



Dear UCNets Participant,

Hello again. We had already been planning on reaching out to you to thank you again for taking part in all three waves of the UC Berkeley Social Network Study and now with the coronavirus pandemic, it's even more timely. It's perfect reading for sheltering in place! We wanted to share some results of the study. Plus, we have an exciting announcement about a new opportunity for you. Given the coronavirus outbreak, we now additionally want to take this time to wish you all well during this hectic time. At the end of this newsletter you'll also find some resources that you may find useful.

Here's a quick summary of the newsletter:

- Thanks to you, the entire UCNets project was a complete success!
- We are now analyzing data to help us answer our big questions.
 - Scroll down to read more on what we are learning about.
- Our work is not finished!
 - We have received additional funding from the National Institutes of Health and are partnering with physicians at UCSF to continue research on the link between **personal networks and heart health**.
 - You have an opportunity to join us in this exciting new research and we hope that you do.

UCNets Completed!

First, we have officially concluded all three waves of the original study, which we celebrated with cake. We were able to connect and follow up with **over 90% of all participants**. This is a huge accomplishment and we have all of you to thank for it!

Second, we have begun to analyze data from all 3 waves and will be presenting our findings at major conferences both here in the Bay Area and with our colleagues in Europe. Because of the information you have shared with us, we are closer to understanding how networks change over time, and how they may be especially important for health and well-being.



The Importance of Networks

In a topic relevant for today and made especially so by the shelter-in-place response to the pandemic, is the issue of loneliness and social isolation. We – [Child and Lawton](#) - found that the young adults in UCNets reported twice as many days lonely and isolated than late middle-age adults, despite, paradoxically, having larger networks. Young adults with more informal social participation and weekly religious attendance reported fewer days isolated compared to young adults who weren't as connected. Among late middle-age adults, people with a larger number of close kin and were embedded in a family reported fewer days of loneliness. For both age groups, people who were satisfied with their network had fewer lonely and isolated days (See Figure 1). We think that young people are in the process of building friendship circles and developing romantic relationships, so they are more sensitive to how their personal networks 'work' for them. With older adults, having stable family relationships are what define satisfactory networks. Some young adults may find themselves needing to make the effort to have active social ties, whereas older adults without supportive family may need to develop and strengthen ties with close friends and what we call 'fictive kin' – people who are like family.

Figure 1a. Average Number of Days Lonely

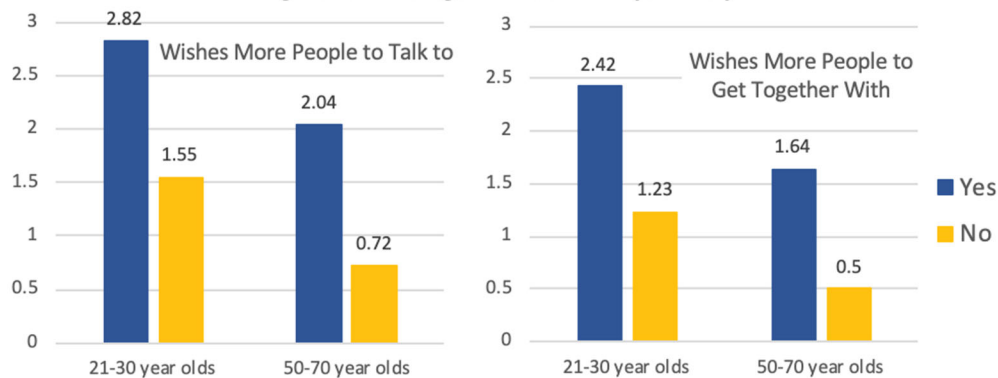
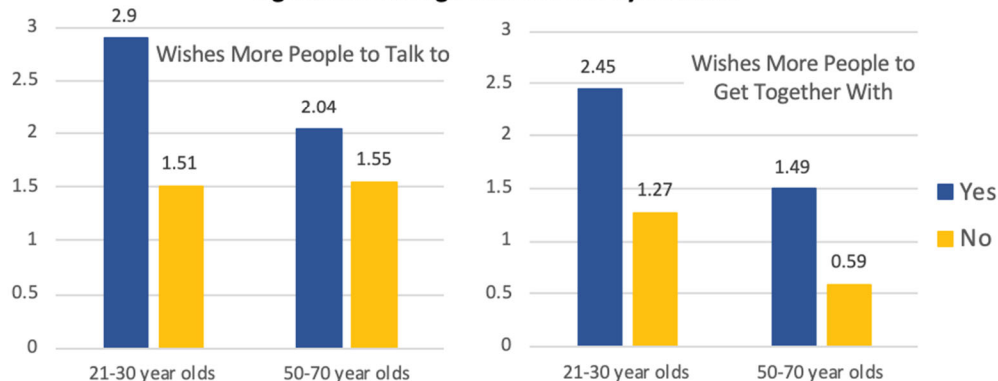


Figure 1b. Average Number of Days Isolated

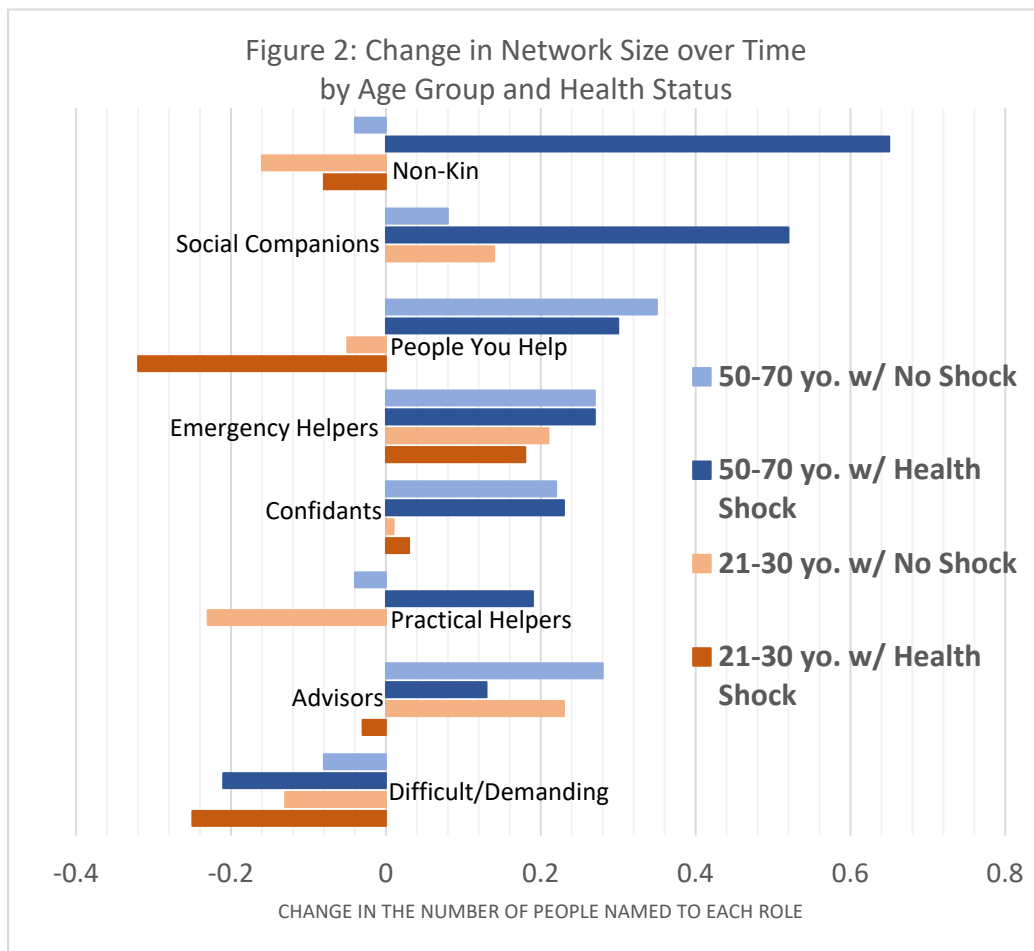


How Health Events Affect Networks

As you may recall, one question in particular we were interested in examining is how networks change in response to changes in health. Below, we examined change in the number of people

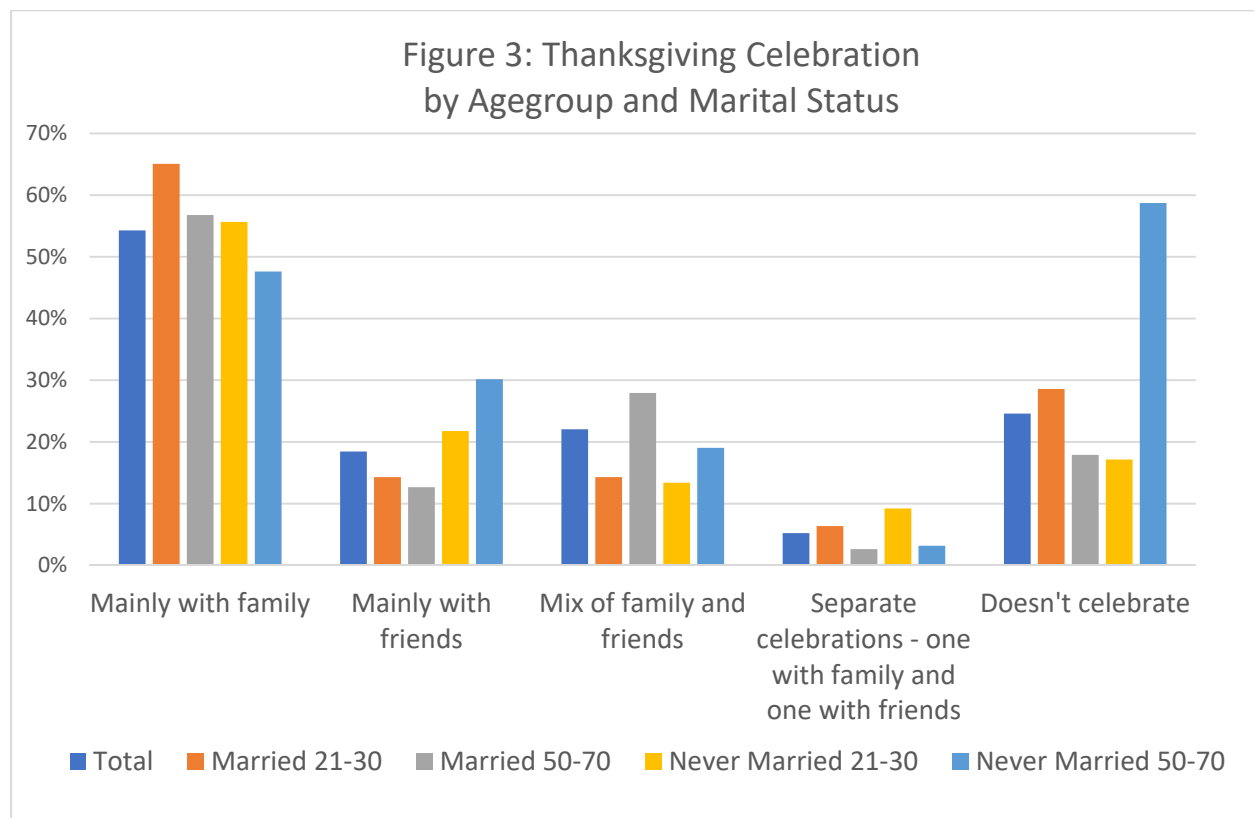
named to each type of role (social companion, emergency helper, etc.) and whether or not someone had experienced a major health shock (i.e., was diagnosed with an illness, hospitalized, or disabled) in the past year. Again we compare the two age groups. As you can see below in Figure 2, participants in the 50-70 year old group who reported a major health shock (dark blue bars) reported a relatively large increase in non-kin ties and social companions, on average, compared with other groups. All older adults experienced a slight increase in the number of people named as confidants. We conclude that rather than being ignored, people do rally to be more involved with their elders.

Younger adults who experienced a health shock (dark orange bars) reported a relatively large decrease in the number of people who relied on them for help ("people you help"). Interestingly, there is a distinct pattern by age: older adults provided help to an increasing number of people, on average, compared with younger adults. However, while the number of people helped *decreased* for younger adults who experienced a health shock, we do not see a similar decrease for the older cohort who also experienced a health shock. This suggests older adults are still relied upon during times of ill health. Neither health nor age seemed to account for the number of difficult and demanding ties in the network, which declined slightly for everyone, on average



Who do you celebrate Thanksgiving with?

Thanksgiving is still a few months away but we wanted to show a holiday fits into our lives and our families. We found that over 80% of you celebrates Thanksgiving, and the majority do so with their family (in Figure 3). There are some differences by age group. A slightly higher percentage of young adults spend the day with friends than older adults. Yet older adults are more likely to spend the holiday with a mixture of friends and family than young adults. Being married – especially for older adults – connects one more strongly to the event. In contrast, among young adults, the married were the least likely to celebrate compared to never married, whereas among older adults the opposite is seen: the never married are the least likely to have a celebration. While the phenomenon of 'Friendsgiving' (a separate celebration usually done entirely with friends) may seem like a popular trend, less than 10% of young adults (and less than 3% of older adults) reported that they attended separate celebrations.



Next, we turn to some additional news about the future of UCNets and related research. Now that our initial study is completed, our Principal Investigator, Professor Claude Fischer, will be stepping down from leading the UCNets project. In his place, Dr. Stephanie Child, who began her postdoc with us in 2016, is now leading her own projects as part of the UCNets study and will continue to oversee many aspects of the data analyses and plans for continuing the panel.

As we mentioned in the summary above, Dr. Child has received new funding from the National Institutes of Health to continue research on the UCNets study. She has been working closely

with physicians at the UCSF Medical Campus and as part of these efforts, she will oversee a study on personal networks and cardiovascular health. This project is called 'Health-E-Heart'.

This means there's still ways for you to continue participating in UCNets! Here's how you can continue to support our mission:

- We are inviting all of our UCNets participants to take part in Health E-Heart, a collaboration led by Dr. Child and physicians at UCSF.
- Health E-Heart is being conducted entirely online and has already enrolled over 100,000 participants from all over the world.
- **In the next several weeks, you will receive an email from the UCNets study with a special link to join the study.**
- By joining the study, your data will contribute to knowledge about the role that personal networks, social support, and major life events play in cardiovascular health.

Finally, we'd like to provide you with a few resources to help you and your network get through the next few weeks as best we can.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) is continuing to provide information as quickly and reliably as possible about the novel coronavirus, COVID-19.

We also recommend checking in with your local county website for the most accurate and up to date information about what is happening near you, including school and restaurant closures. For example, here is the [Alameda County Public Health webpage](#).

For parents and grandparents, KQED has compiled a list of resources for continuing to [learn at home](#). Oakland Unified School District has closed, but has also announced it will continue to provide meals to children who receive low or no-cost lunches. Check with your school district to see if similar meals are available for you, or if you might consider donating to these efforts.

If you, or someone you know is co-quarantined in an abusive relationship, please contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline: CALL 1-800-799-7233, TTY 1-800-787-3224 or CHAT at [thehotline.org](#)

Please check in on your neighbors, those in your network, both near and afar, and please let us know if there is anything we can do to be of service.

Please take care from all of us at UCNets.

Claude Fischer, Leora Lawton, and Stephanie Child