

# Making Sense of It All: The AARP Foundation Isolation Framework

## About AARP Foundation

The AARP Foundation, a non-profit affiliate of AARP, is committed to addressing the needs of Americans age 50 and over. AARP Foundation works with local organizations and national programs to support effective initiatives in the areas of housing, income, hunger, and isolation.

The AARP Foundation Isolation Team seeks to understand and address isolation in Americans aged 50+ to prevent and correct common problems, such as loneliness and disconnectedness.

## About ResearchWorks

We're dedicated to helping socially-minded organizations advance their mission and improve their bottom line. We provide marketing and communication strategies to life sciences, hospitals, nonprofits, medical device companies, and others working for improved health.

For more information, go to:  
[www.researchworks.com](http://www.researchworks.com)

## The Challenge

AARP is trusted by the public as a provider of the most accurate information on issues that affect older adults. ResearchWorks was brought on board to help AARP Foundation's Isolation Team figure out where they could do the most good and have the biggest impact in reducing isolation in older adults. As we discovered, there are many disciplines that work to reduce isolation – ranging from social work to medicine to occupational therapy– and they all view the problem differently. The challenges in this project were many: How to synthesize the multiple approaches and frameworks from several disciplines into a meaningful and useful framework? How to best use the framework to advance the field? And finally, what role should the AARP Foundation play in tackling this important issue??

## The Results

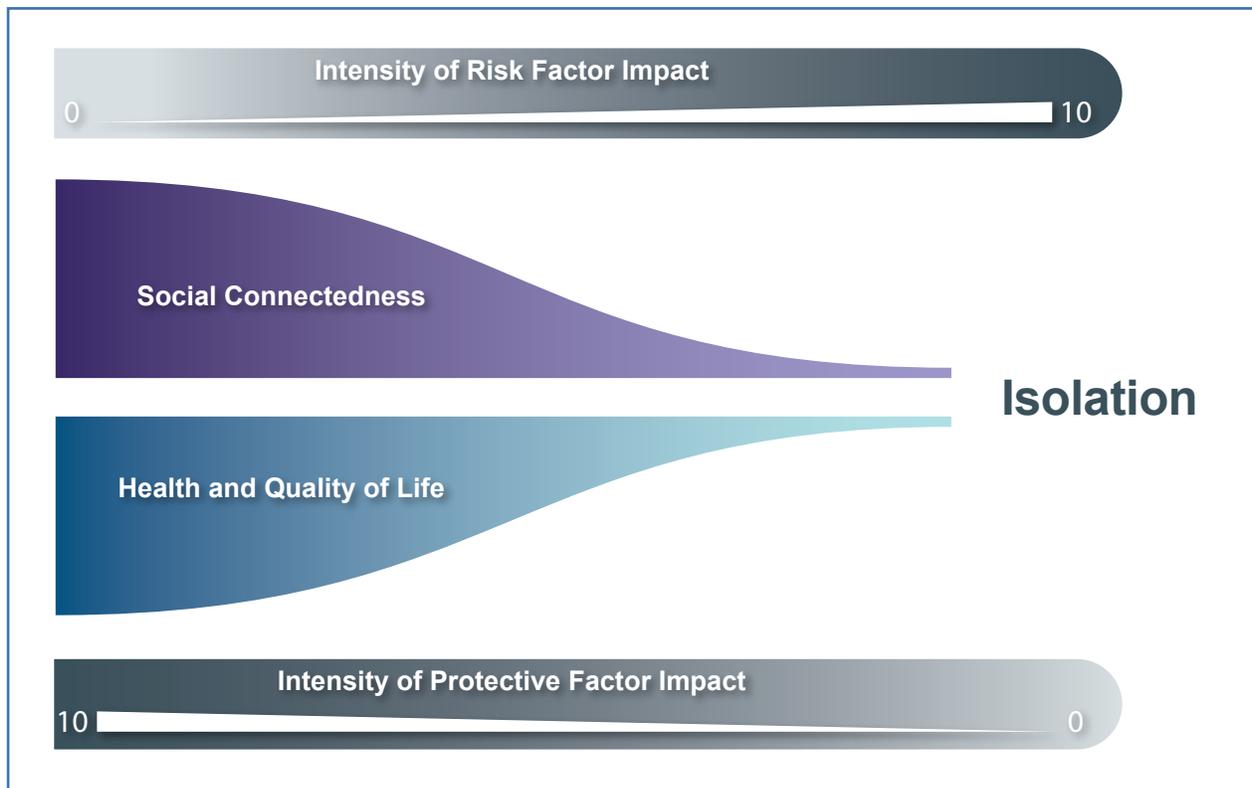
The findings and conclusions, along with the unified definition of isolation (see below), were contained in a research paper that provided the backbone for the final step, a workshop with the AARP Foundation and many experts and practitioners identified in our research. We were then able to don our strategy hats and assist the AARP Foundation with identifying and leveraging the resources needed to become a leader in the field of isolation among elder adults. This project helped them elevate the national discussion of isolation and provide a roadmap for moving forward.

## Unified Definition of Isolation

By interviewing subject matter experts in a variety of scientific fields and conducting a thorough review of the literature, ResearchWorks was able to synthesize key themes and consolidate the results into a unified definition of isolation.



*Isolation is the experience of diminished social connectedness and health and quality of life, stemming from a process whereby the impact of risk factors outweighs the impact of any existing protective factors. A person's lack of social connectedness is measured by the quality, type, frequency, and emotional satisfaction of social contacts. A person's health and quality of life is measured by an individual's physical, social, and psychological health; ability and motivation to access adequate supports for themselves; and the quality of the environment and community in which they live.*



## The Isolation Framework

ResearchWorks developed this framework based on an understanding of how isolation occurs and isolation's impact on quality of life.

When the intensity of the impact of risk factors overcomes the intensity of the impact of any protective factors, a person's risk of isolation increases.

The AARPF Isolation report is available at [http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/aarp\\_foundation/2012\\_PDFs/AARP-Foundation-Isolation-Framework-Report.pdf](http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/aarp_foundation/2012_PDFs/AARP-Foundation-Isolation-Framework-Report.pdf)