

## Social Isolation in Alameda County - Talking Points

*When meeting with policymakers or community members who are interested in public policy, these talking points provide key messages, what social isolation looks like in Alameda County, and recommendations from the Council for Age Friendly Communities. Pair with the Social Isolation Fact Sheet for maximum impact.*

- Social isolation is a significant cause of poor health and wellness outcomes for older adults.
- Prolonged isolation affects physical health as much as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. It increases the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, depression, and dementia. It increases the likelihood of hospital and nursing home admission.
- Because of Alameda County's diverse population, social isolation and its impacts are of particular concern in Alameda County. This is because social isolation and loneliness are particularly prevalent among low-income older adults and especially women, people of color, LGBTQ individuals, immigrants, and refugees.
- Living alone is a risk factor for social isolation and loneliness. 24% of older adults in Alameda County live alone.
- There is no one-size-fits-all approach to preventing and alleviating social isolation and loneliness, but there are proven effective solutions. Multi-disciplinary interventions are among the most powerful.
- Alameda County has made significant strides in putting in place services to address social isolation, but programs are not available in all parts of the County and people face language, eligibility, and other barriers to accessing services. Reducing or eliminating social isolation among older adults in all parts of the County will require additional efforts.
- Practical next steps can take us closer to eliminating social isolation among older adults in our County. These include: conducting a gap analysis; establishing standards of care for the multidisciplinary treatment of loneliness; spearheading public health initiatives that address social determinants of loneliness, isolation and health inequities; and informing the public about the causes and impacts of social isolation.

See more detailed recommendations and learn more about the issue in Alameda County by reading the Issue Brief on Social Isolation developed by the Alameda County Council for Age-Friendly Communities.