



OBSERVATÓRIO DAS DESIGUALDADES

SOCIAL PROTECTION, INEQUALITIES, AND POVERTY:

How public policies can promote or
weaken social citizenship

Bulletin No. 11
March 2021



SOCIAL INEQUALITIES, AND PROTECTION, POVERTY: How public policies can promote or weaken social citizenship

Contrary to what we are sometimes led to believe, the magnitude and profile of inequalities do not fall directly from heaven nor rise directly from hell upon our societies. They are the result of social choices. Among them is how the State, families, and the market are articulated in the guarantee of well-being and in the protection from the risks to which families and individuals are subject throughout the cycle of their lives. The laws, institutions, and public policies that organize this provision are called social protection systems and, more broadly, Social Welfare States.

However, the very definition of what constitutes these policies and rules varies in each country and each time, defining a specific arrangement of policies that aim to secure rights, protect against risks, or meet needs. And these configurations are based on normative references and conceptions of social justice and are the fruits of historical trajectories and political choices. As stated, social protection systems involve the participation of the State, families, and the market. The weight of each of these institutions in the provision of well-being defines – together with the objectives, instruments, and amount of resources – the different social protection regimes. The predominance of each of these sectors is based on a characterization of Welfare States by the degree of de-commodification and, one might add, the degree of de-familiarization of social protection. The meaning of these unfamiliar terms – de-commodification and de-familiarization of social protection – and why they are important will be explained below. The presence of the State as a central provider of protection signals the distributive and

redistributive dimension of these policies in the processes of distribution of income, wealth, and well-being, altering or reproducing the structures of inequalities existing within each country. An adequate understanding of Brazil's social conditions and protection deficits requires the acknowledgment of the multiple combinations of diverse vectors of vulnerabilities resulting from life cycles, territories and housing areas, health and education conditions, access to material and symbolic goods, social status, and adverse incorporation into the labor market, among others. This broader understanding of contemporary social problems and the need for deep social transformations in the country's economic, social, and institutional model poses non-trivial challenges for social protection policies. This bulletin stems from these reflections to identify what occurred in Brazil after the impeachment of President Dilma, an event that marked an important inflection in the trajectory of the Brazilian social State, which now faces its most significant challenges and the dismantling of which produces its most perverse consequences.

1. FROM PHILANTHROPY TO THE SOCIAL WELFARE STATE

Before the emergence and formation of modern States, assistance to the miserable was an exclusive function of the Catholic Church and, in this sense, acts such as giving alms or helping indigents were intrinsically linked to a set of Christian practices and

rituals that symbolized the salvation of the soul and the redemption of sins. The fact is that aid to the most disadvantaged was, in most cases, more related to individual beliefs than to social responsibility toward poverty. The reality imposed by the emergence of industrial and urban capitalist societies triggered a process of precarization of life – such as the terrible working conditions in factories, the low wages, and precarious housing – that led to important changes in charity systems, which slowly moved from informal, one-off, and disorganized movements to a reproduced and articulated practice, which leads to the emergence of State Social Security Systems (ALVES, 2015). Although their origins date back, therefore, to the very beginning of capitalism, with the "Laws of the Poor" in England or with the social security of Bismarck's Germany, social policies timidly emerged at the end of the nineteenth century and took shape from the second half of the twentieth century as a coherent set of State intervention in the guarantee of social rights. Thus, the term "Welfare State" – or Social Welfare State – became widely popular after the Beveridge Report and refers to a set of social protection policies that aims to guarantee social rights, already understood as a structuring dimension of the conception of citizenship: social citizenship, i.e., the right of all citizens to share the material inheritance and symbolic inheritance that in a historical moment is considered as worthy of a society. However, if some type of social protection architecture and policies is currently present in the vast majority of countries that constituted sufficiently organized States, there is a significant variation among the Welfare States in terms of comprehensiveness, the magnitude of benefits and services, and instruments for their operationalization, among others. They certainly respond to the economic and institutional capacity of countries but also to the coalitions and political support that sustain them and to different conceptions of justice and citizenship. Esping-Andersen (1991) proposed a classification based on the concept of de-commodification, i.e., the possibility of individuals and families to maintain a standard of living regardless of their participation or

position in the market. In other words, de-commodification renders essential services accessible without this access depending on money and, therefore, without its provision depending on the market, making it possible to guarantee social rights and dignified life. The concept of de-familiarization was also incorporated as a response to feminist criticisms to signal how much the well-being of individuals is independent of the action of families or, on the contrary, strengthens this responsibility – almost always disproportionately greater for women – demanding the incorporation of the care agenda in the scope of social protection policies. This classification may be observed in Figure 1, taken directly from Castro and Pochmann (2020). An important dimension for characterizing Social Welfare regimes is, therefore, the degree of de-commodification of welfare, as well as the type of social hierarchy that the social welfare state creates, strengthens, or combats, and also the dominant arrangement of welfare provision, i.e., whether welfare is centered on the market, the family, or the state (KERSTENETZKY, 2011). Figure 2 summarizes these different configurations of the Social Welfare State and represents, by the size of the spheres, the differentiated role of the family, the market, and the State in the provision of welfare in each model. In the liberal model of the Welfare State, the market is the leading provider of protection, and the Social State has a residual nature in the sense that social protection policies are to guarantee the minimum and are focused on those unable to enter the labor market, with a focus on social assistance and reduced social security plans. Consequently, in this regime, the de-commodification has minimal effects and constructs a hierarchy that separates on one side the group of invalids and those who are unfit for work and, on the other, those inserted in the labor market and economically integrated, creating an included-excluded dualism, from which stereotypes of the type "winners-losers", "capable-unfit" also tend to emerge, in an individualistic conception of society and well-being that stigmatizes users of social protection. Among the countries that have built this model are the United States, Canada, and Australia.

Figure 1: Relevant elements of the types/regimes of Social Welfare State

Quadro 1: Elementos relevantes dos tipos/regimes de Estado de bem-estar social

Elementos	Tipos/Regimes de Estado de bem-estar social		
	Liberal/Residual	Social-democrata	Conservador/Corporativo
Papel desempenhado Família Mercado Estado	Baixo Alto Baixo	Baixo Baixo Alto	Alto Intermediário Intermediário
Solidariedade social Modo dominante de solidariedade Locus dominante da solidariedade Grau de desmercadorização Base do direito social	Individual Mercado Baixo Necessidade	Universal Estado Alto Cidadania	Corporativo/Familiar Corporação/Família Intermediário Contribuição
Desigualdade e pobreza Nível de desigualdade e pobreza Medidas e ações programáticas	Alto (problema individual) Prestações econômicas (beneficência)	Baixo (disfunção do sistema) Infraestrutura, serviços e ações contra pobreza	Intermediário (multicausal) Prestações econômicas (compensação)
Modo dominante de proteção social Mix público-privado (predominância) Regulamentação do mercado de trabalho Grau de desfamiliarização Mecanismos de atuação política	Privado Baixa Alto (não familista) Pactos partidários e aliança entre classes	Público (universal) Intermediária Alto (não familista) Aliança entre classes, normas legais e pactos sindicatos/patrões	Público (ocupacional) Alta Baixo (familista) Associativismo e envolvimento comunitário, pactos partidários e sociais
Países	UK, USA, Canadá, Austrália	Suécia, Dinamarca, Noruega, Finlândia	Alemanha, França, Bélgica, Itália

Fonte: Szarfenberg (2015); Esping-Andersen (1990)

Source: CASTRO and POCHMANN (2020)

Figure 2: Types of Welfare State and the role of different spheres in its provision

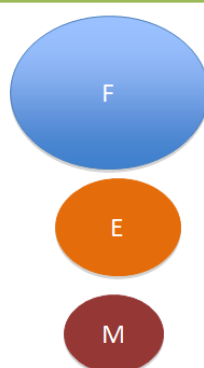
Tipologia de
E. Andersen



Liberal: Mercado como principal provedor da proteção. Benefícios modestos e os critérios de elegibilidade selecionam apenas os que não contam com o mercado ou a família. Efeitos de desmercantilização baixos. Os mais ricos buscam proteção no mercado (iniciativa privada). Exemplos: EUA, Reino Unido, Austrália e Canadá.

Conservador/corporativista

Ênfase nas políticas de seguro (contributivas), com papel secundário para benefícios assistenciais. Efeitos de desmercantilização limitados. O foco no seguro social produz tensão entre incluídos e excluídos e reproduz estratificação do mercado. Exemplos: Alemanha e França.



Socialdemocrata: estende o princípio de desmercantilização:

Indivíduos dependem pouco da família e do mercado. Serviços sociais universais e de alto padrão e benefícios generosos.

“todos se beneficiam, todos são dependentes e todos supostamente se sentirão no dever de contribuir”.

Exemplos: países escandinavos.



F=Família
E = Estado
M = Mercado

Source: Prepared by the authors based on Andersen (1991).

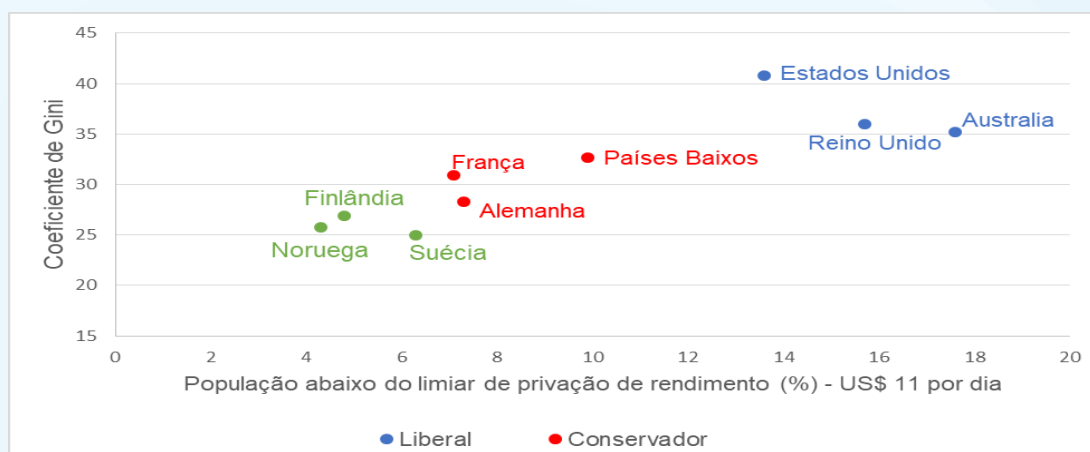
In turn, the conservative model expresses a corporatist, meritocratic, and particularist nature, in the sense that the social rights guaranteed by the State reach citizens mainly through their insertion in work, and the benefits are used and differentiated for selected categories. Consequently, individuals excluded from the world of formal work do not have access to the benefits, which preserves occupational status, produces tension between those included and excluded, and reproduces the market hierarchies – and the inequalities. In addition, even though this model emphasizes contributory social protection policies, with a secondary role for welfare benefits, it has limited de-commodification effects since coverage is given by occupational criteria and, therefore, excludes individuals who are outside the labor market or reserves to them residual benefits. The funding on which it is based is eminently contributory, i.e., benefits are linked to the

contributions of workers and employers. As examples of this model, we note the cases of France, Germany, and Italy (KERSTENETZKY, 2011). Finally, the democratic or universalistic Social Welfare State is characterized by compliance with the principles of universalism and de-commodification of social rights. In this perspective, the well-being of citizens depends less on the family and the market, and the benefits extend to the middle class, aiming at effecting equality of high standards and not only equality in terms of satisfaction of minimum needs. In addition, in this region, it is not usual to use a periodic income verification system to characterize the recipient of benefits of social security and assistance since they are more linked to a conception of rights than merit or necessity. Thus, this model seeks to ensure the right to work with distributive social protection policies and universal and high-standard social services, with Scandinavian countries as the

main examples. Since it is obviously a system that mobilizes resources and considerable budgetary efforts, this model is usually linked to countries with strongly progressive tax systems and very significant direct taxes. Why this long theoretical digression about social protection model typologies? Because we are interested in showing the evidence that more universalistic models of social protection may be more strongly associated with lower poverty and inequality, and this finding may serve to guide reflection on the challenges that Brazil faces to guarantee the rights advocated in the Federal Constitution of 1988. Whether in Europe or Latin America, countries with more robust social protection policies have lower incidences and severity of poverty and lower inequality, with beneficial effects in several social indicators, as has already been widely evidenced in the specialized literature (KORPI, 1998; NEUBOURG, CASTONGUAY, & ROELEN, 2005; VAN LANCKER & VAN DEN HEED, 2019; PALME et al., 2009). Therefore, in addition to value and preference disputes, there is evidence that social

protection systems with higher investments are associated with less poverty (absolute and relative) and lower inequality among the most advanced economies. The available evidence points out that social spending in such countries reduces the proportion of people in poverty, measured in relative or absolute terms. The most universalistic social protection systems are clearly successful in reducing poverty, especially compared to systems with a liberal or residual matrix. Chart 1 allows observing this relationship between more universal social protection systems and lower poverty and inequality. Beyond the discussion on welfare models and their consequences on poverty and inequality, it is important to focus the debate on social protection from the architecture that enables it in each time and country. From this perspective, there is an emphasis on the components, designs, and composition of this protection, its internal modeling, so to speak.

Chart 1: Economic inequality and incidence of poverty along the classifications of the Welfare State



Source: Human Development Report (UNPD), 2007–2008. Prepared by the authors

It should be noted that social protection systems are composed of contributory and non-contributory benefits. In the first case, there are benefits related to the insertion of individuals in the labor market, such as retirement, unemployment insurance, and functional illness, among others, the access to which is conditioned to a prior contribution of that individual to the cost of the good or service,

even if it is public and of the state. As non-contributory benefits, there are minimum income devices, housing and family benefits, and conditional income transfers, such as work fronts, for example. Social assistance is only one part of these sets of non-contributory benefits, as illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Components of a social protection system: different conformations



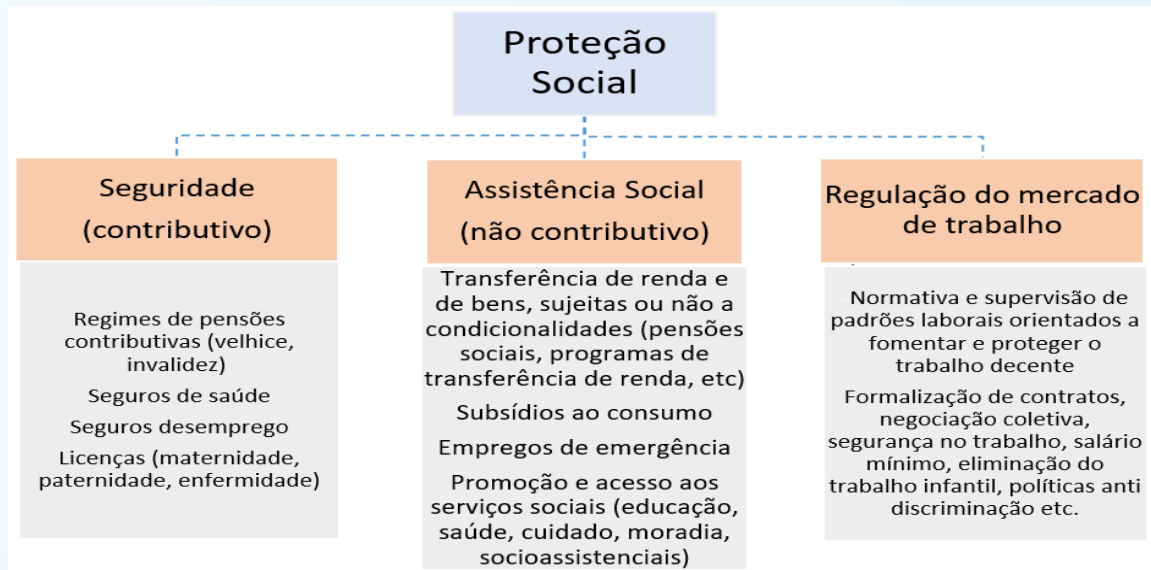
Source: Prepared by the authors.

There is no single conformation of the policies that are part of a social protection system. The architectures are diverse and may encompass policies of different natures combined in each country and each time in a specific way. Within the scope of Latin America, a rights-based conception of social protection points to the need to articulate three sets of policies: a) guarantee social assistance, articulating benefits/transfers and services in the field of non-contributory protection, including care systems for especially vulnerable publics, such senior citizens, children, and people with disability; b) provide security, in the field of contributory protection; c) promote a robust opportunity structure in the field of regulation of

labor markets and policies on employment, income, and access to credit, which would be linked to the scope of social promotion, in clear articulation with labor, employment, and income policies. A central point is the necessary articulation of these dimensions of protection with access to universal basic health and education services (ECLAC, 2010; CECCHINI & MARTÍNEZ, 2011).

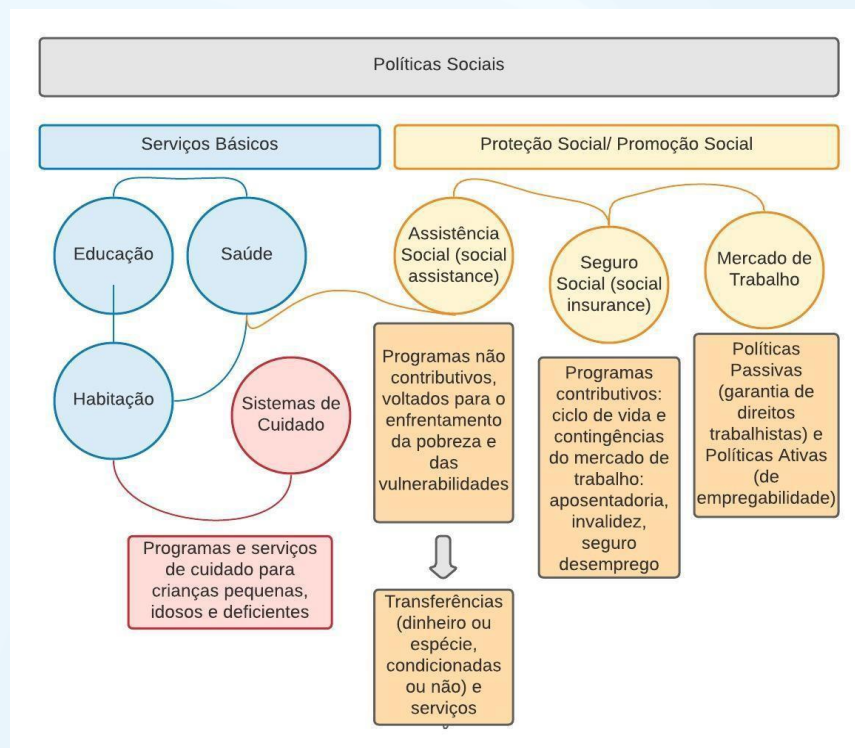
An aspect to point out from this Latin American perspective is the articulation of these policies of social protection and promotion with basic health, education, and care services, as one may observe in Figure 5. The possible social protection architectures are different, more or less comprehensive, and more or less inclusive,

Figure 4: Components of a social protection system



Source: Prepared by the authors based on CECCHINI and MARTINEZ (2011)

Figure 5: Comprehensive Social Protection with a focus on rights



Source: Prepared by the authors based on CECCHINI and MARTINEZ (2011)

articulating different sets of policies and with different emphases on each. It is important to emphasize that there are a normative dimension, paradigms, and worldviews that delimit what the social protection policy is, what is contained in it, its field of action, the audiences to which the actions are directed, the criteria for access to benefits and services, objectives and scope of actions, at last, the design of the systems is based, above all, on more or less dense conceptions of justice (KERSTENETZKY, 2006) that inform, after all, the breadth, scope, and very purposes of social protection. From this first section, of a more conceptual nature, we will briefly address the construction trajectory of the social protection system in Brazil and then, in the last section, present the evidence and consequences of the regression of the country's social protection policies.

2. SOCIAL PROTECTION IN BRAZIL

The trajectory of protection policies in Brazil began in the 1920s but took shape in the 1930s when a new base of the productive structure in the country began to be established, more urban and centered on industrial production. However, despite the expansion of public policies for education, health, and social security and assistance, a universalism-based social protection system was not established in the country at this time. The model consolidated in Brazil from the 1930s to the 1970s, with a strongly meritocratic/corporate nature and in an authoritarian and technocratic form, was based on the occupational position in the productive structure. At this time, some more universal aspirations were restricted to elementary education (although their realization is very

recent) and to urgent health care, given that the rest of the health services remained conditioned on specific contributions – private payment or philanthropy. The position of individuals in the occupational structure – especially formal insertion in the labor market (the "signed labor card") – is what defined one's incorporation or exclusion in the Brazilian protection system (SANTOS, 1979). In the field of social assistance, the conformation of the policy was characterized by the precarious, fragmented, and insufficient nature of the programs, which did not allow the structuring of a comprehensive and consistent system to guarantee social citizenship. For specific groups, a dense non-contributory base scheme was formed, with a profusion of pulverized, overlapping, fragmented programs

focused on and supported by patronage, welfarism, and the perspective of charity and philanthropy. Marked by "first damism" and the residual perspective, social assistance was not seen as a policy of rights but as one guided much more by the duty of those who offer help and the judgment on the "deservingness" of those who receive it. The Federal Constitution of 1988 marked a significant inflection in this trajectory, when social rights and the universal basis of social protection were emphasized, raising the status of social assistance policy, which assumed a leading role in the field of Brazilian welfare, alongside social security and health. Social assistance acquired, for the first time, the status of public policy. From this moment on, there is a densification of the redistributive nature of social policies and an undeniable advance of the social rights system. How are they configured or what is the design of social protection policies in Brazil? What are we talking about when we talk about social protection in the country? Castro (2011) made a representation of the conception of social protection and social promotion policies as the

two axes of social policy, as per Table 1.

one may observe in Figure 6.

From this macro characterization of the objectives and the location of these two large groups of policies, the author identified the location of the policies in this configuration, as

Table 1: Objectives, type of action, contingencies, risks, and needs of social policy in Brazil

	Objectives	Type of action	Contingencies, risks, and needs
Social Policies	Social Protection (social security)	Generation, use, and enjoyment of the capacities of individuals and social groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Inability to earn a living on their own due to external factors that are independent of individual will; – Vulnerable position in the human cycle (e.g., children and senior citizens); – Risk and contingency situations, as in cases of accidents (disability by accident)
	Social promotion (opportunities and outcomes)	Solidarity and social security to individuals and groups in response to rights, risks, contingencies, and social needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Unpreparedness for work and the exercise of citizenship; – Distortions of income and material wealth; – Distortions of asset allocation and collective services; – Marginalization of individuals and/or groups due to a lack of opportunity in the market

Source: Taken from CASTRO, 2011. Prepared by the authors

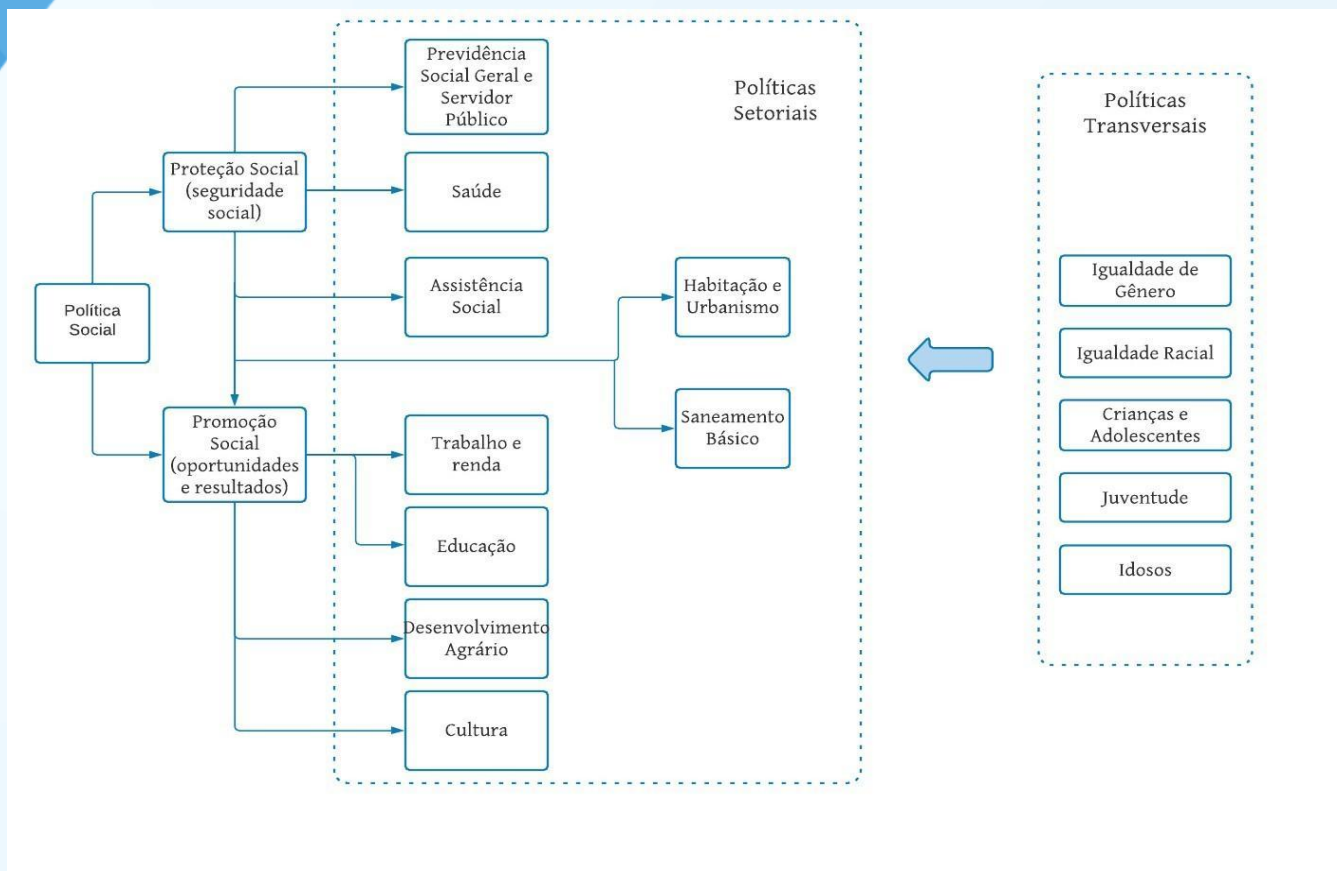
As one may observe, it is a complex and heterogeneous system built, institutionalized, and modified over the years. Thus, analyzing it integrally in ultra-detail far exceeds the scope and space of this bulletin. But zooming in on the social assistance policy allows us to observe the dimension of the effort made to build an important part of social protection in Brazil. The institutionalization of social assistance as a public policy is relatively recent and is still in the process of consolidation. In the Federal Constitution of 1988, it was conceived as part of the social security system, together with Social Security (contributory benefits) and Health (universal system). However, it was still a long time before the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS) was instituted, which established, from 2004 onwards, a new conception of protection, radically changing the meaning and scope of social protection in the country. Structured as a system and based on the principles of territoriality and socio-family matrix, the SUAS breaks with the tradition of patronage and the philanthropic bias of social assistance policy, inaugurating the perspective of social rights in this field. Regarding territoriality, this implies considering the territory as the basis for organizing the provision of social assistance services, and the socio-family matrix means taking the family as the focus of action, overcoming an individualistic view of needs that existed until then. However, moving from this welfare culture, centered on patronage and tutelage practices, to a view of rights and citizenship requires time and much institutional construction effort. Since 2004, significant efforts have been made to change the conception of assistance policy and its framework, reinforcing the idea of rights and citizenship.

With the SUAS, social assistance started to be organized as a system structured from two levels of protection, which organizes it by levels

of complexity, providing for its own equipment, services, and composition of professional teams for one type of care and another. The operational engineering of the policy adopts the distinction between two levels of care: Basic Social Protection (low complexity), focused on prevention actions, and Special Social Protection (medium and high complexity), for situations of medium and high complexity in which there are violations of rights. For both services, there is the social assistance network composed of civil society organizations that complement the offer of social assistance services.

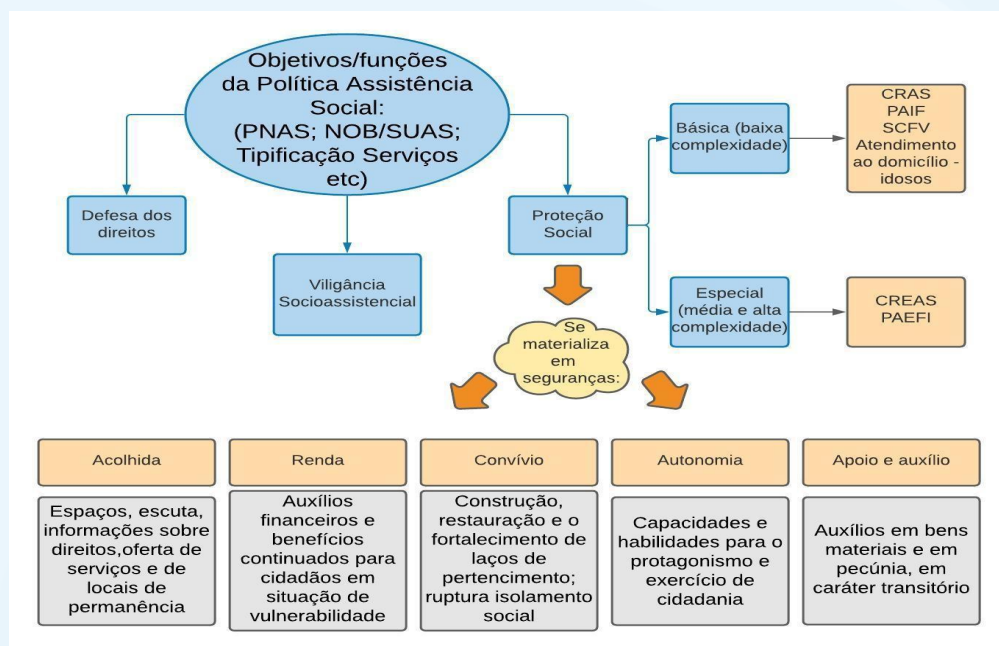
It is one of the largest social assistance systems in the world, with extensive territorial coverage aimed at protecting individuals, groups, and families in situations of social vulnerability or threats of violation of rights. The pieces of equipment for assistance at the level of basic protection (CRAS, Social Assistance Reference Centers) are present in all municipalities and located in territories of greatest vulnerability, reference more than 49 million families, and perform more than 21 million consultations per year (PLOA Technical Note 2021), revealing their centrality as equipment that develops social assistance services aimed at guaranteeing the social securities provided for in the SUAS. The public of the policy is made up of individuals and, above all, families who are in a vulnerable situation, either due to poverty or situations that weaken or threaten the achievement of rights, such as the homeless population, the LGBT population, senior citizens, people with disabilities, people in situations of sexual exploitation, and children and youths in conflict with the law, among other vulnerable publics. Below, Figure 7 presents, in a very general way, what the social assistance policy is and its conformation in security and normative and institutional devices.

Figure 6: Sectoral and Transversal Objectives and Policies of Brazilian Social Policy – 2010



Source: Taken from CASTRO, 2011. Prepared by the authors

Figure 7: The social assistance policy and its conformation in security and normative and institutional devices



Source: Prepared by the authors.

One may perceive, from the effort to institutionalize the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS), the wager of the central level of government to articulate social protection from a systemic perspective in an expanded conception of rights and citizenship. When analyzing the Brazilian social protection system in its non-contributory dimension, there are two fundamental pillars of the strategy: the social assistance services provided in the SUAS and the income transfer benefits, such as the Bolsa Família and the Continued Provision Benefit (BPC). In the context of income transfers, the Bolsa Família program served, in November 2003, 1.2 million families that participated in the transfer programs before being unified in the Bolsa Família program, and in 2018, this total reached 14,080,828 families. In 2021, this number was 14,264,964 families, practically unchanged, despite the growth in poverty in the period, as we will see in the next section. Another transfer benefit is the Continued Provision Benefit (BPC), which guarantees the transfer of 1 (one) time the minimum wage to senior citizens aged 65 (sixty-five) years or more and to people with disabilities of any age who prove that they do not have the means to provide their own maintenance or to have it provided by their family. Considering the expansion of the BPC over the years from 2004 to 2018, one may observe a significant evolution in the inclusion of beneficiaries, whether senior citizens or people with disabilities. This number more than doubled in the 13 years, totalizing 4.7 million beneficiaries in 2019. Recently, adjustments are being proposed to the definition of eligibility criteria, which has a negative impact on their effectiveness (JACCOUD, 2020).

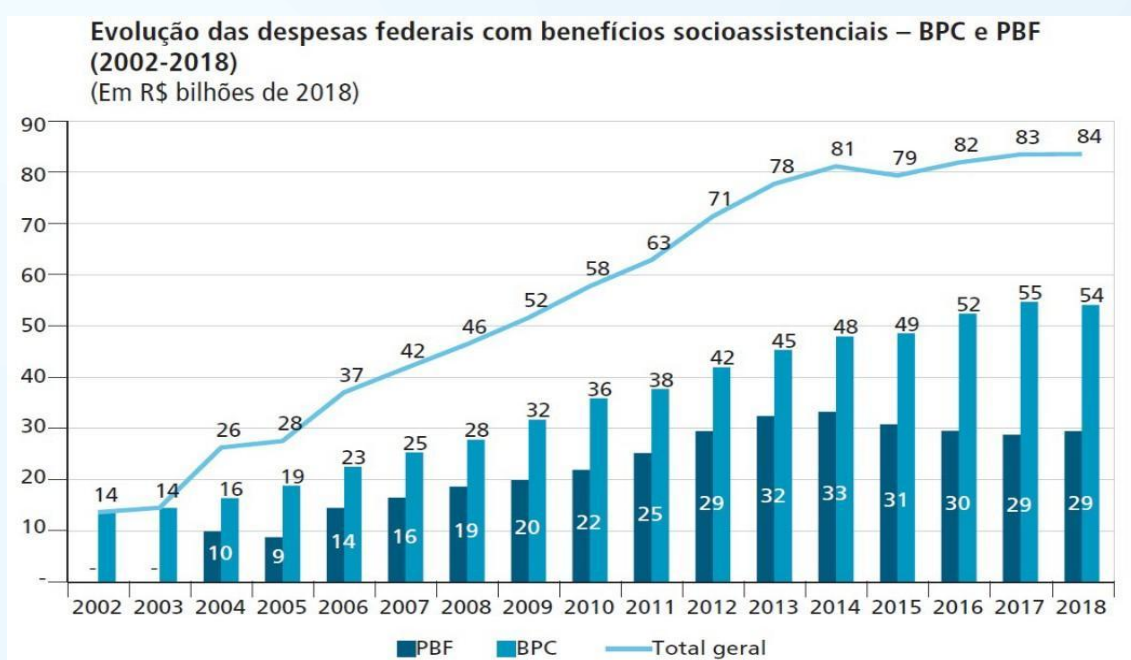
Chart 2 illustrates the evolution of the

federal expenses with the non-contributory benefits discussed above, and one may observe that the expansion of these important income transfer programs was accompanied by an increase in Federal Government expenditures, as expected, and demonstrates how the Union's investments in social protection areas were responsible for the expansion of these benefits. The expansion of the benefits was accompanied by the expansion of the SUAS services network. In 2007, there were just over 4 thousand CRAS in Brazil; in 2016, this number was 8,240. In 2019, the last year for which data are available on the website of the former Ministry of Social Development and the current Ministry of Citizenship, this number was 8,357. The CREAS, in 2008, totaled less than a thousand units; in 2016, this number exceeded 2,500 units. In 2019, that number was 2,689. Therefore, there is an extensive and powerful network of protection in all Brazilian municipalities, with more than 11 thousand reference centers throughout the country, more than 17 thousand typified services, more than 3 thousand reception and shelter services for children, youths, and senior citizens in conditions of extreme vulnerability with more than 160 thousand vacancies, and a network of 420 thousand SUAS workers throughout the national territory (SILVEIRA et al., 2020). However, this entire apparatus, arduously built since the Constitution and with more momentum since 2004, has been undergoing hard blows. This sharp reduction in funding conditions was intensified mainly by Constitutional Amendment 95, approved in 2016 and popularly known as the spending ceiling. This amendment aimed to limit public spending for 20 years to curb the increase in

public debt and mitigate the fiscal crisis. In practice, this budgetary limitation directly affected public policy expenditures in strategic areas, such as health, education, and social security, and led to a setback in social policies after years of advances, a setback evidenced by the aggravation of hunger, poverty, and

social inequality, as will be seen in the next section.

Chart 2: Evolution of federal expenses with social assistance benefits – BPC and the Bolsa Família Program (2002–2018) (in billions of R\$ from 2018)



Source: Siga Brasil. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/3g5CBcl>>.

Chart 3: Budget approved for Social Assistance – LOA- years 2012/2020

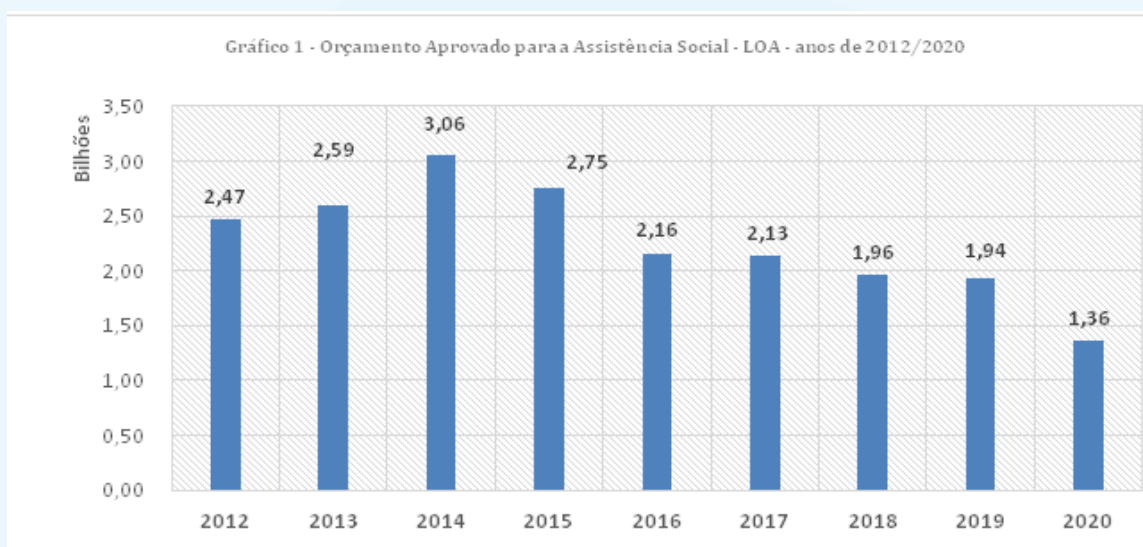
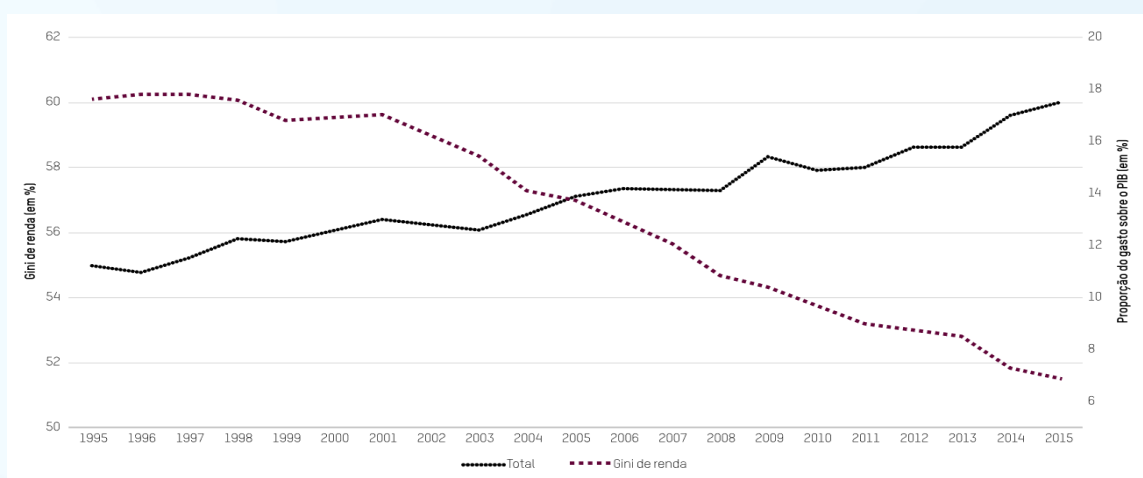


Chart 4 – Federal social spending versus the Gini Index for income – Brazil – 1995–2015



Source: INESC, 2020

The data in Chart 3 illustrate this dismantling movement. In 2012, the resources approved for assistance were around R\$ 2.5 billion, reaching more than R\$ 3 billion in 2014. From 2016 onwards, there was already a significant drop until 2020, with an approved budget of R\$ 1.3 billion, clearly insufficient to adequately provide public services in this policy area. This social protection architecture, combining such benefits and services, has been built more solidly since 2004, with increased coverage of services and benefits and a reduction in poverty, hunger, and inequality indicators. Chart 4 shows the relationships between the volume of social spending, as an indirect indicator of the attention paid to social policies, and income inequality, showing the drop in the Gini Index with increased investments in social spending. However, despite the importance of the social architectures discussed at the beginning of this bulletin, there has been an aggressive and continued dismantling of the social protection system in Brazil in recent years. On several fronts, there is a substantial setback in the field of social protection. There is evidence of

the rise of a welfare framework of social policy, with a return of the presence of the first damismo in the public scene (SILVEIRA, 2017) and the reduction of the budget for social policy in general and assistance in particular (SILVEIRA et al., 2020). Besides the drastic reduction in the coverage of the assistance programs and the funding of social assistance actions, there have also been changes in the rules and eligibility criteria for access to social assistance benefits (JACCOUD, 2020), in addition to institutional changes that seek to undermine the bases of the federative pact that sustained the construction of social protection in Brazil, such as the weakening of the policy agreement instances (SILVEIRA, 2017) and the spaces of social participation and public control.

3. CONSEQUENCES OF THE DISMANTLING: HUNGER, POVERTY, AND INEQUALITY

Among the various dimensions and different social indicators that may reveal the

improvements and setbacks of the social protection system, this bulletin understands that analyzing the data on food security, poverty, and income inequality may help us understand what has happened in Brazil in recent years.

3.1 Food Security

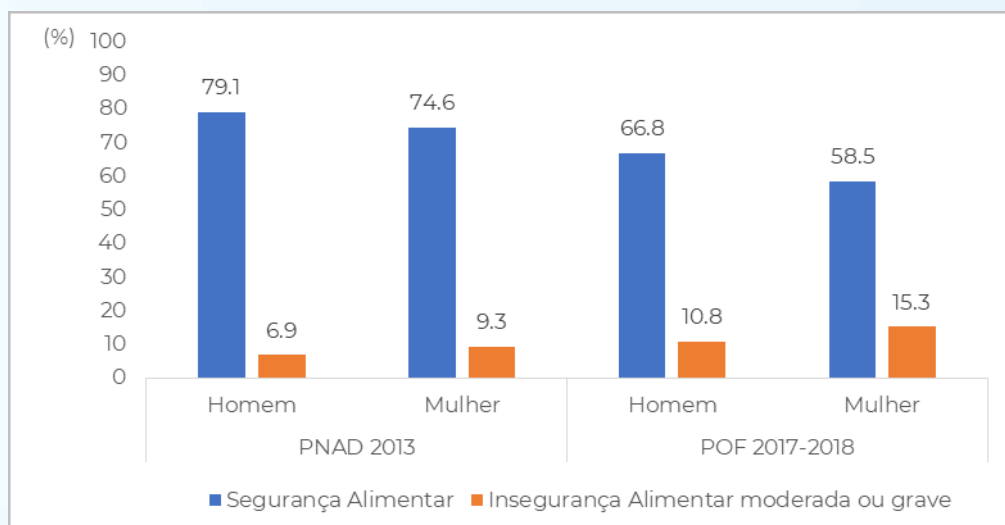
After a long period of setbacks in social policies motivated by the neoliberal reform of the State in the 1990s, starting in 2003, with the recreation of the National Council for Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA) and the creation of the Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger, food and nutrition security became part of the political agenda again. In 2010, the Organic Law on Food and Nutrition Security was regulated, and the National Food and Nutrition Security System (SISAN) was created, which has as its primary competence to regulate the exercise of Public Power together with the participation of society and to develop and elaborate public policies and actions that guarantee the right to food.

All this effort culminated in a reduction 82% in the number of Brazilians in a situation of food insecurity from 2002 to 2013 (FAO, 2014), also resulting in a drop in the Undernourishment Prevalence Index, a measure used by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for more than 50 years to calculate and monitor hunger at the global level, which reached a level of less than 5%, resulting in Brazil's exit from the World Hunger Map (LUPION, 2017).

Food security is covered by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), more specifically by SDG 2 – Ending hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture – which makes this indicator even more relevant for the discussion of this bulletin. Food security may be defined as

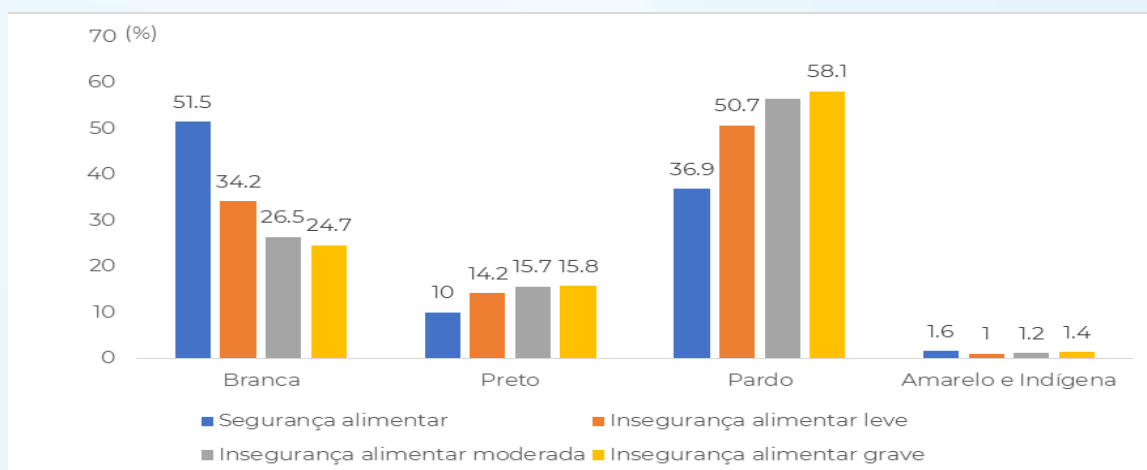
compliance with the right of everyone to regular and permanent access to quality food in sufficient amounts without compromising the achievement of other essential needs. The United Nations FAO defined, in 2013, a scale that measures food insecurity according to three degrees: mild, moderate, and severe. From this perspective, a household is classified as mildly food insecure when there is uncertainty and concern about future access to food. In turn, a moderate level of food insecurity is observed when the food quality and its variety are impaired, and residents have dietary restrictions with daily meals not had. Finally, the severe level of food insecurity is verified when residents are in a situation of severe deprivation in food consumption. The 2017-2018 Family Budget Survey (POF) by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) included, among other information, the trajectory of Brazil's situation concerning food security in recent years. Chart 5 shows that, in 2017-2018, of the 68.9 million households in Brazil, about 36.7% were in some degree of food insecurity, reaching a total of 84.9 million individuals. When the results of the POF are compared with the 2013 National Survey by Household Sample (PNAD), the last time the data on this indicator were produced by the IBGE, one may observe that food insecurity increased by 62.4% in households, i.e., it jumped from 22.6% to 36.7%, equivalent to 25.3 million households. In addition, food security, according to the 2004 PNAD, reached about 65.1% of Brazilian households, and when compared to the 2017-2018 POF, one may realize that the number drops to 63.3 percent, the lowest since the data was first produced.

Chart 6: Prevalence of food security and moderate or severe food insecurity in private households, according to the sex of the reference person – Brazil – 2013/2018



Source: IBGE, 2017-2018 POF. Prepared by the authors

Chart 7: Situation of Food Security and Food Insecurity according to skin color or race (in %)



Source: IBGE, 2017-2018 POF. Prepared by the authors

Thus, the elements discussed above reflect the setback in the fight against hunger in Brazil to the extent that, after a decade of advances, they point to a worsening in food security indicators, reaching the lowest levels in the historical series. It is important to mention that food insecurity affects men and women and also white and black people differently: this situation of extreme vulnerability is amplified by gender and race conditions. From this perspective, Chart 6

illustrates the prevalence of food security and insecurity according to the sex of the reference person, and one may notice that gender inequality in access to food grew significantly from 2013 to 2018. According to the 2013 PNAD, about 9.3% of households with moderate or severe food insecurity were headed by women, compared to 6.9% of households headed by men. In turn, in the 2017-2018 POF, this percentage increased to 15.3%, with only 10.8%

in male-headed households, evidencing a worsening inequality level. In addition, according to the same survey, more than half of the households, about 51.9%, exposed to severe levels of food insecurity were headed by women, a fact that demonstrates how the context of social vulnerability from the perspective of women assumes an even greater severity and may be explained by the hyper-responsibility of domestic tasks and the difficulties of insertion in the formal labor market that may be directly correlated with discrimination in the labor market and/or low level of employability. Additionally, Chart 7 points to the situation of food security and food insecurity according to the cutout by skin color or race, and one may observe that households in a food security condition are predominantly of white families, with about 51.5%. As the degree of food insecurity increases, so does the predominance of families headed by black and brown people, reaching 15.8% and 58.1%, respectively, for the prevalence of severe food insecurity, demonstrating how food insecurity affects black and brown people much more intensely than white people.

Part of the explanation for the setback described above lies in the strong economic recession that Brazil has faced in recent years, resulting in an increase in the number of unemployed and discouraged people. However, several decisions of a political nature made by governments, especially in the last four years, also explain the negative results regarding the guarantee of access to food. An example of such decisions is evidenced in the extinction of the National Council for Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA), an important sphere of articulation between civil society and the government, the primary objective of which was to guide public policies in this area. The extinction of this council resulted in the strangulation of resources in strategic projects to combat hunger, such as the Food Agriculture Food Acquisition Program (PAA) and the Cistern Program.

3.2 Poverty

Of all the indicators discussed in this bulletin, poverty is probably the most complex and also the most important to analyze the current scenario of social programs and the social protection system in Brazil. In this context, for the purpose of analysis, we will investigate this indicator through the absolute poverty line, i.e., using the concept of poverty incidence related to income insufficiency and the proportion of the population with income below an established level. In other words, absolute poverty classifies individuals from income insufficiency to the minimum satisfaction of basic survival needs, and, in this sense, all subjects whose income is not sufficient for their survival are classified as poor. Extreme poverty also uses a monetary line to identify families and individuals who are in a situation of misery, with insufficient income to provide even minimal food.

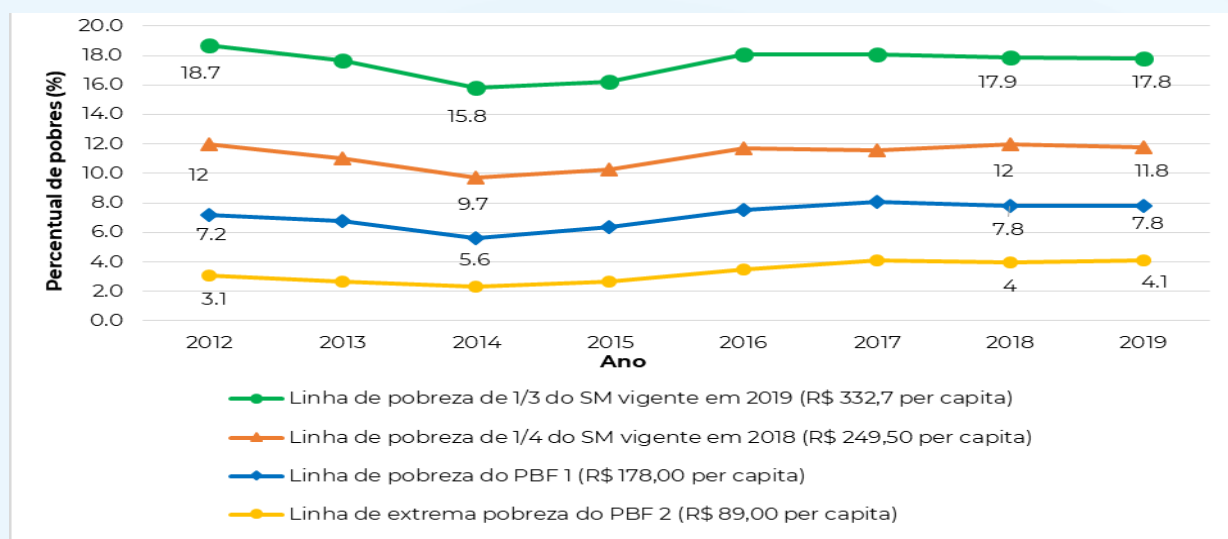
From 2001 to 2011, Brazil experienced an improvement in the historical series of the PNAD

1 *"The poverty gap indicates the average distance (as a percentage of income) that households in a condition of poverty are from the poverty line. Thus, this measure captures, in addition to the number of families considered poor, the dimension of the distance that the incomes of such families are from the poverty line. In turn, the severity is a measure similar to the gap, differing only by increasing the weight of families with lower incomes. Thus, by comparing the role of income sources in reducing these indicators, one may infer the focus of these income sources in society. The more the result grows when comparing the proportion, the gap, and the severity of poverty, in this order, the more focused the source of income analyzed". (STN, 2016)*

referring to the average income of families and a significant decline in poverty and extreme poverty rates. It is important to point out that public investment in the offer of protection has generated not only a reduction in the incidence of poverty but also in its depth. The data show the reduction of the poverty gap and its severity from 1992 to 2014, with greater strength and intensity from 2004 onwards (SAGI, 2015). This means that poverty and misery not only shrunk in size, but the poor became less poor, narrowing the gap relative to a monetary poverty line. But whatever the definition of poverty, there are the effects of a protection policy that actually improved the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable, also increasing social mobility (NATALINO, 2015). In terms of numbers, the average income of the households grew more than 30% in this period, accompanied by a decrease of approximately 10% in the Gini coefficient. From this perspective, Chart 8 illustrates the percentage of poor people for four poverty lines, namely, the two eligibility limits for the Bolsa Família program, which are R\$ 89 per capita per month for extreme poverty and R\$ 178 for poverty, the line of one-fourth of the monthly minimum wage, corresponding to R\$

238.5 per month per capita, and the line of one-third of the monthly minimum wage, equivalent to R\$ 332.7 per month per capita. The year 2014 was an inflection point in the so-far descending trajectory of poverty in Brazil. For the three poverty lines, as of 2014, there was an increase in the number of individuals in this condition, a fact that may be explained by the strong economic crisis experienced during this period, and that also shows the insufficiency of income from social programs such as the Bolsa Família and Continued Provision Benefit, as well as unemployment insurance, to face and overcome poverty, even if they are transfers or benefits extremely important as a minimum safety net. In other words, these social programs were insufficient to mitigate the damage caused to the labor market by the 2014 recession. However, although still insufficient, such benefits are being targeted by several budget cuts by the last governments (BARBOSA, SOARES, & SOUZA, 2020).

Chart 8: Poverty Rate for four Poverty Lines – Brazil, 2012-2019



Source: BARBOSA, SOARES, and SOUZA, 2020. Prepared by the authors

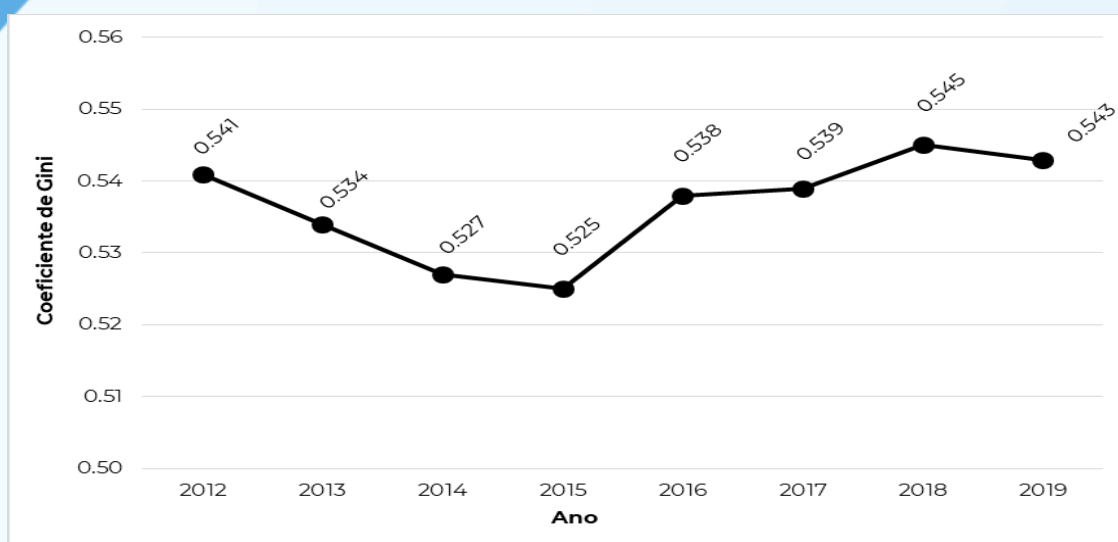
A narrative that seeks to explain the resurgence of poverty in recent years affirms the explanatory centrality of the international economic crisis of 2008, which would have arrived in Brazil with force in 2014, marking this inflection. But we hypothesize that the economic crisis is not enough to explain such setbacks; the explanation has to take into account the strong fiscal austerity policy adopted by recent governments, which limits social spending and promotes cuts in strategic areas of the social protection network, aligned with residual representations and views of protection and social assistance. For example, Constitutional Amendment No. 103/2019, known as the Social Security Reform, even debated the end of the Continued Provision Benefit but backed down after a heated discussion in the Chamber of Deputies, just as, at the beginning of 2020, the Bolsa Família program underwent a cut of 158,452 families, most located in the Northeast region, a cut that was suspended by the Federal Supreme Court (STF) during the pandemic (XAVIER, 2019; BRITO, 2020).

3.3 Income inequality

Regarding income inequality, the figures are even clearer to demonstrate the effects of dismantling social protection policies. Chart 9 shows the trajectory of the Gini coefficient, an important measure of inequality that ranges from 0 (perfect equality) to 1 (perfect inequality), for the

period from 2012 to 2018; one may observe that the index in question came from a downward trend that was interrupted in 2015, with the Gini Index jumping from 0.525 in 2015 to 0.538. Translating this index to another measure, we have that, from the end of 2014 to the second quarter of 2019, the income of the poorest 50% of the population decreased by 17%, that of the wealthiest 10% by 3%, and that of the wealthiest 1% increased by about 10% (NERI, 2019). From the above data, it becomes evident that 2015 was a game changer, and the 2014 recession impacted the poor in a totally different way from the groups with higher incomes since the potential of appropriation of growth in the period of economic recovery, especially in a context of fiscal austerity, is disproportionately more opportune for the wealthiest. Thus, the trend of improvement in income distribution observed since the beginning of the century was interrupted, and we do not know if it is the beginning of another movement or if it is a temporary behavior. Regardless of this, the fact is that the 2010s were a lost decade in the fight against poverty and inequality in Brazil, i.e., the setbacks pointed out brought the indicators to positions equal to or worse than those observed at the beginning of the decade (BARBOSA, SOARES, & SOUZA, 2020).

Graph 9: Gini Coefficient for per capita household income (2012-2019) – Brazil



Source: BARBOSA, SOARES, and SOUZA, 2020. Prepared by the authors

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The assumption that guided the preparation of this bulletin may be summarized by the following statement by Esping Andersen: "A more basic question consists of knowing what kind of stratification system is promoted by the social policy. The Social Welfare State is not just a mechanism that intervenes in – and perhaps corrects – the structure of inequality; it is, in itself, a system of stratification. It is an active force in the ordering of social relations" (ANDERSEN, 1991, p. 104). The social protection model constructed as a result of a social pact materialized in the Federal Constitution of 1988, which strengthened over the years in the direction of universalization and comprehensiveness of protection and is based on the perspective of rights, has been under threat since the white coup of 2016. The model of protection that guides the measures taken since then signals a residual and liberal view of the State, in which the degree of de-commodification is low, and it is up to individuals to buy their well-being in the market, subject to their own fate to find work in

an increasingly casualized and shrinking market and protection in an increasingly hostile and unequal world. This was the axis that guided the preparation of this bulletin: social protection policies are historical, social constructions that materialize in different institutions, policies, and actions and that produce effects on the dynamics and processes of production and reproduction of poverty and social inequality. They are neither neutral nor merely technical choices; they are, especially, political and inspired or motivated by both material and ideological interests. As seen in the first part, the composition or architecture of the protection involves other policies beyond the non-contributory services and benefits of social assistance. The social security policies and policies of regulation and protection via the labor market also make up the framework of social protection, and the dismantling of protection, therefore, also covers other policies, in addition to social assistance, which is the focus of this bulletin.

If the prognosis for social protection was bad before the pandemic, with the emergence of

a government with little commitment to social justice parameters, the situation is one of absolute disaster, with tendencies towards barbarism (CASTRO, 2020). Considering the performance of different indicators over the 32 years of the Federal Constitution, Castro observed that, from 2015 to 2018, there was what he called the "return of exclusion" and, as of 2019, "exclusion towards barbarism", with significant worsening in terms of working conditions and income, reduced protection for active and inactive people, increased poverty and extreme poverty, increased income concentration, terrible expectations concerning health, education, and infrastructure (sanitation and housing), with expectations of worsening in social security. The pandemic exacerbate intolerable inequalities, and further widened the gap between the wealthy and poor in the world and in the country. Although the pandemic connects us with our most basic vulnerability, to illness and death, this vulnerability is also marked by the wedge of inequality. In addition, it became more evident the centrality of the State to guarantee protection to citizens in the face of a risk event as drastic as a pandemic, which threatens everyone, but the incidence, lethality, and consequences of which vary according to income, territory, gender, and skin color of the population.

The emergency aid came as a protection measure and was responsible for the containment of poverty during 2020, as several studies have pointed out (BARBOSA & PRATES, 2020). However, the debate on the subject has shown the need for a more permanent protection device capable of enabling a basic income to all citizens, of a universal and unconditional nature, articulated to other social protection programs and devices of a non-monetary nature. A public and universal health system and social assistance

services aimed at social prevention, protection, and promotion, together with contributory and regulatory policies in the field of labor and social security, constitute the foundations of the conception of social security that is in the Federal Constitution and forged the democratic utopia of the 1980s. The serious debate on the directions of social protection policies in the country requires that basic income policies and other social protection and public policy devices, such as social assistance services and tax justice instruments, be considered in relation to each other, in an integrated, coordinated, and substantiated manner, especially by dense conceptions of justice, as denominated by Kerstenetzky (2006), and which provide the normative bases from which social protection architectures are built.

The data entered here undoubtedly demonstrate the shrinkage of protection devices at the same time as the expansion of poverty and inequality. There is a reduction in the coverage of the main income transfer program in the country simultaneously with the deterioration of the living conditions of the Brazilian population and the return of hunger, the basic threshold of human reproduction. Not only in the assistance policy but also the other pillars of social protection, as in the labor reform, there is evidence of the destructuring and weakening policies aimed at promoting, after all, social justice in the country.

The great challenge is not only to keep alive the flame of commitment to democracy and the conception of rights but also to adopt a bold conception of protection aligned with a perspective of transformative social protection (DEVEREUX & SABATES-WHEELER, 2004), which emphasizes the potential of social protection to contribute to economic growth. In this sense, social protection is not only seen as a

short-term palliative measure generally adopted ex-post to ameliorate inequalities generated by the very economic growth process but also as an important component of the economic growth process itself. By changing hierarchies and unequal relationships, social protection may contribute to social transformation, which will reduce economic vulnerabilities. If the ethical argument or the normative dimension of justice is not enough to mobilize hearts and minds in defense of social protection in Brazil, let this defense be for more petty and pragmatic reasons, to favor economic development and enable the basic conditions of solidarity, cohesion, and maintenance of the social fabric, under penalty of its fraying and barbarism.

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Expedient

Observatory of Inequalities

Partnership between the João Pinheiro Foundation and the Regional Council of Economy – MG

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Team of the Observatory of Inequalities

Coordination: Bruno Lazzarotti Diniz Costa and Matheus Arcelo

Assistant researchers: Marina Tereza da Silva Coelho

Supervision of this edition: Carla Bronzo Ladeira

Art and Layout: Lucas Augusto de Lima Brandão