Racial and **Gender** Economic Justice in Brazil

A PORTRAIT OF
INEQUALITIES
IN THE COUNTRY

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1. Introduction

This document presents the main results of the research *Índice de Justiça Econômica Racial (IJER): uma métrica interseccional para revelar desigualdades estruturais no Brasil* [Racial Economic Justice Index (REJI): an intersectional approach to reveal structural inequalities in Brazil.] The study starts from a central question: how do race and gender structure the access to rights and opportunities in 21st century Brazil?

Over the past few decades, the country has made progress in several social dimensions, with increased access to education, income redistribution policies, and the strengthening of institutional frameworks aimed at promoting equality. However, these advances have not been sufficient to significantly change structural inequality. Patterns persist that systematically place certain groups in more unfavorable conditions.



In this context, the IJER was developed as an analytical tool capable of capturing the complexity of these inequalities, integrating in an unprecedented way dimensions such as education, work, income, and housing conditions, from an intersectional perspective. More than measuring inequalities, the index allows us to understand how they are organized and reproduced over time.

This report summarizes the key findings of the research, articulating data analysis, critical interpretation, and implications for public policy.

> Overall, the results showed that **Black women live in the worst housing and infrastructure conditions, especially in the North and Northeast regions of Brazil.** In this context, environmental injustice severely affects those already at the bottom of the income and labor hierarchy, which deepens existing inequalities.

Unlike traditional indices, which often disregard aspects such as sanitation, household overcrowding, and access to water, the IJER incorporates these variables from a race and gender sensitive perspective. This broadens the understanding of inequality and highlights that economic injustice is not limited to low wages, but also expressed in unequal access to education, precarious insertion into the labor market, inadequate housing conditions, and greater vulnerability to climate events.

2. Where do we start from?

The research begins by acknowledging a reality: Brazil was built upon a colonial, patriarchal, and enslaving logic. These domination structures did not disappear with the end of slavery, in 1888, nor with the 1988 Constitution. The Constitution states, in Article 3, that one of the country's objectives is to build a free, just, and solidary society, as well as to reduce social inequalities. But, in practice, the exclusion of groups that were already marginalized since the colonial period continues to occur.

Almost 40 years after the Constitution, there is still a large gap between what the law guarantees and what the Black population experiences daily. This shows that having rights written on paper is not enough to guarantee truly fair and equal conditions. Therefore, the research starts from the following principle: Brazilian inequalities are not merely persistent. They are continuously produced and reproduced by historical, institutional, and social interconnected processes. Even public policies frequently help to maintain these asymmetries.

To understand inequality in Brazil, it is not enough to look at reality in a generic way, as if everyone were the same and as if race and gender did not matter. It is necessary to consider how these two factors, which have a specific history in Brazil, define who has access to rights and a decent life.

Now, what should we do?

It is necessary to go beyond simply pointing out that social gaps exist.

It is essential to understand the historical, institutional, and social mechanisms that create and sustain these gaps, making them seem natural. To do this, it is important to use theories that view justice not only as the distribution of money or material goods, but also consider the symbolic, institutional, and historical aspects that define who has access to rights and opportunities.

The contributions of critical theory, political economics, and Black and intersectional feminisms show that inequalities are produced by systems of oppression that act together. In these systems, race, gender, and class function in an articulated way. Therefore, it is pointless to analyze social reality using isolated categories (only race, or only gender, or only class) or to use indicators that ignore the combined effect of these markers.

The limitations of traditional approaches and what we propose to do differently

Traditional tools for measuring inequality are important, but they often fail to capture the complexity of these dynamics. This is especially true because they ignore the combined effects of race and gender. The lack of an intersectional

perspective in the construction of indicators limits the ability to make accurate diagnoses. As a consequence, it also restricts the creation of public policies that adequately address inequalities. These inequalities are produced by historical processes deeply rooted in social dynamics that renew themselves over time.

Therefore, it is essential to create new analytical tools to interpret social reality from other perspectives. **It is in this context that the Racial Economic Justice Index (IJER, in Portuguese) proposal emerges. It was created as an analytical tool capable of capturing the complexity of Brazilian inequalities from a perspective sensitive to race and gender. By combining different dimensions of socioeconomic life, the index aims not only to measure disparities but also to show the mechanisms that sustain exclusion and help build fairer responses. More than a technical instrument, the IJER is based on an idea of economic justice committed to transforming the structures that produce and sustain inequalities. Therefore, it recognizes the experiences of Black women as central to the formulation of diagnoses and alternatives.**

The starting point, therefore, is the understanding that it is not possible to fully comprehend economic justice without considering the conditions that limit or make decent lives possible. By proposing an approach that combines critical theory, data analysis, and an intersectional perspective, this work contributes to the academic and political debate on inequalities in Brazil. It also aims to offer support for the development of public policies that are attentive to the structural dynamics of Brazilian society and to provide guidance for building a path to equity.

3. Some important concepts for understanding IJER

Justice

It means recognizing that people have different starting points and ensuring that everyone has the real conditions to live with dignity through the equitable (re)distribution of resources, respect, and social participation.

Intersectionality

This term was coined by the Black jurist Kimberlé Crenshaw.[1] It stems from a simple yet revolutionary idea: oppressions do not act in isolation. Racism, sexism, and class exploitation intertwine and produce unique experiences. It is a lens that prevents us from looking at inequalities in isolation. It forces us to always ask: how do race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and territory act together in people's real lives?

Economic Justice

It goes beyond the struggle for higher wages or less poverty; it involves questioning access to rights such as education, decent work, adequate housing, and social well-being. It asks: Who defines what is valuable? Who is recognized as a legitimate worker? Why are certain forms of work (such as caring for children, older people, and people who are ill) poorly paid or not paid at all? It means recognizing that the economy is not neutral and was built to benefit some groups at the expense of others. In this research, economic justice means reorganizing the rules by valuing care, combating exploitation, and ensuring that everyone has the material conditions to live well.

Socio-environmental Justice

To recognize that access to a healthy environment (with clean air, clean water, decent housing, basic sanitation, and protection against climate disasters) is a profoundly unequally distributed right, marked by racism, sexism, and class inequality. What appears to be an "environmental problem" (lack of sewage systems, flooding, garbage accumulation) is, in fact, a problem of racism and economic injustice. It is no coincidence that Black and marginalized bodies are found in the most vulnerable areas.

1 Crenshaw, Kimberlé. (1991). Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence Against Women of Color. Stanford Law Review, Vol. 43, No. 6, pp. 1241-1299

Why do these ideas matter so much?

If economic and socio-environmental dimensions are not taken into consideration, the idea of justice becomes abstract. Formal rights are not enough when concrete living conditions are lacking, such as income, access to food, transportation, and basic sanitation. Similarly, thinking about economic justice without an intersectional perspective limits the understanding of inequalities, as it ignores how race and gender have historically structured access to resources and opportunities in Brazil.

By articulating these dimensions, it becomes possible to understand and address inequalities more effectively. By aligning intersectionality and economic justice, we can advance the transformation of material living conditions, especially for the most affected groups.

With regard to the inequalities experienced by Black women, it is possible to summarize the mobilization of these assumptions in three main dimensions:

1. ACCESS TO RESOURCES

- The group of Black women is characterized by disadvantages in relation to all other groups regarding average income, per capita income, and unemployment.
- Regarding paid domestic work, there are also differences in the average remuneration of White and Black women, which, in 2022, stood at 4.8% .
- Even with advances in education, racial **'social filters'** keep the Black population in the lowest strata of the social hierarchy.



Social filters

Social and racial filters are processes in which criteria based on race, gender, and/or class are used to determine who has access to opportunities.

2. RECOGNITION

- Lélia Gonzalez[2] dismantles the myth of racial democracy (the false idea that, in Brazil, everyone has the same conditions and that different racial groups interact harmoniously) and shows how racism and sexism together produce specific forms of subjugation for Black women.
- Sueli Carneiro[3] highlights Black women as political subjects and argues that the fight against patriarchy must go hand in hand with the fight against racism, colonialism, and class inequality.
- Carla Akotirene[4] argues that it is not enough to include new subjects in the analysis; it is necessary to transform the theoretical frameworks themselves based on the experiences of marginalized Black women – what she calls the epistemology of the crossroads.
- Mayara Aguiar[5] denounces that private philanthropy, as well as certain state policies, presents itself as "neutral," but reproduces racial hierarchies in the allocation of resources.

3. LIVING CONDITIONS

- Latin American feminist economics proposes placing life at the center instead of profit or growth. This means thinking about the economy from the perspective of **social reproduction** and collective well-being.



Social reproduction

It refers to the practices that sustain life and the workforce, such as caring for children and older people, housework, education, healthcare, food preparation, among others. These activities are often unpaid and associated with women.

2 Gonzalez, Lélia. (1988). A categoria político-cultural de amefricanidade. Tempo Brasileiro, n. 92/93, p. 69–82.

3 Carneiro, Sueli. (2003). Enegrecer o feminismo: a situação da mulher negra na América Latina a partir de uma perspectiva de gênero. In Racismos contemporâneos. Takano, p. 49–58.

4 Akotirene, Carla. (2018). Interseccionalidade. Série Feminismos Plurais. Pólen Produção Editorial.

5 Aguiar, Mayara. (2023). Developing a Racial Justice Framework for US Private Philanthropy.

- It is necessary to recognize the interdependence between human beings and ecodependence (structural dependence on ecological systems such as water, soil, and biodiversity).
- Care should be understood in a broad sense: it goes beyond housework, including emotional bonds, social time, and the daily management of life reproduction.
- Economic justice and climate justice go hand in hand: environmental impacts are part of the process of economic dispossession that hits Black and marginalized women hardest.
- As Arruzza, Bhattacharya and Fraser state[6], the struggles for gender, racial, economic, and environmental justice are inseparable. There is no possible economic justice without recognizing the multiple spheres of inequality that permeate the lives of Black women.

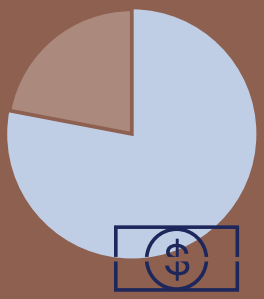
> In short, economic and socio-environmental justice together mean an economy geared towards sustaining life, not accumulating capital, that guarantees access to resources, recognition, and decent living conditions, starting from the experiences of those who have historically been at the bottom of the social hierarchy: **Black women.**

6 Arruzza, Cinzia; Bhattacharya, Tithi; Fraser, Nancy. (2019). Feminism for the 99%: a manifesto. Verso.

Understanding this complexity is a call to go beyond traditional redistributive policies (that is, those policies that merely transfer resources from one group to another). Thinking about economic justice in an intersectional way means understanding **which bodies have historically been most affected by exploitation, precarious employment, and invisibility.** It also means understanding how these forms of oppression accumulate, feed off each other, and shape daily life.

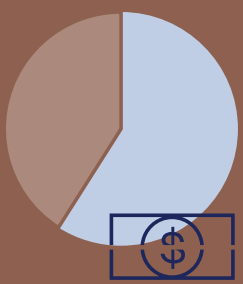
4. What do the figures show about racial and gender inequalities in the country?

According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2023)[7]



Brazilian women received, on average, the equivalent of

78% of men's income in 2022.



Among Black women, this proportion falls to 59%.

7 Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística. (2023). *PNAD contínua 2022: Rendimentos de todas as fontes.* IBGE. Agência de Notícias IBGE.

Furthermore, there is a strong concentration of these women in occupations associated with care, such as domestic work, nursing, and general services—socially indispensable activities. This reveals that, even in the sphere of paid work, economic and symbolic recognition continues to be marked by intersectional hierarchies of gender, race, and class.

This inequality deepens when we analyze wage trends:



IN 2012

Black women employed in domestic work received, on average,

BRL 503.23

while White women earned

BRL 576.00

both had nominal increases

IN 2022

Totaling

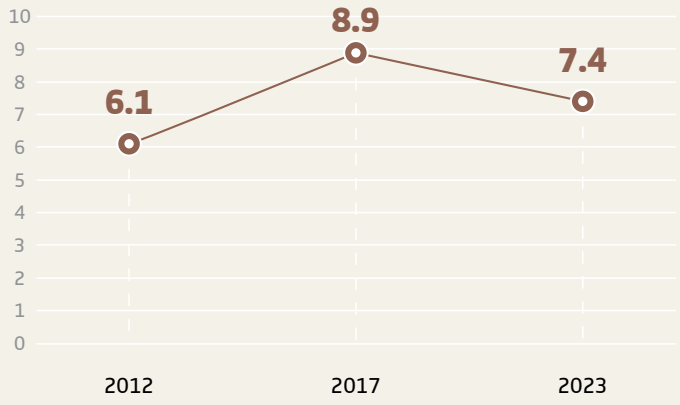
BRL 978.35
for Black women and

BRL 1,184.57
for White women

However, the gap between the two groups grew by 4.8 percentage points, highlighting the continued devaluation of the work performed by Black women (CEDRA, 2025)[8].

8 Average per capita income (in Brazilian Real (BRL)) of households comprised of all Black residents, no Black residents, and mixed residents (Black and non-Black) by sex and race/color of the head of household, 2012-2023. Source: Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística. (n.d.). *Pesquisa Nacional de Amostra por Domicílios (PNAD) e Pesquisa Nacional de Amostra por Domicílios Contínua (PNAD Contínua).* CEDRA. https://cedra.org.br/conjuntos-de-dados/rendimento-medio-r-domiciliar-per-capita-dos-domicilios-ocupados-formados-por-moradores-todos-negros-moradores-nenhum-negro-e-moradores-mistos-negros-e-nao-negros-por-sexo-e-raca-cor-do-responsa/. Date of access: March 21, 2025.

Between 2012 and 2023, the difference between the unemployment rate of Black women and White men remained high.



IN 2012

this disparity was

6.1%

IN 2017

it peaked at

8.9%

IN 2023

and fell to

7.4%

(CEDRA, 2025)

This decline does not represent a reversal of inequality, but rather an uneven improvement in overall indicators. Black women remain more vulnerable to economic shocks and occupy the most precarious jobs.

Average income also reflects these asymmetries:

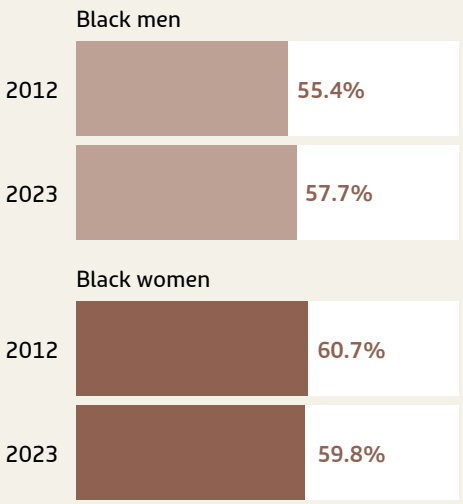
In 2012, Black men earned the equivalent of

55.4%

of their White counterparts' income

in 2023, this percentage rose modestly to

57.7%



However, among women, there was a regression: Black women received

60.7% **of their White counterparts' income in 2012,**

a proportion that fell to

59.8% **in 2023**

In other words, **inequality between Black and White men has decreased slightly, but inequality between Black and White women has increased, albeit subtly. This points to the intersection of racism and sexism as a factor that produces distinct impacts for Black women and men.**

An IPEA Report[9] reinforces this perception of intersectional inequality: in 2022, White people had, on average, 87% higher income than Black people. The greatest disparity is found between two specific groups:

White men and Black women.

While the former lived in households with an average per capita income of

BRL 2,381.43

X



the latter lived on

BRL 1,191.66

about 50% less.

White women had an average of

BRL 2,238.86

and Black men,

BRL 1,283.85

9 Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada. (2024). *Retrato das desigualdades de gênero e raça*. IPEA.

This highlights that racial experience, combined with gender experience, underlies labor income and also the material conditions of family life, perpetuating cycles of inequality.

These structural inequities make it clear that the work of Black women, whether paid or unpaid, continues to be exploited, made invisible, and devalued. Therefore, it is essential to adopt an intersectional perspective in the analysis and formulation of public policies.

The economic hardship experienced by these women is not limited to work: it manifests itself in the denial of basic rights, such as decent housing, adequate food, access to land, health, education, and political participation. In this sense, environmental racism results from the experience of these inequalities and vulnerabilities, which deepen the impact of climate crises. It is the expression of structural inequalities that affect racialized and gendered bodies.

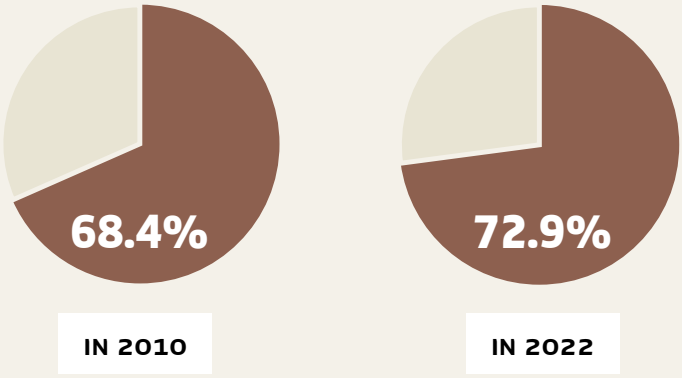
This territorial vulnerability intensifies in the face of extreme weather events. According to Oxfam[10], Black and Indigenous women are the most affected by these events in Latin America. During Hurricane Julia, which struck Honduras and Nicaragua in 2022, 80% of those displaced were Black or Indigenous women. In Brazil, 56% of families headed by Black women reduced their meals in 2023 due to food shortages, reflecting economic inequalities exacerbated by environmental disasters.

10 Oxfam Brasil. (2025, July 25). *Mulheres negras e a crise climática: Entenda essa relação*. Oxfam Brasil. https://www.oxfam.org.br Date of access: 30 Aug. 2025.

Furthermore, according to data from IBGE[11],

The proportion of Black people living in favelas and marginalized communities

rose from 68.4% to 72.9%



Black women are the majority in these territories:

more than 6 million,

compared to

5.8 million

Black men

Living conditions are precarious: basic sanitation, including drinking water, electricity, and paved roads, are lacking. This scenario poses enormous challenges to accessing health, dignity, and safety in those communities.

A study supported by the UN[12] revealed that 15.2 million women in Brazil, mostly Black and Indigenous, live without access to treated water. The greatest sanitation deficits also affect these groups, reiterating that environmental inequalities are both territorialized and racialized.

11 Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística. (2023). *PNAD Contínua 2022: Rendimentos de todas as fontes*. Agência de Notícias IBGE. https://agenciadenoticias.ibge.gov.br Date of access: 25 Jul. 2025.

12 UN. (2019). Black women are the most affected by the lack of basic sanitation in Brazil. UN News, January 8, 2019. Available at: https://news.un.org/pt/story/2019/01/1654412. [in Portuguese] Date of access: 12 Nov. 2025.

5. What's new in this study: The IJER

Social inequality indices are statistical constructs that aim to synthesize, in a single measure, complex and multifactorial aspects of the disparities that exist between individuals or groups within a society. Unlike isolated **indicators**, the **indexes** combine variables to offer a more integrated view of social conditions. Among the most widely used are the Human Development Index (HDI), which combines three fundamental dimensions: per capita income, education (expected years of schooling and average years of schooling), and life expectancy at birth. Its objective is to measure human well-being more broadly than the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), allowing comparisons between countries and regions. Another example is the Gini Index, which exclusively measures income distribution, ranging from 0 (perfect equality) to 1 (maximum inequality), and is widely used to assess wealth concentration.

Each index has methodological specificities and is used by different institutions, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), and the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA), to support public policies, territorial diagnoses, and academic studies on inequality. Despite their relevance to the analysis of social inequalities, the main indices used present significant limitations regarding the incorporation of social markers such as gender and race.

Therefore, the gap persists for an index that simultaneously integrates gender and race, in order to capture the intersectional dynamics that structure social inequalities. **This is where the IJER proposal comes in. More than a new statistical tool, it seeks to rewire analytical and political priorities, based on the following recognition: economic justice can only be effectively achieved when it starts from the intersectional experiences of groups historically responsible for sustaining collective life. These are groups that do not have full access to rights, dignity, and well-being.**[13]



Indicator

It is a raw data point or a direct measure. It answers specific questions such as "how many?" or "what percentage?".

Example: Illiteracy rate (percentage of people who cannot read or write).

Index

It is a weighted combination of several indicators converted into a common scale (usually from 0 to 1 or from 0 to 100). It answers broader questions such as "what is the overall level of development?".

Example: HDI (combines life expectancy, education, and income).

13 To learn more about the methodology used in constructing the Racial Economic Justice Index (IJER), visit: fundoagbara.org.br

Methodology

The Racial Economic Justice Index (IJER) was constructed using microdata from the Continuous National Household Sample Survey (PNAD Contínua), produced by IBGE. Data from the first visit of each year from 2016 to 2023 were used. The years 2020 and 2021 were excluded from the series because, during the Covid-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted by telephone, which altered the data collection protocol compared to other editions.

The IJER was conceived as a multidimensional synthetic indicator, integrating three analytical dimensions:



education | **work/ income** | **housing conditions**

It simultaneously incorporates numerical variables, such as income and years of schooling, and categorical variables, such as level of education, formal employment, and access to services.

Furthermore, Factor Analysis of Mixed Data (FAMD) was chosen, combining the principles of Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA), allowing for the joint treatment of variables of different natures and balancing their contribution to the extraction of factorial dimensions. The FAMD estimation incorporated the individual sample weights from PNAD Contínua, ensuring that the latent structure reflected the adult Brazilian population distribution in the respective years analyzed.

The first Principal Component (PC1) was interpreted as a latent axis of economic justice, as it synthesizes the common pattern of association between education, occupational insertion, income, and housing conditions. The sign of the component was oriented so that higher values systematically corresponded to better socioeconomic conditions.

IJER Reading Guide

WHAT IS IT?

IJER is the Racial Economic Justice Index, created from microdata of the Continuous National Household Sample Survey (PNAD Contínua), which articulates and analyzes access to housing, education, work, and income. It analyzes the historical series from 2016 to 2023 from a race and gender perspective.

WHAT DID WE ANALYZE?

The analysis took into account the combination of race and gender markers, and the subdivision was made as follows: Black women, Black men, White women, and White men.

HOW TO READ IT?

The index ranges from 0 to 1, with 0 being the furthest point from access to economic justice and 1 being the closest point to it.

Economic justice means reorganizing social norms by appreciating care, combating exploitation, and ensuring that all people have the material conditions to live well.

6. Key research findings

Looking at the historical series (the period analyzed), the lowest economic justice index (IJER) was for Black women in 2016, at 0.49. The highest value this group achieved was 0.53, but this number is still lower than all the values recorded for White men, White women, and even Black men in any year of the series.

The Brazilian national IJER average over the years was as follows: 0.53 in 2016; 0.56 in 2017; 0.57 in 2018; 0.57 in 2019; 0.58 in 2022 and 0.59 in 2023. Overall, there was a relative improvement in the national average in access to economic justice.

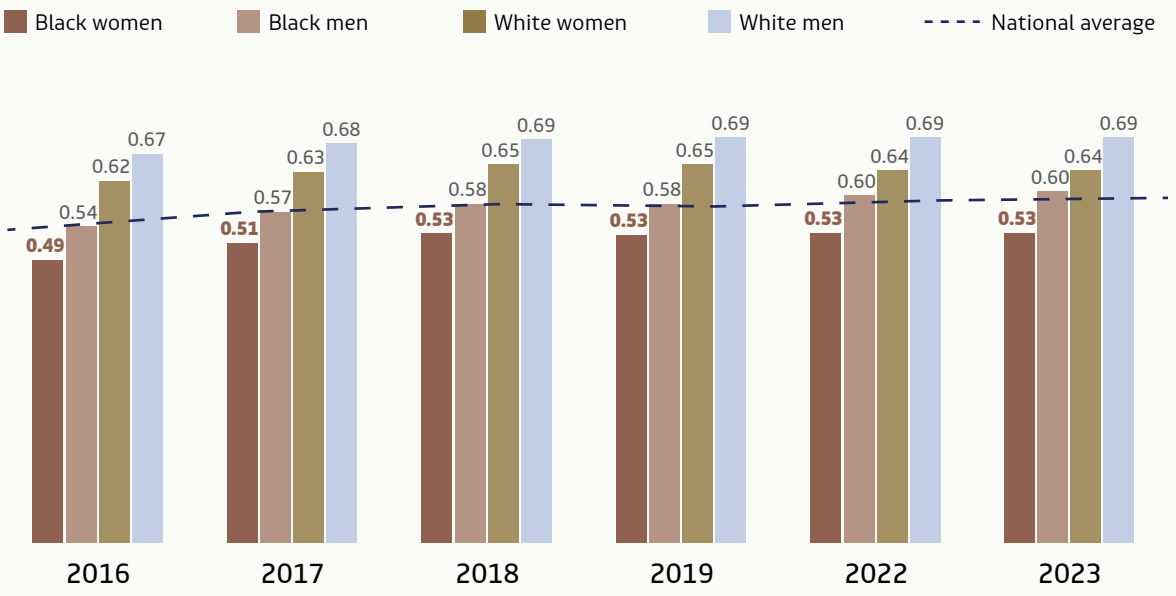
However, a very important point is:

> **The position of Black women throughout this series is striking. Besides consistently ranking last in the IJER distribution, they are the only group that remains below the national average in all years analyzed.** Even with overall progress, Black women fail to reach the country's average level of economic justice. This reveals a structural condition of disadvantage that persists over time.

In comparison, the other groups (even if in different proportions) are close to or above the national average at some point. This shows how the exclusion experienced by Black women is unique, that is, specific and more serious than what other groups face.

The highest IJER is consistently found among White men, with values ranging from 0.67 to 0.69. This group's index is approximately 18% higher than the national average. This shows that White men are generally at the top of society in terms of access to rights and services. At the bottom, the IJER for Black women is about 11% lower than the national average.

CHART 1. Average IJER by group

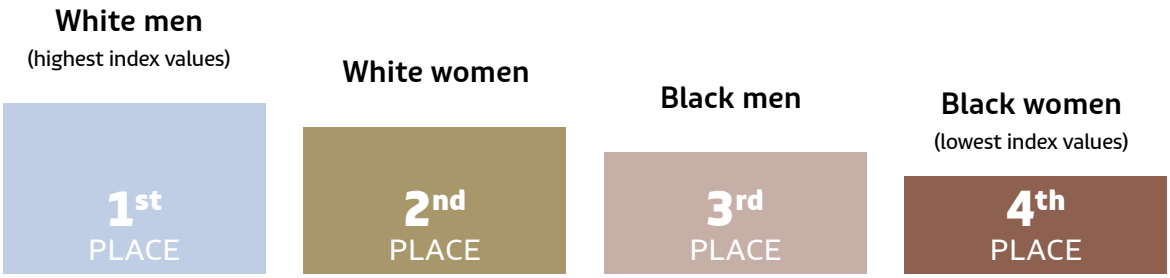


Source: Prepared by the authors using microdata from PNAD Contínua/IBGE (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2022 and 2023).

Comparing groups over time reinforces the intersectional nature of these inequalities: racial differences remain significant within each gender group, while gender inequalities also persist within each racial group. One striking finding throughout the period is that White women consistently show higher levels of IJER than Black men, indicating that the interaction between race and gender produces specific positions in the distribution of opportunities.

Overall improvement, without structural change

> When analyzing the average IJER by group over the years, it becomes clear that the hierarchy remains the same. In all the years analyzed, the order is consistently:



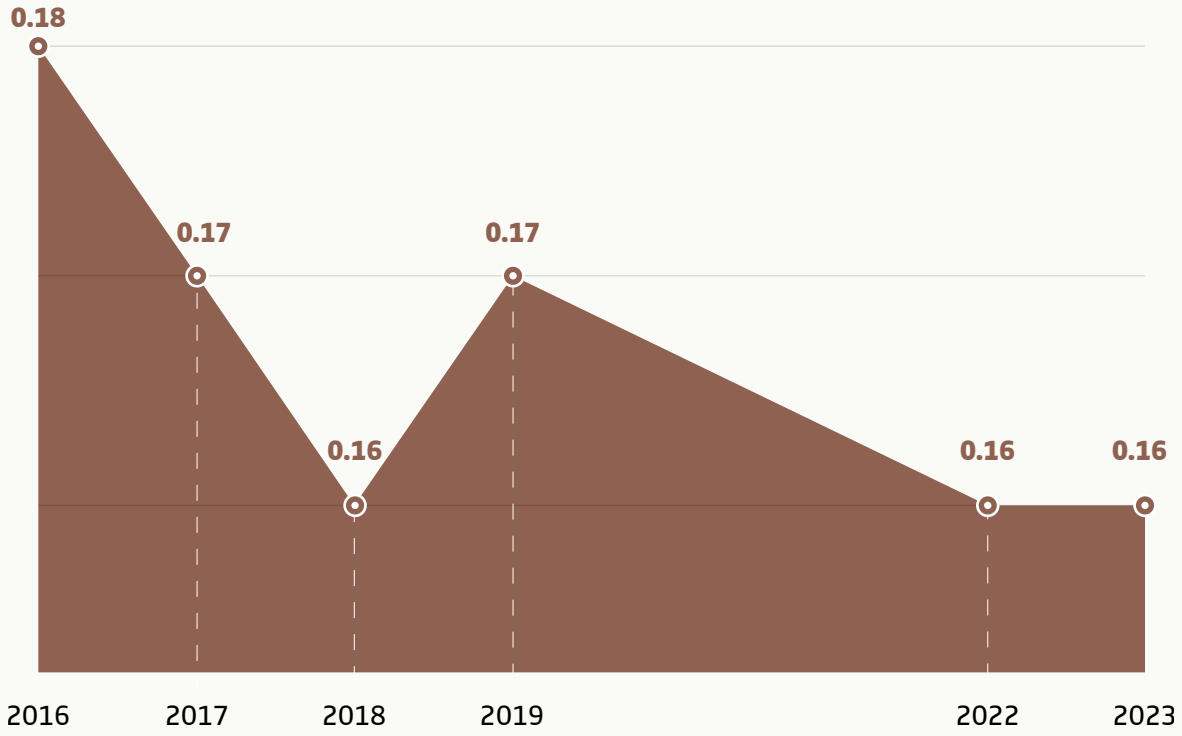
Between 2016 and 2023, there was a general improvement in IJER levels. However, this improvement occurred for all groups simultaneously, without changing the relative order between them. This means that the observed gains represent progress that happened for everyone together, but do not necessarily involve a reduction in structural inequalities. In other words, the difference between the groups remained basically the same. This growth was more intense between 2016 and 2018, and then became more stable in subsequent years.

In summary: the improvements were widespread and benefited all social groups, but they failed to correct historical inequalities. This is due to the fact that there have been no public policies that considered economic justice from an equity perspective, that is, with the aim of correcting the historical asymmetries that have long harmed certain groups.

Black women consistently rank below average

Analyzing the distance between the extremes of the distribution, represented by the difference between White men and Black women, allows for a deeper interpretation: an initial reduction in disparity is observed between 2016 and 2018, when it goes from approximately 0.18 to 0.16. However, this decrease does not sustain itself as a downward trend, followed by oscillations and then a stabilization around 0.16 in more recent years. This pattern indicates that, initially, there was a certain convergence between the groups. This probably happened because the most vulnerable groups experienced faster improvements. But, over time, this process lost momentum and ceased.

CHART 2. IJER gap - White Men vs. Black Women



Source: Prepared by the authors using microdata from PNAD Contínua/IBGE (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2022 and 2023).

The lack of significant convergence between the most and least privileged groups shows that deep mechanisms of social separation continue to operate. These mechanisms limit the capacity to reduce disparities between groups. In this sense, Black women continue to occupy a particularly unfavorable position in the structure of opportunities. This is a result of the overlapping and interaction of multiple dimensions of inequality, such as race, gender, and class.

Where inequality is strongest: findings from regional analysis

The analysis of the spatial distribution of the Racial Economic Justice Index reveals that the intersectional inequalities observed between groups also manifest systematically across Brazilian territory. While a stable hierarchy between racial and gender groups persists over time, the regional dimension shows that this structure is maintained and reproduced in different territorial contexts, albeit with particular depths in each context.

In general, a strong spatial heterogeneity is observed in the distribution of the IJER. More developed regions, such as the South and Southeast, as well as part of the Center-West, concentrate the highest values of the index, while the North and Northeast regions systematically present lower levels. This pattern reflects historical inequalities in economic development, access to public services, and productive structure, which condition the opportunities available to the population.

However, a key aspect is that, despite these regional variations, the hierarchy between groups is invariable. In different states and regions throughout the country, White men continue to occupy the highest positions in the index, while Black women remain at the bottom of the distribution. This result indicates that territory, although relevant, does not act in isolation in the production

of inequalities. On the contrary, it interacts with race and gender, reinforcing structural patterns already identified in the analysis at the national level.

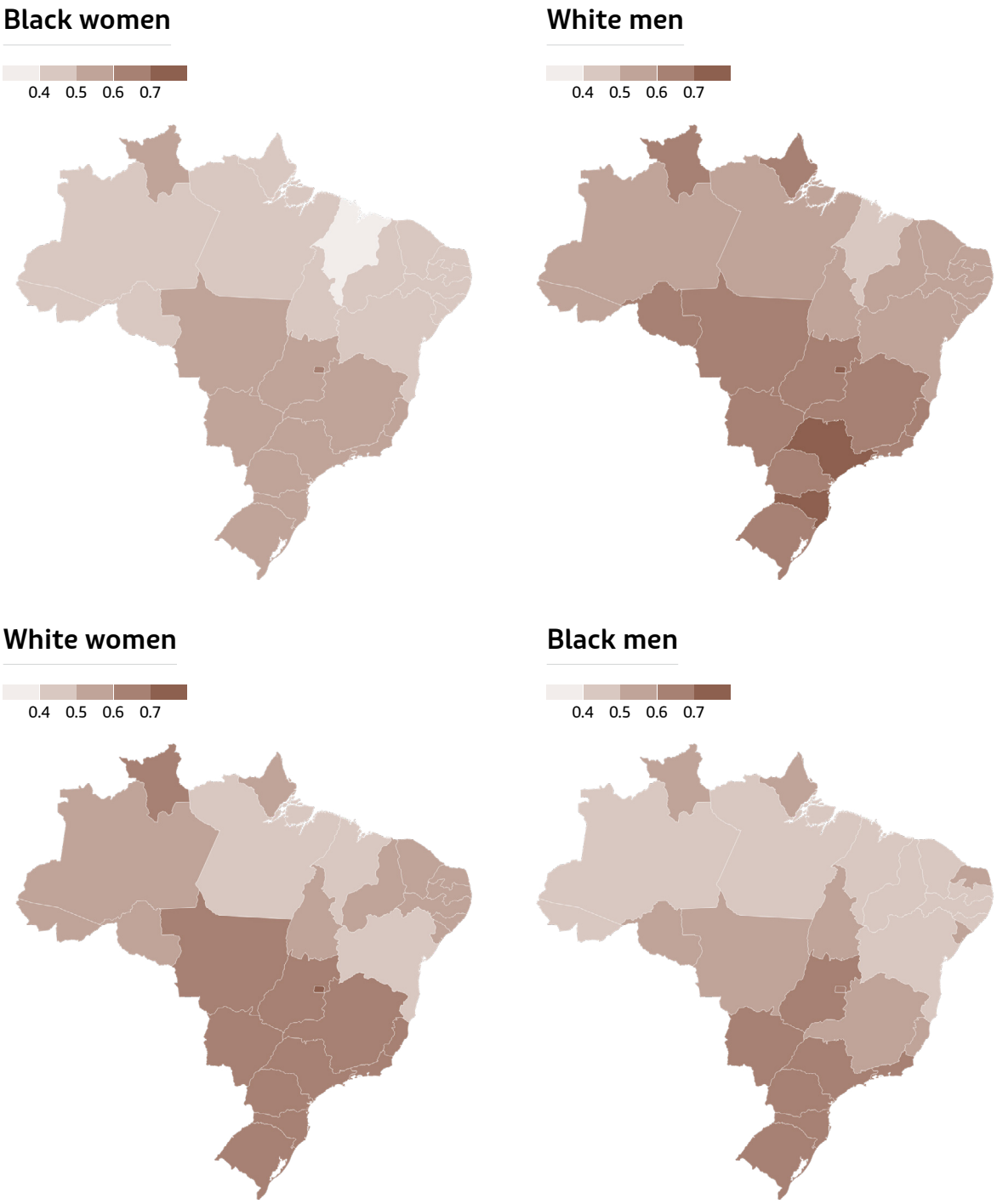
In 2016, the highest IJER levels were concentrated in the South, Southeast, and part of the Center-West regions. This was especially true for White men and, to a lesser extent, for White women. In the North and Northeast regions, the values were lower for all groups. The key finding reveals that **Black women's levels of economic justice were particularly low and quite similar across these regions**. This pattern suggests that, in less developed areas, disadvantages related to race and gender become even more pronounced.

When compared to 2023, we see a trend of improvement in IJER levels in several regions, which is consistent with the overall progress observed over time. There has been an expansion of areas with higher index values, especially in the Center-West and Southeast, indicating improvements in general living conditions and the structure of opportunities.

However, as was the case in the overall analysis of the country, these gains are not distributed equally among the groups in a fair and equitable manner. The most visible advances occurred among men, especially the White ones, who showed improvements spread across more territories. For Black women in particular, the gains were more modest and appeared in fewer places. This pattern reinforces the idea that the expansion of economic opportunities has not been sufficient to significantly reduce intersectional inequalities.

One particularly important finding, which aligns with the previous analysis, is the ranking persistence of Black women. They are not only the group with the lowest IJER level, but also the one that remains below the national average in different regional contexts. Even in states where the index is relatively higher, Black women do not reach the national average of economic justice. This demonstrates a structural condition of disadvantage that is not dependent on the territory where a person lives.

Figure 1. Average IJER by groups and territorial regions of Brazil 2016



Source: Prepared by the authors using microdata from PNAD Contínua/IBGE (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2022 and 2023).

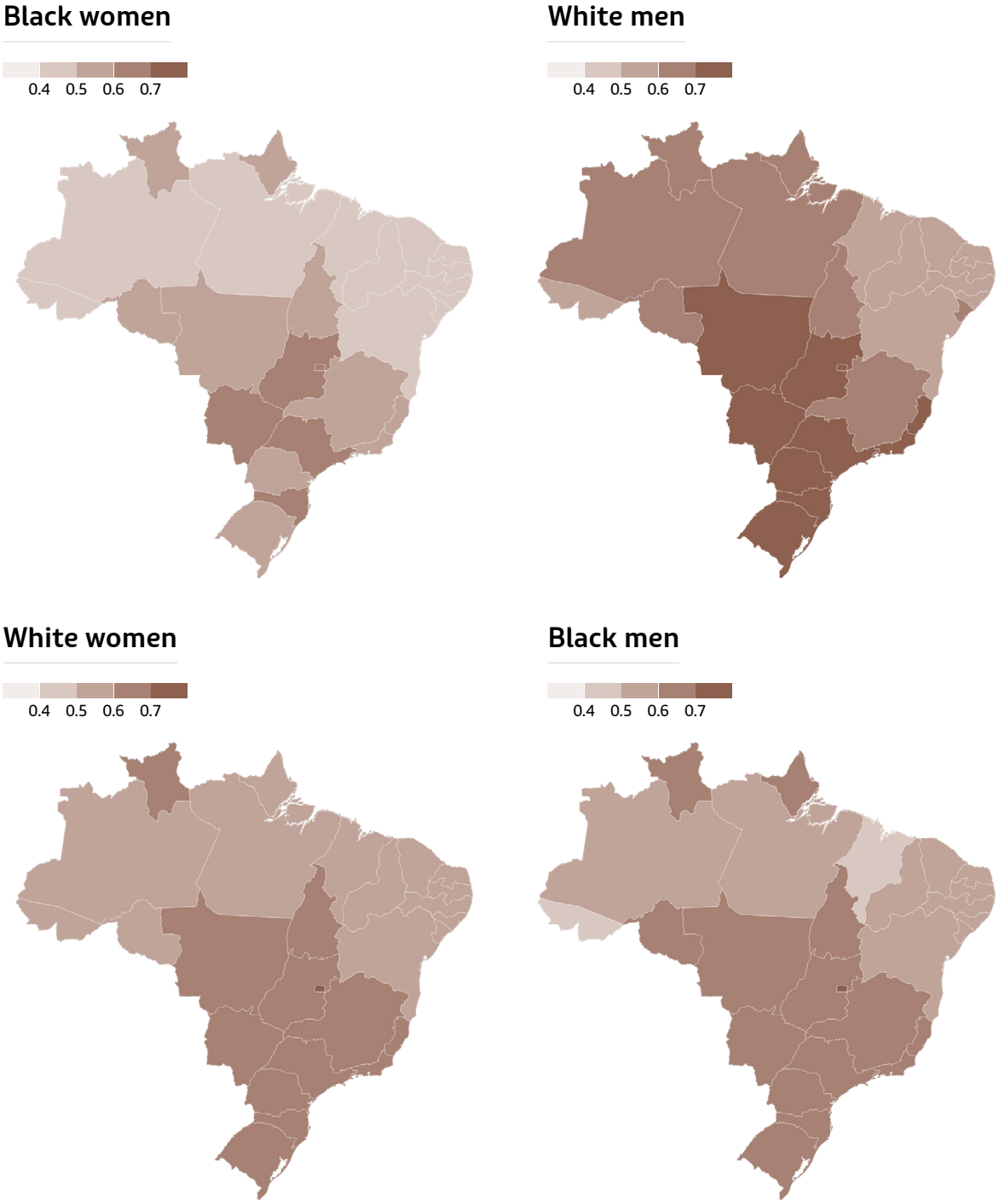
Furthermore, although there is some reduction in regional disparities for Black men, this movement does not change the overall pattern of concentration of low levels of economic justice for the Black population in the North and Northeast. This indicates that the convergence between regions is partial and insufficient to modify deeper structural inequalities.

When we combine the analysis of time and space, the results suggest that the advances observed during the period were not accompanied by significant transformations in the relative distribution of opportunities between groups and between territories. In other words, the improvement in the average IJER levels occurred in parallel between regions and groups, without promoting fundamental change.

> In summary, **the results indicate that economic justice in Brazil is simultaneously unequal from a territorial, racial, and gender perspective.** The persistence of hierarchy between groups over time, the stability of gaps, and the reproduction of these patterns in different regions reiterate that the observed inequalities are structurally intersectional.

In this context, public policies aimed at promoting economic equity need to have as their objective more than just the general expansion of opportunities, but primarily the differentiated distribution among groups and territories, in order to confront the mechanisms that sustain these inequalities over time.

FIGURE 1. Average IJER by groups and territorial regions of Brazil 2023



Source: Prepared by the authors using microdata from PNAD Contínua/IBGE (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2022 and 2023).

7. What does this say about Brazil?

The results of this research show that inequality in Brazil cannot be understood as an exclusively economic or distributive phenomenon, but rather as a structure organized by the articulation between race, gender, class, and territory. Throughout the analyzed period, the Racial Economic Justice Index revealed the existence of disparities between groups and the persistence of a stable hierarchy in the distribution of economic justice, in which White men invariably occupy the most privileged positions, while Black women remain in the worst conditions.

This pattern, consistently observed between 2016 and 2023, indicates that the progress made in fundamental dimensions such as education, work, income, and housing conditions was not accompanied by a significant transformation of the inequality structure. In other words, there was an improvement in average living conditions, but there was no significant equalization between groups in light of economic, socio-environmental, racial, and gender justice. The expansion of opportunities occurred homogeneously, benefiting all groups, but without altering the relative positions that each occupies in the social hierarchy.

The persistence of inequality between White men and Black women over time is particularly revealing. Although a slight reduction in these differences is observed, the rate of decrease is slow and insufficient to indicate a considerable process of overcoming inequalities. The dynamics that produce economic injustice are structural, historically produced and maintained, and cannot be resolved simply through economic growth or a generic expansion of access to goods and services.

One of the most important findings of the analysis is that **Black women not only rank last in all years studied, but they are also the only group that consistently falls below the nationwide IJER average**. This result reveals a situation of exclusion that is not perceived when general analyses are carried out (which include all groups) and shows how intersectionality is central as an analytical tool.

> In other words, **Black women are not only at a disadvantage compared to other groups, they persistently remain far from the average standard of economic justice in Brazilian society.**

The regional dimension deepens this diagnosis by demonstrating that these inequalities are not distributed homogeneously across the territory. Although more developed regions present higher IJER levels, the hierarchy between groups is maintained in different regional contexts. This indicates that the territory interacts with social markers, reinforcing existing inequalities. In historically more vulnerable regions, such as the North and Northeast, the lowest levels of the index affect all groups, but have a more intense impact on the Black population, especially on Black women.

In this sense, the results point to a pattern of structural inequality, with diverse impacts. Economic justice is not just a matter of income or labor market participation, but involves unequal access to capabilities, recognition, and material living conditions and well-being. The construction of the IJER, by integrating dimensions such as education, work, income, and housing, allows us to highlight how these inequalities accumulate over time and insidiously manifest in the lives of individuals.

From a methodological standpoint, the IJER proposal represents a relevant contribution to the debate on measuring inequalities. By incorporating a race and gender-sensitive perspective in the construction of the index, the work advances beyond the limitations of traditional indicators, which often disregard the combined effects of those markers. The index allows for a reorientation of inequality diagnosis based on the most affected groups, contributing to a more precise and politically relevant understanding of Brazilian reality.

Placing Black women at the center of this analysis is not merely a descriptive choice, i.e., it is not something the research does simply because it wants to talk about them. It is a choice of how to produce knowledge, an epistemological choice. This means that, based on the lived experience of Black women, the research is able to see the limitations of traditional ways of looking at reality. Therefore, it proposes a new definition of what is understood by economic justice. The objective is not only to identify where inequalities exist, but also to understand how these inequalities are produced and what possible paths exist to overcome them.

This research also opens avenues for future investigations. For example, it would be possible to expand the IJER to include other dimensions of life, such as health, political participation, and access to public services. This would help achieve an even more complete and comprehensive understanding of economic justice.

Furthermore, it would be important to conduct analyses that track the mobility of groups over time, that is, to investigate whether people are able to change their social position, and to follow individual trajectories. This type of study can deepen the understanding of the mechanisms that reproduce inequalities.

In summary, the results presented indicate that, although Brazil has made progress in several socioeconomic dimensions in recent decades, intersectional inequalities remain one of the major challenges to building a fair society. Economic justice, as proposed in this research, requires not only the expansion of opportunities, but also the transformation of the structures that define who has access to them. Recognizing and confronting the inequalities that disproportionately affect Black women is a fundamental condition for building a truly inclusive and equitable development project.

8. Possible paths and recommendations

Research results show that universal policies (those that treat everyone equally) are necessary, but they do not solve the problem on their own. It is necessary to create policies that explicitly recognize people's race, gender, and territory, acting directly on the mechanisms that reproduce inequalities.

Based on this, we have compiled some recommendations based on the research findings:

1 Public policies: more than just treating everyone the same

A. **Creating policies focused on those left behind:** It is not enough to offer the same things to everyone. It is necessary to direct resources and actions towards groups that have historically been excluded, especially Black women.

B. **Investing in educational retention:** It is not enough to simply guarantee the entry of Black women into school or university. It is necessary to create conditions that allow them to stay until the end, with scholarships, student housing, transportation assistance, childcare, and combating racism within institutions.

C. **Increasing the economic value of care work:** Caregiving (for children, the elderly, the sick, people with disabilities) is essential to life, but it is poorly paid or not paid at all. It is necessary to recognize this work as dignified and to remunerate it fairly.

D. **Transforming structures, not just distributing resources:** Inequality is not just a problem of poorly distributed money. It is also a problem of recognition (who is respected and valued), of power (who makes decisions), and of social organization. Economic justice needs to be a political project that reorganizes the priorities of the economy.

2 Labor market: breaking the segregation that traps Black women in the worst jobs

A. **Expanding access to formal employment with social protection:** Black women are overrepresented in informal work and domestic service, where they lack guaranteed rights. It is necessary to create pathways for them to enter the formal job market, with signed contracts, vacations, leave, and retirement benefits.

B. **Addressing occupational segregation:** Ending the concentration of Black women in the most precarious and poorly paid sectors of the economy. It is necessary to open opportunities in better-paid areas with greater social recognition.

C. **Valuing historically marginalized knowledge:** The knowledge and practices of Black women (such as community knowledge, caregiving skills, agricultural knowledge, and life management skills) need to be recognized as economically relevant, not disregarded.

3 Territory and infrastructure: reducing regional inequalities and guaranteeing basic living conditions

A. **Reducing regional inequalities:** The North and Northeast regions have the lowest levels of economic justice, and Black women in these regions are in the most critical situation. Localized priority investment is needed.

B. **Expanding access to basic infrastructure:** Sanitation, drinking water, decent housing, electricity, public transportation, and internet access are not luxuries. They are essential conditions for a person to study, work, rest, and live with dignity. Without them, economic justice is impossible.

C. **Recognizing that territory and race go hand in hand:** The place where a person lives is not just an address. In practice, it defines whether they will have access to services, security, job opportunities, and quality of life. Therefore, territorial policies need to be considered in conjunction with racial and gender policies.

The way justice has been conceived until now needs to change. It is not enough to distribute resources equally. It is necessary to transform the structures that produce inequality: social recognition, the distribution of power, the organization of work, and the way territories are treated. Economic justice must place life at the center, value those who historically sustain social reproduction (especially Black women), and act directly on the mechanisms that reproduce racism and sexism over time.

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS

FUNDO AGBARA

Fundo Agbara is the first philanthropic fund created by and for Black women in Brazil. It works to advance Good Living by strengthening initiatives and organizations led by Black women that transform territories and promote economic, racial, gender, and climate justice. Since 2020, Fundo Agbara has developed integrated strategies that combine innovation, grantmaking, knowledge production, and advocacy, bringing together the redistribution of power and resources, the reparation of historical inequalities, and the regeneration of territories and relationships with nature. These efforts aim to influence public policies, institutional practices, and social imaginaries. In nearly six years of work, Fundo Agbara has supported around 600 initiatives led by Black women, strengthened more than 5,000 women, and impacted more than 20,000 people, with a presence in 25 of Brazil's 27 states.

ACTIONAID

ActionAid is an international organization that works to promote social, racial, gender, and climate justice and to end poverty in more than 70 countries, through partnerships with other organizations and social movements. In Brazil, the organization is celebrating 25 years of operation, having already worked in over 2,400 communities and benefited more than 300,000 people.

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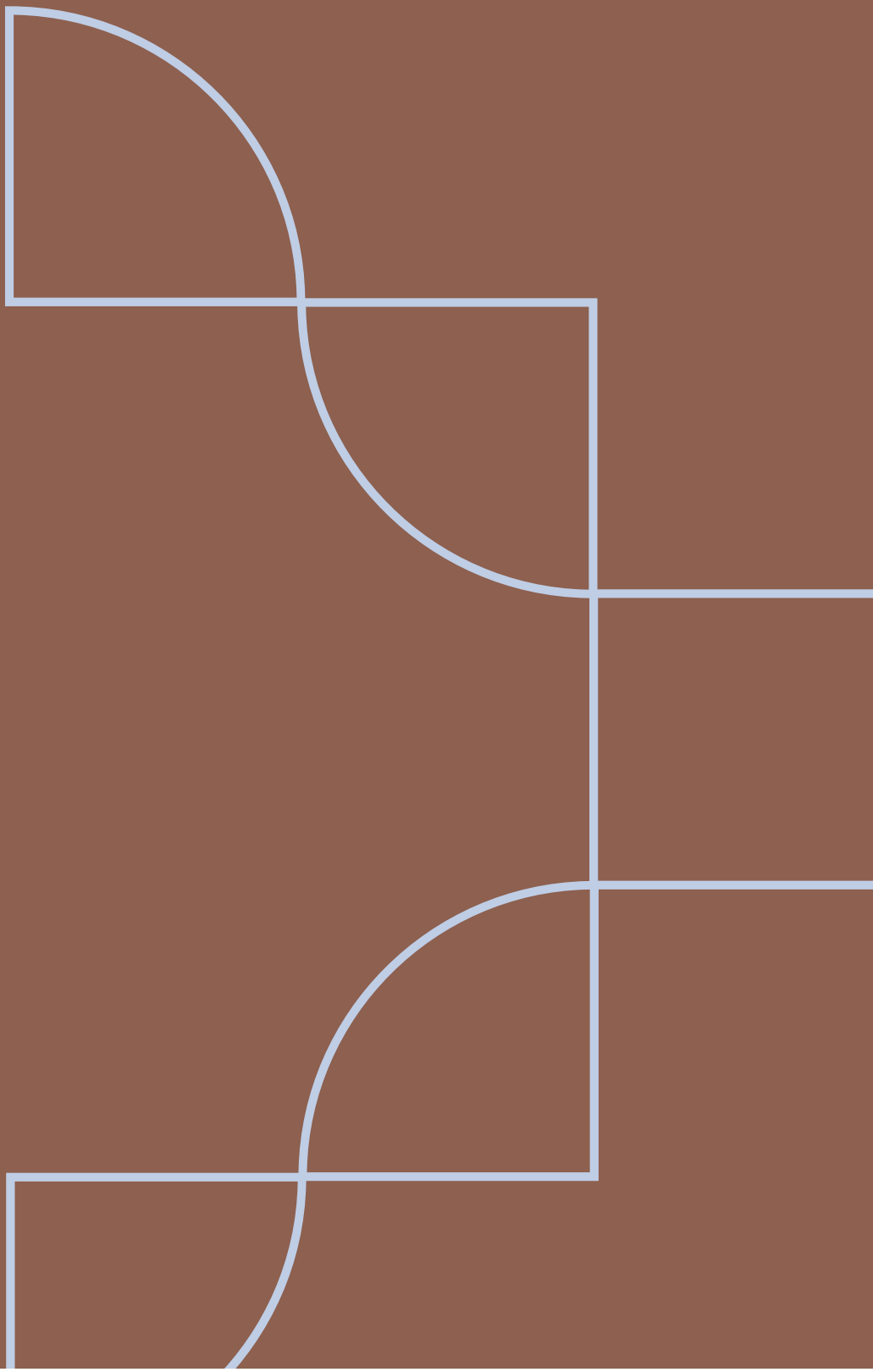
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