



Social Isolation & Loneliness

Scoping Review Summary

Complete Reference

Courtin, E., & Knapp, M. (2017). Social isolation, loneliness and health in old age: a scoping review. *Health & social care in the community*, 25(3), 799-812.

Kadowaki, L., & Wister, A. (2023). Older adults and social isolation and loneliness during the COVID-19 pandemic: an integrated review of patterns, effects, and interventions. *Canadian Journal on Aging/La Revue canadienne du vieillissement*, 42(2), 199-216.

Poscia, A., Stojanovic, J., La Milia, D. I., Duplaga, M., Grysztar, M., Moscato, U., ... & Magnavita, N. (2018). Interventions targeting loneliness and social isolation among the older people: An update systematic review. *Experimental gerontology*, 102, 133-144.

Introduction

- **Social isolation** is the objective state of having few social relationships or infrequent social contact with others, while **loneliness** is a subjective feeling of being isolated.
- In this summary, we synthesized key findings from scoping reviews on social isolation and loneliness (SI/L).
- A scoping review is a type of literature review that summarizes and synthesizes evidence to inform practice, programs, and policy and provide direction to future research priorities.

Research questions

- What are the effective and feasible strategies to reduce social isolation and loneliness among community-dwelling older adults?
- What are the examples of programs to promote social connectedness among community-dwelling older adults?

Major Findings

- Interventions implemented within multi-component programs, incorporating various approaches seemed to provide the most success in reducing social isolation and loneliness.
 - Examples of effective programs include educational, cognitive, and social support programs focusing on networking with other participants.
 - Community-engaged art: older adults draw on their experience and knowledge to create meaningful works of art → help older adults expand their community connections and establish supportive relationships with other participants.
- Techniques used in one-to-one interventions showed significant improvements in social health outcomes
 - **Reminiscence**, where older adults discuss positive aspects of their lives when they believed they were more socially integrated.
 - **Exercise-talk discussions**, where students and older adults perform physical therapy goal-oriented exercise while discussing social aspects of health
 - **Social engagement-directed discussions**, where students and older adults sit face-to-face and discuss social isolation
 - **Coaching**, providing constant encouragement to achieve social integration and older adult's specific goals

- Remote programs for which evidence has been shown for their efficacy and/or effectiveness during the pandemic.
 - **Telephone befriending**, where older adults are matched with volunteers for regular phone calls.
 - **Senior Centre Without Walls (SCWW)**, where social and educational programs were provided virtually or by telephone.
 - **Digital training programs for older adults** using the internet and social media, to help facilitate social visits, group activities, and health promotion interventions

- **Technology**
 - Technology-based interventions were effective at increasing older adults' access to social support, information, and resources
 - Tailoring technology-based programs to match the specific needs of older adult users and providing sufficient training to use technologies such as tablets is crucial.
 - Peer or intergenerational training programs are recommended to teach older adults how to use digital technologies.

Other recommended strategies to address social isolation and loneliness

- Health and social care services should work closely together to strengthen the sustainability and build evidence of the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of programs to reduce SI/L.
- Encouraging more outdoor activities, to support neighbourliness and community use of local open spaces.
- Culturally and religiously grounded interventions (e.g., engaging older adults in sharing about their cultural foods and exchanging recipes).

- Psychological interventions, such as cognitive behavioural therapy, yoga, mindfulness-based stress reduction.
- Programs are often effective when administered digitally, such as through a smartphone app.
- Addressing age-related hearing loss with communication strategies, hearing devices, or Group Auditory Rehabilitation can support communication outcomes.
- Involving older adults in the design stage of an intervention can facilitate its sustainability but also its effects
- Consider low-cost transport options to enable older adults to remain socially active. Otherwise, interventions can also be implemented in the heart of disadvantaged neighbourhoods to reach the most vulnerable older adults more easily and strengthen their community belonging.

