



COUNTRY REPORT:

Brazil

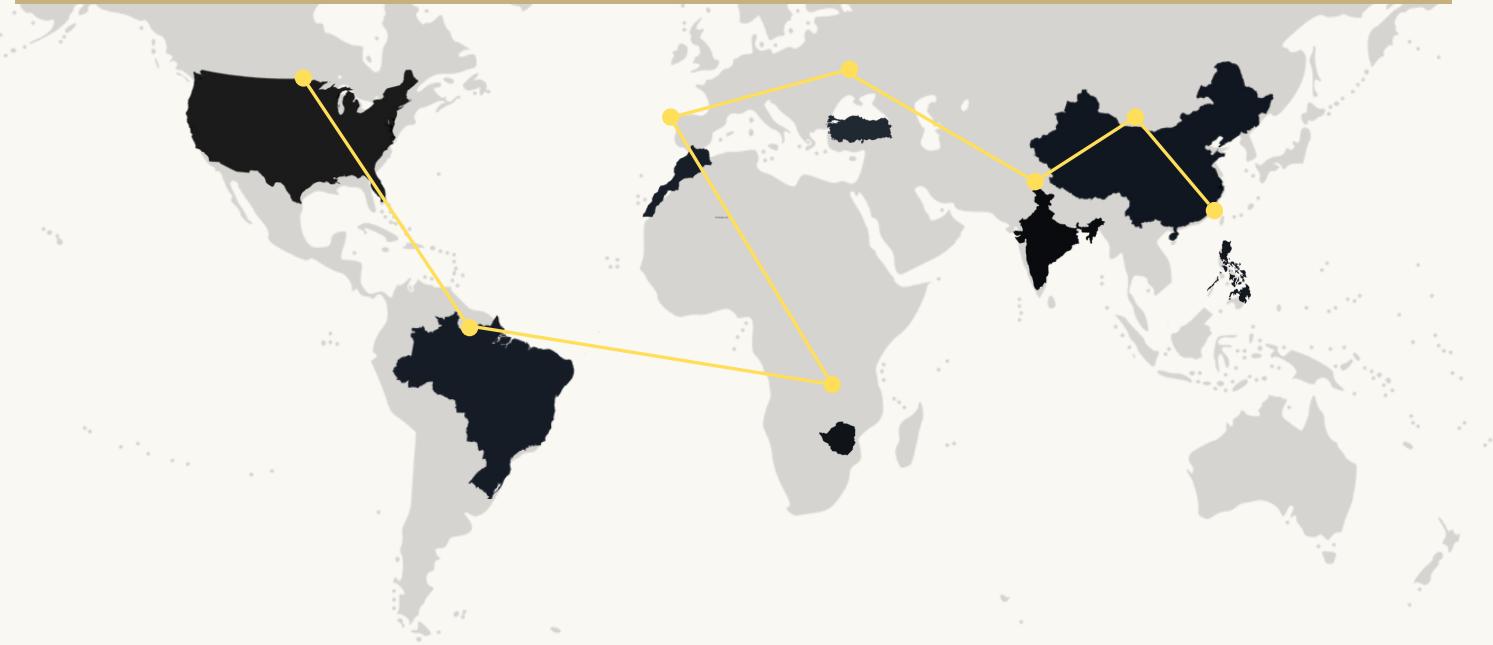
Alegria and Saudade:
Connection in Brazil



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Rethinking the Science of Human Connection

A Multi-Country Investigation into the Conceptualization and Experience of Social Connection, Social Isolation, and Loneliness

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Funded by: Templeton World Charity Foundation

Grant DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54224/32560>

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This country report is part of a larger multi-year initiative to lay the foundation for the first Global Index of Social Connection.

Completed with the support of: Global Initiative on Loneliness and Connection



1. Summary Report

“Even when life is hard, Brazilians find a way to smile together – because being together is what keeps us alive.”

- participant from Brazil





Introduction

This report presents findings from a multi-country qualitative study examining how people across diverse cultural settings conceptualize and experience social connection, belonging, disconnection, and loneliness. The project engages with eight countries: Brazil, China, India, Morocco, the Philippines, Turkey, the United States, and Zimbabwe.

The goal is to provide actionable insights for monitoring and intervention for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers by highlighting both universal and culture-specific dimensions of social connection, disconnection and loneliness.

In Brazil, social life is rooted in family and friendships, with cultural values of warmth and joy shaping expectations of closeness. At the same time, socioeconomic inequalities and urban stressors complicate how connection and loneliness are experienced.

Methodology

The study employed a stratified sampling design and recruited 354 participants aged 18 and older across eight countries. Stratification included age, gender, income, partnership status, loneliness severity, urban/rural residence, and region. Recruitment followed a drift sampling strategy, combining targeted outreach with participant referrals.

Semi-structured interviews (2–3 hours each) explored the individual's social map, functions of their social connections, definition and experiences of social connection, belonging, disconnection, and loneliness. The interview included a meta-cognitive portion where individuals reflected on how and why they have provided the answers that they have given. Data were then transcribed, translated into English, and de-identified. Country teams conducted inductive coding before iteratively synthesizing results into a shared framework. Thematic coding was supported by qualitative analysis tools (Quirkos, NVivo, Google Sheets).



Analytic Approach

For each interview the whole transcript was first mapped to an analysis summary sheet which summarizes all sections of the interview. Information from these summary sheets were then aggregated together to form the evidence table. Concurrently, each transcript was subjected to a selective line-by-line coding focusing on how individuals experience and conceptualize social connection (including how individuals define social connection, how they characterize good and deficient social connections, and how they define belonging); as well as how they experience and conceptualize disconnection and loneliness (including how the individuals experience and define disconnection, experience and define loneliness, and whether make the a distinction between loneliness and solitude).

For the line-by-line coding, country leads initially inductively coded manuscripts independently of the rest of the team. The codes that were developed then reflected culturally applicable elements. Codes from across all countries were then collated and synthesized, and overlapping or similar codes were integrated.

This synthesis provided the coding framework, which the research team then applied to the full set of transcripts.

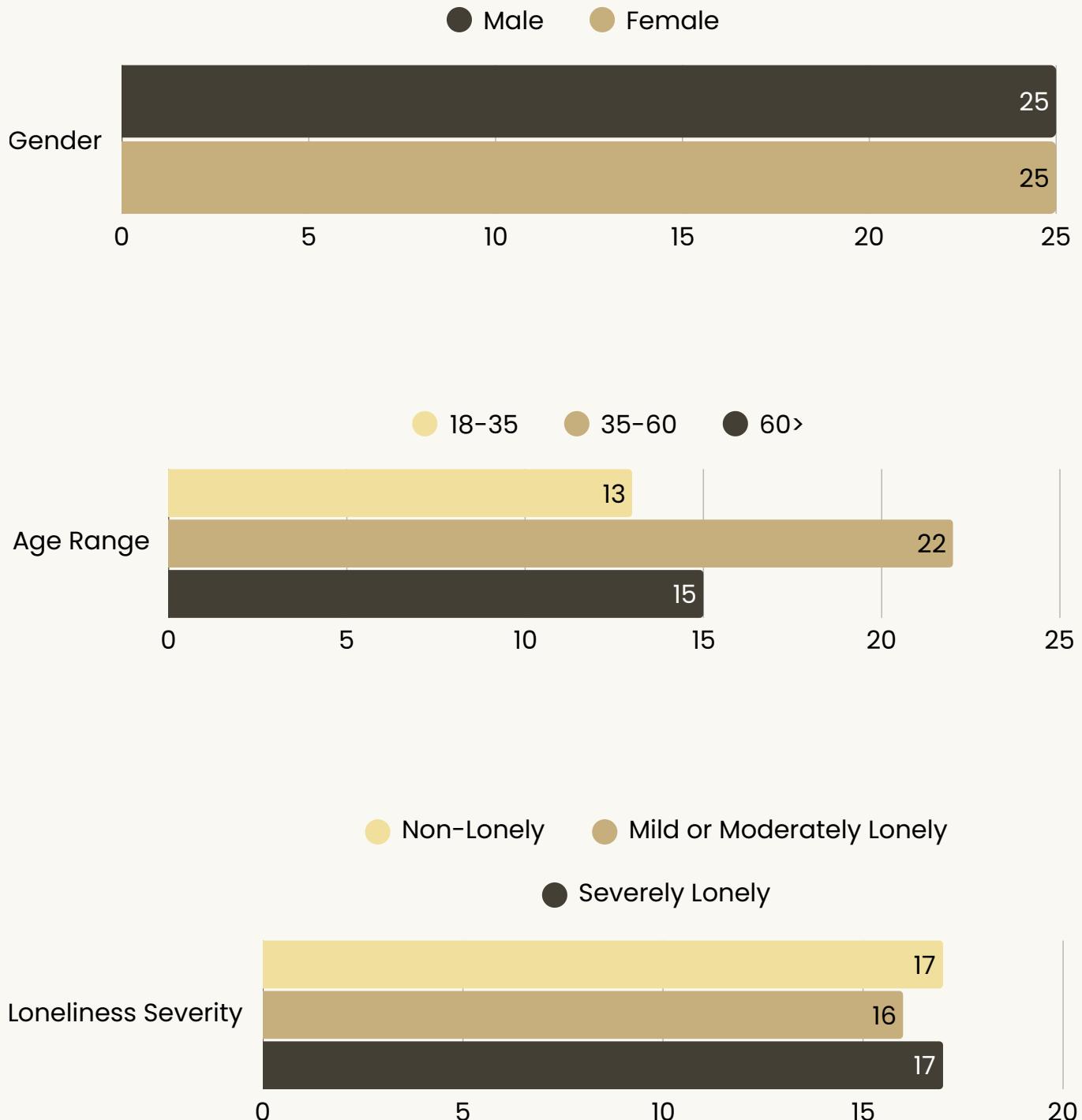
For example, the code [Emotional depth / superficiality] were used for responses that indicate the depth or superficiality of the emotional connection such as when one participant mentioned "People could be extroverted but still lonely if they don't really connect on a deeper level." Codes are not mutually exclusive, and transcript portions can be coded with multiple applicable codes

Codes were clustered as to whether they referred to the characterization of the relationship (e.g., "closeness/depth", "duration"), the interaction (e.g., "frequency of interaction", "reciprocity of interaction"), the function of the interaction (e.g., "instrumental support", "emotional support"), the perceived characteristics of the other (e.g., "availability", "trustworthiness"), or one's self state (e.g., "satisfaction", "obligation"). The full list of codes can be found in the project OSF. The team met weekly to refine the codes, clarifying provisional definitions and applicability of the codes to instances in the data.

Sample Demographics Overview

Participant Profile Summary

 Total Sample: 50



*Loneliness severity was determined during sampling using a single item from the Centre for Epidemiological Studies Depression scale (CES-D): *“During the past week, have you felt lonely?”* Responses were categorized as: Non-lonely: ≤1 day, Mild/Moderate: 1–4 days, Severe: 5–7 days.

Summary of Select Findings

Key Social Categories

Family is widely considered the core of social life, offering both practical support and emotional closeness. Friends, neighbors, and faith communities supplement these ties, creating overlapping networks of care. In many neighborhoods, especially in lower-income areas, local ties provide protection and solidarity against insecurity.

Challenges and Quality of Connection

Social connection in Brazil is often tested by economic precarity, work instability, and urban violence. Obligations within family and community can feel transactional or performative, leaving some feeling depleted. By contrast, good connections were described as those that bring joy, reciprocity, and trust.

"A good friend is one who doesn't just come when you're celebrating, but also when you're suffering," explained one participant.

Definitions of Connection and Belonging

Connection was described through shared time, laughter, and affection, while belonging was expressed as being recognized and valued within a group:

"To belong is to feel that people care if you are there or not."

- participant from Brazil

Cultural Specificity

Brazilian cultural life celebrates sociability: gatherings around food, music, and dance were seen as essential to connection.

Practices of hospitality reinforce relational warmth. At the same time, *saudade*—the feeling of deep longing—captures the ever-present possibility of absence or loss, reminding people that connection is as fragile as it is vital.

Disconnection and Loneliness

Disconnection was linked to exclusion from social groups or the lack of reciprocity in relationships. Loneliness was described as sadness and emptiness, sometimes worsened by cultural stigma: in a society that prizes joy, admitting loneliness can feel shameful.

Implications

Measurement in Brazil should reflect the interplay of joy and strain in social life. Capturing practices of warmth, celebration,

Summary of Select Findings

and reciprocity is essential, but so is recognizing the weight of inequality and insecurity. Programs that build on existing practices of gathering—through food, music, or faith—may prove especially effective.



Summary of Research Questions

This study was guided by a shared analytic framework and research questions* across eight participating countries:

SOCIAL MAPPING

- What are common social categories among the target population?
- What are common challenges/burdens of social connection among the target population?

SOCIAL CONNECTION

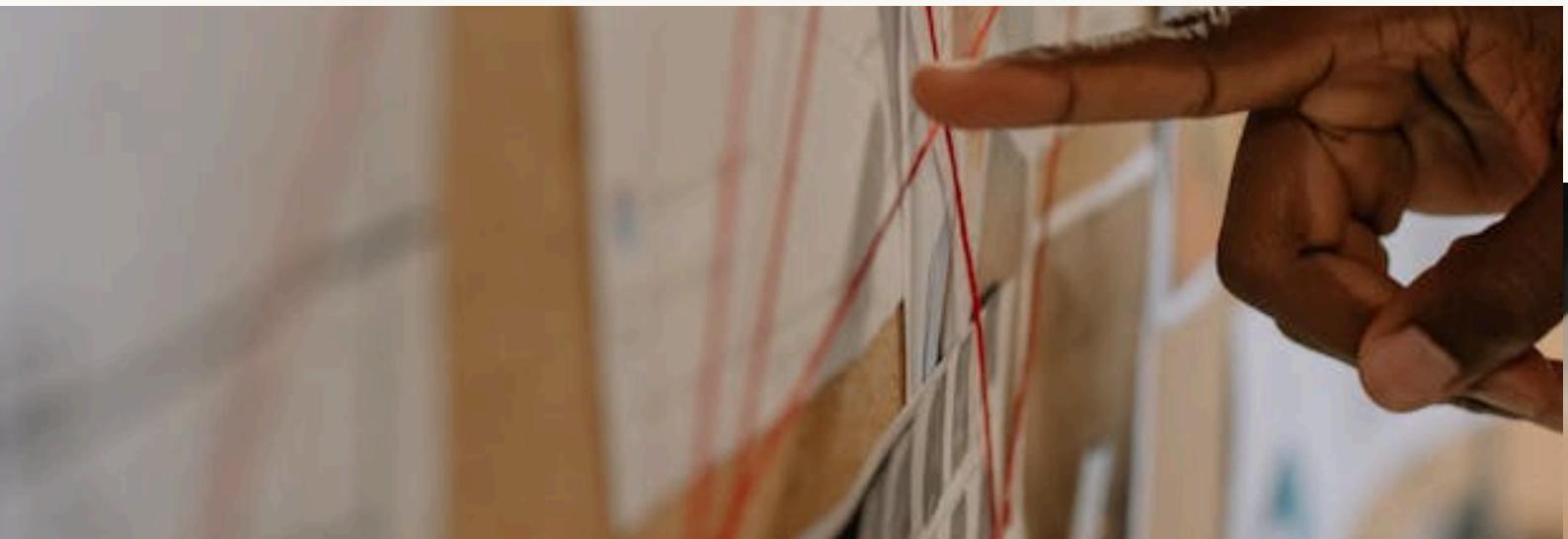
- Definition of social connection: how does the target population define social connection?
- Characteristics of a good (and deficient) social connection: what makes for a good social connection for the target population?
- Definition of belonging: what is belonging for the target population?
- What are culture specific aspects of social connection among the target population?
- What else does the target population feel connected to?

DISCONNECTION AND LONELINESS

- Experiences of disconnection: What are the experiences of disconnection among the target population?
- Definition of disconnection: How do the target population define disconnection?
- Experiences of loneliness: What are the experiences of loneliness among the target population?
- What is the physiology of loneliness among the target population?
- What are the effects of loneliness among the target population?
- How does the target population cope with loneliness?
- What factors affects loneliness for the target population?
- Definition of loneliness: How do the target population define and explain loneliness?

DISCONNECTION AND LONELINESS (*continued*)

- How are lonely individuals perceived among the target population?
- Why is loneliness difficult to be spoken about among the target population?
- What are culture specific aspects of loneliness among the target population?



Summary of Project Resources

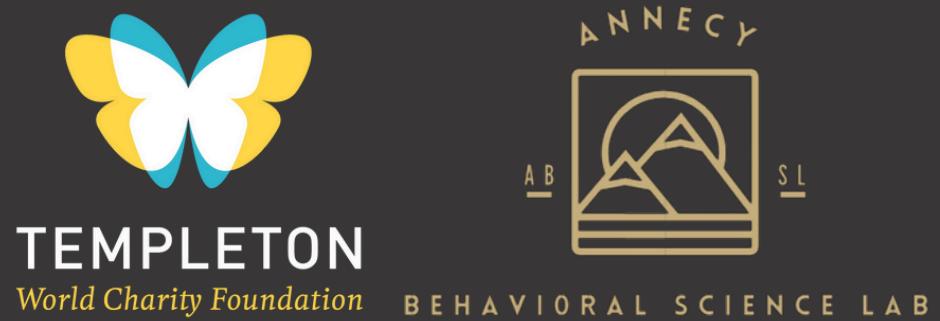


This project's materials are openly available on the Open Science Framework (OSF) at <https://osf.io/p3msu>, to ensure transparency, and accessibility.

- **Interview Guide:** A copy of the interview guide containing the questions asked across 8 countries
- **Deidentified Transcripts:** Interview transcripts (anonymized) from all participating countries
- **Ethics:** Documentation of institutional ethics approvals, consent processes, and ethical safeguards
- **Evidence Tables:** Verbatim transcript portions and summarized information per participant across different research questions
- **Codebook:** The codebook contains the codes, provisional code definitions and transcript portion examples across different research questions
- **Country Reports:** Country reports from the analysis of within-country data in Brazil, China, India, Morocco, the Philippines, Turkey, the United States, and Zimbabwe.
- **Main Publication:** Pre-print of the publication that features the cross-country comparisons across the global project.

DOI

- <https://doi.org/10.54224/32560>



*Multi-Country Investigation into the Conceptualization and
Experience of Social Connection, Social Isolation, and Loneliness*

Commissioned by the Templeton World Charity Foundation

doi.org/10.54224/3256

2. Analysis Report

“I think that a striking characteristic of loneliness in Brazil is this: it smiles. The lonely person in Brazil pretends that it's fine, I don't know if it's only here, but I think that here there is this mark of joy.

The loneliness in Brazil, it is joyful on the surface, a lot of people smiling and deep down the joy, the smile is to camouflage the pain that we want to have the courage to face.”

- participant from Brazil



Common social categories

In Brazil, the most common social categories mentioned by the participants were family, friends, work colleagues, neighbors/community, online spaces, and groups/activities.

Family: Almost all participants mentioned family, including immediate (parents, siblings, children, partners) and extended (aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.) members. However, the quality of these relationships varied, ranging from supportive and satisfying to conflictual, distant, or restricted. For example, P1's "sister" lives in the same house but "doesn't spend much time with" the participant. P45 describes a "big disappointment and breakup with his sister over 10 years ago", which led to distancing.

Friends: The participants often differentiated between close/intimate friends, friends from certain stages of life (school, old friends), friends from certain contexts or groups, or even regarding the degree of proximity. Friendships are often associated with social contact, emotional support, and self-esteem benefits. Some participants express dissatisfaction or a lack of close friends. P3, P5, and P8 are "dissatisfied" with their friends. P26 reports having "no close friends anymore". P46 also states that he has "none 'intimate now'" to refer to the lack of close friends.

Work Colleagues: Interactions are frequently focused on the work environment, but also characterized with support. Negative aspects such as conflict, lack of deep bonds, or a competitive environment are also mentioned. P4's work colleagues are associated with "conflict/social stress". P7's work colleagues lead to "Not satisfied, lack of deeper bonds".

Neighbors/Community: This category describes interactions with people who live nearby or in the local area. Interactions range from brief greetings to helpful conversations. Some participants have limited or no interaction with neighbors or see possible negative aspects such as gossip or social burden. P1 indicated "none" for "neighbors/community". P45 reported that he has "no

relationship with neighbors beyond brief greetings," and that he "doesn't like it due to potential gossip".

Online spaces: This category includes social media and messaging apps such as WhatsApp, and is often cited as a space for interaction. While some participants describe this primarily for professional use or minimal interaction, others use it to keep in touch with existing friends/family, share information, or participate in specific interest groups. Negative aspects, such as hostile interactions or stress, are also mentioned. P15 reports "hostile interactions online". P29 lists "stress, criticism, disrespect" in connection with "online contacts".

Finally, there are **Groups/activities**, which includes involvement in churches, volunteer organizations, cultural groups, sports/fitness groups, research groups, music groups, and specific course-related groups. These groups often provide opportunities to socialize, support each other, share information, and develop a sense of belonging. The type of group that participants indicated reflected different interests and affiliations.

Moreover, the less common social categories mentioned by the participants also include professionals (especially therapeutic or caring), even smaller number of participants mentioned relationships with psychologists, therapists, or mentors. These relationships tend to be focused on specific support needs, such as emotional processing, counseling, and guidance. Students was mentioned by some participants in a professional or mentoring context, e.g., by P7, who "Prioritized students over colleagues" or by P27 and P37, who interact with students in educational settings. P27 finds that the "affection" from teenagers makes him "feel loved".

Some participants state that pets (dogs, cats) provide social bonds, particularly emotional support and a sense of connection. P20 notes that her "three dogs" provide her with "emotional support to get out of depression". In addition, there are some unique social categories described by participants, for example: chosen family, such as P38, who mentions "daughter at heart" and "son at heart" as friends she considers family, and service providers/acquaintances. Some participants named service providers (e.g., P11's "lady who cleans the hallways," P39's "UBER driver," P45's "restaurant staff," "doorman") as social categories.



Common challenges/burdens of social connection

For the Brazilian participants, conflicts and disagreements were a significant burden, often resulting from differing views, such as political disagreements within the family (e.g., P19, P50) and among friends (e.g., P17, P45), differences in values or ideals (e.g., P17, P18), or general arguments (e.g., P11, P33, P37, P41, P42).

Another common challenge was a perceived lack of relationship depth, quality or unity identified in work relationships (e.g., lack of deeper ties for P7, little sense of unity with former colleagues for P40), family (e.g., lack of deep connection for P24, relationship not what it used to be for P33), or superficial casual relationships (e.g., P13).

Logistical barriers, particularly distance and scheduling conflicts, make it difficult to maintain physical closeness and are reported as burdens for family (e.g., difficulty due to distance for P3, P5, P27, P32; routine making meetings difficult for P25, P42), and friends (e.g., P25, P45).

Other types of burdens include feeling of being a burden on others or managing caregiving responsibilities within the family (e.g., P20, P26, P38). External social pressures, such as friends or colleagues pushing for more socialization (e.g., P27) or challenges related to managing expectations (e.g., lowering expectations for P29), are also mentioned.



The work and academic environment presents particular challenges, such as dealing with hierarchies (e.g., P28), lack of commitment from colleagues (e.g., P31), navigating competitive environments (e.g., P50), or feeling disconnected due to discrimination or disagreement (e.g., P32).

Online interactions are sometimes described as negative and include hostile interactions, stress, criticism, or disrespect (e.g., P15, P29, P50). Participants also noted burdens stemming from previous relationship issues, the process of grieving a loss, or fears of abandonment (e.g., loss of mother for P27, past relationship lost through divorce for P15, fear of being alone for P40).

These challenges occur most frequently in social contexts (i.e., reported in interactions with family, friends, and work colleagues and increasingly online). However, they are not universal. Negative case analysis revealed that many participants specifically indicated "None" for burdens or conflicts in relationships within the same categories (e.g., P7 indicated no stresses for family, close friends, and work colleagues; P21 indicated "None" for most categories, including partners, family, friends, and neighbors; P46 also indicated "None" for most family members and friends).

Definition of social connection

Brazilian participants predominantly define social connection by referring to interactions and the characteristics of the relationships among individuals. The most frequently utilized codes for definition was "Interaction" and "General connection", often described as simple contact or socializing with others, including "socializing within society" (e.g., P1: "I think something to do with socializing with other people, socializing within society, socializing with other parts of society, that's basically it") or being "in contact with people" (e.g., P5: "For me, I think of our contact with other people"), mentioning

casual interactions like greeting a bus driver (e.g., P11: "The bus driver I see every day and I just say good morning. I think that's social connection for me"), covering interactions with individuals physically or virtually (e.g., P8: "It's related to the interactions we have with other people"; P43: "Interacting with people in various environments"; P9: "The interaction I have with people on a daily basis").

A significant aspect of the definition involves Emotional connection/bond (e.g., P2: "The bond with other people, right? I believe that would be it"), emphasizing the qualitative aspect of the relationship (e.g., P14: "For me, it's the emotional bond we create with them").

Less frequently, definitions touch upon Social structure as being part of society (e.g., P3: "Connection with the space in which you live"; P20: "Social connection is the way I relate to other people, to society, to the community"), specific functions of relationships like Instrumental support through work or volunteering (e.g., P21: "The need to interact with other people, to make myself understood, to be heard"), or personal self states such as being heard (e.g., P28: "I kind of feel connected, or that things are going well, when a person listens to me, validates my feelings").

Some Brazilian participants expressed unfamiliarity with the concept (e.g., P3: "I confess that I wasn't familiar with it until I saw the application form"; P44: "This exact term, no"), with some associating it primarily with technology and social media (e.g., P22: "Social connection is our access to communication means, access to social networks").

Codes that were not used by Brazilians specifically in their definitions of social connection include Trust, Equality, Sense of belonging (to a group), Frequency of interaction, Reciprocity, Disclosure/Sharing of emotions, Emotional support, and Informational support.

Thematically, Brazilian definitions include a broad sense of presence or coexistence in society (General connection, Social structure) to the more active process of engagement (Interaction, e.g., P24: "Being among people and their realities"; P27: "Socializing with people around me"; P35: "How we stay connected with people"), often highlighted by the importance of the quality and emotional depth of the resulting relationship (Emotional connection/bond, Emotional depth/superficiality, Sense of belonging (to a person), e.g., P8: "A feeling of belonging, of feeling that you belong to that moment, that you belong to that person's life"; P10: "For me, social connection is being close to people with whom we feel comfortable, with whom we feel at home"), and occasionally including the reciprocal benefits or feelings derived from these ties (e.g., P38: "Social connection is when you have empathy for the other"; P40: "When you relate to those around you").

Characteristics of good (and deficient) social connection

Thematically, good social connections were described by Brazilians primarily in terms of 'Emotional safety/non-judgement', they value being able to express themselves without fear of judgment, fostering a sense of welcome and acceptance (e.g., P2: "That welcome itself. To feel welcomed, to feel part of that place, you know? And not to feel withdrawn, excluded..."; P36: "Basically, it's about not being afraid of being judged for who you are, for your truth, so to speak."); P6: "Because I think we have a very open relationship, in the sense of being able to talk about anything, without judgments"). Closely related is 'Trust', seen as crucial for safety and openness (e.g., P10: "For you to feel safe, for you to talk about anything, even the most difficult things, you feel comfortable."); P29: "If they are people I consider trustworthy and who can really help me, yes, I trust them, I talk to them, I share."). This emotional safety enables 'Disclosure/Sharing of positive and negative emotions' (e.g., P7: "Sharing both good times and bad, abundance and scarcity, but always

staying connected."), allowing for deeper connection beyond superficial interactions (e.g., P12: "It's about being able to communicate openly, even about difficult topics"). Participants also highlighted the importance of 'Reciprocity' (e.g., P28: "I think it's the exchange, a balanced exchange. You give and receive in a balanced way."), 'Understanding' (e.g., P3: "Knowing how to listen to each other, to understand both sides"), the 'Respect' for individual differences (e.g., P4: "Respecting space..."; P39: "A good social connection... if they're different, there's respect."), and the 'Authenticity/Acceptance of self' (e.g., P5: "...to have a lot of comfort to be yourself... when the barriers that prevent you from being yourself, they no longer exist."); P23: "I think it's this ability to be spontaneous, to be who we are, to be true, to be natural, a real connection, where I can be myself, where I can speak..."; P36: "...when I'm with them I love because I can be myself."). 'Frequency of interaction' was seen also as important (e.g., P9: "People that you have to take care of... getting in touch at least once a week...") although some highlight that duration (e.g., P20: "I think a good social connection withstands time, so it lasts over time...") and quality matter more than constant contact. (e.g., P6: "...more dissatisfied is precisely not being so close, like, from a physical point of view, of always being with the person...").

In contrast, deficient social connections were often linked to a 'Lack of proximity' (e.g., P9: "Look, my last complaint about this connection issue (disconnection) was with my advisor. It's someone I should have more proximity with..."), 'Superficiality' (e.g., P13: "They are not deep relations, but they are superficial relations, let's say"), 'Feeling Used' (P26: ""And I thought she kind of gave me the cold shoulder, like, she didn't like it, she thought that, I don't know, that every time If she needed it, I would have it in the bank to lend it to her. It was a banking relationship, so it was a situation where I was



kind of like, I said, so maybe she had a friend just because of that"), and 'Selfishness' (e.g., P27: "I always see it that way, that people seem to approach us with a certain interest in something. Not for what I am, not for the person I am, for what I can offer from my feelings, but always thinking about material things. And that's my... That's sad. And that's how I think and I close myself off.").

The most used clusters, supporting these themes, are indeed the characterization of social others (traits like trust, authenticity, and empathy), the characterization of the relationship itself (qualities like emotional depth and reciprocity), and personal self-states (feelings like being respected, understood, satisfied, or being used).

Definition of belonging: what is belonging for the target population?

Thematically, for Brazilians, belonging was mainly conceptualized by self-states traits, described as a general feeling of being included, expressed by "having a place for you to be, not just a place, but people that you can be there with them" (e.g., P2), and feeling "integrated where I have to be" (e.g., P45). Belonging can also be related to feeling of comfort (e.g., P24, P25, P36), which involves feeling welcome and comfortable whatever happens, as described for P24: feeling "at ease, feel spontaneous and feel like I really speak the language of the people who are there" (e.g., P24), and feeling comfortable in one's home.

Authenticity and acceptance of self are also key to belonging definition among Brazilians. Participants described belonging as "feeling comfortable and feeling good about who I am" (e.g., P4), being able to be "your true self"



(e.g., P7) and express themself "in the most genuine way in a space where people understand me" (e.g., P7), accepting one's sexuality and living with people who are similar as mentioned by P31: "Especially in relation to this sense of belonging, because as long as I didn't accept my sexuality, my sexual orientation, I just performed, I just pretended to be someone I wasn't, so I wasn't spontaneous, I couldn't have spontaneity. So I couldn't feel a sense of belonging. I think that after I started to experience my sexuality, when I started to live with people like me, this sense of belonging started to emerge".

Some participants also used metaphors to describe belonging, such as fitting a piece into a puzzle to form a whole or being like a hand that is part of a body (e.g., P16: "The idea is like a puzzle. Belonging is when you fit that piece together. that forms the whole. So, for me, that's what belonging is"). Additionally, some Brazilians related belonging to connections with non-human elements such as nature (e.g., P33), pets (e.g., P49), or Religion / God (e.g., P35).



What are culture-specific aspects of social connection?

A prevalent theme mentioned by many participants was the stereotypical description of Brazilians as warm, open and affectionate people. In general, participants described Brazilians as very welcoming, communicative and talkative, often using body language and touch and enjoying being in public places (e.g., P1, P4, P14, P19, P21, P24, P29, P36). Physical expressions of affection such as hugs, kisses and exchanging gifts are mentioned as common and explicit. For example, P44 says: "Brazilians are much warmer; they touch, grab, kiss, and hug each other". However, some participants, including P11, noted regional differences and consider the North and Northeast to be more welcoming and affectionate than the Southeast.

In terms of expectations, a common theme was the need for support, solidarity, and mutual help (e.g., P17, P26, P32). Participants expect others to be reliable and helpful, available for listening and conversation, and to have a "shoulder to cry on" (e.g., P7). P17 believes that Brazilians expect "solidarity from each other, a sense of mutual help and support". They also expect to be welcomed and to feel part of a group or place (e.g., P2), and for connections to involve companionship (e.g., P4), understanding, and presence (e.g., P11). Physical warmth and affection are also expected, as are celebrations and good coexistence (e.g., P47). Some expect connections to be stable and lasting.

Despite these expectations of warmth and support, several participants are critical and point out expectations that are perceived as negative or challenging. These include the expectation that interactions are determined by material interest or financial gain or that people even "take advantage of

each other" (e.g., "vampirism", P29). Some feel that there is an expectation in society to be very sociable, leading to possible condemnation of those who prefer solitude or fewer relationships, and a pressure to appear a certain way (e.g., P20). P23 refers to the cultural expectation to be sociable and facing "criticism" if one goes out alone. Another critical view is the expectation to constantly demonstrate status and success, especially online, coupled with a perceived lack of genuine solidarity and lasting friendships. P26 laments the "decline in genuine friendships and solidarity". The expectation to always be nice and helpful is also seen as unrealistic, as everyone has weaknesses (e.g., P37). Others also point to the superficiality and transience of relationships. P13 thinks that the stereotype of sociability can lead to many relationships being superficial (e.g., "something stereotypes that people from Brazil are very sociable, that establish relations more easily. It's the stereotype, isn't it? So, I think that in general, I think that people establish more superficial relations and give them more credibility than they really have. Considering someone a friend whom you've seen twice in life, for example").

What else does the target population feel connected to?

Aside from family, friends, work colleagues, and neighbors/community, most of Brazilian participants reported feeling connected to nature (e.g., P6, P7, P8, P9, P11, P13, P14, P16, P18, P19, P21, P22, P27, P28, P30) with specific elements frequently mentioned including the sea, often described as calming or an emotional regulator, waterfalls (e.g., P43), and plants, with the act of caring for them described as particularly connecting (e.g., P27). Animals, especially pets, provide significant emotional connection, companionship, and support (e.g., P3, P21, P24, P26, P28, P29, P30, P34, P37, P48, P50). P18 reported her three dogs were significant emotional supports through a past depression, while

P31 feels a sense of peace and energy exchange with his cats, noting he was moved to adopt a disabled kitten. The inclusion of birds and cannabis plants as sources of connection by P50 may be a potentially unique referent.

Religion and spirituality are also significant connecting factors, manifested through traditional institutions like the church, specific denominations, or broader spirituality, sometimes involving practices like praying or meditating.

Participants also find connection through arts and culture, including music (listening, attending concerts, singing), art, cinema, drawing, literature, poetry, and philosophy (e.g., P3, P4, P7, P23, P38, P45). Engagement in groups and social projects, volunteer work (like P19's work at an old ladies' home bringing great joy and connection), sports (e.g., P9), and even technology like social media (e.g., P41) or video games are reported as sources of connection (e.g., P19). Notably, however, the negative case analysis reveals that not all participants feel these connections. For instance, P10, P13, P15, and P25 explicitly state they do not feel connected to anything besides human beings.

Experiences of disconnection

In general, for Brazilian people, disconnection was described through feelings associated with lack of belonging, such as "not feeling part of that environment, not feeling connected to that situation, that conversation or that environment" (e.g., P1) or a general feeling of not belonging collectively or to any group. This extends to feeling "misplaced in a group" (e.g., P13) or like a "strange being, an 'E.T' when I'm with my husband's friends" (e.g., P36). Significant life transitions frequently manifest as experiences of disconnection. These include major geographical changes, such as leaving

one's city for a capital (e.g., P6: "When I was a teenager, I left my city and went to the capital of the state, then I felt very disconnected"), traveling alone to a foreign country with a different culture (e.g., P12: "I believe it happens when I travel alone. Being at a busy airport or bus terminal and feeling surrounded by strangers makes me feel disconnected"), or moving to a new city (e.g., P21: "But I have acquaintances, I don't have friends, because until now I couldn't be friends with the employees I managed. So I had a lot of acquaintances, but then I moved to another city and ended up just being on social media"). Such transitions may necessitate starting "everything from scratch" (e.g., P6), leading to a "very strong feeling of disconnection". The termination or absence of significant relationships, particularly romantic partners, is also a source of felt disconnection (e.g., P24: "Ending relationships, especially romantic ones, is something that makes me feel very disconnected").

Differences in shared characteristics or views are salient drivers of disconnection. Participants described feeling disconnected in environments where they lacked shared subjects for conversation (e.g., P2), held divergent views from others (e.g., P36), or did not identify with the group's characteristics, such as being a black woman in a space with no other black people (e.g., P34: "For being a black woman, I feel disconnected in various spaces when I see that there are no black people in that place").

Not feeling heard or being ignored when expressing opinions can also cause significant disconnection (e.g., P28: "I think not being heard... causes me a lot of disconnect"). Disconnection was also experienced by Brazilian participants through a perceived emotional distance or lack of closeness in relationships, manifested as feeling less connected to family after moving away (e.g., P11: "For example, I feel connected to my family, but I don't feel as connected as I did when I lived there. Distance also brings a social disconnect for me"), observing closer bonds between others while feeling

excluded (e.g., P14: "Another one (friend) arrived, hugged the other friend and didn't hug me, and then I keep thinking, why do they hug each other and I don't?"), or a general feeling of discouragement related to bonds with others (e.g., P24: "I think that not having enthusiasm, discouragement in relation to the bond with others, the feeling of disconnection, in addition to the break, but maybe, I think that the feeling of discouragement in relation to the bonds").

Considering the specificities of groups of participants, for Brazilian severely lonely individuals, the experiences of disconnection were described in terms of a profound sense of isolation (e.g., P3, P26, P28, P49) and lack of belonging, often missing close friends or groups they feel they belong to (e.g., P28: "'In the last two years or so, I have been missing close friends, or groups that I feel I belong to... And I really miss them, something I used to have a lot of friends'). Moderately/Mildly Lonely participants also mention disconnection stemming from lack of belonging in specific social settings, such as work conferences or family gatherings where shared interests or views are absent (e.g., P7, P32). Life transitions, including moving to a new city or the departure/termination of a romantic relationship, are explicitly linked to feeling disconnected and the subsequent disruption of routine and companionship (e.g., P5, P30, P32). In turn, non-lonely individuals tied their experiences of disconnection to specific situations like being in unfamiliar social settings where they lack shared characteristics or feel uncomfortable (e.g., P10, P12, P35, 46, P50). Geographic changes or moving are also cited as instances where disconnection occurred (e.g., 12). Some non-lonely participants explicitly mention difficulty in recalling past experiences of disconnection (e.g., P47: "I don't remember. I don't remember, honestly [laughs]", "I must have felt disconnected at some point, a long time ago, but... I don't remember").

How is disconnection defined?

Brazilian participants frequently conceptualized disconnection as being "alone" or a "loneliness" (e.g., P9: "I think social disconnection is you being there, like, alone. Without anyone, right? A loneliness"), feeling "lost, alone, on the street" (e.g., P22), or as a "feeling like a fish out of water" (e.g., P33). Regarding the lack of belonging, definitions included not feeling part of some social environment (e.g., P1: "Not feeling part of that environment, not feeling connected to that situation, that conversation or that environment"), "The lack of belonging, of disinterest in the place or in the people" (e.g., P8), "being misplaced in a group" (e.g., P13), or not being welcomed.

Participants also characterize disconnection as the inability to connect, "not being connected to people" (e.g., P13), "when you cannot connect with another person" (e.g., P16), or "having a social void, when you have a need to connect with someone, but you don't" (e.g., P25).

Less frequent, but importantly, there was withdrawal (e.g., P19: "when a person... decides to disconnect from the world and general negative affect conceptualizations"), and general negative affect (e.g., P4: "feeling bad with people") conceptualizations.



Experiences of loneliness

The key experience with loneliness among Brazilians was described based on codes related to 'isolation/sense of being alone' (e.g., P5: "Before I traveled (to another country), as I said, I have at least ten years of relationship with my partner and when he traveled before me, I felt extremely lonely"; P9: "I was living alone and, like, had support from family, from my girlfriend, from friends. But I was living alone, right? So, sometimes, you were there alone. Didn't have, sometimes, someone to talk to. It was that"; P47: "I wake up in the morning alone, I sleep alone, I live alone, my son's apartment is upstairs, mine is downstairs. Sometimes I feel it") and 'lack of support' (e.g., P21: "...my father passed away, and I felt the pain of loss, and at that moment I felt alone because I didn't have any friends nearby, I didn't have anyone I could listen to, that I could... That person you lay on your lap and vent to, at that moment I felt a bit alone..."; P50: "...I felt lost, I felt like I didn't know anyone, with no one to turn to, right?"), with codes such 'anguish' (e.g., P17: "I feel an anguish, it's as if there is a knot in my throat, something that doesn't go down... It's as if you lie down, and this discomfort is more here in the throat actually, and a little bit of pressure like this in the chest. Sometimes there is tremor and sometimes there is no tremor, but physically what I feel is this, when I feel loneliness"), 'feeling not present/disengaged' (e.g., P12: "It was like being present physically but emotionally absent from their world"), 'feelings of abandonment' (e.g., P8: "his person with whom I am in the process of breaking up. This brought up traumas associated with a certain abandonment scheme... And then, this abandonment scheme pulls a lot this thing of loneliness"), and 'feeling sad' (e.g., P40: "Oh, I feel sad, sadness, I don't know how to say it any other way. Well, actually, I almost got depressed when I came back. I had to take medication and stuff to deal with that loss and stuff") appeared in multiple examples.

However, some participants cast their experience of loneliness in a positive way (e.g., P36: "Look, I'm not going to lie, I can't remember the last time I felt alone, because I definitely like being alone, I love being alone. Even for my husband to understand this was a bit tricky..."; P43: "Yeah... I feel alone every day, but without that thing... that... because there are people who can't stand it, right? Being alone seems to drive a person crazy. I'm the opposite, I really like it. So, I feel that way every day and... and... and I try to preserve that. But nothing that, like, shakes, that... that hurts the soul, something that I know, I like"; P50: "Oh, it's very difficult... I like to feel alone, right? When I'm alone, I don't feel alone, and even though I spend most of the day alone, I don't feel alone because my wife works and I work in a place where I'm alone, it's an isolated place, and interestingly, during the day I don't feel alone there, I've never felt alone..."). For Brazilians, experiences of loneliness were not linked to regret and anger.

Individuals categorized as Severely Lonely consistently reported experiencing loneliness with marked negative affect, often linked to deep emotional states (e.g., sadness, crying, anxiety, and situational isolation, P39: "I get sad, I cry", "I get anxious to see my daughter come home"), and lack of essential companionship (including romantic partners or close family) (e.g., p40: "I always felt alone, because friendship is one thing, love, relationships are another, for me it's very different. Friendship is not what I need. Friendships don't satisfy that... I don't have anyone to share things with, my bed, my pillow, my most intimate things, you know? Because I don't tell my son everything, for example. I'm a woman, he's a man, I don't tell him everything, obviously. And to my partner, of course, I tell him a lot more, right?"). Moderately/Mildly Lonely individuals also describe negative experiences, but their experience of loneliness was often tied to specific situational contexts (e.g., P29: "My wife went out for an appointment and I was there, and suddenly I said, I'm alone, what do I do? Where do I go? I don't like TV, music, so I'm going to study, I'm going to read. I felt alone").

Non-Lonely individuals reported feeling alone less frequently or describe it in terms of specific transient situations (e.g., P46: "Look, what affected me the most when I first became a widow was the loneliness when I started to be alone, I started to live alone, but then I got used to the loneliness"), or as a positive experience (e.g., P22: "I love being alone. I don't have that feeling of loneliness" "When my husband travels, I'm home alone. Wow, it's heaven for me"). Some explicitly deny experiencing loneliness altogether (e.g., P34: "...it's strange, but I'm not really one to feel alone, not even when I'm alone, because I tend to wander a lot in my ideas like that, think a lot, elaborate a lot of ideas, travel a lot, so it's harder for me to have that feeling like that, I think I'm good company, I learned to think I'm good company like that, so it's hard to feel alone, but every now and then it happens").

Loneliness and disconnection are closely related and sometimes used interchangeably, but they appear to represent slightly different facets of social-emotional experience. For instance, while loneliness can be triggered by external situations (like being physically alone or changes in relationships), the experiences described by Brazilian participants focused heavily on the feeling itself and its emotional impact — loneliness can also be experienced positively (solitude). In turn, the experience of disconnection was described more on the break, distance, or incompatibility in social bonds or environments.

In sum, the interplay of codes highlights that the experience of loneliness for Brazilian people is multifaceted, involving internal emotional states, external social factors, coping mechanisms, and even positive interpretations, often triggered by relationship dynamics and life events.



The physiology of loneliness

Among Brazilians, the physiology of loneliness was described through different physical indicators, including shortness of breath (e.g., P1); body limp, unwilling to do things, stopped, stuck (e.g., P2); restless sleep, difficulty sleeping, sleep problems (e.g., P6, P41); heart racing, palpitations, heart out of rhythm (e.g., P12, P31, P44, P50); lump in throat, knot in throat, discomfort similar to trouble swallowing (e.g., P12, P17); physical tiredness, exhaustion, lack of energy, loses vitality, feels heavy (e.g., P14, P16, P17, P24, P30); pressure in chest, tightness in chest (e.g., P17, P36). Unique descriptions of the physiological experience are related to the feeling of "pain [that] tightens the body" (e.g., P27); trembling (e.g., P17); changes in eating habits, losing weight, loss of self-care/interest (e.g., P14, P24); and strange feeling, numbness, goosebumps (e.g., P44). Negative case analysis showed that some participants did not report negative physiological effects from being alone or described positive experiences, e.g., P9 ("feels good when he is alone"), P13 ("Calm, sometimes even pleasant"). P35 explicitly states they have "never felt lonely" in a negative way, finding solitude enjoyable and feeling a constant sense of presence. P43 described the daily feeling of being alone positively as "freedom" and a "hug".



The effects of loneliness

For Brazilian participants, loneliness primarily affects mental health, mood, and day-to-day activities. Effects on mental health and mood are frequently reported, including worry (e.g., P1, P19, P41), anguish (e.g., P6, P41), sadness (e.g., P4, P6, P21, P33, P39, P40, P41, P42), anxiety (e.g., P6, P8, P12, P19, P36, P39, P44), despair or hopelessness (e.g., P5, P14, P16, P26), distress (e.g., P23), crying (e.g., P37, P46), feeling a "void" (e.g., P28), feeling out of place (e.g., P14), mood swings (e.g., P28, P48), melancholic/down states (e.g., P5, P15, P26, P41, P50), apathy (e.g., P12, P26), frustration (e.g., P50), or irritation (e.g., P30), sometimes described as feeling "almost in depression" (e.g., P5) or triggering depressive episodes (e.g., P12, P14, P17, P20, P26, P30, P36, P40, P41, P49).

Impact on day-to-day activities manifests as disrupted routine (e.g., P1), inability to do things as usual (e.g., P2), reduced productivity (e.g., P3, P6, P12), difficulty concentrating or paying attention (e.g., P6, P8, P12, P16), desire to stay isolated or in one's room (e.g., P2, P10, P14, P30), difficulty with fundamental actions (e.g., P21), feeling like a "slave to time" or difficulty distracting oneself (e.g., P24), inability to perform basic tasks (e.g., P26), lack of motivation to work or do anything (e.g., P27, P30, P33, P39, P42), or feeling unable to move forward (e.g., P50), while some engage in solo activities or reflection as a coping mechanism (e.g., P11, P18, P32, P34, P37).

Effects on sleeping patterns include difficulty sleeping (e.g., P6, P19, P41), restless or deregulated sleep (e.g., P3, P17), hypersomnia or fear of sleeping (e.g., P12), and tiredness leading to fast sleep (e.g., P38).

Changes in weight show mixed effects, such as not eating properly (e.g., P2), trying to eat less (e.g., P5), compensating with food (e.g., P8), overeating (e.g., P15), gaining weight (e.g., P12, P27), or losing weight (e.g., P24, P42).

Loneliness can lead to hurting the self, including suicidal thoughts (e.g., P12, P14, P18, P37), self-destructive behaviors (e.g., P15), emotional harm (e.g., P6, P17), thoughts of giving up (e.g., P27), or questioning the meaning of life (e.g., P37); there are no reports of participants hurting others.

Other effects include enhanced existing mental health issues (e.g., P3), self-awareness (e.g., P3), loss of vitality or self-care (e.g., P12, P24), mental fatigue or feeling overwhelmed (e.g., P14), shutting down (e.g., P15), affected confidence or self-esteem (e.g., P31), withdrawing (e.g., P37, P42, P49), lack of will, future perspective, or resignation (e.g., P38), worrying about needing future care (e.g., P44), or feeling incapable of creating, interacting, or talking (e.g., P48).

The duration of these effects varies from brief "few moments" (e.g., P3, P27, P36) or "hours" (e.g., P48), to "a day or a day and a half" (e.g., P7, P46), "a couple of days" (e.g., P14, P30), "about a week" (e.g., P21), or "a while" (e.g., P27), with some effects described as "lasting" (e.g., P18, P24, P42, P49) or persisting for months or years (e.g., P12, P26, P27, P42), particularly after significant life events like death or the pandemic (e.g., P12, P14, P27, P42, P44). Effects differ markedly between groups: severely lonely participants consistently report significant negative impacts across most categories, including severe mental health issues like depression and suicidal thoughts (e.g., P14, P37) and profound functional impairment (e.g., P26), while non-lonely individuals reported no negative effects (e.g., P9, P23, P25, P35, P45), sometimes experiencing positive feelings when alone (e.g., P11, P13, P18, P32, P35, P43, P45).



Coping with loneliness

Coping with loneliness involves a range of strategies for Brazilian individuals. Among participants, the most common strategy was engaging in different types of activities, using technology, connecting with family, and friends/community.

Examples of activities used by Brazilian individuals to cope with loneliness involve physical activity/fitness (e.g., P2, P3, P14, P38), reading (e.g., P7, P11, P20, P23, P28, P29, P30, P37, P40, P44, P46, P48), listening to music (e.g., P3, P7, P9, P16, P19, P22, P32, P37, P38). In terms of technology, they related use social networks (e.g., P2, P9, P10, P34, P44, P50), watch movies/series (e.g., P2, P3, P6, P7, P9, P12, P14, P16, P17, P18, P19, P20, P22, P25, P28, P31, P32, P34, P37, P41, P43, P44, P47), using phones/messaging apps to connect (e.g., P5, P11, P12, P20, P34, P41, P44, P50; with P16 and P28 using technology for media consumption rather than direct messaging for connection).

When connecting with family, Brazilian participants referred to talking to children (e.g., P37), daughters (e.g., P42), calling sister/father (e.g., P6), interacting with daughter/son (e.g., P38), "hearing voice of wife" (e.g., P50), and maintaining online contact with mother (e.g., P34). Contact with friends/community was associated with seeking connections/talking to friends (e.g., P5, P6, P7, P12, P13, P20, P24, P27), relying on close friends for support (e.g., P5, P11, P14, P20), engaging in groups or communities (e.g., P20, P23, P26, P29, P34, P41), and interacting with neighbors (e.g., P18, P27).

Many participants also use religion/spirituality as a coping mechanism (e.g., praying P2, P9, P17, P28, P33, P38, P47; faith P26, P27, P38, P42; exploring religion P11; involvement in church P18, P20). Some people report that they have sought help from professionals such as psychologists or therapists (e.g., P3,

P4, P12, P20, P26, P27, P28, P30, P32, P41, P44). The use of substances (e.g., smoking P11, P15-former, P38; marijuana P14; using medication P26, P31, P40; sedatives/tea to sleep P41; beer P44) is mentioned less frequently, but is present, sometimes in connection with coping with symptoms or seeking relaxation.

Work can also serve as a strategy to concentrate, structure, distract, be satisfied, or maintain social contacts (e.g., channeling into work P49; finding satisfaction in the job P18; doctoral research P20; working as a librarian P23; helping colleagues P34; teaching P37; being useful to society P28).

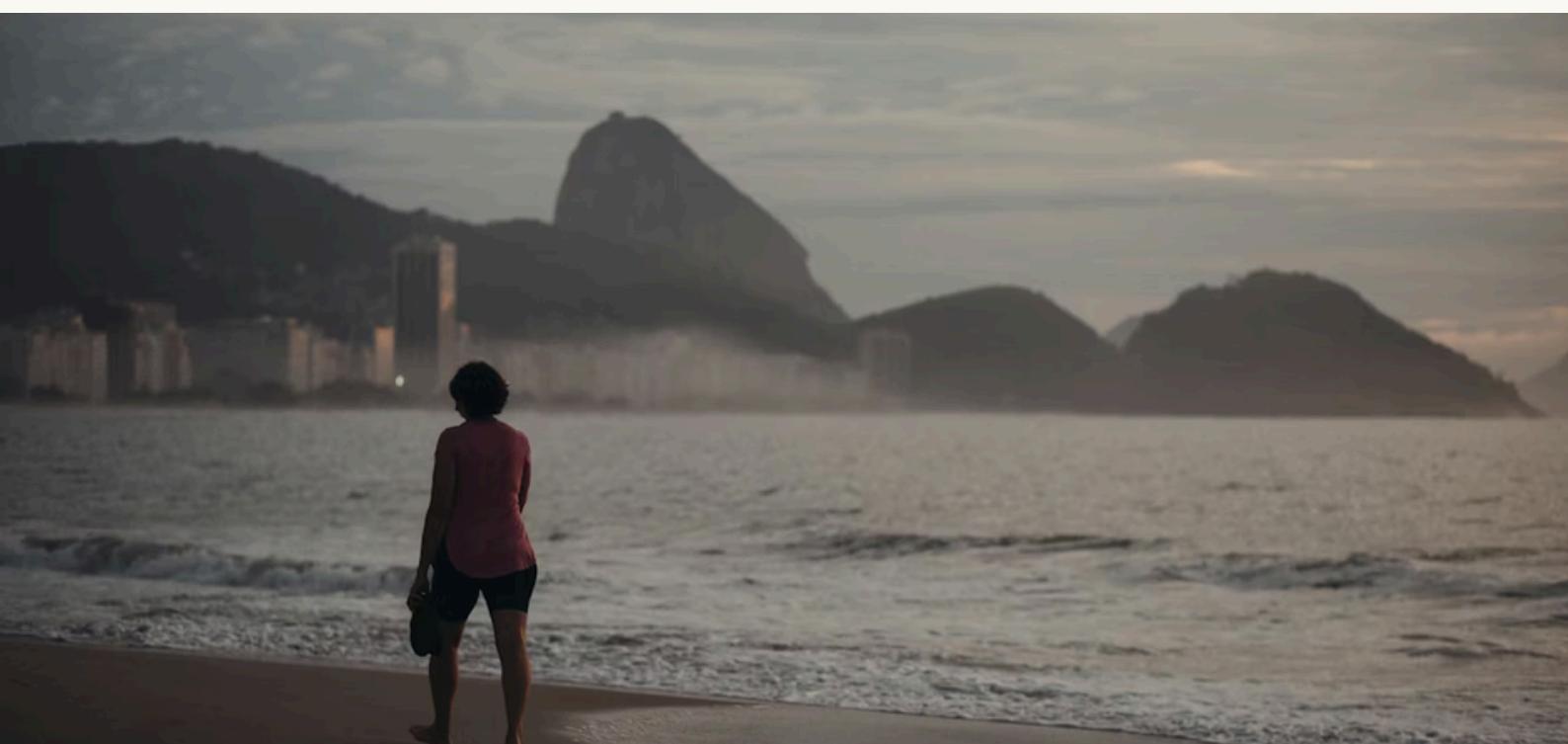
Other coping strategies include internal processes such as self-reflection or trying to understand/process the feeling (e.g., P3, P9, P11, P20, P23, P32, P48), distraction (e.g., P37), letting time pass (e.g., P21, P24, P36), accepting the feeling (e.g., P24), or spending time with pets (e.g., P18-implied, P19, P22, P30, P38; P28 connects with animals as part of spirituality).

Factors affecting loneliness

According to the Brazilian participants, commonly reported factors that influence loneliness include feeling disconnected from others even when they are present (e.g., P42), and the lack of social ties, support, or a social circle, such as not having someone to count on (e.g., P14), not having a person or social circle (e.g., P9), or lacking meaningful social interactions (e.g., P8, P13, P44). Inner states and problems with self-perception are also frequently mentioned, such as poor mental health (e.g., P4), not feeling at peace with oneself (e.g., P12), lack of self-confidence (e.g., P22), difficulties enjoying one's own company (e.g., P23, P36), rigidity or inflexibility (e.g., P7), or a lack of self-acceptance (e.g., P43).

Life changes, transitions, and significant losses are mentioned as factors, including the loss of loved ones (e.g., P18, P37, P40, P47, P49), the end of relationships or cycles (e.g., P6, P49), and difficult family circumstances such as abandonment (e.g., P19, P25).

External, environmental, and societal factors are widely acknowledged contributors, such as socioeconomic context, capitalism, or inequality (e.g., P3, P5, P11, P21, P22, P25, P31, P45), the hustle and bustle of everyday life (e.g., P13, P30), physical distance from connections (e.g., P20, P31, P37, P41, P46), and living in environments without a sense of community (e.g., P44, P46) are widely recognized factors. While these factors are present across several, moderately lonely, and non-lonely individuals, some aspects appear to be more frequently emphasized by severely and moderately lonely participants, such as certain forms of loss or detailed family issues (e.g., loss of significant people, P37; fragmented sense of family, P17), although non-lonely individuals also report losses (e.g., P47). Internal factors are common to all groups, with severely and moderately lonely individuals sometimes reporting more specific psychological details (e.g., past traumas, P8; emotional dependency, P27, P43). The negative case analysis shows no discrepancies.



Definition of loneliness

Loneliness was fundamentally described by the feeling of being alone ('isolation/sense of being alone', e.g., P1: "Loneliness is being alone and feeling that way regardless of where you are. Sometimes you're in the middle of a lot of people, but you feel alone. Sometimes you're at home and you're alone, you feel lonely"; P13: "Loneliness for me is when we are alone, not by our own choice. I think that's it"; P35: "From an etymological point of view, from the meaning of the word, loneliness comes from being alone, from feeling alone. Because I think the most important thing is this reflective question and what it would represent. So, for me, in practice it would really be being alone"). Participants clarify that this sense of being alone can occur regardless of physical location, even when "in the middle of a lot of people" (e.g., P1) or "surrounded by strangers" (e.g., P12). Among Brazilians, a central theme in definition of loneliness was the absence of meaningful connection with others. It was defined as "not having someone to talk to" (e.g., P41: "Loneliness is being alone, needing someone to talk to, someone to talk to, someone to date. When you don't have these elements, loneliness hits"), "count on", or "share things with" (e.g., P12: "Loneliness is also tied to the absence of people you can count on or share your life with"). It's the "need to have a social connection and not being able to do so" (e.g., P25: "Loneliness is precisely this need, a desire to have a social connection and not being able to do so") or the "lack of having a loved one around" (e.g., P39). It is explicitly linked to a "lack of sense of connection" or being "disconnected from someone or something".

Loneliness was also frequently characterized by negative emotional states and physical sensations. These include feeling "completely bad" (e.g., P5), and "anguish" (e.g., P12, P17, P27, P35, P42) a feeling described as knot in the

throat (e.g., P17: "I feel an anguish, it's as if there is a knot in my throat, something that doesn't go down... it's as if you lie down and this discomfort is more here in the throat actually and a little bit of pressure like this in the chest. Sometimes there is tremor and sometimes there is no tremor, but physically what I feel is this, when I feel loneliness").

Some Brazilian participants also used metaphors to explain loneliness, describing it as "darkness" (e.g., P5, P48), being "unable to scream" (e.g., P5), an "end, not a means" (e.g., P25), a "thing of the soul" (e.g., P48), or needing someone in a "world that is so big, and you are alone" (e.g., P41).

Even as many participants define loneliness as a negative self-state, some participants conceptualize loneliness in a positive manner (i.e., loneliness as positive), as a sense of solitude (e.g., P7: "So those moments of solitude are also important").

The definition of loneliness appears to subtly differ across individuals with different levels of loneliness. In general, some severely lonely participants tended to link loneliness directly to depression (e.g., P40: "Loneliness for me is a type of depression"; P46: "For me, it's a little monster in the making, right? It's apparent. It's the twin sister of depression. Loneliness does that"). As severely lonely group, most of moderately/mildly lonely participants also defined loneliness with negative terms (e.g., sadness, emptiness, and distress, lack of pleasure, or lack of companion). However, negative case analysis revealed that some of participants of this group also define loneliness in a positive manner (e.g., P18: "Loneliness was for me an option, an option that I liked and adopted and no, as I told you, I don't want to share with anyone else is my personal life, my intimate life") In the same way, a portion of non-lonely participants defined loneliness in overwhelmingly positive terms, equating it with peace (e.g., P12), personal time (e.g., P9), or

just a "longing" for company they happen to want at a specific moment (e.g., P47: "It's just a moment of longing, not of being alone").

The difference between loneliness and solitude

Some Brazilian participants differentiate loneliness from solitude. As previously described, loneliness was generally described negatively, associated with feelings like anguish and sadness (e.g., P6: "But, on the other hand, in those specific moments, for example, after a very laborious day, very tiring, it gives me a feeling of loneliness, like that, of being a negative thing, a bad thing, something that causes me discomfort, something that causes me anguish"). Solitude, in contrast, was mostly viewed positively (e.g., P32: "I believe that there is loneliness and solitude. Today I live in my moment of solitude. I am alone, but I am with myself. Everything is fine. In loneliness you feel really distressed, empty, sad... in solitude you are alone with yourself, but everything is fine, you are calm. You do not miss anything"). Primarily, the most used codes by Brazilians to differentiate loneliness to solitude was satisfaction/positive affect, sense of peace, and self-reflection. Thus, for most of Brazilian participants solitude is a chosen state (e.g., P1: "I prefer to be quiet. It's a moment when I need to be quiet, having good thoughts, remembering the things I'm doing, which I think are right. It eases the situation a lot"), a moment one wants to be alone (e.g., P19: "when I separated from my wife, I preferred to be alone, without any emotional ties with anyone, because I decided to give myself some time. But that addicted me, and I have been divorced for ten years now"), namely a moment of peace, comfort, calm, or blessing (e.g., P21: "Solitude is a blessing"). It's a time for self-reflection (e.g., P4: "Sometimes when I'm alone and I don't talk to anyone, I think, this is a moment for me to reflect, think about my life,

sometimes I need a moment all, to process my emotions, to write what I'm feeling, anyway, to think about my life without any external noise, I like"), organizing oneself (e.g., P6: "The feeling of loneliness, it's like for me it's two processes...It's something that I generally like most of the time because it allows me to organize myself, and I think it's something that I'm even used to by now, right? So, it's something that allows me to organize myself, to fulfill my tasks"), engaging in enjoyable activities (e.g., P13: "Loneliness is something that is not your choice and that you do not process well. And solitude is when you are there, alone or another, as I was, maybe there, drinking my wine, watching my movie, it was another, for me too"; P20: " I like being with myself like this, I like eating my meals, taking my bath, lying down quietly, reading what I want, watching a podcast, a documentary, I like this, let's say, deprivation of other people, I like it."), or connecting with oneself (e.g., P7: "sometimes (loneliness) it's very good because I can connect with myself"). While severely lonely participants described loneliness in a negative manner (e.g., P26: "I don't like it. I hate it. I hate loneliness. Because... Before, I didn't know. I cried a lot. I suffered a lot, right?"), some of moderately/mildly and non-lonely Brazilian individuals even describe loneliness itself as a specific positive term, such as a "hug" (e.g., P7, moderately/mildly lonely), or a blessing (e.g., P21, non-lonely). Regarding the unused codes, Brazilian participants did not use the codes mis/non-understanding, not valued/appreciated, lack of witness, lack of hope/helplessness, and social comparison (positive) to distinguish loneliness of solitude.

How are lonely individuals perceived among the target population?

In Brazil, lonely people are mainly characterized by their negative emotional states such as sadness (e.g., P2, P5, P6, P8, P12, P13, P22, P26, P28, P29, P30, P33,

P39, P44, P45), depression (e.g., P9, P13, P20, P32, P45), suffering (e.g., P27, P32, P44), anguish (e.g., P35), or a lack of joy or will to live (e.g., P2), sometimes they appear apathetic (e.g., P8) or negative (e.g., P32, P39). Behaviorally, lonely people are often described as withdrawn (e.g., P5, P12, P31), closed off (e.g., P7, P21, P22), quiet (e.g., P11, P22, P39), or physically isolated (e.g., P3, P4, P7, P10, P16, P19, P21, P42, P46, P47, P49, P50). The physical signs mentioned include a sad face (e.g., P22, P26, P33), a shy appearance (e.g., P5, P20) or a stooped posture (e.g., P7). A feeling of pity for lonely individuals is also noted (e.g., P18, P44), with some participants seeing them as suffering (e.g., P18, P44). Even though most Brazilian participants perceived lonely people with the negative emotion lens, some of them noted that talkative or outwardly social people can also be lonely (e.g., P22, P31), stating that "solitary individuals can still have good social lives" (e.g., P34) and that lonely people can be adept at hiding feelings (e.g., P26). Perceptions also varied according to the degree of participants' loneliness. For example, severely lonely (SL) participants strongly emphasized deep emotional pain (e.g., "suffer a lot" by P27) and tangible isolation (not leaving the house by P4), sometimes associating this with a history of abandonment (P26). Moderately lonely (MML) participants mention personality traits such as shyness (e.g., P5, P20) and explicitly mention that outwardly sociable people can be lonely ("people who are very outgoing, and yet they are very lonely" by P31). Non-lonely (NL) participants seem to associate lonely people with solitude, associating them with autonomy (e.g., P23), introspection (e.g., P10, P34), or having more time (e.g., P34).



Why is loneliness difficult to be spoken about among the target population?

Brazilian respondents generally found talking about loneliness difficult for a variety of reasons. Common difficulties generally include the fear of showing vulnerability or admitting weaknesses (e.g., P4, P17, P37, P38), as society may not be used to talking about weaknesses or sadness (e.g., P8, P17, P35), and shame, embarrassment, or feeling exposed (e.g., P5, P9, P13, P18, P22, P27, P28, P32, P35, P49), with saying "abandoned" being particularly difficult leading to shame (e.g., P49). Loneliness is often attributed to failures (e.g., P18) and linked to a lack of social connections (e.g., P18, P49), and the cultural emphasis on sociability in Brazil can lead to the admission of loneliness being perceived as a personal failure (e.g., P23), a view reinforced by cultural conservatism that stigmatizes discussing being alone or sad (e.g., P9, P10, P20, P23, P50), creating a taboo (e.g., P3).

Participants also mention reluctance to burden others (e.g., P4, P15, P30, P38) or fear of judgment (e.g., P32, P42). Unique responses evidence the complexity of explaining the feeling, such as a mental "blockage" (e.g., P2), finding the right words (e.g., P46, P48), the contradictory dilemma of not talking about loneliness (e.g., P8, "it's contradictory not to talk about loneliness, (...) not talking about your loneliness feeds your loneliness, (...) so, when you talk about it, it kind of stops existing"), or seeing it as an end result (e.g., P25, "there is a lot behind loneliness; it is an end result of many contributing factors"). A negative case occurs when people who talk about their own loneliness explicitly state that they do not find it difficult, often see it as a normal part of life (e.g., P3, P21, P29, P34, P43, P46, P47), finding talking helpful (e.g., P3), as not describe themselves as lonely (e.g., P22, P35, P36, P45). Those who found it personally difficult stated that they had had negative experiences in the past, such as being ignored (e.g., P11, P38), having difficulty verbalizing feelings (e.g., P6, P37, P48), or having concerns about burdening others (e.g., P15, P30).

Culture-specific aspects of loneliness

Culturally, a key aspect among the Brazilian participants was the tension between Brazil's self-image as a warm, collective, happy, and welcoming country and the reality of individual experiences of loneliness (e.g., P1, P15, P34, P37, P38), which some feel is camouflaged (e.g., P14: "I think that a striking characteristic of loneliness in Brazil is this, it smiles, the lonely person in Brazil pretends that it's fine, I don't know if it's only here, but I think that here there is this mark of joy, the loneliness in Brazil it is joyful on the surface, Right, a lot of people smiling and deep down the joy, the smile is to camouflage the pain that we want, have the courage to face"; P20, "I think that in [Country A], loneliness is more camouflaged, I think there's a web of conservatism in many states, mine is one of them, that you really can't talk about it, that it's wrong to talk about being alone, being unwell, being sad, it's disturbing") or denied (e.g., P29, "Loneliness is a ghost to be denied"). Loneliness is often viewed negatively or as undesirable (e.g., P12, P18, P29, P30), and there may be social pressure to be sociable (e.g., P12, P23, P34), making it harder to deal with (e.g., P12, P20) or even leading people not to open up or seek help (e.g., P20, P50).

Socio-economic factors such as capitalism, limited resources, strenuous work, poverty, and inequality were frequently cited as important factors contributing to loneliness in Brazil (e.g., P3, P17, P22, P24, P26, P31, P39, P45, P46), particularly affecting the poorest layers (e.g., P3, P22, P46), as a lack of a material base affects social relationships and access to leisure (e.g., P3, P31). For example, P22 argues: "I think it's poverty, right? I think poverty is what leaves people... Feeling lonely, without help, without... Feeling isolated, unloved, something like that", in line with P46 who says: "I think so, more about poverty, right? People who don't have financial means too, right?"

There's no one to help them, and I think that loneliness for these people is really hard, right?". Some saw social media as a tool used to convey a false image of wellbeing (e.g., P2: "On social networks many people show being very well, that everything is very ok, living the best days, but when they get home and find their reality, what is real, everyday, it hits very hard") or as a reflection of the fear of being alone (e.g., P29: "Why the explosion of social networks? Why are so many people following so many people? Why are so many people looking for so many likes? Why are so many people looking for views? Maybe it's not to avoid feeling alone, afraid of loneliness, afraid of being forgotten, afraid of not being remembered? So I think that perhaps social networks reflect a little of this denial of loneliness").

Family dynamics, including a strong expectation for social bonds, pressure around family issues, and the cultural aspect of having children to avoid dying alone, also play an important aspect in the culture of loneliness in Brazil (e.g., P12, P20, P36), alongside issues such as ageism (e.g., P7, P48) and family abandonment (e.g., P7). Specific cultural characteristics that were mentioned include the custom of hugging and kissing as a greeting (e.g., P42) and the tendency of people to be nosy (e.g., P23).

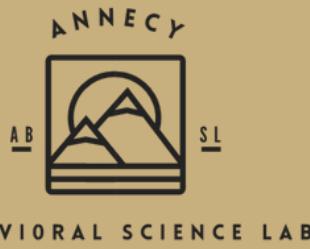


Notes

P1] BR_SL_18-35_Single_Male_Allysson_ID1
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P3] BR_SL_18-35_Single_Male_Allysson_ID3
P4] BR_SL_18-35_Single_Female_Allysson_ID4
P5] BR_MML_18-35_Single_Male_Allysson_ID5
P6] BR_MML_18-35_Any_Female_Allysson_ID6
P7] BR_MML_18-35_Single_Male_Allysson_ID7
P8] BR_MML_18-35_Single_Female_Allysson_ID8
P9] BR_NL_18-35_Partnered_Male_Allysson_ID9
P10] BR_NL_18-35_Single_Female_Allysson_ID10
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Experience of Social Connection, Social Isolation, and Loneliness*