

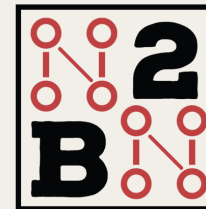
# WHY MATTERING MATTERS TO PUBLIC HEALTH

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# How we got here

- Our work and path to mattering
  - *Social isolation*
  - *Social support & adults with serious mental illness*
- Loneliness
  - *Dissatisfaction with social connections*
  - *Short-term adaptive response prompting connection (Caccioppo et al., 2014)*
  - *Loneliness as a symptom*
- Matterings at psychological, relational & community levels

## Social Isolation, Loneliness, and Living Alone: Identifying the Risks for Public Health

Eric Klinenberg, PhD

[Additional article information](#)

*Follow-up* *Annual Review of Public Health*

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## Social Connection as a Public Health Issue: The Evidence and a Systemic Framework for Prioritizing the “Social” in Social Determinants of Health

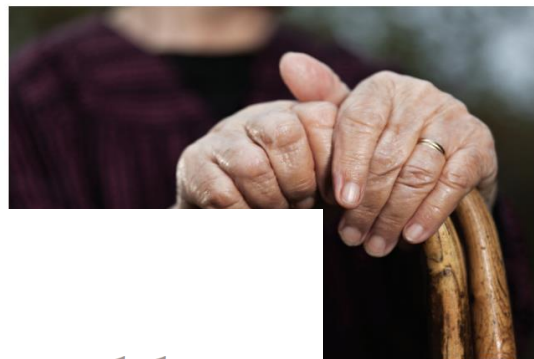
Julianne Holt-Lunstad

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## In Practice

### Loneliness: a public health issue

*With nearly one in ten older people suffering from loneliness, isolation is now the hidden killer of the elderly*



published in *PLoS Medicine*, found a 5% boost in longevity if adults have a solid social network. Researchers even v as far as to suggest that having a social network was just as good for long-term survival as giving up 15-a-day smoking habit. A lack of social interaction is also linked to the onset

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Alzheimer's disease, heart disease and depression.

Failure to tackle the problem of loneliness in older people could thus have huge health implications, and with Alzheimer's costing the NHS an estimated £20 billion a year, could be costly.

One campaign group calling for the

need to make  
loneliness a pu  
health concern

**1 in five older people**

## Loneliness as a Public Health Issue: The Impact of Loneliness on Health Care Utilization Among Older Adults

Kerstin Gerst-Emerson, PhD and Jayani

Jayawardhana, PhD

[Additional article information](#)

## Abstract

**Objectives.** We aimed to determine whether loneliness is associated with higher health care utilization among older adults in the United States.

# Prevalence

## ■ General Population

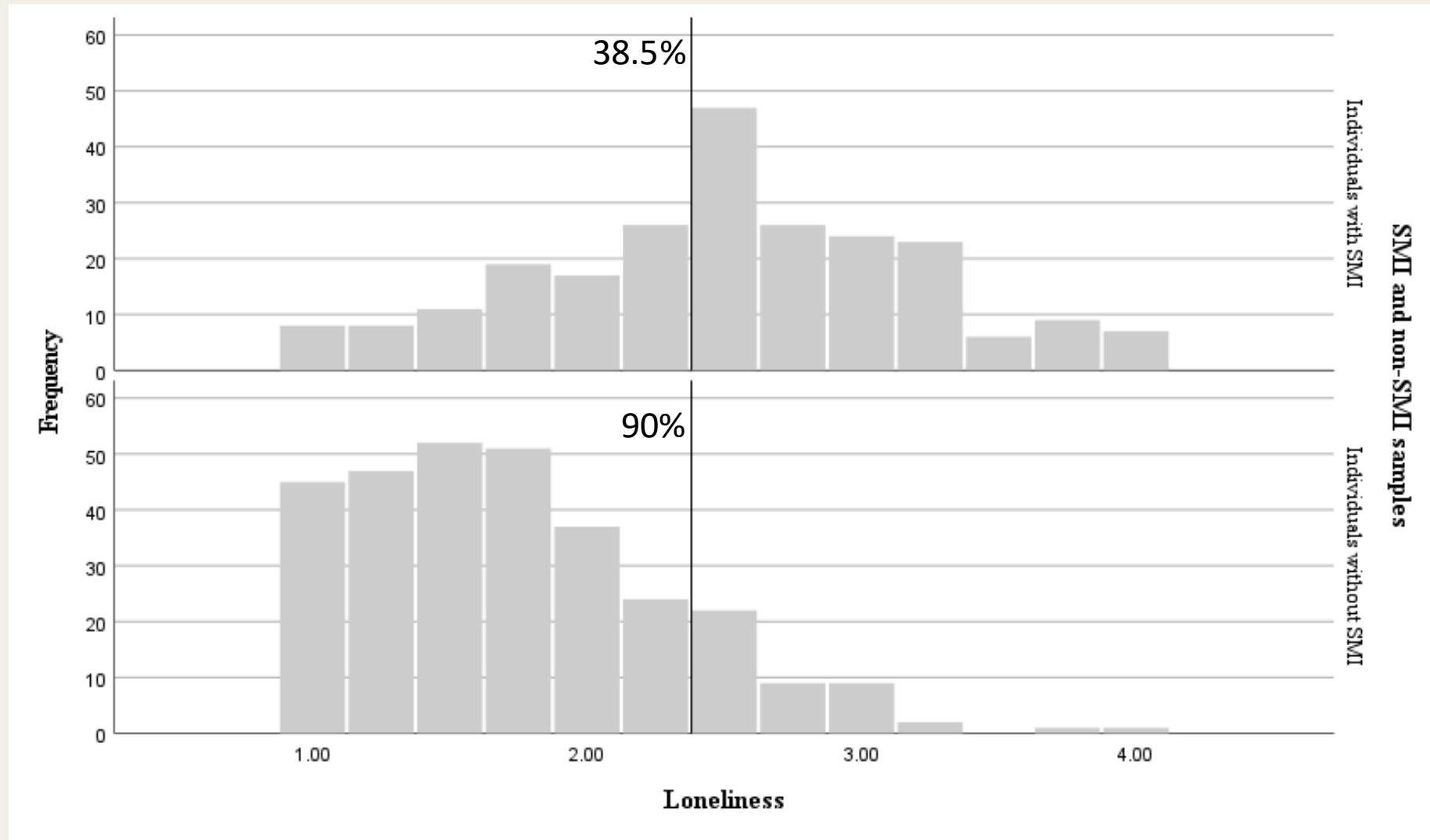
- *Severe loneliness*
- *5-10% European national samples (Beutel et al., 2017; Lasgaard et al., 2016).*
- *6.9% pooled prevalence middle aged adults across 113 countries, (Surkalim et al., 2022)*
- *U-shape across lifespan (cross sectional)*
  - *Lowest in middle adulthood (Victor & Yang 2012)*
- *Longitudinal evidence*
  - *Level decreases over time in childhood, relatively stable through oldest age (Mund et al., 2020)*

## ■ People with disabilities

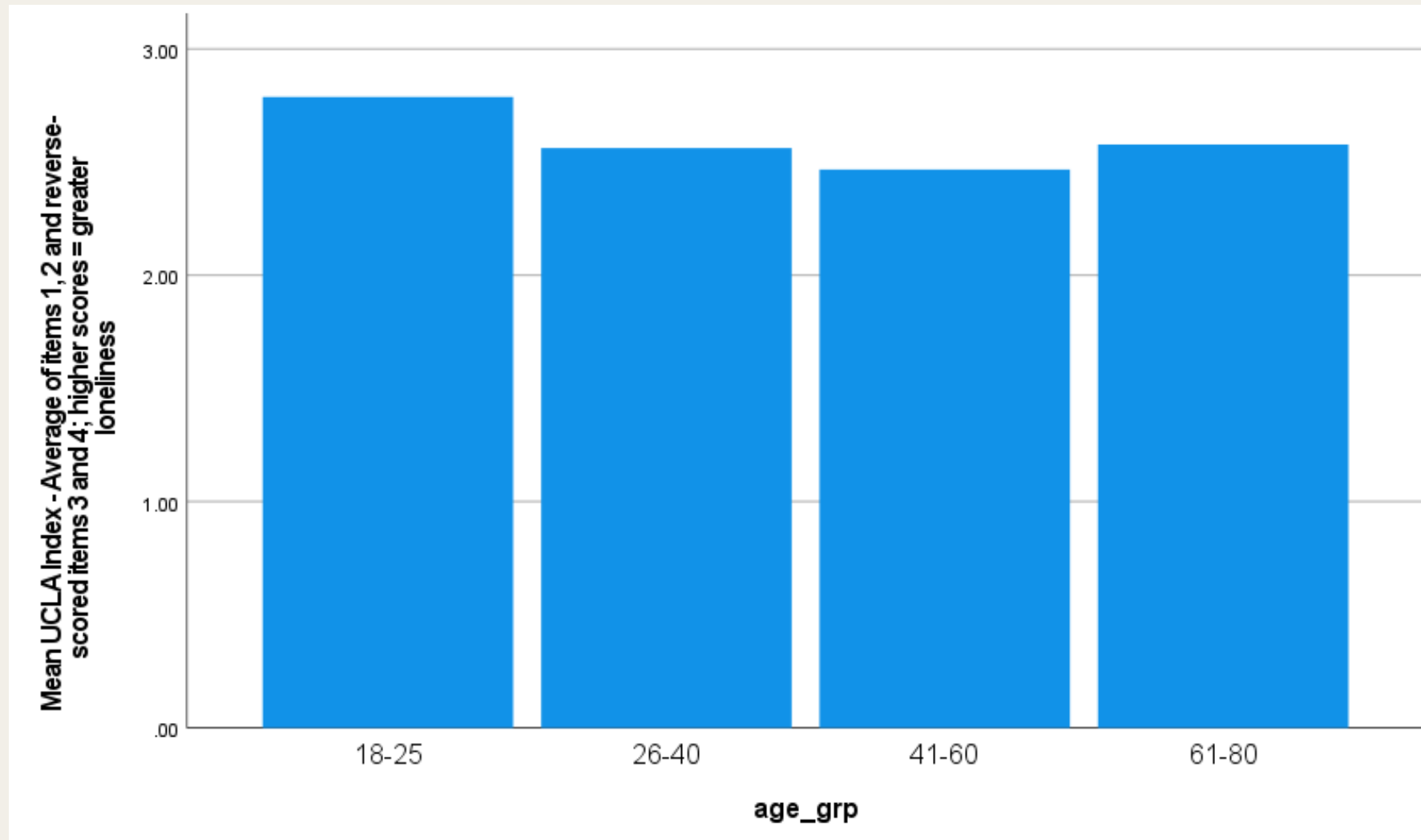
- *Greater prevalence & severity*
- *May not follow U-shaped pattern*

# Loneliness Severity- Adults with serious mental illness (SMI)

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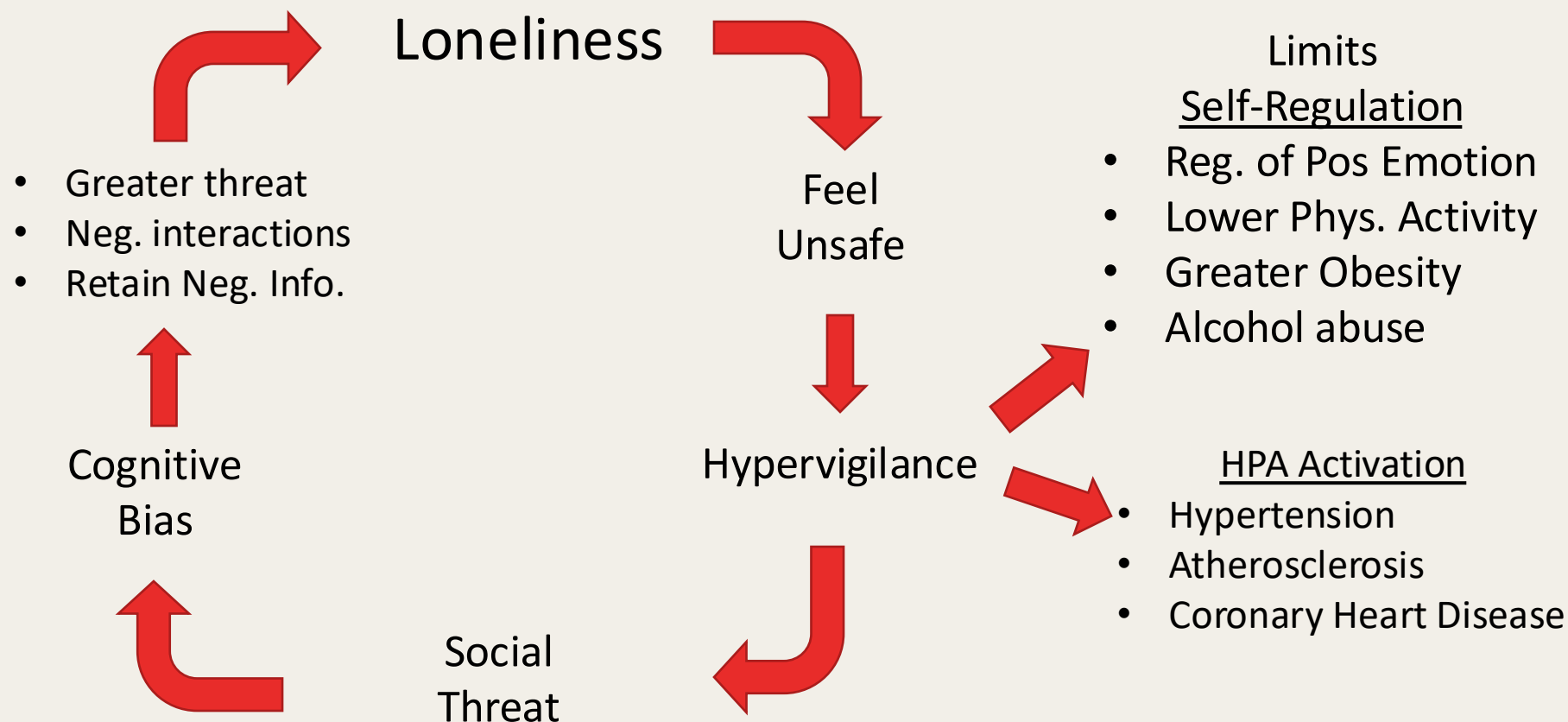
# Loneliness across age (SMI)



# Loneliness Health Impacts

- Depressive symptoms (Cacioppo et al., 2006; Jaremka et al., 2014)
- Poor sleep quality (Cacioppo et al., 2004; Mahon, 1994)
- Poor general health (Fortuna et al., 2021; Goosby et al., 2014).
- Difficulties in cognitive control (Baumeister et al., 2005)
- Overall cognitive decline (Wilson et al., 2007)
- Elevated cortisol (indicating chronic stress) (Adam et al., 2006; Doane et al., 2014)
- Elevated suicidal thoughts & attempts (Heinrich & Gullone, 2006; Stravynski & Boyer, 2001)

# Potential Mechanisms



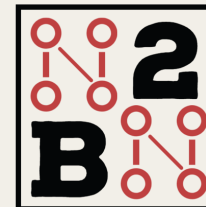
Hawkley, L. C., & Cacioppo, J. T. (2010) Loneliness matters: A theoretical and empirical review of consequences and mechanism. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 40, 218-277.



# MATTERING AS A ROOT CAUSE



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# Mattering

- Extension of self-esteem (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981)
  - *Key Components*
    1. *Sense that others depend on us*
    2. *Feeling that others regard us as important*
    3. *Belief others are actively paying attention to us*
  - Later added:*
    4. *Belief we would be missed if no longer around*
- Elliot et al. (2004) summarized as:
  1. *Awareness*
  2. *Importance*
  3. *Reliance*

# Psychological Mattering

- Positive social connections convey
  - *One is valued by and important to others*
  - *One contributes value to one's world*
- Develops in relationships of reciprocity
  - *Receiving support*
  - *Giving support*
- Groups with potentially limited reciprocity
  - *Youth*
  - *Older adults*
  - *People with disabilities*
  - *Economically disadvantaged*

# Mattering & Health Outcomes

- Youth
  - *Lower risk of suicidal ideation (Elliott et al., 2005)*
  - *Reduced anxiety & depression (Dixon et al., 2009)*
  - *Reduced odds of family violence (Elliott et al., 2011)*
  - *Reduced anti-social & self-destructive behavior (Marshall, 2004; Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981)*
- College Students
  - *Reduced depression (Dixon et al., 2008; Flett et al., 2012)*
  - *Greater self-regulation (Flett & Nepon, 2020)*
- Working age Adults
  - *Reduced odds of suicidal ideation (Milner et al., 2016)*
- Older Adults
  - *Overall wellness (Myers & Degges-White, 2007)*

# Positive Aspects of Mattering (Flett, 2022)

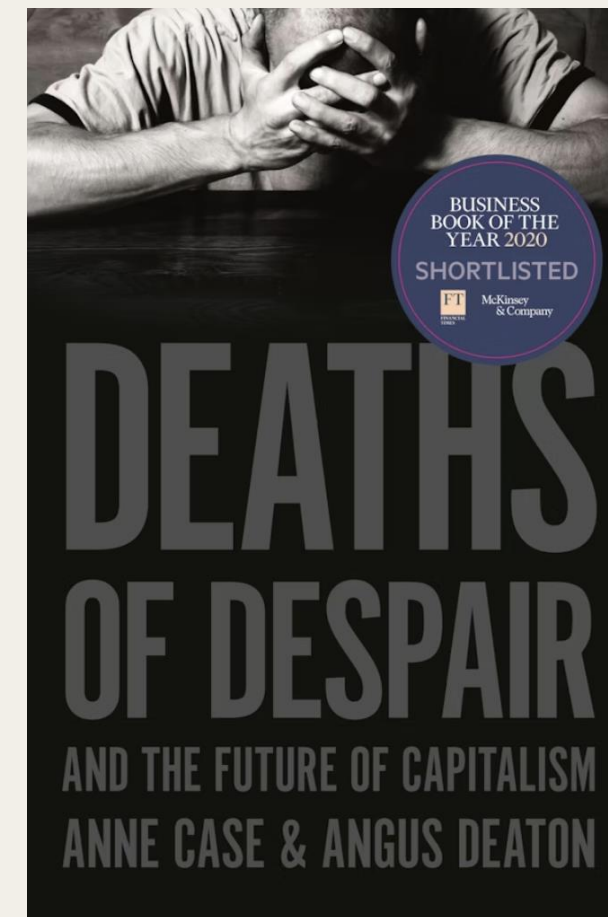
- Concept is broadly relevant
  - *Can be seen in its absence*
- Powerful influence on motivation
  - *People wish to matter (Pearlin & LeBlanc, 2001)*
- Source of resilience
  - *Resistance to mistreatment from others (Flett, 2018)*
- Pertinent over the lifespan
  - *From youth (NRC, 2002) to older adults (Dixon, 2007)*
- Relevant in times of difficulty
  - *Linked to more positive self-appraisals (Besser et al., 2020)*
- Feelings of stability in transitions
  - *Response to COVID-19 crisis (Flett & Zangeneh, 2020)*
- Mattering can be modified and cultivated
  - *Through adding value, mattering can be increased (Davis et al., 2019; Milner et al., 2016; Prilleltensky, 2020)*

# Mattering & Anti-mattering

- Feeling unimportant to anyone and/or invisible (Flett, 2020)
- Feeling that one has no voice
- Feelings of insignificance can result in positive or negative responses
- Outcomes include (Prilelltensky, 2021)
  - *Stress*
  - *Depression*
  - *Suicide*
  - *Mass killings*

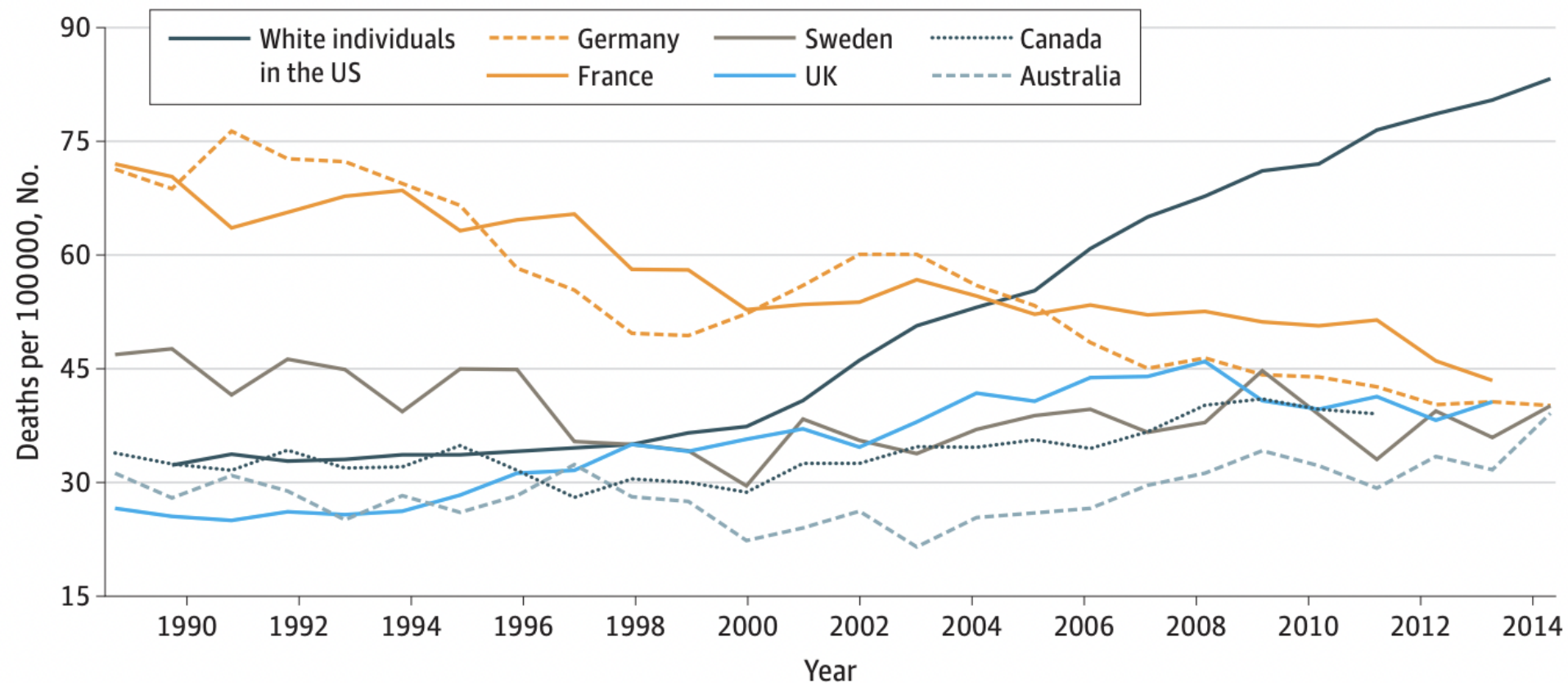
# Deaths of Despair

- Deaths attributable to
  - suicide,
  - drug overdose,
  - alcohol-related liver disease
- Progressive increase in these deaths over past 2 decades (Beseran et al. 2022)
  - Low socioeconomic position
  - Low education level
  - High employment insecurity
  - Rurality
- Concentrated in Americans without college degrees (Case & Deaton, 2020)



**Figure 2. Deaths of Despair Rise Steeply in the US vs Western Europe, Canada, Australia, and Japan**

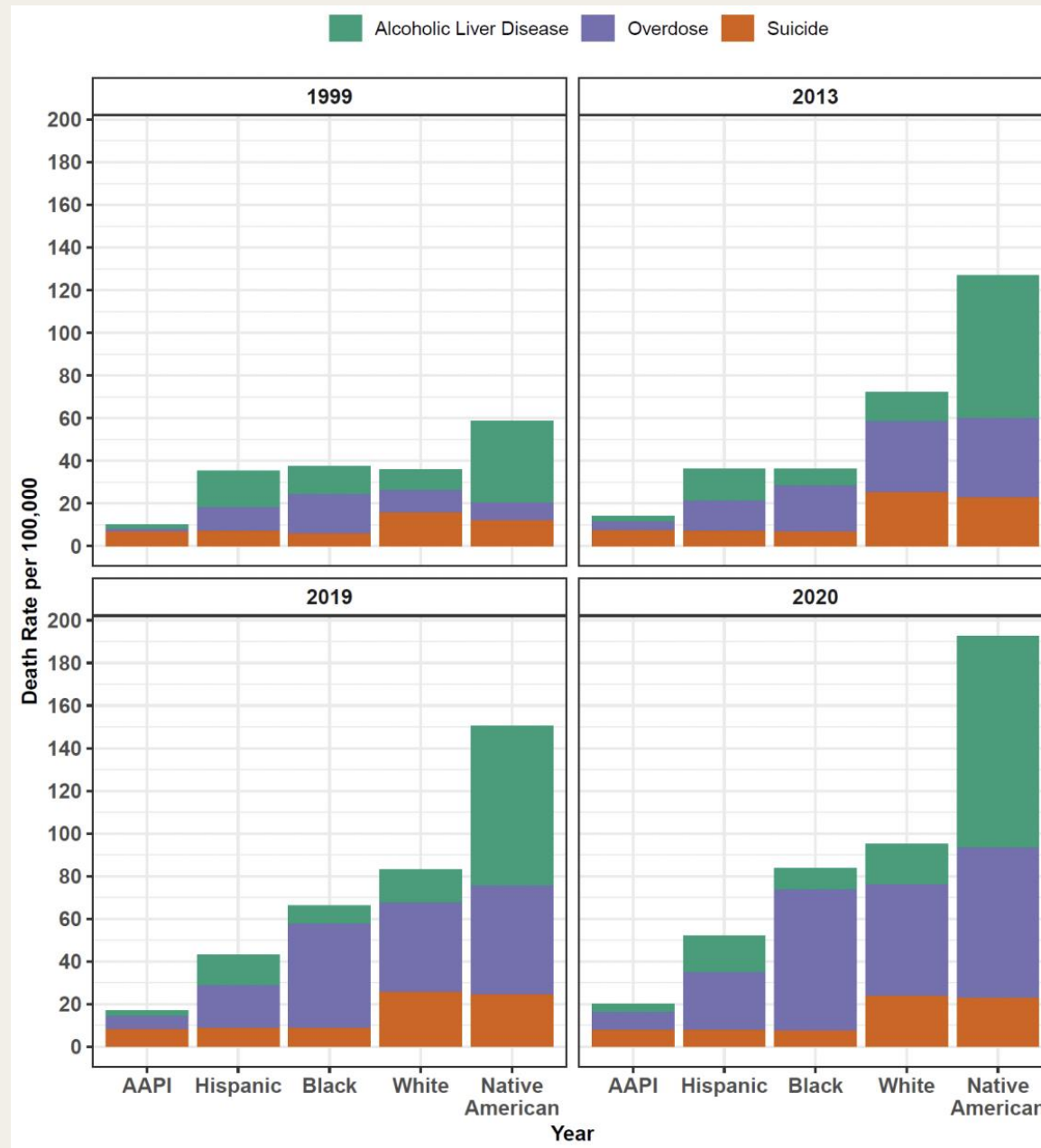
**A** Drug, alcohol, and suicide mortality in men and women aged 50-54 y



Source: Sterling P, Platt ML. Why Deaths of Despair Are Increasing in the US and Not Other Industrial Nations — Insights From Neuroscience and Anthropology. *JAMA Psychiatry*. 2022;79(4):368–374. doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2021.4209



# Deaths of Despair and indigenous people



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# Deaths of Despair

“People feel that their ability to contribute to society has been terribly thwarted.” - Anne Case

# Mattering at personal, relational, community levels

- Fostering a community of appreciation
- Workplace feelings of mattering related to:
  - *Productivity (Jung & Heppner, 2017)*
  - *Engagement (Prilleltensky 2019)*
  - *Well-being (Shuck & Reio, 2014)*
- Balancing personal, relational & communal well-being
  - *Autonomy & self-determination*
  - *Sense of solidarity & belonging*
  - *Equality of worth*

“Mattering is a unifying value since it builds upon personal values such as self-determination, communal values in making a contribution to others, and relational values such as caring and making other people feel respected and worthy.”  
(Prilleltensky, 2020, p. 26)

# Enhancing Mattering

- *Me cultures*
  - *Valorize personal achievement*
  - *Emphasize personal rights*
- *We Cultures*
  - *Balancing freedom and fairness*
  - *All people are valued and feel valued*
  - *All people have opportunities to add value*
- Addressing inequality (income & otherwise)
  - *Income inequality linked to multiple negative outcomes (Wilkinson & Pickett 2018)*

# Building sense of mattering (Flett, 2018)

**Table 3.2** Ways to convey to people that they matter

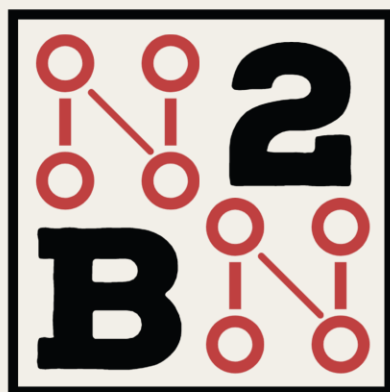
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Inquiring often about what someone wants or thinks
Investing time and energy into someone's wellbeing
Expressing a belief in someone and their capabilities
Letting someone know they are needed and relied upon
Going out of one's way to enhance someone's wellbeing
Wanting to know about someone's hopes, fears, interests, and values
Reacting with compassion when compassion is clearly needed
Acknowledging efforts, accomplishments, and achievements
Expressing gratitude as a form of appreciation
Sharing life events and past personal events, both positive and negative

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# ***Being Needed: Building relationships that matter to address social isolation and loneliness***

- National Institute on Disability, Independent Living & Rehabilitation Research
- Adults with serious mental illness (SMI)
- 5-year Disability & Rehabilitation Research Project (DRRP)
  - *Identifying risk & protective factors*
  - *Experiential factors contributing to mattering*
  - *Trial of volunteering intervention*



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“The worst thing that could happen to anyone is to never be used by anyone for anything. Thank you for using me, even though I didn’t want to be used by anybody.”

Kurt Vonnegut Jr. *Sirens of Titan*



# THANK YOU

Please reach out to us if you have additional questions:

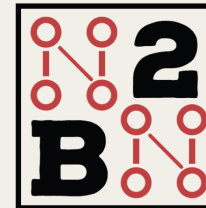
Bryan McCormick [bryan.mccormick@temple.edu](mailto:bryan.mccormick@temple.edu)

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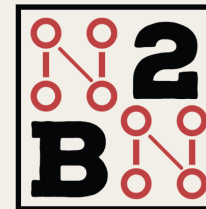


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# QUESTIONS?



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