

Covid-19 and (Im)Mobility in the Americas

BRAZIL

October - December 2020

1. **Poverty Rate (defined by unsatisfied basic needs):** 19.4% of the total population in 2018.
2. **Migration Facts**
 - a. **Emigration:** According to the 2010 census by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), the population residing abroad was estimated at 491,243 people. However, according to the Minister of Foreign Relations (MRE), in 2016 there was an estimated 3,083,255 Brazilians abroad. It is believed that the true number of emigrants is higher than official figures. In general, Brazilians living outside of the country reside mainly in the US, Portugal, England, Japan, Italy, Spain, and Paraguay.
 - b. **Immigration:** According to the Federal Police, Brazil has close to 1.2 million migrants, around .5% of the total population. According to the Migration Observatory (OBMigra), around 774,000 immigrants arrived in Brazil between 2010-2018, composed mainly by Haitians, Venezuelans, and Colombians. In the last four years, the Venezuelan population reached a higher volume (253,495 Venezuelan migrants and refugees until November 2019 according to R4V).
 - c. **Transit:** Immigrants passing through Brazil include Venezuelans, Haitians, and Africans.
 - d. **Refugees:** According to the National Committee for Refugees (CONARE), there are officially registered 43,000 refugees in Brazil in 2020, 88% of recognized refugees (38,000) are Venezuelans.

State Measures

- [The Paraguayan government opened the border with Brazil on October 29](#), including the pedestrian crossing. The decision affects the movement of people across the Ciudad del Este International Friendship Bridge. The passage between the two countries had been closed in March due to the Covid-19 pandemic. On October 15th, it opened with some remaining restrictions.
- Since the beginning of the pandemic, [representative organizations of immigrants and refugees have been trying to obtain information on how Covid-19 has impacted this population](#), who often live in extremely vulnerable situations. The first official response from the Ministry of Health came only in August, five months after the announcement of the first emergency health measures. However, for those concerned with the situation, these figures are far from a

reflection of reality. One of the reasons for this discrepancy is that the tools of the health system were not designed, nor were the health agents trained, to detect immigrants and refugees.

- On November 13, 2020, the Chamber of Basic Education published in the Official [Record a resolution that guarantees the enrollment of migrant children, stateless persons, and asylum seekers in the country's public basic education](#). Enrollment will be guaranteed as vacancies become available and without discrimination, with access for the most vulnerable.
- In November 2020, [the Brazilian government launched the third edition of the Manual on Financial Information for Refugees and Migrants](#). The purpose of the brochure is to provide information about the country's financial system to refugees and migrants, who arrive in a situation of financial vulnerability and have difficulties understanding the Brazilian system. The document has updates and new regulations, such as information on the PIX, the instant payment system, with versions in Portuguese, English, and Spanish, it will soon be available in French and Arabic. The manual is available on the website of the Central Bank.
- The government of Acre published in the Official Record the creation of the State Committee in Support of Migrants, Stateless Persons and Refugees (CEAMAR / AC). The committee will be linked to the Secretary of State for Social Assistance, Human Rights and Women's Policies (SEASDHM), and will have the objective of guiding, monitoring, and evaluating actions, projects, programs, and plans related to policy concerning migration, stateless persons, and refugees. It will also propose mechanisms to prevent human trafficking, slave labor, sexual exploitation, and other violations.
- General Antônio Manoel de Barros commands the so-called Welcome Operation, which seeks to relocate Venezuelan migrants arriving to the border city of Roraima. However, throughout 2020 [Operation Shelter faced difficulties in relocating Venezuelans and reorganized in anticipation of the opening of borders](#). There is another delicate point, which is the role of the military in the operation. According to de Barros, a contingency plan is being prepared that includes the reduction of the “military aspect” starting in August of next year. “The operation has a mature process, and we are working on a plan for a gradual and orderly transition,” he said.
- [Venezuelans living in shelters in Roraima played a key role in the measures created by Operation Welcome to prevent the spread of Covid-19](#). Such measures implied new rules of cohabitation and hygiene as well as the creation of the Protection and Care Area (APC). The balance of the effort was positive. At the end of October, 10,300 infections had been registered, of which only 349 were people of Venezuelan origin. Operation Shelter managed to hold the contamination rate in shelters to 3%—up to November there were 9 deaths—which was considered a success. Today APC passed into the hands of the State and remains a positive legacy of Operation Welcome.
- The Ministry of Justice and Public Security, through the Migration Department of the National Secretariat of Justice (Demig/Senajus), [released reports on immigration and refugee status in Brazil](#).¹ The documents contain information

¹ El informe se encuentra disponible en la siguiente dirección: <https://portaldeimigracao.mj.gov.br/pt/>

on the insertion of migrants and refugees into the labor market. The Document was prepared in conjunction with the International Migration Observatory (OBMigra) with data from 2010 to 2019.

- The Government resumes the practice of temporary regularization of immigrants with pending trials in SEF.

1. Migrant Situation Alerts

Brazilian Migrants Abroad

- [The Government of Portugal once again granted temporary immigration regularization](#) until March 2021 to migrants residing in the country who had requested regularization between March 18, 2020, and October 15, 2020. As a result, the migrants, many of them Brazilians, can access the country's social rights, which include, among others, access to the National Health Service.
- [The Brazilian government decided, through Ordinance 630, to require the PCR Covid-19 test for all people \(Brazilians and non-nationals\) who enter the country.](#) As a result, international air traffic restrictions have increased for Brazil. Brazilians and foreigners traveling to Brazil will still have to complete a traveler's health declaration (DSV) indicating that they agree on the sanitary measures that must be followed during the period they are in the country.

Undocumented Venezuelans, Haitians, and Other People in Transit

- There is [a major deficiency in the mechanisms for documenting COVID cases in the immigrant and refugee population in Brazil](#). The issue has not been given the necessary attention so that the data might be truthful, and so the true effect of the pandemic on the migrant population might be understood.
- [Brazil does not have a record of how many immigrants died from Covid-19](#), where they were treated, and in which regions of the country. The mortality data from covid-19 in Brazil is compiled from death certificates and from the Hospitalization Authorization (AIH). Nationality, however, is not a mandatory element included in this recordkeeping process. Experts warn that the migrant population, considered one of the most vulnerable amid the pandemic, is not included in the national emergency response plans for Covid-19 in Brazil.
- [The impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the economy also affected the fashion sector](#). Latin American immigrants were among the most affected groups, especially Bolivians, who work in production of consumer goods, many in sewing workshops located in the São Paulo Metropolitan Region.

2. Social Responses

Migrant Resistance

- The Social Union of Haitian Immigrants (USIH), which operates in the Liberdade neighborhood of São Paulo, is threatened with eviction due to non-payment of rent. [The organization has assisted hundreds of Haitians during the crisis](#), including the distribution of food baskets.

Solidarity Networks

- [ACNUR spokesperson, Luiz Godinho, announces](#) that in addition to the donations to the emergency hospital in Boa Vista, the agency published hygiene and prevention measures that were translated into several languages. These were distributed through WhatsApp groups and banners placed in shelters.
- [The team from the Refugee Reference Center for Refugees of the Archdiocesan Caritas of São Paulo prepared a report](#) on the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) on refugee children. The information was collected through participatory diagnoses (consultations with the public served) between the months of June and August of this year. The study identified risks, capacities, and solutions from the perspectives of social isolation, health, leisure, behavior, and education of children.
- [To facilitate the social integration of migrants, the Public Defender of the Union \(DPU\) and the Eirenè project of the Federal University of Santa Catarina \(UFSC\)](#) prepared the Brochure to Support Immigrants in Greater Florianópolis, in southern Brazil. The document includes informational items, detailing the norms that guarantee a series of rights to migrants, and addresses of social organizations that can be contacted. The brochure is available in four languages: Portuguese, Spanish, French, and English. The Public Defender of the Federal Union in Florianópolis has an exclusive service for immigrants and refugees focusing on helping to obtain documents and regularize the presence of these citizens in Brazil. The institution also collaborates to facilitate access to public services, such as health and education, in addition to acting to guarantee other rights for this population.
- In the last week of November, 2020, [a caravan of dentists from the Humanitarian Brotherhood without Borders Organization \(FSF\) arrived to Pacaraima](#), in the northern state of Roraima, to participate in an emergency oral health treatment campaign for Venezuelan refugees in the region.
- [The “U-Report – Uniting Voices” tool provides information and amplifies the voices of adolescents and young people in Venezuela](#). More than 260,000 Venezuelans live in Brazil today, either as refugees or residents. The project initiative, which uses the open-source software Rapid Pro, is ran by the Regional Platform for Interagency Coordination of Refugees, Refugees, and Migrants of Venezuela (R4V).

Xenophobia

- Immigrants and refugees are guaranteed access to the Unified Health System (SUS), provided for in the Federal Constitution and, more recently, in accordance with the new Immigration Law. However, in practice, there are reports of difficulties of access for those seeking health services during the pandemic due to the language barrier, lack of guidance from public officials, and instances of prejudice. During the pandemic, it is not uncommon that refugees and migrants report xenophobia in the Brazilian health system.