

# Right to Education Index 2021

## Country Brief - Brazil



**CAMPANHA**  
NACIONAL PELO DIREITO À  
**EDUCAÇÃO**

## Introduction

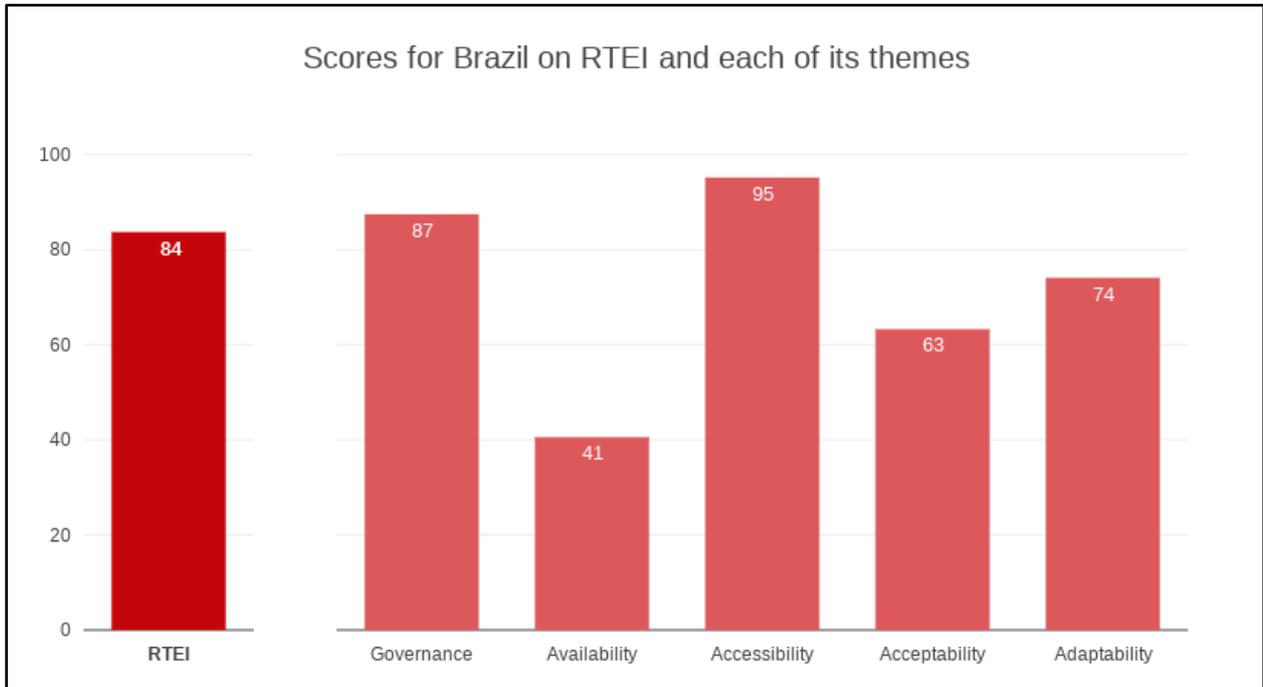
The Right to Education Index (RTEI) is a global accountability initiative that aims to ensure that all people, no matter where they live, enjoy their right to a quality education. RTEI is a global index built out of the international right to education framework to monitor national progress towards its fulfillment. It reveals key areas in need of improvement, offers country-to-country comparisons, and tracks progress over time. Ultimately, RTEI seeks to:

- Strengthen the expertise and capacity of civil society and education advocates.
- Increase public and political support for realizing the right to education.
- Hold governments and institutions accountable for their commitments to the right to education.
- And finally, uphold the right to education for every child and adult everywhere.

RTEI partners with civil society organizations, research institutions, and governments to collect data on a wide range of indicators explicitly derived from the international right to education framework. The data is used to form the Right to Education Index, which can be used by the public, civil society, researchers, and governments to identify areas in need of improvement, explore issues more deeply, and place efforts where they are most needed. As with any index, RTEI has limitations in its interpretation and application. For complete information on RTEI methodology, scope, limitations and data, visit the **RTEI Website**: <https://www.rtei.org/en>

# Overview

In its second year participating in the Right to Education Index (RTEI) initiative, Brazil achieved an overall score of 84 out of 100, which shows there are still fundamental efforts to be made in the country towards guaranteeing the right to education. The current performance is up 6 points from the last edition which took place in 2018.

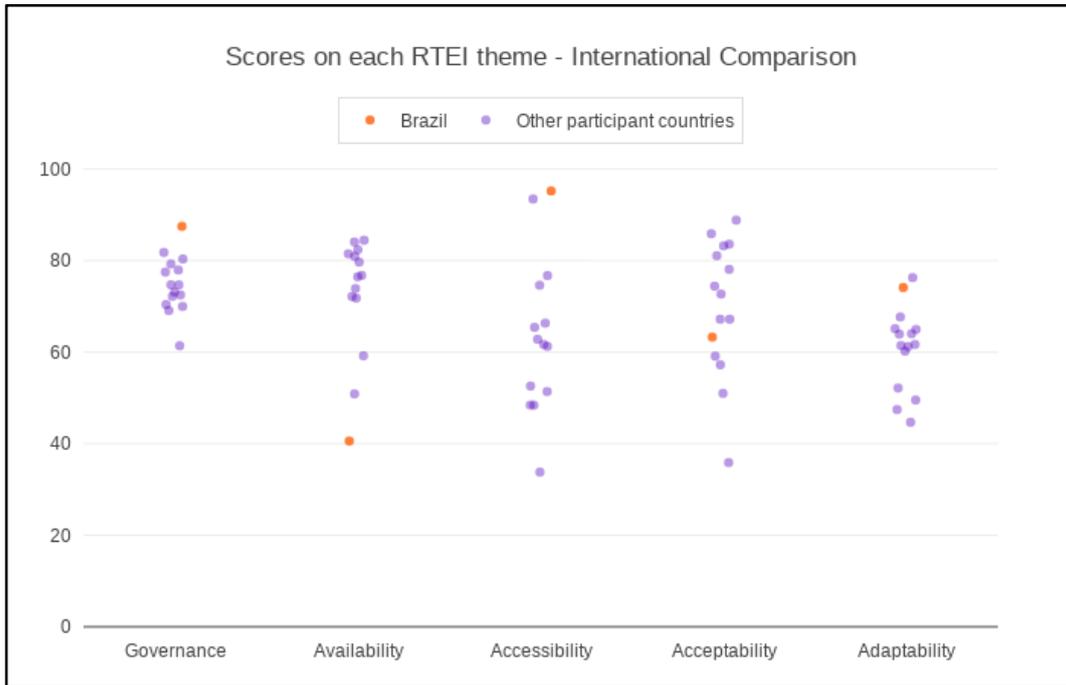


The RTEI is calculated from an extensive but non-exhaustive list of items, each corresponding to one of five broad themes that are also separately scored. These themes are *Governance* and Katarina Tomasevski's 4As of *Availability*, *Accessibility*, *Acceptability* and *Adaptability*. As can be seen in the above figure, Brazil scores especially low on the theme of *Availability*, singling it out as the most urgent area of concern.

The score for **Availability** can be understood as a measurement of the specific quantity of educational institutions available and the structural condition of these institutions, as well as education inputs, such as learning materials. As such, it speaks to a fundamental dimension of the quality of education. Brazil scores only 41 out of 100 in this dimension, reflecting the lack of particular standards for classroom sizes, sanitation, textbooks and adequate number of teachers and emphasizing the importance of initiatives aiming to remedy that situation, such as the Cost of Quality Education per Student (CAQi/CAQ).

**Governance** regards the legal structure of education in a State. This includes State ratification of international treaties, education financing, and education standards and regulations. As is the case with all of the five RTEI themes, the score for this theme can be understood as a measurement comparing each country's situation to a particular reference set. Out of 100, Brazil's score was 87, ranking highest among the other countries participating in the current edition of RTEI, but still falling below the benchmark for this theme. Regarding education financing in particular, it is important to note that while the RTEI adopts 6% as a benchmark for total investment in education as a proportion of GDP, the Brazilian National Plan for Education approved in 2014 establishes that 10% of the country's GDP shall be invested in public education

by 2024, with an intermediary goal of 7% by 2019. This goal is instrumental for the achievement of most of the other goals in that plan.



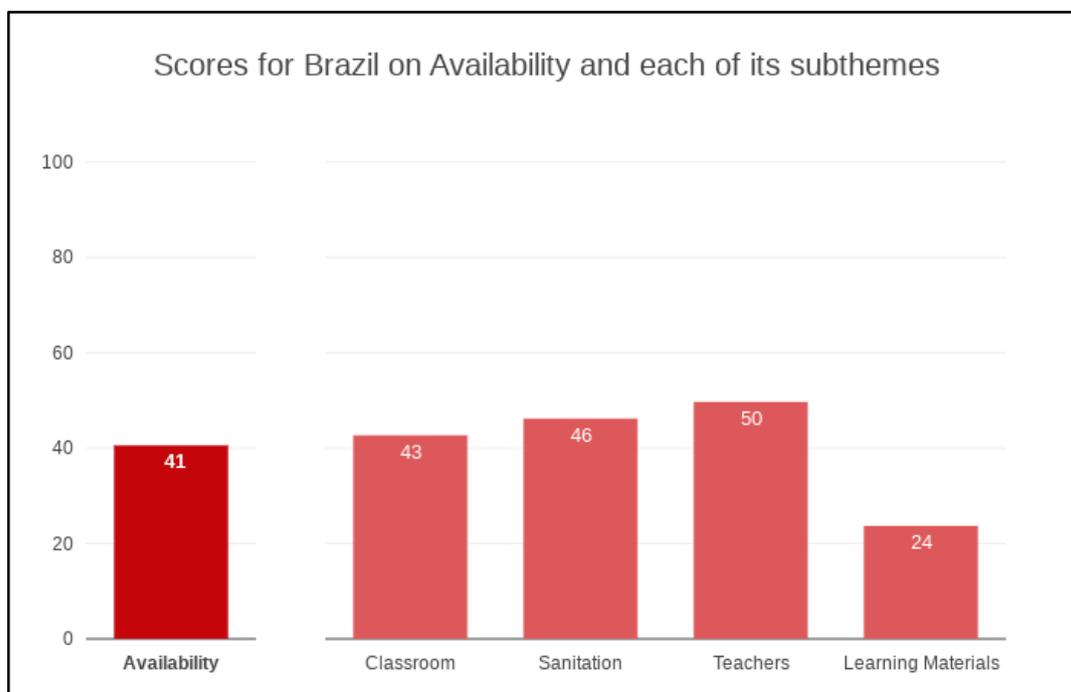
**Accessibility** speaks to whether available institutions are accessible to all students regardless of their socioeconomic, familial or demographic status, and the score for this theme is a measurement of that. Brazil got a score of 95, such that this is the best performing dimension of the country's education system, although it still falls below RTEI's benchmark.

The score for **Acceptability** can be interpreted as a measurement related to the quality of available education. This moves beyond learning outcomes to also capture the cultural relevance and security of the educational environment as well as the aims and content of education. Brazil achieved a score of 63 out of 100 in this theme, indicating that efforts on this front are still necessary.

Finally, the score for **Adaptability** can be seen as a measurement of the ability of education to be flexible in meeting the needs of a diverse range of students, ensuring that education is available, accessible and acceptable for all. Brazil scores 74 out of 100 in this dimension. The country's high rank among the participants should not lead to the conclusion that the situation in Brazil is in any way adequate or sufficient regarding Adaptability, since it is still considerably far from RTEI's benchmark which is itself not exhaustive, and thus not to be used as a sufficiency criterion.

# Availability

As is the case with every other theme in the RTEI, the score for Availability is obtained by averaging the scores for its subthemes. In this case, the subthemes are *Classroom*, *Sanitation*, *Teachers* and *Learning Materials*. It is the weakest performing aspect of the country's education. There were not enough available data to calculate the score for this subtheme in RTEI 2018.



A score of 100 in the **Classroom** subtheme corresponds to having official standards dictating classrooms should have no more than 25 pupils on primary school, and no more than 20 pupils on secondary. On top of that, the actually observed pupils-per-classroom ratios should be equal to or lower, on average, than the respective national standards<sup>1</sup>. Brazil has no such standards as of RTEI 2021, and the pupil-classroom ratio for the secondary level exceeds the 20-to-1 benchmark at an estimated 28.45 for the year 2020, yielding a subtheme score of 43.

Brazil's score in **Sanitation** is 46. A 100 score corresponds to the situation where there is a minimum standard in the law setting the number of pupils per toilet both for primary and secondary schools, and where the standard is not greater than a 25-to-1 ratio. Besides that, the actually observed pupils-per-toilet ratios on primary and secondary must also be equal to or lower than the national standards, and, finally, every primary and secondary school must provide access to potable water. As of RTEI 2021, there was no legal standard for pupils per toilet and no data on the actually prevalent ratios, but 91.6% of primary schools and 93.15% of secondary schools did provide potable water (data is from 2019).

The score for the **Teachers** subtheme is 50. For a country to meet RTEI's benchmark in the subtheme, every working primary- and secondary-level teacher must be qualified for their position; there must be a law stating there should be no more than 25 students per qualified teacher in primary schools, and no more than 20 students per qualified teacher in secondary

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<sup>1</sup> In order to score this requirement when a national standard is absent, the observed ratios are instead compared to the same reference that would be used to evaluate that nationally determined ratio. This also applies to the similar questions found in the Sanitation, Teacher and Learning Materials subthemes.

schools, and the actually observed ratios should be no greater than the legally defined values. That the average teacher salary should be at least equal to the national mean salary is also part of the benchmark, but since a large proportion of the participant countries have no data on this indicator, it was excluded from this edition's score calculation.

As of RTEI 2021, Brazil has none of the required legal standards; 69.5% of primary school teachers are qualified, and that ratio is approximately 61% for secondary level teachers; the estimated pupil-trained teacher ratios for both primary and secondary schools exceed the benchmarks; and, although not scored, it is known that the average teacher salary is 81% of the national mean salary for tertiary-level graduates. It should be noted that Brazil's current National Plan for Education also establishes as goals that every teacher should be qualified for their positions (Goal 15), and that the average teacher salary should be at least equal to the mean for tertiary-level graduates (Goal 17) – in fact, teacher salaries should have been equalized by 2019, but that is still to happen. Goal 15 is due by 2024, but the rate of progress observed since the Plan's approval does not suggest it will be met.

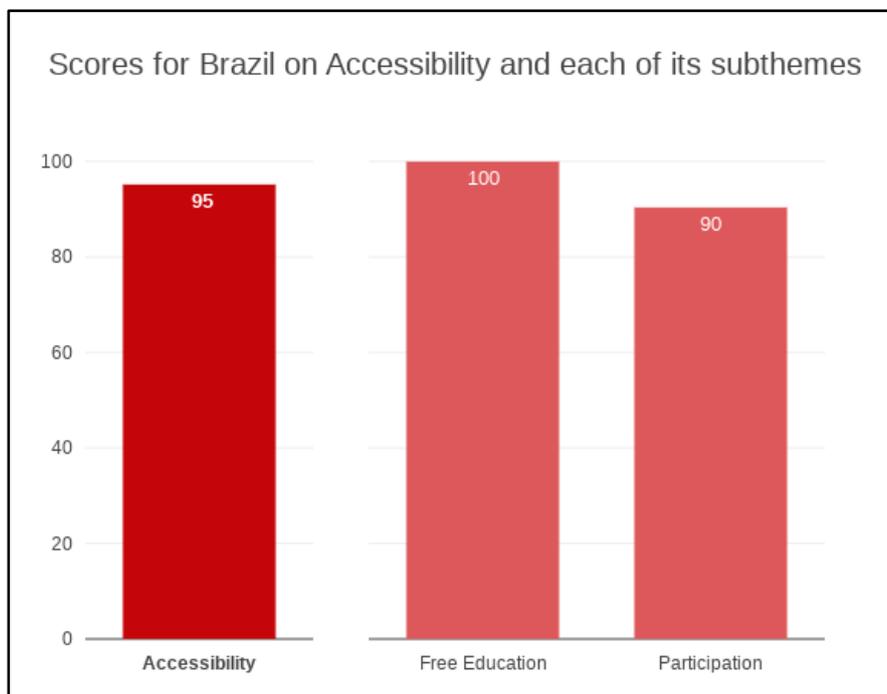
As for the **Learning Materials** subtheme, Brazil's score is 24, the lowest in the theme of Availability. This is because the country does not have a minimum standard for the number of pupils per textbook – even though the National School Textbook Program, which is *de facto* responsible for providing the public schools with textbooks, does work with a reference ratio of 1 student per textbook, it is not explicitly established as a minimum standard, and, furthermore, the program is opt-in. Besides not having a pupil-textbook ratio standard, only 30.9% of its public schools have a library, 34.4% have computer facilities and 23.6% provide access to information technology to students (schools having laptops available to students was used as a proxy). Even basic access to electricity was missing in 2.8% of schools. There is no publicly available data for the effective ratio of pupils per textbook observed in Brazilian schools, so this item was not taken into account in the calculation of the country's score.

In order to achieve a score of 100, it would be necessary to have a legal standard for a maximum rate of one student per textbook; that the actually observed ratio was equal to or lower than the legal standard, and that every school had a library, computer facilities, and access to electricity and information technology.

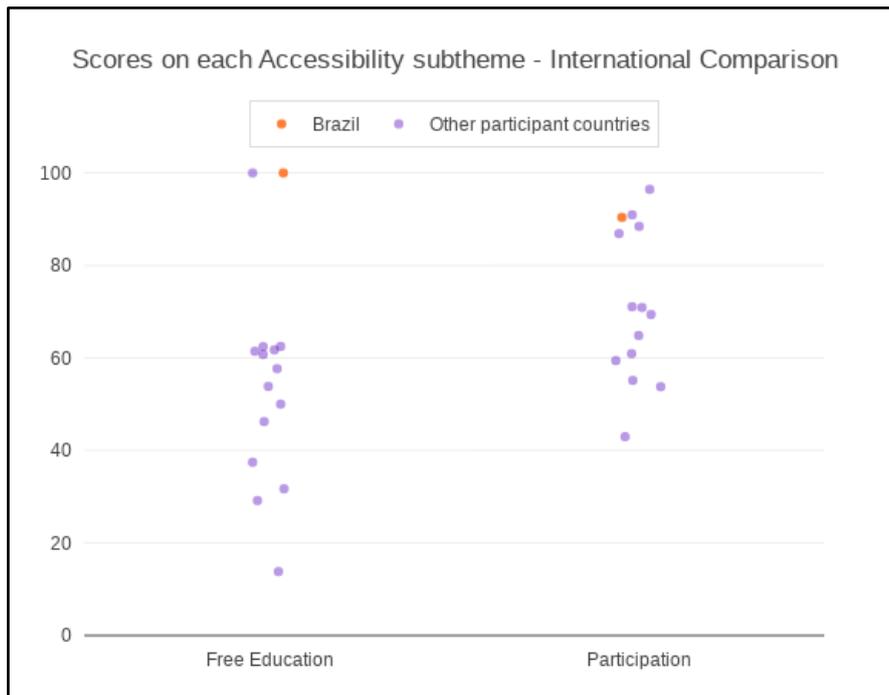


# Accessibility

The score for Accessibility is calculated from the subtheme scores of *Free Education* and *Participation*.



In the subtheme of **Free Education**, Brazil scores at 100, although that doesn't take into account the data on household spending on primary and secondary education, which would likely cause it to drop. To fully meet the benchmark for this subtheme, there would need to be verifiably no spending on those levels by national households, but that was excluded from this edition's calculation due to lack of data for a large portion of the participant countries. The other requirements, which are fulfilled as of 2021, are to have national laws provide for free *and compulsory* primary education, and for free pre-primary, secondary and higher education. Furthermore, primary education has to be free *in practice*, not just in the law; free basic education must be provided for adults who have not completed primary education; and, finally, no tuition fees may be charged for public higher education.

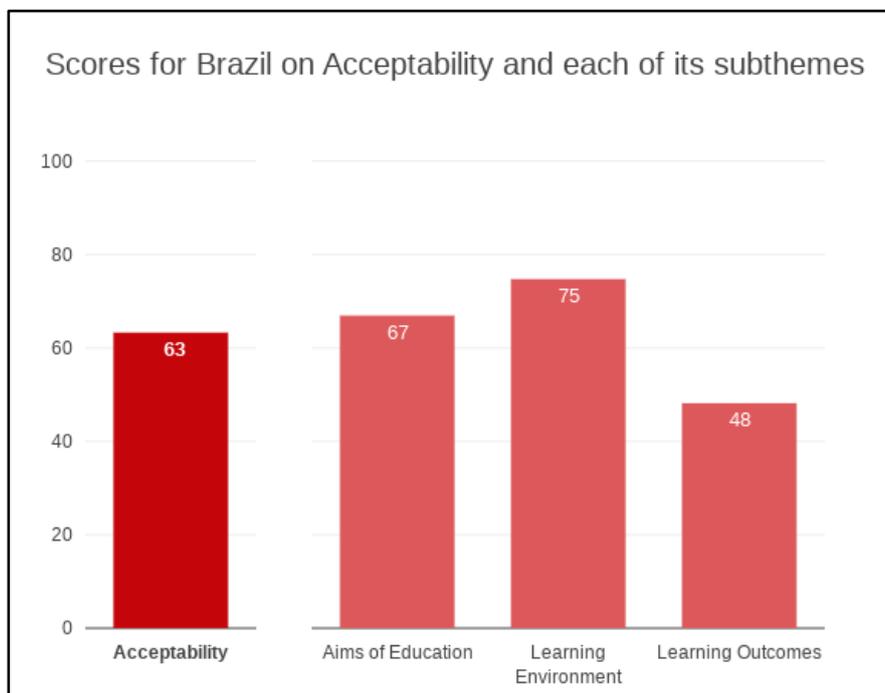


The requirements to fully meet RTEI's benchmark for **Participation** are to have an overall net enrollment rate of 100% for pre-primary, primary and secondary schools, and to have both the overall net completion rate and the gross enrollment rate equal to 100% for public primary, secondary, and tertiary schools and for technical and vocational training programs. It should be noted, however, that in order to achieve a score of 100 in this edition it was not necessary to meet the gross enrollment rate benchmark for vocational programs, the net enrollment rate benchmark for pre-primary, and the completion rate benchmark for the tertiary level and vocational programs, as these indicators were excluded from the computation due to lack of data for a large amount of participant countries.

Brazil scores at 90 for this subtheme, with overall net enrollment rates of 95.8% for the primary level and 85.5% for the secondary. As for the gross enrollment rates, they are equal to 112% for the primary level and 104% for the secondary, with the pre-primary and tertiary levels having 95.5% and 55.1% as the values. Due to lack of data, Brazil's score doesn't include the net completion rate.

# Acceptability

The score for Acceptability is calculated from the subtheme scores of *Aims of Education*, *Learning Environment* and *Learning Outcomes*. There was a significant increase in the score from 58 to 63 in relation to RTEI's last edition, in 2018.



To fully meet RTEI's benchmark for the **Aims of Education**, it is required that:

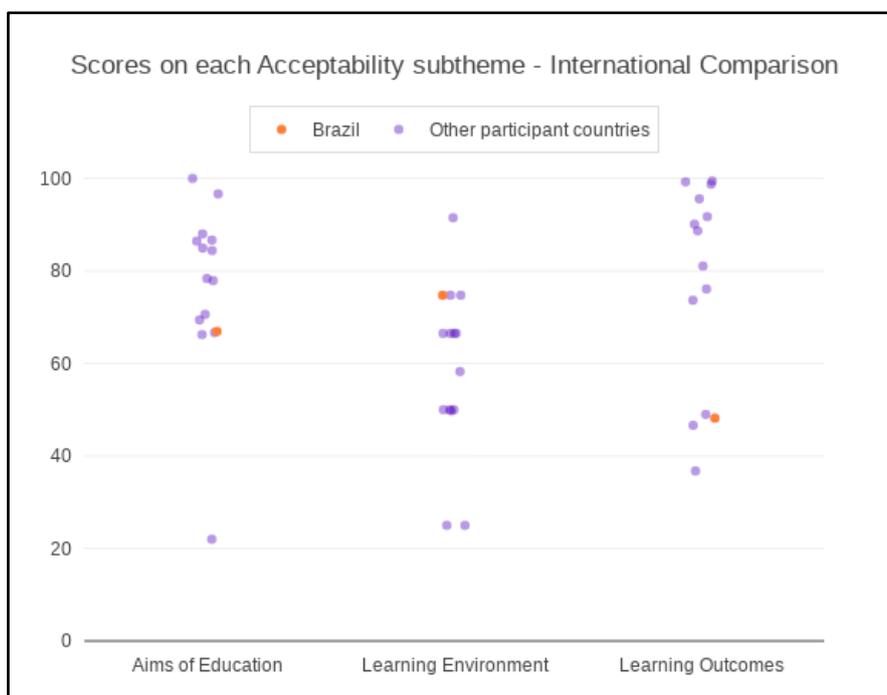
1. The national laws or policies direct education towards:
  - a. The full development of the child's personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities
  - b. The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms
  - c. The development of respect for the child's parents, cultural identity, language, and values, as well as respect for the values of the child's country and other civilizations
  - d. The development of the child's responsibilities in a free society, including understanding, peace, tolerance, equality, and friendship among all persons and groups
  - e. The development of respect for the natural environment
2. The national curriculum directs education towards the same aims above;
3. The required teacher training includes improving the skills necessary for teaching towards the full development of those same aims;
4. There are established mechanisms to ensure that textbooks used in both public and private schools are aligned with the curriculum guidelines provided by the Ministry of Education;
5. The national curriculum includes Health and Well-being, Human Rights and The Arts;
6. The national laws include children in the decision-making process of school curricula, school policies, and codes of behavior.

Out of the six aforementioned requirements, Brazil fails to ensure that textbooks used in private schools are aligned with the curriculum guidelines provided by the Ministry of Education. Apart

from that, national laws do not include children in the decision-making process of school curricula, school policies and codes of behavior. As such, the final score for this subtheme is 66 out of 100.

Regarding the **Learning Environment** subtheme, Brazil scores 75 out of 100. RTEI's benchmark is that the national government adopts specific measures to protect children from violence and abuse in school; that children do not *in fact* encounter violence or abuse in schools; that the national legal framework forbids corporal punishment in schools; and that it does not effectively happen. Points of concern in this subtheme, and the reason Brazil does not achieve a perfect score, is that data from more than one source point out that the proportion of students reportedly being victims of episodes of violence in school fall in the range between 10 and 33% (according to data from PISA, 29% report suffering any type of bullying act, for example).

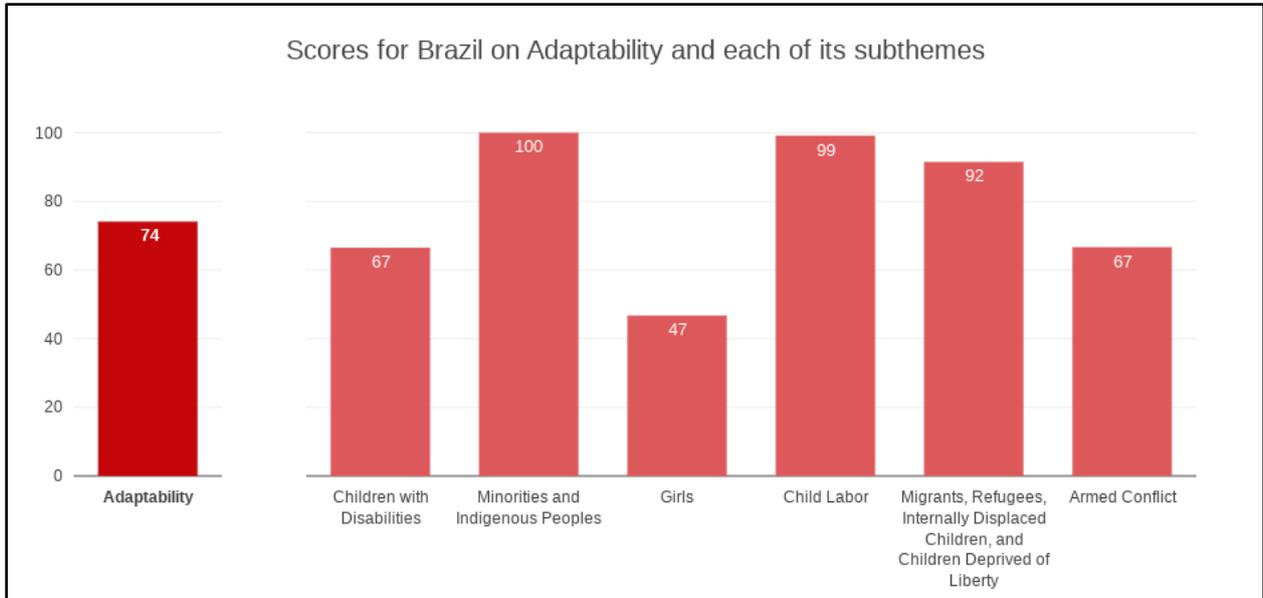
Apart from that, corporal punishment cannot be plausibly said to be completely absent from Brazilian schools, as 1.7% of children between 13 and 17 years of age report having been physically harassed by school staff.



In the subtheme of **Learning Outcomes**, Brazil scores a 48 out of 100, but data is missing for some items. For this subtheme, a RTEI's benchmark is a scenario where the national assessments evaluate the pupils' understanding of the topics of Health and Well-being, Human Rights and The Arts; where all students in primary and secondary schools receive a passing score on the national assessment overall, as well as in reading and mathematics; and where every person aged 15 years or older is literate. For this edition, however, there are several countries with missing data related to students' performance on assessments, such that these indicators are not part of the calculation. Brazil falls short of a score of 100 due to the fact that the national assessment does not evaluate knowledge about Health and Well-being, Human Rights and The Arts. Apart from that, there are still 0.8% of illiterate youth (ages 15-24) and 6.6% of illiterate adults (ages 24+) in the country.

# Adaptability

The score for Adaptability is calculated from the scores of the six following subthemes: *Children with Disabilities*, *Minorities and Indigenous Peoples*, *Girls*, *Child Labor*, *Armed Conflict* and *Migrants, Refugees, Internally Displaced Children, and Children Deprived of Liberty*. The score for this theme is not comparable to the last edition, in 2018, due to significant changes in the questions.



RTEI's benchmark on the subtheme of **Children with Disabilities** represents a case where the national laws recognize the right to education for children with disabilities, and nearly all schools provide accommodation measures for these children; where every teacher is trained to teach children with disabilities, and no child with disabilities is enrolled in "special schools". However, due to lack of data for a major proportion of the participant countries, the percentage of teachers trained to teach children with disabilities and the percentage of children with disabilities enrolled in "special schools" were not part of the score calculation in this RTEI edition.

Brazil scored significantly lower than 100 at 67 due to the fact that accommodation measures for students with disabilities are found in less than 30% of schools. Although not part of the score, it is known that 6.7% of Brazilian students with disabilities are enrolled in special classes – the best publicly available proxy for the attendance in special schools – and that only 43.1% of teachers are trained to teach children with disabilities.

As for Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, Brazil achieves a score of 100, but that is based on just two items from RTEI's benchmark, which measure whether national laws provide for instruction to be in the child's mother tongue and whether indigenous peoples have the right to educational autonomy. The full benchmark scenario in this subtheme also includes universal access to school for nomadic or hard-to-reach children, for which Brazil has no data, and all children in the primary and secondary levels being effectively taught in their mother tongue, which was excluded from RTEI's score calculations in this edition due to lack of data for too many of the participant countries – including Brazil. It is important to note that the country's high score in this subtheme is being driven solely by its legislation, and thus cannot inform any solid conclusion on the extent to which these peoples' right to education is being effectively fulfilled.

In the subtheme of **Girls**, there are significant problems that amount to a final score of 47 out of 100. There is no law explicitly prohibiting the expulsion of girls from school because of pregnancy or for having a baby, even though expulsions for those reasons are not known to effectively happen in Brazilian schools. Furthermore, there is no law prohibiting child marriage, even though the few available data place Brazil as one of the countries in the world where that is most common among girls: 26% for the year 2006, and 19.7% for a likely underestimating proxy for the year 2015. Importantly, the national curriculum does not include age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education, instead limiting it to the biological aspects in the National Common Curricular Base. Nor are teachers trained to deliver age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education.

In order to achieve a score of 100, the national legal framework must explicitly prohibit the expulsion of girls due to being pregnant or having a baby; there has to be no occurrence of such expulsions in practice; there must be a policy enabling pregnant girls and adolescent mothers to remain in school and return without restrictions; age-appropriate and comprehensive sexuality education must be part of the national curriculum, and training must be provided for teachers to deliver that education; child marriage must be explicitly prohibited, and no such occurrence should be observed in practice among female children.

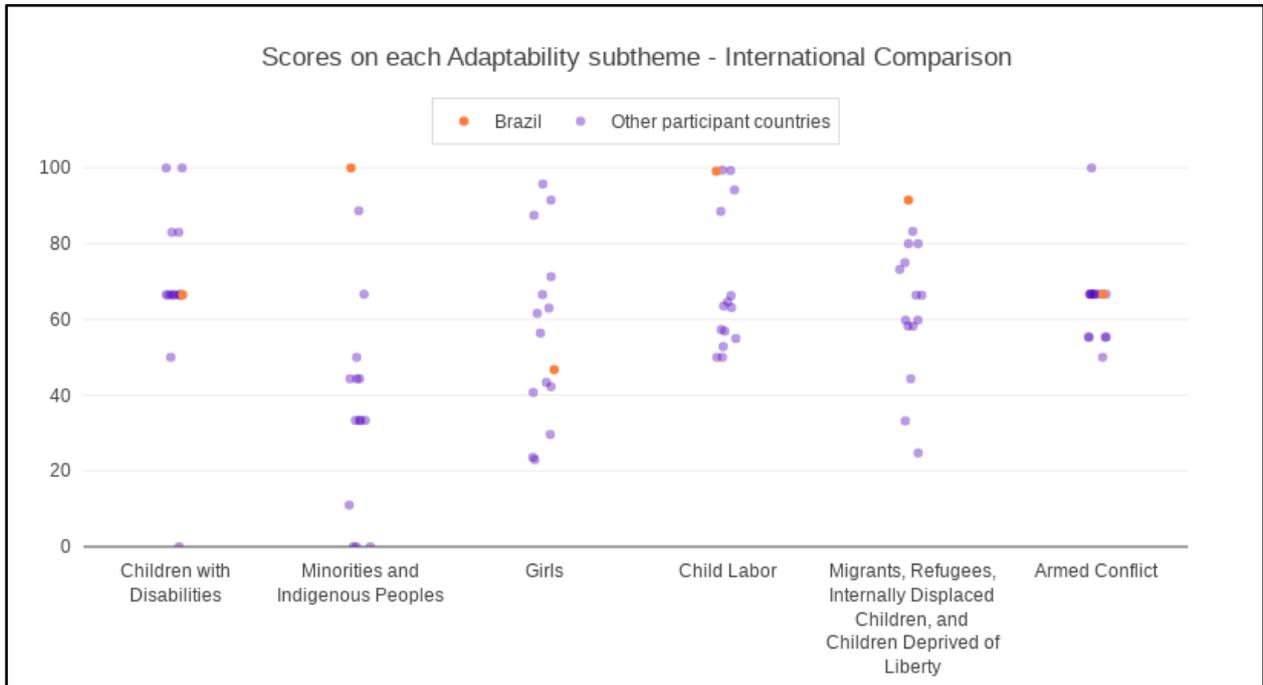
On the subtheme of **Child Labor**, Brazil comes close to meeting RTEI's benchmark with a score of 99 out of 100 by having a legal minimum age of employment of 15 years; having specific governmental measures to combat child labor; and having 2.57% of children under the age of 15 work in the labor force. As can be seen in the last item, it is important to note there are still children incorporated in the workforce as per data from 2019, and it is urgent that that practice is effectively eliminated within the country.

Regarding **Armed Conflict**, Brazil scores 67 out of 100. A perfect score is properly achieved by having the legal minimum military recruitment age at 15 years or above; having no child below 15 being effectively recruited by the military; having no occurrence of attacks on education; and by having education ensured by the occupying power, if there is one. In relation to that benchmark, Brazil falls short due to the fact that attacks on education were identified and documented both in the press and in reports such as *Education under Attack 2020*, which lists Brazil among 56 countries with isolated attacks on education over the period from 2015 to 2019, with more than five documented incidents. Brazil is currently not occupied by a foreign power, such that the item relating to this phenomenon is not applicable.

On the subtheme of **Migrants, Refugees, Internally Displaced Children, and Children Deprived of Liberty**, Brazil achieved a score of 92 out of 100, although there is some missing information on the topic. RTEI's benchmark is that a country must allow migrant, refugee or internally displaced children to enroll in school without having to present documents stating their legal status; primary education must be available in retention centers or camps for refugee children, if such centers/camps exist; refugee children must be able to access public schools at the pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary levels; all refugee children must be enrolled in public schools; education must be universally available in prison; and imprisoned children must receive education with the same curricula as the general education system. As can be seen by the benchmark scenario, this subtheme measures the absence of a set of barriers to access to schooling by the particular populations it is concerned with, such that no inferences should be made from its score about the quality of the education provided. It should also be reminded that RTEI is not intended as a sufficiency criterion.

Brazil's score falls short in this subtheme due to making education available in most, but not all prisons. This subtheme's indicators measuring the percentage of refugee children enrolled in

public schools were not a part of the score for this edition of RTEI due to the fact that the data is missing for most participating countries, including Brazil.



## COVID-19

The occurrence of the still ongoing COVID pandemic since 2020 called for drastic measures which heavily impacted education in order to guarantee the preservation of as many lives as possible. Although there is much information missing, we know that the total duration of full and partial school closures amounts to 78 weeks, according to data from UNESCO. Additionally, national data bear out that 76.3% of the country's students had been affected by school closures by November 2020. During that period, the federal government became notorious for resisting taking significant measures against the proliferation of the virus, such that many of the important mitigation measures, especially school closures, were implemented independently by state governments.

## Recommendations

- The relevant public institutions, such as the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights, must collect data on the prevalence of child marriage, especially girls, in accordance with the internationally adopted methodology, possibly by incorporating it into one of the already established and related investigations like the National Health Survey (Pesquisa Nacional de Saúde), performed periodically by IBGE;
- The relevant public institutions, such as the IBGE, the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research (INEP), and the Ministry of Education, must expand the breadth of regular publications based on data from educational surveys like the Basic Education Census (Censo da Educação Básica) from INEP, especially now that the microdata are no longer publicly available due to privacy requirements recently enacted;

- The relevant public institutions, such as the former Ministry of Social Development – now a part of the Ministry of Citizenship – and the Ministry of Justice and Public Safety, must collect data on the populations of migrants, refugees, indigenous, nomadic and hard-to-reach populations that allow for the accountability and planning of educational public policies aimed at their specific needs for the fulfillment of their right to education. What little data there is on these populations indicates the need for improvement in those policies.
- The governmental statistical publications on education must ensure that data is disaggregated, whenever possible, by a standard set of levels, namely: *income quintiles*, *sex*, *urban/rural*, and *disability status*, in order to show inequalities in education and possible discrimination. Currently, the Social Indicator Synthesis (Sintese de Indicadores Sociais) published by IBGE is one of the few, if not the only, regular publication that does so for educational indicators. Brazil has a considerable wealth of data, but that is frequently only accessible to specialists who can work with the microdata – when these are publicly available;
- Governments on all federative levels, but especially the federal government, must further the expansion of investments in public education, directing them in accordance to the policy guidelines delineated in the articles, goals and strategies of 2014's National Plan for Education, such that the trajectory of their corresponding indicators are corrected towards meeting the target levels in due time. It is especially important to direct resources towards school infrastructure, teacher qualification and teacher pay, contributing to a more adequate educational Availability. By 2024, the country must invest 10% of its GDP on education as prescribed by law;
- It is urgent to implement the Cost of Quality Education per Student (CAQi/CAQ), which is prescribed both in the National Plan for Education and also in the Constitution, after the Constitutional Amendment nº 108, in order to ensure adequate standards for school infrastructure and the provision of well-trained and well-paid teachers, as well as those related to democratic management and processes. For regional and educational inequalities to be settled, it is also necessary that the National Congress approves, and the Federal Executive puts into operation, the National Education System;
- The high governance score shows that the legal framework and monitoring mechanisms are mostly existent and adequate, but implementation data demonstrate the need for such legislation to be made effective – in more colloquial terms, to be *brought out of the paper and into reality* –, and that the diagnoses must serve as basis to the formulation, implementation and monitoring of state and long-term policies.