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LABOR AND RACIAL INEQUALITY IN BRAZIL

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INTRODUCTION

In spite of recent affirmative public policies, as well as the equality formally established by the Federal Constitution of 1988, Brazilian society has not yet reached the stage of a racial democracy, so much so that, even after more than 130 years of the abolition of slavery, official data point to a blatant socio-racial inequality between whites and blacks, in terms of access to fundamental rights, such as health at work.

Understanding this picture of inequality requires an analysis of the historical factors that structured the formation of Brazilian society and that resulted in the construction of a culture marked by racism, present at the base of its organization and in the construction of its cultural values, with the ethnic-ethnic dimension. racial associated with social, economic, political and ideological aspects.

Thus, in this article, structural racism is placed as a determining element in the framework of discrimination and exclusion of blacks in the Brazilian labor market. As the racial issue was based on the exploitation of the workforce, racial relations developed intrinsically to the formation of social classes, in a history of slavery in which the black population was inserted in precarious and subaltern material conditions, in a reality that is reproduced until the current days.

This slave process left as a legacy the institutionalization of racism, with an impact on several areas, including the labor market, with wage differences between whites and blacks, directly influencing the income composition of the black population, subject to greater social vulnerability.

The disastrous effects of the health crisis caused by the pandemic associated with the new coronavirus, in addition to the deep shock in the areas of health, with the occurrence of thousands of deaths, had a strong impact on the economic scenario, with serious

implications for the labor market, registering an increase in the number of unemployed at alarming levels.

The problem that arises in this text is: in this scenario, has the increase in inequality in the labor market between whites and blacks been accentuated? For this investigation, a descriptive research was carried out, based on a bibliographic survey about the literature on the racial issue, covering structural racism and the racial division of labor in Brazil, within a critical perspective, for qualitative analysis; and documentary, aiming to obtain secondary data presented by official research bodies, for quantitative analysis, from the central categories of the problem in focus, aiming to present the differentiation between whites and blacks in the labor market.

ROOTS OF STRUCTURAL RACISM IN BRAZIL

An analysis of the issue of racial inequality in Brazil necessarily involves the analysis of the historical roots about the origin of racism in the country, as well as how the modes of production practiced acted as a structure of oppression, through a process of colonization, in which slavery promoted the mechanism of social exclusion.

Structural racism is a set of discriminatory practices within a society that privileges some races over others. Societies structured around racism favor white individuals and disadvantage blacks and indigenous people.

For Prado Júnior (2011), structural racism resides in the fact that Brazilian capitalism had in enslavement a specific form of historical matrix, in which racism is manifested in the most diverse relationships, of a social, economic, political and cultural order.

Sodré (1990) addresses the formation of capitalism in Brazil, including the modes of production, the colonial structure, the labor market; considers that the category “mode of

production” constitutes the basis for analysis on the formation of capitalism in Brazil.

Thus, the origin of racism in the country’s social relations occurs with the process of colonization of Brazil by Portugal, with the slavery regime and the establishment of hierarchy between races and ethnicities.

For the conceptualization of racism, Almeida (2018) uses the category of racial discrimination, which refers to the different ways of treating people belonging to specific racial groups. The practice of racial discrimination is based on the power relations that certain groups hold, taking advantage of the advantages that the racial category offers. Racism is effected through structured racial discrimination, constituting the process by which the circumstances of privileges are spread among racial groups and are manifested in economic, political and institutional spaces.

The slave system constituted the main source of income generation in the colonial period, characterized by the transition from the system of circulation of use values to commercial organization, with the production of goods, with a view to its expansion, which culminated in the capitalist mode of production. production (Mazzeo, 2015).

For Coutinho (2000), the central objective of colonialism, at the time of the predominance of mercantile capital, consisted of extorting use values produced by the economies of colonized peoples, in order to transform them into exchange values in the international market. In his view, the colonial period was based on a pre-capitalist mode of production, and slavery marked the economic and social formation of the time.

The granting of the Lei Áurea, in 1888, formalizing the abolition of slavery, met the international economic interests of the time, in response to the nascent process of industrialization, with the emergence of new needs of capital, which, demanding new

training for work, makes it unfeasible. slave labor. From this perspective, capital began to require the generalization of free labor as a way of expanding its rates of profit (Ianni, 1972).

This way, slave labor, the nucleus of the productive system of Colonial Brazil, is gradually being replaced by free labor, in an excluding way. Legal mechanisms, such as the Abolition Law of 1888, and even the process of encouraging immigration, forged a scenario in which the black labor force becomes a surplus condition, mostly surviving on small services or agriculture. subsistence (Theodoro, 2008).

In this circumstance, the black population found itself socially unprotected, without access to housing, education and paid work. The advent of this new reality resulted in the massive insertion of the black population into the poverty line and exercising the most precarious occupations in the labor market - a reality that extends to the 21st century, through persistent racial inequality.

ANALYSIS OF THE BASIC SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS OF THE LABOR MARKET

Measures to combat social inequalities in Brazil have been the object of analysis and studies by public policy-making bodies, with emphasis on the forms of manifestation of racial inequalities, given the importance of aspects related to the characteristics of the Brazilian development process and the concern with the levels of economic and social vulnerability presented.

Given the small representation of indigenous and yellow populations in the total Brazilian population, when sample data are used – with most of the information coming from the Continuous National Household Sample Survey – Continuous PNAD, carried out by IBGE –, the analyzes are concentrated in the inequalities between people of color or

white race and black or brown people (which together represent the black race). Together, these three groups represented around 99% of the Brazilian population in 2018: whites were 43.1%; blacks, 9.3%; and browns, 46.5%. (IBGE, 2019).

The following data focus on social inequalities by color or race, based on a set of indicators representing themes essential to the reproduction of the living conditions of populations.

Indicators obtained based on the 2020 IBGE Social Indicators Synthesis point to racial inequality in the labor market, even before the pandemic.

As with the total Brazilian population, black or mixed race people also make up the majority of the workforce in the country. In 2018, this contingent corresponded to 57.7 million people, that is, 25.2% more than the white population, totaling 46.1 million people. However, in relation to the unemployed population and the underused population, which includes, in addition to the unemployed, the underemployed and the potential workforce, black or brown people are substantially more represented; despite constituting just over half of the workforce (54.9%), they represented around $\frac{2}{3}$ of the unemployed (64.2%) and underutilized (66.1%) in the workforce in 2018. The relative disadvantage of this population group remains even when considering the cut by level of education. The composite rate of underutilization of the workforce, for example, is higher among people of color or race, black or brown, whatever the level considered, with this difference being relatively smaller among those who have completed higher education. A similar pattern is observed with regard to the unemployment rate. (IBGE, 2018).

Graph 1 shows a division of Brazilian society into income deciles, showing that among the poorest 10%, 21.9% are white

and 77.0% are black. In the richest decile, the proportion is reversed: 70.6% are white and 27.2% are black.

IBGE data also show a greater white presence in public administration and in financial information, two groups of activities known for better pay and working conditions.

Blacks (blacks and browns) are much more present, according to 2019 data, in agriculture, construction, commerce, transport, accommodation/food and domestic services (where around 4 million blacks and browns are employed, against about 2 million whites).

The sectors where there is a black majority are among those most impacted by the new coronavirus pandemic: commerce and services, including paid domestic work.

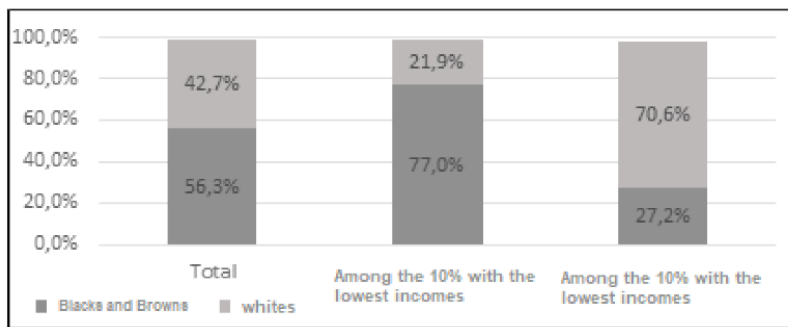
Graph 2 compares the real average earnings of the main job of Brazilian workers by sex and color/race, recording the persistence of income inequalities regarding these two items.

Graph 3 shows that racial inequality persists as the level of education increases. This means that an uneducated white worker/with incomplete primary education has hourly earnings 1.29 times higher than that of a black worker with the same education, but this racial difference is even greater when comparing workers with complete higher education: 1.44 times.

This fact shows that, although it is extremely important to expand the schooling of the black population, the mere increase in schooling does not resolve inequalities in the labor market.

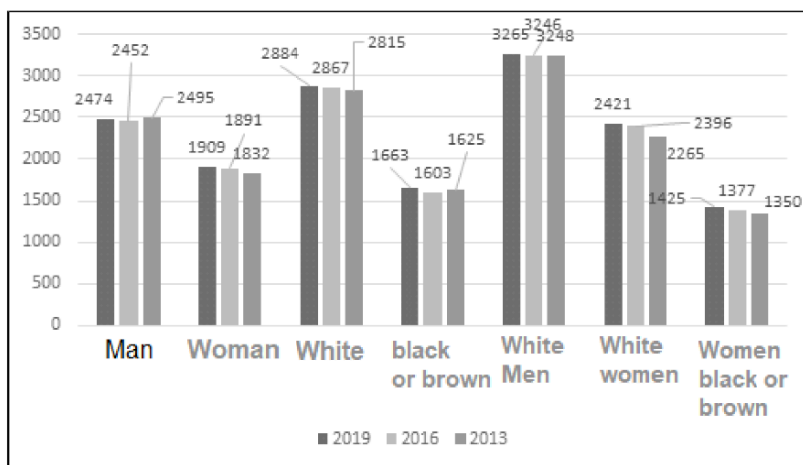
Graph 4 shows the different unemployment rates for the years 2019, 2016 and 2013, by sex and color/race. Among the unemployed – a category already in a situation of vulnerability – there is a greater participation of black men and women.

Data referring to informality show that black people are also the majority, as shown in Graph 5. It is worth remembering that,



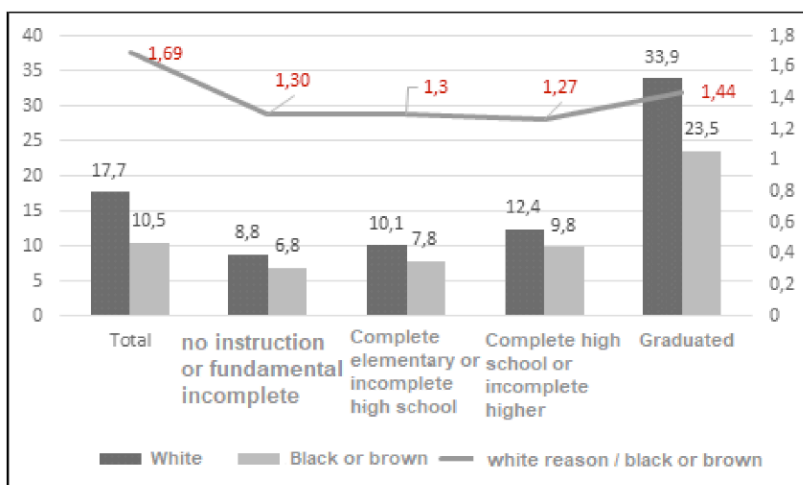
Graph 1. Percentage distribution of the population by color or race, according to classes of percentage of people in ascending order of household *income per capita* in Brazil, in 2019.

Source: SIS IBGE (2020).



Graph 2. Real average income from the main job usually received per month by people aged 14 or over, employed in the reference week, according to selected characteristics, in the years: 2019, 2016, 2013.

Source: SIS IBGE (2020).



Graph 3. Real average hourly earnings of the main job of employed persons, by color or race, by level of education in Brazil in 2019

Source: SIS IBGE (2020)

from the moment social isolation began in the country, this category was one of the most affected in terms of income and exposure to the virus. While some categories were able to work from *home*, this possibility becomes more remote for informal workers.

In the analysis of vulnerabilities prior to the pandemic, the expressive percentage of the black and brown population living in households with inadequate housing stands out, as shown in Graph 6.

In this sense, it must be noted that, throughout 2020, villages and slums became places of rapid spread of Covid-19, due to precarious housing conditions, with . Add to this that many of those who live there have precarious insertions in the labor market, making them even more vulnerable in times of crisis. Poor infrastructure, informality and low income are combined with a higher prevalence of comorbidities, making the black population more vulnerable to the pandemic.

According to official data from the IBGE and the Ministry of Economy, racial inequality in the Brazilian labor market has increased in the face of the crisis caused by the new coronavirus pandemic, as shown in Graph 7.

The main indicators show that blacks and browns, who represent more than half of the country's population (56.8%), were the most affected by the effects of the crisis on the labor market, especially blacks. The data indicate that:

- unemployment increased more among blacks;
- the unemployment rate among blacks was more expressive than among the others;
- the level of employment among blacks was even lower than that of whites;
- the fall in the occupancy rate among blacks was more intense than among the others;
- blacks have a lower proportion among

workers with a formal contract;

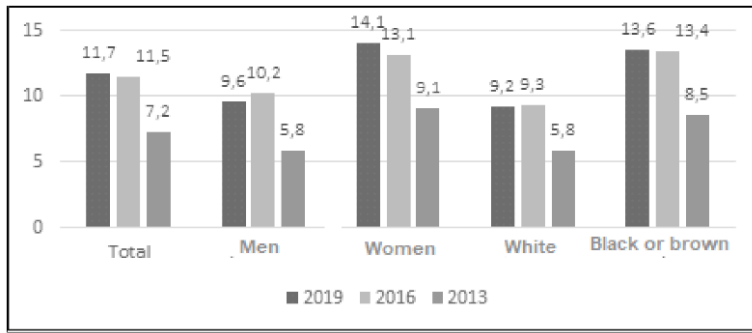
- the remuneration of blacks is lower than that of others in all segments.

According to Fundação Getúlio Vargas (2020), the biggest increase in unemployment and the biggest drop in the occupation of blacks and browns during the pandemic can be explained by the effects of social isolation on the sectors of commerce and services - the so-called heterogeneous sectors - that were the most impacted (especially services) – and which tend to be more intensive for the black and brown workforce than other sectors such as industry, for example, where white labor predominates. Dimensions such as education level and informality in the labor market can also explain the occurrence of more adverse effects for blacks and browns, in terms of unemployment and occupation, since these groups constitute the majority of informal workers in Brazil.

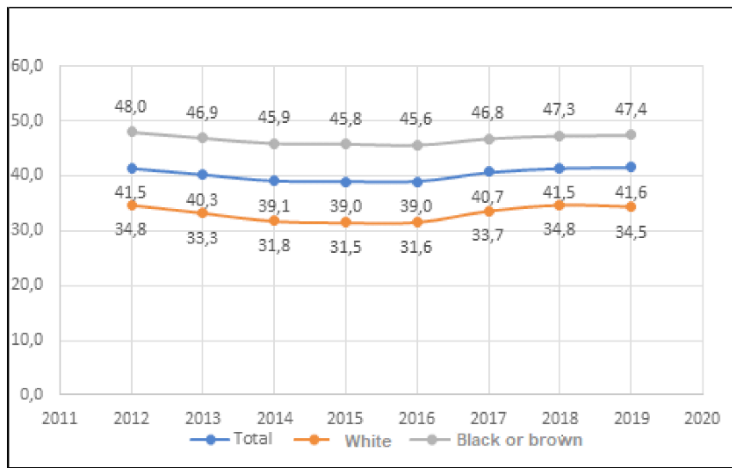
A study carried out by the Inter-Union Department of Statistics and Socioeconomic Studies (DIEESE, 2020), in November, points to the increase in inequalities between blacks and whites in the Brazilian labor market during the pandemic. The research reveals that black men and women were more impacted by the damage of social isolation and reduced economic activity, compared to the white population.

The data were obtained through the Continuous National Household Sample Survey (Pnad Contínua), carried out by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), and show that most people who left the job market are black. Between the 1st and 2nd quarter of 2020, about 6.4 million black men and women lost their jobs or stopped looking for work due to lack of perspective, while white people, in the same condition, add up to about 2.4 million.

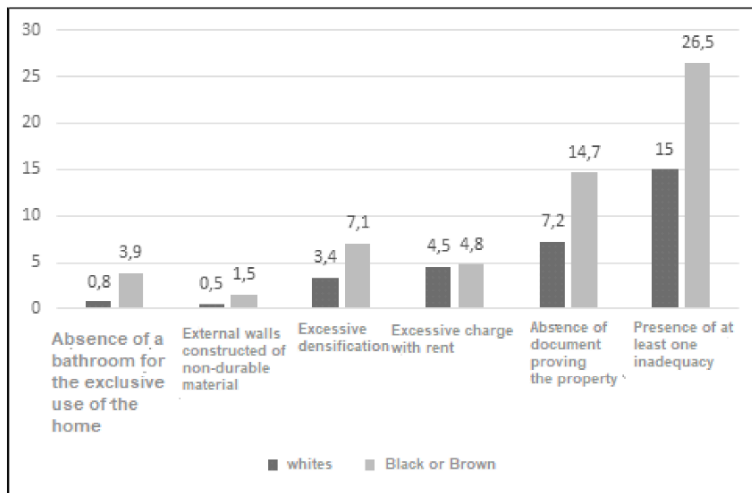
If the comparison is made between the 4th quarter of 2019 and the 2nd quarter of 2020,



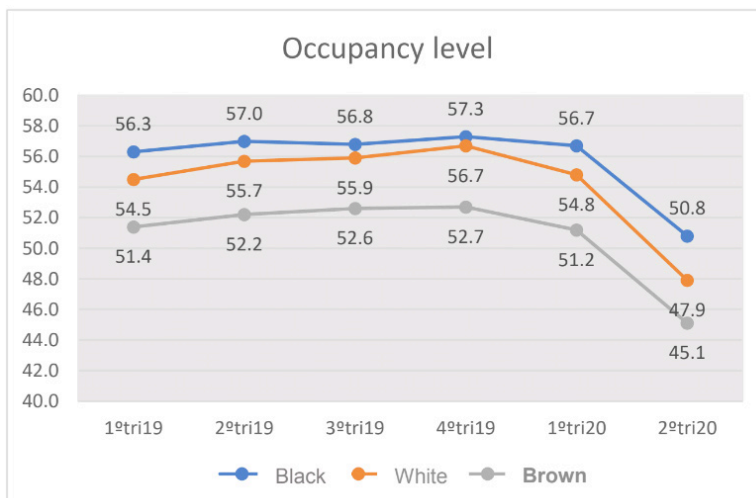
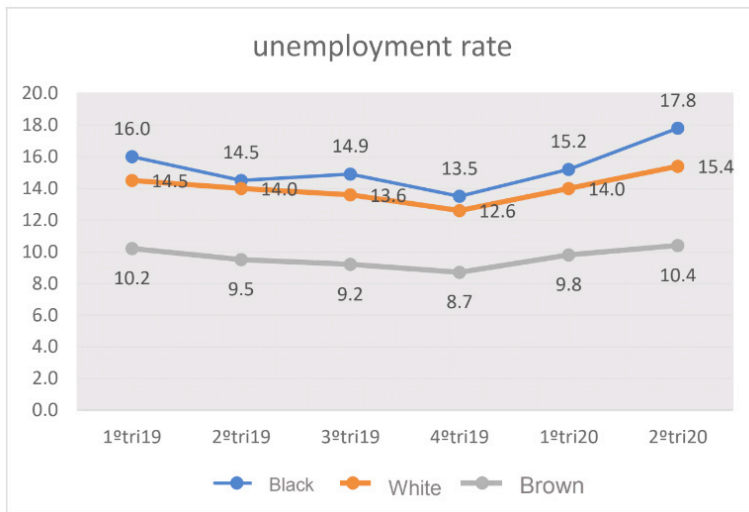
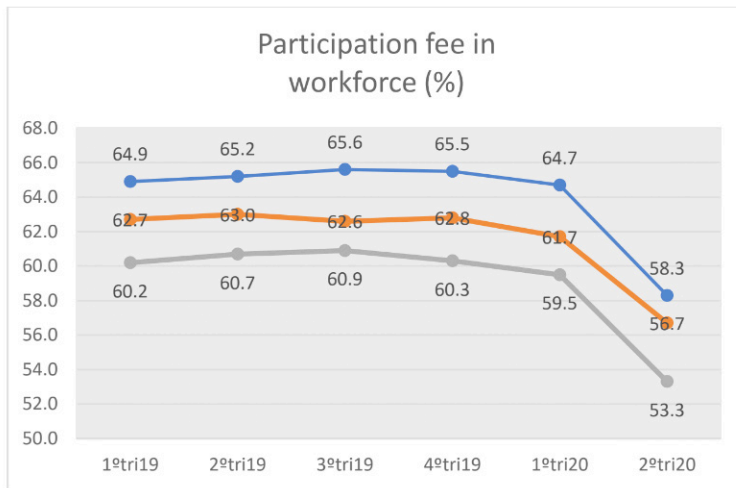
Graph 4. Unemployment rate of people aged 14 and over, by sex, color or race in 2019
Source: SIS IBGE (2020)



Graph 5. Proportion of people aged 16 or over employed in the reference week in informal jobs by color or race (%) – Brazil, 2004 to 2014
Source: SIS IBGE (2020)



Graph 6. Proportion of the population residing in households with household inadequacy, by color and race, according to the type of inadequacy - Brazil, 2019 (%)
Source: SIS IBGE (2020)



Graph 7. Labor market in Brazil, from the 1st quarter of 2019 to the 2nd quarter of 2020

Source: CONTINUOUS PNAD – IBGE (2021).

the inequality is even greater: the number of blacks unemployed or who stopped looking for work rose to 7.4 million, while the number of whites in the same situation reached 2.7 million.

About eight million people in Brazil lost their jobs between the 1st and 2nd quarter of 2020. Of these, more than 70% are black, totaling 6.3 million people. The study also indicated that, between the 4th quarter of 2019 and the 2nd of 2020, 8.1 million black men and women were in a vulnerable situation in the country.

From the above, it can be inferred that the Covid-19 pandemic intensified the economic crisis and was decisive for the negative records, showing a significant retraction in employment and work rates, with a worsening of the situation for blacks and browns.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The new coronavirus pandemic represents a serious challenge for countries that have deep social inequalities. In Brazil, the inequalities identified by race, color and ethnicity are characteristics of a process of structural racism, historically based on the slave system.

In this context, the black population is visibly more affected, due to its majority presence in the informal labor market, which restricts access to basic labor rights, such as minimum wage and retirement, in addition to earning lower average household *income per capita*.

Structural racism generates practices and prejudices that are at the base of inequalities between social groups, divided by race or ethnicity, as the basis of intolerable inequalities.

The unprecedented health crisis, caused by the new coronavirus pandemic, has been a challenge for countries with deep social inequalities, such as Brazil. There is evidence that the black population will suffer more severely from the impacts of the pandemic

and its various negative implications than the white population. The historical aspects and their relationship with the conditions of vulnerability of the black population denounce the structural racism present in Brazilian society and its devastating consequences in the context of Covid-19.

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