	19%	24%	27%	30%	28%	30%	34%	27%	29%
Feeling tired or having less energy	47%	52%	42%	36%	24%	49%	45%	43%	51%	41%	56%
Little interest or pleasure in doing things	22%	23%	29%	13%	20%	23%	22%	21%	24%	18%	29%
Feelings of isolation and loneliness	22%	22%	27%	17%	20%	24%	20%	21%	25%	21%	23%

- Rural seniors (56%) are more likely than urban (51%) and suburban (41%) seniors to say they have experienced feeling tired or having less energy during the last year.
- Black (30%) and white (31%) seniors are more likely than Hispanic seniors (18%) and seniors of other ethnicities (11%) to say they have experienced feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge during the last year.

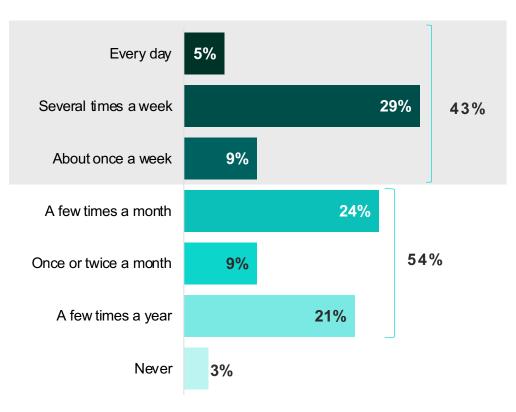
Two in five seniors (43%) who have experienced feelings of isolation and loneliness during the past year say they experience the feelings about once a week or more and that these feelings have had a significant (48%) impact on their mental health.

#### AMONG SENIORS WHO SAY THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED FEELINGS OF ISOLATION AND LONELINESS DURING THE PAST YEAR, n=221

Based on your experience, how significant of an impact does experiencing loneliness and isolation have on your mental health, if at all?



How frequently have you been experiencing feelings of isolation and loneliness during the last year?



### AMONG SENIORS WHO SAY THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED FEELINGS OF ISOLATION AND LONELINESS DURING THE PAST YEAR, n=221

61%

with a mental health
condition say they have
been experiencing feelings of
isolation and loneliness about
once a week or more during
the past year,

73%

with a mental health
condition say experiencing
loneliness and isolation have
a significant impact on their
mental health.

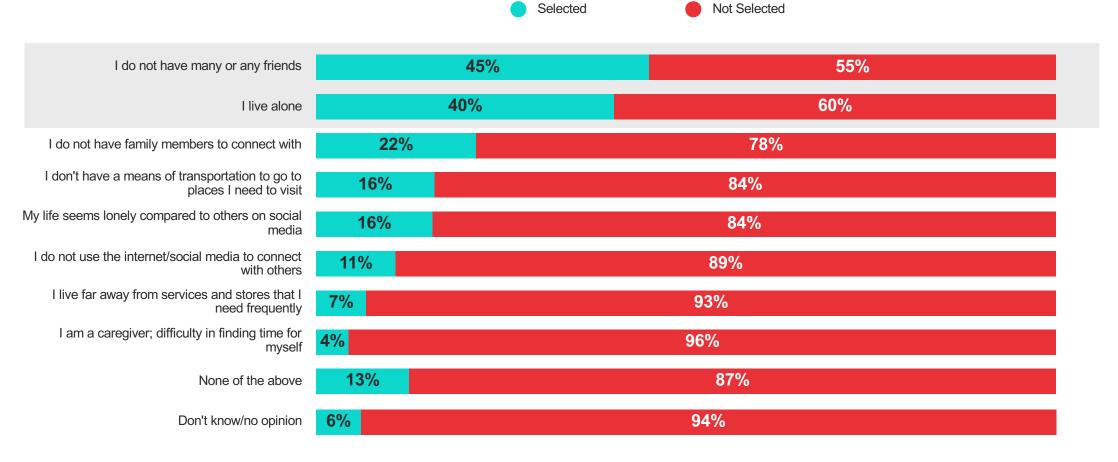
48%

with cancer or a chronic illness have been experiencing feelings of isolation and loneliness during the last year about once a week or more.

Seniors who have experienced feelings of isolation and loneliness during the last year say a lack of friends (45%) and living alone (40%) contributed to their feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Which of the following, if any, contributed to your feelings of isolation and loneliness last year? Please select all that apply.

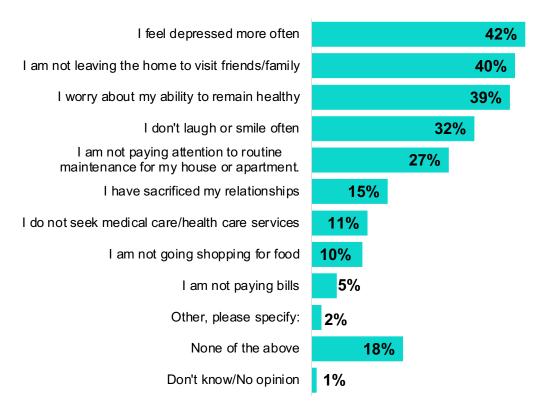
AMONG SENIORS WHO SAY THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED FEELINGS OF ISOLATION AND LONELINESS DURING THE PAST YEAR, n=221



Seniors who have experienced feelings of isolation and loneliness during the past year say they feel depressed more often (42%), don't leave their home to visit friends/family (40%), and worry about their ability to remain healthy (39%).

#### AMONG SENIORS WHO SAY THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED FEELINGS OF ISOLATION AND LONELINESS DURING THE PAST YEAR. n=221

Based on your experience, which of the following experiences best describe how loneliness and isolation impacted your life over the past year? Please select all that apply. **Selected** 



Please describe how experiencing loneliness and isolation has impacted your life over the past year. [Open End]

- Experiencing an overall tendency to withdraw, shut down and keep to themselves
- Experiencing suicidal thoughts
- Experiencing worsened loneliness during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Feeling like their energy is drained
- Experiencing sleep loss due to worry and anxiety
- Feeling a lack of motivation to do things
- Increasing alcohol consumption

Some seniors have tried to be more active, travel more and socialize more often as a result of their loneliness.

Regardless of their diagnosis, seniors say a companion or friend to regularly talk to (74%) and one on one therapy (62%) would be helpful to feel more socially connected.

How helpful, if at all, would the following resources be to helping you feel more socially connected?

Somewhat helpful ■ Very helpful ■ Not too helpful ■ Not helpful at all ■ Don't know/No opinion **Total Helpful** 74% A companion or friend to regularly talk to 25% 49% 5% 9% 13% 62% One on one therapy 22% 40% 13% 18% Referrals to available resources 11% 52% 41% 11% 14% 23% 42% Spiritual guidance 16% 26% 11% 27% 20% 14% Internet access 24% 21% 21% 20% 38% Group therapy 4% 32% 15% 25% 24% 36% 9% Telehealth with a therapist 24% 19% 23% 25% 33% Mental health hotline 6% 24% 21% 23% 25% 30% Social support networks 7% 21% 22% 23% 28% 28%

#### **Among Seniors**

What other resources not already listed would be helpful to you? [open end]

- Being able to travel
- Ways to learn new hobbies
- Group activities
- Animal companionship
- Books
- · Time with loved ones

### Top helpful resources among seniors diagnosed with a mental health condition:

- A companion or friend to regularly talk to (78%)
- One on one therapy (76%)
- Referrals to available resources (55%)
- Telehealth with a therapist (47%)
- Internet access (41%)

### Top helpful resources among seniors diagnosed with a cancer or a chronic condition

- A companion or friend to regularly talk to (83%)
- One on one therapy (62%)
- Referrals to available resources (52%)
- Internet access (45%)
- Spiritual guidance (43%)
- Telehealth with a therapist (43%)

#### Top helpful resources among seniors who experience isolation and loneliness:

- A companion or friend to regularly talk to (80%)
- One on one therapy (61%)
- Internet access (52%)
- Referrals to available resources (48%)
- Spiritual guidance (45%)



How helpful, if at all, would the following resources be to helping you feel more socially connected?

Total Helpful	Seniors	White (Non- Hispanic)	Hispanic	Ethnicity: Black (Non- Hispanic)	Asian + Other (Non- Hispanic)	Under 50k	50k-100k	100k+	Urban	Suburban	Rural
MOE (+/-)	3%	4%	11%	10%	9%	4%	6%	9%	6%	4%	6%
Social support networks	30%	29%	31%	37%	29%	29%	31%	32%	27%	31%	29%
One on one therapy	61%	60%	82%	57%	50%	55%	70%	65%	62%	61%	60%
Group therapy	36%	34%	54%	37%	27%	32%	38%	46%	36%	37%	32%
Telehealth with a therapist	38%	36%	64%	38%	30%	36%	39%	44%	33%	40%	39%
Spiritual guidance	45%	44%	49%	61%	36%	47%	42%	47%	42%	45%	49%
Referrals to available resources	50%	47%	76%	54%	48%	46%	54%	56%	52%	48%	51%
Mental health hotline	33%	31%	42%	32%	43%	30%	33%	44%	30%	34%	33%
A companion or friend to regularly talk to	75%	76%	77%	68%	70%	75%	76%	70%	73%	74%	78%
Internet access	39%	39%	34%	38%	44%	39%	37%	44%	38%	41%	36%

<sup>•</sup> Four in five **Hispanic seniors (82%)** say **one on one therapy** would be helpful to them to feel more socially connected. Three in four **Hispanic seniors (76%)** say **referrals to available resources** would be helpful.

Middle and high income seniors say referrals to available resources would be helpful to them to feel more socially connected.



# TRACKING FROM 2021 ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES LONELINESS & ISOLATION

RESPONDENT PROFILE



#### **RESPONDENT PROFILE**

