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## SINGLE PEOPLE IN POLAND AND BRAZIL ON SOCIAL ISOLATION: LIVING SITUATIONS

**Abstract.** This text is a report related to the quantitative data of the study “Single people in social isolation: a transnational study”. This research started in 2020 and aims to understand, from a gender perspective, how single people from Brazil and Poland experienced social isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The research included single adults of both sexes who were not involved in a romantic relationship at that time. The study is exploratory, with quantitative methods, using questionnaires as instruments. In this text, we are going to present the profile of the participants in the Brazilian and Polish samples, seeking to describe from a gender and an intersectional perspective how single people lived in the first months of 2020 when the pandemic was recognised by some essential socio-demographic characteristics, living conditions, parenting, casual relationships.

**Keywords:** pandemic of COVID-19, single people, living solo, singlehood, singles, gender

## SINGLE W POLSCE I BRAZYLII W IZOLACJI SPOŁECZNEJ: SYTUACJE ŻYCIOWE

**Abstrakt.** Artykuł bazuje na danych ilościowych z badania „Osoby samotne w izolacji społecznej: badanie międzynarodowe”. Badanie to rozpoczęło się w 2020 r. i miało na celu zrozumienie, z perspektywy płci, w jaki sposób osoby samotne z Brazylii i Polski doświadczyły izolacji społecznej z powodu pandemii COVID-19. W badaniu wzięły udział samotne osoby dorosłe obu płci, które w tym czasie nie były zaangażowane w romantyczny związek. Badanie ma charakter eksploracyjny, z metodami ilościowymi, z wykorzystaniem kwestionariuszy ankiet jako narzędzi. W tym tekście zamierzamy przedstawić profil uczestników w próbie brazylijskiej i polskiej, starając się opisać z perspektywy płci i interseksyjnej, jak żyły osoby samotne w pierwszych miesiącach

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2020 r., kiedy pandemia została rozpoznana z uwzględnieniem podstawowych cech statusowych i społeczno-demograficznych, warunków życia, rodzicielstwa i przypadkowych relacji.

**Słowa kluczowe:** pandemia COVID-19, osoby samotne, życie w pojedynkę, singielstwo, single, płęć, gender

## 1. Introduction

When COVID-19 broke out in China in December 2019, several countries adopted social isolation to prevent contamination and contain the virus under the guidance of the World Health Organization – WHO. This measure was also taken to avoid overburdening the healthcare system, especially public health worldwide. The adoption of social isolation, however, tends to change people's life dynamics, routines, forms of relationships, and self-care. On the one hand, staying at home and being socially isolated is a form of protection against contamination by the virus; on the other hand, it can be one of the stress factors identified in health crises (Morales 2020).

According to the census of the IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), in 2010, in Brazil, the number of single people was 55.3% of the population (added to the number of separated, divorced and widowed people, the percentage reaches 65.1%) (IBGE 2010). In the last census of the same institution, the number of single people was higher than marriage: 81 million singles (without the number of divorced, separated and widowed) and 63 million married people (IBGE 2022). 15.5% is the percentage of single-person households, higher than in 2012, which was 12.2%. With the increasing number of divorces and the diversity of households, single people are gaining prominence in the country.

The latest population census conducted in Poland in 2021 shows that the number of single-person households has increased by just over 2 percentage points compared to the census in 2011. In 2011, single-person households accounted for 20.3%, now 22.7%. The most significant difference concerns large cities, where the change is almost 4%, and currently, nearly 1 in 3 apartments is inhabited by a single person. There is also a higher number of divorced individuals than in 2011 – back then, it was 5%, and now it is 7.6%. Hence, it can be stated that there are half as many again divorced Poles today as there were a decade ago. As for bachelors and spinsters, they constitute 30% of society today, and there has been little change in this regard over the last 10 years (Central Statistical Office in Poland 2011, 2023).

In several countries, demographic data have shown that there is a growing trend in the number of single people since the 1970s, considering it a reflection of the social transformations in the field of intimacy that have been happening rapidly in Western societies – such as the increasing number of divorces and separations, the increase in age expected to marry, or even the non-marriage, which leads people to spend more time single. Amid these transformations, we live with the emergence

of a more diverse composition of households beyond the nuclear family, including people living alone, sharing a residence with colleagues and friends, single-parent families, and others.

The topic of singlehood has drawn attention from various fields of knowledge. From a gender perspective (Haraway 1995; Harding 1996), singlehood is seen as a social, historical, cultural and discursive construction, as well as a social practice, according to Jill Reynolds (2008). In dialogue with this perspective and also from an intersectional look, we understand that singlehood is multidimensional and multifaceted. Considered as a condition or situation of those who are single, and based on a study that analysed the experiences and meanings of adult single people living alone, it was seen from the following dimensions: marital status, lifestyle, loneliness and freedom (Andrade 2022).

The dimensions established from Andrade's study were: (a) as "marital status", including the construction of this concept in opposition to marriage and discussing expectations and criticism of this institution, as well as considering singlehood as a temporary state ("being" single); (b) as "lifestyle" – "to be single", adopted by those who construct their lifestyle under this condition; (c) as "loneliness", discussed as a feeling that does not depend on marital status and type of residence, but is inherent to the human condition and can be experienced positively, approaching solitude (Mansur 2011); finally, (d) as "freedom", considered the primary dimension of singlehood, an element that interconnects the other dimensions and its most essential meaning. (Andrade 2022: 46–47 *free translation*)

These dimensions dialogue with other studies on the area (Stein 1976, 1981; DePaulo 2016, 2017, 2023; Paprzycka 2008; Żurek 2008; Czernecka 2014). Singlehood is multifaceted in the sense that its experience is related to the discourse and social places that people occupy, also varying in time, culture and locality, being dynamic because it may not be a condition experienced as permanent due to the possibility of marriage – especially for those who long for one.

Studies supporting the topic have been based on an interdisciplinary and gender perspective (Haraway 1995; Harding 1992), looking at the heteronorms (Wittig 1992) that are still very present in Western culture, characterised as patriarchal, familistic, and couple-oriented (Budgeon 2008; Amador, Kiersky 2003). They also observe how these cultural norms influence the experiences and subjectivities of single adults, placing them in a paradoxical situation in contemporary times, where new ways of living, relating, and building identities coexist with some traditions. Choosing a way of life outside marriage has been more socially accepted. The stigmas of the "spinster" and the "bachelor" weaken; single adults are still asked to be expected to respond about the reasons why they are not married. This requires the creation of strategies to deal with such accusations (Budgeon 2008; Reynolds, Wetherell 2003).

Single people in this context may also feel excluded, as if there is something wrong with them, which contributes to the emergence of negative feelings about

self-identity and self-esteem and can lead to psychological distress. This is especially true for women, whose identities are constructed in our culture with a focus on the relationship with the other, from the so-called gendered devices, as Valeska Zanillo (2018) discusses. For the author, there are privileged paths of subjectivation for women and men. Women subjectivate themselves from the loving and maternal devices, which are related to the social attribution of care – and to “feminine” characteristics, as being the function and destiny of women. Furthermore, men, through the efficacy device (sexual and labour efficacy), related to the social roles of provider and “eater”. In this sense, it is identitarian for women to be mothers and wives and for men to perform well sexually and labour life.

The gender device also works intersectionally with colour/race, sexual orientation/sexuality, age/generation, and other social identity attributes that place single people in places of vulnerability and, at the same time, underlie their identity constructions (Pacheco 2013). In the Brazilian context, we highlight how racism contributes to the loneliness of black women as well as in many other countries, especially ones marked by the colonisation process (Andrade 2012, 2022). The etarism still stigmatises, beyond the elderly, those people who have reached an “age to marry” but who are (still) single or have become divorced/separated; LGBTphobia still oppresses many people who want to express their sexuality and gender identity, for not being hegemonic (cisheterosexual, monogamic, etc.), and end up being limited to guetos as a form of protection, and even increase loneliness. Other discriminations can accentuate vulnerabilities related to singlehood, such as the experience of motherhood when one is a single mother or father and of non-motherhood – especially women who have chosen or for various reasons are not mothers, and even more so those who have interrupted a pregnancy.

During the pandemic, when we could see inequalities becoming more accentuated and the invisibility of social groups being exacerbated, we seek to draw attention to this social group of single people, considering this scenario. It is about knowing how they lived through the first months of 2020 when the questionnaires were applied. At that time, there were still measures of social isolation (in some way) in Brazil and Poland, and people started to create means to deal with the country’s crisis.

## **2. Methodology**

This study sought to know and understand how single people experienced a period of social isolation due to the pandemic of COVID-19, investigating aspects of personal life, work, leisure, and domestic activities; exercise of sexuality, including virtual relationships; mental health – feelings present in the period of social isolation and self-care practices; opinions and experiences of singlehood; and projects for the future. It considered gender and cultural differences regarding the mentioned

aspects. Also, it sought to analyse processes of subjectivation around the experience of singlehood in the pandemic in order to investigate how the people who participate in the study feel in the condition of singlehood, observing the injunctions of gender devices in an intersectional way, paying attention to their places of speech and the contexts from which they depart.

The study was exploratory and used online questionnaires and interviews to construct data. In this paper, we will focus on the data from the online questionnaire containing 64 questions, closed and open, applied from the access to people through “snowball”, accessed through the contact network of the research team and disseminated on social networks. For data analysis, we used content analysis (Bardin 1997), observing the themes of the study, gender and cultural differences, with support from SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Science) software for computing and statistical analysis of a more descriptive nature of the responses from the questionnaires. We applied the questionnaires between April and August 2020, when social isolation measures were being adopted globally. In Brazil, however, this measure was not adopted in a more organised way due to the lack of a coherent national policy to combat the virus. In Poland, surveys were distributed by the singles portal *Sympatia.pl* and made available on the Association for Singles website. In this phase, we had 1645 valid questionnaires, 867 of which were applied in Brazil and 778 in Poland. It should be added that in Poland and Brazil, much larger results of questionnaire completions were obtained (in Poland, about 3,000, in Brazil, nearly 1,500). At the same time, due to a lot of missing data, the analysis was narrowed down to complete questionnaires. The high interest in the survey may indicate this topic’s social relevance and importance.

The sample in this study was random and not probabilistic. The intention was that these data could collaborate to help us think about the condition of single people during the pandemic, starting from a specific middle-class group, considering that they were people who had access to the internet and that most of them had working conditions that allowed them to stay at home. The analyses considered the variables sex (women and men), race (people who declared themselves white and black, and other races – we added black, brown, and other races), age (we separated 4 age groups: 18 to 25 years, 26 to 41 years, 42 to 59 years, and 60 years or older), type of residence (those who lived alone and those who shared a residence), and maternity/paternity (people with children and those without) due to investigate the similarities and differences between some of the characteristics of this group. The analyses considered the frequencies of responses between each group, not comparing them. In this process, we used the chi-square test to observe statistical significance. The researchers also undertook the second part of the qualitative study, which involved conducting in-depth, structured, open-ended interviews with women and men, which will be analysed in future articles.

### 3. Data about personal life: Profile of the sample

Regarding sex, gender identity and sexual orientation, the majority of the participants in Brazil are single women (80.7% women; 19.3% men), cisgender persons (96.4% in total. 97.1% of women and 94% of men responses), with heterosexual sexual orientation (70.8%). The sexual orientation of the others added up to 29.2%, which included those who identified themselves as bisexual (15.8%), gay (7.5%), lesbian (3.7%), pansexual (1.7%), and others. As in Brazil, most of them identified themselves as a cisgender person: 98.0% of women, 96.4% of men's responses. The majority declared heterosexual: 93.5% of women and 95.2% of men. Other sexual orientations cited were: among women, 2.9% claimed bisexual, 1.8% described their sexual orientation as different, 0.9% asexual, and 0.9% pansexual. Among men, 1.8% declared themselves as bisexual, 1.2% as pansexual, 0.9% as asexual, and 0.6% as sexual orientation as different.

In Poland, the number of female and male participants was slightly more balanced: women (57.4%) and men (42.5%). Among Polish respondents, 98.0% of women identified with their birth gender and 2.0% identified with another cultural gender. Among men, 96.4% identified with their birth gender, 0.3% as transgender, and 3.3% identified their cultural gender as other. Among women surveyed from Poland, 93.5% declared themselves as heterosexual, 2.9% as bisexual, 0.9% as asexual, 0.9% as pansexual, and 1.8% described their sexual orientation as other. Among men, 95.2% described themselves as heterosexual, 1.8% as bisexual, 1.2% as pansexual, 0.3% as homosexual, 0.9% asexual, and 0.6% described their sexual orientation as other.

The age of the participants, in general, was divided into four groups for analysis, with the majority between 26 and 41 years old in Brazil: from 18 to 25 years old, 27.7% of the sample; from 26 to 41 years old, 49.6%; 20.4% of the sample in the 42 to 59 age group, and 2.3% with 60 years old or more. In the study group from Poland, there were 39 people in the 18–25 age group (5%), 424 people in the 26–41 age group (54.4%), 310 people in the 42–59 age group (39.8%) and 5 people in the age group 60 and more (0.6%).

Regarding marital status, in Brazil and Poland, the majority reported being single and never married, as shown in the table below, with more single people who had never married in Brazil and more divorced people in Poland.

**Table 1.** Gender and marital status

Country	Gender	Marital status (%)				
		Single (never married)	Divorced	Separated	Widow	Other
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Brazil	Women	72.6	14.7	11.6	1.1	0.0
	Men	84.4	7.8	6.0	1.8	0.0

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Poland	Women		52.8	34.7	4.5	6.0	2.0
	Men		69.5	25.4	3.0	1.2	0.9

Regarding gender and marital status in Brazil, 72.6% of the women stated that they were single and had never married, 14.7% were divorced, 11.6% were separated, and 1.1% were widowed. 84.4% of the men stated they were single and had never married, 7.8% were divorced, 6.0% were separated, and 1.8% were widowed. In this group, there are significant positive and weak relationships between sex and marital status  $\chi^2(3) = 11.83$ ;  $p = 0.008$ .  $\Phi = 0.12$ ;  $p = 0.008$ .

In the group of women from Poland, 52.8% were unmarried, 34.7% were divorced, 4.5% were separated, 6.0% were widows, and 2.0% answered that their marital status was different. In the group of men, 69.5% answered that they were single, 25.4% were divorced, 3.0% were separated, and 1.2% were widowers. In this group, there are significant positive and weak relationships between sex and marital status  $\chi^2(4) = 27.89$ ;  $p < 0.001$ .  $\Phi = 0.19$ ;  $p < 0.001$ .

Regarding age, more singles never got married in both countries, especially at an earlier age, and divorced over 40, as the table above shows.

**Table 2.** Age versus marital status

Country	Age group	Marital status (%)				
		Single (never married)	Divorced	Separated	Widow	Other
Brazil	18–25	98.3	0.8	0.8	0.0	0.0
	26–41	78.6	10.0	11.4	0.0	0.0
	42–59	39.5	34.5	20.9	5.1	0.0
	60 and more	25.0	50.0	15.0	10.0	0.0
Poland	18–25	94.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.1
	26–41	79.2	16.7	2.4	0.5	1.2
	42–59	30.0	53.9	6.5	8.4	1.3
	60 and more	0.0	20.0	0.0	60.0	20.0

In Brazil, in the 18–25 age group, most people never got married (98.3%); in the 26–41 age group, 78.6% of people too, followed by 11.4% as separated, and 10.0% as divorced. In the 42–59 age group, 39.5% indicated they were single and had never married, 34.5% were divorced, 20.9% were separated, and 5.1% were widowed. In the 60 and older age group, the majority are divorced: 50% divorced, 25% never married, 15% separated, and 10% widowed. This group has significant relationships between age and marital status  $\chi^2(9) = 246.53$ ;  $p < 0.001$ .  $\Phi = 0.53$ ;  $p < 0.001$ . In the study group of people from Poland aged 18–25, 94.9% declared that they were never married, and 5.1% stated that their marital status differed. In

the 26–41 age group, 79.2% of people declared that they were never married, 16.7% were divorced, 2.4% were separated, 0.5% were widows, and 1.2% determined their marital status was different. In the 42–59 age group, 30.0% declared that they were single and never got married, 53.9% were divorced, 6.5% were separated, 8.4% were widows, and 1.3% declared that their marital status is different. In the age group of 60 and older, 20.0% declared that they were divorced, 60.0% were widow, and 20.0% declared that their marital status differed. This group has significant relationships between age and marital status  $\chi^2(12) = 270.43$ ;  $p < 0.001$ .  $\Phi = 0.59$ . Interestingly, there is a more significant relationship between marital status with gender and age. There are more single men who have never married than women and younger groups, which also represents changes in the age of marriage. In Brazil, it was identified as 28 years for women and 31 years for men, according to the marriages registered in 2020 (IBGE 2020). Furthermore, the increase in divorce and separation rates also contributed to people spending more time as single.

#### 4. (Casual) relationships

We consider that single people are not necessarily celibate because they can be involved in different kinds of relationships outside marriage, as many other kinds of relationships are becoming more common: the ones that are more fluid and temporary. In this research, we did not include people involved in a severe or long-term romantic relationship to avoid the so-called living apart together people or other relationships that are closer to marriage. During the pandemic, with the decreased possibilities for sexual and amorous encounters due to social isolation measurement and the risk of contamination by the virus, it was expected that single people would not get involved in casual or other kinds of sexual and romantic relationships. Moreover, most of the participants of this research were not, around 70% in each country. The other part of the sample said they were involved in casual relationships. The Brazilians had more casual encounters (what is called “ficar”), and in Poland, the “friends with benefits” and being a lover/mistress were more present. We expected to find more people engaged in online dating in both countries, but it represented less than 10% of the responses. Check the table below.

In the female group from Brazil, 69.4% answered that they were not involved in any form of relationship, 15.9% had occasional sexual relations (what in Brazil calls “ficante”), 6.7% had a relationship with a “friend with benefits” (a friend with who occasionally the person have sex with), 6.0% of this group arrange online dating, 1.7% had a lover, 0.3% state that their form of relationship was different. Among men, 74.3% state that they were not involved in any form of relationship, 12.6% had occasional sexual relations (“ficante”), 6.0% had online dating, 5.4% answered that they had a “friend with benefits”, 1.8% had a lover. In this group, there is no significant relationship between sex and the form of relationship  $\chi^2(5) = 2.25$ ;  $p = 0.814$ .



**Table 3.** Gender and the form of the relationship

Country	Gender	Are you currently involved in any form of relationship? (%)				
		Yes, I have casual sexual relations (“ficar”)	Yes, I have a friend with whom I have sex from time to time	Online dating	Yes, a mistress/lover	Other
Brazil	Women	15.9	6.7	6.0	1.7	0.3
	Men	12.6	5.4	6.0	1.8	0.0
Poland	Women	1.8	8.3	7.8	4.5	2.5
	Men	3.3	8.5	7.3	2.4	2.1

In the group of people from Poland demonstrated in the environment of women, 75.2% of them answered that they were not involved in any form of relationship, 4.5% responded that they had a lover, 1.8% said that they had random sexual relations, 8.3% declare that they had “friend with benefits”), 7.8% manifest that they had online dating, 2.5% described their form of relationship as different. Among men from the same country, 76.4% answered that they were not involved in any form of relationship, 2.4% declared that they had a lover, 3.3% said that they had random sexual relations, 8.5% said that they had “friend with benefit”, 7.3% manifest that they go on online dating, and 2.1% responded that their form of relationship is different. In this group, there is no significant relationship between sex and the form of relationship  $\chi^2(5) = 4.30; p = 0.507$ .

Related to age and forms of relationships, in the group of respondents from Brazil aged 18–25, 71.7% declared that they are not in any form of relationship, 15.0% declared that they had random sexual relations, 7.1% said they had online dating, 5.4% said they had a “friend with benefits”, 0.8% declared that they have a lover. In the age range of 26–41, 65.8% answered that they were not in any form of relationship, 17.9% responded that they had random sexual relations, 7.4% answered that they had a “friend with benefits, 6.5% answered that they date online, 1.9% answered that they had a lover, 0.5% answered that their form of relationship was different. In the age range of 42–59, 76.8% stated that they were not in any form of relationship, 10.2% said that they had random sexual relations, 6.2% said that they had a “friend with benefits”, 4.0% said they had online dating, 2.8% said that they had a lover. In the age range of 60 and over, 95.0% manifest that they were not in any form of relationship, and 5.0% manifest that they had random sexual relations. In this group, there are no significant relationships between age and the form of relationship  $\chi^2(15) = 20.70; p = 0.147$ .

In the group of respondents from Poland aged 18–25, 79.5% declared that they had no relationship in any form, 7.7% said that they had a lover, 5.1% declared that they had a “friend with benefits”, 5.1% declared that they had online dating, 2.6% declared that they had random sexual relations. In the age range of 26–41, 77.1%

answered that they had no relationship in any form, 7.8% answered that they had an online date, 7.1% answered that they had a “friend with benefits”, 2.8% answered that they had a lover, 2.6% answered that they had random sexual relations, 2.6% answered that their form of relationship was different. In the 42–59 age group, 73.5% stated that they were not in any form of relationship, 10.3% said that they had a “friend with benefits”, 7.7% said they were dating online, 4.2% said that they had a lover, 2.3% said that they had random sexual relations, and 1.9% said their relationship was different. In the age range of 60 and over, 60.0% manifest that they were not involved in any form of relationship, and 20.0% had a friend with whom they have sex from time to time. There are no significant relationships in this group between age and the form of the relationship  $\chi^2(15) = 16.03$ ;  $p = 0.380$ . Related to sexual orientation and type of relationship, we did not find a significant relationship between sex and sexual orientation related to this item.

## 5. Parenting

Regarding being a **parent** during the pandemic, in both countries, most single people in this survey had no children; among them, more men than women did not.

**Table 4.** Gender vs. how many children you have

Country	Gender	Number of children (%)			
		None	One	Two	Three or more
Brazil	Women	76,6	11,9	8,3	3,3
	Men	90,4	6,6	2,4	0,6
Poland	Women	58,4	19,2	16,1	6,3
	Men	62,8	18,7	14,2	4,2

When we observe the groups by sex, more men do not have children than women in Brazil: 90.6% of men do not have children, and 76.6% of women do not have children either. Among the sexual orientation groups (hetero and LGBT), more heterosexuals have children (25.7% of heterosexuals; 8.7% of LGBT). Regarding age, it is more mature and older people who have children: in the age group 42–59, 52.5% have children, and in the age group 60 and over, 75%. Few of the younger singles have children: 15.6% in the 26–41 age group and 2.1% in the 18–25 age group. Regarding race, whites indicated having fewer children than blacks and people of other races: 22.3% and 29.1%, respectively. Concerning marital status, the people who have more children are divorced (in this group, 69%), separated (53.8%) and widows (63.6%), which indicates the presence of solo mothers and fathers. In the group of those who have never married, only 6.8% have children (or 44 people). When analysed, these variables showed no significant relation in Brazil and Poland.

During the pandemic, we asked with whom the children are living during social isolation, and most Brazilians affirmed that they are with them, especially their mothers.

**Table 5.** Gender and if you have a child/children, who does it live with during social isolation?

Country	Gender	If you have a child/children, who do they live with during social isolation? (%)			
		With me	With the father/mother	With other people (grandparents, aunt, uncle, etc.)	They live on their own, and they are adults
Brazil	Women	74.5	5.7	0.7	19.1
	Men	40.0	50.0	0.0	10.0
Poland	Women	58.5	43.9	0.0	0.0
	Men	41.5	56.1	0.0	0.0

Regarding marital status/type of singlehood, this group represents ongoing social change, with the majority presence of people who had never married, who do not have children, and some social expectations that older people have children and had experienced a marriage relation before, considering the number of divorced people. The ones who had children were with them at this time, and considering that they were mainly single parents, the experience of being single must pay attention to this fact. By the time when the data was collected, in the first months of the pandemic, it was expected that the seek of casual encounters had diminished because many leisure services were closed (such as bars, clubs, and other places where singles usually hang out), and single people were socially isolated. Most participants in this research showed they were not involved in any (casual) relationships.

## 6. Living situation

Regarding the living situations, a large part of the sample of single persons in Brazil shared a residence (70.2%). When analysed by group, 70.9% shared the residence in the women's group; in the men's group, the percentage was 67.7%. The percentage of people living alone in Brazil was 29.8%. In the men's group, there is a slightly higher percentage of those living alone compared to the women's group in the same residence condition (32.3% in the men's group and 29.1% in the women's group), which shows some tendencies in large cities to have more men in this condition.

In the racial group, more people shared residence in the group of blacks and other races: 73%. In the white group, this percentage is 67.7%. In the age group, the percentage of people sharing a residence decreases with age: in the group with

people aged 18–25, 94.2% share a residence; in the group aged 26–41, 63.3%; in the group aged 42–59, 58.2%, and among older people, the percentage is 40%.

Among the group of people who have children, 81.7% share a residence, and in the group of people who do not have children, 67.2% share. This also indicates that more people in the group of those living alone have no children (32.8%), more than in the group of people living alone and having children (18.3%) – in this group, the children are now adults and have left home. In the Brazilian respondent group, there are significant relationships between gender and with whom the child/children was/were living during social isolation  $\chi^2(3) = 23.34$ ;  $p < 0.001$ .  $\Phi = 0.39$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ; significant relationships exist between age and whom the child/children lived with during social isolation  $\chi^2(9) = 61.93$ ;  $p < 0.001$ .  $\Phi = 0.64$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ; there are significant relationships between race and who the child lives with during social isolation  $\chi^2(9) = 20.10$ ;  $p = 0.017$ .  $\Phi = 0.37$ ;  $p = 0.017$ .

Neither the age nor education of Polish respondents affected who they lived with during their social isolation. What makes a statistically significant difference in their answers is gender. Men were likelier to share an apartment with friends than women  $\chi^2(1) = 4.651$ ;  $p < 0.031$ .  $\Phi = 0.077$ .

In the first months when the pandemic was enacted, more people were living alone in Poland than in Brazil. Among Polish respondents, those who lived alone (92.7%) or with friends/acquaintances (7.3%) during social isolation/quarantine predominate.

Related to the type of residence, in Poland, the most commonly declared place of residence was a house (54.6%) and apartments (42%). Other responses totalled 3.3%. Respondents from Poland were slightly less likely than those from Brazil to live in apartments, while living in a house was more common. Both gender and age did not differentiate the results in a statistically significant way. Regardless of gender, respondents were more likely to live in houses than in an apartment  $\chi^2(3) = 3.042$ ;  $p = 0.385$ , and the same was true for the age of Polish respondents, where among each age group, the home was the most frequently indicated  $\chi^2(6) = 3.566$ ;  $p = 0.735$ .

The type of housing reported in Brazil prevailed between apartments (49.7%) and houses (46.8%). Other types (3.2%) were kitnet, loft, and ranch, and two reported living in shacks. In these dwellings, the number of bedrooms prevailed over those with three bedrooms (37.6%) and two bedrooms (33.6%). Some lived in one-bedroom (14.1%) and no-bedroom (1.4%) apartments – characterised by smaller apartments and “kitnets”, respectively, very common in large Brazilian cities and metropolises. Larger residences with four or more bedrooms represented 13.4% of the single-person dwellings in the pandemic context.

The place where Polish respondents spend their time in social isolation is most often four rooms or more (47.7%). Less common are three-room apartments or houses (27.5%), and even less common are two-room apartments (17.6%) and one-room apartments (7.2%). Due to variables such as gender, age and education, no

effect was observed in Polish respondents on the number of rooms they indicated. The results for gender are statistically insignificant:  $\chi^2(3) = 5.299$ ;  $p = 0.151$ , the same for age  $\chi^2(6) = 2.303$ ;  $p = 0.890$  and education  $\chi^2(6) = 4.709$ ;  $p = 0.582$ .

We asked how comfortable the place where people lived in the first months of the pandemic was, and the answers that showed some degree of comfort prevailed in both countries. In Brazil, we found the answers: very comfortable, 48.1%; comfortable, 31.4%; relatively comfortable, 17.9%. The answers that showed some discomfort were of little significance (rather uncomfortable, 2.3%; very uncomfortable, 0.3%). Respondents from Poland most often rated the place where they spent their time during social isolation as relatively comfortable (39.3%) or very comfortable (37.1%). It is also often rated as simply comfortable (14.5%). Overall, Poles rate the comfort of the place they spend time in highly – at least “rather comfortable” for 90.9% of respondents. The remaining 9.1% of responses rate the place as rather uncomfortable (5.7%) or very uncomfortable (3.3%). We consider that the degree of comfort of the residence can be attributed to the fact that people are primarily in their relatively spacious residences with more than one room. When we analyse the groups of people concerning gender, race, housing type, and age, they do not show significant differences.

The degree of comfort is also related to who shares the residence (for those sharing by the time of the pandemic) and the quality of the relationship established with these people. When asked how many people shared the residence with the study participants, those who shared the residence reported that they lived in Brazil mainly with two (20.8%) or one (18.1%) person. 16.8% of the sample reside with three people, 8.4% with four, and 6.1% with five or more. Most respondents from Poland lived alone (92.7%) or with friends/acquaintances (7.3%) during social isolation/quarantine. When asked about the number of people they lived with during social isolation, Respondents from Poland answered that they most often lived alone (37.5%). Less often did they live with one person (26.3%) or two (19.2%). Respondents living with more than two people during this time (three, four, five or more) represent only 16.9% of this group. Poles are more likely than Brazilians to live alone or with one person (63.8% compared to 47.8%) and less likely to live in households larger than two people (in Brazilian respondents, 31.3% of responses). By gender, no statistically significant differences were noted. The responses of men and women are similar – the most frequently indicated response in both groups is to live alone  $\chi^2(5) = 4.894$ ;  $p = 0.429$ . Similarly, age did not differentiate the number of cohabitants in a statistically significant way  $\chi^2(10) = 10.677$ ;  $p = 0.383$ , and so did declared education  $\chi^2(10) = 1.689$ ;  $p = 0.998$ .

For those sharing a residence, the quality of the relationship with the lodger in Brazil was considered suitable to some extent (28.3% said the relationship is “fairly good”; 20% “excellent”), followed by “neither good nor bad” (17.4%), possibly tolerating living in the same space in the pandemic. There were those who reported that the relationship was not good (“bad”, 3%, and “extremely bad”, 1.5%)

(N = 867, with 259 people not answering the question or 29.9% of the sample). There were no significant differences between groups regarding gender, race, type of residence, and those with and without children.

Respondents from Poland who live with other people rate the relationships they form with them as excellent (44.3%), often also as rather good (34.4%), in third place in terms of response rate – as neither bad nor good (15.4%). Compared to respondents from Brazil, Poles are more likely to describe their relationships as great (a difference of 15.8 percentage points), and Brazilians as “rather good” or “neither bad nor good.” However, respondents from both countries rate their relationships positively. The combined percentage of “rather good” and “great” responses is 78.7% among Poles and 68.8% among Brazilians. Age statistically significantly differentiated the responses. Those in the younger age category are likelier to rate their relationships as very bad, while the number of responses positively rating relationships increases with age  $\chi^2(8) = 16.836$ ;  $p < 0.032$ .  $\Phi = 0.188$ .

By gender, men are slightly more likely than women to rate relationships more positively – although this is not a statistically significant relationship  $\chi^2(4) = 5.533$ ;  $p = 0.237$ , it does not rule out or support the hypothesis stating that men rate their lives as more comfortable than women due to the lack of care for others. The hypothesis assuming a higher sense of comfort with permanent employment/work was rejected – statistical measures did not indicate such a relationship. The confirmed hypothesis indicates a correlation between well-being during social isolation (answer “well” in question 45) and the evaluation of relationships with people with whom the respondent lives. The more often respondents feel good during social isolation, the more often they describe their relationships as “excellent” or “rather good,” and vice versa – if they indicate that they never feel good or feel so less often than usual, the more often they describe their relationships as “very bad” or “neither good nor bad.”  $\chi^2(16) = 35.469$ ;  $p < 0.003$ .  $\Phi = 0.274$ .

Hypercoexistence in the same house, with the limitations imposed by the pandemic context, contributed to the emergence of a series of interpersonal conflicts and violence, especially gender violence, with an overload of domestic work for women, for example, an increase in marital violence, and violence against older adults, children, discrimination against LGBT people, among other more vulnerable groups. This group of single men and women timidly demonstrated the existence of some dissatisfaction within their relationships, but here, we could not analyse it further. However, with responses expressing good, excellent and tolerable relationships (neither good nor bad) prevailing, it seems this can be a protective factor against suffering due to social isolation.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Data and discussion related to the wellbeing of single people will be presented in another report.

## 7. Reflections

The present article sought to bring the characteristics of single people who lived in social isolation in the first months of the pandemic in Brazil and Poland in 2020. Here, we showed the characterisation of the people who participated in the study, bringing socio-demographic characteristics, living conditions, type of singlehood and (casual) relationships. We tried to highlight aspects of social identities in terms of sex/gender, race/ethnicity, and age group data, looking at housing type and parental conditions (who has children and who does not) when they were significant. With that, we collaborated to have a more comprehensive view of this group that participated in the study to build an intersectional look and look for approximations, similarities and particularities from the observed identity markers, which will be deepened later with the analysis of the interviews.

Interestingly, the profile of the people who participated in the study dialogues with other studies on singlehood, which brought to light the reality of single, cisheterosexual, white, urban middle-class adult women living in large cities in Western countries. Our study in Brazil also included this profile: cisheterosexual, childless women who mostly share a house. They are adults aged 18 to 41 years – and in the sample, we have the youngest who have never married and the most mature who are divorced. The study also included black people and people of other colours/race/ethnicity (almost half of the sample), aspects still little discussed in other studies on singlehood (Andrade 2012, 2022). The same situation is about singlehood in Poland. The group participating in this study reflects the socio-demographic characteristics discussed in previous analyses of this phenomenon. It concerns mainly urban slings, women and men from the middle social class, well-educated people, and a significant number of living alone (Żurek 2008; Czernecka 2014; Paprzycka 2008; Izdebski 2016).

The profile also brings in single people who were mainly not involved in an affective/love relationship. In a pandemic context, this seems to be expected, especially in the first months when the virus's behaviour was still being studied by scientists and the guidelines disseminated in the media did not offer guidance on the risks of contagion concerning sexual behaviour. We believe that the fact that most participants stated that they were in social isolation to avoid contaminating themselves and other people contributed to this lack of involvement in relationships in this period – a topic that we will work better in conjunction with analyses of more specific data on sexuality in the pandemic, also bringing information about possible relationships in this context.

One of the most interesting differences we noted is that in Poland, the majority of surveyed individuals, both women and men, lived independently. In contrast, most women and men in Brazil lived with other people during the pandemic. While in Poland, those who lived with someone usually had only one roommate. Statistically, it was several people in Brazil. This may have a significant impact on

further analyses related to the consequences of social isolation on mental health. In the Brazilian group, men often shared accommodation with friends, while women lived with family members. This could also be related to receiving greater emotional support and assistance in women's daily duties to their family members. It is worth noting that there was also a significant statistical correlation regarding with whom women lived, namely with their parents. Another gender-related aspect is that statistically, women who have children are more likely to live with them compared to men.

To conclude, regarding the crossings we sought to make concerning the identity aspects of the group participating in the study, we found a few differences, which have already been discussed throughout the text and will form the basis for future analyses in articulation with qualitative data. After having presented who the people who participated in the study are and how they lived in this setting, the following analyses will bring aspects of the experience of singlehood regarding daily practices of leisure, work, domestic activities, well-being and mental health, sexuality, and projects for the future.

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