



This Brazilian *catadora* belongs to the second level cooperative network Redesol in the state of Minas Gerais. Photo credit: Murilo Godoy.



Waste Pickers in Brazil: A Statistical Profile

Mathilde Bouvier and Sonia Dias

Brazil has been a leader in recognizing its more than 281,000 informal waste pickers in recycling chains and in the country's official statistics.

Brazil has experienced a period of great innovation in the solid waste management sector in recent decades. Major innovations include: the inception of the first cooperatives of collectors of recyclables (called *catadores* in Portuguese) in the late 1980s; the implementation of inclusive recycling systems that integrated *catadores* as service providers in metropolitan recycling collection in the early 1990s; the creation of the National Movement of Waste Pickers – MNCR – in 2001; and the 2010 National Solid Waste Policy Law that recognized informal waste pickers legally as key actors in the recycling chain.¹

Another major advance in Brazil was the recognition of the occupation *catador de material reciclável* – “picker of recyclables” – in the Brazilian Classification of Occupations (CBO). This enabled the identification of *catadores* in the main national data sets: the National Household Survey (PNAD) and the Annual Registry on Social Information (RAIS).² As Dias points out, the relevance of waste pickers (organized or autonomous), whatever the size of their population, is due to their role as essential workers in the Brazilian recycling chain.³ This is especially true because municipal programmes that segregate waste at the source are still limited in Brazil.

¹ Dias, S. (2011). “[Overview of the Legal Framework for Inclusion of Informal Recyclers in Solid Waste Management in Brazil.](#)” WIEGO Urban Policies Briefing Note No. 8.

² Crivellari, H.M.T, Dias, S.M., Pena, A de S. (2008). [Informação e trabalho: uma leitura sobre os catadores de material reciclável a partir das bases públicas de dados.](#) In: KEMP, V. H & Crivellari, H.M.T. (org.) *Catadores na cena urbana: construção de políticas socioambientais.* Belo Horizonte: Autêntica Editora.

³ Dias, S. (2011). [Statistics on Waste Pickers in Brazil.](#) WIEGO Statistical Brief No. 2.

Considerable efforts were made in the preparation of this brief to identify the full population of *catadores* in Brazil. Nonetheless these workers and their advocates may well criticize the numbers as being too low. There are grounds for such questioning. First, PNAD Contínua is a household survey based on a sample of persons living in households. However, many *catadores* do not live in households but in dwellings on dump sites or even on the streets. The *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* (IBGE) points out that people living in improvised private dwellings, located in buildings that do not have outbuildings exclusively intended for habitation or in places unsuitable for habitation, are not part of the survey's target population.⁴ These not-captured *catadores* are likely to live and work under even more precarious circumstances than those identified through PNAD Contínua.

Another concern in the precise estimation of the number of *catadores* is that even with a more complete estimate of waste pickers, their numbers would be small in relation to the total population. With a small sample, there is a greater chance for the statistics produced to be estimated with less precision.

Notwithstanding these limitations, this brief shows that *catadores* in Brazil represent over a quarter of a million workers – a number that has generally increased during the past decade. With increasing urban populations and economic and

Box 1: Data Sources in Two WIEGO Waste Picker Briefs

In 2011 WIEGO published *Statistics on Waste Pickers in Brazil*,¹ based on the 2006 *Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios* (PNAD) – National Sample Survey of Households. Subsequently, the Brazil Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) made major changes in the survey, and it became the *Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Contínua* (PNAD Contínua).²

The PNAD Contínua is a synthesis of the PNAD and the PME (*Pesquisa Mensal de Emprego* – Monthly Employment Survey). The methodology of PNAD Contínua is based on an extension of PNAD's geographical coverage, as well as on the cyclical nature of the PME. Conceptual changes related to the framework for work statistics recommended by the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) were implemented in the PNAD Contínua. The changes relate to collecting data on both paid and unpaid activities performed by persons that contribute to the production of goods and services.³ The PNAD includes individuals aged 10 years and over in the labour force, while the PNAD Contínua considers individuals aged 14 years and over. For this report, the earlier data were revised to include only those aged 14 and above.

Finally, in addition to the changes in the survey, the IBGE adopted a different classification of occupations. The PNAD is based on the 2002 “Brazilian Classification of Occupations” (CBO); the PNAD Contínua relies on the “Classification of Occupations for Household Surveys” (COD), which follows the International Standard Classification of Occupations of 2008 (ISCO-08). The implications of this change for identifying *catadores* are presented in Box 2. Due to the conceptual changes and different geographical coverage, data from the two surveys are not fully comparable.

¹ Dias, S. (2011). [Statistics on Waste Pickers in Brazil](#). WIEGO Statistical Brief nº2. This Brief is a summary of Crivellari et al 2008 paper listed in a previous footnote.

² The PNAD Contínua became the Brazilian Labour Force Survey in 2012. It is conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, the *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* (IBGE). The objective of this survey is to monitor the evolution of the population's insertion in the labour market in the short, medium and long term, as well as to generate information necessary for the study of Brazil's socio-economic development.

³ Razafindrakoto, M., Roubaud, F., Saboia, J., Simões, A., Hallak Neto, J. & Botelho, L. (2020). [Conceitos, definições e mensuração do trabalho informal no Brasil](#). UFRJ-IE Working Paper No 2020-31. Citing: Simões, A. and Dick, P. (2016). *Indicadores de Trabalho*. In: *Panorama Nacional e Internacional da Produção de Indicadores Sociais*. Simões, A., Fresneda, B. (org). Rio de Janeiro: IBGE.

environmental crises, the numbers of these “green jobs” can be expected to grow in the future.

The statistics presented here deepen knowledge of the situation and characteristics of these

workers. Further, they provide a starting point for discussion and efforts to both improve the situation of these important workers in recycling systems and for discussion and study to improve their measurement.

⁴ Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (2021). [IBGE divulga o rendimento domiciliar per capita 2020](#).

Box 2: Identifying *Catadores*

In Brazil, provision of all solid waste management services (street sweeping, waste collection, disposal, treatment, and processing) is the responsibility of the municipal government. These activities are performed either directly by municipal workers and/or by contractors, all of whom are mainly formal workers. Workers in formal solid waste services are distinguished from the recyclers and refuse sorters who are the focus of this brief.

At the urging of organizations of *catadores*, in 2002 Brazil adopted a special category for *catadores* in the national occupational classification, the CBO (*Classificação Brasileira de Ocupações*): “waste pickers – category 5192 – are defined as those who pick, select, and sell recyclable material such as paper, cardboard, glass, ferrous and non-ferrous and other reusable materials, whether working on their own or organized in associations or cooperatives as employees.”

The PNAD Contínua uses a classification for waste pickers closely based on the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08) group 9612, “Refuse Sorters”: “Refuse sorters identify, collect and sort discarded items suitable for recycling at dump sites and recycling enterprises or in buildings, streets and other public places. Tasks include: searching through refuse and collecting items for recycling from dump sites, domestic, commercial and industrial premises or from public places such as streets; sorting cardboard, paper, glass, plastic, aluminum or other recyclable materials by type; placing recyclable items and materials in designated compartments and containers for storage or transportation; identifying and setting aside items of furniture, equipment, machinery, or components that are suitable for repair or re-use; transporting recyclable items by hand or using non-motorized vehicles; selling recyclable or reusable materials.” This definition is very similar to the earlier definition and corresponds to the main work of waste pickers in Brazil. However, some of the tasks may also be captured by another category – 9611, Garbage and Recycling Collectors: “Garbage collectors collect and remove rubbish and items for recycling from buildings, yards, streets and other places. Tasks include: collecting rubbish and recyclable materials and locating them into bins and garbage and recycling trucks; riding on or in garbage and recycling trucks; lifting garbage bins and emptying contents into trucks and larger containers; unloading garbage and recycling trucks.”

To identify the possibility that *catadores* were included in category 9611, the occupational category 9611 was crossed with that of the branch of economic activity sectors (the *Classificação Nacional de Atividades Econômicas* – CNAE) and informality. One of the CNAE categories – 38000 “Waste collection, treatment and disposal; materials recovery” (*Coleta, tratamento e disposição de resíduos; recuperação de materiais*) – had many informal workers so these informal workers were added to the 9612 category to create a more complete measurement of the total group of *catadores*. For the year 2019, 29,720 informal workers in category 38000 of code 9611 were included as *catadores* (4,127 women and 25,593 men). This increased the number of waste pickers by around 11 per cent.

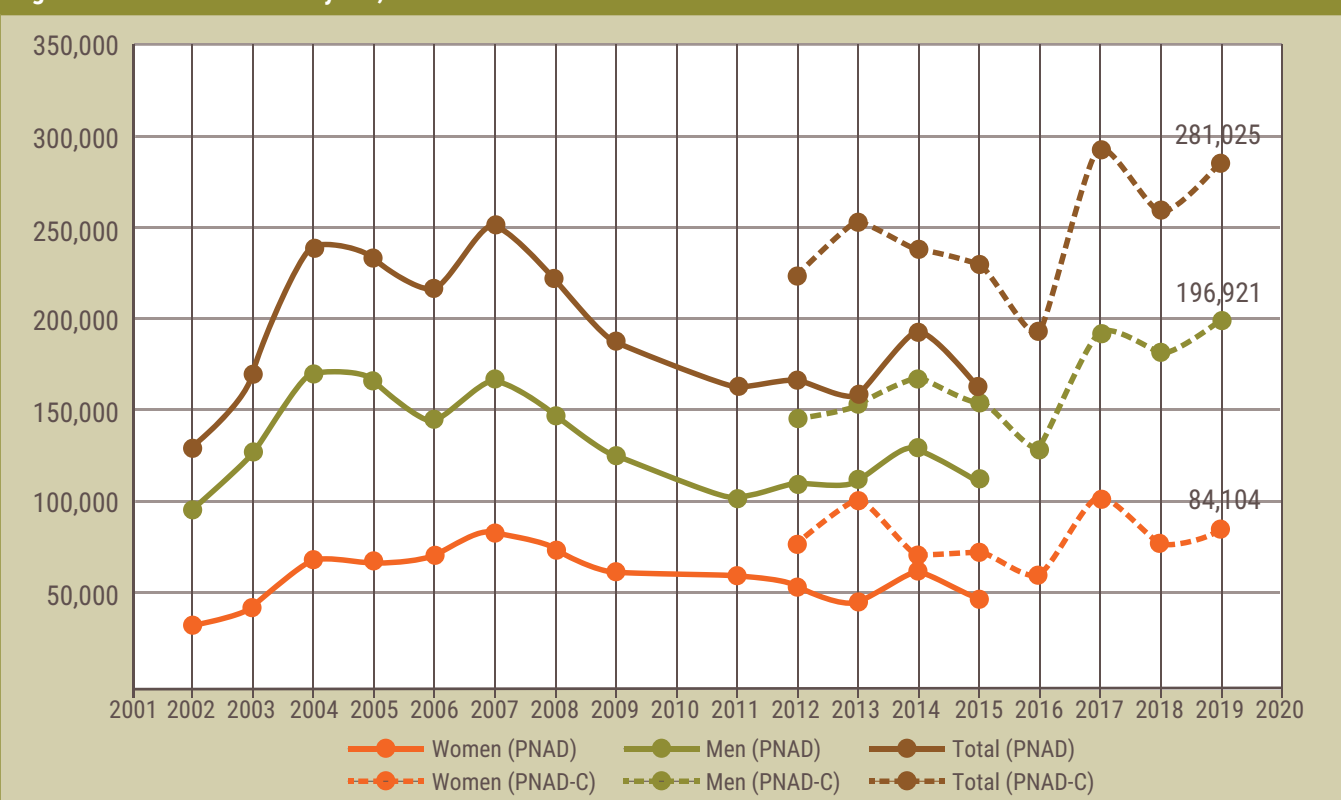
The absolute number of *catadores* identified in the PNAD and the PNAD Contínua should not be directly compared. This is due not only to the conceptual changes in the definition, but also to methodological changes between the two surveys described in **Box 1**.

Numbers and Location

In Brazil, the estimated number of waste pickers (*catadores*) was 281,025 in 2019 (**table 1**). The majority of *catadores* are men – 70 per cent – while women comprise 30 per cent. While the absolute numbers of waste pickers has increased in recent years, their share of total employment remains between 0.1 and 0.4 per cent. Although this is a low share, these workers are responsible for high recycling rates in the

Table 1: *Catadores* in Brazil by sex, 2002–2019: Absolute numbers and per cent of total employment (in parentheses)

	Women	Men	Total
2002 PNAD	32,472 (0.10)	96,039 (0.21)	128,511 (0.16)
2007 PNAD	83,589 (0.22)	166,180 (0.32)	249,769 (0.28)
2012 PNAD	56,679 (0.14)	109,555 (0.20)	166,234 (0.17)
2012 PNAD-C	76,133 (0.20)	144,740 (0.28)	220,873 (0.25)
2017 PNAD-C	101,629 (0.26)	191,650 (0.37)	293,279 (0.32)
2019 PNAD-C	84,104 (0.20)	196,921 (0.37)	281,025 (0.30)

Figure 1: *Catadores* in Brazil by sex, 2002–2019

Women waste pickers in Brazil took part in a programme examining gender and waste. Photo credit: Lina Mintz.

country. Brazil recycles 97 per cent of cans and 67 per cent of cardboard.⁵ Given that only a quarter of all municipalities have segregation at source collection systems, the high recycling rates are due to the work of the *catadores*.⁶

The number and share of *catadores* in total employment declined during the years of economic growth (**figure 1**). The period of growth was associated with a decline in informality in the country. This trend was

interrupted by the Brazilian economic crisis that began in 2014. The severity of the economic crisis drove people to the streets and to informal trade; waste picking and street trade are a survival strategy.⁷ Generally, the period following the 2014–2016 crisis was marked by a slight increase in informality in the country.⁸ The growth of *catadores* in 2017 may also be related to some degree to a change in the definition of the category.

⁵ CEMPRE (Compromisso Empresarial para Reciclagem) (2021). Web page www.cempre.org.br.

⁶ SNIS – Sistema Nacional de Informações sobre Saneamento (2019). *Diagnóstico da gestão e manejo de resíduos sólidos urbanos*. Brasília: MDR/SNS.

⁷ Dias, S., Abussafy, R., Gonçalves, J., & Martins, J. P. (2020). *Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Inclusive Recycling in Brazil*.

⁸ Razafindrakoto, M., Roubaud, F., & Saludjian, A. (2021). *Crises, informalité et reconfigurations sur le marché du travail : quatre décennies de bouleversements économiques au Brésil*. UFRJ-IE Working Paper No 2021-17.

The overwhelming majority of *catadores* are in urban areas: 94 per cent in urban areas and only 6 per cent in rural areas (**table 2**). The share of total employment that is in urban areas is high at 89 per cent, but less than among *catadores*.

The south and south-east regions of Brazil traditionally have more developed infrastructures and more developed recycling industrial parks. Consequently, the regions have a significant number of *catadores* (**table 3**).

Table 2: *Catadores* and total employment by rural and urban areas and sex in Brazil, 2019: Absolute numbers and per cent distribution in parentheses

	Women	Men	Total	Total employment
Urban	78,613 (93.5)	186,302 (94.6)	264,915 (94.3)	83,805,460 (88.6)
Rural	5,491 (6.5)	10,619 (5.4)	16,110 (5.7)	10,836,867 (11.4)

Table 3: *Catadores* by major metropolitan area in Brazil* and sex, 2019: Absolute numbers and per cent distribution in parentheses

	Women	Men	Total
MR of São Paulo (SE)	7,663 (9.1)	26,768 (13.6)	34,431 (12.3)
MR of Belo Horizonte (SE)	3,071 (3.6)	6,753 (3.4)	9,824 (3.5)
MR Porto Alegre (S)	2,012 (2.4)	7,414 (3.8)	9,426 (3.3)
MR of Curitiba (S)	2,929 (3.5)	6,221 (3.1)	9,150 (3.3)
MR of Rio de Janeiro (SE)	2,651 (3.2)	6,465 (3.3)	9,116 (3.2)
MR of Grande Vitória (SE)	922 (1.1)	1,132 (0.6)	2,054 (0.7)
Other <i>catadores</i>	64,856 (77.1)	142,168 (72.2)	207,024 (73.7)
Total	84,104 (100)	196,921 (100)	281,025 (100)

* Of the 76 Metropolitan areas in Brazil, the list includes those that are large, have a federal capital and are in the south-east (SE) and south (S) regions.



Organized waste pickers from Brazil took part in *ExpoCatadores*, an international event that brought informal recyclers together to share, strategize and celebrate the 15th Anniversary of the National Movement of Waste Pickers (MNCR) in 2016. Photo credit: Cyrus Ashfar



In Belo Horizonte, women workers segregate materials at their sorting centre. Photo credit: Sonia Dias Archives.

Working Arrangements

In Brazil, *catadores* in informal employment are either employees without a working card (*carteira de trabalho assinada*), employers/own-account persons not contributing to social security, or unpaid family members. These workers generally have no or limited social protection while facing major risks (health risks, accidents, urban violence, etc.).

Employment among *catadores* is predominately informal (**table 4**). It is more than double the share of informal employment in total employment (87 per cent in comparison to 42 per cent for total employment). A slightly higher proportion of men *catadores* than women are in informal employment.

Own account work is the predominant working arrangement for *catadores* in Brazil (**table 5**). A much larger share of *catadores* are own account workers than the share in total employment (70 per cent in comparison to 26 per cent).

Men are more often employers or employees than women, and women are more often contributing family workers. Additional tabulations show that a male contributing family worker is often the son of the household head (85 per cent), while a female contributing family worker is more often the wife of the household head (65 per cent).

Table 4: *Catadores* and total employment in Brazil by informal and formal employment and sex, 2019: Absolute numbers and per cent distribution in parentheses

	Women	Men	Total	Total employment
Formal	13,482 (16.0)	23,798 (12.1)	37,280 (13.3)	55,191,602 (58.3)
Informal	70,622 (84.0)	173,123 (87.9)	243,745 (86.7)	39,450,725 (41.7)

Table 5: *Catadores* and total employment by employment status and sex in Brazil, 2019: Absolute numbers and per cent distribution in parentheses

	Women	Men	Total	Total employment
Employer	3,777 (4.5)	10,946 (5.6)	14,723 (5.2)	4,370,159 (4.6)
Own account	59,406 (70.6)	134,347 (68.2)	193,753 (69.0)	24,416,210 (25.8)
Employee	14,018 (16.7)	43,833 (22.2)	57,851 (20.6)	63,772,153 (67.4)
Contributing family worker	6,903 (8.2)	7,794 (4.0)	14,697 (5.2)	2,083,805 (2.2)

Three types of working arrangements for *catadores* in Brazil have been identified:⁹

- 1) The unorganized or autonomous *catadores* who make a living picking or buying recyclable materials on the streets or in waste dumps and selling it to junk shops. These workers are not connected to waste pickers associations or cooperatives, although they may sometimes sell the collected materials to these associations.
- 2) The organized *catadores* who work through cooperatives and associations.

- 3) The *catadores* with a contract who work mainly in junk yards or in the metallurgical industrial sector, but also in the public municipal sector or in associations and cooperatives.

Although membership in cooperatives and associations is important in improving the situation of *catadores*, one quarter of *catadores* did not respond to this question in the survey (**table 6**). Of those responding, around 5 per cent reported membership in an association or cooperative.

Table 6: *Catadores* by membership in a cooperative, or association and sex in Brazil, 2019: Absolute numbers and per cent distribution in parentheses

	Women		Men		Total	
Members	5,246	(8.3)	6,285	(4.3)	11,531	(5.5)
Not members	57,937	(91.7)	139,008	(95.7)	196,945	(94.5)
No answer	20,921	-	51,628	-	72,549	-

Table 7: *Catadores* and total employment by educational category and sex in Brazil, 2019: Absolute numbers and per cent share in parentheses

	Women		Men		Total		Brazilian population	
None / less than 1 year	8,437	(10.0)	21,713	(11.0)	30,150	(10.7)	2,066,045	(2.2)
Some primary education / primary completed	68,867	(81.9)	131,130	(66.6)	199,997	(71.2)	29,350,694	(31.0)
Some secondary education / secondary completed	4,869	(5.8)	42,716	(21.7)	47,585	(16.9)	37,965,176	(40.1)
Some tertiary education / tertiary completed	1,931	(2.3)	1,362	(0.7)	3,293	(1.2)	25,260,412	(26.7)

Education

Most *catadores* have some primary education, but 1 out of 10 have less than one year of schooling (**table 7**). More than 80 per cent of *catadores* have not been educated beyond primary school. Clearly waste picking provides an opportunity for people with low education. Working as part of a cooperative is helpful in this respect. Cooperatives provide various types of training to their members, such as occupational safety, literacy, and environmental courses.¹⁰

A larger share of men than women have some secondary education (22 per cent in comparison to 6 per cent). However, a small share of women waste pickers have some tertiary level education (2.3 per cent in comparison to less than 1 per cent of men).

⁹ Crivellari, H.M.T., Dias, S.M., Pena, A de S. (2008). *Informação e trabalho: uma leitura sobre os catadores de material reciclável a partir das bases públicas de dados*. In: KEMP, V. H & Crivellari, H. M.T. (org.) *Catadores na cena urbana: construção de políticas socioambientais*. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica Editora.

¹⁰ Ministério do Trabalho e Emprego (n.d.), *Classificação Brasileira de Ocupações*.

Socio-demographic Characteristics

Around 80 per cent of women *catadores* are aged 35 to 64 (**table 8**). The age distribution for women peaks at ages 45-54, followed closely by ages 35-44 and then by ages 55-64. Additional tabulations show that 79 per cent of women *catadores* above age 55 are the household head and 19 per cent are the spouse of the household head.

Among men, a somewhat lower per cent (59 per cent) of waste pickers are ages 35 to 64 than among women.

The differences between women and men in the distribution by age is greatest at ages 14-24. Only 5 per cent of young women are in this age group in comparison to 19 per cent of young men. Additional tabulations show that 36 per cent of the young women waste pickers and 68 per cent of the young men are the child or stepchild of the household head; 44 per cent of the young women in comparison to 19 per cent of young men are the spouse of the household head; and 20 per cent of young women in comparison to 9 per cent of young men are the household head. In summary, among waste pickers, young women are much more likely to be the wife of the household head and young men are more likely to be their son.

When compared to the age structure of total employment in Brazil, the major differences are at ages 25 to 34 and ages 55 and older. The younger age category accounts for 12 per cent

Table 8: *Catadores* and total employment, by age and sex in Brazil, 2019: Absolute numbers and per cent distribution in parentheses

	Women	Men	Total	Total employment
14-24	4,223 (5.0)	36,881 (18.7)	41,104 (14.6)	13,457,368 (14.2)
25-34	7,658 (9.1)	24,949 (12.7)	32,607 (11.6)	22,941,121 (24.3)
35-44	23,333 (27.8)	42,002 (21.3)	65,335 (23.2)	24,524,951 (25.9)
45-54	24,460 (29.1)	39,759 (20.2)	64,219 (22.9)	19,216,147 (20.3)
55-64	20,701 (24.6)	33,437 (17.0)	54,138 (19.3)	11,089,446 (11.7)
65+	3,730 (4.4)	19,892 (10.1)	23,622 (8.4)	3,413,294 (3.6)



Waste pickers who participated in a targeted health project called the [Cuidar Project](#) in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Photo credit: Bruno Greco

of *catadores* but a share twice as large (24 per cent) for total employment. By contrast, for ages older than 55, the share of waste pickers is 29 per cent in contrast to only 15 per cent of total employment. In summary, a substantial share of waste pickers continues to work at older ages.

A much larger share of *catadores* are Black and Mixed-race relative to their share in the Brazilian population over 14 years of age (**table 9**). While 72 per cent of Brazil's *catadores* are Black and Mixed-race, these racial groups account for only 56 per cent of the Brazilian population. An even larger share of women *catadoras* (80 per cent) are Black or Mixed-race.

Table 9: *Catadores* and total employment by racial group and sex in Brazil, 2019: Absolute numbers and per cent distribution in parentheses

	Women	Men	Total	Brazilian population (14+)
White (<i>Branca</i>)	16,922 (20.1)	60,927 (30.9)	77,849 (27.7)	73,578,106 (43.0)
Black (<i>Preta</i>)	15,384 (18.3)	39,143 (19.9)	54,527 (19.4)	17,098,842 (10.0)
Mixed-race (<i>Parda</i>)	51,799 (61.6)	95,081 (48.3)	146,880 (52.3)	78,516,042 (45.9)
Oriental (<i>Amarela</i>)	- -	1,770 (0.9)	1,770 (0.6)	1,231,864 (0.7)
Indigenous (<i>Indígena</i>)	- -	- -	- -	638,878 (0.4)



A Brazilian waste picker takes part in a Cuidar Health Risk project activity. Photo credit: Bruno Greco



A catadora shreds waste paper for resale in Belo Horizonte.
Photo credit: Sonia Dias Archives

Working Conditions

The majority of *catadores* (56 per cent) work 40 or more hours a week, including the small but significant proportion (13 per cent) who work more than 48 hours (**table 10**). Women tend to work fewer hours than men, likely due to the time they devote to their domestic responsibilities. Among women, 57 per cent work less than a 40 hour week, while among men the comparable statistic is 38 per cent.

Catadores have lower earnings than the average earnings for all employed in Brazil. *Catadores*

are concentrated at the bottom of the income distribution. Further, 8 per cent of women and 4 per cent of men – the contributing family workers – are unpaid.

Two-thirds of *catadores* earn less than the monthly minimum wage, with significant earnings differences between women and men (**Table 11**). Considering only paid workers, 77 per cent of women and 64 per cent of men earn the minimum wage or less. Waste pickers earning more than three times the minimum wage are almost exclusively men.

Table 10: Catadores by hours of work and sex in Brazil, 2019: Absolute numbers and per cent share in parentheses

	Women		Men		Total	
< 15 hours	13,547	(16.1)	16,239	(8.3)	29,786	(10.6)
15 to 34 hours	29,824	(35.4)	51,961	(26.4)	81,785	(29.1)
35 to 39 hours	4,933	(5.9)	7,312	(3.7)	12,245	(4.3)
40 to 48 hours	29,592	(35.2)	91,207	(46.3)	120,799	(43.0)
> 48 hours	6,208	(7.4)	30,202	(15.3)	36,410	(13.0)

Table 11: Earnings of catadores and all employed in relation to the monthly minimum wage by sex in Brazil, 2019: Absolute numbers and per cent share in parentheses

	Women		Men		Total		Total employment	
Contributing family worker	6,903	(8.2)	7,794	(4.0)	14,697	(5.2)	2,341,989	(2.5)
Up to a minimum wage	64,629	(76.8)	125,870	(63.9)	190,499	(67.8)	27,352,111	(28.9)
More than 1 to 2 minimum wages	9,755	(11.6)	41,228	(20.9)	50,983	(18.1)	33,824,276	(35.7)
More than 2 to 3 minimum wages	2,415	(2.9)	14,487	(7.4)	16,902	(6.0)	13,431,768	(14.2)
More than 3 minimum wages	402	(0.5)	7,542	(3.8)	7,944	(2.8)	17,692,182	(18.7)

Catadores in Formal Employment from RAIS

The RAIS (*Relação Anual de Informações Sociais* – Annual Social Information Report) is a national administrative registry of the Ministry of Labour and Employment; it is updated annually. It provides another source of statistics on waste pickers who are formally employed; that is, they have a working card. Employers must declare the occupational status of each employee on the basis of the CBO nomenclature. In the RAIS data, waste pickers formally employed by commercial establishments were identified by the 5192 category.

- 13,700 *catadores* were identified in 2019 in the RAIS survey; this compares to the 14,501 employees in the private sector with a signed working card, a similar category identified in the 2019 PNAD Contínua. In the RAIS data 76 per cent are men and 24 per cent are women.
- Almost 60 per cent of *catadores* attended some secondary education and approximately half of them finished middle school.
- More than 56 per cent of *catadores* received 1 to 1.5 minimum wage, and one third 1.5 to 2 minimum wages (based on the average yearly wage). Among this last proportion, 80 per cent are men.
- Over 90 per cent work more than 40 hours a week.
- The waste pickers in RAIS are concentrated in small enterprises, but a considerable number are also employed in big companies.



A catadora pulls a cart to collect what others have thrown away. Photo credit: Sonia Dias Archives

The brief was prepared with the guidance of an advisory group comprised of the authors and François Roubaud and Mireille Razafindrakoto of The French Research Institute for Development (IRD-DIAL) and the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ); and Gayatri Koolwal, Françoise Carré and Joann Vanek of the WIEGO Statistics Programme.

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About the photos: All photos in this brief were taken before COVID-19, which led to additional protective equipment.



About WIEGO

Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) is a global network focused on empowering the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy to secure their livelihoods. We believe all workers should have equal economic opportunities, rights, protection and voice. WIEGO promotes change by improving statistics and expanding knowledge on the informal economy, building networks and capacity among informal worker organizations and, jointly with the networks and organizations, influencing local, national and international policies. Visit www.wiego.org

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Statistical Briefs

WIEGO Statistical Briefs are part of the WIEGO Publication Series. They 1) provide statistics on the informal economy and categories of informal workers in accessible formats at the regional, country and city levels; or 2) describe the methods for the collection, tabulation and/or analysis of statistics.