

Social Distancing Heightens Feelings of Isolation and Loneliness in Young People

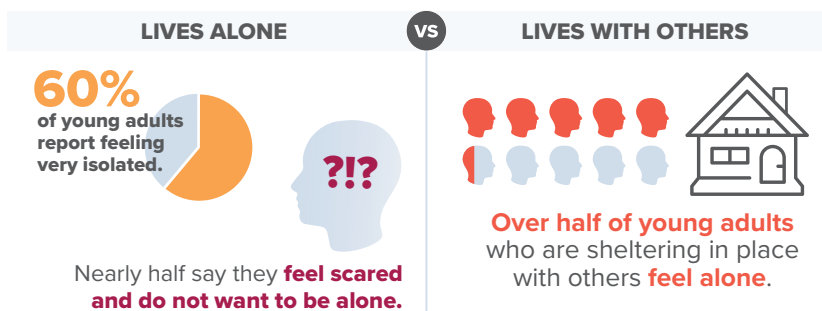
A new survey by Springtide™ Research Institute found that for many young adults, sheltering in place and social distancing evoke fear and uncertainty, leading to increased levels of isolation, loneliness, and anxiety. The survey found that the single most important way to mitigate loneliness is for trusted adults to reach out and connect with young people.

Social Distancing Heightens Loneliness

Springtide surveyed a nationally representative sample of 508 young adults ages 18–25. 1 in 3 (32%) of these respondents live alone. These solo dwellers report some of the most troubling data of this survey. Within this particular subset, 6 in 10 report feeling very isolated, and nearly half say they feel scared and do not want to be alone.

Shelter-in-Place and Loneliness

US Young Adults, 18–25 years of age



Yet, even among young adults who are sheltering in place with others, half of the participants say they feel alone. Many (39%) report their loneliness results from no one checking in with them.

The survey found that when a trusted adult outside of the home connected with young people, nearly 8 in 10 report feeling less lonely.

SUMMARY:

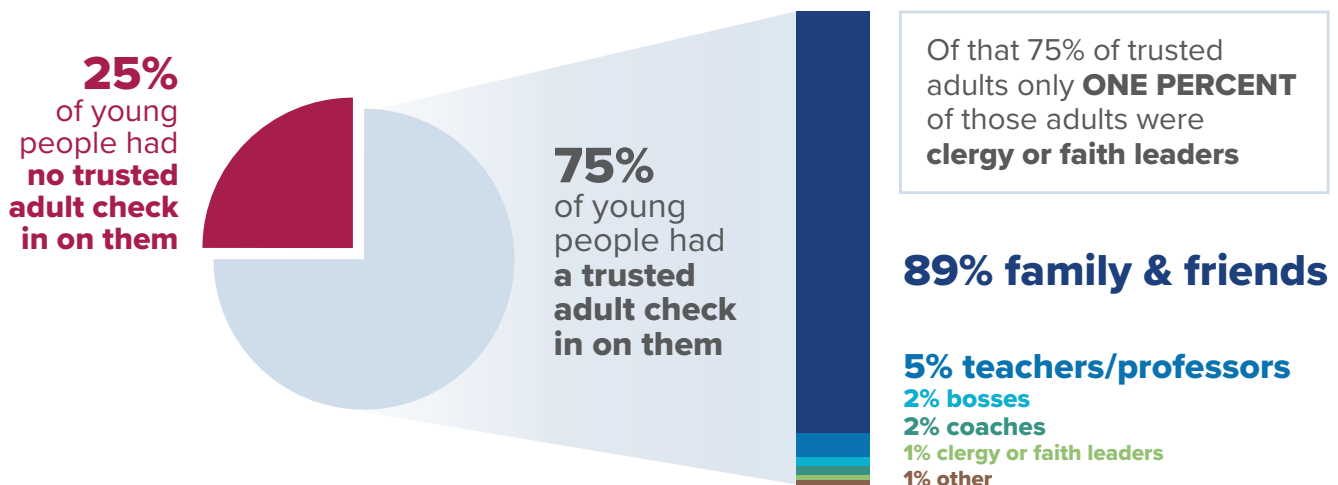
- The survey consisted of a national panel of 508 respondents ages 18–25, with a margin of error of +/- 4% at a 95% confidence level, administered between March 24 and March 31, 2020.
- 1 in 3 respondents are sheltering in place alone.
- 63% of all respondents say they do not feel as alone or isolated when people reach out to them.
- Among young adults who are sheltering in place with others, half still say they feel alone, and nearly 8 in 10 report feeling less lonely when a trusted adult outside of the home checks in on them.
- About 58% say they feel scared and uncertain, and 66% of those who feel this way say they don't have anyone to talk to about their emotions. Thus, they feel isolated because no one is reaching out to them.
- Respondents are not experiencing a decrease in their faith; in fact, 35% have increased their faith, and 47% have stayed the same.
- Nearly 46% have started new religious practices, and 43% have participated in at least one religious service online.
- Yet 50% of those who have attended an online service report that they don't have anyone to talk to about how they are feeling, and 44% report feeling isolated because no one has reached out to them.

[Springtideresearch.org/new-social-distancing-study/](https://springtideresearch.org/new-social-distancing-study/)

Of those adults who reached out to young people, the most common connection was family and friends (89%), followed by teachers/professors (5%), bosses (2%), and clergy or faith leaders (less than 1%).

Impact of Trusted Adults Checking In

Nearly 8 out of 10 young adults (18–25 years of age) who have had a trusted adult check on them report feeling less lonely.



Effect on Faith and Religious Beliefs

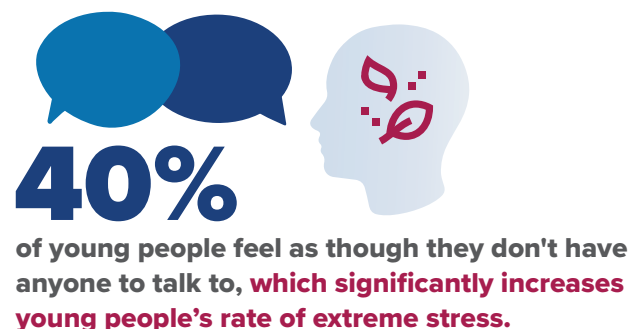
The survey found that young adults are not experiencing a decrease in their faith during social distancing. In fact, 35% report increased faith, while 47% report their level of faith staying the same. Almost half (46%) of respondents report having started new religious practices, and 43% have participated in at least one religious service online.

7 in 10 people who watched an online service say that interacting with people, even virtually, makes them feel more connected. Yet, nearly half of those people still report feeling isolated because no one is reaching out to them individually.

Despite some young adults finding value in churches and religious or faith communities providing online rituals and virtual spaces during this time of social isolation, the survey found that what mitigates their experience of loneliness is the act of caring adults checking in and connecting with them.

Meaningful Adult Relationships Mitigate Loneliness and Isolation

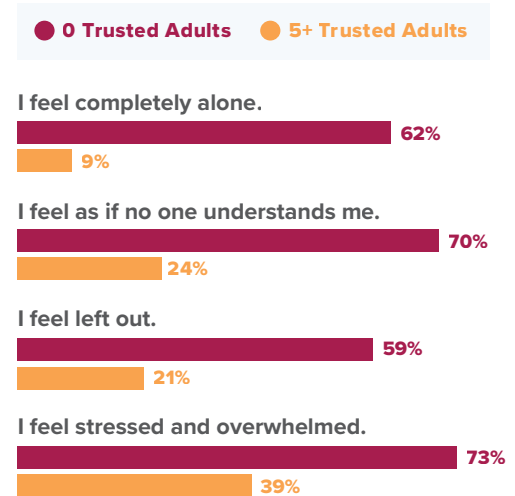
The survey findings follow a 2020 Springtide study report, *Belonging: Reconnecting America's Loneliness Generation*, which examined the effects of loneliness on a nationally representative sample of 1,000 young people ages 13–25 across the United States. *Belonging* found that 40% of young people feel as though they don't have anyone to talk to, resulting in increased rates of extreme stress.



Data from *Belonging* indicates that unlike previous generations, young people's positive feelings of belonging today are not affected by affiliation with social groups and institutions, including churches and religious groups. This is due in part to eroding trust in institutions and a perception that certain traditional tools for connecting are ineffective.

Belonging found that meaningful adult relationships are critical to a young person's well-being. The higher the number of positive adult relationships that are authentic, vulnerable, curious, warm, and structured, the more a young person will be able to cultivate positive feelings of belonging. The study reported that 62% of young people with 0 trusted adult relationships feel completely alone. Conversely, for young people with 5 or more trusted adult relationships, only 9% report feeling alone.

Percentages of 13-to-25-year-olds who AGREE with each statement.



“We believe there is an urgency for those working with young people to understand the need to be connected during this time of social distancing. This is an important moment for spiritual leaders to do what is at the heart of their faith.”

—Dr. Josh Packard

Springtide Research Institute listens to the inner and outer lives of young people ages 13–25. We seek to help those who care about young people care better, by amplifying young people's lived experiences through unbiased research and generating evidence-based actionable insights.