

A SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

# DISH OF THE DAY: INEQUALITIES

RACE, SOCIAL CLASS AND GENDER  
IN BRAZILIAN FOOD SYSTEMS

COLLECTION *Equity and health in food systems* | *Race, gender, social class and food*



**FIAN**  
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**DISH OF THE DAY:**

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IN BRAZILIAN FOOD SYSTEMS**

**FIAN BRASIL  
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## PRESENTATION

This summary collates the main data and analyses from the book ***Dish of the Day: Inequalities. Race, Gender and Social Class in Food Systems***, in addition to facilitating access to the full scope of its content. The publication compiles the results of a study conducted in 2022 and 2023 by three researchers, with contributions from two additional researchers, under the supervision of FIAN Brasil. As a resource, it is aimed at academics, journalists, civil society and anyone else interested in understanding the historical, social and political phenomena involved.

The investigation shows how **inequities** (unjust inequalities produced by society) contribute to the various violations of the **human right to adequate food and nutrition (the HRtAFN)** experienced by Brazilian men and women. It reminds us that, historically, these violations have made their mark on food systems and the **food process**. It also reiterates that such violence most significantly affects the lives of black people, women, children, indigenous people, traditional peoples and communities (TPCs) and low-income families.

The study was carried out based on broad, multi-method research involving quantitative analysis of data from the Family Budget Survey (POF), and examines ideas and narratives originating from civil society, scientific articles and national participatory processes over the last two decades.

FIAN texts address the reality studied from the perspective of the RtF. The publication also suggests topics for further study.

Our expectation is to **denormalise** and make visible the impacts of structuring mechanisms such as *machismo*, patriarchy and racism, in order to contribute to overcoming them, aiming towards the collective and permanent construction of a Brazil without social injustice and with fully implemented human rights.

## THE QUESTION GUIDING THE STUDY

How are the relationships between inequalities and inequities (especially race, gender and social class) expressed in food systems and food processes in Brazil?

## WHY DID WE CARRY OUT THIS STUDY?

- Because we recognise that inequities and inequalities of race, gender and social class are important factors in the increase in hunger (Rede Penssan, 2022; Salles-Costa et al., 2023), and other manifestations of food insecurity (FI): obesity, excess weight, micronutrient deficiencies (MS, 2022; IBGE, 2015; UFRJ, 2021; 2022), as well as at other stages of the food process;
- Because we wish to expand our capacity to influence public action and policies aimed at implementing the human right to adequate food and nutrition (the HRtAFN), based on the understanding that there is insufficient recognition and knowledge about the ways in which inequalities and inequities are expressed in food systems.



The full text of this study, as well as the complementary publication “Methodological notes”, can be accessed here: [fianbrasil.org.br/desigualdades](https://fianbrasil.org.br/desigualdades).

## HOW WAS THE STUDY CONDUCTED?

- We carried out a multi-method study on a sequential exploratory basis with the adoption of a qualitative-quantitative analysis approach (Paranhos et al., 2016), from August to December 2022. In the research, different data sources were adopted, such as: electronic questionnaires, public textual documents published between January 2018 and July 2022, indexed scientific articles published between January 2018 and October 2022, databases on social inequality related to actions in the food process, debate workshops and the systematisation of data from the Family Budget Survey (POF).

Our research objectives were:

- Verify how gender, race and social class inequalities and inequities emerge in the data collected in POF 2017-2018.
- Identify, systematise and analyse convergences, gaps, overlaps and disputes in narratives related to the theme "inequalities, inequities and food systems in Brazil", expressed in public documents.
- Describe challenges and opportunities related to overcoming social inequalities and inequities, especially those related to race, gender and social class, in the context of the food process.

## **I - HOW DO DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF CIVIL SOCIETY EXPRESS INEQUALITIES, ESPECIALLY THOSE OF GENDER, RACE AND SOCIAL CLASS, IN THE FOOD PROCESS IN BRAZIL?**

For the **CIVIL SOCIETY** grouping, we included positions and/or informative texts created by organisations or institutions linked to the private sector of a commercial nature, professional associations and social movements. This is a diverse set of organisations, and, although it has antagonistic actions from the point of view of focus, it shares common forms of influence in the debate, and on public action related to food.

Within the breadth of strategies adopted for political advocacy (scientific strategies, associated with the Brazilian political system and mobilisation of members and society in general), the Brazilian Food Industry Association (Abia) and the Federal Council of Nutritionists (CFN) stand out. Emphasis should be given to the CFN's role as a political agent operating on different fronts, which characterises this institution as a strategic actor when countering views presented by the food industry and by corporate agriculture.

### **1.1 The Brazilian Food Industry Association (Abia), the Brazilian Agribusiness Association (Abag) and the Brazilian Supermarket Association (Abras)**

The debate on gender inequality was found in the documents and statements of associations linked to the private commercial sector in the area of food. The same was not true for race. The debate on social class was approached in a restricted way, and from the perspective that “equality” is constructed by individual effort, entrepreneurship and meritocracy. This also includes the challenges experienced by women.

The prevailing narrative is that adequate nutrition and a healthy body are associated with the consumer's right to choose. The individual and autonomous decision about which foods to consume and easy access to food, through supermarket chains, are aspects that influence adequate health and nutrition. The inequality dimension of the access to food is ignored. There is no reference to the socio-educational and financial heterogeneity of the Brazilian population, the distribution aspects of commercial food establishments, the high prices charged for fresh/minimally processed products, or the inequality black people, women and people in vulnerable socioeconomic situations face in accessing food and a diet that promotes health and well-being.

### **1.2 Federal Council of Nutritionists (CFN), National Federation of Nutritionists (FNN), Brazilian Nutrition Association (Asbran), National Executive of Nutrition Students (ENE Nutrição) and Brazilian Society of Food and Nutrition (Sban)**

Despite the strong reporting and advocacy on the public agenda for food and nutritional security (FNS) and the HRAFN by most of these entities, the treatment of inequality is still superficial. The term “inequality” appears, above all, in the context of complaints about the increase in hunger (Asbran and CFN), struggles to guarantee labour rights (FNN) or, briefly, in debates about the professional training of nutritionists (CFN and ENE Nutrição). Some of these documents detail aspects of inequality associated with income and gender, but there is no reference to

racial inequity. Regarding income, the condition of inequality tends to be reported to highlight food and nutritional problems associated with financial access to food. Gender is the approach most frequently highlighted in texts, but it is limited to the perspective of sex (man and woman), tending to be generalised, even when brought to spaces intended for presenting proposals for action.

Sban, also included in this group because its membership comprises nutritionists and other professionals who work with the topic of food and nutrition, differs from the other entities analysed in this block. In the Sban documents, there was no mention of the word “inequality” or related terms (inequities, equity, gender, race/color, social class, income). There is a resemblance to the narratives of associations linked to the commercial private sector with regard to debates on modifications to nutritional labelling, based on the idea that consumers choose according to their needs, that they “know how to choose” and must have the right to do so without the interference and unnecessary and alarmist warnings, for example, on food labels.

### **1.3 Rural social movements and organisations**

The following were part of this group: The Peasant Women's Movement (MMC), Via Campesina Brasil, Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST), Small Farmers' Movement (MPA), Rural Working Women's Movement (MMTR), National Confederation of Rural Agricultural Workers and Family Farmers (Contag), National Confederation of Workers in Family Farming in Brazil (Contraf) and the Marcha das Margaridas.

The analysis of current documents and statements by leaders in recent public debate indicates that issues related to FNS and food sovereignty are central to the agendas of rural social movements, associated with the structural debate on inequalities and inequities. The documents record reflections that (1) relate the agribusiness production model to the inequalities faced by traditional peoples and communities (TPCs) living in rural areas; (2) emphasise the strengthening and need to (re)value food production through family farming and TPCs as a strategy to combat inequalities; (3) reaffirm the role of the State in the development of agri-food systems based on sustainability and social justice.

The movements draw attention to the fact that inequalities (social, gender and race), which restrict the most vulnerable population's access to food and the means to produce it, have been exacerbated by the crisis of capitalism, the recent health crisis promoted by the Covid-19 pandemic and the economic policies implemented by the 2019-2022 federal administration (the Bolsonaro government). These phenomena have widened social differences by pushing a large portion of the population into a condition of extreme poverty, where limits on access to income and public assistance services further restricts the implementation of human rights, including the RtF.

MST, MPA, MMC, Via Campesina and the Marcha das Margaridas share the perspective that social inequalities originate in the production structure strengthened by the hegemonic practice of the agribusiness, where land, wealth and income and the commodification of countryside products, waters and forest is concentrated, delimiting a class division in rural areas as well.



Some of these movements consider that the aforementioned cycle of reproduction of inequalities has accompanied the history of Brazil since colonisation, through the promotion of a State that legitimises the theft of indigenous lands, peoples and traditional communities.

Social movements strongly associate hunger with the hegemonic model of the agribusiness. They recognise that the phenomena linked to food insecurity, especially hunger, are associated with the dimensions of gender, social class and race, especially affecting poor black women, indigenous peoples, traditional communities and the landless. They consider that the increase of hunger and FI cannot be justified by lack of food, since there is sufficient domestic and global production to feed everyone. This is a phenomenon resulting from inequity in access to food.

Most of these social movements also recognise that agri-food systems, linked to the hegemonic model of the agribusiness, focused on exports, have a strong connection with the exacerbated consumption of industrialised and ultra-processed products, and are therefore harmful to health, FNS and the environment.

Women from rural social movements play an important role in narratives that show the interrelationship between patriarchy, racism and capitalism, considered structuring systems for inequalities in Brazilian society. They report that hunger affects black and poor women more. The women of the Marcha das Margaridas defend anti-capitalist, anti-racist and anti-patriarchal feminism as a strategy to overcome gender, race and social class inequalities. The women of the MPA defend the affirmation of peasant feminism in rural areas. Women in the agroecological field consider that the association between feminism and agroecology is a way of building equality, based on the recognition of women's work and their contribution to the productive and economic development of food systems.

## **II - EXPRESSIONS OF INEQUALITIES IN SCIENTIFIC TEXTS**

In the **SCIENTIFIC** texts grouping, 34 articles published between January 2018 and October 2022 were analysed. The search was carried out on the Virtual Health Library (VHL) database, using health science descriptors (HSD) and the combinations: food systems and inequalities of race, gender and social class. See the document “Methodological notes” ([fianbrasil.org.br/notasmetod](http://fianbrasil.org.br/notasmetod)) to see details about the methodology adopted.

The lack of results for the combination of descriptors that aimed to identify works that dealt with “food systems” and “race/color” is noteworthy. Race or skin color were not terms adopted by the studies as keywords/descriptors, but they were present as themes and words in the body of the articles analysed in this study. Only three articles described the relationship between food insecurity and race. In these, black people were identified as those with the highest frequency of FI situations when compared to other population groups. Other studies recognised the relationship between race and/or gender inequality and the manifestations of FI but did not present analyses that would allow an understanding of the social mechanisms that operate to increase the occurrence of FI among women and black people.

### ***Recommendations for the scientific field:***

From the set of scientific texts, it is possible to conclude that race/colour data are commonly presented as one of the characteristics for describing the profiles of the public studied and not as a central focus for analysis. They are most frequently used as explanation elements for unfavourable FNS results among low-income people, black people or women. In this way, academic studies end up contributing to the invisibility of racial issues and experiences of discrimination, while also being limited in their ability to present potential contributions aimed at overcoming inequities.

It is recommended that studies focus on racism, classism and sexism in determining the conditions of vulnerability. Acting contrary to this premise could strengthen the idea that being black and/or being a woman, for example, are determinants of food insecurity. In reality, it is racism and gender and racial inequities that prevail in the lives of individuals, bringing additional layers of obstacles to overcoming unfavourable and unfair living and eating conditions.

It is also recommended to focus analytical attention on the reasons that make white people benefit more directly from actions and strategies to promote FNS and implement the RfT in a country founded on racism. It is important that studies give more visibility to the racial privileges of whiteness, racialise white people and name the processes that give them social advantages.

As a path, we recommend greater training for researchers on the topic of racism and gender inequities in the social determination of FNS and in the stages of the food process, as a way of overcoming the restricted understanding of race and gender as descriptive layers that influence and explain the numbers.

***Some public policy recommendations, expressed in the texts analysed:***

- Consider the dynamics and interactions that exist between racism, sexism and the issue of social class, as an intersection that enhances social vulnerabilities, thus favouring the overcoming of the universal way of formulating and proposing political actions that disregard the experiences and challenges experienced by subjects exposed to systematic discrimination;
- Invest in policies to improve the food environment of families using income transfer programs, such as the decentralisation of spaces for selling healthy food, reaching the most peripheral areas;
- Incorporate the perspective of equity and tackling inequalities in access in the design of policies, with priority given to indigenous peoples, traditional communities and the black population;
- Stop the advance of agribusiness in indigenous territories, which has caused pesticide contamination of water, food and soil, causing illness and weakening traditional food culture.

### III – EXPRESSIONS OF INEQUALITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM NATIONAL CONFERENCES

In the reports of the 15 national conferences and meetings analysed, held between 2009 and 2021, identified as belonging to the **SOCIAL PARTICIPATION** group, we found that the specific terms “food systems” and “food process” or even “inequalities in food systems” were scarcely adopted. Recurring terms were “food and nutritional security (FNS)”, “agroecology”, “family farming” and “rural development”. Contributions to this analysis were most frequently obtained in documents from conferences on rural development, FNS, aquaculture and fishing, solidarity economy, health, promotion of racial equality, technical assistance, indigenous health and rural women, and at the agroecology meeting. Policy conferences for women, LGBTI+ and social assistance did not seem to have dedicated space to debate these topics. The 5th National FNS Conference highlighted the debate on inequality and inequities in “food systems”, with quotes and proposals associated with the promotion of gender and racial equality.

In all the analysed documents, references to women were present, bringing visibility to this segment and fostering increased contemplation of gender equality and rights. While there is progress in terms of incorporating a gender perspective into the discourse, it remains unclear whether there is a comprehensive examination of the power dynamics between women and men that underlie our society.

The racial perspective was incorporated into the debates of a small portion of the conferences analysed. We verified the recognition that institutional racism needs to be faced by public authorities, especially in the fight against poverty and extreme poverty, a condition that affects a large part of the black population. The concept of ethnodevelopment was stated as essential to promoting/protecting the specific way of life of traditional peoples and communities. However, we found that the invisibility of the black identity still predominates in conference records, which can be seen by the absence of the term “black” in most documents.

The mapping process allowed us to identify 342 proposals from national meetings or conferences. Only 14 proposals (4% of the total) made direct reference to the term “inequalities” or “inequities”. The references to such terms, in the 14 times they were cited, were related to the terms “ethnic”, “race”, “gender”, “generational”, “sexual” and “social”, following this descending order of citations. It is worth highlighting that, in the set of conference proposals, we found 23 citations (6.7%) associated with the affirmation/defense of equality or equity, with these being most frequently related to the words “ethnic”, “race”, “gender” and , in smaller, to the words “generational”, “social” and “sexual”.

We found 246 proposals related to the five different stages of the food process: i) obtaining food, ii) access to food, iii) food transformation, iv) food consumption and v) regeneration of vital and environmental conditions. Of these, 42% dealt with topics associated with the stages of obtaining and accessing food.

#### 3.1 Obtaining Food

People's access to means of production, such as land, water and natural resources, financial resources and technical knowledge.

**In the process of national conferences, the debate on inequities at this stage of the food process highlighted:**

- The Existence of two large groups of food systems. The hegemonic ones, associated with employer production, types of cultivation (commodities), territorial extension and principles applied in the production process (cultivation approach, labour relations, etc.) and industrial fishing; and counter-hegemonic ones, associated with traditional knowledge, agroecological, solidarity dynamics, promoters of social justice and sustainable development, from perspectives that integrate nature, territory and people;
- Maintenance and intensification of inequities due to the power exercised by those who dominate the employer production model, both in the field of ideas and political power (through influence over politicians and government institutions);
- Inequities in access to land and the right to territory, related to land concentration by agribusiness and the systematic invasion and the grabbing of traditional lands and territories;
- Inequality in the distribution of public investment, more focused on the production of commodities, to the detriment of promoting healthy food production systems, such as agroecological systems;
- Unequal access to public policies to strengthen family farming (credit, agricultural insurance and technical assistance and rural extension – Ater –, among others), by women, young people, indigenous peoples, traditional peoples and communities.

#### **PROPOSALS FOR ACTION DERIVED FROM NATIONAL CONFERENCES (SYSTEMATISATION)**

- Carry out agrarian reform, ensuring instruments to guarantee women's ownership of property;
- Ensure quilombola communities and urban black communities have the right to the territory, recognising this as material and intangible heritage and a territory of social and environmental interest for traditional peoples of African origin and *terreiro* peoples;
- Expand access to public policies for the black population, indigenous peoples, traditional peoples and communities, by strengthening and expanding the participation of these groups, respecting their traditional production systems, ways of life and food cultures as strategies to promote sustainability and income generation;
- Protect and promote socio-biodiversity, through the recognition of black, quilombola, indigenous, peasant and farmer women as guardians of heirloom seeds and biodiversity;
- Democratise access to Ater and the National Program for Strengthening Family Farming (Pronaf) among other policies aimed at strengthening family farming, adapting it to the cultural knowledge of traditional peoples and communities, and seeking to overcome obstacles to access for women, rural youth, indigenous peoples, quilombolas and other traditional communities;
- Simplify access to the Family Farming Registry (CAF, which replaced the Declaration of Aptitude for Pronaf – DAP) for indigenous peoples and traditional communities;
- Promote women's self-organisation initiatives and the strengthening of their networks, organisations, and their performance in decision-making spaces and the exercise of political power;
- Promote the diversification of agricultural crops in traditional communities;
- Expand public policies aimed at rural youth.

### **3.2 Access to food: purchase, collection, creation and sale or exchange of food not mediated by money**

**In the process of national conferences, the debate on inequities at this stage of the food process highlighted:**

- Exponential increase in the distance between food producers and consumers;
- Increase in food prices;
- The informality of economic enterprises as an economic, social and access barrier to public policies, especially for women, indigenous peoples, traditional peoples and communities.

#### **PROPOSALS FOR ACTION DERIVED FROM NATIONAL CONFERENCES (SYSTEMATISATION)**

- Expand access for women, indigenous peoples and traditional peoples and communities to purchasing food from the National School Meal Program (Pnae) and the Food Acquisition Program (PAA), ensuring the appreciation and protection of cultural and environmental aspects associated with food production and processing;
- Carry out a diagnosis of the challenges and opportunities faced by the black population, agrarian reform settlers, indigenous peoples, quilombolas and other TPCs in accessing institutional markets;
- Create and consolidate mechanisms to promote racial and gender equality in food acquisition programs;
- Improve and comply with cooperative and associative legislation, taking into account the diversity of existing arrangements built by traditional communities and peoples.

### **3.3 FOOD PROCESSING**

Processes for preparing, processing and modifying food before consumption, at a domestic or industrial level.

**In the process of national conferences, the debate on inequities at this stage of the food process highlighted:**

- Inequality in the access to instruments to support the food agro-industrialisation process within the scope of family farming and artisanal fishing;
- Inadequacy of tax, fiscal, health and environmental legislation for the reality of family agribusinesses;
- The informality of fish processing enterprises, especially those run by women, and lack of adequate infrastructure to guarantee the health and sanitary quality of workers.

#### **PROPOSALS FOR ACTION DERIVED FROM NATIONAL CONFERENCES (SYSTEMISATION)**

- Expand and diversify access to agricultural industry promotion programs, with an emphasis on guaranteeing access for women and strengthening the processing of food from traditional and artisanal forms of cultivation and production;
- Value the knowledge, practices and resistance practices of indigenous peoples, quilombolas and other TPCs, the black population, gypsies and communities of African origin in food processing.

### **3.4 FOOD CONSUMPTION (NUTRITION AND HEALTH)**

Consumption, use or biological exploitation of food, influencing the nutritional status and general health of individuals.

**In the process of national conferences, the debate on inequities at this stage of the food process highlighted:**

- Prevalence of hunger among lower-income people, women and the black population;
- Reduction in the consumption of fresh and minimally processed foods and an increase in the consumption of ultra-processed foods;
- urbanisation and lifestyle in cities;
- the influence of advertising and propaganda applied to groups of products with an inadequate nutritional profile.

#### **PROPOSALS FOR ACTION DERIVED FROM NATIONAL CONFERENCES (SYSTEMATISATION)**

- Ensure that school meals respect and value cultural food traditions related to food, training co nutritionists;
- Expand the supply of organic or agroecological foods in schools;
- Encourage the consumption of artisanal fish;
- Promote adequate and healthy eating considering the conditioning factors and social factors related choices, thus seeking to build a broad understanding of the determinants of eating, avoiding blaming pe
- Carry out health initiatives, especially among the youth, that address nutrition beyond the health binomial, that discuss determinants of adequate nutrition and food insecurity, beauty standards, stigmas of fat people, chronic non-communicable diseases (CNDs) and other issues that today are “invisible” an to food systems.

### **3.5 RECONSTRUCTION OR REGENERATION OF VITAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS**

The food process approach calls on us to understand the elements associated with the acts of feeding and nourishing from a cyclical perspective, which goes beyond the idea of a chronological and rigid sequence of understanding about access to the consumption of food. At this stage, we include proposals related to overcoming inequalities and confronting institutional racism in spaces of social participation and public policy governance.

#### **PROPOSALS FOR ACTION DERIVED FROM NATIONAL CONFERENCES (SYSTEMATISATION)**

- Expand public participation, especially of women, the black population, indigenous peoples and traditional peoples and communities, in spaces of social control and participation, especially in FNSCs (national, state and municipal);
- Provide governance spaces for public policies and actions aimed at the black population and other peoples and communities, based on listening and the active and effective participation of people in decision-making processes. Attention is drawn to the need for public policies and actions to be planned, executed, evaluated and reviewed with people and not simply for people, thus allowing the construction of a public governance environment that seeks to overcome structural racism;
- Provide public spaces and spaces for mobilisation around the topic of institutional racism, starting with FNSCs (national, state and municipal), to discuss the institutional racism suffered by the black population, quilombolas, indigenous people and TPCs in their relationship with the Brazilian State;

- Support the institutionalisation of specific structures to support and strengthen women's participation in society;
- Guarantee and expand on resources for actions to combat discrimination based on race, sex and sexual orientation;
- Guarantee the funding and structuring of bodies responsible for regulating access to land and territories for indigenous peoples and quilombolas, the black population, people of African origin, gypsy people and other traditional peoples and communities;
- Demarcate and protect indigenous and TPC territories in order to protect their ways of living (which include a diverse food process, regenerating nature, life and cultures);
- Form dialogue networks on FNS, structured to disseminate the human right to adequate food (the HRtAF) and FNS to society in general, emphasising indigenous peoples, black populations, traditional peoples and communities, women, homeless people and people in deprivation of liberty.

#### **IV – GENERAL ANALYSIS ACROSS CONVERSATIONS**

The results of the content analysis described here and the contributions arising from the project's initial debate workshop also indicates to us the need to guide our partners in the field of demandability and struggles for the implementation of the HRtAFN on how to overcome generalist and subtle forms of inequalities and inequities that prevail in the eating process of all. There is, however difficult it may be to affirm, a contribution to the action of rendering invisible the structural causes of gender and racial inequalities and inequities in the Brazilian population.

This is connected to a gap in the debate about “the causes of the causes”, of the conditions that lead to hunger, malnutrition or obesity – and other forms of violation of the HRtAFN. These absences constitute a strategy for naturalising inequalities. This way of acting is dangerous as it can strengthen the mistaken idea that entrepreneurship and self-effort are life's solutions, when those who struggle daily to survive have neither the time nor the energy to demand their rights. When they do, they do so on their knees<sup>1</sup> – because they do not recognise themselves as holders of rights, who can demand access to food, water, housing, transportation, security, work or income. It thus becomes a search for charity, for help or for a brilliant idea for starting one's own business. A perspective that opposes the logic of the HRtAFN.

**Within the narratives and expressions of the different subjects and respective documents, we (un)found the following expressions in common about inequalities and inequities in the food systems/food process in Brazil:**

- The perspective of someone having the RfT is little explored in the set of documents, even among those originating from social movements and national conferences;
- The use of the term “inequality” in a generalised way and the lack of analysis on how structural racism impacts current data on hunger and other manifestations of FI. There

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<sup>1</sup> Reference to the words of the bishop emeritus of Goiás, Dom Tomás Balduino: “Rights can not be demanded on one's knees, they are demanded on one's feet”.  
<https://jornalistaslivres.org/direitos-nao-se-pede-de-joelhos-exige-se-de-pe>.



is an invisibility of the differences imposed by area and location of residence, race and ethnicity, sex and sexual orientation/diversity.

- The debate on gender inequality, when present, is placed in the perspective of differences between men and women. There is also a restriction of the gender debate to the male-female aspect, characterised as based on biological sex, which perpetuates the invisibility with which people with other gender identities and sexual orientation are exposed. Furthermore, there are no reflections on what it means to be a woman at different stages of life (girls, young people, adults and elderly people);
- Race is information that tends to be placed in the perspective of skin color, thus being presented more as an element of characterisation or construction of a descriptive photograph of the population than as an explanatory aspect for any analysis of food systems or related to the topic of food;
- In the context of analysing rural social movements, race was a term most recurrently associated with traditional peoples and communities residing in rural areas. We did not find reflections that dealt with the urban perspective or black people living in cities;
- No contributions were found from social class analysis. The income or education level – as a proxy for indirect information about income – were the most adopted strategies to characterise aspects of people's social insertion. To some extent, albeit to a limited extent, information was found that related to work situation.
- Even in more inclusive movements and articulations that adopt in their narratives the perspective of overcoming structural inequalities, such as gender, the existence of obstacles to the effective integration of women has been identified. This reflection originates from analyses of texts in the field of agroecology, from which the insufficiency of the racial debate was also perceived.

## **V. A QUANTITATIVE LOOK AT GENDER, RACE AND SOCIAL CLASS INEQUALITIES**

The descriptive quantitative analysis was carried out using the Family Budget Survey (POF) 2017-2018 database, the last national survey conducted by the federal government with data on the food security (FS) and food insecurity (FI) of the Brazilian population. The POF was conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). The edition, with data collection in that biennium, had a sample of approximately 68 thousand families (IBGE, 2020). The research adopted the Brazilian Food Insecurity Scale (Ebia) to assess FS and FI levels in households. Additional details can be found in the complementary document “Methodological notes” ([fianbrasil.org.br/notasm Metod](http://fianbrasil.org.br/notasm Metod)).

We included this analysis with data from 2017-2018 with the aim of illustrating, in numbers, how inequalities marked the daily lives of Brazilian men and women in the pre-pandemic period. Unfortunately, studies subsequently published pointed to a worsening of hunger and other forms of food insecurity in the Brazilian population (Rede Penssan, 2021; 2022; Galindo et al., 2021).

What we present here is a selection of some indicators, referring to those years, from a broader set accessible in the whole document ([fianbrasil.org.br/RelatDesigualdades](http://fianbrasil.org.br/RelatDesigualdades)), including in graphs and tables.

## 5.1 OVERVIEW OF LIVING CONDITIONS

### (a) Financial difficulties in households headed by men and women

- 50.5% of households in which black women were the head of household had difficulty acquiring food, while for white men this proportion was 23.2%.
- Families headed by white women experience fewer financial difficulties, in general or when purchasing food, than households headed by black men, indicating that the issue of race overlaps with the analysis of gender, in this case of comparison between whites and blacks.

### (b) Access to food

- Solidarity mechanisms – such as food donations – were more frequent in households headed by self-declared black people. Among households with black people as a head of household, more than 10% of food was purchased through donations;
- Access to food through own production was reported by 5.2% of Brazilian households, without a distinction regarding the race of the head of household.

### (c) Living Conditions

- Among households headed by black women, 41.9% of them did not have a sewage outlet via the general network, while among white women this proportion was 24.4%.
- Unhealthy conditions<sup>2</sup> were greater in households where women were the head of household. However, this gender difference is very close to the statistical margin for sampling error. Regarding race, we observed that households headed by black women presented even worse results in this indicator when compared to households headed by white women.

## 5.2 SEGMENTATION BY SOCIAL CLASS

### (a) FS/FI in households with a head of household identified as an employer, employee or a self-employed income producer.

From a conceptual point of view, the “employer” is a representative of the capitalist class who has control of the means of production, dominance over the work process of third parties, and receives income from capital. The “employee” belongs to the working class and lives from

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<sup>2</sup> The housing unhealthiness indicator considered a set of elements, such as problems with the foundation, space in the home, existence of leaks and location of the residence in places subject to flooding or landslides. The factors are specified in the document “Methodological notes”: ([fianbrasil.org.br/notasm Metod](http://fianbrasil.org.br/notasm Metod)).

work and its remuneration. The “self-employed” category, in turn, brings together a specific group of workers who are not subject to the control of capitalists and whose remuneration does not result from a salary. This category may include self-employed professionals and informal workers.

- Severe FI was present in 7.7% of households in which the head of household reported earning income on their own and in 5.4% of households where the reference person was an employed worker. Among employers, severe FI was not statistically relevant.
- 40% of households where the head of household reported being employed faced some level of FI.
- 13% of employers' households had some degree of FI, with a large proportion of these households classified as having mild FI, that is, with concerns about obtaining food in the future.

**(b) FS/FI in households according to the head of household’s work situation: formal or informal work.**

- 69.6% of households with a head of household in a formal work situation were in FS. In households headed by a person in a situation of informality in the labor market, this figure fell to 53.4%.
- 9% of households with a head of household working informally experienced severe FI, that is, hunger.

**(d) FS/FI in households according to income.**

**The higher the income, the lower the FI frequency**

|                                   | <b>AMONG THE POOREST 10%</b> | <b>AMONG THE RICHEST 10%</b> |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| They lived in a situation of FI   | 72.6%                        | 8.8%                         |
| They lived in severe FI (hunger)  | 22.5%                        | No statistical relevance     |
| Declare themselves brown or black | 74%                          | 25%                          |
| They declare themselves white     | 24%                          | 75%                          |

- Among the poorest 10% in Brazil, 74% declared themselves mixed race or black (for this study aggregated in the black race category) and 24% declared themselves white. This proportion reduces as income increases and is reversed in the case of the richest 10%, of which 75% self-declared as having white skin colour and 25% as black or brown.
- Among the poorest 10%, black people tend to be poorer than white people, and therefore more prone to food insecurity. This applies to the entire distribution up to the richest 10%. Other explanatory factors, not related to income, can also elucidate this difference – for

example, inequality in the distribution of wealth, the existence of family support networks, the narcissistic pacts of whiteness (Bento, 2022) and other factors related to structural racism. These factors, however, were not analysed in this study and should be the subject of future work.

### 5.3 SEGMENTATION BY RACE AND GENDER

- FI was more frequent in households where the head of household was a woman (41.6%), compared to where the head of household was a man (33.3%).
- FI was present in 45.6% of households where black men or women are the head of household, while the figure was 26.1% for households headed by white people in 2017-2018.
- Severe FI (hunger) was higher among households headed by self-declared black people when compared to the prevalence of severe FI in families headed by white people. However, **households headed by black women had the highest incidences of severe FI (9.5%), followed by households headed by black men (6.7%), white women (4.2%) and white men (2.4%).** In 2017-2018, when the head of household was declared black, the family unit had more than twice the incidences of severe FI than households headed by a self-declared white person. The same trend was observed for the prevalence of mild and moderate FI, which was also higher among households headed by black women.
- FS, on the contrary, was higher among households headed by white men (76.8%) compared to those headed by white women (69.8%), black men (58.1%) and black women (49.5%).
- The intersection of gender and racial inequalities is manifested in all regions of the Brazilian territory, as well as in urban and rural spaces. Considering the extreme cases, only 13.4% of households headed by white men were marked by FI in the South Region, while 61.9% of households headed by black women in the North Region were under this condition.
- The elderly had the highest frequencies of FS, probably as a result of the Brazilian social security system, whose design is more effective in protecting individuals belonging to this age group/life cycle. However, the prevalence of black elderly people experiencing food insecurity (38.7%) was 18.6 percentage points higher than the value found for white elderly people (20.1%). Hunger (severe FI) affected 5.5% of self-declared black elderly people, a figure almost three times higher than that found for self-declared white elderly people (1.9%).
- In 2017-2018, most children and adolescents experienced some level of FI. If we add the most severe levels of FI (moderate + severe) we have 25.2% of children and 25.9% of adolescents with partial or severe food restrictions. Black children presented double the frequency of the severe FI condition – hunger (12.6%), when compared to the frequency of this situation among white children (6.1%). This pattern of racial inequality repeats itself for teenagers.
- Self-declared black people reported purchasing less fruit than white people. As for vegetables, there was no significant difference. Here, however, it is worth noting that the acquisition of these foods is very low considering all the race categories studied.
- Among households that reported purchasing fruits and vegetables, the average monthly amount spent was R\$68.55 for white men, R\$61.26 for households headed by white women, R\$57.84 in households headed by men black people and R\$53.14 in households

headed by black women. When considering the average amount spent on fruits and vegetables by the total number of Brazilian households, by sex and self-declared race of the head of household, it appears that the acquisition of these foods in households headed by black people is always lower than in households where the head of household is a self-declared white person.

- In relation to organic products, these were also consumed more by white people than by black people, although they represent less than 1% of the food purchases of Brazilian men and women in general.

#### **WANT TO KNOW MORE?**



Read the full report and details of the methodology at: [fianbrasil.org.br/desigualdades](https://fianbrasil.org.br/desigualdades).

## Race, gender and social class inequalities from the perspective of the HRTAFN

The terms “**non-discrimination**” and “**equality**” are perhaps among the most frequently mentioned in the main human rights regulations (declarations, treaties, general comments) as a central element for the implementation of the rights. General Comment 18 states that,

“Non-discrimination, together with equality before the law and equal protection of the law without any discrimination, constitutes a basic and general principle relating to the protection of human rights.”

Both expressions are currently insufficient to encompass the (perverse) complexities that have been revealed.

The United Nations (UN) was founded after the Second World War and the revelation of the atrocities of the Holocaust. It was conceived in response to such a discovery as a way of placing limits on hegemonic powers and affirming the humanity, dignity – the rights, in short – of all people, regardless of their origin, regardless of the norms of the countries where they lived. Rights that all human beings should have, simply for being part of the human species. The UN had the mission of preventing something of such a magnitude of cruelty from happening again.

The repetition about prohibiting and confronting discrimination “of any nature” may be related to the notion that the “**dehumanisation**” of certain groups – for example, the “radicalised” ones – is a crucial factor in the naturalisation of human rights violations. Without disregarding the geopolitical context of that decision or belittling a measure at the height of an unacceptable event for humanity, it is necessary to remember that absurd atrocities were committed against African people at specific moments and continuously throughout centuries of enslavement without the creation of declarations and organisations to protect the rights of these human beings.

The digression aims to shed light on the fundamental role of discussions about racism, sexism and classism occupying a prominent place in the struggles for human rights. So that, as this report suggests, the violations experienced by black people, indigenous people, women and impoverished people are **denaturalised**. The “discrimination” cited by human rights documents – which is suggested to be named in a more concrete and blunt way in the typifications above – is the structural cause of the greater occurrence of violations of the rights of these significant portions of society and social naturalisation which, in turn, makes its perpetuation possible.

**The Dish of the Day report: Inequalities. Race, Gender and Social Class in Brazilian Food Systems** and this summary invite the field of study and struggle for the **human right to adequate food and nutrition (RtF)** to think about this right with the view of denaturalising such injustices. More than that, by mentioning the “insufficiency of knowing”, by systematising the view of race, gender and social class under this approach, it invites the field of food and nutritional sovereignty and security (FNSS) to transform its perspectives, proposals and actions to combat hunger, obesity and other consequences of Dhana violations, bringing to the fore the “causes of the causes”: racism, sexism and classism, most notably.

In this field of knowledge and action, the defense of **food as a right** as opposed to its commodification is historic. Reinforcing and disseminating the idea that food is a **common good** (just like nature) seems important both from the perspective of combating power inequalities between social class, race and gender and in confronting charity as the “natural” solution to ensure the RtF of these people, if the debate is held with the intention of making such issues even more visible.

This understanding is close to the principle of the **universality** of human rights, which can be invoked in opposition to the absurd idea of meritocracy between groups so different in terms of opportunities and experiences. “Non-discrimination” itself is a principle for the realisation of human rights, along with equity, participation and inclusion, accountability and the rule of law.

From a human rights perspective, the realisation of these rights is the responsibility of society as a whole, but it is the States that bear the **obligation**. This is due to the fact that they are the holders of power (Executive, Legislative and Judiciary) and the management of public resources capable of ensuring that rights are respected and protected, and satisfied by all people. To this end, the State has prerogatives that allow it to reduce inequalities inherent to the historical process of the development of a country.

From the perspective of the inequities of race, gender and social class in the food systems highlighted, the fields of FNSS and human rights seem to be lacking in expanding the visibility of the structural causes of these reiterated inequalities, filling the gap of the “causes of the causes”, that is, overcoming generalist descriptions that are not very expressive about the topics in question.

The recognition and exposure of racism, sexism and classicism makes it clear that inequalities were produced by power structures. It is, therefore, up to the State – who is supposed to “manage” the power of the people – to produce solutions, with the participation of society, to eliminate the causes of inequities, through appropriate public policies, in the broadest sense of the adjective.

Reflecting on and proposing public policies that consider racism and sexism and their impacts on their users seems revolutionary in this sense. It means “humanising”, giving full attention to the holders of the most frequent rights in all these policies. It seems obvious, but perhaps it needs to stop being like this, so that we can look more carefully at ways of doing this.

Along these lines, a robust proposal for social participation stands out, a central axis also in both fields: that public policies be evaluated and revised with and not merely for individuals who experience oppression. It is necessary that these people are actually heard and considered in decision-making processes.

The analyses and proposals presented in this document are, therefore, instruments for rethinking and reestablishing, from a more complex and in-depth perspective, the struggles to confront inequalities and inequities of race, gender and social class in food systems. The study provokes us, combatants of these struggles, to start our work where we are and expand it as much as we can.

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## **EQUITY AND HEALTH ON THE AGENDA**

This study is part of the project “Equity and health in food systems”, which FIAN Brasil is concluding. The initiative was designed to contribute to the debate on inequalities at all stages of the food process – such as production, marketing, consumption –, as well as to combat them.

In another aspect of the project, we carried out two case studies on the National School Meal Program (Pnae) in indigenous schools. Based on fieldwork in Caarapó (MS) and Tabatinga (AM), the team sought to deepen their understanding of the dilemmas, solutions and barriers faced by the communities. Each local reality is portrayed in publications and a mini-documentary, available on our website.

The idea is that the knowledge produced forms the basis for strategies to influence public purchases, those carried out by State organisations. The so-called institutional market can support a series of policies – for example, ensuring the supply of adequate food in schools and other environments; and acquiring agricultural production from indigenous people, quilombolas and settlers.

FIAN Brasil's advocacy activities take place in partnership with a series of organisations and movements, especially through networks and coalitions, such as the School Food Observatory (ÓAÊ) and the Alliance for Adequate and Healthy Food.

The team also participated in the preparation of collective political documents seeking the adhesion of candidates to the real food platform, based on family farming, agroecology, fair trade and fresh foods. Another front has been the influence on the National Congress and the Federal Executive.

Among the communication content produced is an animation series that humorously portrays the corporate capture of food systems. It can be accessed on the FIAN website. And, based on this study, we proposed a workshop for journalists.

Looking at inequalities in food systems and conflicts of interest, as well as monitoring public purchases (especially in the Pnae), will remain at the centre of our activities in 2024 and 2025.





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