



## The first years in your hands

*This guide is meant for quick consultation and offers essential information about this stage of life and all the laws, rights, and challenges related to it*

**SINCE 2007**, the Maria Cecilia Souto Vidigal Foundation has worked on a variety of fronts to promote, support, and raise awareness about the idea that planting the seed of full development during the stage of life that goes from birth to six years of age will lead to the

reaping of results for the rest of a child's life. A well cared-for child will become an independent, productive, and healthy adult. The impact of the care a child receives reverberates in complex ways throughout the different areas of both the private life of

the individual and their social, economic, and national context. This guide was composed as a tool for you to always have information on hand regarding the main data, laws, and arguments related to early childhood.

ILLUSTRATION: Anna Cunha

## The goals of the Maria Cecilia Souto Vidigal Foundation



Daycare for those who want or need it.  
Preschool for everyone.

**Always high quality.**



**Strengthen caretakers.**

Support the most vulnerable families,  
from pregnancy to 3 years of age.



Evaluation of early childhood:

**that which can't be measured,  
can't be improved.**



Everyone needs to know:

**what a child experiences  
during early childhood has  
an impact on their entire life.**

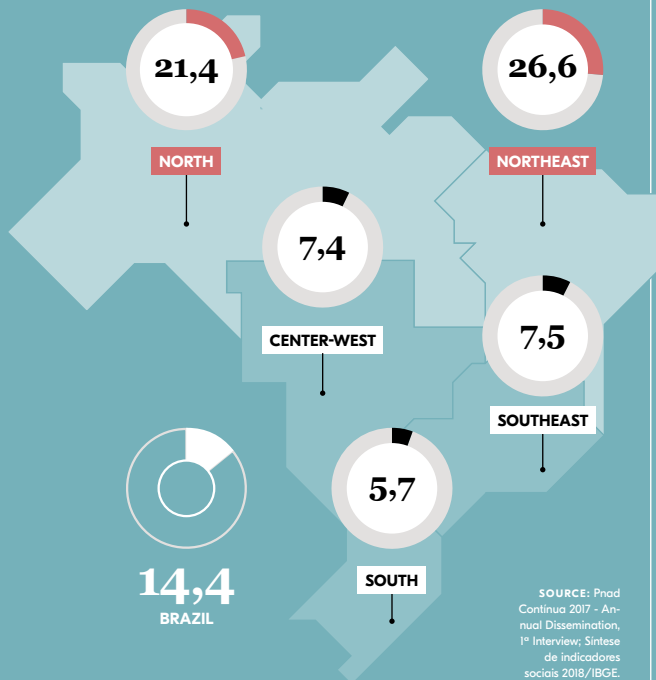


# Portrait of Early Childhood in Brazil

*Teenage pregnancy, extreme poverty, and violence make several of the challenges to be faced very urgent*

## THE INEQUALITY MAP

% of people who live in households with children between the ages of 0 and 6 years old and that have a per capita family income of below R\$ 170\*



20.6 million

IS THE ESTIMATED NUMBER of children between the ages of 0 and 6 in 2019 in Brazil. <sup>1</sup>



1 in every 3

OF THESE CHILDREN LIVE IN POVERTY or extreme poverty. <sup>2</sup>

## NOT EVEN THE BASICS

Primary infrastructure is still not a reality for many of the families with children between the ages of 0 and 6

No sewer system



No running water



No garbage disposal services



SOURCE: Pnad Continua 2017 - Annual Dissemination, 1<sup>st</sup> Interview; Síntese de indicadores sociais 2018/IBGE. CREATED BY: CPP/Inspier

## • THE GREATEST NUMBER OF CASES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

involves children between the ages of 1 and 5 (51.2%). In 37% of the cases, the perpetrator was a relative of the victim. <sup>3</sup>

• HALF OF THE PARENTS OR GUARDIANS of children under the age of 4 did not complete high school. <sup>4</sup>



Every year, one in 5 babies born in Brazil is the child of an adolescent mother,

according to the country's Ministry of Health. In poorer regions, the number of adolescent mothers is even higher. <sup>5</sup>

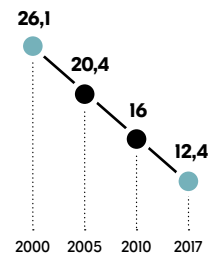
1/3

OF CHILDREN UP TO 5 YEARS OLD in Brazil are overweight. <sup>6</sup>

• THE PERCENTAGE OF UNREGISTERED CHILDREN in the North and Northeast regions remains high: 12.5% and 11.9%, respectively. <sup>7</sup>

## THE CHALLENGE IS STILL HUGE

Evolution of child mortality rate (up to 1 year old) per thousand live births <sup>8</sup>



<sup>1</sup> IBGE and MDS 2018 <sup>2</sup> Análise epidemiológica da violência sexual contra crianças e adolescentes no Brasil, 2011 - 2017 <sup>3</sup> Aspectos dos cuidados das crianças de menos de 4 anos de idade, Pnad 2015 <sup>4</sup> Datasus, 2015 <sup>5</sup> Ministério da Saúde, Datasus and Fundação Abrinq <sup>6</sup> IBGE and Fundação Abrinq, 2017 <sup>7</sup> MS/SVS/CGIAE - Sistema de Informações sobre Mortalidade - SIM



# Child development

*The influence that the care received, and external environment have on the creation of connections in the brain make the first years of life a crucial period*



## THE IMPORTANCE OF STIMULI

The full development of the children is determined by the way they relates to the world around them

Speaking,   
singing,   
playing,   
and reading   
to babies  
and children

are the best ways to stimulate learning. Babies who receive more attention from their caretakers and interact in a safe and secure environment are emotionally healthier and better cultivate intellectual and motor skills.



THE BOND BETWEEN ADULT AND CHILD, STRENGTHENED BY DAILY CARE, is essential to a child's emotional development. <sup>1</sup>



LIVING IN A THREATENING ATMOSPHERE, permeated by violence, poverty, abuse, and neglect can produce alterations that will negatively affect the child for the rest of her life. <sup>2</sup>



The human brain begins its development before birth. The care given a fetus during pregnancy, therefore, is fundamental,

as a variety of structures are formed and mature during this period. <sup>3</sup>



DURING THESE FIRST YEARS OF LIFE, a child's neural connections form at a rate of **1 million per second.** It is a unique time. <sup>4</sup>

**90%**

of brain connections take place by 6 years of age. <sup>5</sup>

**53%**

OF BRAZILIANS believe that children begin to learn only after the first 6 months of life, despite the fact that science has proven that they learn from the time they're in the womb. <sup>6</sup>



But we shouldn't be deterministic about this.

The human brain has enough plasticity to be able to learn until the end of life. However, it's a fact that the rate of learning diminishes after early childhood. <sup>7</sup>



<sup>1</sup><sup>2</sup> Importância dos vínculos familiares na primeira infância, Núcleo Ciência Pela Infância, 2016 <sup>3</sup> De Casper, A. J.; Fifer, W.P., Of human bonding: newborn prefer their mothers' voices. Science, 1980 <sup>4</sup> Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, In brief: the science of early childhood development <sup>5</sup> Unicef, Relatório anual do fundo das Nações Unidas para a infância, Brasília, 2006. <sup>6</sup> Primeiríssima Infância, 2012 Ibope <sup>7</sup> Singer W., Development and plasticity of cortical processing architectures science.

# The context of early childhood education in Brazil

*Raising awareness among families of the benefits of early childhood education, a lack of vacancies, and the quest for quality are the current challenges being faced*



**ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION** is a right guaranteed to both children and their families by the Constitution. <sup>1</sup>



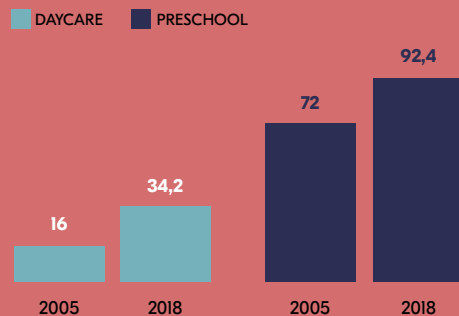
**WITHOUT EQUAL ACCESS**

• **AMONG THE POOREST 25% OF FAMILIES IN THE BRAZILIAN POPULATION**, only 26% of children are in daycare. <sup>2</sup>

• **AMONG THE RICHEST 25% OF FAMILIES**, more than half — 55% of children — have access to daycare. <sup>2</sup>

## EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN 0 TO 5 YEARS OLD

The National Education Plan aimed to provide universal early childhood education in preschools (4-5 years old) by 2016 and in daycares (up to 3 years old) to at least 50% of children by 2024 (In %)



SOURCE: Pnad Continua 2018 Educação



Despite being obligatory, more than

# 300,000

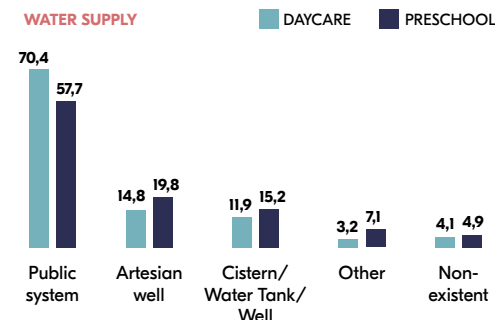
**CHILDREN BETWEEN 4 AND 5 YEARS OLD ARE NOT IN PRESCHOOL** in Brazil. Out of this number, 41.4% don't attend due to their family's choice. <sup>3</sup>

## PUBLIC SYSTEM ESTABLISHMENTS

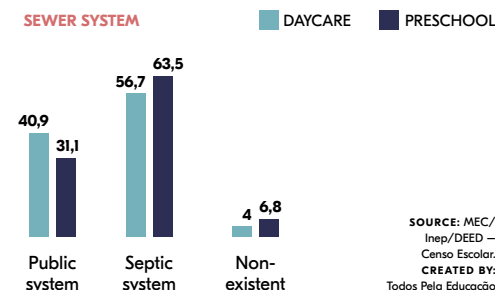
By education level, according to the resources available at the school — Brazil — 2018 (In %)

RECURSOS	CRECHE	PRÉ-ESCOLA
Playground	40	28,6
Reading Room	15,4	15,7
Indoor bathroom	89,6	85
Age-appropriate bathroom	51,4	34,3
Filtered water	87,7	82,6
Access to electricity	98,7	96,6

## WATER SUPPLY



## SEWER SYSTEM



SOURCE: MEC/ Inep/DEED — Censo Escolar.  
CREATED BY: Todos Pela Educação

<sup>1</sup> Federal Constitution of 1988 <sup>2</sup> Pnad Continua 2016 - 2017 — Anuário Todos Pela Educação <sup>3</sup> Education at a glance 2019 - OCDE

• **34.7% OF CHILDREN 2 AND 3 YEARS OF AGE** don't attend daycare because of lack of access, whether due to a lack of a vacancy or a facility. Among children 0 to 1 years old, this percentage is 21.1%. <sup>4</sup>

# 0.7%

**GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP)** is invested in daycares and preschools in Brazil. <sup>5</sup>



**BEGINNING IN 2019, EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION** will begin to be evaluated within the Saeb (Basic Education Evaluation System). The lack of information on quality hinders the improvement of services for children 0 to 6 years old at daycares and preschools.



# Why invest in early childhood

*Studies and research conducted around the world have provided evidence for the economic, social, and health importance of investing in this stage of life*

## PROVEN BY SCIENCE

If we improve the conditions of the most vulnerable children now, guaranteeing them:

healthcare 

 affection,

nutrition, 

 security,

and quality 

 education

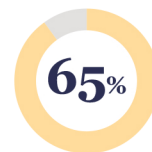
we greatly increase the possibilities of them having a better future.

• **ACCORDING TO AMERICAN ECONOMIST** James Heckman, the Nobel prize for Economics in 2000, high quality birth-to-five programs for disadvantaged children can deliver a 13% return on investment. <sup>1</sup>

**25%**

**HIGHER SALARIES, ON AVERAGE,** that's what children from poor families who attend quality daycare can earn in the future compared to those who haven't had the same opportunity. <sup>2</sup>

Quality early childhood education stimulates socio-emotional skills and helps reduce by



the chances of an individual committing a violent crime



the chances of going to jail



the chances of being unemployed <sup>3</sup>

A good early childhood contributes to the establishment of a strong foundation for a more secure

family environment, resulting in major gains for future generations as well. <sup>4</sup>



Education and Health



Unemployment and Crime



In the long term, children exposed to fewer opportunities

to develop during this stage of life, have a higher probability of becoming poor adults, perpetuating the phenomena known as the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

• **TO BUILD A SOCIETY** with more equitable opportunities, public policies geared toward actions with a special focus on the first years of life are indispensable.

<sup>1</sup> Heckmanequation.org <sup>2</sup> Heckman, J.; Gertler, P. et al., Labor market returns to an early childhood stimulation intervention in Jamaica <sup>3</sup> Sneha, E.; Hojman, A.; Garcia, J.L. and Heckman, J., Early childhood education 2016 <sup>4</sup> Heckman, J.; Karapakula, G., Intergenerational and intragenerational externalities of the Perry Preschool Project

# Early Childhood Legal Framework

*Approved in 2016, this law bridges the gap between what science has to say about children from birth to 6 years of age and the guidelines for the formulation and implementation of public policies regarding early childhood. Below are some of its most relevant provisions:*

## THE INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN UP TO 6 YEARS OF AGE IN DRAFTING PUBLIC POLICIES

• **ARTICLE 4 (PARAGRAPH 2)**  
“Children should be included in the formulation of the actions taken on their behalf, in accordance with the characteristics of their age and level of development.”

## Guarantee children the right to play

• **ARTICLE 17**  
“The Union, the States, the Federal District and the Municipalities must organize and encourage the creation of recreational spaces encourage well-being, Play and the exercise of creativity in public and private spaces where children circulate, as well as the enjoyment of open and secure environments in their communities.”

## HOUSE ARREST FOR MOTHERS AND PREGNANT WOMEN

• **ARTICLE 41**  
“The judge can substitute preventative incarceration with house arrest when the suspect is pregnant or a woman with a child under the age of 12 years old.”



## PRIORITIZE THE QUALIFICATIONS OF PROFESSIONALS OVER THE SPECIFICS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

• **ARTICLE 9**  
“Policies regarding early childhood shall be developed with professional educational institutions, with the goal of tailoring the courses to the

characteristics and needs of children and training qualified professionals, in order to enable the expansion of a variety of services while maintaining high quality standards.”

## Reinforce the importance of providing in-home attention, especially in cases of children in vulnerable situations.

• **ARTICLE 14**  
“Family support policies and government programs, including home visits and the promotion of responsible parenting programs, shall be conducted in coordination

with health, nutrition, education, social assistance, cultural, labor, housing, environmental, and human rights departments, among others, to support the full development of the child.”



## EXTEND PATERNITY LEAVE TO 20 DAYS AT COMPANIES THAT ADHERE TO THE “PROGRAMA EMPRESA CIDADÃ”

• **ARTICLE 38 (PARAGRAPH 2)**  
“Extension of paternity leave from 5 to 20 days. This rule, however, only applies to public servants and employees of companies registered in the “Programa Empresa Ciudadã”, a federal tax reduction program for companies.”



## INSTITUTE EQUAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES BETWEEN MOTHERS, FATHERS, AND GUARDIANS

• **ARTICLE 26**  
“The mother and father, or other guardians, are endowed with equal rights and shared duties and responsibilities with regard to the care and education of the their child, and their right to hand down their families’ beliefs and culture shall be protected, in as far as such right does not conflict with the child’s rights established by this law.



## SPECIAL ATTENTION AND PROTECTION FOR MOTHERS WHO DECIDE TO GIVE THEIR CHILD UP FOR ADOPTION AND DETAINED PREGNANT WOMEN

• **ARTICLE 8**  
“Access to women’s health programs and policies and reproductive planning is guaranteed to all women, and adequate nutrition and comprehensive humanized care during pregnancy, birth, and the post-partum period through the national Single Health System is guaranteed to pregnant women.”



# Early Childhood and the SDGs

*The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are part of the UN's agenda for 2030 and constitute a plan of action against poverty, to protect the planet, and to guarantee peace, health, and prosperity to all people*

Created by the United Nations in 2016, the SDGs include 17 goals to be met by 2030. Early childhood development is directly interconnected to 11 of these goals, which are as follows:



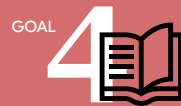
## ERADICATE POVERTY

Right at the beginning of life, when the brain is at its maximum capacity for development, children learn abilities that will help them flourish in the 21st century. Caring well for a child during this stage of life is the most cost-effective strategy to combat poverty.



## GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Caring well for a child during early childhood ensures that the course his or her life will take will be a healthier one, up to old age. Those who receive adequate care during this stage of life have a lower chance of developing cardiovascular problems, as well as a number of other health issues.



## QUALITY EDUCATION

Learning begins at birth. It has been proven that action taken during early childhood is the basis for future learning, academic success and productivity. A study on enrollment in preschools conducted in 73 countries has shown that a child's future salary increases between 6 and 17 dollars per dollar invested, which indicates potential long-term benefits amounting to between 11 billion and 34 billion dollars.



## GENDER EQUALITY

Investment in high-quality and accessible day-care facilities is related to providing women better opportunities to advance economically.



## DECENT WORK FOR EVERYONE

Having daycare services adequate to families' needs is essential to guaranteeing the ability to work. This being the case, investing in training and qualification of daycare professionals is fundamental.



## SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Children in early childhood need safe spaces with sustainable and natural elements that introduce them to nature within cities and other human settlements.



## REDUCED INEQUALITIES

Quality care during early childhood is a powerful equalizer of the inequalities that exist between children who are born into different life situations with different levels of opportunity. Children in vulnerable situations who receive adequate care earn a 25% higher income when they are adults than their peers in similar situations who don't receive such care.



## SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

Early childhood programs should include healthy consumption habits and positive attitudes toward conservation. What a child learns at the beginning of life last forever.



## PEACE AND JUSTICE

Quality care during early childhood as the potential to promote neurobiological health and cultivate resilience and values that can reduce violence and promote peace.



## PARTNERS IN THE GOALS

Measuring early childhood development on a global and regional level is a powerful tool for establishing partnerships centered around the issue. Surveys conducted by UNICEF can help with this work.

Consult: Unicef's MICS



# Glossary

## B

### BOND

The innate connection between interdependent individuals.

### BRAIN

The brain is part of the nervous system and controls all of the body's processes. Protected by the cranium, it is the home of our knowledge and development.

### BRAIN PLASTICITY

The brain's ability to constantly modify not only its functions, but also its structure, throughout its life, influenced by an individual's experiences.

## C

### CHILDREN

People under 12 years old, according to the Child and Adolescent Statute (ECA).

### COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Relates to the so-called

higher mental functions, such as memory, association, deductive reasoning, and the ability to plan, among others.

## D

### DAYCARE

Educational facility that serves children up to 3 years old.

### DEVELOPMENT

Construction and acquisition of new abilities in a continuous, dynamic, and progressive manner in order to be able to carry increasingly more complex functions. This concept is wide-reaching and encompasses growth and maturation in a variety of contexts.

## E

### EARLY CHILDHOOD

Period that covers the first full six years, or 72 months, of a child's life, as defined by the Early Childhood Legal Frameworks (Law no. 13.257/2016).

### EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Education provided to children up to 6 years of age.

### ECA – CHILD AND ADOLESCENT STATUTE

Law no. 8.069, approved July, 13, 1990. This constitutes the set of rules and regulations meant to provide comprehensive protection to children and adolescents. It constitutes the legal and regulatory framework for human, child, and adolescent rights.

### EPIGENETIC

Field of biology that studies chances to a gene that are not due to alterations in the DNA sequence. This field analyses how experiences, nutrition, and other external factors alter the expression of genes.

### EXECUTIVE FUNCTION AND SELF-REGULATION SKILLS

Refers to the mental process that allows for planning, focus, memorization, and balancing multiple functions.

## F

### FULL DEVELOPMENT

Refers to the development of physical, emotional, social, and cognitive aspects.

## L

### LEARNING

The process of constructing, acquiring, and appropriating knowledge.

## N

### NEURON

Brain cell.

## P

### PARENTING

This concept describes the set of activities carried out by an adult charged with the care of child in order to ensure the child's survival and full development in a way that promotes their social integration and make them progressively more independent.

### PRESCHOOL

Educational facility

that serves children 4 and 5 years of age.

## S

### SUBJECT OF RIGHTS

The Federal Constitution of 1988 marked a new perspective on the rights of children: they came to be considered citizens and subjects of rights, and the it was declared that the family, society, and the State are responsible for guaranteeing, with absolute priority, their rights. The term "minor" has been substituted with the expression "child and adolescent."

### SUPPORT NETWORK

Refers to interpersonal relations. In this network, the person and/or family receives emotional support, material aid, services, and information.

### SYNAPSE

It is the process that occurs every time neurons receive some kind of stimulus. It is the point of contact between them. Synapses construct pathways that allow connections between different areas of the brain.

## T

### TOXIC STRESS

Occurs when a child undergoes adversity for a prolonged period of time without the support of an adult. Toxic stress can interrupt a child's healthy brain development, as well as the development of other body systems, increasing the risk of a series of illnesses. Such adversity can include: physical and emotional abuse, negligence, and exposure to extreme violence or poverty.

## V

### VERY EARLY CHILDHOOD

Stage of life that goes from birth to 3 years old.

## W

### WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

Sensitive period that is most propitious for the learning of skills and abilities or the development of aptitudes and competencies.