

Reaching people with disabilities to learn about their experiences of social connection and loneliness

Abstract

People with disabilities often feel lonely and isolated more than those without disabilities. But we wanted to learn more about how this happens to people with different types of disabilities.

Here's what we did:

1. We talked to over 2,100 people with disabilities to see if the kind of disability they have and how we found them for the study made a difference in how connected they feel to others.
2. We looked at four things to understand how connected they felt:
 - ☐ How happy they were with their social activities.
 - ☐ How many friends they had.
 - ☐ How good their friendships were.
 - ☐ If they felt lonely.
3. We found that not having a job, having a mental illness, not having a way to get around for social stuff, and how we found them for the study (a method called MTurk) were linked to them feeling less connected to others.

This study shows that we can learn more about why people with disabilities feel lonely and isolated by using different ways to find them for studies. This is especially important for those with mental illnesses who might not be part of groups but are at higher risk for feeling lonely and isolated.

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