

# Loneliness and Social Isolation Report



2024

# Loneliness

Loneliness is feeling alone or disconnected from others. It is feeling like you do not have meaningful or close relationships or a sense of belonging.

There are three types of loneliness.

1. Emotional loneliness, the absence of meaningful relationships.
2. Social loneliness, a perceived deficit in the quality of social connections.
3. Existential loneliness a feeling of fundamental separateness from others and the wider world

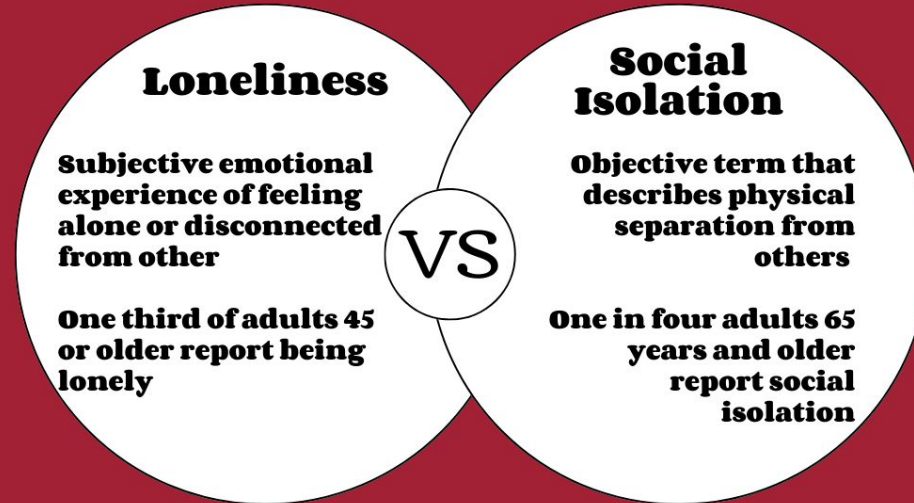
# Social Isolation

Social isolation is the lack of relationships with others and little to no social support or contact. It is associated with risk even if people don't feel lonely.

All types of social isolation can include staying home for lengthy periods of time, having no communication with family, acquaintances or friends, and/or willfully avoiding any contact with other humans when those opportunities do arise.

# LONLINESS VS. SOCIAL ISOLATION

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- “58% of Americans reported feeling lonely consistently. Loneliness is on the scale of the opioid epidemic or obesity” (Okolo, 2023).
- “Loneliness leads to a 29% increased risk of heart disease; a 32% increased risk of stroke; and a 50% increased risk of developing dementia for older adults” (Summers et al, 2023)
- “Residents of New England (20%) report the highest level of loneliness across nine U.S. regions” (Witters, 2023).
- “Over 300 million people globally don’t have a single friend, and one in five don’t have friends or family that they can count on when needed” (Witters, 2023).

## Public Health Data on Loneliness

# Loneliness and Social Connections



“I have lived in Wakefield for 20 years and still feel like a new resident” -Wakefield resident.

# Our Process



## Research

Understanding the need to focus on loneliness and social isolation and potential strategies for Wakefield



## Resource mapping

Conducting a thorough assessment of available activities and strategies in Wakefield to connect individuals and build sense of community



## Survey

Gaining an understanding of if Wakefield residents have feelings of loneliness and social isolation; if they are aware of/utilizing existing resources; gather input on strategies to increase community connections.



## Key Informant Interviews & Focus Groups

Providing community members with opportunities to share thoughts on existing resources, potential new opportunities, and understanding what encourages or prevents them from participating.





# Resource Mapping in Wakefield

Conducted an assessment of our resources and how they are publicized to the residents



# Beebe Library

## For Adults:

- Virtual author talks
- Lectures and workshops on a variety of topics
- Drop in tech help and technology classes

## For Children:

- Weekly storytimes for a range of age groups
- Afterschool programming for grades K-12
- Summer at the Library events and activities

## For Families:

- Book clubs
- Summer concerts on the Plaza
- BeebeCon, the library's annual Comic Con

# Wakefield Recreation Department

## For Adults:

- Pickleball lessons
- Power over Parkinson's Workshop

## Youth:

- Camps
- Soccer for tots
- Fencing for ages 7 and up
- Youth climbing program

## Workshops:

- Gingerbread house workshop
- Home alone safety for kids (or entire family)

# Council on Aging

## Fitness classes:

- Drums, Chair yoga, Functional fitness, Barre, Zumba and pilates, Strength, Strong and steady, Poms, Tai Chi

## Cards and Games:

- Chess, Bingo, Bridge, Skat, Poker, Mahjong American style, and Mexican Train Dominoes

## Programs, Classes, and Clinics:

- Art class, Wood carving, and blood pressure clinics
- Caregiver support group
- Holiday party(s)
- Transportation curb to curb service
- Room to write sessions
- Congregate Meal Programs

# Other Ways To Connect

- Albion Cultural Exchange
- Sweetser Lecture Series
- Plaza Jazz
- Wakefield Community Access Programming
- Town day
- farmers markets
- Festival by the Lake
- Physical Activity Opportunities

## Methods

**Survey 200+**



**3 Focus Groups**

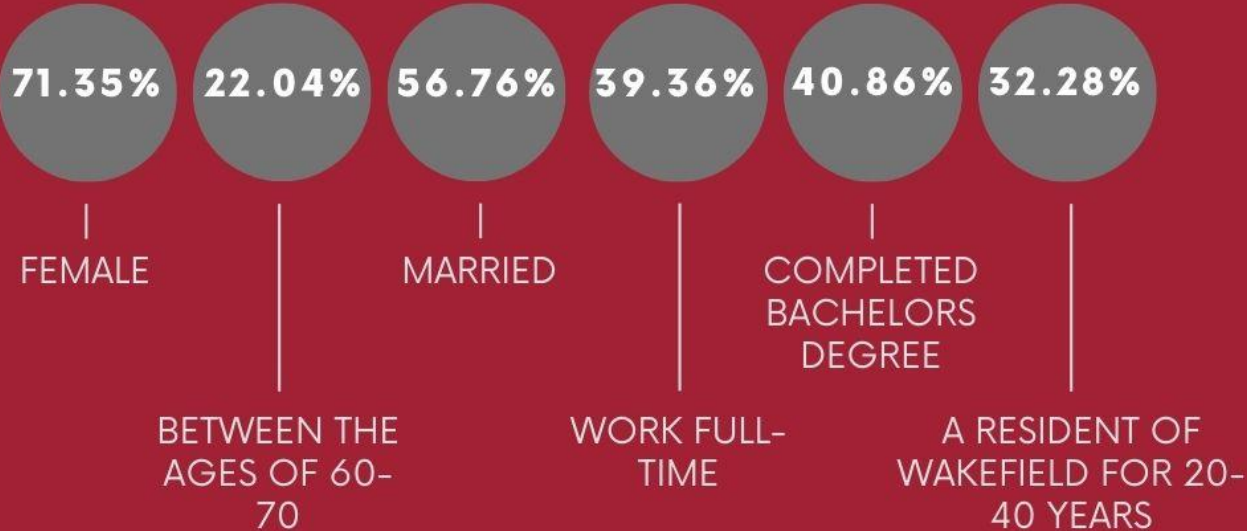


**7 Key Informant Interviews**

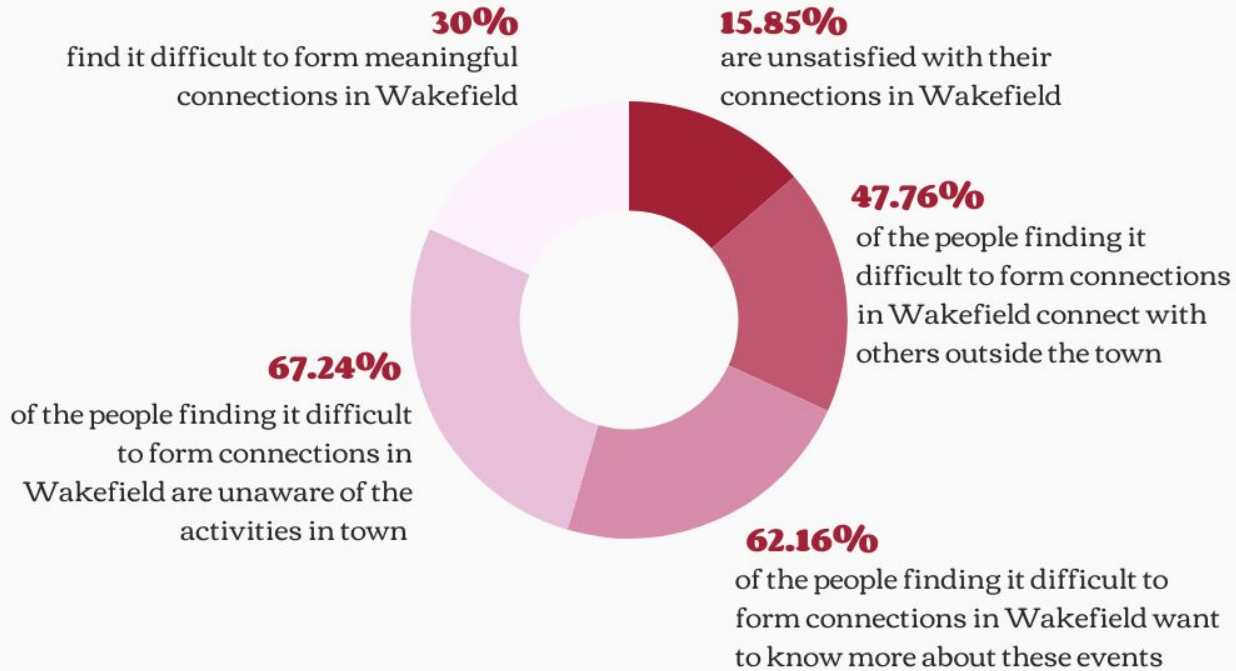


# SURVEY ANALYSIS

- The survey was created on SurveyMonkey
- Shared through various social media platforms
- Paper copies placed around Wakefield
- 202 individuals took the survey

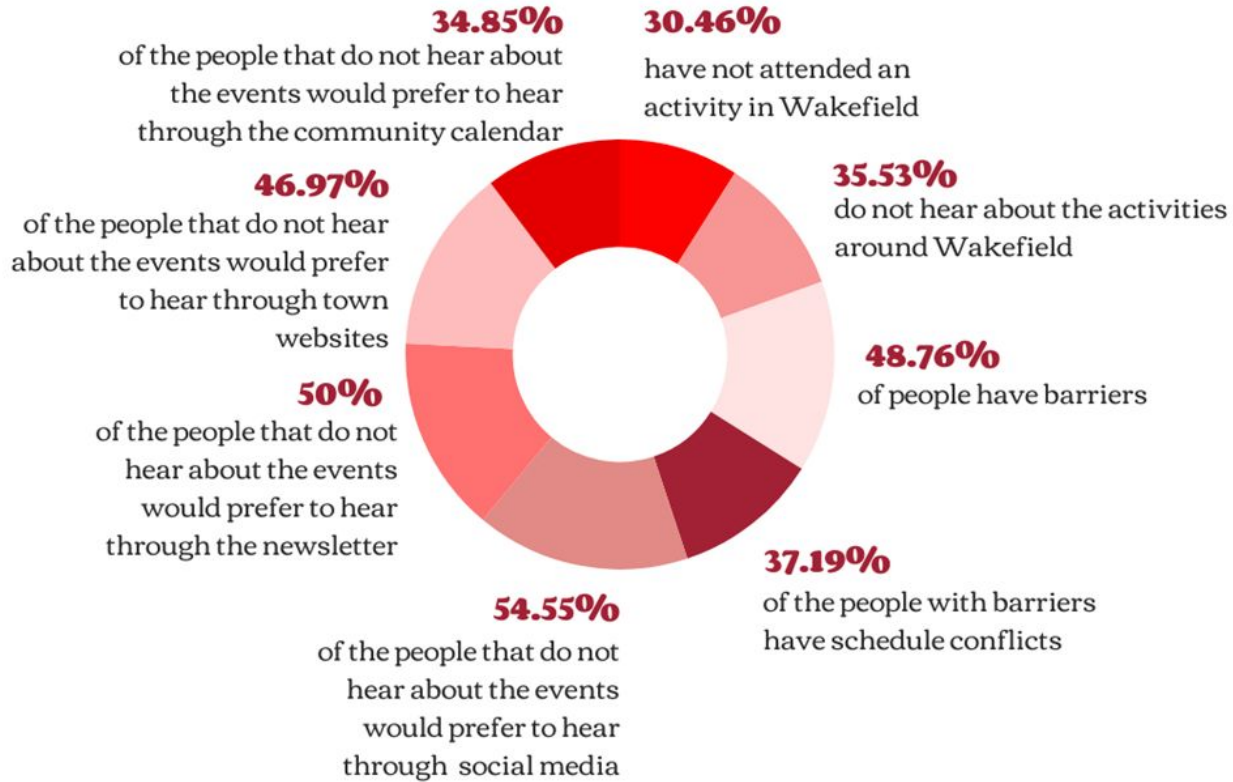


# Key findings: Survey





# Key Findings: Survey



- “Some of my friends can’t believe I come here, they say “that’s for old people.” They don’t like that it’s called Senior Center or Council on Aging. A Community Center would get more people to come. However we don’t want people that are not old enough attending our programs, that’s not fair.
- Some people need a push. Maybe if we had a “bring a friend” program.
- If they have meals or other interesting activities, there could be an incentive for the people that bring a friend
- “I have lived in Wakefield for 20 years and I still feel like a new resident”

# What Our Residents Are Telling Us?

# What Else Do We Need To Know?

Q1

How can we adjust the activities around Wakefield to best suit peoples accommodations?

Q2

How can we encourage people in the community to be more inclusive towards others?

Q3

How do we encourage introverts to form meaningful connections with others?

Q4

Are we now successfully reaching everyone in the community in regards to information on activities?

# Recommendations for Individuals in Wakefield

## Physical

- Attend events at the Beebe Library, Council on Aging, Albion Cultural Exchange, and the Civic Center
- Going to parks, Lake Quannapowitt, etc. to take a break for yourself
- Making new connections
- Join a club or group
- Adopt a pet
- Volunteer
- Get active
- Connect with people from the past
- Find a new hobby

## Mental

- Acknowledge your feelings
- Talk about your feelings
- Focus on what you can change
- Look after yourself
- Get professional help
- Practice gratitude
- Make time for friends or family
- Show yourself some compassion
- Fill your home with comfort
- Meditate
- Try not to compare yourself to others

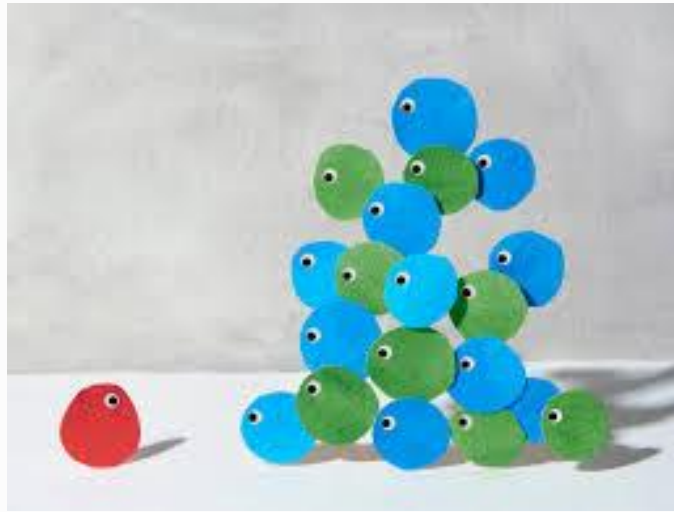
# Resources For Residents

## Resources

- <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/>
- <https://www.endsocialisolation.org/>
- <https://www.ruok.org.au/ending-loneliness-together>

## Resources in Massachusetts

- <https://findahelpline.com/countries/us/ma/topics/loneliness>
- <https://www.nami.org/Home>
- <https://www.umb.edu/gerontologyinstitute/>
- <https://mahealthyagingcollaborative.org/>
- <https://www.endlonelinessma.com/>



Feeling lonely? Your brain may process the world differently

<https://www.npr.org/2023/12/08/1198908816/lonely-brain-neuroscience-of-loneliness>

15 minute listening session