

NIVEA CONNECT REPORT 2024

Social Isolation and Loneliness:
Reasons, Consequences, and Solutions



NIVEA
CONNECT

FOREWORDS	4
by Grita Loeb sack and Jean-François Pascal	
ALONE TOGETHER	6
Results of the Global NIVEA CONNECT REPORT 2024	
EDUCATION TO BUILD RESILIENT AND CONNECTED COMMUNITIES	22
Interview With Dilbur Parakh	
ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS	26
Interview With Adriana Barbosa	
IMPRINT	30

FOREWORD

Grita Loeb sack

President NIVEA

NIVEA has always been more than just a skincare brand. Caring not only for skin, but for each other, across generations and the globe.

We believe in the profound power of human connection and togetherness – and we commit to take action. That’s why we are joining forces with institutions, universities, and NGOs to combat the growing epidemic of social isolation and loneliness, an alarming development leading to serious long-term consequences for health and well-being.

Our social mission NIVEA CONNECT is a commitment to help address this issue. Together, we can fight social isolation – by raising awareness to help reduce the stigma, educating individuals and enabling meaningful social connections.

Using our brand voice and channels, we will communicate and engage with communities. We are setting up NIVEA CONNECT projects with local partners in 40 countries by 2026. And we support and amplify a global community of scientists, experts and organisations.

This report offers insights into the root causes and consequences of social isolation. It is based on an extensive global study and aims to share the knowledge about this pressing topic.

We invite you to join us in this important mission.

One in four people in our study has felt socially isolated often or always. That means someone you know right now is struggling. Reach out today. Let’s make a difference, together.



FOREWORD

Jean-François Pascal

Vice President Sustainability Beiersdorf

At Beiersdorf, we care beyond skin to champion a more inclusive society. This purpose is actioned through the social mission of our iconic brand. With NIVEA CONNECT we are uniting our social efforts to tackle the highly relevant and globally rising concern of social isolation.

Our first international NIVEA CONNECT research reveals that 86% of respondents see social isolation as a growing issue, closely linked to exclusion and discrimination. One in four participants feels excluded, bullied, or unable to participate in society due to financial constraints, and faces discrimination. Addressing these issues is at the core of our mission as we aim to reach beyond our core business and contribute to greater social cohesion.

As part of our engagement, I'm pleased to announce that NIVEA is committed to partnering with local organizations in 40 countries by 2026. The collaborative projects aim to provide information, enable connections and strengthen resilience in local communities. Engaging and empowering these communities is crucial for inspiring impactful and long-lasting change.

Our efforts to fight social isolation are as vital as our commitment to deepening our understanding of the issue. This NIVEA CONNECT REPORT marks the beginning of the brand's social mission to fight social isolation and foster meaningful connections. I hope you find value in the interviews within this report, highlighting two of our local projects in Brazil and India which offer insights from experts on the ground.

Thank you to our dedicated colleagues and local partners worldwide for driving NIVEA CONNECT forward. Together we can fight social isolation and contribute to our Beiersdorf CARE BEYOND SKIN Sustainability Agenda.





METHODOLOGY

The NIVEA research was conducted by Ipsos, a global market research and public opinion firm, as computer-assisted web interviews (CAWIs) with 8,000 people in the following 8 countries (1,000 interviews per country): Brazil, China, France, Germany, the Philippines, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Survey respondents were between 16 and 74 years of age, with access to the internet. The study was conducted from January 3–16, 2024. The quantitative research was supplemented by a qualitative study of participants in five countries (Brazil, Canada, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States) that consisted of online diary entries, individual interviews, and mini group discussions. The qualitative research was conducted between February 2 and March 6, 2024.

ALONE TOGETHER

Facing the Hidden Epidemic of Social Isolation and Loneliness

New NIVEA research finds that social isolation is becoming more prevalent, with one in five people worldwide without even a single close friend.

In today's era of unprecedented connectivity, a paradox lurks in the shadows of our lives. Consider a few familiar scenarios: a grandmother sits alone in her home, her only company the flickering television; a teenager scrolls endlessly through social media, surrounded by followers but feeling utterly disconnected; a young professional relocates for work, finding themselves in a bustling city yet overcome by a deep sense of loneliness. These are not isolated anecdotes, but rather the quiet, pervasive reality for millions worldwide.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines social isolation as having an insufficient number of social connections, and loneliness as the social pain of not feeling connected.¹ Together, these issues have silently become one of the most pressing public health challenges of our time, stealthily impacting our mental and physical well-being. The COVID-19 pandemic intensified the issue of social isolation, affecting people across all age groups. Lockdowns and social distancing measures, while necessary to curb infections, also led to a surge in loneliness and associated health problems globally.

According to Gallup, a global analytics firm that advises employers and leaders, 330 million adults around the globe endure weeks at a time without speaking to a single family member or friend, and 20% of all adults worldwide don't have **anyone** they can reach out to for help.² This lack of connection is dangerous. Loneliness and social isolation are associated with, among other risks, a 29% increased risk of heart disease and a 32% increased risk of stroke, due in part to increased levels of cortisol and other stress hormones that can damage our health over time.³ "There's no question that social relationships are important for health," says health and wellness researcher Dr. Elliot Friedman. "If you stack having few social relationships against other risk factors – like smoking and obesity – not being socially connected is as strong a risk factor for death."⁴

Now that advances in neuroscience and psychology have shown the risks of social isolation and loneliness to be on par with other well-known health hazards, experts are beginning to approach these issues as critical public health concerns rather than mere individual experiences. This heightened awareness of social isolation's impact on our mental and physical health has spurred global initiatives such as the new WHO Commission on Social Connection, which aims to address loneliness as a pressing health threat and promote social connection through a range of solutions worldwide.⁵

Similarly, various countries have launched national strategies and community programs aimed at fostering social connections, particularly among vulnerable populations such as the elderly and adolescents. For example, in 2018 the United Kingdom appointed the world's first-ever Minister for Loneliness, whose work would tackle "the sad reality of modern life."⁶ Technology companies are developing digital solutions to facilitate meaningful interactions, while public health campaigns increasingly emphasize the importance of social well-being. Collectively, these efforts mark a significant shift toward a more holistic understanding of health that acknowledges the essential role of social connection.

When we understand the profound impact of social isolation and loneliness, we are moved to act – not only out of compassion, but out of a recognition that our own health and happiness are intertwined with those around us. By encouraging connection and inclusivity, we can create a ripple effect of positive change, ensuring that no one has to endure the silent suffering of loneliness. We have a responsibility to shine a light on this hidden epidemic. Our collective health and happiness depend on it.

“If you stack having few social relationships against other risk factors – like smoking and obesity – not being socially connected is as strong a risk factor for death.”

DR. ELLIOT FRIEDMAN

PEOPLE WHO HAVE ALWAYS OR OFTEN FELT SOCIALLY ISOLATED DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS





Source: Global Survey IPSOS/NIVEA 2024

WHAT MAKES YOU FEEL CONNECTED TO OTHERS?



52%

COMMON INTERESTS

48%

SPENDING TIME TOGETHER

40%

SHARED VALUES

28%

TALKING ABOUT PERSONAL TOPICS

26%

HAVING EXPERIENCED SPECIAL SITUATIONS TOGETHER

Source: Global Survey IPSOS/NIVEA 2024

“We used to look out for each other more”: Social isolation is on the rise

To better understand the epidemic of social isolation and loneliness, NIVEA commissioned an international study of 8,000 people in eight countries around the globe to understand people’s experiences with and attitudes toward social connection. As a brand that has long made it a mission to foster human relationships and connection, NIVEA aims to contribute to the existing body of scientific research on this issue, while sparking dialogue about potential solutions so that we can all enjoy the benefits of richer, more meaningful social connections.

The results of the multi-country study reveal that social isolation and loneliness are widespread, affecting people across all age groups and cultures, and the problem is growing. Most people surveyed have experienced social isolation or loneliness to some degree over the past year, a finding that underscores how no one is immune from experiencing these fundamental aspects of the human condition. One out of four people have felt socially isolated always or at least often during the past 12 months. 91% wish we would take care of each other more, and 86% believe that social isolation and loneliness have become increasingly big problems in our society. 85% also agree with the statement “We used to look out for each other more.”

While the responses show that social isolation is on the rise overall, the study also uncovers some intriguing regional variations that invite interpretation. For example, social isolation and loneliness are most prevalent in Brazil, the Philippines, and South Africa, countries that tend to emphasize strong interpersonal connections and where family and community play a central role in the culture. Globally, around three in four people are in touch with their loved ones at least once a week – except in France, where contact is less frequent. Furthermore, while around one in five people globally don’t have even one close friend, in China that number is much lower – around one in ten. This finding echoes the Gallup survey mentioned earlier that found that 20% of all adults worldwide don’t have **anyone** they can reach out to for help.

“I’m a rather introverted person who can’t trust people very easily. I have fewer friends and prefer to be at home with my pets.”

FEMALE, CHINA

The results also point to a relationship between social isolation and lack of trust in others. 81% of people believe that in today’s society everyone is out for themselves. Half feel that no one really knows them well. One female respondent from the qualitative research in China remarked: “I’m a rather introverted person who can’t trust people very easily. I have fewer friends and prefer to be at home with my pets.”

These responses suggest that social isolation and lack of trust in others are closely related and can reinforce each other. When people lack trust in others, they may avoid social interactions and relationships out of fear, leading to isolation. Conversely, social isolation can erode trust over time. Without regular social engagement, people may become more suspicious and wary of others’ intentions, having fewer positive interactions to balance out negative perceptions. This lack of trust can deepen isolation, as the isolated person becomes increasingly reluctant to reach out or accept outreach from others.

On the other hand, despite showing rising social isolation and a troubling trust gap, the study also shows that people worldwide are demonstrating resilience and coping skills that allow them to navigate periods of isolation without it overshadowing their overall sense of well-being. Around four out of five people globally are satisfied with their life in general, and the majority find it easy to connect with others, especially family and friends. When connecting with others, people surveyed overwhelmingly prefer in-person to digital contact and agree that shared interests and values provide the common ground most often needed for connection.

These findings suggest that social isolation and loneliness can be transient experiences and overcome with the help of early interventions that offer the proverbial ounce of prevention, such as creating more community spaces where people can gather in person and bond over shared interests. But in order to arrive at solutions, we must first understand the factors that contribute to isolation – and perhaps more importantly, **keep** people in a state of disconnection.

Social isolation and shame fuel a vicious cycle of mental health issues

Social isolation and loneliness stem from universal human needs for connection and belonging, which can be disrupted by various life events and personal circumstances. Life changes such as moving to a new place, losing a loved one, or transitioning through different life stages can impact our relationships, leading to feelings of isolation. However, while it is important to acknowledge that these experiences can happen to anyone, the data reveals a few key correlations. In general, those most likely to report often feeling lonely or isolated include: people who work from home, those having a hard time connecting to others, very frequent social media users, and young people.

People surveyed attribute social isolation primarily to health issues, including social anxiety, followed by physical distance from friends/family and lack of financial resources. Modern lifestyles and ways of relating to others appear to contribute, as well. Between 40 and 60% of people surveyed work from home at least some of the time, and of those people, more than half believe that working from home isolates them, as they miss the in-person contact with their colleagues. One in four people find it difficult to connect with others, and of those people, 35% feel socially isolated (compared to 24.9% of all respondents). And 27% of frequent social media users report feeling isolated often, if not always (compared to 21% of less frequent users).

Age is a factor, as well. While 25% of all people surveyed report feeling isolated in the past year, that number rises to 34% for those aged 16–24. Across all countries, social isolation appears to decrease with age, reaching just 13% for those aged 55–74. This may sound counterintuitive, but it aligns with previous NIVEA research that suggested that older people have different expectations and desires when it comes to touch (i.e. they expect less), which could be why they report feeling less isolated. Young people may be particularly vulnerable to isolation due to the many significant life transitions occurring in late adolescence and early adulthood that can disrupt existing social networks, such as moving for school or starting a new job. Additionally, the pervasive use of social media can sometimes replace meaningful face-to-face interactions, leading to feelings of disconnection despite being virtually connected.

CONSEQUENCES AND DRIVERS OF SOCIAL ISOLATION

When feeling socially isolated or lonely, ...

63%

... HAVE LONGED FOR
PHYSICAL CONTACT

56%

... HAVE PULLED OUT
OF SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

53%

... HAVE EXPERIENCED A
DECLINE IN MENTAL HEALTH

48%

... HAVE EXPERIENCED A
DECLINE IN PHYSICAL HEALTH

46%

... HAVE NEGLECTED
IMPORTANT RESPONSIBILITIES

30%

... HAVE SEEN A
DOCTOR OR THERAPIST

Source: Global Survey
IPSOS/NIVEA 2024

The relationship between social media and isolation underscores what we've come to understand about the importance of meaningful connections, and the limitations of living so much of our lives online. The nature of social media often results in quick, surface-level interactions rather than deeper connections grounded in genuine understanding and emotional depth. This could be why even seemingly connected people with "full" lives (e.g., family, friends, and work) are struggling with feelings of isolation. The data reflects this paradox: 58% of people globally report feeling alone even with other people around.

The consequences of all this disconnection are sobering. More than half of people report experiencing a decline in mental health when socially isolated. 56% have pulled out of social activities, and 58% report feelings of helplessness. When considering these findings, it's clear that socializing less and health issues are both consequences **and** drivers of social isolation. Certain dynamics can lead to a vicious cycle that makes it hard to get out of social isolation's dark tunnel. Experiencing intense feelings around sadness, grief, and stress makes people feel they aren't good company for others, so they withdraw and may miss the "way out." A 26-year-old male from the UK compared the painful feelings of isolation to drowning: "I guess I sometimes feel like I'm already in water at the beginning of drowning. And I think that separates me from them because I feel like they have to trudge through the water just to get me."

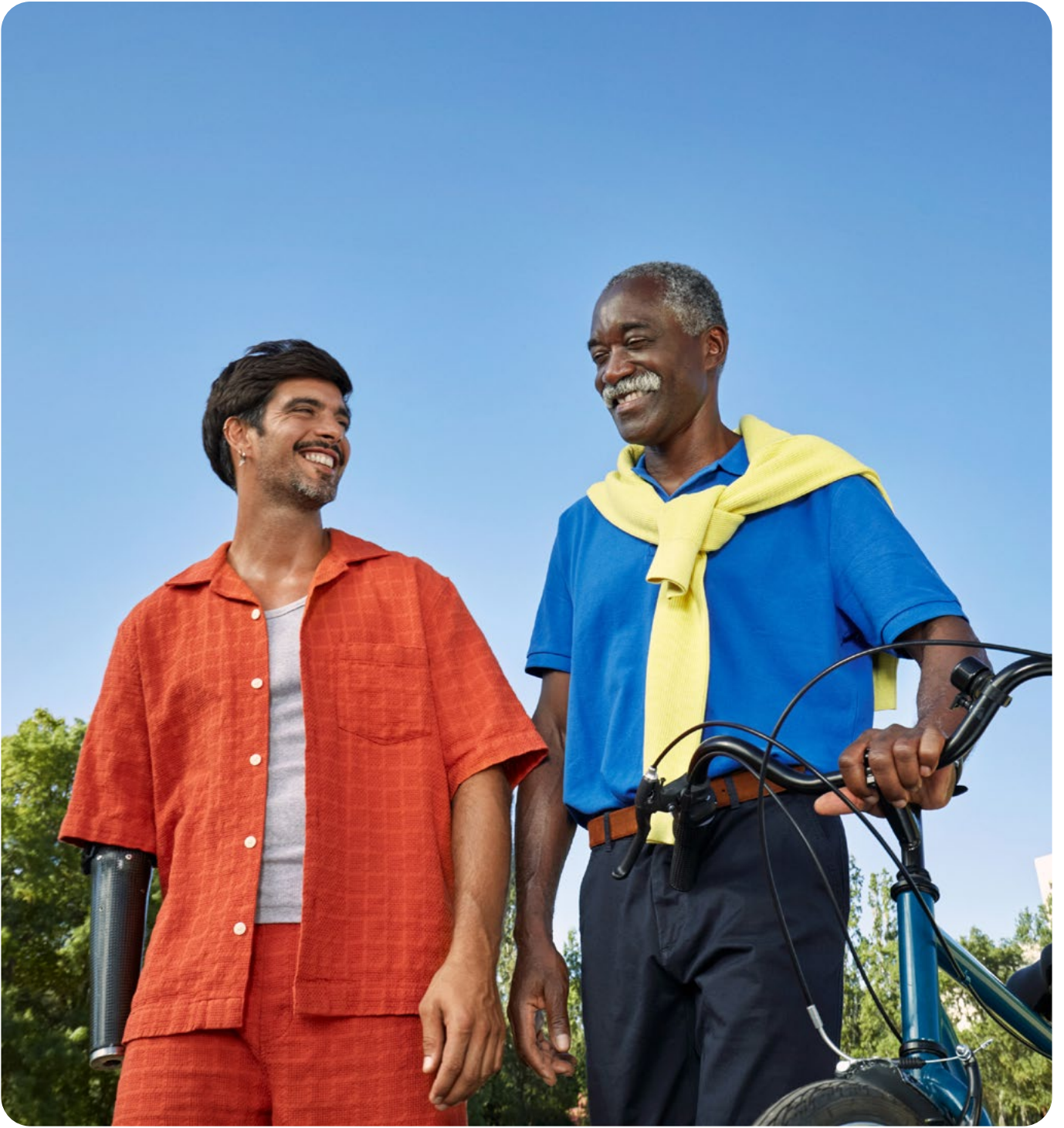
Other factors contribute to the feedback loop that perpetuates social isolation. Destructive coping strategies like comparison to others on social media make the tunnel of isolation appear darker and can lead to even more withdrawal and/or marginalization. And feelings of mistrust and shame (often rooted in the perception that isolation is taboo) hinder reaching out for help. Feeling ashamed about being isolated is more common in Brazil (49%), the Philippines (62%), and South Africa (53%) – also countries where isolation is most prevalent. Feelings of shame aren't unique to people living in those countries, however; 40% of all respondents globally reported feeling ashamed of their loneliness and isolation.

Co-chair of the WHO Commission on Social Connection, Dr. Vivek Murthy, who in 2017 declared loneliness a public health epidemic, said of the perceived stigma surrounding loneliness: "This can cause profound shame, which can erode self-esteem. It can also worsen feelings of loneliness, as it often pushes us to distance ourselves from others at a time when we need support most."

He went on to add that loneliness is a universal human experience: "We all feel lonely at times, just like we all feel hunger or thirst. There is no reason to be ashamed of being human."⁷

"I guess I sometimes feel like I'm already in water at the beginning of drowning. And I think that separates me from them because I feel like they have to trudge through the water just to get me."

MALE, 26, UK





Support is available for those who are isolated – but it can be hard to ask for it

One of the most encouraging findings from the study is that the overwhelming majority (around 90%) of people who know someone isolated have tried to help. Of those who have not tried to help, it is not from lack of care; most simply don't know how to help, or don't want to cause embarrassment for the isolated person. When asked who should be helping those who feel socially isolated or lonely, most people see family and friends as having the responsibility (75%), followed by social institutions (36%) and the affected person themselves (34%).

Indeed, people are taking charge of their own well-being by employing various tactics to overcome loneliness and isolation, including talking to friends and family, practicing self-care, and engaging in hobbies/favorite activities. A 28-year-old male in Brazil said: "When I can't have contact with other people, I usually watch videos, listen to music, or engage in some physical activity ... it helps the mind focus on other things and prevents intrusive thoughts from arising and bringing feelings of loneliness or inadequacy." Another respondent in Brazil declared: "I unfollowed some content on Instagram after realizing that I feel bad when comparing my life with theirs."

"When I can't have contact with other people, I usually watch videos, listen to music, or engage in some physical activity ... it helps the mind focus on other things and prevents intrusive thoughts from arising and bringing feelings of loneliness or inadequacy."

MALE, 28, BRAZIL

Such individual efforts, while important, are only one piece of the puzzle. When we experience isolation, that's when we need our social networks the most. Asking for help can be a barrier for many people experiencing isolation, however, due to the self-reinforcing cycles mentioned earlier. While a majority of people surveyed (67%) know where to find support when feeling lonely or isolated, far fewer (46%) find it easy to ask for help. China is a notable exception; 75% of people in China say it is easy to ask for help. Perhaps unsurprisingly, those who struggle the most with asking for support include those aged 16–24 and 55–74, and those who find it hard to connect with others – groups that are more vulnerable to isolation in the first place.

No discussion of barriers is complete without acknowledging the role of complex social and cultural influences, which can have a significant impact on people's likelihood of both experiencing isolation and seeking help. In many cultures, mental health issues are stigmatized, leading people to conceal their struggles to avoid shame or discrimination. Cultural norms around social interactions and expressions of distress can vary significantly; in some places, open discussions about personal problems are discouraged, leading to internalized feelings of loneliness and making it challenging to seek or receive appropriate help. In cultures where people perceive themselves as very socially oriented, it can be hard for those struggling to accept the self-image of being socially isolated when people around

them appear to enjoy happy social lives. In highly individualistic cultures, seeking support can be difficult because of the strong emphasis on self-reliance and personal success, which may discourage people from admitting vulnerabilities or reaching out for support due to fear it could be seen as a sign of weakness.

Social-connectedness expert Dr. Julianne Holt-Lunstad, whose research has helped establish a link between poor social support and early mortality, echoes the view that individualistic cultural norms can make it challenging to address issues of isolation: “One of these social barriers is that we value our independence so highly. Needing others is viewed as a weakness rather than a conceptualization of interdependence – that we can rely on others and they can rely on us.”⁸

If this new study has shown us anything, it’s that loneliness and social isolation are associated with a complex interplay of both individual and environmental factors, many of which reinforce each other, making it difficult to determine what is the cause of isolation and what is the result. The findings have helped shine a light on the growing prevalence of loneliness and social isolation in today’s modern society, the factors that make people vulnerable to isolation, and the barriers that stand in the way of potential solutions.

But like other studies that have been published on this topic, this research invites more questions than it answers. What makes relationships meaningful, and therefore beneficial to our well-being? How can we create more meaningful interactions? How can we encourage more empathy for those who are isolated? What are some “early interventions” that can help stop the vicious cycle of isolation, and how can we implement them at scale? How can we harness the power of technology to create closer connections? These questions represent just a few potential areas of future exploration. NIVEA remains committed to continued research that will shed further light on this urgent public health issue and help us better understand where solutions can be found.

Regardless of age, background, or social status, everyone has an inherent need for meaningful connections and a sense of belonging. Yet most of us will, at some point, go through changes such as a new home, a new job, bereavement, or divorce – circumstances that can disrupt our sense of connection. The universal nature of these experiences means that loneliness and isolation can touch anyone at any time. So while we may sometimes feel alone, we are not alone in these experiences. There is comfort to be found in our shared human condition. If we can find ways to reach out to each other, we can discover the profound strength and hope that comes from our interconnectedness.

¹ <https://www.who.int/news/item/15-11-2023-who-launches-commission-to-foster-social-connection>

² <https://hbr.org/2022/10/the-power-of-work-friends>

³ <https://www.uhhospitals.org/blog/articles/2023/11/how-the-loneliness-epidemic-affects-physical-and-mental-health>

⁴ https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/four_ways_social_support_makes_you_more_resilient

⁵ <https://www.who.int/groups/commission-on-social-connection>

⁶ <https://reengage.org.uk/latest-news/five-years-on-from-the-first-minister-for-loneliness/>

⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/18/well/mind/loneliness-connection.html>

⁸ <https://www.apa.org/members/content/holt-lunstad-loneliness-social-connections>

HOW PEOPLE OVERCOME FEELINGS OF LONELINESS AND ISOLATION



48%

MEETING/TALKING TO CLOSE FRIENDS OR FAMILY



42%

SELF-CARE



39%

PRACTICING HOBBIES/
FAVORITE ACTIVITIES



38%

WATCHING A MOVIE/SERIES
OR READING A BOOK



29%

PHYSICAL CONTACT

Source: Global Survey IPSOS/NIVEA 2024

EDUCATION TO BUILD RESILIENT AND CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

Interview With Dilbur Parakh



Dilbur Parakh is co-founder and chairperson of Aseema Charitable Trust, an organization dedicated to providing high-quality education to marginalized children in India. In this conversation, Dilbur shares the inspiring journey of Aseema, the challenges faced by marginalized communities, and how Aseema addresses issues like social isolation and emotional well-being, helping children build resilience and meaningful connections. Her book, *Aseema: A Journey Beyond Boundaries*, which charts the extraordinary journey of Aseema over the past 25 years, has just been released. Aseema is a project partner of NIVEA CONNECT in India.

NIVEA CONNECT: Dilbur, can you start by telling us about the origins of Aseema and what motivated you to start this incredible initiative?

Dilbur Parakh: Aseema's journey began in the early 1990s when I was working as a legal officer with the International Commission of Jurists in Geneva. My work involved addressing human rights issues across Asia and the Pacific. However, I soon realized there was a significant gap between international conventions and the realities on the ground, especially concerning children's rights. This realization motivated me to return to India and work at the grassroots level. In 1995, along with two like-minded friends, I co-founded Aseema to provide high-quality education to marginalized children, particularly those from slum areas and remote tribal regions.

NIVEA CONNECT: It's inspiring to hear how Aseema was born out of a desire to bridge that gap. Can you tell us more about those early days and how Aseema evolved into what it is today?

Dilbur Parakh: The early days were both challenging and rewarding. We started by conducting surveys at traffic signals in Bandra, Mumbai, where we saw children begging. We spoke to their parents and found that they were eager for their children to receive an education but didn't have the means. This led to the establishment of our first education center in 1997 with just 18 children. We started the center at Saint Stanislaus School in Bandra, thanks to the principal's generosity. Over time, we realized that many municipal schools lacked infrastructure and quality education, so we decided to adopt these schools. Today, Aseema runs three municipal schools in Mumbai and has its own school in Igatpuri, catering to children from pre-primary through the 10th standard (last year of high school).

NIVEA CONNECT: Aseema's growth is truly remarkable. You mentioned earlier that Aseema's approach goes beyond academics. Could you elaborate on how you support the emotional and psychological needs of the children?

Dilbur Parakh: From the beginning, we recognized that academic success is impossible without addressing the emotional and psychological well-being of our students. Many of the children we work with come from challenging home environments, including situations of abuse or having alcoholic parents. To support them, we integrated counseling services into our schools. Initially, we had just one counselor, but today we have counselors across all our schools. The bond between students and teachers is also crucial, as it helps build confidence and a sense of self-worth, which are essential for their overall development and mental health.

NIVEA CONNECT: Speaking of challenges, how does Aseema address issues like social isolation and loneliness among these children – now and in their future?

Dilbur Parakh: Social isolation is a significant issue, ironically even in crowded cities like Mumbai, and especially for children in difficult circumstances. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this became even more apparent. At Aseema, we've created an environment where children feel secure, valued, and emotionally supported. Our counselors and teachers work together to identify and support children who face trauma, helping them build resilience and form meaningful connections with others.

NIVEA CONNECT: Can you share some success stories that highlight Aseema's impact?

Dilbur Parakh: There are many. One of our early students, who grew up in a slum, went on to excel academically and now works with Accenture. Another student attended a climate change workshop at Oxford University, and yet another started an International Baccalaureate program in China. These successes demonstrate how our approach to education and emotional support is transforming lives and helping children reach their full potential.

NIVEA CONNECT: What can Aseema's work teach us about building resilient and connected communities?

Dilbur Parakh: Our work at Aseema shows that creating environments where children feel safe and supported is crucial for their development. This foundation allows them to build resilience and navigate life's challenges. It's a lesson that applies not just to our students but to society as a whole. Fostering a sense of self-worth and inner peace is essential for creating a more harmonious and truly connected world.

“Fostering a sense of self-worth and inner peace is essential for creating a more harmonious and truly connected world.”

DILBUR PARAKH

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Interview With
Adriana Barbosa



Adriana Barbosa, recognized as one of the 51 most influential black people under 40 in the world, is the founder and CEO of PretaHub and founder of the Instituto Feira Preta and the Festival Feira Preta, the largest culture and entrepreneurship event in Latin America. Over 21 years, the event has generated approximately R\$12 million through the hiring of people and the sale of products and services. PretaHub is a project partner of NIVEA CONNECT in Brazil.

NIVEA CONNECT: Adriana, could you tell us a bit about PretaHub and its mission in Brazil?

Adriana Barbosa: PretaHub is a social impact business that has been working in Brazil for 22 years with the mission to economically empower the black population, which is the majority in Brazil. We focus on creating systemic strategies to combat the inequality that has been deeply rooted in our society since the colonial era. One of our key initiatives, Afrolab, is a program aimed at education and access to credit, helping to support black entrepreneurs across the country. NIVEA is an important partner to make that happen.

NIVEA CONNECT: What inspired you to start PretaHub and its initiatives like Feira Preta and Afrolab?

Adriana Barbosa: It all started as a personal initiative. I was selling clothes at street fairs to survive, and I noticed that many other black people, especially black women, were in a similar situation. This led me to create Feira Preta, a space where the black community could come together, sell their products, build self-esteem, and celebrate our culture. Over time, as we recognized the systemic nature of racism in Brazil, we expanded our efforts to include projects like Afrolab and the PretaHub houses, which provide training in entrepreneurship and access to credit.

“Understanding and embracing your roots can provide a strong foundation and help you feel less isolated.”

ADRIANA BARBOSA

NIVEA CONNECT: PretaHub is one project partner within a broader effort to combat social isolation, especially as it relates to marginalized communities. Can you share your thoughts on how this concept applies to the black community in Brazil?

Adriana Barbosa: The issue here is mostly about inequality. The black population in Brazil isn't isolated from society in a literal sense; rather, they are deeply integrated. But they lack access to the same rights and opportunities as the white population. While the black population is the majority, many still feel they don't belong, so from a psychological perspective they can feel isolated. That can create similar symptoms to "social isolation." Our work is focused on addressing these disparities by fostering economic empowerment and cultural pride.

NIVEA CONNECT: How does PretaHub's work help to combat these feelings of exclusion or even loneliness that can result from such systemic inequality?

Adriana Barbosa: Our work is based on two main pillars. The first is cultural empowerment. We believe that self-recognition and pride in black culture are essential for developing self-esteem. This has been a significant part of our strategy, and it's why we've invested so much in projects that celebrate black culture. The second pillar is economic empowerment. Historically, black people in Brazil have been excluded from the formal job market. By fostering entrepreneurship, we provide a path for economic inclusion and empowerment. For example, our annual Feira Preta festival, which attracts over 60,000 people, creates a space where black people can come together, see themselves reflected in others, and feel a sense of belonging. This sense of community helps counteract the feelings of disconnection from the more influential parts of our society that can result from systemic racism.

NIVEA CONNECT: Over the years, what results have you seen from PretaHub's initiatives? Have they made a tangible difference in the lives of black Brazilians?

Adriana Barbosa: Absolutely. We've seen significant progress in several areas. For example, there's been a widespread shift in self-esteem among black women who have embraced their natural hair, moving away from the pressure to straighten it. We've also established a consumer market specifically for black people in Brazil, which didn't exist before. Finally, we've pioneered the concept of economic empowerment through entrepreneurship, a model that is now being adopted across Latin America. All these initiatives create meaningful connections and eventually lead to change.

NIVEA CONNECT: As someone who has built such a successful movement, what advice would you give to others around the world who may feel marginalized or excluded?

Adriana Barbosa: The first step is self-knowledge and strengthening self-esteem. Seeking psychological help can be crucial, especially from professionals who understand the impact of racism on mental health. It's also important to connect with your history and culture. Understanding and embracing your roots can provide a strong foundation and help you feel less isolated.

IMPRINT

NIVEA CONNECT REPORT 2024

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Reasons, Consequences, and Solutions

ABOUT THIS GLOBAL REPORT

This global report was commissioned by NIVEA, based on global quantitative research on social isolation in eight countries and qualitative interviews with participants in five countries, both conducted by IPSOS.

We would like to thank everybody who contributed their knowledge and passion.

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“One in four have always or often felt isolated during the past 12 months.”*

* NIVEA CONNECT REPORT 2024

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