



# The Citizen Connections Report **2023**



*“What is social connectedness? When you feel like you belong and have the support and care you need, as well as the number, quality, and diversity of relationships that you want.” - The CDC*

**Over the last few years, a global crisis of connection has clearly emerged. The conversation of people being less connected amidst an epidemic of loneliness has permeated discussions across our social fabric:**

- The U.S. Surgeon General reports loneliness more fatal than smoking & obesity
- Mount Sinai Hospital in Canada attribute 45,000 deaths/year to loneliness
- The UK appointed a Minister of Loneliness in 2018, calling loneliness “one of the greatest public health challenges of our time”

As a communications agency with a mission “to make every conversation count” - and knowing conversation is the catalyst for connection - Citizen got curious about today’s crisis of connection. What is driving it and how can we help?



## Introducing the **2023 Citizen Connections Report**



Surveying 3000+ consumers across the US, Canada and the UK to get a better understanding of their interest and behaviours around social connection, Citizen’s findings were clear:  
**Almost universally, people desire more connection - but they’re held back.**



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This gap between wanting connection but being held back is what we're calling **The Connection Deficit.**

Three key contributors to The Connection Deficit emerged:

**WE'VE DELIBERATELY SHRUNK OUR SOCIAL CIRCLES.**

**Nearly 30%** are less likely to talk about anything controversial

**15% have lost friends** due to polarization, while 16% have found new friends that share their beliefs

**44% of Gen Z respondents** chose "myself" over all others when asked who they feel more connected to since 2020

**IT'S NOT ABOUT ONLINE VS. OFFLINE - WE NEED BOTH.**

**78% prefer spending time with others in real life,** Why? Improved communication & camaraderie

A quarter **found resonance in discovering like-minded individuals** online. Why? convenience and specificity

**Only 12% of total respondents trust those that they meet online**

**MENTAL HEALTH IS THE BIGGEST BARRIER.**

**57% agree with the statement** "I feel lonely sometimes even when I am surrounded by people"

**20% are more anxious in social settings**

Mental Health was the **#1 topic** respondents want to see brands addressing across all markets



## THE NEW MANDATE FOR BRANDS: **TACKLING SOCIAL CONNECTION**

### Letting purpose drive the change

Brands exist now to cultivate a better world; communications leaders are uniquely positioned to help organizations tackle the connection deficit.

### Changing the offline/online conversation

It's time to take the online vs. offline connection out of opposite corners; brands have an opportunity to step in and shape the next era of online conversation.

### Helping people disagree

Brands can help foster the free flow of conversation, where we truly listen to each other, where ideas are exchanged and minds are open.

### Finding the weak ties

Instead of protecting consumers from unexpected chatter, brands should be encouraging these "weak ties" as ways to bolster social connection and find purpose in our community.