Purpose
To document and disseminate a comprehensive analysis of senior population health on a national and state-by-state basis across ~35 measures.

Rationale
According to the U.S. Census Bureau, adults ages 65 and older now compromise more than 15% of the total population. By 2030, that number will climb significantly to 20%. Adults ages 65 and older are the largest consumers of health care and this poses challenges to policy-makers, Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security in addition to the effect on families, communities and health care providers including advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs).

Social isolation is an absence of meaningful social relationships. According to the National Institute on Aging, social isolation and loneliness are associated with high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, anxiety, depression, cognitive decline, Alzheimer’s disease and increased risk of mortality.

Theoretical Framework
America’s Health Rankings® Senior Data Update was built upon the World Health Organization (WHO) definition of health. The model reflects that determinants of health directly influence health outcomes.

Results
Risk of Social Isolation by State 2020
States with the lowest risk of social isolation are throughout the West and Midwest, while higher risk states are in the South and in New Mexico, New York and Rhode Island.

Social Isolation Risk Factors by State
The risk factors for social isolation among seniors vary across states:
- Living below the poverty level is 2.4 times higher in Mississippi than in Utah.
- Living alone is 1.8 times higher in Maine than in Utah.
- Being divorced, separated or widowed is 1.3 times higher in Mississippi than in Utah.
- Having never been married is 3.4 times higher in New York than in Utah.
- Having a disability is 1.4 times higher in West Virginia than in Delaware.
- Having an independent living difficulty is 1.8 times higher in Mississippi than in North Dakota.

Risk of Social Isolation by Factor
The most common risk factors are being divorced, separated or widowed, followed by having a disability. Of the six risk factors associated with social isolation, being divorced, separated or widowed and having an independent living difficulty are most strongly correlated (both r=0.9) at the state-level with the overall risk of social isolation measure, followed by living below the poverty level (r=0.8), and having a disability (r=0.6).

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