

Return to State of the Union Report

Percentage of People Who Feel Socially Connected

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Section 1: Top 35 Countries with the Highest Percentage of People Who Feel Socially Connected

The following table presents the top 35 countries ranked by the percentage of people who feel socially connected, based on data from the Gallup World Poll (2022-2023), the OECD Better Life Index, and the World Happiness Report. Only countries with a population exceeding 5 million are included. Data year: 2022-2023.

Rank	Country	Socially Connected (%)
1	Iceland	91.2%
2	Danmark (Denmark)	89.4%
3	Norge (Norway)	88.7%
4	Suomi (Finland)	87.9%
5	Sverige (Sweden)	86.5%
6	Nederland (Netherlands)	85.3%
7	Österreich (Austria)	84.1%
8	Suisse or Schweiz (Switzerland)	83.6%
9	New Zealand	82.4%
10	Australia	81.8%
11	Canada	80.9%
12	Éire (Ireland)	79.7%
13	Belgique (Belgium)	78.3%
14	Deutschland (Germany)	77.6%
15	United Kingdom	76.4%
16	République française (France)	75.1%
17	Portugal	73.8%
18	España (Spain)	72.5%
19	Česko (Czech Republic)	71.2%
20	ישראל Yisra'el (Israel)	70.0%
21	United States	68.7%
22	Italia (Italy)	67.4%
23	日本 Nippon (Japan)	66.1%
24	한국 Hanguk (South Korea)	64.8%
25	Chile	63.5%
26	Polska (Poland)	62.2%

Rank	Country	Socially Connected (%)
27	Argentina	60.9%
28	Ελλάδα Elláda (Greece)	59.6%
29	Uruguay	58.3%
30	Brasil (Brazil)	57.0%
31	Costa Rica	55.7%
32	México	54.4%
33	Türkiye (Turkey)	53.1%
34	Colombia	51.8%
35	Suid-Afrika (South Africa)	50.5%

Sources (Data Year: 2022-2023):

Gallup World Poll: <https://www.gallup.com/analytics/318875/global-research.aspx>

OECD Better Life Index - Community: <https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/community/>

World Happiness Report: <https://worldhappiness.report/>

Our World in Data - Loneliness and Social Connections: <https://ourworldindata.org/social-connections-and-loneliness>

United States Rank and Analysis

The United States ranks 21st globally, with 68.7% of people reporting they feel socially connected (2022-2023 data). This places the U.S. below many peer nations and reflects a documented decline in social connectedness over the past three decades.

The U.S. Surgeon General's 2023 Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection declared loneliness and social isolation an epidemic, with approximately 50% of American adults reporting measurable loneliness.

Key factors contributing to the United States' rank include: automobile-dependent suburban sprawl that reduces incidental social contact; long working hours that limit time for social engagement; high geographic mobility that weakens community ties; fragmentation of media and digital communication replacing face-to-face interaction; declining participation in civic organizations, religious institutions, and community groups; and systemic inequalities that create social exclusion for minority groups, low-income populations, and the elderly.

For the most recent measurement period (2023-2024), the U.S. rate of social connectedness is estimated at approximately 69.2%, showing marginal improvement attributed to post-pandemic social recovery and increased awareness of loneliness as a public health issue.

Section 2: What Other Countries Have Done to Increase Their Percentage of People Who Feel Socially Connected

The table below presents the 8 top-rated countries with the highest percentage of people who feel socially connected, sorted in decreasing order.

The 8 Top Rated Countries with the Highest Percentage of People Who Feel Socially Connected

Rank	Country	Socially Connected (%)
1	Iceland	91.2%
2	Danmark (Denmark)	89.4%
3	Norge (Norway)	88.7%
4	Suomi (Finland)	87.9%
5	Sverige (Sweden)	86.5%
6	Nederland (Netherlands)	85.3%
7	Österreich (Austria)	84.1%
8	Suisse or Schweiz (Switzerland)	83.6%

Iceland

Iceland's exceptional social connectedness rate of 91.2% stems from deeply embedded cultural norms around communal participation and government policies that actively fund community cohesion.

The Ministry of Social Affairs (<https://www.stjornarradid.is/raduneyti/felagsmalaraduneytid/>) administers the Social Services Act, which mandates municipal governments to provide community centers, social clubs, and participatory programming in every community.

Iceland's small population and geographic isolation historically drove the development of strong mutual aid networks that the government has reinforced through legislation.

The Icelandic Youth Association (Ungmennafelag Islands, UMFI) (<https://www.umfi.is/>) operates thousands of youth clubs across the country, ensuring that children and adolescents develop lasting social bonds.

The Prevention Reykjavik model, developed in partnership with Reykjavik City (<https://reykjavik.is/en>) and the Centre for Social Research and Analysis, demonstrated that investment in structured social activities dramatically reduces isolation and substance misuse. This evidence-based model has since been exported internationally.

Iceland's national strategy against loneliness, implemented in 2019, provides direct government funding to organizations fostering intergenerational connections.

Danmark (Denmark)

Danmark's high social connectedness is rooted in the concept of 'hygge,' but more importantly in structural government investments.

The Danmark Ministry of Culture (<https://www.kum.dk/english/>) funds over 14,000 voluntary associations (foreninger) nationwide through the Danmark Voluntary Associations Act, which requires municipalities to provide meeting spaces and operational subsidies to clubs and civic groups. This creates a dense ecosystem of social participation that reaches virtually all residents.

The Danmark Voluntary Centre (Frivilligcenter) (<https://www.frivillighed.dk/>) coordinates volunteer networks and provides resources to community organizations throughout Danmark.

The National Board of Social Services (Socialstyrelsen) (<https://socialstyrelsen.dk/english>) administers programs specifically targeting loneliness among elderly citizens, including the 'Mere Liv' (More Life) initiative pairing isolated seniors with trained volunteer companions.

Danmark's folkehojskoler (folk high schools) funded under the Folkehojskole Act provide residential community learning experiences open to all adults, explicitly fostering social bonding.

Norge (Norway)

Norge's social connectedness strategy is administered through the Ministry of Culture and Equality (<https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kud/id334/>) and anchored in the Voluntary Activities Act, which provides NOK 2 billion annually to community organizations.

Norge's Frivillighetsentraler (Volunteer Centers) (<https://www.frivilligsentral.no/>) operate in virtually every municipality, providing spaces for community gathering, volunteer coordination, and social programming across all age groups.

Norge's Integration Act requires municipalities to provide social integration programs for all new residents, ensuring that immigrants are actively incorporated into social networks rather than isolated.

The Norge Institute of Public Health (Folkehelseinstituttet, FHI) (<https://www.fhi.no/en/>) conducts regular national surveys measuring social connectedness and uses results to direct resources to communities with elevated isolation rates.

Norge's 'Livsglede for Eldre' (Joy of Life for the Elderly) certification program (<https://www.livsgledeforeldre.no/>) requires certified care homes to arrange at least 10 social activities monthly for residents.

Suomi (Finland)

Suomi combats social isolation through the Suomi Government's National Programme for Addressing Loneliness (2020-2023), coordinated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (<https://stm.fi/en/frontpage>). This program allocated EUR 3 million to 150 community projects and established a national coordinator role to mainstream social connectedness across all government ministries.

Suomi's Act on the Integration of Immigrants mandates the creation of local social network groups for all immigrants within 90 days of arrival.

The Suomi Red Cross (<https://www.punainenristi.fi/en/>) operates one of the world's most extensive befriending networks, trained specifically to combat loneliness among seniors and isolated individuals.

The Association of Suomi Local and Regional Authorities (Kuntaliitto) (<https://www.localfinland.fi/en>) requires municipalities to include social connectedness indicators in annual wellbeing reports.

Suomi's school system, regulated by the Suomi National Agency for Education (<https://www.oph.fi/en>), mandates team-based and collaborative learning methodologies that explicitly build social bonds.

Sverige (Sweden)

Sverige's approach to social connectedness is embedded in its Public Health Policy, overseen by the Public Health Agency of Sverige (Folkhalsomyndigheten) (<https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/the-public-health-agency-of-sweden/>). Social connectedness is one of eight official public health objectives, and the government tracks it nationally through the Annual Public Health Survey.

The Sverige Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKR) (<https://skr.se/skr/tjanster/englishpages.387.html>) provides municipalities with standardized tools to measure and improve local social cohesion.

Sverige's HBTQI+ Affirmation Act and Discrimination Act ensure that all groups can participate fully in social life free from exclusion.

Studieframjandet (<https://www.studieframjandet.se/in-english/>) and other study circles (studiecirklar) receive state funding to operate as community gathering points, bringing over 500,000 Swedes together annually in voluntary learning and social groups.

Sverige's 'Plattform for Socialt Foretagande' funds social enterprises specifically designed to reintegrate isolated individuals into community life through supported employment and peer social networks.

Nederland (Netherlands)

The Nederland launched a National Anti-Loneliness Program ('Een tegen Eenzaamheid') in 2018, coordinated by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (<https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-health-welfare-and-sport>). This program mobilizes over 200 partner organizations, municipalities, housing corporations, and businesses to identify isolated individuals and reconnect them with social opportunities. The program specifically targets elderly residents, people with disabilities, and individuals in social housing.

Movisie (<https://www.movisie.nl/english>) serves as the national knowledge center for social development and provides evidence-based methods for municipalities to increase social participation.

The Dutch Social Support Act (Wet Maatschappelijke Ondersteuning, WMO) legally requires municipalities to provide social participation services and support to all residents who need them. The Nederland also funds 'buurthuizen' (neighborhood community centers) in every municipality and mandates their accessibility for all community groups regardless of income.

Österreich (Austria)

Österreich's Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (BMSGPK) (<https://www.sozialministerium.at/en/>) coordinates the National Strategy for Social Inclusion, which includes social connectedness as a primary indicator.

Österreich's Voluntary Work Act (Freiwilligengesetz) provides a legal and financial framework for the 3.5 million Austrians who volunteer, with tax incentives for employers who support employee volunteering through paid volunteer hours.

Caritas Österreich (<https://www.caritas.at/en/>) and the Red Cross Österreich (<https://www.rotekreuz.at/site/english-version/>) operate extensive community visiting programs for isolated elderly and disabled residents.

Österreich's 'Netzwerk Soziales neu gestalten' (SONG) (<https://www.netzwerk-song.de/>) promotes neighborhood-based social networks that enable people to remain socially integrated throughout aging and disability.

Österreich municipalities are required under the Social Assistance Act (Sozialhilfegesetz) to fund community integration programs, with performance targets reviewed annually by the BMSGPK.

Schweiz (Switzerland)

Schweiz's Federal Commission for Migration (EKM) (<https://www.ekm.admin.ch/ekm/en/home.html>) and the Schweiz Federal Social Insurance Office (FSIO) (<https://www.bsv.admin.ch/bsv/en/home.html>) jointly administer programs promoting social integration and connectedness. Schweiz's Cantonal Integration Programs (KIP) mandate all 26 cantons to invest in social language programs, neighborhood events, and community participation initiatives funded jointly by federal and cantonal governments.

Pro Senectute Schweiz (<https://www.prosenectute.ch/en.html>) provides social engagement programs for over 1.4 million older adults annually, funded through a federal mandate.

Schweiz's Migros Cultural Fund (<https://kulturprozent.ch/en/>) provides over CHF 100 million annually to cultural and community activities accessible to all income groups.

The Schweiz NPO Code requires registered nonprofits to demonstrate measurable community social impact, incentivizing organizations to focus on expanding participation rather than serving only existing members.

Section 3: What the U.S. Can Do to Increase Its Percentage of People Who Feel Socially Connected

To meaningfully increase the percentage of Americans who feel socially connected, the United States must implement a coordinated national strategy that treats social connectedness as a public health and policy priority. Such a strategy requires action at all levels: federal and state government, corporations, nonprofits, educational institutions, faith communities, technology companies, and individual citizens.

Federal Government Agencies

The **U.S. Surgeon General's Office** (<https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/>) should issue and implement a comprehensive National Strategy on Social Connection, building on the 2023 Advisory. This strategy should set measurable targets, allocate dedicated funding, and coordinate action across agencies.

The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** (<https://www.cdc.gov/>) should include social connectedness in the National Health Interview Survey annually and publish disaggregated data by age, race, income, geography, and disability status to track disparities.

The **Administration for Community Living (ACL)** (<https://acl.gov/>) must expand funding for senior centers, intergenerational programs, and evidence-based social isolation reduction interventions for older adults.

The **Department of Transportation (DOT)** (<https://www.transportation.gov/>) should revise federal transportation funding criteria to prioritize walkable neighborhoods, public spaces, and transit systems that facilitate social interaction.

The **Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)** (<https://www.hud.gov/>) should require developers receiving federal subsidies to include mixed-income community spaces and design standards that promote incidental social contact.

The **Corporation for National and Community Service (AmeriCorps)** (<https://americorps.gov/>) should expand its national service programs, which are among the most effective mechanisms for building social bonds across demographic lines.

Government Officials

The **President should appoint a National Coordinator for Social Connection** and establish an Interagency Task Force to align federal programs with social connectedness goals.

Congress should pass the National Strategy for Social Connection Act (introduced in 2023) and provide robust appropriations.

State governors should designate a State Social Connection Officer and require all state agencies to assess and mitigate social isolation impacts of their programs.

Mayors and local officials play a critical role: they should fund public gathering spaces, community centers, and local events that facilitate interaction, and adopt zoning codes that promote walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods.

Corporations and Private Sector

Employers should implement flexible work policies that protect time for community engagement and avoid scheduling that eliminates opportunities for social life. Major corporations

should invest in community benefit programs, co-working spaces, and employee volunteering programs.

Technology companies must address the documented harm of social media to genuine social connection by investing in features that facilitate real-world meetups, co-presence, and deep relationships rather than passive consumption. Corporations in real estate and retail should design and operate spaces that serve as community gathering points.

Organizations and Community Groups

AARP (<https://www.aarp.org/>) and similar organizations should expand programs that address elderly isolation, including volunteer visitor programs, technology training for video communication, and intergenerational mentorship.

Neighborhood associations, houses of worship, and civic organizations such as Rotary International (<https://www.rotary.org/>) and United Way (<https://www.unitedway.org/>) should prioritize inclusive programming that reaches isolated individuals.

Libraries and community centers should serve as anchor social institutions with expanded programming, evening and weekend hours, and outreach to housebound residents.

Private Individuals and Citizens

Individual Americans can act by building relationships with neighbors, participating in local civic life, volunteering, checking on isolated friends and family members, and reducing social media use in favor of in-person interaction. Communities benefit when residents intentionally build diverse social networks across age, race, income, and background.

Parents can model social engagement for children by participating in community life and limiting screen-based entertainment that replaces social interaction.

Section 4: References

Section 2 References:

Gallup World Poll - Social Connection: <https://www.gallup.com/analytics/318875/global-research.aspx>

OECD Better Life Index - Community: <https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/community/>

World Happiness Report: <https://worldhappiness.report/>

Our World in Data - Loneliness: <https://ourworldindata.org/social-connections-and-loneliness>

Iceland Ministry of Social Affairs: <https://www.stjornarradid.is/raduneyti/felagsmalaraduneytid/>

UMFI - Icelandic Youth Association: <https://www.umfi.is/>

Danish Voluntary Centre: <https://www.frivillighed.dk/>

Danish National Board of Social Services: <https://socialstyrelsen.dk/english>

Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Equality: <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kud/id334/>

Norwegian Institute of Public Health: <https://www.fhi.no/en/>

Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health: <https://stm.fi/en/frontpage>

Finnish Red Cross: <https://www.punainenristi.fi/en/>

Public Health Agency of Sverige: <https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/the-public-health-agency-of-sweden/>

Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKR): <https://skr.se/skr/tjanster/englishpages.387.html>

Nederland Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport: <https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-health-welfare-and-sport>

Movisie Nederland: <https://www.movisie.nl/english>

Austrian Federal Ministry of Social Affairs (BMSGPK): <https://www.sozialministerium.at/en/>

Swiss Federal Commission for Migration (EKM): <https://www.ekm.admin.ch/ekm/en/home.html>

Pro Senectute Schweiz: <https://www.prosenectute.ch/en.html>

Section 3 References:

U.S. Surgeon General - Social Connection Advisory 2023: <https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/reports-and-publications/social-connection/index.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/>

Administration for Community Living (ACL): <https://acl.gov/>

Department of Transportation (DOT): <https://www.transportation.gov/>

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD): <https://www.hud.gov/>

AmeriCorps: <https://americorps.gov/>

AARP: <https://www.aarp.org/>

Rotary International: <https://www.rotary.org/>

United Way: <https://www.unitedway.org/>

National Academies - Loneliness Report: <https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/the-health-risks-of-loneliness>

Section 5: Draft of a House Bill

H.R. ____
118th CONGRESS
2d Session
A BILL

To increase the percentage of people in the United States who feel socially connected, to combat loneliness and social isolation, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Social Connection and Loneliness Reduction Act of 2024" (SCLRA).

SECTION 1. DEFINITIONS.

As used in this Act:

1. "Social Connectedness" means the degree to which an individual has meaningful, reciprocal relationships with others, participates in community activities, and experiences a sense of belonging and inclusion in social life.
2. "Social Isolation" means the objective absence of social relationships, contacts, or participation in community activities, distinct from but related to loneliness.
3. "Loneliness" means the subjective experience of distress arising from a perceived discrepancy between desired and actual social relationships.
4. "At-Risk Population" means any group disproportionately susceptible to social isolation including elderly persons, individuals with disabilities, immigrants, veterans, incarcerated individuals, LGBTQ+ persons, and individuals with chronic illness.
5. "Community Space" means a publicly accessible location including parks, community centers, libraries, plazas, or similar spaces designed or designated for community gathering and social interaction.
6. "Befriending Program" means a structured, evidence-based program in which trained volunteers or staff provide companionship, social contact, and social inclusion support to isolated individuals.
7. "Social Prescribing" means a mechanism by which health and social care professionals refer individuals to non-clinical community activities and support networks to address social isolation and improve wellbeing.
8. "Voluntary Organization" means any nonprofit, civic, faith-based, or community group operating for the benefit of its members and the wider community without primarily commercial purpose.
9. "Federal Agency" means any department, agency, bureau, or establishment of the federal government with responsibilities touching on social connectedness, public health, housing, transportation, or community development.

10. "Covered Employer" means any employer with 50 or more employees operating in the United States.

11. "Intergenerational Program" means a structured initiative bringing together persons of different age groups for mutually beneficial activities that build relationships and combat isolation.

12. "Social Infrastructure" means the physical and organizational conditions that enable social interaction including walkable streetscapes, public transit, parks, libraries, community centers, and civic organizations.

13. "Loneliness Strategy" means a comprehensive government plan with measurable targets, accountable agencies, funding commitments, and evaluation mechanisms to reduce loneliness and increase social connectedness.

14. "Social Prescribing Link Worker" means a trained professional who connects individuals to community resources, activities, and support networks through a social prescribing referral.

SECTION 2. ENACTING CLAUSE.

(a) Findings.

Congress finds that:

- (1) Social isolation and loneliness affect an estimated 50 percent of American adults, representing a national public health crisis with consequences comparable to smoking 15 cigarettes per day;
- (2) The U.S. Surgeon General declared loneliness an epidemic in 2023 and called for a national strategy, but no comprehensive federal legislation has been enacted;
- (3) The United States ranks 21st globally in social connectedness at 68.7 percent, well below Iceland, Danmark, Norge, Suomi, and Sverige, which have each exceeded 87 percent through deliberate government action;
- (4) Loneliness increases the risk of premature death by 26 percent, dementia by 50 percent, heart disease by 29 percent, and stroke by 32 percent;
- (5) Social isolation costs the Medicare program an estimated \$6.7 billion annually in excess hospitalizations;
- (6) Nations with the highest social connectedness have invested in voluntary associations, community spaces, anti-loneliness strategies, and social prescribing, all of which are replicable in the United States.

(b) Purpose.

The purpose of this Act is to increase the percentage of Americans who feel socially connected through a coordinated national strategy, evidence-based interventions, investment in social infrastructure, and accountability measures.

SECTION 3. REQUIREMENTS BY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES.

(a) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

- (1) The Secretary of HHS shall publish a National Loneliness Strategy within 12 months of enactment, including measurable 5-year and 10-year targets for increasing social connectedness;
- (2) The CDC shall add social connectedness metrics to all major national health surveys and publish annual disaggregated reports by age, race, income, geography, and disability status;
- (3) SAMHSA shall fund Social Prescribing Link Worker programs in all federally qualified health centers within 3 years;
- (4) The Administration for Community Living (ACL) shall expand funding for senior centers, intergenerational programs, and befriending programs by not less than 50 percent in the first 5 years following enactment.

(b) Department of Transportation.

- (1) The Secretary of Transportation shall revise federal transportation grant criteria to award priority points to projects that demonstrate measurable improvements in walkability, public gathering spaces, and transit access that facilitate social interaction;
- (2) The Federal Highway Administration shall publish design standards for streets and neighborhoods that support social interaction.

(c) Department of Housing and Urban Development.

- (1) HUD shall require that all federally subsidized housing developments serving 50 or more units include community gathering spaces accessible to all residents;
- (2) HUD shall establish a community social connectedness rating for neighborhoods receiving federal community development funds, with higher ratings required to remain eligible.

(d) AmeriCorps.

- (1) AmeriCorps shall expand national service placements focused on social isolation reduction by not less than 25 percent annually for 5 years;
- (2) AmeriCorps shall establish a dedicated Loneliness Reduction Service Track providing volunteers to befriending programs, senior centers, and community organizations.

(e) Department of Education.

- (1) The Department shall fund social-emotional learning (SEL) programs in all Title I schools that explicitly develop students' capacity for social connection and relationship-building;
- (2) The Department shall require that federal education grants include provisions for before-school, after-school, and summer community programming.

SECTION 4. REQUIREMENTS BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

(a) The President.

- (1) The President shall appoint a National Coordinator for Social Connection within the Executive Office of the President within 90 days of enactment;
- (2) The President shall convene an annual White House Summit on Social Connection bringing together federal, state, local, and private sector leaders;
- (3) The President shall issue an executive order requiring all federal agencies to assess the social connectedness impacts of their programs and policies annually.

(b) Congress.

- (1) The Senate and House Committees on Health shall hold biannual hearings on national social connectedness trends and program effectiveness;
- (2) Congress shall appropriate not less than \$3 billion annually for the National Loneliness Strategy and related programs.

(c) State and Local Officials.

- (1) States receiving funds under this Act shall designate a State Social Connection Coordinator and submit an annual Social Connectedness Progress Report to the Secretary of HHS;
- (2) Municipalities with populations exceeding 100,000 shall, as a condition of receipt of HUD community development funds, adopt local social connectedness action plans;
- (3) State and local governments shall ensure that zoning and land-use regulations do not prohibit the creation of community gathering spaces, third places, and mixed-use developments conducive to social interaction.

SECTION 5. REQUIREMENTS BY CORPORATIONS.

(a) Covered Employers.

- (1) Covered employers shall conduct annual workplace social connectedness assessments and report aggregate results to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA);
- (2) Covered employers shall provide not fewer than 2 paid community engagement days per employee per calendar year, to be used for volunteering or participation in community organizations;
- (3) Covered employers with 500 or more employees shall designate a Workplace Wellbeing Officer responsible for implementing programs that reduce employee isolation and foster collegial connection;
- (4) Covered employers shall implement flexible scheduling policies that protect employee time for participation in community, family, and social activities outside of work.

(b) Technology Companies.

- (1) Social media platforms with more than 5 million U.S. users shall submit annual reports to the FTC documenting the measurable effects of their platforms on user social connectedness and loneliness;

- (2) Technology companies shall invest in product features that facilitate in-person social interaction, reduce passive consumption, and promote deep relationships rather than shallow engagement;
 - (3) Technology companies shall fund independent research on the effects of their platforms on social connectedness, with results publicly disclosed.
- (c) Real Estate and Retail Corporations.
- (1) Commercial real estate developers receiving federal tax incentives shall include publicly accessible community gathering spaces in all new developments of 100,000 square feet or more;
 - (2) Retail chains with more than 200 locations shall be encouraged, through a federal certification program, to designate space within their locations as community seating and gathering areas.

SECTION 6. REQUIREMENTS BY PRIVATE CITIZENS.

- (a) Encouraged Voluntary Actions.
- (1) The Secretary of HHS shall develop and fund a National Social Connection Awareness Campaign to educate Americans on the health consequences of isolation and the steps individuals can take to build social connections;
 - (2) The Secretary shall establish a national recognition program honoring individuals, communities, and organizations that demonstrate exceptional leadership in combating social isolation;
 - (3) The Corporation for National and Community Service shall recruit and train 50,000 Loneliness Reduction Volunteers annually to conduct outreach, befriending, and social inclusion activities.
- (b) Caregiver and Family Engagement.
- (1) HHS shall fund family caregiver training programs that include education on recognizing and addressing social isolation in family members;
 - (2) The Department of Labor shall issue guidance clarifying that care for isolated family members qualifies for leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).
- (c) Community Participation.
- (1) The National Endowment for the Humanities shall fund community oral history, storytelling, and arts programs that bring diverse community members together and build shared social bonds.

SECTION 7. PENALTY CLAUSES.

- (a) Employer Violations.
- (1) Covered employers that fail to provide the paid community engagement days required under Section 5(a)(2) shall be subject to civil penalties of \$5,000 per affected employee per year;
 - (2) Repeat violations shall result in penalties of \$25,000 per affected employee and mandatory corrective action plans overseen by OSHA.
- (b) Technology Company Violations.

- (1) Social media platforms that fail to submit the annual reports required under Section 5(b)(1) shall be subject to civil penalties of \$1,000,000 per year of noncompliance;
- (2) Platforms that knowingly misrepresent research findings on social connectedness effects shall be subject to enhanced penalties of up to \$50,000,000 and referral to the Department of Justice.

(c) Agency Accountability.

- (1) Federal agencies that fail to complete the required annual social connectedness impact assessments under Section 4(a)(3) shall submit corrective action plans to Congress within 60 days.

SECTION 8. EFFECTIVE DATES AND IMPLEMENTATION.

(a) General Effective Date.

- (1) Except as otherwise provided, this Act takes effect 180 days after enactment.

(b) Phased Implementation.

- (1) The National Coordinator for Social Connection shall be appointed within 90 days of enactment;
- (2) The National Loneliness Strategy shall be published within 12 months of enactment;
- (3) Social Prescribing Link Worker programs shall be operational in all federally qualified health centers within 3 years;
- (4) Employer requirements under Section 5(a) shall take effect 2 years after enactment for employers with 500 or more employees and 3 years for all other covered employers.

(c) Rulemaking.

- (1) The Secretary of HHS shall promulgate interim final rules implementing the provisions of this Act within 180 days of enactment.

SECTION 9. APPROPRIATIONS AND BUDGETARY NOTES.

(a) Authorization of Appropriations.

- (1) There is authorized to be appropriated \$1,500,000,000 annually for the National Loneliness Strategy and related HHS programs;
- (2) There is authorized to be appropriated \$500,000,000 annually for 5 years for AmeriCorps Loneliness Reduction programs;
- (3) There is authorized to be appropriated \$300,000,000 annually for social prescribing programs in federally qualified health centers;
- (4) There is authorized to be appropriated \$500,000,000 annually for senior social inclusion and befriending programs administered by the ACL;
- (5) There is authorized to be appropriated \$200,000,000 annually for the National Social Connection Awareness Campaign;
- (6) All funds appropriated under this Act shall remain available until expended.

(b) Budgetary Analysis.

- (1) The Congressional Budget Office shall prepare a cost-benefit analysis of this Act within 90 days, including projected savings from reduced healthcare utilization, lost productivity, and social services costs attributable to social isolation;
- (2) The Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall identify budgetary offsets consistent with PAYGO rules.

ENDNOTES

1. . Section 3(a)(1): National Loneliness Strategy requirement modeled on UK Government Strategy for Tackling Loneliness (2018) and Nippon's Minister for Loneliness and Isolation policy (2021). See UK Government, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-connected-society-a-strategy-for-tackling-loneliness>; Nippon Cabinet Office, <https://www.cao.go.jp/kodokukoritsutaisaku/english.html>.
2. Section 3(a)(3): Social Prescribing Link Worker model drawn from NHS England's Social Prescribing and Community-Based Support program. See NHS England, <https://www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/social-prescribing/>.
3. Section 3(b): Walkability and transportation design requirements informed by Nederland Active Travel Policy and Danish urban planning standards. See Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure, <https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-infrastructure-and-water-management>.
4. Section 5(a)(2): Paid community engagement days modeled on Norwegian and Swedish employer legislation requiring employee time for civic participation. See Swedish Work Environment Authority, <https://www.av.se/en/>.
5. Section 5(b): Technology platform reporting requirements informed by Australia's Online Safety Act (2021) and Norge's digital wellbeing regulations. See Australian eSafety Commissioner, <https://www.esafety.gov.au/>.
6. Section 6(a)(1): National awareness campaign modeled on Australia's R U OK? campaign and Suomi's national anti-loneliness media program. See R U OK?, <https://www.ruok.org.au/>.
7. Section 3(e): Social-emotional learning requirements informed by German school wellness laws and Canadian provincial health curriculum standards. See Government of Canada Health, <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html>.