Foundation for Social Connection

THE SOCIAL FRAMEWORK

Systems Of Cross-sector Integration and Action across the Lifespan Framework

Human beings are fundamentally social by nature. Substantial evidence documents the benefits of stronger social connections and the risks of disconnection (e.g., isolation and loneliness) for individuals, groups, organizations, and communities.(1-5) Research on social connection spans multiple scientific disciplines including medicine, sociology, evolutionary biology, psychology, epidemiology, neuroscience, communication, and anthropology. Much of this research has historically been conducted in siloes and relies on a wide range of research methods, which makes it challenging to develop a cohesive, systematic approach to promoting social connection.

The Foundation for Social Connection's **Scientific Leadership Council** developed the Systems Of Cross-sector Integration and Action across the Lifespan (SOCIAL) Framework to translate research into practice, accelerating progress toward a society that contributes to social connectedness across the lifespan.(6) The SOCIAL Framework draws upon the hybrid relationship of the socio-ecological model and the Health in All Policy (HiAP) Framework to illustrate how every sector of society and level of influence(7-8) can contribute to social connection and reduce social isolation and loneliness.(6,9-10)



Figure 1. Socio-Ecological Model

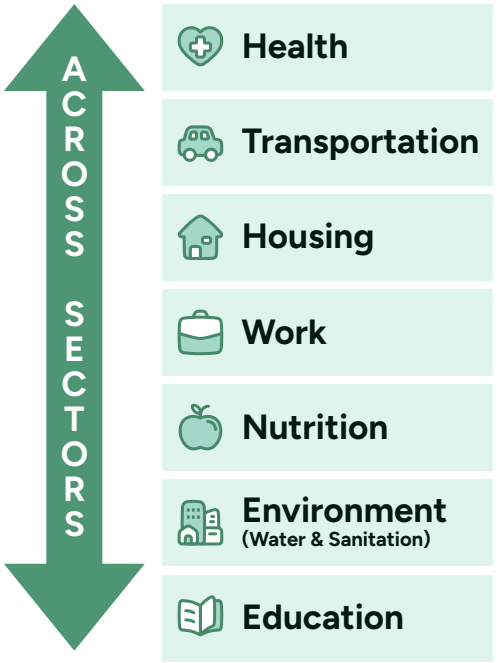


Figure 2. Health in All Policies Framework

Source: Holt-Lunstad J. 2022. Annu. Rev. Public Health 43:193-213

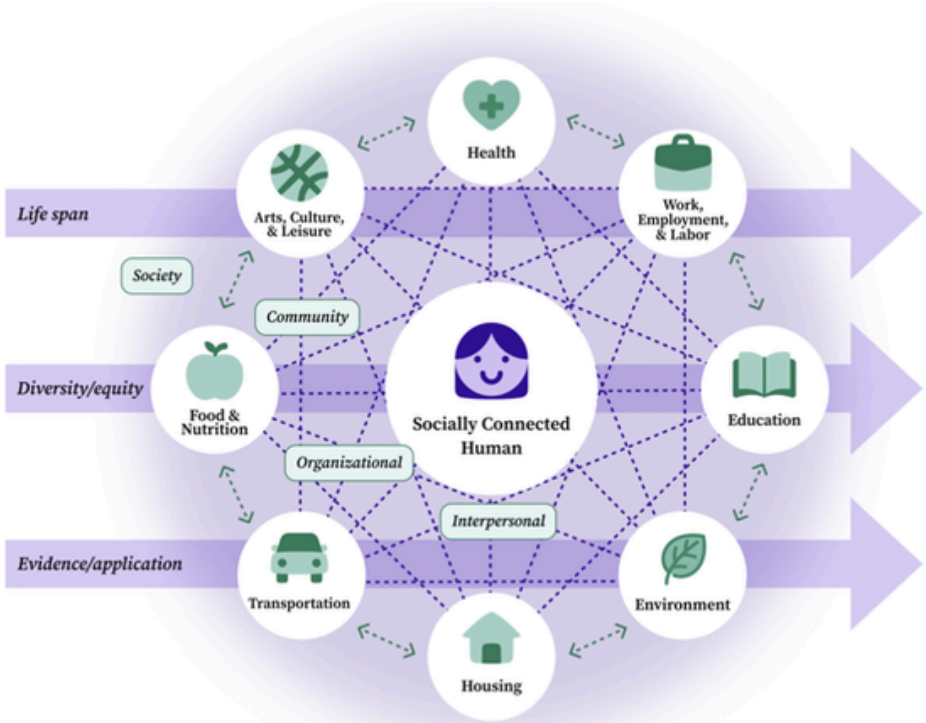


Figure 3. The SOCIAL Framework

The SOCIAL Framework has four main components, which provide guidance in identifying opportunities for intervention or support for population health:

- **Levels of Influence:** individual, interpersonal, institutional/organizational, community, and societal levels
- **Sectors of Society:** health; work, employment, and labor; education; housing; transportation; environment; food and nutrition; and arts, culture, and leisure
- **Cross-Cutting Themes:** represent issues that must be addressed across all levels and sectors represented in the framework (e.g., lifespan)
- **Opportunities for Collaboration:** acknowledge and encourage approaches that operate across many sectors and disciplines

We have completed comprehensive reports on each sector and the role each play in addressing social isolation, loneliness, and connection. Explore the full reports **here**.

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1. Holt-Lunstad J, Smith TB, Baker M, Harris T, Stephenson D. Loneliness and Social Isolation as Risk Factors for Mortality: A Meta-Analytic Review. Perspect Psychol Sci. 2015;10(2):227-237. doi:10.1177/1745691614568352
2. Pinquart M, Duberstein PR. Associations of social networks with cancer mortality: A meta-analysis. Crit Rev Oncol Hematol. 2010;75(2):122-137. doi:10.1016/j.critrevonc.2009.06.003
3. Holt-Lunstad J, Smith TB, Layton JB. Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-analytic Review. Brayne C, ed. PLoS Med. 2010;7(7):e1000316. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1000316
4. Zalta AK, Tirone V, Orlowska D, et al. Examining moderators of the relationship between social support and self-reported PTSD symptoms: A meta-analysis. Psychol Bull. 2021;147(1):33-54. doi:10.1037/bul0000316
5. Lyyra TM, Heikkinen RL. Perceived Social Support and Mortality in Older People. J Gerontol B Psychol Sci Soc Sci. 2006;61(3):S147-S152. doi:10.1093/geronb/61.3.S147
6. Holt-Lunstad J. Social Connection as a Public Health Issue: The Evidence and a Systemic Framework for Prioritizing the "Social" in Social Determinants of Health. Annu Rev Public Health. 2022;43(1):193- 213. doi:10.1146/annurev-publhealth-052020-110732
7. As stated in Holt-Lunstad (2018), the socio-ecological model underpinning the SOCIAL Framework has "a hierarchy of levels of influence" that shape our social relationships. The hierarchy's depiction as concentric circles reflects how the levels shape one another from both the top-down and bottom-up, thereby highlighting the need to address social connection at every level (1, 8)
8. Holt-Lunstad J. Why Social Relationships Are Important for Physical Health: A Systems Approach to Understanding and Modifying Risk and Protection. Annu Rev Psychol. 2018;69(1):437-458. doi:10.1146/annurev-psych-122216-011902
9. CDC. Health in All Policies. Office of the Associate Director for Policy and Strategy. Published June 18, 2019. Accessed January 31, 2023. https://www.cdc.gov/policy/hiap/index.html
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