

Executive Summary

Next Generation

Brazil

September
2025



Acknowledgements

Next Generation Brazil would not have been possible without the engagement and support of countless individuals and organisations in Brazilian society, who offered invaluable support to the research team by providing insights and helping to disseminate the survey tool. We extend our sincere gratitude to all those who have been involved in this project since its inception.

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Special thanks to

AfroReggae; Aldo Moraes (Instituto Cultural Arte Brasil); Alessandro Luiz Pereira ; Aline Fernanda Alves Dias, Danielle Macedo da Fonseca & Luana Ramos Sidi (INES); Aparecida Santana; Atados; Brenda Santos (Junior Achievement Brasil); Carlos Alberto Bezerra (Instituto Genivaldo Nogueira); Cleber Ribeiro de Souza (Uniperiferias / IMJA); Daniela Araújo (Grupo AdoleScER); Elaine Souza (NUPDEC); Eraldo Noronha (Associação Voar); Ester Farias (Jovens Pela Diferença); Fabiana Rosa & Rebeca de Souza (Lupa do Bem); Francisco Silva (ELAFAV); Giovanna Calisto (PVP Bom Pastor); Gisele Lasserre (Tech Girls); Jare Pinage (Engajamundo); Jefferson Rodrigues (Ozipa Criativa); João Martins Coelho - Miudinho (Equipe Brasil Boxe); Josy Falcão; Jurema Duarte (JAMDS); Jurema Nunes de Oliveira (Aldeia Mata Verde Bonita); Laerte Breno (Unifavela); Mara Gabrilli (Mara Gabrilli Institute); Márcio Lima (CUFA-Bahia); Marcone Ribeiro (Coque Connecta); Marize Vieira de Oliveira (Associação Indígena Aldeia Maracanã); Metrô DF; Metrô Rio; Metrô SP; Metrofor; Nayara Bazzoli (Juventudes Potentes / United Way Brasil); Nilcimar M. Silvestre dos Santos Cunha & Shaiene Santos de Paula (AMAC); Priscila Araújo; Rafael Parente (Instituto Salto); Renée Zicman (Faubai); Sabrina Ceia; Teacher Lobo (Educar para Transformar); Vando Vieira (Um Passo a Mais Capoeira); Vandrê Brilhante (CIEDS); Victor Leta & Rennan Leta (Casa Favela); Vitória Behs (ASID Brasil).

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Foreword

The great Caetano Veloso sang of youth as akin to “walking against the wind” — a line that captures how many young Brazilians feel as part of a present they have inherited rather than designed for themselves. Whilst it evokes a vulnerability to being buffeted by the major forces of the day, it speaks of a simultaneous defiance too. A defiance not to reject for its own sake, but a clear decision to challenge the headwinds of society, determined not to accept the world as it is, but to imagine what it could be.

Next Generation Brazil surveyed more than 3,000 young people aged 16–35 about the issues that matter to them. It shows a generation connected and committed to the planetary and global concerns that dominate — the climate emergency, the fragility of peace, the shifting nature of work — while also occupied by realities closer to home that impact their prospects. What is revealed from the research are the persistent and multiple inequalities shaping opportunities and outcomes for themselves, their peers, and their communities. The “many Brazils” commonly referenced in studies are not an abstraction here; they appear in uneven access to resources, services, and safety across neighbourhoods, cities, states, and regions.

Across the findings, one message is consistent: young people are ready to participate. They want to be brought centrally into the development of strategies and policies — not as a final stop for consultation, but as co-authors from the start. They recognise and value the instruments and forums that already exist to hear youth voices; they are asking for their insights to sit closer to the centre of decision-making, especially where policies must anticipate near-future requirements and skills — from digital and AI literacy to financial capability and creative problem-solving. This is not unique to Brazil. In the UK, for example, current preparations for a national youth strategy are drawing on widespread consultations with young people who have asked for a similar role in the development of policies for and about them.

The importance of this research lies in how it can inform those who share responsibility for Brazil’s next steps: policymakers across education, culture, labour and employment, entrepreneurship; educators and leaders; civil society and cultural institutions; employers and innovators. It offers evidence and direction for practical collaboration — including in arts and culture, education and skills development — so that opportunities can be designed and delivered in ways that address the inequalities many young people face. Above all, it reminds us that progress will require the same spirit we hear in Veloso’s lyric: the courage to walk into the wind — this time, together — and to let young Brazilians help set the course for what lies ahead.



Tom Birtwistle
Director British Council Brazil



Executive summary

Brazil is home to over 61 million young people aged 16–35 — the country's largest-ever youth population, representing nearly a third of the nation. As this proportion is projected to decline in the coming decades, there is an urgency to invest in youth now and break generational cycles of disadvantage. Despite economic, environmental, and political challenges, Brazilian youth demonstrate resilience, creativity, and a desire to lead change.

Next Generation Brazil, part of the British Council's global research series, brings the voices of young Brazilians to the forefront. Using a large-scale survey and in-depth qualitative research across all five macro-regions, the study captures a vivid portrait of Brazil's youth — their struggles, hopes, and aspirations for the future.

A mixed-method approach was used to develop a comprehensive and inclusive understanding of youth perceptions in Brazil today, focusing on those aged 16 to 35. The research prioritised representation and diversity, by including voices from marginalised groups. This report offers a youth-informed roadmap for governments, civil society, and international partners to reimagine Brazil's trajectory, placing young people not just at the centre of policy, but at the helm of national transformation.

A volunteer Youth Task Force comprising young leaders from all across Brazil provided crucial input to ensure the language, accessibility, and cultural relevance of the research. Exploratory interviews with community activists to identify key themes and policy gaps were followed by a large-scale survey with 3,248 young people aged 16–35 across all regions of Brazil, achieving a 95 per cent confidence level with a ± 2 per cent margin of error. A further qualitative phase, including in-depth interviews and focus groups with youth from marginalised groups, was conducted to deepen insights and capture the perspectives of youth often excluded from mainstream data collection.

Summary of key findings

This report analyses the plurality of Brazilian youth identity and uses both quantitative and qualitative data findings to illustrate a modern nation where certain groups face systemic exclusion. Many young Brazilians navigate precarity — poor access to education and health, limited job prospects, and persistent inequalities. Young people and stakeholders working with them expressed significant concerns about an education system that does not adequately meet the needs of youth or the demands of the labour market.

Youth identity and resilience

The data shows that Brazil remains a deeply unequal country, where the majority of Black and mixed-race youth have personally experienced discrimination based on their ethnicity; young Black women earn nearly three times less than white men; two-thirds of those who identify as part of LGBTQIAPN+ communities have been treated differently due to their sexual orientation; transgender youth cite constant prejudice and targeted violence; and Indigenous youth report widespread discrimination outside their communities.

Education, skills and digital divide

Many young Brazilians risk being left behind in an increasingly digital world without targeted investment in connectivity and digital skills, while unequal access to quality education limits social mobility, further perpetuating poverty and exclusion. The recent pandemic deepened existing inequalities, particularly for youth without adequate digital access.

Feedback gleaned throughout this study underscores an urgent need for Brazil to reform its curriculum and infrastructure, with effective pedagogical and diversity training, and technology integration to equip all young people with the skills needed for the modern job market.

Data showed white survey participants as more likely to hold higher education qualifications than mixed-race youth or Black Brazilians, while Indigenous youth often face linguistic and structural barriers when accessing education outside their communities. Financial constraints, family responsibilities, lack of local opportunities, commuting issues, and poor institutional support are key barriers to continued education, and territorial differences were noted — most youth responding from *favela* communities do not think Brazil offers quality education.

Affirmative policies have begun to show positive results, particularly in granting access to higher education to low-income Brazilians and those in marginalised groups. However, there was a consensus among young people that more needs to be done and that retention supports need improvement to help maintain these young people in university.

Employment, entrepreneurship and informality

Young Brazilians identified interpersonal skills; critical and analytical thinking skills as crucial to employability, and showed a keen interest in short courses to better their job prospects. Artificial intelligence skills were most in demand, followed by financial and business management courses.

A desire for entrepreneurship among young Brazilians is analysed in detail in the report, which distinguishes between a wish to innovate with a new business idea, and urgent financial necessity that maintains much of Brazil's youth in cycles of labour market informality, particularly those from marginalised communities. Lack of access to finance was the main barrier to entrepreneurship identified by Brazilian youth, as well as a skills and self-confidence deficit, amid cultural obstacles.

Half of the employed youth living in favelas occupy informal roles, while a third of informal workers surveyed self-declared as Black, a marginally larger share as mixed-race, and only a quarter were white. One in four self-declared informal workers were earning less than the minimum wage, while one in three struggles to make ends meet on a monthly basis.

Respondents consistently identified financial security as the main factor for current and future happiness. 'Worried' was the most frequent term used to describe what lies ahead, with many citing poverty as the main obstacle the world is facing today.

Civic and political engagement

Young Brazilians are disillusioned by the formal political system, but show considerable evidence of community-level organisation, often around shared disadvantage. While they protest and lead grassroots movements, young people identify barriers such as inaccessible political language, institutional racism, and lack of civic education. Despite compulsory voting from the age of 18, trust in political institutions is low. Yet youth turnout is rising — with more and more 16-18-year-olds registering to vote in each election cycle — signalling a renewed demand to be heard (TSE, 2022).

Climate challenges

Personal testimony relating to the impacts of climate change already being felt by young Brazilians, particularly those in Indigenous and Riverine communities, are examined in Next Generation Brazil. Meanwhile, survey results show that Brazilian youth considers favela residents, and Indigenous communities as among the most affected. Floods, fires, and droughts hit the poorest hardest, yet these communities are rarely adequately included in climate decision-making.

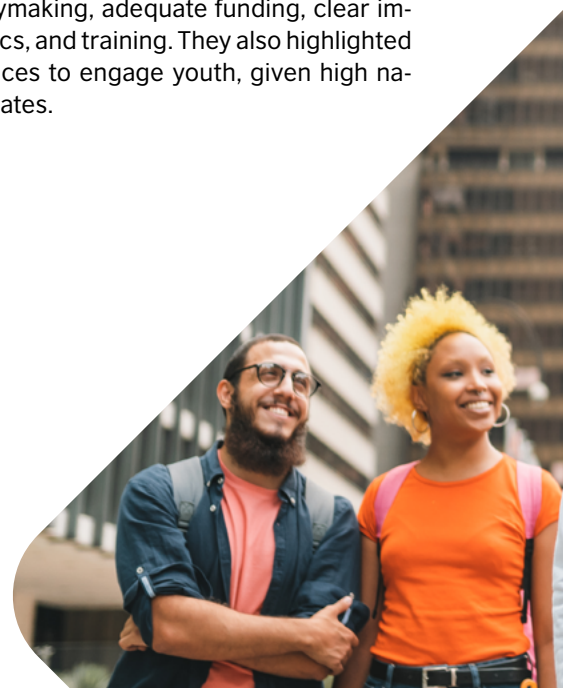
Policy Recommendations

Many existing governmental policies are identified throughout the report, some of which have been introduced very recently, making it too early to measure their impact. A strong message came from youth activists throughout the research process — policies are no good on paper — they need adequate budget allocations for training and full national penetration, along with regular monitoring and oversight.

The policy recommendations in this report were developed through a youth-led, participatory process, drawing on quantitative data and qualitative insights from community activists, youth leaders, and focus groups with marginalised groups.

The Youth Task Force was instrumental to ensure regional, social, and thematic representation from a youth-centred perspective throughout the development of recommendations. The issues raised by young people through the research process were wide-ranging, leading to two sets of recommendations: some designed to improve conditions for all young people in Brazil, and others tailored to the specific needs of groups who may face additional barriers and vulnerabilities.

These recommendations reflect the most practical and actionable priorities identified. Young participants consistently emphasised the need for meaningful youth involvement in policymaking, adequate funding, clear implementation metrics, and training. They also highlighted schools as key spaces to engage youth, given high national attendance rates.



Among the main policy recommendations:

- Mandate youth impact assessments for all new multi-sector policies affecting young people, with a focus on marginalised groups, ensuring that assessments are led by panels including young people and youth-focused stakeholders.
- Make civic youth councils mandatory at state and municipal levels, with dedicated budgets and clear accountability mechanisms. Embed youth in decision-making through seats on local councils. Ensure inclusive representation of Indigenous, Black, rural, LGBTQIAPN+, disabled, and *favela*-based youth, with gender and diversity quotas.
- Implement diversity and inclusion programmes across public services, with compulsory training on bias, safeguarding, and anti-discrimination. Ensure inclusive practices for marginalised groups — such as trans students — through social name use, accessible facilities, and clear reporting channels.
- Require all teacher education programmes to include mandatory training in anti-racist, decolonial, and inclusive pedagogy, with ongoing in-service training for current educators.
- Embed locally relevant climate education in school curricula, train teachers, and promote hands-on projects like climate monitoring. Use digital tools to engage youth and foster community-led climate action.
- Focus on retention, inclusion, and mentoring of young PwDs in education and employment, not just access. Embed inclusive practices and extend social welfare support during job transitions to ensure economic security and sustained engagement.
- Develop and scale short (affordable or free) courses in digital skills and artificial intelligence (AI), prioritising youth from low-income backgrounds, rural areas and *favelas* to reduce disparities in labour market access. Ensure the full implementation of *BNCC da Computação* (Brazil's National Common Curricular Base - Computing).
- Develop and promote inclusive formalisation pathways for young informal workers, recognising their role in urban economies. Measures should include simplified licensing, co-designed selling zones, and access to training, microcredit, and public services.
- Fund community-led arts and cultural initiatives in underserved areas, supporting diverse expressions from Indigenous, Afro-Brazilian, LGBTQIAPN+, and peripheral communities. Expand access to cultural spaces through subsidies and mobile or digital programmes, and integrate arts and cultural literacy into school curricula.
- Promote rural inclusion through targeted training, infrastructure, and improved logistics. Support Indigenous, *Quilombola*, and Riverine communities in developing culturally rooted businesses with co-financing, technical assistance, and respectful marketing.
- Support trans-led leadership programmes and visibility campaigns, especially in high-risk regions. Ensure trans participation in policymaking through LGBTQIAPN+ councils and policy reviews. Increase trans visibility across sectors and enforce anti-discrimination laws to ensure safe, equal access to public spaces.

Brazil's youth are not passive victims of inequality. They are active agents of transformation — leading change in education, politics, culture, and climate action, often without adequate public support. This report is a call to centre youth in national strategies and to equip them not just to participate in Brazil's future, but to lead it.





SOS Education produced Next Generation Brazil on behalf of the British Council. SOS Education is an independent research consultancy, specialising in market research and developing evidence-based policy solutions in a range of areas, including education and youth policy.

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