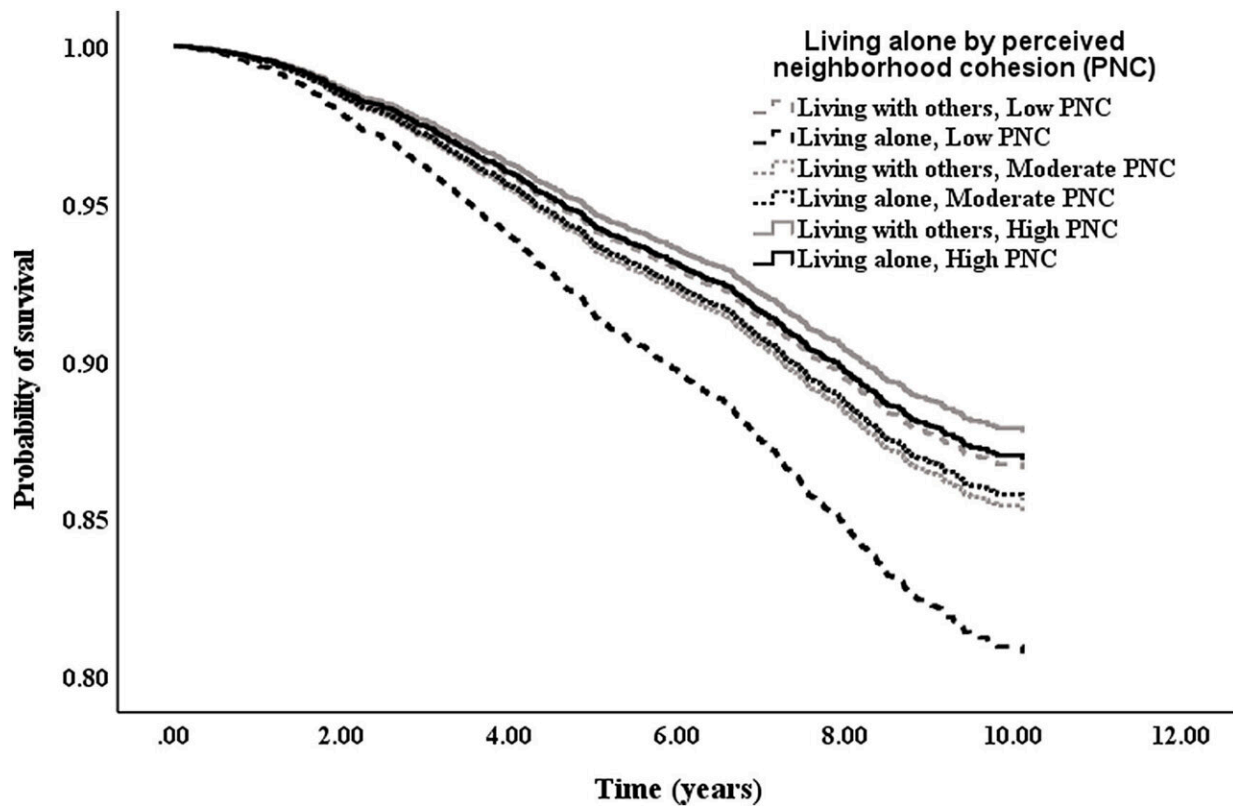


Strong connection to neighbors may improve health outcomes

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Survival curves by living alone at low (0–33%), moderate (34–66%), and high (67–100%) levels of perceived neighborhood cohesion. Credit: *Social Science & Medicine* (2022). DOI: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2022.115568

Strong neighborhood connections reduced the negative impact of living alone on the death rates of older Chinese Americans, according to

Rutgers researchers.

The study, published in *Social Science and Medicine*, examined if neighborhood cohesion in Chinese Americans living in the greater Chicago area would reduce the impact of living alone on early death.

"Older Chinese Americans who lived by themselves in neighborhoods with low cohesion were much more likely to die earlier than those who lived by themselves in neighborhoods with strong cohesion," said Yanping Jiang, author of the study and faculty member at the Center for Population Behavioral Health at Rutgers Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research.

In the United States, about 27 percent of people ages 60 and older live alone, according to Pew Research Center. Living alone has been found to be associated with various poor health outcomes, such as depression, [cardiovascular disease](#), dementia, poor biological health and [premature death](#). Therefore, researchers found it important to identify which factors may help mitigate the negative effects of living alone.

Using data from the Population Study of Chinese Elderly in Chicago (PINE), the researchers examined whether the perception of trust and connection among neighbors had an impact on the risk of death in this population.

They found participants who lived alone and reported low interaction or connection with their neighbors had a 48.5 percent increased risk of death than their peers living with others, whereas participants who lived alone and reported strong cohesion with their neighborhood had a similar risk of death compared to those living with others.

With a clearer understanding of how different types of neighborhoods can affect the health of individuals, [social policies](#) and public health

initiatives can be improved to create better neighborhood environments for promoting health of older adults, researchers said.

"Our findings show the particular challenges faced by older adults who live alone in communities with little interaction or connection," said Jiang, who is an instructor at the Rutgers Department of Family Medicine and Community Health. "Enhancing neighborhood cohesion may be a promising way to reduce [early death](#) for older adults who live alone."

Researchers encourage future studies to examine other factors involved in neighborhoods and how they influence the health of [older adults](#). Additionally, the public also can play a role in improving community health by reaching out and being kind to neighbors, particularly those who live alone.

More information: Yanping Jiang et al, Living alone and all-cause mortality in community-dwelling older adults: The moderating role of perceived neighborhood cohesion, *Social Science & Medicine* (2022). [DOI: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2022.115568](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2022.115568)

Provided by Rutgers University

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