

Public Disclosure Authorized

Public Disclosure Authorized

Public Disclosure Authorized

Public Disclosure Authorized

# Afro-descendant Youth and the Labor Market

# Authors and acknowledgements

## Young Researchers

**Adriely Maria Coelho**, 27 years old, has a BA in Social Services and works as a make-up artist.

**Ana Biatriz Santos de Souza**, 27, has a diploma in Business Administration with a focus on Marketing, and works as a community educator.

**Ana Flavia Oliveira Barbosa**, 20, studied Social Cinema and Cinematography. She is a media activist, a photographer, and a videomaker.

**Maycon Victor Rodrigues Balbino**, 19, finished high school and helps his family doing housework. The only person with a formal job in his household is his aunt.

**Rayssa Lorraine Silva Santos**, 20, is a member of Kilombo Manzo Ngunzo Kaingo. She is currently a monitor for the Eduka Kilombo project, and also works as a hair braider.

**Renato Izaias de Carvalho**, 24, is an artist, an independent actor, a human rights activist, and a social educator. He also manages a peripheral humor page on social networks.

**Thaís Regina da Silva**, 19, is a cultural producer and a slammer.

**Yara Gabrielle Ramos**, 20, has a marketing diploma. She is also a street poet and a rapper.

**Yara Yasmin Rocha Pereira**, 15, is finishing high school and works as a volunteer at the GK project.

## AFRO-CEBRAP

**Márcia Lima** is a professor at the University of São Paulo's Sociology Department and is AFRO-CEBRAP's general coordinator.

**Renata Braga** has an MA in World Political Economy from UFABC and works as a researcher at AFRO-CEBRAP.

**Danilo França** is a Sociology professor at the Fluminense Federal University and a researcher at AFRO-CEBRAP.

**Hugo Nicolau Barbosa de Gusmão** is currently reading for his MA in Physical Geography at the University of São Paulo, and is a researcher/data analyst at AFRO-CEBRAP.

## PEREGUM

### Black Reference Institute

**Bianca Santana** is a journalist with a PhD in Information Science from the University of São Paulo's Communications and Arts School.

**Dalva Santos** has a specialist degree in Social Innovation and Culture, and an MA in Sociology from UNICAMP.

**Douglas Belchior** is a History professor, a cofounder of UNEAFRO Brasil, and a member of the Black Coalition for Rights.

**Flávia Lopes** has a first degree in Graphic Design from the Mackenzie Presbyterian University.

**Jessica Ferreira** is studying Public Policy at the ABC Federal University and is a militant at UNEAFRO Brasil.

**Mariana Andrade** has a postgraduate degree in Criminal Law and Criminal Proceedings.

**Vanessa Nascimento** has a first degree in Languages; she is a cofounder of UNEAFRO Brasil, and the CEO of the PEREGUM Black Reference Institute.

**Valerya Borges** is a journalist and an MA student at the University of São Paulo's Diversitas program.

## The World Bank

**Germán Freire** is a senior specialist in Social Development.

**Flavia Carbonari** is a senior consultant in Social Development and Gender.

**Pablo Acosta** is the Program Leader for Human Development in Brazil.

**Matteo Morgandi** is a senior economist.

## Editing and Graphic Design

NFatorial



# Afro-descendant Youth and the Labor Market

# Table of Contents

<b>1. Executive Summary</b> .....	6
<b>2. Preface</b> .....	10
RATIONALE .....	11
METHODOLOGY .....	12
<b>3. Schooling and Inequality</b> .....	16
THE PANDEMIC AND THE INTERNET .....	17
DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL .....	18
NEET .....	18
<b>4. The Labor Market and Inequality</b> .....	22
LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION .....	23
UNEQUAL INCLUSION OF WOMEN IN LABOR RELATIONS .....	24
BIPOLARITY THESIS .....	25
THE CASE OF DOMESTIC EMPLOYMENT .....	25
<b>4.1 Inequality among Workers</b> .....	26
FORMAL AND INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT .....	26
ENTRY BARRIERS .....	27
"OCCUPATIONAL GHETTOS" .....	27
INCOME .....	28
THE PANDEMIC AND WORK .....	29

4.2 Inequality among the Unemployed.....	30
WAYS TO LOOK FOR A JOB.....	30
LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT.....	31
4.3 Inequality among Persons with Disabilities .....	32
LABOR MARKET PARTICIPATION.....	33
ACTIVITY AND INACTIVITY.....	33
INCOME .....	33
INFORMAL WORK.....	34
<b>5. Regional Inequalities.....</b>	<b>36</b>
INCOME .....	37
INACTIVITY .....	38
<b>6. Final Considerations .....</b>	<b>40</b>
RECOMMENDATIONS .....	42
<b>7. References.....</b>	<b>46</b>



1.

# Executive Summary

In the recent past, Brazil has managed to advance in the area of education, mitigate occupational segregation, and reduce the wage gap between different racial and gender groups (Guimarães and Brito 2014). In spite of all that, racial inequality is still significant and persistent. The Afro-descendant population (including Black and mixed-race people, according to the IBGE definition) represent about 56 percent of the Brazilian population, and are part of the group with the lowest levels of access to education, health, and the labor market. They are also the ones who suffer the most from Brazil's high rates of violence and incarceration.

In order to better understand these dynamics and propose policies to reduce such inequalities, the World Bank commissioned AFRO-CEBRAP and PEREGUM—Black Reference Institute to produce a first-ever survey on the participation of Afro-descendants in the Brazilian labor market. This paper is a summary of their research, which aimed to analyze, between March and June 2021, the insertion of Afro-descendants in the labor market, with special attention to the intersection of race, gender, and disability. The research team applied quantitative and qualitative methods, and used data from the 2019 Continuous National Household Sample Survey (*PNAD Contínua*), the 2010 Census, and the November 2020 PNAD-COVID Survey. In addition, young Afro-descendant researchers residing in five Brazilian metropolitan areas were selected and trained to interview other young people in their respective communities.

Research findings point toward three factors that lead to inequality. The first concerns disadvantages in the access to and quality of education, which mainly affect the Afro-descendant population and contribute to their being the majority in low-skill jobs, with fragile employment relationships and low pay. For example, according to data from *PNAD Contínua*, about a third of the population aged between 18 and 29 are not in employment, education, or training (NEET). Among the respondents, 37 percent dropped out of educational institutions.

The second factor is occupational segregation, which results in white men, Afro-descendant men, white women, and Afro-descendant women occupying specific niches in the labor market. According to data from *PNAD Contínua 2019*, more than 60 percent of all unskilled workers are Afro-descendant, and more than 60 percent of skilled workers and employers are white. Among those that are not working, 47.3 percent of Afro-descendant women are inactive, and 8.9 percent are unemployed. In addition, Afro-descendants occupy only 6.3 percent of all management-level positions in the private sector and 4.7 percent of executive roles, and only 4.9 percent of them have a seat in their boards of directors.

Finally, the third factor is actual discrimination, which can be observed in the racial and gender wage gaps between equally educated individuals performing similar jobs. Among people with the same schooling and similar occupational status, Afro-descendant men, white women, and Afro-descendant women do not earn nearly as much as white men. White men in leadership positions or who own a business earn, on average, R\$8,458.00 a month, while Afro-descendant women in similar situations earn 54 percent less, or R\$3,966.00.

In order to address this, Brazil ought to implement policies aimed at promoting income distribution, raising the minimum wage, and encouraging and keeping the poor at school. Furthermore, affirmative action policies in the public and private sectors are essential to insert and keep these youth in the labor market.





## 2. Preface

“

Racism is a structural problem—some people understand that Black people are also capable, while others just *cannot see* them. So I think it is related to individual ignorance, you know. I don't think I'll ever understand *why* people still do that, if they can see another person in front of them. I'll never know the exact reason, but it's structural, and it's up to these people to try not to be as ignorant as they are.

”

Extract from an interview with a 20-year-old Afro-descendant cisgender woman from Brasilia

Young people face particular challenges in the labor market: insertion difficulties, stronger impacts of economic crises, challenges deriving from recent legislative changes, and other disadvantages related to race, gender, and social background. For Afro-descendant youth specifically, these challenges are even greater. In order to understand how these phenomena present themselves today, this study has analyzed how different types of inequality are expressed in terms of access to and quality of education, occupational segregation, and actual discrimination, with special attention to the intersection of race, gender, and disability.

The study was carried out by AFRO-CEBRAP and PEREGUM—Black Reference Institute at the request of the World Bank. The research team used quantitative data from research institutes, reviewed specialized literature, and developed a unique qualitative study with young people from five Brazilian regions. The study discusses educational rates, employability, and different employment arrangements broken down by race, gender, and disability, as well as inclusion-related challenges and opportunities from the perspective of Afro-descendant youth.

### **RATIONALE**

**i. Theory of Cumulative Disadvantage**—As other surveys have repeatedly shown, racial inequality does not disappear with a country's development and progress; on the contrary, Afro-descendants (Black and mixed-race people) accumulate disadvantages throughout their lives, and pass them on to younger generations (Hasenbalg 1979; Hasenbalg and Silva 2000). They are born into comparatively poorer families, with less cultural and social capital. This imposes specific challenges related to education, which, in turn, will affect their insertion in the labor market. We therefore have a situation that combines significant educational disadvantages when entering the labor market with discrimination, wage gaps, and career barriers.

**ii. The Pandemic and Race**—The COVID-19 pandemic had a strong impact on the economy and the labor market, which, at the time, were still recovering from the 2015–16 crisis (Corseuil et al. 2021; Prates et al. 2021).

The groups that were most affected by job losses include young people, women, Afro-descendants, and workers with limited formal education (Corseuil et al. 2021). Furthermore, there was a sharp drop (15.6 percent) in informal jobs, which tend to concentrate these more vulnerable groups.

Afro-descendants are overrepresented among self-employed and informal workers. Thus, they were especially affected by the crisis, as they had no social safety net on which to rely—except for the Emergency Aid program.<sup>1</sup> In addition, due to the closure of small commercial establishments, Afro-descendant employers and workers suffered more than white ones.

**iii. The Pandemic and Gender**—During the pandemic, women started devoting more time to care work, doing household chores and caring for other people, and were particularly affected by the waves of dismissals in the labor market. This is because they are the majority in economic sectors classified as “nonessential,” such as retail, domestic services, hospitality, caregiving, and personal services. The main reason for the exclusion of women (overall) from the labor market during the pandemic was occupational and sectoral segregation; among Afro-descendants, exclusion mainly resulted from informality (Prates et al. 2021, p. 22).

## **METHODOLOGY**

Between March and June 2021, the project adopted three research strategies.

- **Quantitative approach**—The research team used data from the 2019 Continuous National Household Sample Survey (*PNAD Contínua*), the 2010 Census, and the November 2020 PNAD-COVID Survey.
- **Bibliographic review**—Dozens of studies served as input and tools to dive deeper into the research topic. These include the work of experts and researchers linked to reference research centers.

---

<sup>1</sup> Social benefit created by Law no. 13982/2020, under which beneficiaries received monthly grants of R\$600 to mitigate the impacts of the economic crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic on the most vulnerable populations.



- **Qualitative approach**—Finally, the team designed a pioneering participatory qualitative research tool (Brandão and Correa Borges 2008). Young Afro-descendant researchers were selected to conduct interviews with other young people in different communities spread over five Brazilian regions. The strategy was based on the premise that these youngsters were not the object of research; rather, they were agents for the production of knowledge and for the development of analyses and policy recommendations.

The young researchers received theoretical and methodological training, conducted the interviews, and held weekly conversation circles to monitor the activities. This strategy helped to ensure the study had ample territorial coverage and could be conducted in a short period of time, despite the pandemic.

In addition, the young researchers contributed to designing the questionnaire, making adjustments in the pretesting stage. Their participation in the design stage facilitated the creation of mechanisms to ensure the survey would be accessible to all and could be carried out even in the context of the distancing measures imposed to contain the COVID-19 pandemic.

The qualitative study was conducted in five state capitals in Brazil, accounting for regional diversity and socioeconomic and demographic peculiarities: Belém (Pará), Recife (Pernambuco), Brasília (Federal District), Belo Horizonte (Minas Gerais), and Porto Alegre (Rio Grande do Sul). In each of these cities, two young researchers were selected, observing gender and age criteria and prioritizing people who were not in employment, education, or training (NEET). The findings do not corroborate current ideas about young people's lack of interest or willingness to work or study.

The 81 interviews covered the following profiles:

Respondent profiles
Young researchers that were part of the team
Formally employed young people
Young people working informally
Students
Unemployed
Entrepreneurs
Women heads of household
Persons with disabilities

As some respondents failed to provide sufficient data, only 70 of those interviews were considered for the study. In addition, the work included four conversation circles, which allowed us to dive deeper into some specific points.

The composition of the group was as follows:

Gender	Number of respondents
Cisgender women	41
Cisgender men	21
Transgender, nonbinary, or <i>travesti</i> *	8

\*a unique and polysemic gender identity in Latin America

Occupation	Number of respondents
Not in employment, education, or training (NEET)	13
Informal workers	11
Students	9
Formal workers, mothers who are heads of household, or unemployed	8

Age	Number of respondents
18 years old or younger	11
19 to 21 years old	26
22 to 24 years old	23
25 to 29 years old	8

Monthly household income	Number of respondents
Less than R\$1,000 (minimum wage)	10
Between R\$1,045.00 and R\$2,090.00	25
Between R\$2,090.00 and R\$4,180.12	18

Thus, the qualitative stages included research, training, exchanges, listening, and teambuilding, in a process that provided training and income generation opportunities to each participant and their families.

### 3. Schooling and Inequality

“

**Being admitted to college is already difficult. But once you are there, not having support or the means to study makes it even more complicated. Sometimes, this lack of support caused me panic attacks, and made me feel frustrated. And it's sad because students, especially those who have a scholarship to attend a private college, need support to stay there. I've seen many people drop out of their course, and it's scary because you know you might be the next one to drop out if you have no money.**

”

Extract from an interview with  
a 21-year-old cisgender man from Belém



**A**lthough educational attainment is often understood as a passport to improving one's living conditions, recent studies show how educational and professional opportunities are unequal. Structural racism manifests itself in racial inequality even among the most educated people, and among those with more prestigious jobs. It also affects the chances of upward mobility and the increased probability of losing one's social status (Ribeiro 2009; Osório 2004).

Affirmative action policies sought to reverse this situation, including through quotas for Afro-descendants in higher education and the public service. As they ensured access to better training, those higher education quotas were expected to lead to more labor market inclusion, enabling access to more senior positions and potentially promoting structural changes. However, despite having been in force for almost two decades—and in spite of their undeniable positive impact—there are still several obstacles. Once those young people get their degrees, they are not incorporated into the labor market as skilled workers.

### **THE PANDEMIC AND THE INTERNET**

In the recent past, research has revealed even more acute challenges. For example, internet access among students was marked by racial and regional inequalities, as shown by recent data. "In elementary school, 76 percent of mixed-race and 75 percent of Afro-descendant students do not have access to a computer with internet connection, while the percentage is 53 percent for white students (...) in the North and Northeast regions, these shares exceed 80 percent." (Venturini, Lima, et al. 2020)

Among the respondents, 60 percent said they had wi-fi connection at home. Nevertheless, they reported frequent difficulties in following online classes, ranging from no internet connection at home, poor connection speed, and lack of structure—including equipment and an adequate study environment.

### **DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL**

The pandemic was also the most commonly cited reason for why some young respondents had stopped studying. During the pandemic, the surge in dropout rates affected not only high school students, but also those that were already in college. Among all respondents, 37 percent dropped out: 18.5 percent did so between high school and college; 7.4 percent were already in college; and 4.9 percent and 6.2 percent during high school and elementary school, respectively.

In this regard, young researcher Rayssa, from Minas Gerais, spoke about how the pandemic affected her studies. Her precarious internet service and the lack of an adequate room where to study pushed her out of school in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of high school.

In addition, many respondents reported mental health issues related to COVID-19 impacts, both on studies and work. When asked, “Has your health ever prevented you from working?”, 6.2 percent of the 18.5 percent who answered “yes” referred to conditions such as anxiety and depression. Other reasons were also cited: 4.9 percent mentioned childcare/pregnancy; 3.7 percent declared that they had not passed the ENEM/Vestibular [Brazil’s university entrance exams], and 3.7 percent said they had to work.

### **NEET**

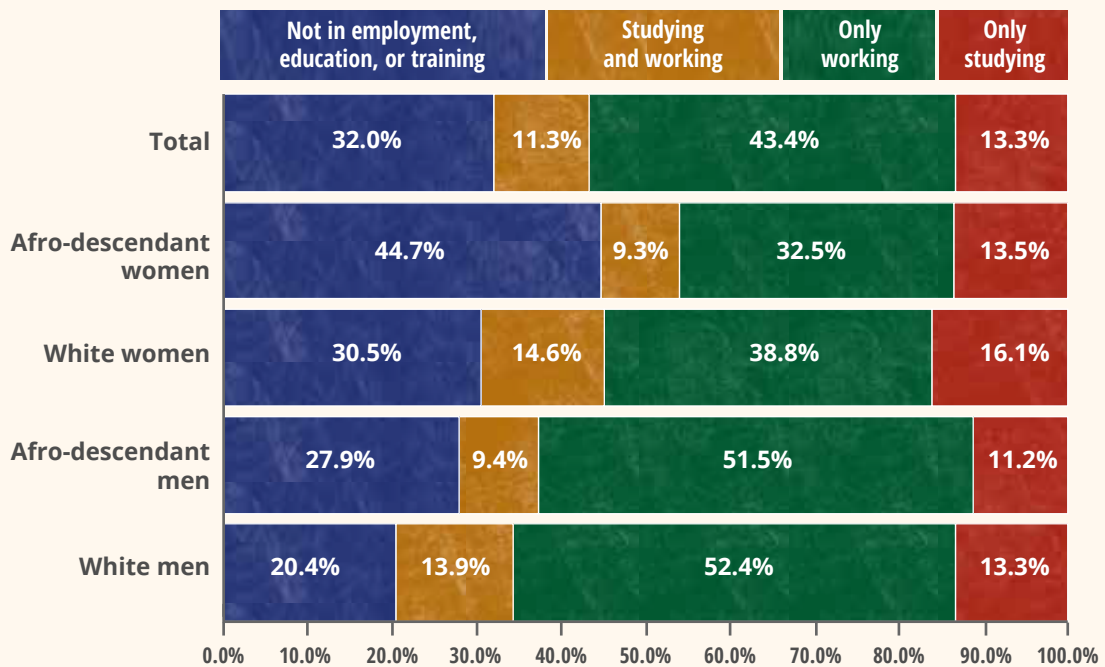
NEETs—people that are not in employment, education, or training—are a group that strongly demonstrates the structural nature of the difficulties faced by young people when trying to enter the labor market.

Multivariate analyses brought to light important family factors for defining a NEET trajectory: the larger the family, the greater the chance of young people becoming NEETs. Furthermore, if a family has two youngsters and one of them is a NEET, the second one has a 32 percent chance of also being one. If there is already a second NEET in the family, the odds for a third one are even higher: 41 percent.

Another factor that affects a person’s chance of becoming a NEET is income: in 2010, the poorest 10 percent were 8 times as likely as the richest 10 percent to have a NEET in the family. In other words, poorer families with children are more likely to have a young member classified as a NEET. Among young women, there are successive generations of NEETs, as Cardoso (2013) points out. Having a child significantly impacts the life of these young women: 70 percent of all 15-year-old mothers were NEETs, a rate that dropped to 35 percent in the case of mothers aged 29.

About a third of the population aged between 18 and 29 are not in employment, education, or training. Data from *PNAD Contínua 2019* point to the lack of work in their neighborhood, their lack of experience in the labor market, and the need to perform household chores as obstacles to looking for a job. A comparison between race and gender groups reveals huge disparities. NEETs account for 20.4 percent of all white men, as compared to 44.7 percent among Afro-descendant women. While women are more likely to be full-time students, or to study and work at the same time, over half of all men only work.

**FIGURE 1.**  
**Study and Work Status by Race and Gender**  
 Youth aged 18 to 29, 2019



Source: *PNAD Contínua 2019*.

Among those who would like to work, but have not taken any steps to get a job (referred to as “inactive,” according to the Brazilian classification), there are also some important racial and gender differences.

For women, domestic care responsibilities are the main obstacle to being in the labor market. For Afro-descendant men, the main factor, as shown by data from *PNAD Contínua 2019*, is the lack of work near home, which confirms that there is a higher concentration of Afro-descendants in more vulnerable and less economically dynamic territories. Among

Afro-descendant men, the lack of professional experience was also mentioned more often. Still according to *PNAD Contínua 2019*, white respondents claimed much more often than Afro-descendant ones that their studies prevented them from participating in the labor market.

Finally, data from the same *PNAD Contínua 2019* reveal that many Brazilians with a higher education degree do not work in their chosen professional fields. That is, higher education in itself is no guarantee of a better placement in the labor market (Comin and Barbosa 2011).





4.

## The Labor Market and Inequality

“

**It is very, very, very difficult for us to get a job. I just can't understand why. But it's hard, it's hard. Especially now, during the pandemic, it's even harder. There are few job vacancies, and competition is high. They want you to have 30 years of experience, even if you are only 25 years old! You must either have a lot of experience, or a degree. If you have neither, it's very difficult.**

”

Extract from an interview with a 25-year-old cisgender woman from Belo Horizonte

In the labor market, gender and racial inequalities manifest in different ways, including: the percentage of people in the workforce, the type of inclusion in labor relations, the experience in so-called “occupational ghettos” (marked by gender and race), and the unequal division of domestic work.

### **LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION**

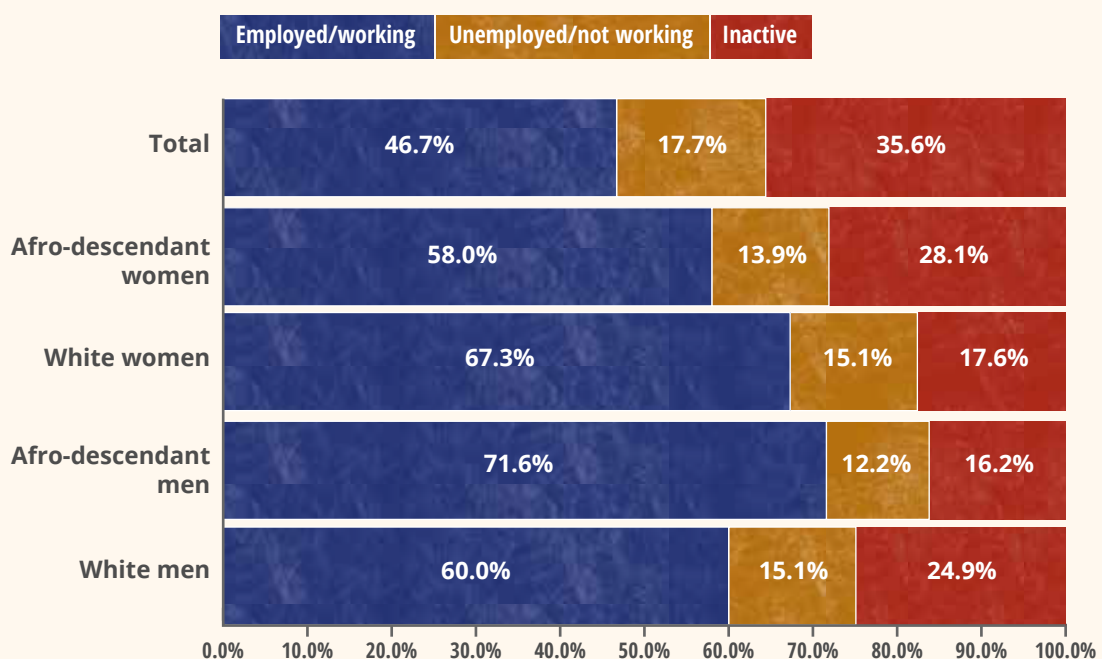
The working-age population (WAP) includes everyone who is able to perform an economic activity, that is, people aged 14 or above. According to *PNAD Contínua 2019*, almost three quarters of all Brazilian men are active in the labor market. This number includes both people who are working (that is, those who have an occupation) and the unemployed (those looking for a job). Among women, both Afro-descendant and white, almost half are not in the labor market. PNAD data describe a patriarchal structure that keeps women tied to the domestic environment and reveal how, in terms of participation in the workforce, women in general are more affected.

When considering inactivity rates, racial aspects become more prominent. Among those who are struggling to get a job, unemployment hits Afro-descendant men and women harder. In the case of Afro-descendant women, racial and gender inequalities overlap, resulting in the highest rates of inactivity (47.3 percent) and unemployment (8.9 percent).

In the 18-to-29 age group, unemployment rates are also particularly high. However, employment rates in this age group are higher than what is found among the workforce in general. For example, 67.3 percent of all white men are employed, as compared to 71.6 percent of *young* white men; and 64.1 percent of Afro-descendant men are employed, as compared to 67.3 percent of *young* Afro-descendant men. Among women, we find similar results: 48.9 percent of all white women are employed, but the number rises to 58 percent if we only consider *young* white women; and 43.8 percent of Afro-descendant women are

employed, against 46.7 percent of *young* Afro-descendant women. It is noteworthy that more than a third of all Afro-descendant women in this age group (35.6 percent) are not part of the workforce. This is a crucial transition stage for young people who have just left school, and are beginning their work life. This particular moment may have significant impacts on their future careers—either positively or negatively. The specialized literature has identified barriers to the insertion of youth in the labor market. It is worth pointing out, however, that young Afro-descendant women are more acutely affected by these obstacles.

**FIGURE 2.**  
**Workforce Status by Race and Gender**  
 Youth aged 18 to 29, 2019



Source: PNAD *Continua* 2019.

### **UNEQUAL INCLUSION OF WOMEN IN LABOR RELATIONS**

The levels and characteristics of female participation in the labor market are an important topic for discussion on gender inequality.

Firstly, when we consider unpaid work, women are affected by the daily burden of caring for their home and family, and thus enabling their spouses to work in the paid job market (Biroli 2016).



In the context of paid work, women are steered toward lower-paid jobs. As a result, they are more concentrated in “traditionally female” sectors, jobs, and areas, such as care work, the service sector, the social sector, and public administration (Araújo and Lombardi 2013; Bruschini 2006; Bruschini and Lombardi 2000, 2002).

In addition, when performed by men, these same jobs tend to be better paid and offer greater opportunities for promotion.

### **BIPOLARITY THESIS**

However, even among women, there are some relevant differences. Historically, Afro-descendant women have always been in the labor market. Indeed, many white women were only able to have a paid job because they could rely on the domestic work of Afro-descendant women looking after their homes and children (Gonzalez 2020). The access of women to more prestigious occupations took place at the same time when there was a greater presence of a certain group of women working in precarious conditions—such as Afro-descendant women with low education (Bruschini and Lombardi 2000).

### **THE CASE OF DOMESTIC EMPLOYMENT**

IPEA reports that, between 1995 and 2018, there was a decrease in the number of women engaged in domestic work—from 17 percent to 14.6 percent. However, if broken down by race, the same indicator would show a different picture: 18.6 percent for Afro-descendant women, and 10 percent for white women.

This overall downward trend is partially attributed to the 2015–16 economic crisis, which led to an increase in informality—in 2018, daily housecleaners (domestic workers without formal employment ties) accounted for 44 percent of the category. However, the crisis was also partially responsible for increased access to education (both basic and higher). This last aspect also had an impact on the age composition of this category: domestic workers up to the age of 29 dropped from 46.9 percent in 1995 to 13 percent in 2018; the number of adult women (above 29) doing the same job increased from 50 percent to 80 percent in the same period; and elderly female workers, from 3 percent to 7 percent (Pinheiro et al. 2019).

## **4.1 Inequality among Workers**

**“The jobs they offer have a very high turnover. For example, sometimes you get a job, work for a while, and then they fire you. Overall, these jobs pay very little, and suck a lot out of people (...) And as I am a transgender woman, I have to know where to look for a job. If I try to work for a company that is not open to this type of thing, they will probably not hire me—and if they do, I might suffer discrimination and prejudice. They might not even call me by my name, even if it is there on my documents, and that kind of thing.”**

Extract from an interview with a 20-year-old transgender woman from Belém

Among those that are employed, individual markers such as race and gender significantly affect their experiences. When it comes to registered employees, for example, gender inequality predominates; when it comes to unregistered workers, race inequality is greater (Cacciamali and Hirata 2006).

### **FORMAL AND INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT**

The quality of employment relationships reveals greater racial inequality than gender inequality. On the one hand, almost half of all employers are white men (45 percent), and more than half of all white women have a formal job. On the other, 60 percent of all informal workers are Afro-descendant men and women, and more than a third of them (35 percent) are Afro-descendant men. As a result, this populational group are more vulnerable to market fluctuations and lack of social protection (since they have more limited access to social security, unemployment insurance, etc.).

The professional trajectory of young researcher Adriely, from Belém, is illustrative of that. She obtained a degree in Social Work and, at the same time, worked as a make-up artist. When the pandemic started, the number of events dropped significantly, and so did the demand for her

work. As she explains, the strategies she adopted to remain in the field of social assistance were restricted to continuing her studies through a postgraduate course—but not envisioning a potential career in the area.

As a whole, the interviews suggest that, when young people have access to higher education, their labor insertion strategies and their sources of income remain linked to previous activities (precollege), or those not related to work.

### **ENTRY BARRIERS**

Efforts to enter the labor market are often surrounded by constraints that end up creating entry barriers. Among those interviewed, 28 young people mentioned, for example, that they perceived barriers in recruitment processes. All 28 spoke about the importance of looks, including skin color, or cited “...not meeting HR standards.” In addition, 17 young people stressed their lack of experience; 11 spoke of their insufficient training; 6 mentioned their area of origin/residence; and another 6 highlighted their gender identity. For example, young researcher Renato, from Pernambuco, explains how, as a transgender person, he faced difficulties in finding a job: “The way people talk to you changes, before and when they realize you are a trans person.”

### **“OCCUPATIONAL GHETTOS”**

A country’s racial structure also materializes in the form of distinctions between positions and functions. Among high-skilled professionals, business owners, and employers, there is greater representation of white men and women, while in unskilled occupations, there is a greater concentration of Afro-descendant men and women. According to data from *PNAD Contínua 2019*, more than 60 percent of all unskilled workers are Afro-descendant, and more than 60 percent of all high-skilled professionals and employers are white.

Although there is a clear link between limited educational attainment and lower-status jobs, it is also possible to see racial differentials in occupational statuses even when we select groups of individuals with similar education. Thus, while more than 70 percent of all white men with higher education are high-skilled professionals, business owners, or employers, the largest group of Afro-descendant women with higher education (47.6 percent) are engaged in occupations classified as “nonmanual workers, midlevel professionals, and supervisors.” In other words, among Afro-descendant women, higher education is not enough to enable them to work in the fields for which they trained.

When women, either Afro-descendant or white, enter the labor market, they tend to engage in reproductive and care work, administrative tasks, services, retail, and professional roles—that is, exercising a specialist position with specific training. White men predominate among officers in the armed forces and in administrative and managerial occupations. Afro-descendant men work more frequently in unskilled manual jobs and in the industrial sector; and Afro-descendant women, in care work and in the service sector (Leão 2019). Between 1976 and 2015, there was a decrease in the levels of segregation, but the patterns were maintained in relation to the specific concentration areas for men and women, and for Afro-descendant and white people.

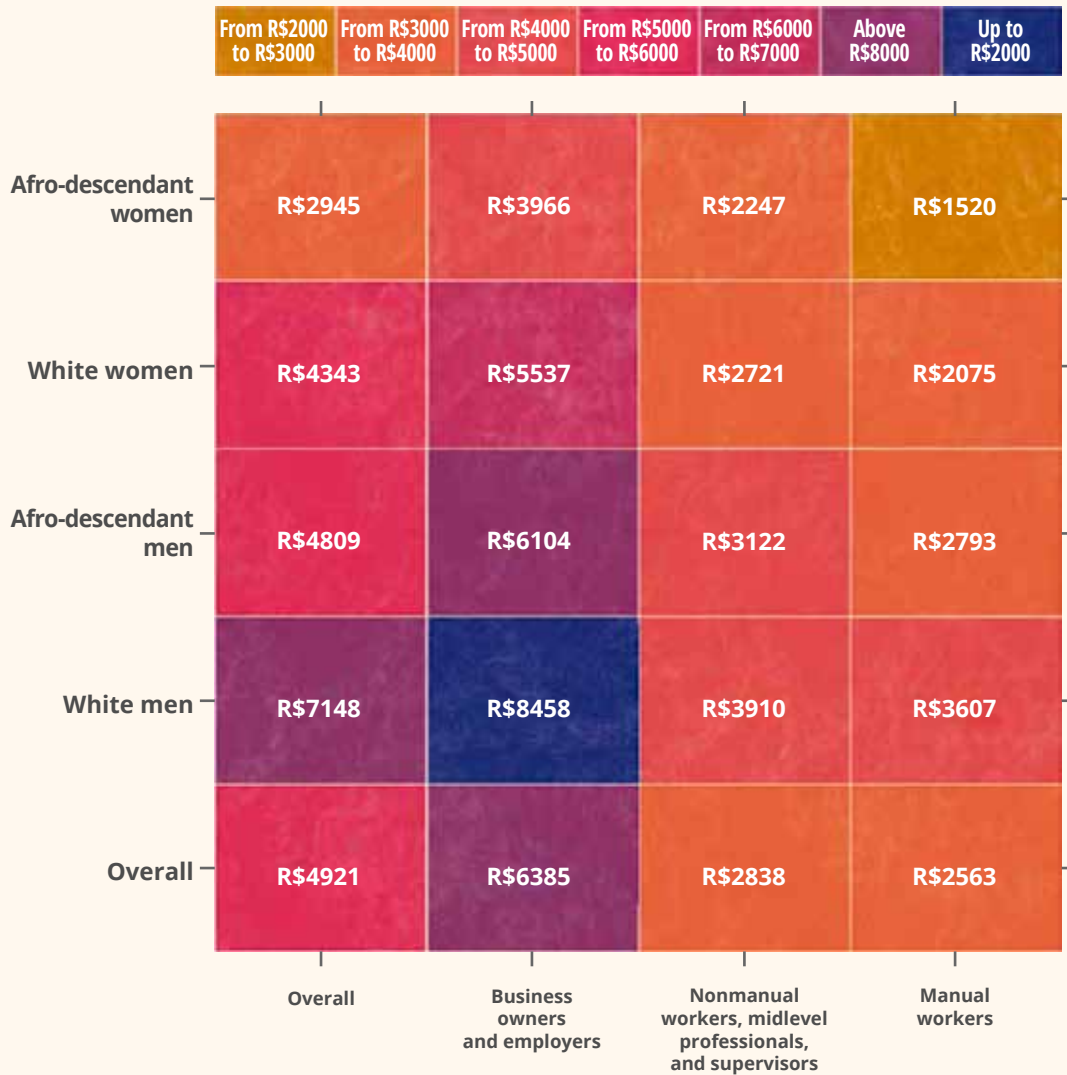
The group that achieved greater occupational gains, resulting in a greater fall in occupational segregation over the decades, was that of white women. Not only did they see a general decrease in occupational segregation, as highlighted above, but they also managed to move into positions with higher professional qualifications, which means that they are getting good returns on their investment in higher education. However, a large number of them continue to occupy positions in reproductive and care work, such as nutritionists, psychologists, and teachers (Leão 2019).

### **INCOME**

Differences in professional status affect pay in terms of gender and race. Among people with similar education and occupations, Afro-descendant men, white women, and Afro-descendant women do not earn nearly as much as white men. The greatest burden of this segregation falls on Afro-descendant women with higher education, who, on average, earn less than half of what is paid to white men with a degree.



**FIGURE 3.**  
**Average Monthly Earnings from Main Job by Race and Gender**  
 People with higher education, 2019



Source: PNAD Contínua 2019.

### **THE PANDEMIC AND WORK**

Evidence shows how, throughout 2020, unemployment rates increased in Brazil: among white workers, from 9.2 percent to 11.6 percent; and more sharply among Afro-descendants, from 11.4 percent to 16.6 percent (Prates et al. 2021). In view of the social impacts of COVID-19, 11 respondents mentioned a decrease in social events and parties. Many of them worked in the field of culture or beauty/body care. Eight of them said they had been laid off during the

pandemic, and seven made reference to a lack of opportunities due to current unemployment. It is worth noting that only one person reported a positive impact: a young designer from Porto Alegre. He said that the virtual environment enabled him to work for people that did not know his racial identity, and thus he was protected from racism and race-related embarrassment.

## **4.2 Inequality among the Unemployed**

**“(...) No matter how much we try to do—different projects and all—we are always struggling to keep up and have an equal footing in the job market, (...), we run, run, and run, but it’s as if we are running against a structure created to crush us all.”**

Young researcher Ana Flávia  
during Conversation Group 2

The historical inequalities found in Brazil’s labor market—which were exacerbated by the pandemic—result in high unemployment rates, but that is not all. They also affect the type of strategy people use to look for a job, and the average time without a job.

### **WAYS TO LOOK FOR A JOB**

Most often, the unemployed try to find a job by contacting potential employers (80 percent), according to data from *PNAD Contínua 2019*. However, some nuances mark the practices adopted by different groups in relation to race and gender.

White job seekers tend to adopt more impersonal job search methods, such as employment agencies. In addition, public exams to join the civil service attract more white women than Afro-descendant men. Formal education is often a requirement for government jobs, and those with a college or university degree are in a better position to prepare for the exams and pass them. Finally, opening a business—as a way to beat unemployment—is more common among white women and men.

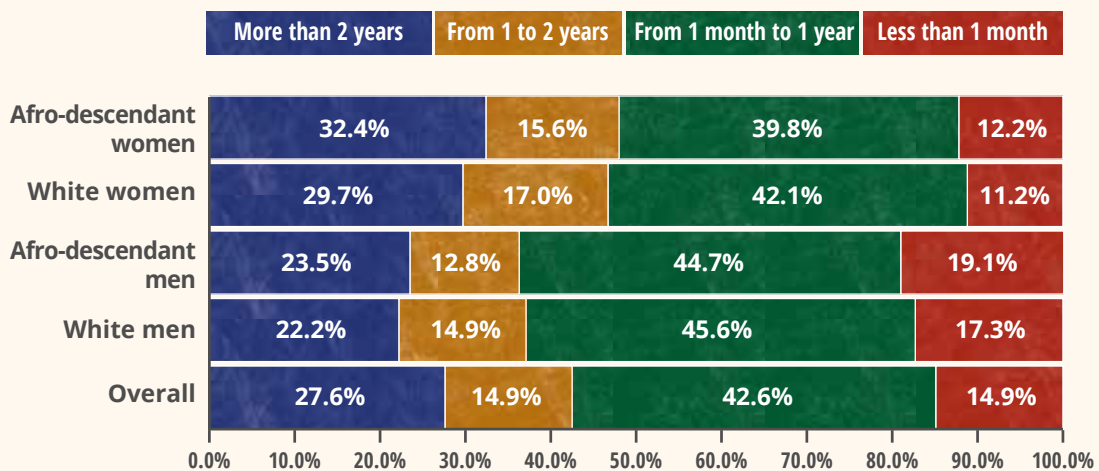
Relying on interpersonal relationships through a chain of private contacts is more common among Afro-descendant men, who seek help from relatives, friends, and members of personal networks.

## LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT

How long a person remains without a job affects their living conditions, social relationships, and future plans—in addition to harming their self-esteem. Prolonged periods without work often create a stigma that limits their chances of finding a new position and coping with the situation.

Long-term unemployment affects women more strongly than men. In this case, Afro-descendant women are those that face the greatest difficulties: they have the highest unemployment rates, and tend to remain unemployed for longer, as shown in the chart below.

**FIGURE 4.**  
**Length of Unemployment by Race and Gender**  
 Youth aged 18 to 29, 2019



Source: PNAD Contínua 2019.

## 4.3 Inequality among Persons with Disabilities

**“I started a little late because of my disability. Schools didn’t want to accept me due to the disability I had. They didn’t have someone to look after me, and due to my disability I needed a person to take care of me. So I had to struggle to find a school that would accept me.”**

Extract from an interview with a 29-year-old cisgender man from Recife

Defining the group of persons with disabilities is not a simple task. There is a wide range of physical, sensory, and cognitive limitations linked to different levels of functional impairment. In censuses, for example, the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF) is used to assess disability through respondents' self-declarations, asking about their degree of impairment (total, major, some, or none) in relation to each question.

The participation rate of persons with disabilities in the EAP (economically active population)—including those employed and those looking for a job—is 53.2 percent, most of whom are in the informal market. This rate is very small compared to workers without disabilities (77.4 percent). Thus, among those with disabilities, even at a working age (between 20 and 59), there is a considerable number of “inactive” people (just over 3 million). Some of these individuals survive on pensions, assistance benefits (such as the Continued Cash Benefit—BPC), social security, or family support.

The exclusion of persons with disabilities is also linked to environmental and social obstacles that prevent their full participation. These obstacles can be more severe for certain subgroups, which already face cumulative disadvantages and fewer opportunities, including the Afro-descendant population, women, rural residents, and Indigenous peoples.

For example, according to a World Bank report titled *Disability Inclusion in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Path to Sustainable Development*, persons with disabilities in Brazil have a lower chance of completing their studies: a 24-percent reduction in primary education, 23 percent in secondary education, and 11 percent in higher education. Among Afro-descendants with disabilities, the probability is reduced to 57 percent in elementary school, 58 percent in high school, and 28 percent in higher education (Garcia Mora, Schwartz Orellana, and Freire 2021).

### **LABOR MARKET PARTICIPATION**

In addition to their reduced participation in the labor market, persons with disabilities are overrepresented in the most vulnerable social groups, and are subject to worse income and employment conditions (Garcia and Maia 2014). The difficulties they face when entering the labor market are the same as in their access to education, generating a loop.

In addition, employers prefer to hire persons with disabilities that have no impairments (that is, those whose disability does not affect their work) for positions with higher pay and qualifications, since they also tend to have higher educational levels. They then select other workers based on convenience, usually for less qualified, more vulnerable, and lower-paid positions.



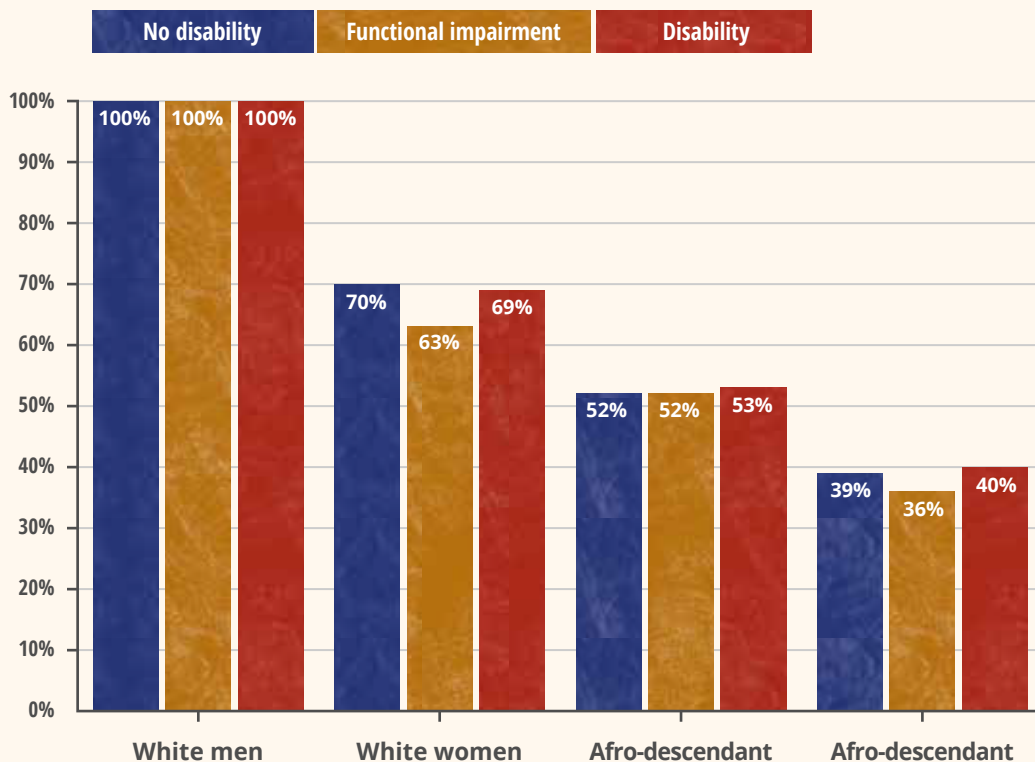
## **ACTIVITY AND INACTIVITY**

Considering people that are not in the labor market, there are many more persons with disabilities than people without disabilities. However, an analysis taking race and gender into account reveals the same pattern of the general population, that is, more inactivity among women, higher levels of occupation among men, and greater unemployment among Afro-descendant men and women.

## **INCOME**

Even when persons with disabilities manage to get a job, their average income is lower than that of people without disabilities. Racial and gender inequalities follow a similar pattern. In other words, among persons with disabilities, the ratio between the average income of Afro-descendant men and Afro-descendant and white women and the average income of white men is similar to that observed in the group without disabilities, as shown in the graph below.

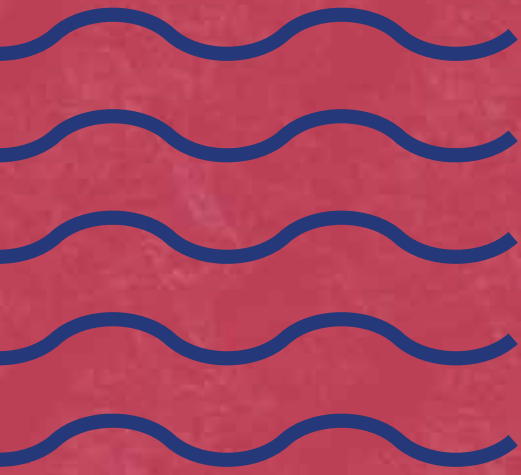
**FIGURE 5.**  
**Income Differences: White Men vs. Other Groups**  
2019



Source: PNAD Contínua 2019.

**INFORMAL WORK**

Informal work is the rule when we consider persons with disabilities and functional impairments, which highlights the fact that public policies can only do so much to encourage the inclusion of this group in formal employment. Nevertheless, as observed in the general trend of the labor market, Afro-descendant men and women are more representative among those with more unstable jobs.



# 5. Regional Inequalities

“

Well, I am a jack of all trades, literally. I'm currently freelancing at Putz, a local bar. I now freelance three times a week, but I also work with social services, and if I am hired to teach poetry, that is, creative writing related to poetry, to deliver a production workshop, to do cleaning services, or babysitting, I do it too. Currently I'm working more at Putz, and dealing with thrift stores. My sister and I also engage in social and cultural work, but I do everything all the time—I'm never idle [...] So far, no formal work. I think the only more formal job I ever had was as a production assistant, where I worked for two months, at Pilastra. I had to wake up at a certain time, and stopped working at the same time every day for two months. That's it. But it wasn't a registered job—it was a sort of informal contract, agreed by email and stuff. So I had no labor rights and stuff. My life is very informal.

”

Extract from an interview with a 20-year-old  
cisgender woman from Brasília



The metropolitan areas of Belém, Recife, Belo Horizonte, Porto Alegre, and Brasília were selected with the aim of analyzing local particularities of the labor market. The selection took Brazil's regional diversity into account, given its socioeconomic and demographic peculiarities. These are important issues when we consider the implementation of focused policies inserted in local contexts with particularities.

### **INCOME**

In all five metropolitan areas, most people earned, on average, more than the national average (in absolute terms). However, the percentage differences in relation to white men are also higher, that is, there is greater racial income inequality. This is consistent with the finding that labor markets in metropolitan areas offer greater income opportunities, but also show more inequalities among workers.

Considering the specificities of each location, we note that Belo Horizonte was the capital with the most gender inequality. In Recife, Belém, Brasília, and Porto Alegre (in that order), the gap between white women and white men is a little smaller. Unlike the national average, in the five metropolitan areas, the average income of white women is higher than that of Afro-descendant men.

**FIGURE 6.****Average Monthly Income from Main Occupation**

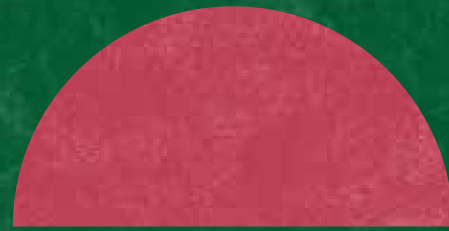
Select metropolitan areas, 2019

	Up to R\$1500	From R\$1500 to R\$2000	From R\$2000 to R\$2500	From R\$2500 to R\$3000	From R\$3000 to R\$4000	Above R\$4000
Brasilia	R\$3950	R\$5773	R\$3590	R\$4450	R\$2669	
Porto Alegre	R\$2871	R\$3539	R\$2252	R\$2553	R\$1804	
Belo Horizonte	R\$2255	R\$3723	R\$2164	R\$2399	R\$1489	
Recife	R\$2070	R\$3130	R\$1838	R\$2623	R\$1401	
Brazil	R\$1913	R\$2602	R\$1894	R\$1827	R\$1545	
Belém	R\$1926	R\$2994	R\$1821	R\$2330	R\$1559	
	Overall	White men	Afro-descendant men	White women	Afro-descendant women	

Source: PNAD Contínua 2019.

**INACTIVITY**

Inactivity and unemployment rates tend to follow the general trends of the country: inactivity is much higher among women than among men, and unemployment is higher among Afro-descendant workers. However, there are some specific differences: in the five metropolitan areas, the inactivity rate for white women is higher than for Afro-descendant women; and in Recife, unemployment is higher among white men than among white women.



6.

## Final Considerations

“

[...] I don't have much trust in institutions that talk a lot about youth, but don't give them a chance to work. You don't need to have an office where everyone is young, but it's very difficult to give credit to a company or an institution, actually an institution, that talks about youth, that talks about *Blackness*, but doesn't have young people and Black people around, or leading in developing things. These institutions tend to lose the most because this becomes very obvious to everyone.

”

Extract from an interview with a 24-year-old  
cisgender woman from Recife

One of the main findings of this paper is that even when the Afro-descendant population manage to overcome many educational obstacles, they have lower returns on their investment in education from the labor market. This finding is corroborated by both quantitative and qualitative data. Among informal workers, 60 percent are Afro-descendant, and more than a third (35 percent) are Afro-descendant men. Among the unemployed, race and gender inequalities overlap: 47.3 percent of Afro-descendant women are inactive, and 8.9 percent are unemployed. In addition, Afro-descendants occupy only 6.3 percent of management positions in the private sector and 4.7 percent of executive roles, and only 4.9 percent of them sit in their boards of directors, according to the sixth edition of the Social, Racial, and Gender Profile of the 500 Largest Companies in Brazil (Ethos Institute and IDB 2016).

Thus, it is not surprising that young Afro-descendants are generally skeptical about continuing their studies, looking for work, and staying in their job. Even when young Afro-descendants manage to overcome their educational disadvantages, their venturing into the labor market remain precarious and are not consistent with their education. Among young Brazilians, 37 percent are not in employment, education, or training. Field research shows that many drop out of school between high school and college. However, contrary to some widespread beliefs, there is no lack of interest or willingness on the part of young people to work or study. Among their dreams mentioned in the survey, professional and financial stability come at the top. At the same time, the lack of opportunities, the demand for experience, and discrimination mechanisms appear as major barriers.

Studies on race and gender in the labor market identify three factors that influence inequality.



1. The educational disadvantages that mainly affect the Afro-descendant population mean that they are incorporated into lower-skill jobs, with fragile employment ties and low pay.
2. Occupational segregation lead white men, Afro-descendant men, white women, and Afro-descendant women to occupy specific niches in the market.
3. Effective discrimination becomes evident in the race and gender wage differentials observed among equally educated individuals performing similar jobs.

Economic growth cycles could attenuate these inequalities, but they are unable to eliminate them, given their structural nature. Therefore, inequality is bound to resurface in periods of economic stagnation, flattening out the gains from years of economic growth. Such vulnerability becomes evident at times such as the current one, in which young people are among the most affected by the labor market “shock” resulting from the pandemic (along with Afro-descendants and women).

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Measures to promote labor market insertion, in addition to relieving young people from the burden of unemployment, may not only have short-term or individual effects, but also have the potential to consolidate change. Active labor market insertion policies and others aimed at the education system may become important tools for rebalancing rooted inequalities and mitigating the effects of discrimination. The interventions aimed at building this pathway involve several areas, and result from combined efforts. There is a need to invest in a broader set of services that go beyond the formal classroom training programs currently available in Brazil, in order to facilitate the school-to-work transition and the upward mobility of young Afro-descendants, particularly women. Below, we list a set of recommendations in this regard.

- **Recognizing and understanding differences and inequalities—** Identifying racial, gender, and disability-related inequalities in order to transform schools and jobs into critical spaces for building more inclusive societies.

- **Investing in research**—Producing and disseminating research and knowledge on the different needs and characteristics of Afro-descendants, women, and persons with disabilities in Brazil. These instruments must be comprehensive in scope, incorporating variables on education, employment, health, income, and the like.
- **Reducing economic obstacles to school completion**—Implementing approaches aimed at eradicating the economic obstacles that prevent many children and young people—Afro-descendant boys and girls, and those with disabilities from disadvantaged backgrounds—from thriving academically. These include cash transfer programs, subsidies, and other forms of support.
- **Training teachers**—Equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills they may need to discuss racism, sexism, and ableism at school, thus creating a safe environment that welcomes and values students from diverse backgrounds, and enforcing a zero-tolerance policy toward any expression of discrimination. Teachers must become more sensitive and able to identify subtle and indirect manifestations of prejudice, including unequal praise and lower expectations towards nonwhite students, for example.
- **Updating coursebooks**—Introducing race, gender, and ability as crosscutting themes, making it relevant to different disciplines and contents. This will enable students to think about race, gender, and the human body not as something circumscribed or restricted to personal identity, but as a structural reality that permeates many aspects of life (from health and employment to economic development and politics).
- **Promoting lifelong education**—Expanding the options beyond formal education, offering opportunities for those who, due to their age or lifepath, have not completed primary or secondary education, but wish to learn new skills and technical knowledge.
- **Strengthening and expanding affirmative action policies**—Affirmative action policies are essential to avoid turning secondary education into a dead end for young people from lower classes, and to prevent them from dropping out of secondary education. We must consider the variables that negatively affect Afro-descendants in primary and secondary education in order to guarantee that quotas

and affirmative action programs may benefit the poorest or most vulnerable families. An important aspect in this regard is a review of Law 12711/2012 to take place in 2022, ten years after its implementation.

- **Promoting affirmative action in the private sector**—Diversity and inclusion policies focused on the private sector include initiatives such as specific trainee programs for Afro-descendants. Despite being of paramount importance, such initiatives cannot reach young people like those who participated in this qualitative research: many lack higher education, a second language, or reliable internet access. In addition, these programs tend to be implemented in large companies located in large urban centers. Greater territorial coverage and larger-scale initiatives are thus required. In this regard, wage subsidy programs might be good alternatives.
- **Introducing targeted wage subsidies**—Creating incentives for the inclusion of young Afro-descendants and those in vulnerable situations in the labor market through a wage subsidy policy (or tax exemption) for companies.
- **Establishing a priority system in daycare centers**—Childcare grants are essential to allow young mothers from low-income families to continue studying and to relieve older siblings of care obligations, which is also a cause for early school dropout among girls.
- **Providing transport grants to support job seeking**—Recent analyses show that people with lower income tend to live much farther away from work, requiring long commutes, including in large metropolitan areas such as São Paulo. Transport subsidies for young job seekers could reduce this barrier to accessing more attractive labor markets.
- **Investing in comprehensive programs for the self-employed**—These programs are highly context-sensitive, and often include a combination of skills development, financial inclusion, grants, or subsidized credit. They can best be implemented in the communities where these workers are, with compatible schedules and pace.
- **Promoting mental health**—It is essential to consider the incidence of mental illness among young people, as its impact is significant on their educational and professional trajectories. There is a lack of mental health policies designed for the Afro-descendant population in general, and for young Afro-descendants in particular.

- **Disseminating best practices**—Brazil has an abundance of projects (both in the area of education and the labor market) that provide alternatives to the change policies that tend to emerge at the local level. Such wealth of knowledge must be used and shared nationally, instead of being restricted to certain spaces, or being associated with or implemented in specific urban centers.
- **Launching a campaign or policy to promote digital inclusion**—Both access to computers and the provision of free or affordable high-quality internet connection could impact education and the labor market in the near future.

# 7. References



- Araujo, Angela Maria Carneiro, and Maria Rosa Lombardi. 2013. "Trabalho informal, gênero e raça no Brasil do início do século XXI". *Cadernos de Pesquisa*, v. 43, no. 149, Aug 2013: 452–77. São Paulo.
- Biroli, Flávia. 2016. "Divisão Sexual do Trabalho e Democracia". *Dados*, v. 59, no. 3, Sep 2016: 719–54.
- Bruschini, Cristina. 2006. "Trabalho doméstico: inatividade econômica ou trabalho não-remunerado?". *Revista Brasileira de Estudos da População*, v. 23: 331–53.
- Bruschini, Cristina, and Maria Rosa Lombardi. 2000. "A bipolaridade do trabalho feminino no Brasil contemporâneo". *Cadernos de Pesquisa*, no. 110, Jul 2000: 67–104. São Paulo.
- Bruschini, Cristina, and Maria Rosa Lombardi. 2002. "Instruídas e trabalhadoras trabalho feminino no final do século XX". *Cadernos Pagu*, v. 17/18: 157–96. Campinas, SP: UNICAMP.
- Cardoso, Adalberto. 2013. "Juventude, trabalho e desenvolvimento: elementos para uma agenda de investigação". *Caderno CRH*, v. 26, no. 68, Aug 2013: 293–314. Salvador.
- Comin, Alvaro A., and Rogério Jerônimo Barbosa. 2011. "Trabalhar para estudar: sobre a pertinência da noção de transição escola-trabalho no Brasil". *Novos estudos [on-line]*, no. 91: 75–95. CEBRAP. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1590/S0101-33002011000300004>>. Accessed on: July 4, 2021. Epub February 6, 2012. ISSN 1980-5403. <<https://doi.org/10.1590/S0101-33002011000300004>>.
- Corseuil, Carlos Henrique Leite, Maíra Penna Franca, and Katcha Polo-Ponsky. 2020. "A inserção dos jovens brasileiros no mercado de trabalho num contexto de recessão". *Novos estudos*, v. 39, no. 3, Sep 2020: 501–20. São Paulo: CEBRAP.
- Corseuil, Carlos; Maíra Franca, Gabriela Padilha, Lauro Ramos, and Felipe Russo. 2021. "Comportamento do mercado de trabalho brasileiro em duas recessões: análise do período 2015-2016 e da pandemia de Covid-19". *Nota Técnica IPEA 92*, Feb 2021.
- Garcia Mora, Maria Elena, Steven Schwartz Orellana, and German Freire. 2021. *Disability Inclusion in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Path To Sustainable Development*. World Bank, Washington, DC.

- <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/36628> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.
- Gonzalez, Lélia. 2020. *Por um feminismo afro-latino-americano*. São Paulo: Zahar.
- Guimarães, Nadya Araújo. 2002. "Os desafios da equidade: reestruturação e desigualdades de gênero e raça no Brasil". *Cadernos Pagu*, no. 17-18: 237-66. Campinas ,
- Guimaraes, Nadya Araujo, Murillo Marschner Alves de Brito, and Leonardo Sangali Barone. 2016. "Mercantilização no feminino: a visibilidade do trabalho das mulheres no Brasil". *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais*, v. 31, no. 90, Feb 2016: 17-38. São Paulo.
- Hasenbalg, Carlos. 1979. *Discriminação e desigualdades raciais no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Graal.
- Hasenbalg, Carlos, and Nelson do Valle e Silva. 2000. "Tendências da Desigualdade Educacional no Brasil". *DADOS – Revista de Ciências Sociais*, v. 43, no. 3: 423-45.
- Instituto Ethos, and IDB. 2016. *Perfil Social, Racial e de Gênero das 500 Maiores Empresas no Brasil*.
- Leão, Natalia. 2019. *Diagnóstico da segregação ocupacional por gênero e raça no mercado de trabalho brasileiro entre 1976 e 2015*. 44º Encontro Anual da ANPOCS.
- Lima, Márcia, and Ian Prates. 2019. "Emprego doméstico e mudança social – Reprodução e heterogeneidade na base da estrutura ocupacional brasileira". *Tempo Social*, v. 31, no. 2, May 2019: 149-72. São Paulo.
- Osório, R. 2004. *A mobilidade social dos negros brasileiros*. Discussion Paper no. 1.033, Aug 2004. Brasília: IPEA.
- Pinheiro, Luana, Fernanda Lira, Marcela Rezende, and Natália Fontoura. 2019. *Os desafios do passado no trabalho doméstico do século XXI: Reflexões para o caso brasileiro a partir dos dados da Pnad Contínua*. Discussion Paper. Brasília/Rio de Janeiro: IPEA.
- Prates, Ian, Márcia Lima, et al. 2021 "Desigualdades raciais e de gênero no mercado de trabalho em meio à pandemia". *Informativo Desigualdades Raciais e Covid-19*, no. 7. AFRO-CEBRAP.
- Ribeiro, C. A. C. 2009. *Desigualdade de oportunidades no Brasil*. Belo Horizonte: Argvmentvm.
- Venturini, Anna Carolina, Márcia Lima, et al. 2020. "As desigualdades educacionais e a Covid-19". *Informativo Desigualdades Raciais e Covid-19*, no. 3, Nov 2020. AFRO-CEBRAP.





