

Relationships

Session 7

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Delivering insight through data for a better Canada



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FORMALIZING A FRAMEWORK FOR MEASURING RELATIONSHIPS: WHAT MAKES US SOCIAL



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POPULATION VS. SOCIETY

Population – counts of people

- Total number of individuals in a defined area or group.
- **Statistical concept** —measured by counting people, regardless of relationships with one another



Society – structure and relationships of people

- Population **plus** the web of relationships, institutions, norms, and cultural systems
- **Social concept** — how people live, interact, and organize themselves.



WHAT MAKES US SOCIAL: RELATIONSHIPS

- Under the proposed Central Framework for a System of Population and Social Statistics (CFSPSS):
 - People serve as the unit of measurement in social statistics, moving through time and place
 - Relationships building block differs from the others, looking at how people interact, not in isolation
 - Framework for measuring relationships can showcase these interactions and integration with other building blocks
- Builds on work by:
 - OECD Centre on Well-Being Sustainability and Equality Opportunity (WISE)
 - Holt-Lunstad, Robles and Sbarra (SOCIAL Framework, 2017)
 - The Harvard Longitudinal Study of Adults
 - UNECE Task Team on Social Cohesion



MEASURING RELATIONSHIPS: KEY RESEARCH AND FRAMEWORKS



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RELATIONSHIPS & MORTALITY

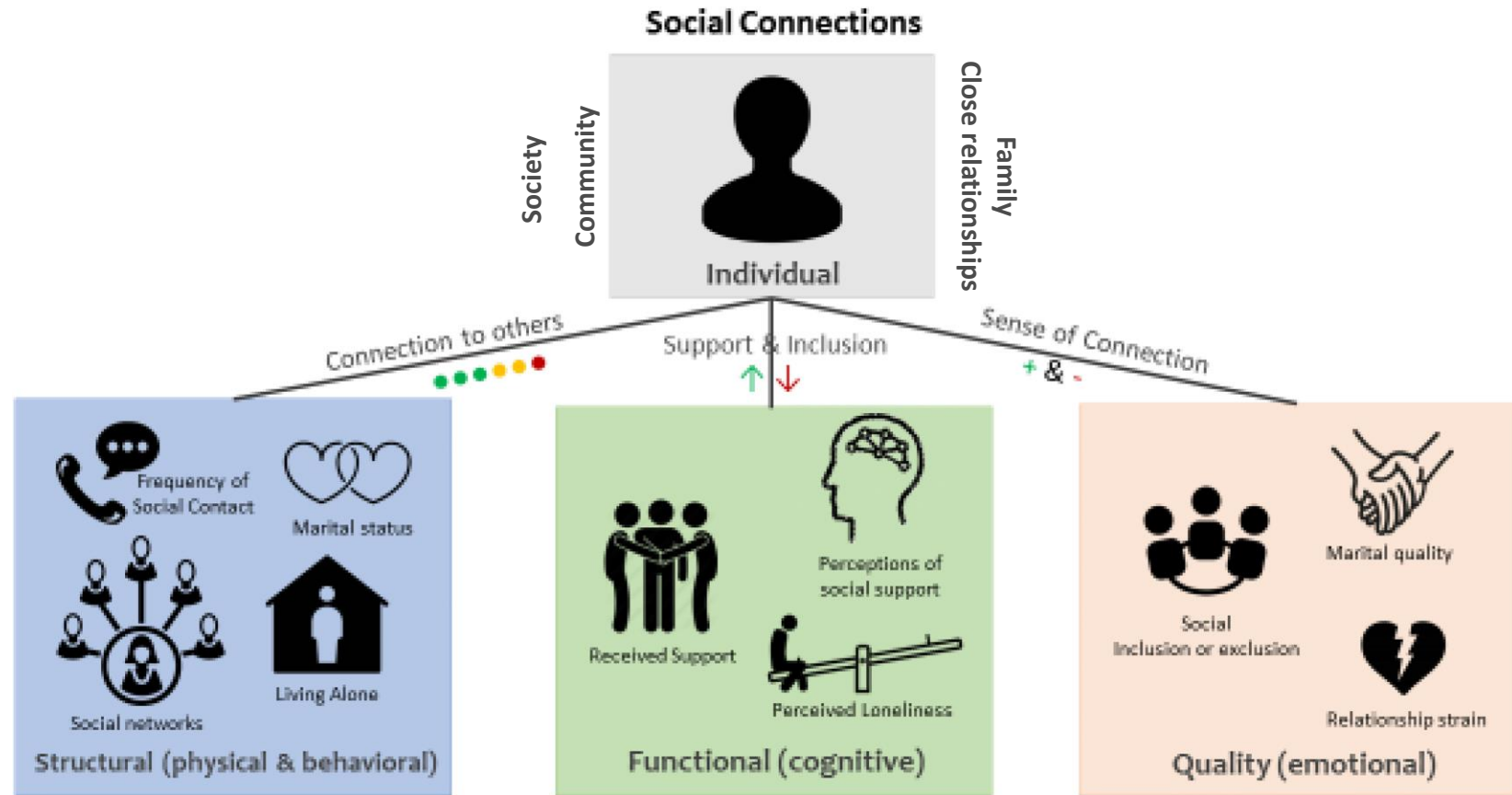
Dr. Holt Lunstad, Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience and Director of the Social Connection & Health Lab, Brigham Young University

LITERATURE REVIEW INSIGHTS

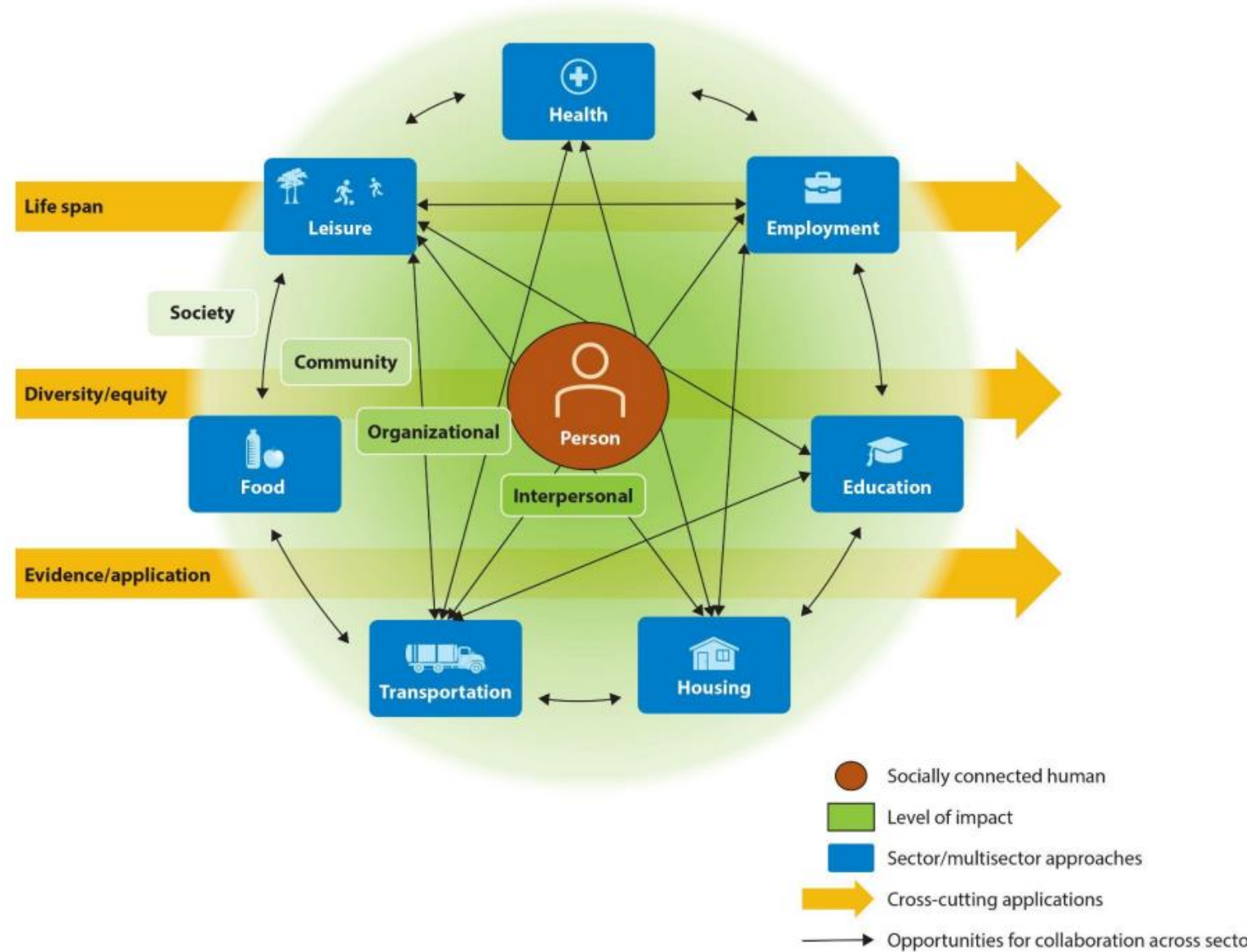
- Carried out a metaanalysis (n = 141 studies) to pinpoint why the link between relationships and mortality was so underrecognized
- Across all measures, relationships led to an increase in survival
- Discovered the lack of a common language for relationship concepts—data collected over multiple scientific disciplines, yielding different methods and conceptualizations
- Identified common themes and common language on relationship concepts.



SYSTEMS OF CROSS-SECTOR INTEGRATION AND ACTION ACROSS THE LIFESPAN FRAMEWORK



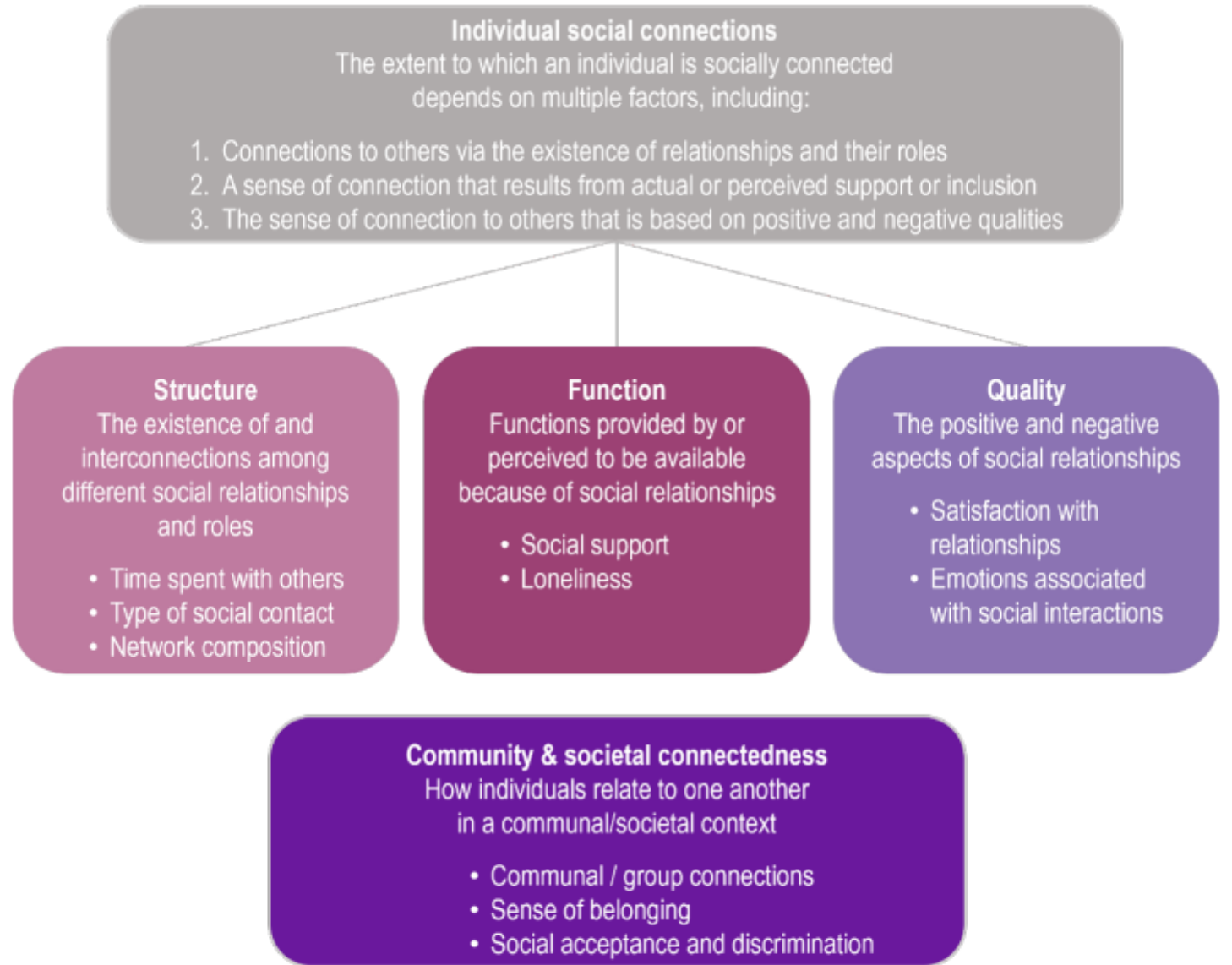
SOCIAL FRAMEWORK



OECD PROPOSED MODEL FOR MEASURING SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Measuring social connectedness in OECD countries

A scoping review



Note: Example indicators within each box are meant to illustrate measurement approaches, they do not constitute a comprehensive list of all approaches to measuring a given topic.



MEASURING RELATIONSHIPS: A PROPOSED SYSTEM



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PEOPLE (Unit of measurement for social statistics)

People interact in Multi-dimensional **RELATIONSHIPS**

RELATIONSHIPS FRAMEWORK – *Illustrative Examples of Relationship Measures*

Measurement Dimension	Relationship Level					
	Individual	Micro		Meso		Macro
		Household	Family	Community	Sector/ Institution	Society/National/Global
Extent - stock (how many); characteristics (proximity, similarity, diversity, etc.)						
Function - activity, service						
Quality - (e.g., weak vs strong, close vs far, positive vs negative, unifying vs polarizing)						
Impact – intrinsic evaluations, extrinsic valuations (e.g., discrimination, social inclusion/exclusion as +/- impacts of relationships)						

Interactions/Relationships between People occur in **PLACES** (Physical) and Spaces (Virtual); complexity of flows (mobility, evolution over time)

Interactions/relationships between People occur in **TIME** (across the lifecycle (childhood, youth, adolescence, adulthood, elderly); from transitory interactions to life-long bonds): complexity associated with flows (Frequency, Duration, Contextual Era)

RELATIONSHIP LEVELS

MICRO



MESO



MACRO



RELATIONSHIP LEVELS



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Dimensions of Relationships

Extent

- Stock and structural characteristics of relationships
- How many, with whom, how often
- Structural features (diversity, frequency, physical distance, mode of connection etc.)

Function

- Activity or service they provide
- Role the relationships play, the purposes they serve
- Services they provide, social and emotional support provided, activities engaged in

Quality

- Negative or positive state or condition of relationships
- Whether those relationships are good or bad, often along a continuum

Impact

- Intrinsic evaluations and extrinsic valuations of outcomes for relationships



PEOPLE (Unit of measurement for social statistics)

People interact in Multi-dimensional **RELATIONSHIPS**

RELATIONSHIPS GRID – *Illustrative Examples of Relationship Measures*

Measurement Dimension	Relationship Level					
	Micro			Meso		Macro
	Individual	Household	Family	Community	Sector/ Institution	Society/ National/Global
Extent - stock (how many); characteristics (proximity, similarity, diversity, etc.)	e.g., # of friendships	e.g., household composition	e.g., marital status, # children, intergenerational relationships, siblings	e.g., community groups and organizations, neighbours	e.g., connections with colleagues, student to student, student to teacher, between teachers, roommates	e.g., in-group relationships, between-group relationships
Function - activity, service	e.g., social and emotional support, someone to count on	e.g., caregiving, sharing of resources	e.g., child-rearing	e.g., provision of local amenities/supports, community disaster support	e.g., education	e.g., governance, social support programs
Quality - (e.g., weak vs strong, close vs far, positive vs negative, unifying vs polarizing)	e.g., perceived relationship strain	e.g., satisfaction with division of household chores	e.g., satisfaction with relationships; marital quality	e.g., sense of belonging to community	e.g., skills	e.g., confidence in institutions
Impact – intrinsic evaluations, extrinsic valuations (e.g., discrimination, social inclusion/exclusion as +/- impacts of relationships)	e.g., perceived impact of emotional, informational, tangible support; loneliness;	e.g., household economies of scale	e.g., generational wealth transfers	e.g., community safety and socio-economic opportunities such as local schools	e.g., earnings	e.g., peace and economic stability

Interactions/Relationships between People occur in **PLACES** (Physical) and Spaces (Virtual); complexity of flows (mobility, evolution over time)

Interactions/relationships between People occur in **TIME** (across the lifecycle (childhood, youth, adolescence, adulthood, elderly); from transitory interactions to life-long bonds); complexity associated with flows (Frequency, Duration, Contextual Era)

Dimension	Measures	Data source	Frequency	Individual level (micro)	Household level (micro)	Family level (micro)	Community level (meso)
<p>Extent - stock (how many); characteristics (diversity, etc.); size, density, frequency, structure, distance, mode of connection (i.e. face-to-face, virtual)</p> <p>The extent of relationships describes the stock and structural characteristics of relationships – how many, with whom, how often, what are their structural features (diversity, frequency, physical distance, mode</p>	<p>What is the relationship of the following [people/person] to you?</p>	Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS)	Annual				
	01: Husband or wife	Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS)	Annual				
	02: Common-law partner	Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS)	Annual				
	03: Father or mother	Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS)	Annual				
	04: Son or daughter	Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS)	Annual				
	05: Brother or sister	Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS)	Annual				
	06: In-law	Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS)	Annual				
	07: Other related	Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS)	Annual				
	08: Unrelated	Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS)	Annual				

RETROFITTING EXISTING MEASURES TO THE FRAMEWORK: A STATCAN CASE STUDY

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA - DIMENSIONS



Their level of agreement that the dimension in question is clearly defined:

Agree, no modification needed.

Disagree, modifications needed (state modifications in the written feedback column).



Their level of agreement that the dimension in question can be differentiated from the other dimensions:

Agree, no modification needed.

Disagree, modifications needed (state modifications in the written feedback column).



An assessment on the placement of measures within the domain in question, where experts could specify that measures should:

Remain within the dimension chosen, without modifications.

Remain within the dimension chosen, with modifications (state modifications in the written feedback column).

Be moved to another dimension, without modifications (state the dimension it should be moved to in the written feedback column).

Be moved to another dimension, with modifications (state the dimension it should be moved to and the modifications in the written feedback column).

Be removed from the measuring relationships grid.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA - HIGH-LEVEL MEASURES AND LEVELS



Whether the measure should be prioritized for inclusion in a minimum viable set of international relationship measures for NSOs to collect:

Yes

No

Other - it should be part of a larger set of measures (not the highest priority to measure)



Whether the measure accurately targets the relationship level in question

Yes, this measure targets this level.

No, this measure does not target this level.

The level could be targeted by this measure with data pooling.

CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION OF “RELATIONSHIPS”

Key feedback and issues:

- No standardized definition of “relationships” currently exists.
- While the dimensions and associated definitions help to operationalize the concept, they rely on an assumed understanding that needs to be more explicitly articulated.



DIMENSION DEFINITIONS AND DIFFERENTIATION

SUMMARIZED FEEDBACK



EXTENT DIMENSION FEEDBACK

Current definition: The extent of relationships describes the stock and structural characteristics of relationships – how many, with whom, how often, what are their structural features (diversity, frequency, physical distance, mode of connection etc.)?

Rather than adopting technical economic terminology like “stock” with reference to the Extent dimension definition, “amount” or “the number of” relationships was preferred for greater conceptual clarity.

The Extent definition requires refinement to clarify whether it includes longitudinal aspects (i.e., flow) or only static measures (i.e., stock), and depth of relationships.

Experts noted that components of the Extent dimension overlap with those of the Quality (e.g. distance and strength of relationships) and Function (e.g. caregiving measures) dimensions.



FUNCTION DIMENSION FEEDBACK

Current definition: The function of relationships refers to the activity or service they provide that is, the function measures the role the relationships play, the purposes they serve, the services they provide, the social and emotional supports provided, the activities engaged in (e.g. social/emotional support, caregiving, disaster support, social support programs etc.).

More clarity in the dimension's definition was requested by experts to gauge whether the Function dimension includes hypothetical/potential roles or only actions in relationships.

Experts denoted ambiguity between the Function and Impact dimensions, where they had challenges differentiating service measures from outcome measures.



QUALITY DIMENSION FEEDBACK

Current definition: The quality of relationships refers to their negative or positive state or condition, whether they are good or bad, often along a continuum. For example, are they weak/strong, warm/cold, close/distant, positive/negative, stressful/not stressful, unifying/ polarizing, reciprocal/one-sided, compassionate/callous, satisfactory/not satisfactory.

Experts commented on the need to clarify the definition of relationships in the context of people who are in regular contact with one another versus those who are in close relationships.

Sense of belonging was underscored as fitting under both the Quality and Impact dimension, depending on the context. Experts recommended dual categorization for such measures.



IMPACT DIMENSION FEEDBACK

Current definition: The impact of relationships refers the intrinsic evaluations and extrinsic valuations of their outcomes. For example, intrinsic evaluations would include subjective measures such as contentment or satisfaction with relationships, sense of belonging, loneliness, and connectedness, while extrinsic valuations are objective measures such as social isolation, access to network resources, and social integration, as examples.

Articulate more clearly the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic evaluations, particularly where objective vs. subjective isolation is concerned.

Refine the definition to be able to make the distinction between relational impacts and broader life outcomes. Overall, a clearer definition is needed with a tighter scope.

Add a subdimension to be inclusive of broader societal impacts (e.g., health, economy, policy, labour, societal trust, and trust in institutions).



DATA SOURCES AND INVENTORY ENHANCEMENTS



Limitations of the case study: Only household survey measures were included in the Statistics Canada inventory of relationships measures.



Recommendations:



Expand data sources beyond household surveys to administrative and alternative sources



Leverage relationship construction algorithms (ex. National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth and Ontario Child Health Study)



Include additional indicators from the Labour Force survey (LFS), its supplement surveys, and the Canadian Survey on Working Conditions regarding employment-related relationships.

RECOMMENDED HIGH-LEVEL MEASURES



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SNAPSHOT OF RECOMMENDED HIGH-LEVEL MEASURES

Extent	Function	Quality	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationship of [people/person] to you Marital status Frequency of social contact (face-to-face, online, texting, phone call, email) Extent to which you know your neighbour enough to ask for a favour Number of friends in the same city or region Number of relatives in the same city or region Number of good friends at work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Somone to count on Care received from family, friends or neighbours Care provided for family, friends or neighbours Communicating with friends and family for mental and/or physical health Doing favours for a neighbour/neighbour doing a favour for you Support received or granted with transportation, meal prep, cleaning, personal care, finances, etc. Receipt of emotional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfaction with personal relationships Having close relationships that provide a sense of emotional security and wellbeing Feeling part of a group of people who share the same attitudes and beliefs Having warm and trusting relationships with others Having a trustworthy person to speak to in times of crisis Experience of unfair treatment or discrimination (or not) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of belonging to your local community Feelings of loneliness Participation in groups, organizations or associations has a positive impact on wellbeing Your community is a place where people from different backgrounds get along together Level of trust in people Level of trust in institutions

CONCLUSION

- Ideally, new relationship measures would specifically target each relationship dimension and level within the Framework, obtained through one central survey on a regular basis
- Rather than retrofitting measures from existing household surveys, subject matter experts advised starting with the relationship concepts that must be measured through the Relationships Framework and then defining those measurements.
- Another recommendation was testing the measures to see if they result in relational or other outcomes.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE WORK

- Add administrative indicators to the inventory to create a more comprehensive inventory of relationships measures.
- Refine dimension definitions that reflect the feedback received from internal experts to create a more clear, comprehensive understanding of the dimensions of relationships and how they fit into the associated framework in a distinct way.
- Test existing relationships measures to see if they reliably measure what they're intending to measure in the Relationships Framework, and whether they result in relational or other outcomes.
- Further develop and test (in a similar way) the framework's 'levels', including the role of Institutions
- Catalogue key actors within the levels and their typical functions, to build out the intervention logic of an eventual conceptual framework for social statistics
- Expand on the findings from these case studies to develop classifications and standards to organize statistics about institutions and relationships for social statistics



THANK YOU - MERCI !



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