

EXTENDED FAMILIES AND THE CARE OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS: AN ANALYSIS BASED ON THE 2023 CONTINUOUS PNAD AND THE 2022 CENSUS

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1 INTRODUCTION¹

According to the international guide *Family for every child kinship care guideline: lessons learnt from around the world* (Family For Every Child, 2025),² the care of children and adolescents by members of the extended family or by close persons³ represents a crucial contribution to the well-being, development, and survival of millions of children around the world. This type of care should be the first alternative considered when parents are unable to fulfil their parental duties. Despite its importance, this arrangement still lacks specific public policies to support and develop its implementation.

Children, adolescents and young people who have grown up in this context – as well as grandparents, other relatives, or close individuals – are well aware of the needs involved and have much to contribute towards the development of more appropriate responses. Care by extended families or close persons is recognised by communities across various cultural contexts, reinforcing its social legitimacy. Beyond the emotional bonds built within these families, there exist wider support networks, often underutilised, that could be mobilised to strengthen such arrangements.

In the Brazilian context, there is a historical tradition of children circulating between the homes of close relatives. This is a common practice, especially among the lower-income segments of the population, as noted by Priore (1997). Such circulation is neither recent nor exceptional: it is grounded in values of solidarity and in family survival strategies amid contexts of scarcity and instability. It involves the temporary or long-term transfer of children among different members of the kinship network. These arrangements reflect the central role of the extended family as a space for care and socialisation, mobilised to ensure continued protection when parents – due to reasons such as absence, illness, poverty, or work – are unable to provide it fully.

This historical practice is rooted in forms of family organisation in which care is not carried out solely by biological parents, but shared with grandparents, uncles, godmothers or other members of the extended family community. In many of these cases, it was women – especially grandmothers – who took on daily caregiving responsibilities, both due to their availability and a cultural tradition that has historically associated care with the female figure. However, more than simply a gender-based assignment, what stands out in this process is the continued presence, over time, of a family logic rooted in intergenerational cooperation and the flexibility of parenting arrangements – a hallmark of the history of working-class families in Brazil.

This historical understanding reinforces the social legitimacy of care provided by extended families or close persons, not as an improvised solution but as a recurring, culturally recognised and functional response across different periods and regions. By acknowledging this tradition, we recognise the accumulated experience of such arrangements which can and should be strengthened by public policies that are sensitive to their specificities.

According to the guide, some of these arrangements need to be formalised or regulated by social services to ensure greater legal security and clarity regarding parental responsibilities (Family For Every Child, 2025). However, such formalisation is not always necessary and families must be free to decide on

1. The authors would like to thank Jonathan Hannay, anthropologist from Columbia University and affiliated with the Association for Support of Children at Risk (Acer Brasil), for kindly providing the translation of the text.

2. More information is available at: <https://www.terradoshomens.org.br/pt-BR/notices/1-webinar-gin-fe-lancamento-do-guia-internacional-cuidado-por-familia-extensa-ou-proximos>. Accessed on: June 9, 2025.

3. Translator's note: in English publications one often sees the term 'Friends and Family Care' however this construct has been chosen as it is a direct translation and more accurately describe kin and people who have already got strong links to the child or adolescent prior to living with them (also known in the English language as kith). Also as we are talking about individuals rather than a collective, persons is used rather than people.

the type of care that best meets their needs. As stated in the document, no formalisation process should ever be a prerequisite for receiving support.

These families often face multifaceted challenges with chronic poverty being one of the main vulnerability factors. Issues related to stress and mental health also need to be taken into account. Moreover, these families require continuous access to information, healthcare services, education, decent housing and effective support to carry out their caregiving roles.

In Brazil, there are still no specific statistical surveys that quantify the number of children and adolescents living in extended family arrangements. This gap motivated the preparation of this Technical Note which aims to provide the Intersectoral National Group on Care in Extended Families (Ginfe) with up-to-date data and high-quality analyses of this population.

Based on microdata from the 2023 Annual Edition of the Continuous National Household Sample Survey (Continuous PNAD) and the information already available from the 2022 Demographic Census, this Technical Note seeks to estimate the number of children and adolescents in extended family arrangements – a term used here as equivalent to extended or enlarged family, as defined by the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA) –, as well as to describe the demographic, socioeconomic and regional characteristics of these populations and the heads of their households. The survey adopts the family relationship to the head of household as a proxy, given that, to date, there are no specific variables for the direct identification of these families in national statistical databases.

It is important to highlight that data from the Continuous PNAD and the Demographic Census are not directly comparable. While the Continuous PNAD is a sample-based survey updated annually, the Census is a comprehensive survey conducted every ten years. Furthermore, there are methodological differences in the way information is collected and classified which may explain discrepancies in the totals observed. For example, the 2023 Continuous PNAD estimated approximately 7.3 million children and adolescents living in extended families while the 2022 Census data – albeit using different methodological frameworks – suggests a higher number. These methodological differences should be taken into account by readers to avoid misinterpretations.

2 RESULTS

2.1 Characteristics of the population aged 17 and under by relationship to the household reference person

2.1.1 How many are there

Table 1 presents the population aged 0 to 17 by degree of kinship with the head of the household. The data regarding the number of children and adolescents in possible extended families or living with close persons in Brazil was extracted from the Continuous PNAD. It is estimated that in 2023, Brazil had 7,329,950 children and adolescents living in extended families or with close persons representing 13.9% of the total population aged 0 to 17. Regarding the degree of kinship with the head of the household, table 1 reveals that 81.9% of these children and adolescents were grandchildren, 13.6% were other relatives, 3.4% were great-grandchildren and 1.2% were non-relatives.

In addition to the significant predominance of the grandchild relationship which accounts for over 80% of the cases, the absolute number of children and adolescents identified as with “other relatives” – which reaches nearly one million – stands out. This indicates the diversity of family arrangements in the country and highlights the importance of expanding institutional recognition of these bonds within the design of public policies.

TABLE 1**Brazil: population under 18 (0-17) by relationship to household head (2023)**

Relationship	Quantity	%
Grandchild	6.005.328	81.9
Other relative	994.420	13.6
Great-grandchild	245.828	3.4
Non-relative ¹	84.374	1.2
Total	7.329.950	100
Population under 18 (0-17)	52.808.853	-

Source: IBGE (2024).

Note: 1st visit.

¹ A non-relative who does not share expenses.

The presence of 1.2% of non-relations – children and adolescents living with responsible adults without formal kinship ties – is also noteworthy. Although they represent a smaller portion of the total, these cases may involve informal guardianship, spontaneous care by neighbours or close persons, the worst forms of child labour and unregulated arrangements. These situations require special attention from child protection systems, particularly concerning documentation, access to benefits and monitoring.

2.1.2 Age range

The analysis of table 2 which presents the age range and degree of kinship with the head of household reveals important patterns worth highlighting. It is observed that the largest proportion of children and adolescents in extended family arrangements is concentrated among the younger age groups: around 60% of children and adolescents were between 0 and 9 years old and only 15.4% were aged 15 to 17. The data further shows that, as age increases, the proportion of children and adolescents living in extended families or with close persons decreases.

TABLE 2**Brazil: age range of the population under 18 (0-17) by relationship to household head (2023)**

Relationship	0 to 4 years old	5 to 9 years old	10 to 14 years old	15 to 17 years old
Grandchild	1.948.403	1.738.631	1.478.202	840.092
Other relative	226.681	233.177	274.242	260.321
Great-grandchild	128.480	86.748	22.228	8.371
Non-relative	14.806	20.526	31.604	17.437
Total	2.318.370	2.079.082	1.806.276	1.126.221
Total in extended family (%)	31.6	28.4	24.6	15.4
Total population in age range (%)	6.3	6.8	6.7	4.2

Source: IBGE (2024).

Note: 1st visit.

This declining proportion with age can be explained by two non-mutually exclusive factors. On one hand, it may reflect the greater need for care and protection in early childhood which would lead to children being placed in households with close relatives, especially grandparents. On the other hand, it may indicate greater autonomy among older adolescents who tend to move into other living arrangements – including institutional settings, shared housing with friends or independent living due to work or forming their own families.

Another hypothesis is that adolescents aged 15 to 17 make up a proportionally smaller segment of the population compared to the other age groups listed in the table. According to data from the 2022 Demographic Census, children and adolescents aged 0 to 4, 5 to 9, 10 to 14, and 15 to 17 represented, respectively, 6.3%, 6.8%, 6.7%, and 4.2% of the population. Therefore, the smaller proportion of adolescents living in extended families or with close persons can also be interpreted in light of the age distribution of the population itself which has been affected by declining fertility rates and a decreasing absolute number of adolescents in the country.

Another relevant aspect is the predominance of the “grandchild” relationship across all age groups including among older adolescents, reinforcing the central role of grandparents as carers for a significant proportion of children and adolescents in extended family settings.

2.1.3 Sex

The sex composition is practically balanced, as shown in table 3, with 50.9% male and 49.1% female. The slight predominance of boys may be linked to the higher numbers of grandsons among members of extended families, as in the other kinship relations the number of girls, albeit only slightly, is higher.

TABLE 3
Brazil: sex of the population under 18 (0-17) by relationship to household head (2023)

Relationship	Male		Female	
	Number	%	Number	%
Grandchild	3.093.186	42.2	2.912.142	39.7
Other relative	479.953	6.5	514.467	7.0
Great-grandchild	119.798	1.6	126.030	1.7
Non-relative	40.000	0.5	44.374	0.6
Total	3.732.937	50.9	3.597.013	49.1

Source: IBGE (2024).
Note: 1st visit.

This equilibrium reinforces the idea that extended family arrangements accommodate boys and girls relatively equally, with no evidence of significant gender disparity in the overall composition of these families. However, it will be important for future studies to delve deeper into gender-related aspects within extended family arrangements in order to better understand the distribution of responsibilities, access to education and work, as well as the roles children and adolescents play in caregiving tasks within these households.

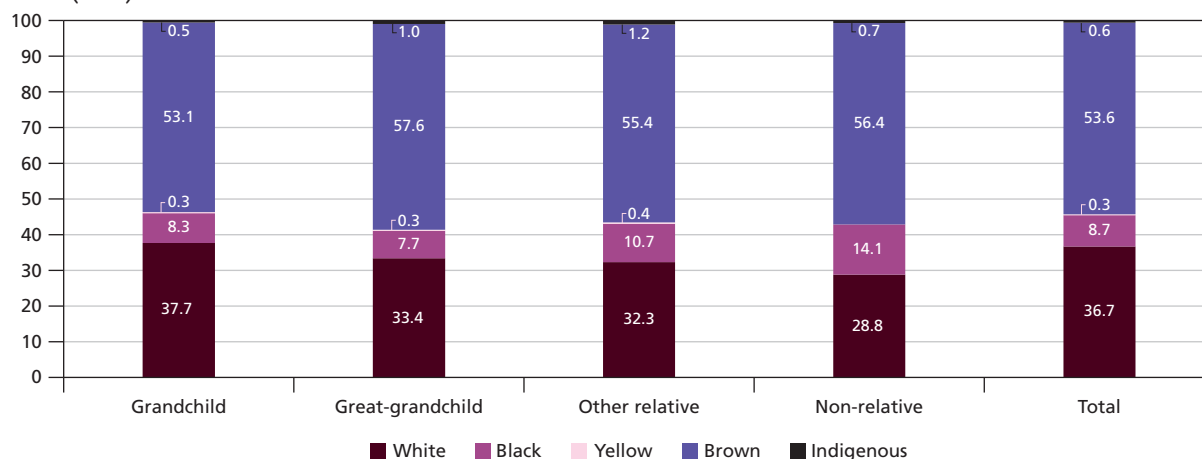
2.1.4 Race/ethnicity⁴

With regard to the race of children and adolescents up to the age of 17 living in extended families or with close persons, figure 1 shows that 53.6% are identified as mixed race (pardo), 8.7% as black (preto), 36.7% as white (branco), 0.3% as Asian (amarelo) and 0.6% as Indigenous. This pattern is consistent across all kinship categories analysed, reinforcing the central role of racial inequality in shaping extended family arrangements in the country. Table B.1, in the appendix B, provides a more detailed breakdown of the data by age group, degree of kinship and race.

4. Translator’s note: in Brazilian statistics where race/ethnicity is gathered, the options are a mix of colour and origin whereby the colours are black, brown, white and yellow (given that yellow is used to be equivalent of East Asian) and one ethnic option which is Indigenous.

FIGURE 1

Brazil: race/ethnicity of the population under 18 (0-17) by relationship to household head (2023)
(In %)



Source: IBGE (2024).

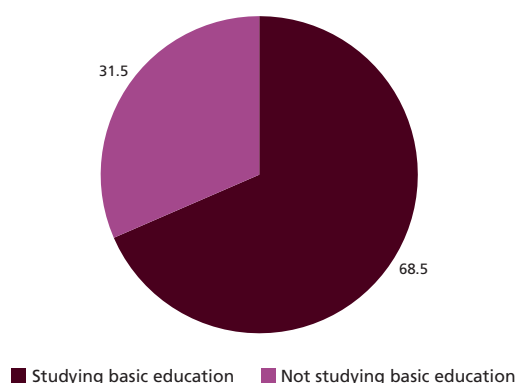
Note: 1st visit.

2.1.5 Education⁵

Figures 2 and 3 below present data from the 2023 Continuous PNAD regarding the educational status of children and adolescents living in extended family arrangements. As shown in figure 2, 68.5% of children and adolescents aged 6 to 14 living with extended family members were attending primary/middle school. In figure 3, 71.4% of adolescents aged 15 to 17 in the same type of arrangement were enrolled in secondary/high school. These proportions are significantly lower than the national averages recorded for these age groups in Brazil as a whole, according to the same source: 94.6% of children aged 6 to 14 were enrolled in primary school, and 75% of adolescents aged 15 to 17 were attending secondary school (table 4).

FIGURE 2

Brazil: 6 to 14 year olds in extended families in basic education (2023)
(In %)



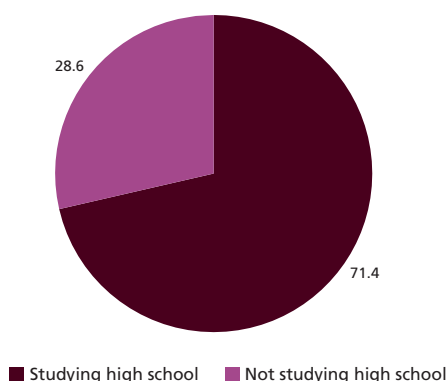
Source: IBGE (2024).

Note: 1st visit.

5. Translator's note: in Brazil there are 14 years of statutory education which is divided as follows: 4 and 5 years old – infant education; 6-10 years old – first cycle of basic education; 11-14 years old – second cycle of basic education; and 15-17 years old – secondary/high school.

FIGURE 3

Brazil: 15 to 17 year olds in extended families in high school (2023)
(In %)



Source: IBGE (2024).
Note: 1st visit.

TABLE 4

Brazil: population between 6 and 14 and 15 and 17 years old who were studying according to the kind of course (2023)

Escolaridade	6 to 14 years old		15 to 17 years old	
	Number	%	Number	%
Infant education	172.922	5.0	-	-
Basic literacy – youth and adults	376	0.0	3.257	0.3
Regular basic education	3.216.680	93.9	281.718	25.4
Youth and adult basic education	2.695	0.1	10.734	1.0
Regular high school	34.113	1.0	804.096	72.4
Youth and adult high school	-	-	1.217,3	0.1
University – undergraduate	-	-	10.171	0.9
Total	3.426.785	100.0	1.111.194	100.0

Source: IBGE (2024).
Note: 1st visit.

These figures therefore indicate a higher incidence of age-grade distortion among children and adolescents living in extended families. However, it is important to emphasise that this difference cannot be attributed solely to the type of family arrangement. It is most likely the result of the intersection with other structural factors such as poverty, social vulnerability, and racial markers, which disproportionately affect the population living in these contexts.

Thus, while the type of arrangement may influence educational trajectories, the data underscores the need for intersectoral public policies that address social, racial, and territorial inequalities in a coordinated manner, which affect access to and continuity in education for children and adolescents. The identification of belonging to extended families in administrative records, as well as their proper monitoring, should be incorporated into educational management and monitoring tools in order to support targeted strategies that guarantee the right to education with equity, as provided for in the National Education Plan and in the ECA.

2.1.6 Regional distribution

Table 5 presents data on the population of children and adolescents living in extended families or with close persons according to the 2023 Continuous PNAD. The Northern region stands out, with 21.0% of individuals up to the age of 17 living in extended families – a higher proportion than the national average (13.9%) and that of other regions. This is followed by the Northeast (17.1%), Southeast (13.6%), South (13.6%), and Centre-West (13.0%). In table B.2, included in the appendix B, the data are disaggregated by federative unit, highlighting the states of Amapá (23.4%), Pará (22.7%), and Amazonas (22.3%) as having the highest proportions of the under 18 (0-17) population living in extended family arrangements.

TABLE 5

Brazil: regional distribution of the population under 18 (0-17) by relationship to household head (2023)

Relationship	North	Northeast	Southeast	South	Central-West
Grandchild	884.482	1.985.484	2.087.304	595.985	452.073
Great-grandchild	61.057	81.447	66.376	20.533	16.416
Other relative	158.063	311.381	339.472	111.689	73.815
Non-relative	11.527	28.159	33.523	4.673	6.492
Total	1.115.129	2.406.471	2.526.675	732.880	548.796
Population under 18 (0-17) (%)	21.0	17.1	13.6	13.6	13.0

Source: IBGE (2024).

Note: 1st visit.

These regional differences may reflect both distinct sociocultural patterns and disparities in access to public services for child protection and family support – such as a limited number of children's homes or foster care services. In regions historically marked by greater scarcity of public services and lower coverage of social policies, such as certain municipalities in the North and others in the Northeast, extended family arrangements tend to play an even more central role in caregiving and protection. In such areas, care is often more intensively organised around extended family and solidarity networks, frequently on an informal basis and without adequate state support.

The higher presence of children and adolescents in extended families in these regions should therefore be understood both as an expression of familial and community solidarity and as an indicator of the absence or insufficiency of public services aimed at guaranteeing the right to family and community life in an institutionalised and sustainable manner. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that, whenever affective bonds and minimum caregiving conditions are present, remaining with the extended family tends to be preferable to institutional care or even foster care programmes, as it preserves family ties and reduces the impact of a complete rupture of family bonds.

2.1.7 Household income

Table 6 below shows the population aged 0 to 17 by per capita household income bracket and relationship with the head of household in Brazil for 2023. With regard to per capita household income, it is found that 79.5% of children and adolescents living in extended families fall within the categories of extreme poverty, poverty and low income. This result prompts important reflections, particularly on the reasons behind the concentration of extended families within the lower income strata. Furthermore, it is necessary to understand the context in which these children live and the material conditions required to enable their proper development.

TABLE 6

Brazil: real per capita income distribution bands for the under 18 (0-17) population by relationship to household head (2023)

Income band	Grandchild	Great-grandchild	Other relative	Non-relative	Total	
					Number	%
Up to ¼ minimum wage	909.498	25.862	154.095	21.841	1.111.296	15.2
¼ to ½ minimum wage	1.809.343	67.925	264.645	20.507	2.162.420	29.5
½ to 1 minimum wage	2.067.211	110.828	349.645	23.872	2.551.556	34.8
1 to 2 minimum wages	938.270	37.080	158.843	9.897	1.144.090	15.6
2 to 3 minimum wages	164.248	3.451	40.888	5.347	213.934	2.9
3 to 5 minimum wages	87.653	692	11.085	2.008	101.438	1.4
More than 5 minimum wages	29.343	0	15.259	905	45.507	0.6

Source: IBGE (2024).

Note: 1st visit.

The high concentration of children and adolescents in extended families within the lowest income brackets suggests that these arrangements function as an informal form of social protection, meeting care needs with limited resources in the absence of more structured institutional support. Often, the care provided by grandparents, other relatives or close persons occurs in conditions of significant material deprivation, reinforcing the burden on families and highlighting the urgent need for direct public policy support for these carers.

It is also observed that the presence of children and adolescents in extended families within the higher income brackets is almost residual – with only 0.4% living in households with more than five times the minimum wage per capita. This raises the question of whether such data indicate that this type of arrangement is primarily a survival strategy in contexts of vulnerability and that this family-based solution is in urgent need of institutional recognition and governmental support.

2.2 Characteristics of the heads of household: an overview

To gain a better understanding of the characteristics of those responsible for households with the presence of children and adolescents in extended families, that is households that include grandchildren, great-grandchildren, other relatives or non-relatives under the age of 18 (0-17) we draw on data from the 2022 Demographic Census. These data provide insights into the profiles of the main household heads and their relationship with other residents, offering valuable clues about the family arrangements that underpin this type of care.

Before presenting the Census 2022 data on the heads of households with children and adolescents in extended families, it is important to highlight a key methodological limitation. Unlike the 2023 Continuous PNAD which directly estimated around 7.3 million people aged 0 to 17 living with grandparents, great-grandparents, other relatives, or non-relatives, the 2022 Census does not provide a direct, consolidated estimate of this total.

Tables 7 and 8 present the number of household heads aged 25 or over who live with residents identified with these kinship ties, but not the total number of children and adolescents in these arrangements. Therefore, it is not possible to directly compare total numbers between the two sources. Each offers a complementary perspective: the PNAD allows for an estimate of the number of children and adolescents in extended families, while the Census enables a characterisation of the individuals responsible for these children and adolescents.

2.2.1 Sex of the heads of household

Table 7 reveals a significant asymmetry among those responsible for households in which children and adolescents live within extended family arrangements. In 2022, women accounted for 62.4% of household heads in these settings, indicating a clear predominance of female responsibility in such arrangements. When broken down by type of relationship, the data show that 46.0% of household heads living with grandchildren were women, compared to 23.7% who were men. This discrepancy remains evident in households with great-grandchildren, where 1.8% of the heads were women, versus only 0.6% men. A similar pattern can be observed in arrangements involving other relatives, where women represented 13.0% of household heads compared to 11.7% men. Interestingly, in households with “non-relatives”, there was a slight male predominance: 1.7% compared to 1.6% female.

TABLE 7

Brazil: sex of the population aged 25 years and over who are the main person responsible for the household and the degree of kinship of the other household members in relation to that person (2022)

Relationship	Male		Female	
	Number	%	Number	%
Grandchild	2.687.844	23.7	5.212.018	46.0
Great-grandchild	67.571	0.6	206.969	1.8
Other relative	1.321.131	11.7	1.473.504	13.0
Non-relative	188.144	1.7	182.098	1.6
Total	4.264.690	37.6	7.074.589	62.4

Source: IBGE (2023).

These figures reinforce the central role played by women, especially grandmothers and great-grandmothers, as primary caregivers in extended family arrangements. They also highlight that, even among the most vulnerable population groups, the burden of care disproportionately falls on women who often shoulder economic, emotional and social responsibilities within the household.

2.2.2 Age of the head of household

The analysis of table 8 reveals that among households with children and adolescents identified as grandchildren, 58.1% were headed by individuals aged 60 or over. In households with great-grandchildren, this proportion rose to 93.5%, clearly indicating the strong presence of older individuals in caregiving roles within intergenerational arrangements. This predominance reinforces, once again, that care for grandchildren and great-grandchildren is mainly carried out or shared by grandparents and great-grandparents aged 60 and above.

TABLE 8

Brazil: age group of household reference persons aged 25 years and over, and relationship of other household members to the reference person (2022)

Relationship	25 to 39 years old		40 to 59 years old		60 years old and above	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Grandchild	144.825	1.8	3.161.465	40.0	4.593.572	58.1
Great-grandchild	75	0.0	17.659	6.4	256.806	93.5
Other relative	942.368	33.7	1.176.234	42.1	676.033	24.2
Non-relative	105.796	28.6	148.207	40.0	116.239	31.4
Total	1.193.064	10.5	4.503.565	39.7	5.642.650	49.8

Source: IBGE (2023).

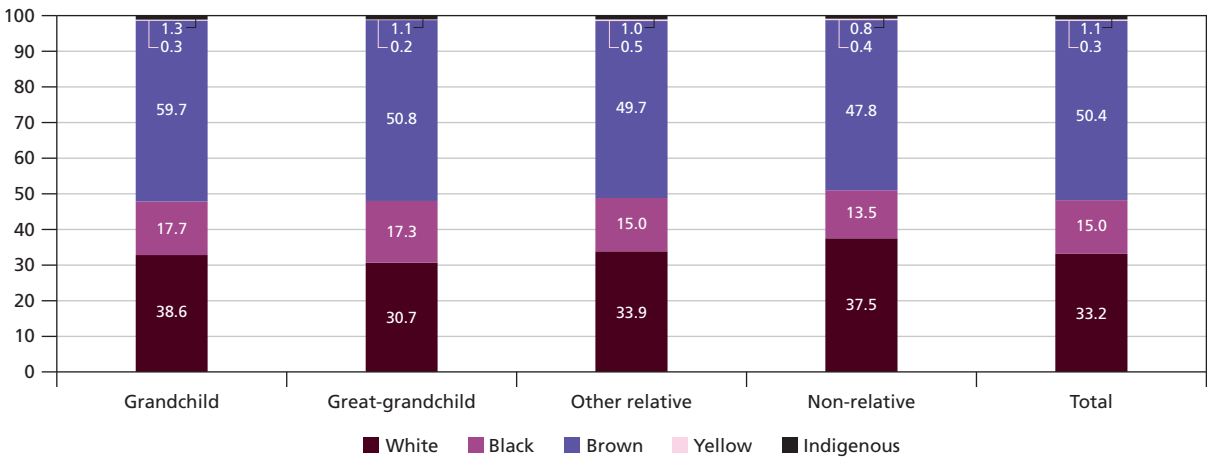
In arrangements involving other relatives, the age distribution of household heads is more balanced: 33.7% were aged between 25 and 39, 42.1% between 40 and 59, and 24.2% were 60 or older. These figures likely reflect the presence of aunts, uncles, siblings, and other relatives in caregiving roles. In the case of non-relatives, although fewer in number, the age distribution also varies: 28.6% of household heads were between 25 and 39, 40% between 40 and 59, and 31.4% aged 60 or more. This diversity may indicate a range of caregiving arrangements involving close persons without formal kinship ties.

Overall, 49.8% of households with this type of family arrangement were headed by individuals aged 60 or over, demonstrating the central role of older generations in family-based care. These data reinforce the relevance of older adults in everyday caregiving and highlight the urgent need for public policies that recognise, value and support their role in ensuring children’s right to family life.

2.2.3 Race/ethnicity of heads of household

With regard to the race of the individuals responsible for households where children and adolescents under the age of 18 (0-17) live in extended families, the data shown in figure 4 indicate that the majority reside in households headed by black or mixed-race individuals who together represent 65.4% of the total. This reinforces the intersection between racial inequality and extended family arrangements, as the responsibility for caring for children and adolescents outside the nuclear family structure falls disproportionately on historically marginalised populations.

FIGURE 4
Brazil: population aged 25 years and over who are the household reference person, by race and the relationship of other household members to that person (2022)
(In %)



Source: IBGE (2023).

Additionally, it is observed that 0.3% of these young people lived in households headed by individuals who self-identified as Asian, while 1.1% lived in households led by Indigenous persons. Although numerically small, the presence of Indigenous household heads highlights the diversity of family structures in Brazil. In many Indigenous communities, the care and socialisation of children is not limited to the nuclear family, but involves multiple members of the community, according to unique conceptions of kinship, territory and cultural belonging.

A similar observation can be made regarding *quilombola*⁶ communities, in which intergenerational solidarity, ancestry and collective identity play a central role in shaping and sustaining extended family arrangements. These shared caregiving models, rooted in experiences of historical resistance, constitute legitimate expressions of diverse ways of life which, nevertheless, are often not fully captured by official statistics that tend to reflect Western and urban-centric family models.

It is therefore essential, in discussions around this type of family arrangement, to consider that Indigenous and *quilombola* peoples are foundational to the formation of Brazilian culture. They have made significant contributions to the development of values, knowledge and collective ways of living that are central to Brazil's identity. In this regard, extended or enlarged families are far from being exceptions; they are a core part of our social history and must be recognised and included in the formulation of public policies aimed at children and adolescents.

Table B.3, located in the appendix B, presents these data disaggregated by degree of kinship and race/ethnicity of the head of household, enabling a more detailed analysis of the intersections between family ties and social markers of difference.

3 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The data presented in this Technical Note demonstrate the significant presence of children and adolescents living with extended families in Brazil, representing around 14% of the population under the age of 18 (0-17). This group is composed mainly of grandchildren and is concentrated predominantly in low-income households, headed by women and individuals aged 60 or older – particularly in the North and Northeast regions of the country.

The analysis reveals that extended family arrangements constitute a significant feature of family organisation in Brazil, often overlooked by statistics and insufficiently considered in the design and implementation of public policies. The high proportion of children and adolescents in economic vulnerability within these arrangements reinforces the need for policies that recognise, value and support these families through income support, psychosocial support services, family-strengthening initiatives or intersectoral coordination between social welfare, education, health and justice systems.

In addition to demographic and economic aspects, the data show that approximately 49.8% of heads of households living with grandchildren, great-grandchildren, other relatives or non-relatives under the age of 18 (0-17) are aged 60 or older. This underscores the crucial role of older adults in caregiving. In the specific case of great-grandchildren, the figure rises to 93.5%, highlighting the importance of intergenerational bonds in these arrangements.

A predominance of women in caregiving responsibilities is also evident: in 2022, 62.4% of those in extended family arrangements lived in households headed by women. These figures show that extended family arrangements are largely sustained by older women, who take on the daily care of new generations. The reason women almost always take on this role stems from a historical gender norm that socially attributes caregiving to female figures, as demonstrated in the historical analysis by Ribeiro e Bittencourt (2017). Even with ongoing social changes, this model continues to be reproduced and is reinforced by cultural values that associate women with the emotional and practical responsibility for children's wellbeing.

Ribeiro e Bittencourt (2017, p. 24.), citing Winnicott (2005 [1967]), notes that grandmaternal care is often welcomed, especially when provided by grandmothers who have internalised a "good enough" maternal function (as proposed by Winnicott), as they are able to offer a secure emotional base, transmit values and

6. Translator's note: a *quilombola* community is a traditional Afro-Brazilian community formed by the descendants of previously enslaved Africans who escaped from slavery in Brazil and established autonomous settlements known as *quilombos*.

provide the necessary “holding” for healthy psychological development. However, substituting the mother with the grandmother does not always occur under ideal conditions; it may be linked to abandonment, neglect, or the mother’s inability to care and it often carries emotional strain and family tensions. Although grandmothers’ care can be fundamental in guaranteeing children’s wellbeing in vulnerable contexts, this phenomenon should not be romanticised as it may reflect a crisis in family bonds or a lack of social support for caregivers.

Despite the current limitations of data collection tools which do not allow for the direct identification of extended families as defined in the ECA, the use of proxies and cross-referencing of available variables makes it possible to create a consistent initial picture, useful for guiding policy discussions toward the development of support programmes for extended families in Brazil.

Recognising and valuing the diversity of family arrangements present in Brazilian society, especially those historically structured around community-based models as seen in indigenous and *quilombola* communities, is essential for the effectiveness and equity of policies for children and adolescents. It is recommended that public policies explicitly incorporate recognition of extended and enlarged families as legitimate units of care and socialisation for children and adolescents, moving beyond normative models based solely on the nuclear family.

Such recognition is even more relevant in cases where children are separated from their parents as a protective measure. In accordance with the right to family and community life (art. 19 of ECA), article 28 § 4º of ECA – which defines and recognises the extended family as a preferential space for care – and the United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, it is recommended that, whenever possible, priority should be given to the child remaining with close relatives with whom they share emotional bonds before resorting to institutional care or adoption. This measure should uphold the principle of the child’s best interest and respect the continuity of their family, emotional and cultural bonds.

In the case of indigenous children or those belonging to traditional communities, Article 28 of ECA mandates that placement in substitute families must prioritise members of the same community or ethnic group, respecting their identities, traditions and kinship systems. In such cases, the intervention of the National Foundation for Indigenous Peoples (Funai) is mandatory to ensure respect for the cultural and social specificities of these populations. This reinforces the principle that the adoption or institutionalisation of indigenous children outside their cultural context must be an absolute last resort.

The following recommendations aim to support the recognition of extended families or close persons within the scope of official initiatives and government programmes intended to strengthen such family arrangements.

- Review and broaden the operational definitions of “head of household” and “family unit” in social registries and official censuses to include diverse forms of caregiving, including intergenerational, community-based and traditional models.
- Adapt eligibility criteria and monitoring procedures in income transfer, education and healthcare programmes to recognise the central role of extended family ties in the protection of children and adolescents.
- Strengthen psychosocial and economic support mechanisms for extended families, especially in highly vulnerable contexts, as a means of preventing unnecessary institutional placements.
- Ensure the active participation of indigenous and *quilombola* communities in the formulation, monitoring and implementation of public policies in their territories, with full respect for their own social organisation and caregiving practices.

By recognising that family structures are diverse and rooted in cultural traditions that form the foundation of Brazilian history, the State moves towards addressing racial inequalities and ensuring the full protection of children and adolescents, with respect for the plurality that characterises Brazilian society.

Expanding and improving mechanisms for the identification and support of these families both in sample surveys and administrative records represents a key step toward guaranteeing the right to family and community life as established in Brazilian legislation.

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APPENDIX A

DOCUMENTATION AND METHODS

The ECA defines the extended or enlarged family as “one that goes beyond the parent-child or couple unit, consisting of close relatives with whom the child or adolescent lives and maintains bonds of affinity and affection” (Brasil, 1990, p. 25).¹

To identify the actual number of children and adolescents living with extended families, questions available in the 2022 Demographic Census that could serve as a proxy were analysed given that there are no direct questions that allow for such identification. The most relevant questions relate to the kinship or living arrangement with the head of household, as well as the composition of the family, considering whether the father, stepfather, mother or stepmother resides in the household. However, at the time this Technical Note was drafted, these data had not yet been released.

FIGURE A.1
2022 Demographic Census questionnaire question: what is your relationship of kinship or cohabitation with the person responsible for the household?

2.06 QUAL É A RELAÇÃO DE PARENTESCO OU DE CONVIVÊNCIA COM A PESSOA RESPONSÁVEL PELO DOMICÍLIO?

☐ 01 - PESSOA RESPONSÁVEL PELO DOMICÍLIO	☐ 11 - BISNETO(A)
☐ 02 - CÔNJUGE OU COMPANHEIRO(A) DE SEXO DIFERENTE	☐ 12 - IRMÃO OU IRMÃ
☐ 03 - CÔNJUGE OU COMPANHEIRO(A) DO MESMO SEXO	☐ 13 - AVÔ OU AVÓ
☐ 04 - FILHO(A) DO RESPONSÁVEL E DO CÔNJUGE	☐ 14 - OUTRO PARENTE
☐ 05 - FILHO(A) SOMENTE DO RESPONSÁVEL	☐ 15 - AGREGADO(A)
☐ 06 - ENTEADO(A)	☐ 16 - CONVIVENTE
☐ 07 - GENRO OU NORA	☐ 17 - PENSIONISTA
☐ 08 - PAI, MÃE, PADRASTO OU MADRASTA	☐ 18 - EMPREGADO(A) DOMÉSTICO(A)
☐ 09 - SOGRO(A)	☐ 19 - PARENTE DO(A) EMPREGADO(A) DOMÉSTICO(A)
☐ 10 - NETO(A)	☐ 20 - INDIVIDUAL EM DOMICÍLIO COLETIVO

Encerre o bloco e siga para 3.01

Source: 2022 Demographic Census/Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística – IBGE).
 Note: Illustration reproduced as in the original (Editorial note).

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FIGURE A.2**2022 Demographic Census questionnaire section on household and family composition**

7 NÚCLEO FAMILIAR (PARA TODOS OS MORADORES)	
7.01 SUA MÃE OU MADRASTA MORA ATUALMENTE NESTE DOMICÍLIO? ☐ 1 - SIM ☐ 2 - NÃO → Se SIM, siga para 7.01.1 Se NÃO, passe para 7.02	7.02 SEU PAI OU PADRASTO MORA ATUALMENTE NESTE DOMICÍLIO? ☐ 1 - SIM ☐ 2 - NÃO → Se SIM, siga para 7.021 Se NÃO: Se (idade menor que 2 anos), encerre o bloco e passe para 11.01 Se (idade maior ou igual a 2 anos e menor que 10 anos), encerre o bloco e passe para 10.01 Se (idade maior ou igual a 10 anos e menor que 12 anos), encerre o bloco e passe para 9.01 Se (homem) e (idade maior ou igual a 12 anos), encerre o bloco e passe para 9.01 Se (mulher) e (idade maior ou igual a 12 anos), encerre o bloco e siga para 8.01
7.01.1 QUEM É ELA? → Se (idade menor que 2 anos), encerre o bloco e passe para 11.01 Se (idade maior ou igual a 2 anos e menor que 10 anos), encerre o bloco e passe para 10.01 Se (idade maior ou igual a 10 anos e menor que 12 anos), encerre o bloco e passe para 9.01 Se (homem) e (idade maior ou igual a 12 anos), encerre o bloco e passe para 9.01 Se (mulher) e (idade maior ou igual a 12 anos), encerre o bloco e siga para 8.01	7.02.1 QUEM É ELE? → Se (idade menor que 2 anos), encerre o bloco e passe para 11.01 Se (idade maior ou igual a 2 anos e menor que 10 anos), encerre o bloco e passe para 10.01 Se (idade maior ou igual a 10 anos e menor que 12 anos), encerre o bloco e passe para 9.01 Se (homem) e (idade maior ou igual a 12 anos), encerre o bloco e passe para 9.01 Se (mulher) e (idade maior ou igual a 12 anos), encerre o bloco e siga para 8.01

Source: 2022 Demographic Census/IBGE.

Note: Illustration reproduced as in the original (Editorial note).

The closest available source was the Continuous National Household Sample Survey (Continuous PNAD). This survey includes a question about the resident's relationship within the household. To estimate the number of children and adolescents living in possible extended family arrangements, individuals under the age of 18 (0-17) who were classified as grandchildren, great-grandchildren, other relatives or non-relatives were selected.

The main difference between the Demographic Census and the Continuous PNAD lies in the type of survey conducted: the Census is exhaustive, collecting data from all households in the country while the Continuous PNAD is sample-based, relying on a representative sample of households. In terms of geographic detail, the Census allows for highly localised analysis, down to the neighbourhood, district and census tract levels, making it essential for informing locally targeted public policies. Meanwhile, the Continuous PNAD provides estimates at the state level and, in some cases, for major metropolitan regions.

In terms of frequency, the Census is conducted every ten years whereas the Continuous PNAD operates on an ongoing basis, with results published monthly, quarterly and annually. The Census provides a detailed snapshot of the population at a specific moment in time while the Continuous PNAD enables the monitoring of trends over time.

The Continuous PNAD includes a variable that identifies the resident's relationship within the household. Due to its broader thematic scope and regular publication, it was selected as the main tool for analysis. To understand the characteristics of children and adolescents and their households, variables related to race, gender, income and geographic area were selected.

In table A.1, the selected variables from the Continuous PNAD are listed alongside their respective categories. To isolate only children and adolescents, a filter was applied to include only those under the age of 18 (0-17), as defined by variable V2007. As a proxy for household relationship status, only individuals identified as grandchildren, great-grandchildren, other relatives or non-relatives were included. Variable V2010 was used to identify race, while variable VD5003 was used to capture household income.

TABLE A.1
Selected variables from the annual Continuous PNAD

Variable code	Variable	Selected categories	Description
V2005	Relationship in the household	10	Grandchild
		11	Great-grandchild
		14	Other relative
		15	Agregado(a) – non-relative who does not share expenses
V2007	Sex	1	Male
		2	Female
V2009	Age of the person on the date of reference	<= 17	Age (in years)
V2010	Colour or race	1	White
		2	Black
		3	Yellow
		4	Brown
		5	Indigenous
VD5003	Household per capita income income bracket (effective income) (excluding income received in the form of transport or meal vouchers) (excluding the income of persons whose status in the household was lodger, domestic worker worker or relative of a domestic worker)	1	Up to ¼ of a minimum wage
		2	¼ to ½ of a minimum wage
		3	½ to 1 minimum wage
		4	1 to 2 minimum wages
		5	2 to 3 minimum wages
		6	3 to 5 minimum wages
		7	More than 5 minimum wages

Source: Continuous PNAD/IBGE.

For data processing, R software was used, employing packages related to the Continuous PNAD, particularly PNADclBGE and the `get_pnadc` function for extraction, reading and tabulation. In the Annual edition of the Continuous PNAD, information about household members is collected during the first visit, so only first-visit data from 2023 was used. After extracting and tabulating the data, a filter was applied to keep only the categories of interest regarding household relationship status and age. With the data filtered for the target population, it was then possible to analyse the remaining selected characteristics.

For a more comprehensive analysis of extended families, the ideal scenario would be to await the release of microdata from the 2022 Demographic Census which will allow for more accurate estimates. However, the current lack of data highlights important concerns, revealing that extended families have not been adequately researched or quantified, despite representing a vital source of support for children and adolescents.

APPENDIX B

TABELA B.1

Brazil: race/colour of the population under the age of 18 (0-17) by relationship to the household reference person (2023)

Race/colour	White		Black		Brown		Yellow		Indigenous	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Grandchild	2.262.780	30.9	500.878	6.8	3.189.726	3.5	17.096	0.2	32.591	0.4
Great-grandchild	82.094	1.1	18.934	0.3	141.650	1.9	751	0.0	2.399	0.0
Other relative	321.297	4.4	106.842	1.5	550.835	7.5	3.989	0.1	11.456	0.2
Non-relative	24.304	0.3	11.882	0.2	47.578	0.6	0	0.0	609	0.0
Total	2.690.475	36.7	638.536	8.7	3.929.789	53.6	21.836	0.3	47.055	0.6

Source: Continuous National Household Sample Survey (Continuous PNAD)/Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística – IBGE).

Note: 1st visit.

TABLE B.2

Brazil: population under the age of 18 (0-17) by relationship to the household reference person, by Federative Units and regions (2023)

Locality	Grandchild	Great-grandchild	Other relative	Non-relative	Total	Population under the age of 18 (0-17) (%)
Brasil	6.005.328	245.829	994.420	84.374	7.329.951	13.9
North	884.482	61.057	158.063	11.527	1.115.129	21.0
Rondônia	48.636	1.215	7.124	700	57.675	13.7
Acre	35.816	1.069	7.855	233	44.973	16.7
Amazonas	223.421	9.975	54.065	1.792	289.253	22.3
Roraima	26.823	507	7.997	424	35.751	16.2
Pará	438.421	42.502	65.247	5.953	552.123	22.7
Amapá	45.333	3.085	6.395	912	55.725	23.4
Tocantins	66.033	2.703	9.380	1.513	79.629	18.7
Northeast	1.985.484	81.447	311.381	28.159	2.406.471	17.1
Maranhão	354.416	11.342	48.218	4.833	418.809	20.7
Piauí	125.407	3.392	18.963	1.744	149.506	17.8
Ceará	295.584	9.045	50.769	2.694	358.092	16.3
Rio Grande do Norte	123.266	7.335	23.194	4.016	157.811	19.7
Paraíba	122.368	2.802	17.765	1.094	144.029	14.3
Pernambuco	283.521	11.101	54.835	4.055	353.512	15.3
Alagoas	112.051	7.313	18.333	1.467	139.164	16.0
Sergipe	69.347	4.952	12.277	1.904	88.480	15.4
Bahia	499.525	24.165	67.029	6.351	597.070	17.1
Southeast	2.087.304	66.376	339.472	33.523	2.526.675	13.6
Minas Gerais	541.722	12.379	67.301	7.354	628.756	13.9
Espírito Santo	100.366	4.277	13.686	1.055	119.384	13.4
Rio de Janeiro	435.885	22.591	71.778	8.418	538.672	15.6
São Paulo	1.009.332	27.129	186.706	16.696	1.239.863	12.8

(Continues)

(Continued)

Locality	Grandchild	Great-grandchild	Other relative	Non-relative	Total	Population under the age of 18 (0-17) (%)
South	595.985	20.533	111.689	4.673	732.880	13.6
Paraná	225.503	7.808	41.738	2.810	277.859	13.9
Santa Catarina	153.581	4.401	25.308	875	184.165	13.4
Rio Grande do Sul	216.902	8.323	44.643	989	270.857	15.6
Centre-West	439.723	19.158	70.616	5.093	534.590	13.0
Mato Grosso do Sul	76.493	2.507	8.654	1.623	89.278	12.3
Mato Grosso	90.132	2.257	23.969	1.742	118.101	11.9
Goiás	186.530	8.055	23.700	1.297	219.581	12.7
Distrito Federal	86.567	6.339	14.293	431	107.630	16.4

Source: Continuous PNAD/IBGE.

Note: 1st visit.

TABLE B.3

Brazil: population aged 25 years and over who are the main person responsible for the household, by race and the relationship of other household members to that person (2022)

Race/colour	White		Black		Brown		Yellow		Indigenous	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Grandchild	2.592.784	38.6	1.189.907	17.7	4.008.771	59.7	21.675	0.3	86.569	1.3
Great-grandchild	84.302	30.7	47.426	17.3	139.341	50.8	532	0.2	2.937	1.1
Other relative	945.896	33.9	418.195	15.0	1.387.797	49.7	13.151	0.5	29.327	1.0
Non-relative	138.848	37.5	49.901	13.5	176.893	47.8	1.492	0.4	3084	0.8
Total	3.761.830	33.2	1.705.429	15.0	5.712.802	50.4	36.850	0.3	121.917	1.1

Source: 2022 Demographic Census/IBGE.

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