SOCIAL CONNECTIONS AND HEALTH AMONG OLDER ADULTS LIVING IN SUBSIDIZED HOUSING: LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS PERSPECTIVES
Avery Bullock\textsuperscript{1}, Joseph Gallo\textsuperscript{2}, Carl Latkin\textsuperscript{2}, Cynthia Boyd\textsuperscript{2}, and Thomas Cudjoe\textsuperscript{3}, 1. Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore, Maryland, United States, 2. Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, United States, 3. Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, Baltimore, Maryland, United States

Social isolation among older adults living in the United States is a major public health problem that disproportionately affects those living below the poverty line. Though decades of epidemiological studies have provided important insights on the impact of social isolation on health, there have been limited qualitative studies on the dynamics of social connections among older adults in subsidized housing. This study aims to advance our understanding of the perspectives of local stakeholders in the field of subsidized housing on the social connections of older adults and how to enhance social connection. Semi-structured interviews were conducted between July 2021 and October 2021 with local stakeholders in Baltimore’s subsidized housing community to better understand social connections among older adults. Stakeholders included, but were not limited to, the following positions: service coordinators, property managers, maintenance staff, and security guards. Interviews were imported and analyzed using NVIVO12 software and a qualitative content analytic approach. Preliminary themes identified included: barriers and facilitators of connection, engagement with family, and ideas about interventions. Mental and physical health challenges, access to and use of communications technology, and lack of transportation were barriers while food incentives, gift card giveaways, and resident champions were facilitators of social connection. Social isolation among older adults is an important concern among stakeholders in subsidized housing. To promote social connection in older adults, interventions must adopt a multi-pronged approach that addresses the barriers and leverage existing facilitators within subsidized housing communities.

LONELINESS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF THE INSTITUTIONAL OLDER ADULTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
Shiau-Fang Chao\textsuperscript{1}, Hui-chuan Hsu\textsuperscript{2}, and Yun-Pei Su\textsuperscript{2}, 1. National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taipei, Taiwan (Republic of China), 2. Taipei Medical University, Taipei, Taipei, Taiwan (Republic of China)

Purpose: Institutional residents experienced more restrictions in the lockdown of covid-19. The purpose of this study was to examine the association of loneliness and lonely literacy with mental health wellbeing during covid-19 for older institutional residents.

Methods: The participants living in the 13 long-term care institutions who were aged 65 and more and able to communicate with were invited in the survey (n=143). Mental well-being was measured by depressive symptoms and life satisfaction. Loneliness was measured by the 6-item UCLA loneliness scale. In addition, demographics, health status, active and passive coping strategies, social support from family and friends, social interaction changes after covid-19, loneliness change after covid-19, and worries about covid-19 were investigated. Linear regression and logistic regression models were conducted.

Results: The mean of the loneliness score (6-24) was 9.71 (SD=4.02). Factors related to loneliness increased during covid-19 for the institutionalized residents included having more physical function difficulties (OR=1.179), feeling more lonely (OR=1.146), and having more worries for covid-19 (OR=2.317). The residents having depressive symptoms was related to have more loneliness (OR=1.269), worse self-rate health (OR=0.320), and increased more loneliness during covid-19 (OR=3.233); while having high life satisfaction was related to less loneliness (OR=0.859), less physical difficulties (OR=0.834), higher satisfaction of family support (OR=2.835), and not increasing loneliness during covid-19 (OR=0.255).

Conclusion: Loneliness during covid-19 is related to more depressive symptoms and lower life satisfaction, especially during covid-19. Learning active coping strategy and providing proactive and helpful environment for the long-term care residents is suggested during the pandemics.

DECREASED FREQUENCY OF SMALL TALK DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND MENTAL HEALTH: LONGITUDINAL SURVEYS IN JAPAN
Hirosi Murayama\textsuperscript{1}, and Ikuko Sugawara\textsuperscript{1}, 1. Tokyo Metropolitan Institute of Gerontology, Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan, 2. Bunri University of Hospitality, Suginami-ku, Tokyo, Japan

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has drastically reduced opportunities for small talk. As small talk involves socializing, such deprivation can be stressful. This study examined the association between the change in frequency of small talk before and during the pandemic and the mental health of middle-aged and older people. We conducted web-based longitudinal questionnaire surveys from March to May 2020 and from September to October 2021 among members of a Japanese social networking service. We analyzed 867 responses of people who participated in both surveys (mean age, 68.0 ± 8.0 years; men, 68.1%). This study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of University of Tokyo. Change in small talk frequency before and during the pandemic was assessed using a single item, “Have the opportunities for small talk (including face-to-face, phone, video call, etc.) with someone other than cohabiting family members changed?” We divided the responses into “increase,” “no change,” and “decrease.” Mental health outcomes included psychological well-being and loneliness. A total of 57.0%, 34.4%, and 8.7% reported “increase,” “no change,” and “decrease,” respectively, from before to during the pandemic. After adjusting for potential covariates, multiple regression analyses showed that people who felt their small talk frequency decreased during the pandemic compared to pre-pandemic period had lower psychological well-being and greater loneliness than those who did not. We observed no interaction between change in small talk frequency and age/sex. Our study quantitatively revealed the importance of small talk during the pandemic in maintaining mental health.