



The President's Council on Science & Technology (PCAST)

Harnessing Social and Behavioral Science Insights to Enhance
Policymaking and Improve the Lives of the American People

January 10, 2025

Social Sciences Working Group Members

Jennifer Richeson*, Yale University

Lisa Cooper*, Johns Hopkins University

John Friedman, Brown University

Laura Greene*, Florida State University; National High Magnetic Field Lab

Paula Hammond*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Jonathan Levin*, Stanford University

Saul Perlmutter*, U.C. Berkeley; Lawrence Berkeley National Lab

William Press*, University of Texas at Austin

* [PCAST Member](#)



Why Social & Behavioral Science Research?



- The social sciences provide an evidence base for understanding and ultimately improving individual and societal well-being.
- If we want to promote the prosperity, security, and well-being of the nation, we first need to know where we stand and then examine ways to improve these outcomes.
- Social science offers research insights and methods to reliably measure and rigorously develop and test interventions on the pathways that ultimately engender prosperity, security, and well-being.





[Partners](#) [Researchers](#) [Educators](#) [Survey Respondents](#)

[News](#) [NAICS Codes](#) [Jobs](#) [About Us](#) [Contact Us](#) [Help](#)

[Topics](#) [Data & Maps](#) [Surveys & Programs](#) [Resource Library](#)

Search data, events, resources, and more 🔍



How Many Young and Older Adults Lived Alone?





IDEAS

THE ANTI-SOCIAL CENTURY

Americans are now spending more time alone than ever. It's changing our personalities, our politics, and even our relationship to reality.

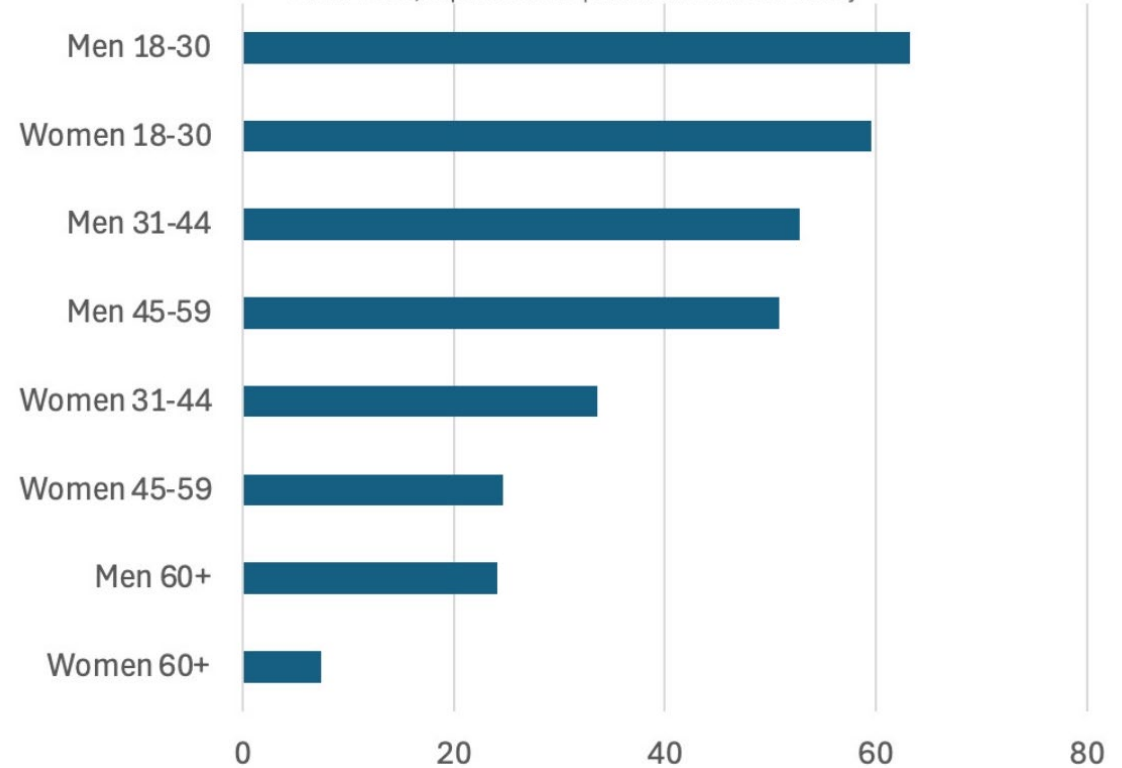
By Derek Thompson
Illustrations by Max Guther

% Increase in Time Spent Alone Every Day: 2003 - 2021

Luke Pardue, Aspen Institute | American Time Use Survey

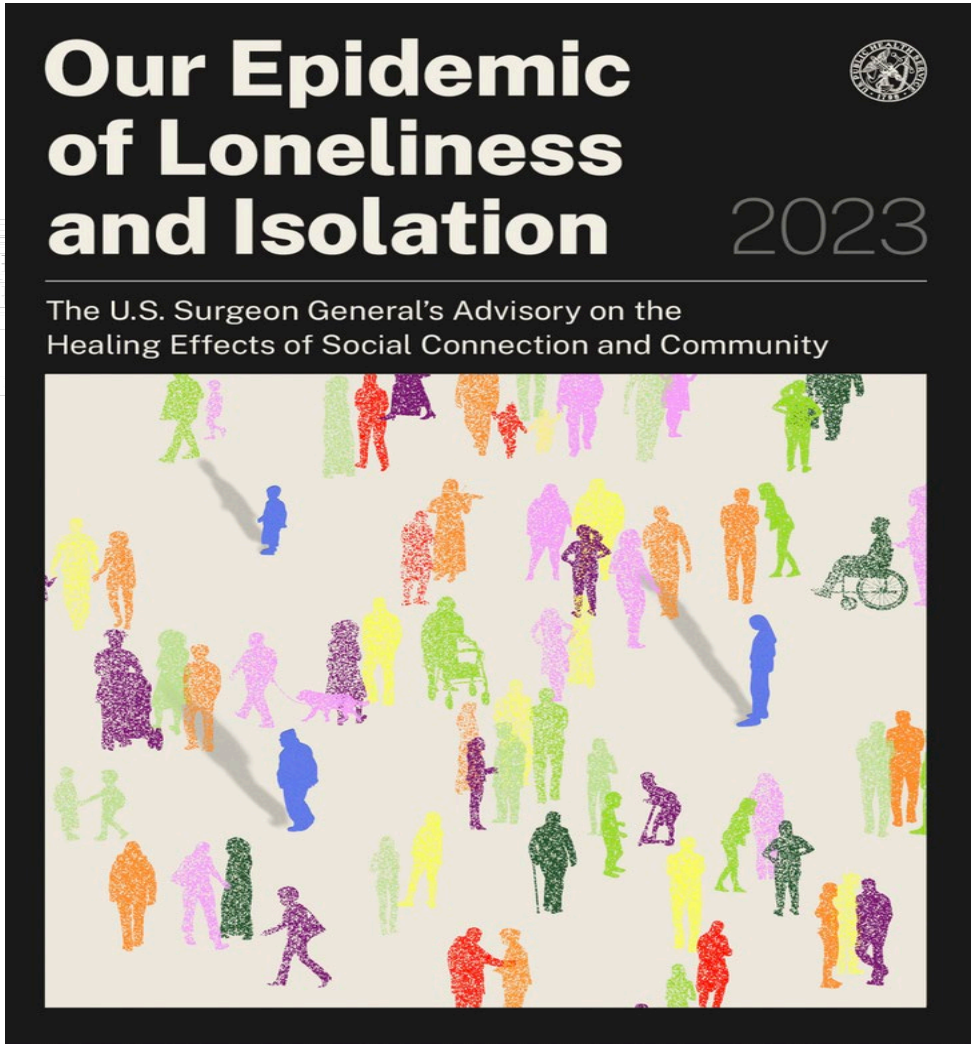
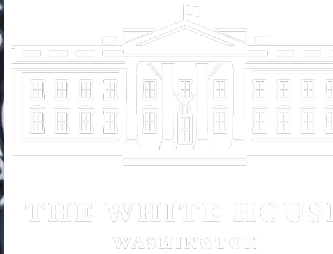


TIME

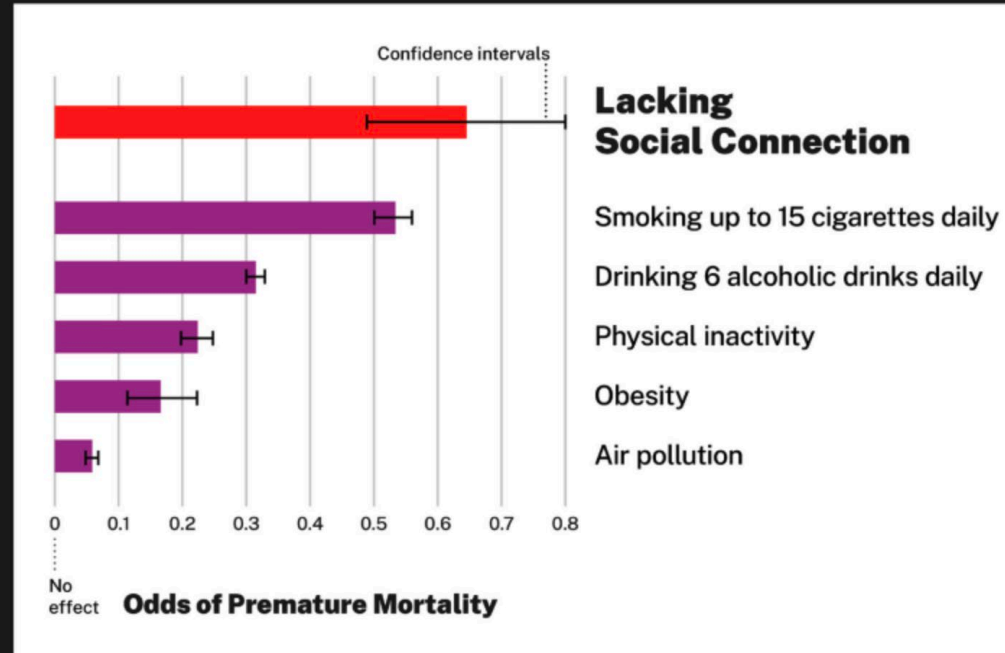




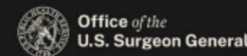
Vivek Murthy
U.S. Surgeon General



Lacking social connection is as dangerous as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day.



Source: Holt-Lunstad J, Robles TF, Sbarra DA. Advancing Social Connection as a Public Health Priority in the United States. *American Psychology*. 2017;72(6):517-530. doi:10.1037/amp0000103. This graph is a visual approximation.



Office of the
U.S. Surgeon General



The Value of Social Connection



Our Report



Social science insights, scholars, and methods are often critical to efforts to promote the prosperity, security, and well-being of individual Americans, as well as the vitality of American families, neighborhoods, organizations, and businesses.



U.S. Government Consultations

General Services Administration

- Michael DiDomenico, Chief Evaluation Officer (Acting), Office of Evaluation Sciences

National Science Foundation

Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences

- May Aydin, Science Advisor, National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES)
- John Finamore, Chief Statistician, NCSES
- Heather Madray, Supervisory Program Director, NCSES
- Lisa Mirel, Statistical Advisor, NCSES
- Emilda Rivers, Director, NCSES

Department of Commerce

Census Bureau

- Ron Jarmin, Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer
- Sallie Keller, Chief Scientist & Associate Director for Research and Methodology

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

- Alison Krepp, Social Science Program Manager & Co-chair of the Social Science Committee

Department of Education

- Marsha Silverberg, Associate Commissioner and Economist, Evaluation Division, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance

Health and Human Services (HHS)

- Clair German, Chief Data Officers Council on Data Sharing
- Steven Posnack, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Technology Policy, Deputy National Coordinator for Health Information Technology

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- Alan Sim, Chief Data Officer

National Institutes of Health (NIH), Office of Behavioral and Social Science Research

- Rosalind King, Chief, Scientific Development and Coordination Section
- Janine Simmons, Deputy Director
- Jane Simoni, Associate Director for Behavioral and Social Science Research

Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

- Charles Armstrong, Chief Information Officer

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

- Calvin Johnson, Commission on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys Commissioner, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Research, Evaluation, and Monitoring

Department of Treasury

- Anne Chiang, Chief Evaluation Officer
- Gary Fellman, Senior Program Manager (Treasury); Enterprise Risk Services Consultant, Office of Financial Research

Internal Revenue Service

- Barry Johnson, Chief Data and Analytics Officer

The White House

Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

- Diana Epstein, Evidence Team Lead
- Karin Orvis, Chief Statistician and Chief of the Statistical and Science Policy Branch, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs

Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP)

- Jeremy Epstein, Assistant Director, Technologies and Privacy
- Kei Koizumi, Principal Deputy Director for Policy
- Steve Newell, Assistant Director for Innovation and Equity



Private Sector & Non-Governmental Consultations

John Ayanian

Director of the Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation
University of Michigan

Christopher Bail

Professor & Director of the Polarization Lab
Duke University

Sara Barber

Principal
Lewis-Burke Associates LLC

BJ Casey

The Christina L. Williams Professor of Neuroscience
Barnard College, Columbia University

Jennifer Doleac

Executive Vice President of Criminal Justice
Arnold Ventures

Robert Groves

Professor in the Math and Statistics Department as well as Sociology
Georgetown University

Anna Harvey

President and CEO
Social Science Research Council

Sunshine Hillygus

Professor of Political Science, Director of the Duke Initiative on Survey Methodology & Professor in the Sanford School of Public Policy
Duke University

Eric Horvitz

Chief Science Officer
Microsoft

Arthur Lupia

Interim Vice President for Research and Innovation
University of Michigan

Brian Nosek

Co-founder and Executive Director
Center for Open Science

Joshua Tucker

Professor of Politics, Director Jordan Center for the Advanced Study of Russia, Co-Director NYU Center for Social Media and Politics, Affiliated Professor of Russian and Slavic Studies, Affiliated Professor of Data Science
New York University

Duncan Watts

Stevens University Professor & Director, Computational Social Science Lab
University of Pennsylvania

Jeremy Weinstein

Kleinheinz Family Professor of International Studies and Senior Fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies and at the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research
Stanford University

David Williams

Florence Sprague Norman and Laura Smart Norman Professor of Public Health
Harvard University



The Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Evidence Act)



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON



BLUEPRINT FOR THE USE OF SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE TO ADVANCE EVIDENCE-BASED POLICYMAKING

A Report by the
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES OF THE
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE
of the
NATIONAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL

May 2024



Social Behavioral Science (SBS) Research & Evidence-Based Policymaking



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

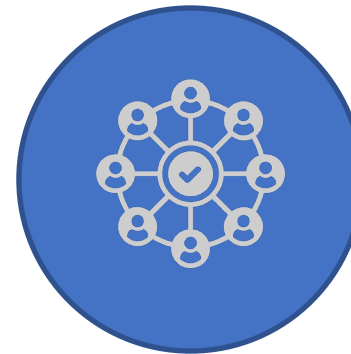
**Basic Research
& Discovery**



**Policy
Development**



**Policy
Implementation**



**Policy Evaluation
to Understand
Outcomes**



Recommendation 1: Invest in SBS Expertise



THE WHITE HOUSE

Optimize the presence and integration of social and behavioral scientists at federal agencies to better harness social scientific expertise, insights, and methods that support evidence-based policymaking, implementation, and evaluation.



Recommendation 1



THE WHITE HOUSE
OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1A. Agency leadership should ensure they have sufficient expertise in social scientific perspectives and methods among their staff members and external partners, and incorporate them into each phase of their work.

1B. Agencies should incorporate established and emerging social and behavioral science insights when developing policies and use the methods and tools of social science research to enable and facilitate rigorous program and policy implementation and evaluation.



Potential and Actual Effects of Social and Behavioral Sciences on Practice and Policy



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

- Diabetes Prevention Program adapted and enhanced by Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)
- Moving to Opportunity (MTO) Program
- Research on community health workers (CHWs) informs CMS initiatives supporting the Biden-Harris Cancer Moonshot and Medicare Physician Payment rule



Recommendation 2: Leverage Federal Data



Expand secure access to federal data sets across agencies and with social scientists for approved research and policy evaluation needs with appropriate protections and safeguards.



Recommendation 2: Leverage Federal Data



THE WHITE HOUSE

2A. Allocate the funding necessary to establish the National Secure Data Service.



Recommendation 2: Leverage Federal Data



National Center for Science
and Engineering Statistics



The National Secure Data Service Demonstration



Recommendation 2: Leverage Federal Data



THE WHITE HOUSE

2A. Allocate the funding necessary to establish the National Secure Data Service.

2B. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) should spearhead access to appropriate federal datasets across agencies and by external researchers.



Recommendation 3: Invest in SBS Research Ecosystem



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Agencies should review their funding priorities, models, budgets, and instruments to better support the contemporary social and behavioral science research ecosystem.



Contemporary Social & Behavioral Science Research Ecosystem



CONTACT ENGLISH

ABOUT VALUES EDUCATORS PARTICIPANTS FAMILIES SCIENTISTS STUDY SITES NEWS

Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development

The ABCD Study® is the largest long-term study of brain development and child health in the United States.

EDUCATORS

FAMILIES

SCIENTISTS

STUDY SITES

NEWS

National Institute on Drug Abuse	National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism	National Cancer Institute	National Institute of Mental Health	Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute	National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke	National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities	NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research	NIH Office of Research on Women's Health
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Division of Violence Prevention	National Institute of Justice	Center for Disease Control and Prevention – Division of Adolescent and School Health	National Science Foundation	National Endowment for the Arts

jgabuse.gov



Recommendation 4: Invest in Cross-sector Partnerships



THE WHITE HOUSE

Facilitate engagement and partnerships between private industry, federal agencies, academic institutions, and not-for-profit foundations to harness social and behavioral science insights for greater policy impact on societal challenges.



Recommendation 4: Invest in Cross-sector Partnerships



4A. Promote collaboration between private sector, public sector, not-for-profit, and academic organizations to advance and set standards for social and behavioral scientific discovery and evidence-based policymaking.



Recommendation 4: Invest in Cross-sector Partnerships



4B. Promote collaboration between private sector, public sector, not-for-profit, and academic organizations to advance and set standards for social and behavioral scientific discovery and evidence-based policymaking.



Conclusions

To address the complex problems facing our nation, we must ensure we have a robust, reproducible, and unbiased evidence base, and use it to develop effective policies.

This requires bridging gaps in our knowledge, in part through expanding secure access to and responsible, ethical use of relevant data, both within and outside of government, as well as by working in partnerships across industry, government, and academia to identify needed data, refine analytical techniques and methods, and rigorously evaluate the outcomes of current and new policy proposals.

Experts in SBS are poised to lead this work.





whitehouse.gov/PCAST