

# INEQUALITIES AND US

OXFAM BRASIL/DATAFOLHA SURVEY  
PERCEPTIONS OF INEQUALITIES IN BRAZIL



MAY 2021



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Brasil

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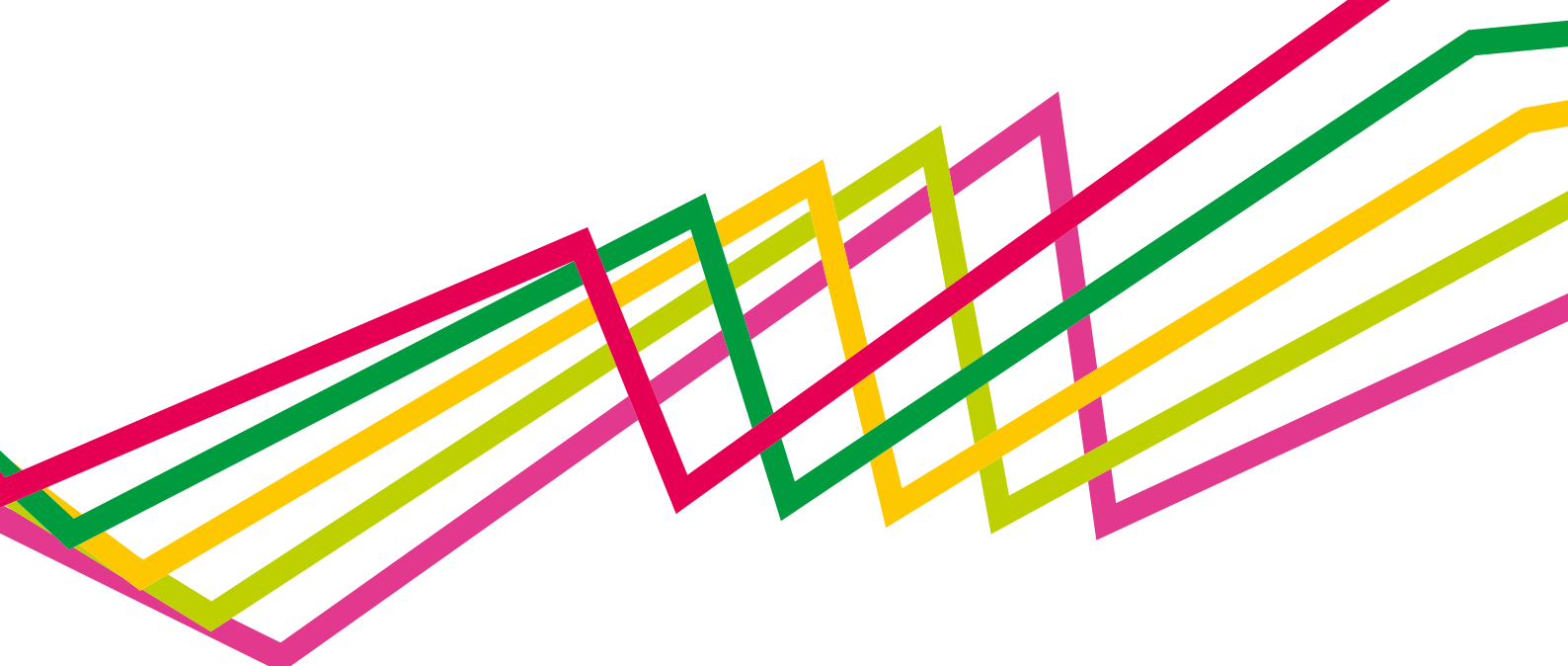
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## PRESENTATION

Oxfam Brasil presents the results of its third opinion survey with Datafolha Institute. The data are intended to contribute to the public debate on reducing inequalities in Brazil based on people's perception about them.

The coronavirus pandemic caused an unprecedented global health and economic crisis; by the end of April 2021, there were about 150 million infections and 3.1 million lives had been lost to Covid-19 around the world. Brazil is one of the countries most severely affected by the pandemic, with more than 14 million infections and over 430,000 fatal victims.

Economic measures were adopted in the country to tackle the pandemic, including the Emergency Benefit for the Preservation of Employment and Income (BEm), the National Program to Support Microenterprises and Small Businesses (Pronampe), and emergency aid. Approved after civil society mobilization and actions in Congress, the emergency aid program not only kept inequality from worsening but also caused unprecedented reduction in poverty and extreme poverty rates. But such transformational effect was not enough to convince the Federal Government to guarantee its continuity along the same lines and under the same criteria after December 2020, which had immediate impacts on levels of poverty, extreme poverty and, consequently, inequality. In March 2021, a Federal Executive Order renewed emergency aid for another four months, after Congress approved a Constitutional Amendment (106/2021), but the amounts paid were much lower than those established in early 2020. With the second wave of the pandemic and the health crisis worsening in Brazil, the country's inequality indicators are expected to deteriorate.

Knowing what the Brazilian population has to say on the subject is crucial. While challenges persist regarding the way the population sees and understands income distribution, the views from previous surveys about the connection between development and equality was consolidated: **eight out of ten people believe that progress is not possible without reducing inequalities.**

**The percentage of people who approve raising taxes at the top of the pyramid has increased (84%)** and, for the first time since the first survey, **most Brazilians (54%) support raising taxes for everyone to fund social policies** such as health care, education and housing. There is support for universal public policies and the need to correct social and regional inequalities. This third edition showed **increase in perception of racism and sexism in society**, indicating a clear trend that strengthens the movement seen between the 2017 and the 2019 editions.

This survey also provides information on society's perception about keeping the emergency aid after the pandemic – in line with the debate on universal basic income – in addition to the federal and state governments' responsibility to tackle Covid-19, maintain employment and income, and provide access to health care.

To face such challenging scenario – in addition to emergency measures to respond to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic in the country and quick and effective implementation of the National Immunization Plan (PNI) – it is necessary to design and implement strong and inclusive social policies funded by a fair tax system based on solidarity, so that the State is able to fulfil the principles of reducing social and regional inequalities provided for in the 1988 Federal Constitution.

We hope this survey will enable informed debates on the importance of the state's role in addressing inequalities, especially in a context of additional challenges as a result of the pandemic. We also hope that our society's perceptions will give rise to greater dialog on the urgency of building a more humane Brazil based on justice and solidarity.

**Katia Drager Maia**  
Executive Director

## METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted by Datafolha Institute, approaching individual respondents in areas of high circulation<sup>1</sup> with a structured questionnaire produced with Oxfam Brasil.

The nationwide sample of 2,086 subjects allowed for a regional breakdown (Centre-West, North, Northeast, South and Southeast). The interviews were conducted in 130 small, medium and large municipalities, including metropolitan areas and other cities.

The interviews were conducted on December 7-15, 2020. The margin of error for the general sample is plus or minus 2%, considering a confidence interval of 95%.

As this is a sample-based survey conducted in places with large circulation of people, Datafolha Institute defined a sample that seeks to reflect the profile of Brazilian society according to the last Demographic Census, conducted in 2010.

The questionnaire contained 17 items, including open-ended questions, blocks of agree/disagree questions, and closed-ended questions (except for identification questions). Both the questionnaire and information on the sampling adopted by Datafolha Institute are available on **Oxfam Brasil's website ([www.oxfam.org.br](http://www.oxfam.org.br))**, together with a general presentation of Datafolha and the microdata.

Finally, the results for sex, race and income chosen for this report were calculated by Datafolha Institute, which tabulated the survey's microdata.

# SUMMARY OF RESULTS



## HEALTH CARE AS A TOP PRIORITY

62% of Brazilians believe that “having access to health care” is one of the three priorities for a better life, along with “studying” and “religious faith.”

73% advocate universal health care provided at health units and hospitals, compared to 72% in 2019.

9,5 “Public investment in health care” is among the top priority measures to reduce inequality (average score: 9.5).

## SUPPORT FOR TAXATION

56% agree with raising taxes in general to fund social policies, compared to 31% in 2019.

84% agree with raising taxes for very rich people to fund social policies, compared to 77% in 2019.

94% agree that tax revenues should benefit poorer people.

## WITHOUT REDUCING INEQUALITIES, THERE WILL BE NO PROGRESS

86% believe that Brazil’s progress is conditional on reducing inequality between the rich and the poor.

85% agree that it is governments’ duty to reduce the gap between the very rich and the very poor – compared to 84% in 2019.

## INDIVIDUAL OPTIMISM FALLING, SOCIAL SCEPTICISM ON THE RISE

64% believe they will be in the “middle class” or “upper middle class” within five years; they were 70% in 2019.

64% do not believe that inequalities will decrease in the coming years; they were 57% in 2019.



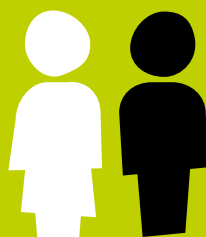
**60%**

**MERIT DOESN'T HELP**

doubt that working will be an equalizing factor for poorer people's chances, compared to 58% in 2019.

**52%**

do not believe that educating poor children levels their chances of a successful life; they were 51% in 2019.



**67%**

**GENDER AND RACE AFFECT INCOME**

agree that being a woman impacts income, compared to 64% in 2019.

**58%**

agree that black people earn less, compared to 52% in 2019.



**76%**

**SKIN COLOUR MATTERS**

believe that skin colour influences companies' hiring; they were 72% in 2019.

**84%**

believe that skin colour influences the police's decision to stop someone; they were 81% in 2019.

**78%**

agree that justice is tougher on black people, compared to 71% in 2019.



**62%**

**INCOME TRANSFER AND POST-PANDEMIC TIMES**

support keeping emergency aid after the pandemic for people who are entitled to it today.



**9,6**

**TOP PRIORITIES FOR REDUCING INEQUALITIES**

was the average score for "fighting corruption"; "investing in education"; and "ensuring equal rights for men and women."

**9,5**

was the average score for "increasing job offer"; "public investment in health care"; and "fighting racism."

## DETAILED RESULTS

The 2020 Oxfam Brasil/Datafolha survey provides an overview of public opinion at the end of a year marked by the health crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic – in addition to being the second year of President Jair Bolsonaro's administration. As the third edition of the survey, its results allow the analysis of a time series started in 2017 to evaluate shifts in public perception amid changes in the country's social, political and economic scenario. The survey was conducted 22 months after the second edition because of restrictions imposed by the pandemic to face-to-face surveys.

In line with the two previous editions, the results of the current survey stress **the importance of reducing inequalities as a condition for progress**, according to nine out of ten Brazilians. The figures indicate that society interprets income distribution more accurately than it did in early 2019, when the second edition was conducted, even though the complex structures of Brazilian inequality are still not fully understood.

**The majority of the population saw their feeling of individual optimism about the future reduced** by 6% compared to the previous survey – that is, those who believe they will be in a higher social class within five years. In contrast, the data point to a majority perception that **Brazil as a society will not reduce inequalities in the near future** – a more sceptic view than in early 2019.

Society has **stronger opinions and higher awareness about the impact of machismo and racism on women and black people**, underscoring a clear trend already seen in the previous survey, despite the growing conservative discourse that gained indisputable political expression after the 2018 elections. Therefore, Brazilians show their understanding that women earn less because they are women and that they should not be solely responsible for housework and care. They also understand that skin colour has a negative impact on income, in addition to reducing people's chances of being hired by companies, increasing their chances of being stopped by the police, and negatively impacting the way the Justice system treats them.

The numbers of the third survey also point to consolidation in **the population's support for tax reforms based on fairness and solidarity that end the regressive nature of our tax system**, reducing taxes on goods and services and increasing those on earnings and assets, especially for richer people, which indicates popular support for changes that are needed in our national tax system. This is important in light of the debates on tax reform currently underway in Congress, which considers it a hot – and urgent – issue in Brazil's economic agenda.

Finally, the survey presents data on **society's perception of inequality in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, highlighting the role of income transfer programs** – such as the emergency aid established in the first half of 2020 –, the higher impact of the pandemic on specific social strata, and the responsibilities of federal and state governments.

The main results of the survey are presented in this briefing. Part of them refers to new questions asked this year. Another part includes questions asked over the three years – 2017, 2019 and 2020 – described throughout the text and in graphs for comparison.

This Briefing is divided into five parts: **1. Perceptions of inequalities and social mobility; 2. Perceptions of gender and race; 3. Perceptions of taxation and social policies; 4. Perceptions of public policies and the pandemic; and 5. Inequalities and us: ways to reduce.** Further details on the margins of error per sample segment and the description of the sample analysed can be found on Oxfam Brasil's website.



# 1. PERCEPTIONS OF INEQUALITIES AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

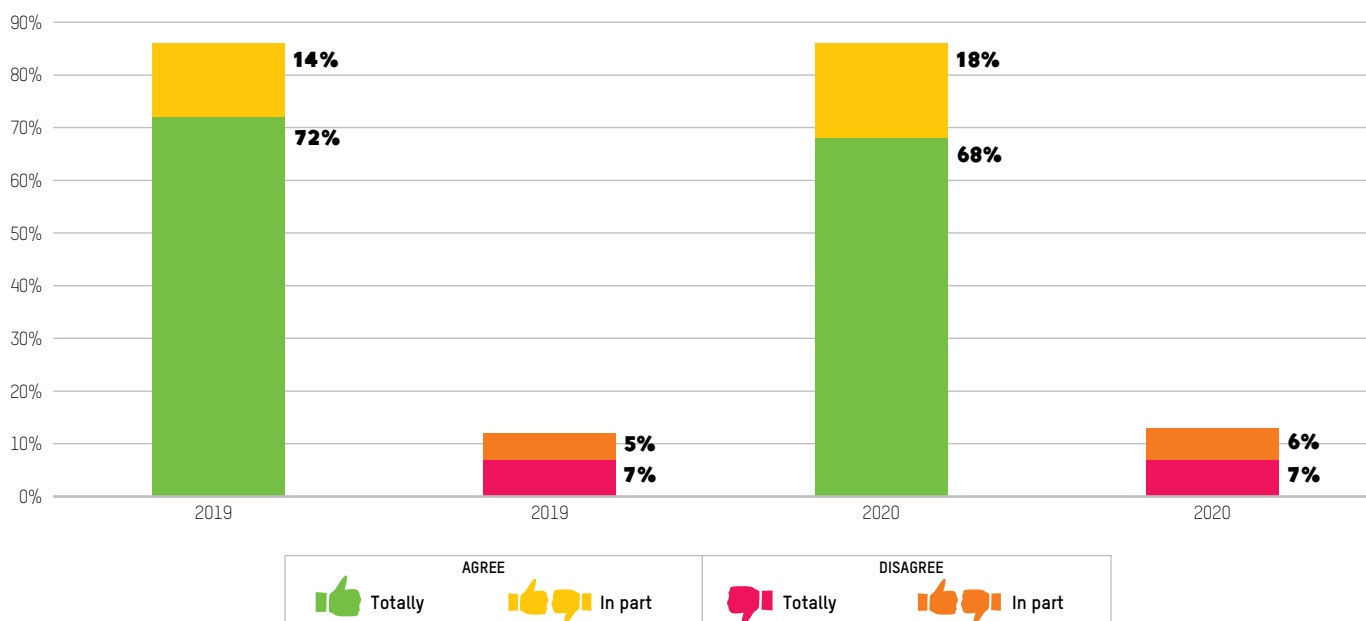
## 1.1. WITHOUT REDUCING INEQUALITIES, THERE WILL BE NO PROGRESS

Reducing inequalities and eradicating poverty and marginalization are fundamental principles of the Brazilian Republic as provided for in its 1988 Federal Constitution.<sup>2</sup> This wish finds support among people, as shown in the survey presented here, following the trend established in the 2019 edition.

According to the opinion survey, 86% of Brazilians see Brazil’s progress as conditional on reducing inequality between rich and poor people – the same percentage found in 2019. As shown in **Graph 1**, the vast majority of respondents agree with that assumption. Considering distinct income groups – from those earning up to one minimum wage to more than five minimum wages a month –, such agreement is equally strong, with a small variation from 84% to 89%.

**GRAPH 1.**  
Brazil – The need to reduce inequality between rich and poor for the country’s progress – 2019-2020

Source: Oxfam Brasil/Datafolha 2020.



Question: Agree/disagree with the statement: “For Brazil to progress, reducing the economic difference between rich and poor is fundamental.”

Note: 1% answered “Neither agree nor disagree” – the same percentage that answered “Don’t know.”

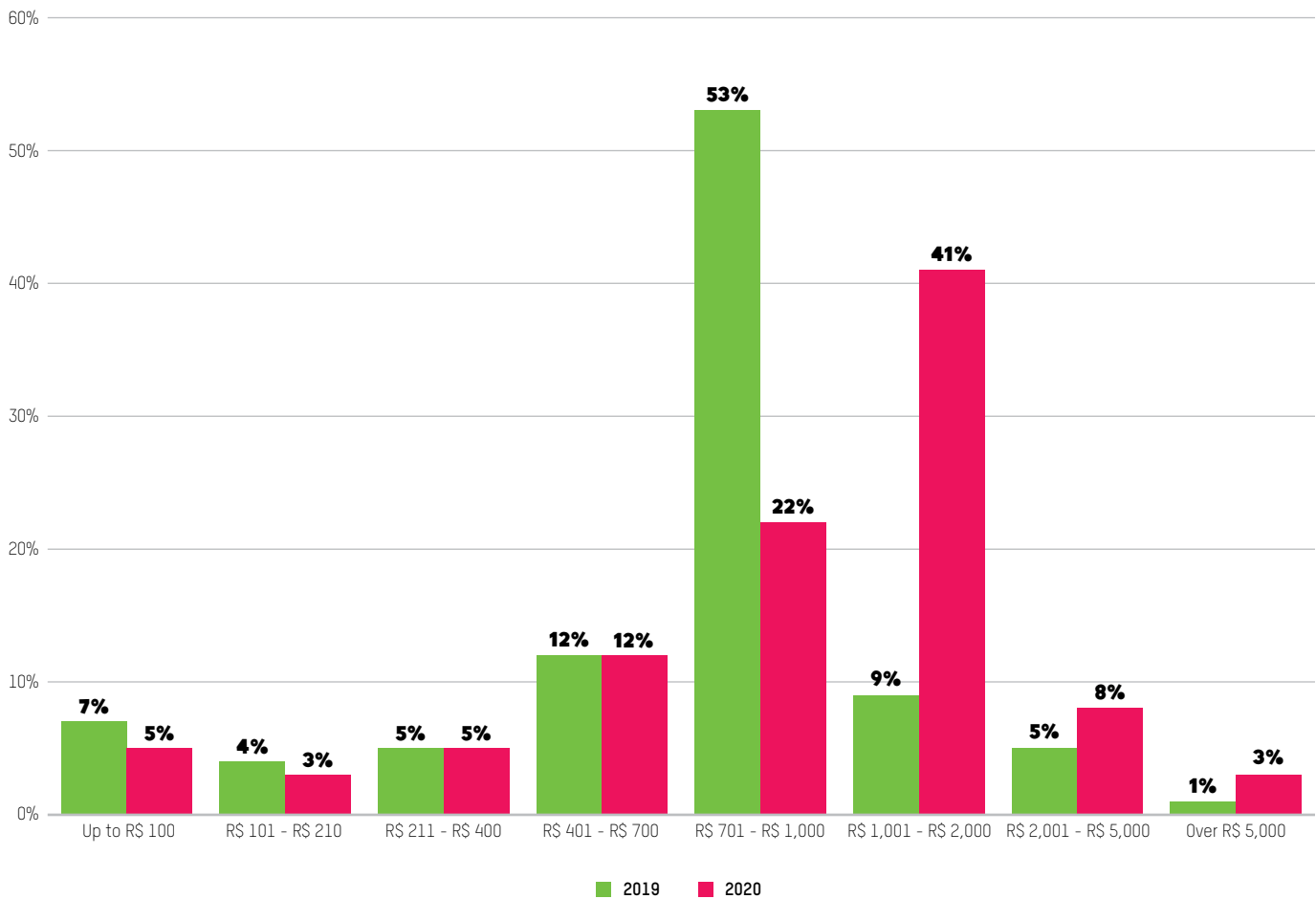
## 1.2. MISPERCEPTIONS OF THE POVERTY LINE

Public perception of poverty in Brazil does not match standard international criteria. In early 2021, 13% of the country’s population, or 25 million people,<sup>3</sup> lived on a per capita income of just R\$ 250 a month – the poverty threshold according to the World Bank’s basic criteria – approximately US\$ 1.90 per person/day.<sup>4</sup>

For only 8% of Brazilians, a person can be considered poor when he or she earns up to R\$ 210, and for 13% of them, poverty is defined by individual earnings below R\$ 400 a month. Almost half of Brazilians see poverty as starting at R\$ 1,001 a month – close to the current minimum wage –, with 41% seeing it between R\$ 1,001 and R\$ 2,000, as shown in **Graph 2**.

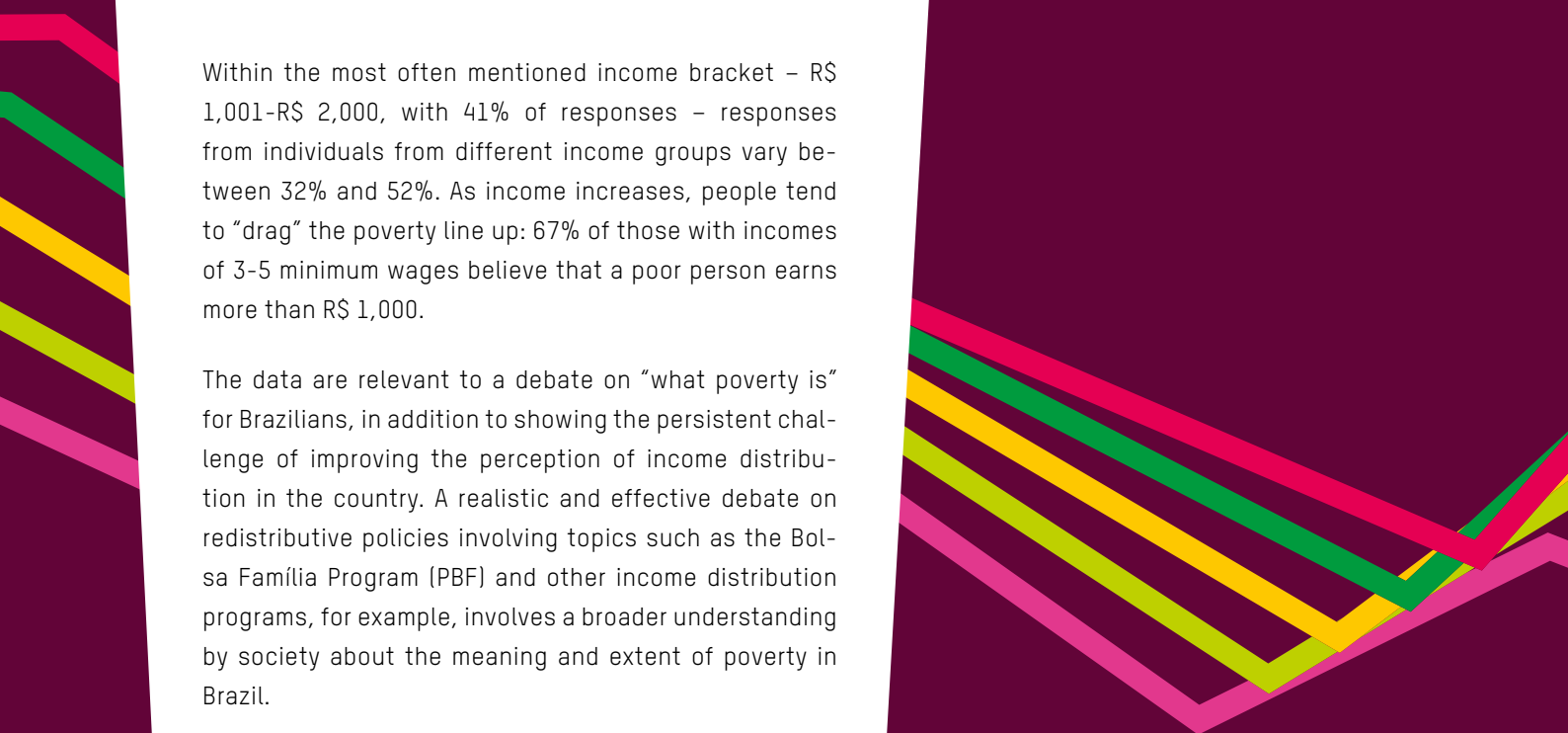
**GRAPH 2.**  
Brazil – Poverty line perception – 2019-2020

Fonte: Oxfam Brasil/Datafolha 2020.



Question: In your opinion, what is the most a person can earn per month to be considered poor in Brazil?

Note: 1% answered "Don't know."



Within the most often mentioned income bracket – R\$ 1,001-R\$ 2,000, with 41% of responses – responses from individuals from different income groups vary between 32% and 52%. As income increases, people tend to “drag” the poverty line up: 67% of those with incomes of 3-5 minimum wages believe that a poor person earns more than R\$ 1,000.

The data are relevant to a debate on “what poverty is” for Brazilians, in addition to showing the persistent challenge of improving the perception of income distribution in the country. A realistic and effective debate on redistributive policies involving topics such as the Bolsa Família Program (PBF) and other income distribution programs, for example, involves a broader understanding by society about the meaning and extent of poverty in Brazil.

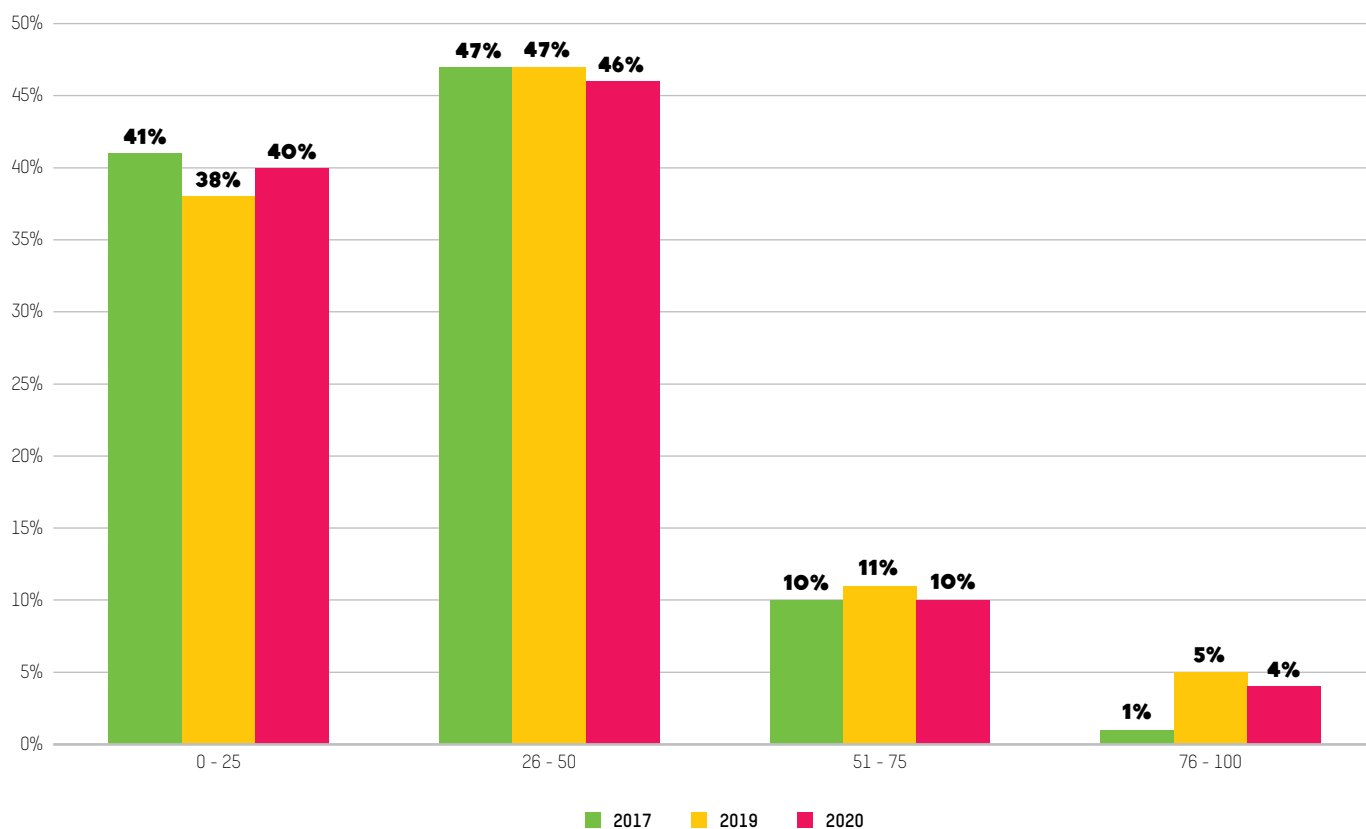
### 1.3. RICH? NOT ME.

On a scale from 0 (“very poor”) to 100 (“very rich”), 86% of Brazilians place themselves in the poorer half (0-50). In comparison with the previous survey, there was a slight upward fluctuation – it was 85% in 2019 – indicating the persistence of a distorted view of the country’s social class make up. While the fluctuation is positive when compared to the first survey conducted in 2017 (88%), there is still a long way to go for us to equalize awareness and perceptions on the subject.

As seen in **Graph 3**, there were small variations between the three editions, and more significant changes were seen in the “ends” from 2017 to 2019, with a 41%-38% drop in the group that placed themselves among the poorest 25% and a 1%-5% increase in those who saw themselves in the richest 25%. From 2019 to 2020, the percentage of people who placed themselves among the poorest 25% increased – 2 percentage points (pp) – and a downward fluctuation (1 pp) in those who considered themselves to be part of the richest 25%. From 2019 to 2020, there was a 2-pp reduction for both people who placed themselves in the poorest half of the population and also for those in the richest 50%.

**GRAPH 3.**  
Brazil – Perception of one’s own position in the national income distribution – 2017-2020

Source: Oxfam Brasil/Datafolha 2020



Question: On a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 is for those with the lowest income in the country, i.e., the very poor, and 100 is for those with the highest income in the country, i.e., the very rich, where do you place yourself?

Note: 1% answered “Don’t know.”

While perception about the minimum income for being among the richest 10% has improved compared to the previous edition, it is still quite far from reality. Considering per capita earnings of those with some income, the minimum earnings for being part of the richest 10% in Brazil was 4.3 minimum wages in 2017<sup>5</sup> – R\$ 4,730 in current values.<sup>6</sup> In other words, considering the vast majority of the population at the base of the pyramid – and a small minority concentrating a considerable part of the income – one does not have to earn much money to be in the highest income groups – a scenario of which Brazilians are highly unaware.

Only 23% of respondents said a person must earn R\$ 5,000 to be among the richest 10% – a 4-pp increase over 2019. Nevertheless, 63% believe that one must earn more than R\$ 5,000 to be part of the last income decile – they were 65% in 2019.

Nevertheless, 65% of respondents believe that one has to earn more than R\$ 5,000 to be part of the highest income decile. Just over one in three respondents – 39% – think the minimum value would be R\$ 20,000, almost five times more than the actual value. Note that there is an even higher gap within the last income decile, with the top 1% earning an average of R\$ 30,585.<sup>7</sup>



### 1.4. INDIVIDUAL OPTIMISM, SOCIAL SCEPTICISM

In 2020, 69% of Brazilians were in the “lower middle class” or “poor” categories – a 5-pp increase over 2019 – 78% of those with individual incomes above three minimum wages and 26% of Brazilians earning more than five minimum wages believe they are in the country’s lowest social classes.

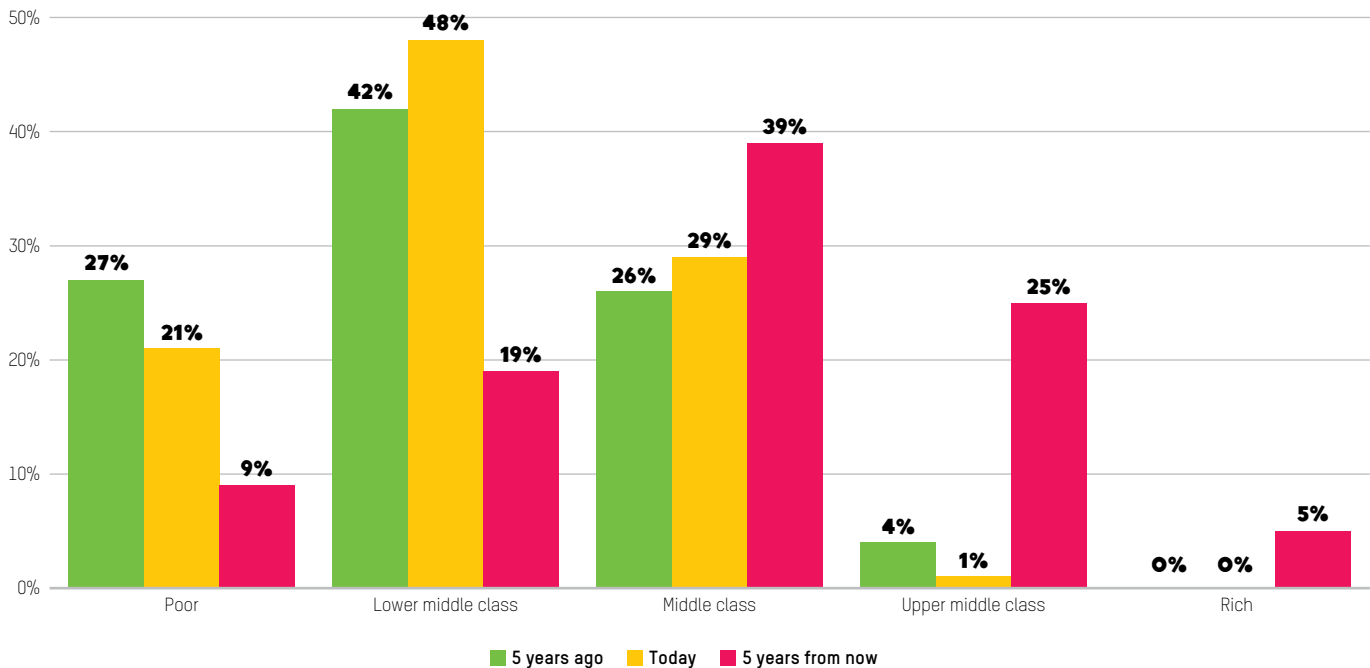
On the other hand, the percentage of people who expect to raise in the social ladder has decreased: 64% of Brazilians believe they will be in the “middle class” and the “upper middle class” within five years – they were 70% in 2019. Among those who earn up to one minimum wage, 64% believe they will be in these groups by 2025 – a 4-pp reduction over 2019. These data are show in **Graph 4**.

Regardless of reductions, the scenario is the same as the previous survey, where most people were optimistic about their own chances at social mobility, expressed as the desire of almost two thirds of the population to rise to the “middle class” and the “upper middle class” within the next five years – even among a majority that sees themselves as economically poor today.

There is also a minority group of 5% that sees themselves among the “rich” within five years. That is important given that virtually no respondent classified themselves as “rich” nowadays (or five years ago, for that matter).

**GRAPH 4.** Brazil – Self-perception of social class today, five years ago and five years from now – 2020

Source: Oxfam Brasil/Datafolha 2020.



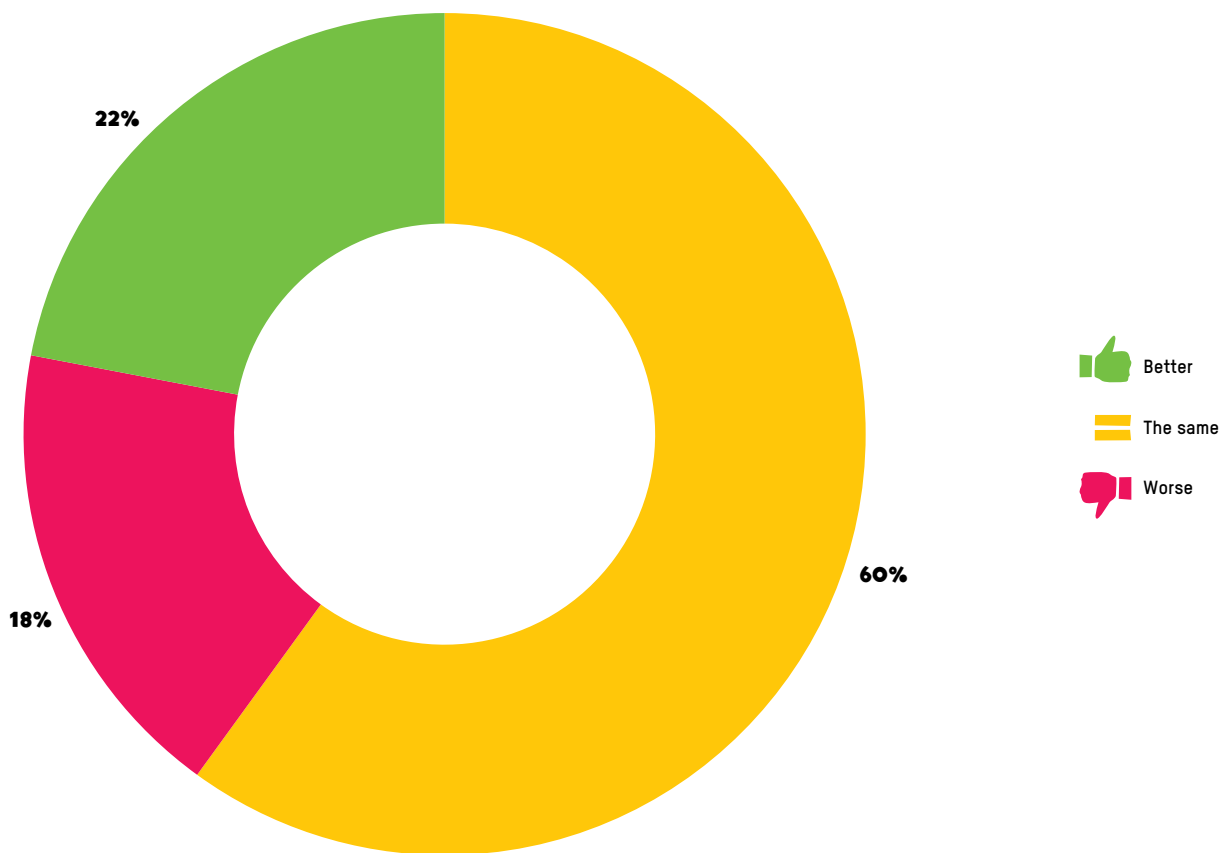
Question: Considering your income and standard of living, to which of these groups do you belong? Approximately 5 years ago, which group were you in? Five years from now, which group do you think you will be part of?

Eighteen percent of Brazilians believe that their social class standing has worsened since 2015 (see **Graph 5**). Considering only this group, the reasons for such a drop include lack of job opportunities (for 46%), deterioration of household financial status (for 36%), lack of educational opportunities (for 27%), and place of residence (for 15%).

On the other hand, 22% believe their social class standing has improved in the last five years. The reasons include job opportunities (for 61%), improvement of the household financial status (to 28%), educational opportunities (to 28%), and place of residence (to 17%).

**GRAPH 5.**  
**Brazil – Self-perception of social mobility in the last five years – 2020**

Source: Oxfam Brasil/Datafolha 2020



Question: Considering your income and standard of living, to which of these groups do you belong? Approximately 5 years ago, which group were you in?

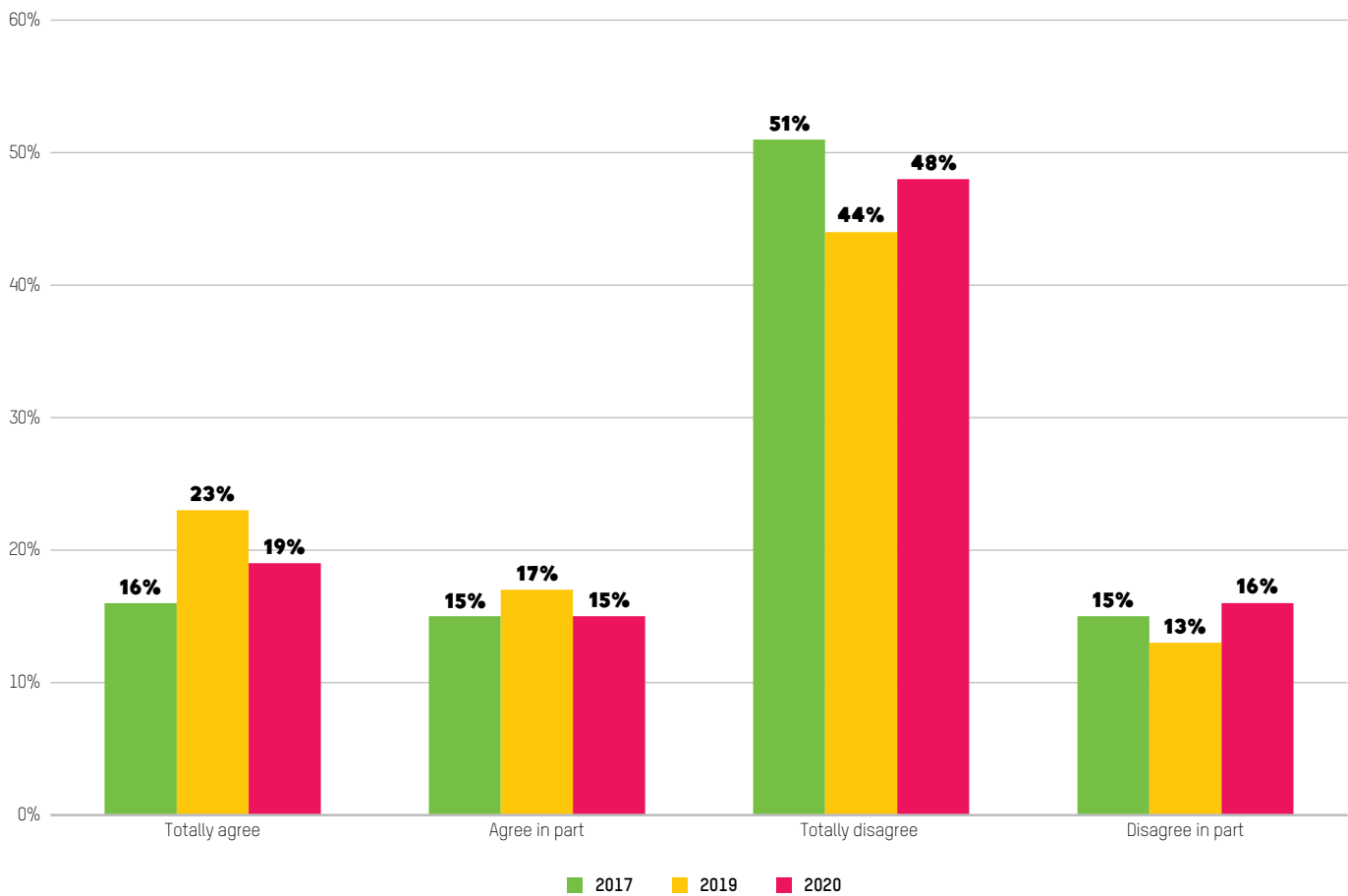
As in 2019, the importance of people’s place of residence for their perception of social progress – which was a reason for worsening social mobility to 15% and for its improvement for 17% of respondents – is in line with another research question: the impact of living in lower-income urban outskirts on the chances of finding a job – 76% of Brazilians totally or partially agree that there is such impact; it reaches 79% among respondents with individual monthly incomes of up to one minimum wage.

While there is still an optimistic perception of individual progress, the same cannot be said about expectations about tackling social inequalities. **Graph 6** shows that 64% of the population totally or partially disagrees that the gap between Brazil’s richest and poorest will decrease in the coming years – a 7-pp drop over 2019. The percentage of those who agree that the gap will be reduced in the coming years also dropped from 40% in 2019 to 34% in 2020. Therefore, the perspective of reducing inequalities between the very poor and the very rich in the coming years fell by 13% (6 pp) between 2019 and 2020.

**GRAPH 6.**

**Brazil – Perception of a possible reduction in inequalities over the next few years – 2017 to 2020**

Source: Oxfam Brasil/Datafolha 2020.



Question: Agree/disagree with the statement that “in the next few years, the difference between the richest and the poorest will diminish in Brazil.”

Note: 1% answered “Neither agree nor disagree” in 2019 (2% in 2017); Those who answered “Don’t know” were 2% in 2019 and 1% in 2020.



### 1.5. MERIT DOESN'T HELP

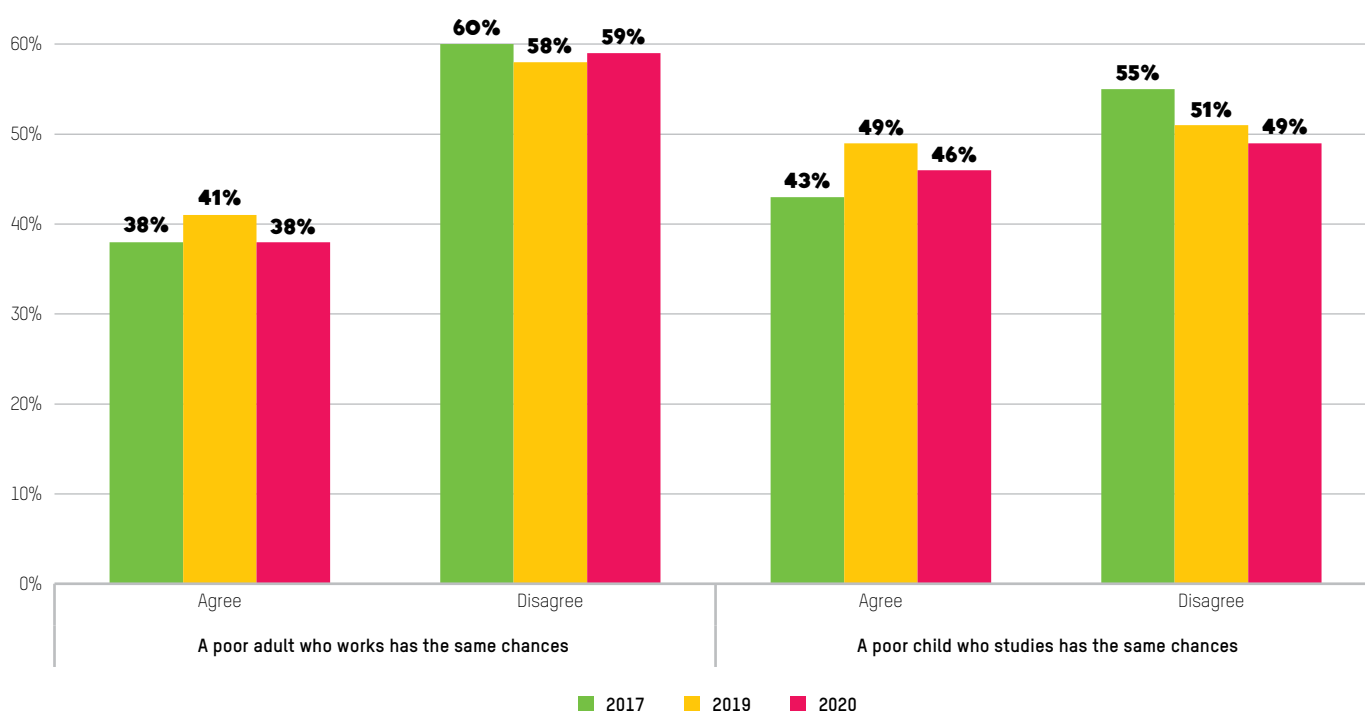
Between 2017 and 2020, there was slight variation in people’s perception about a poor person’s chances in life levelling with those of a rich person through work and study.

In 2020, 60% of the population disagreed and 39% agreed that “a person from a poor family who works a lot has the same chance of having a successful life as a person born rich, who also works a lot.” In 2019, they were 58% and 41%, respectively.

As for education as a path to equal opportunities, there were slight fluctuations compared to 2019: 52% of Brazilians do not believe that “a child from a poor family who is able to study has the same chances of having a successful life as a child born into a rich family,” compared to 47% who believed that the child has the same chances. In 2019, they were 51% and 49%, respectively [see Graph 7].

**GRAPH 7.**  
**Brazil – Confidence in the role of working and education for the poor to achieve equal social conditions**

Source: Oxfam Brasil/Datafolha 2020.



Question: Agree/disagree with the statements that “in Brazil, a person from a poor family who works a lot has the same chances of having a successful life as a person born rich, who also works a lot” and that “in Brazil, a child from a poor family who is able to study has the same chances of having a successful life as a child born into a rich family.”

Note: 1% answered “Neither agree nor disagree” with the statement on work in 2020, 2019 and 2017; 0% provided that answer in 2020 and 2019, and 1% in 2017, for the statement on study. 1% answered “Don’t know” in 2019 and less than that in 2020 and 2017 regarding work. Less than 1% answered “Don’t know” in the three years of the survey to the statement on study.

### 1.6. FAITH, EDUCATION AND HEALTH FOR A BETTER LIFE

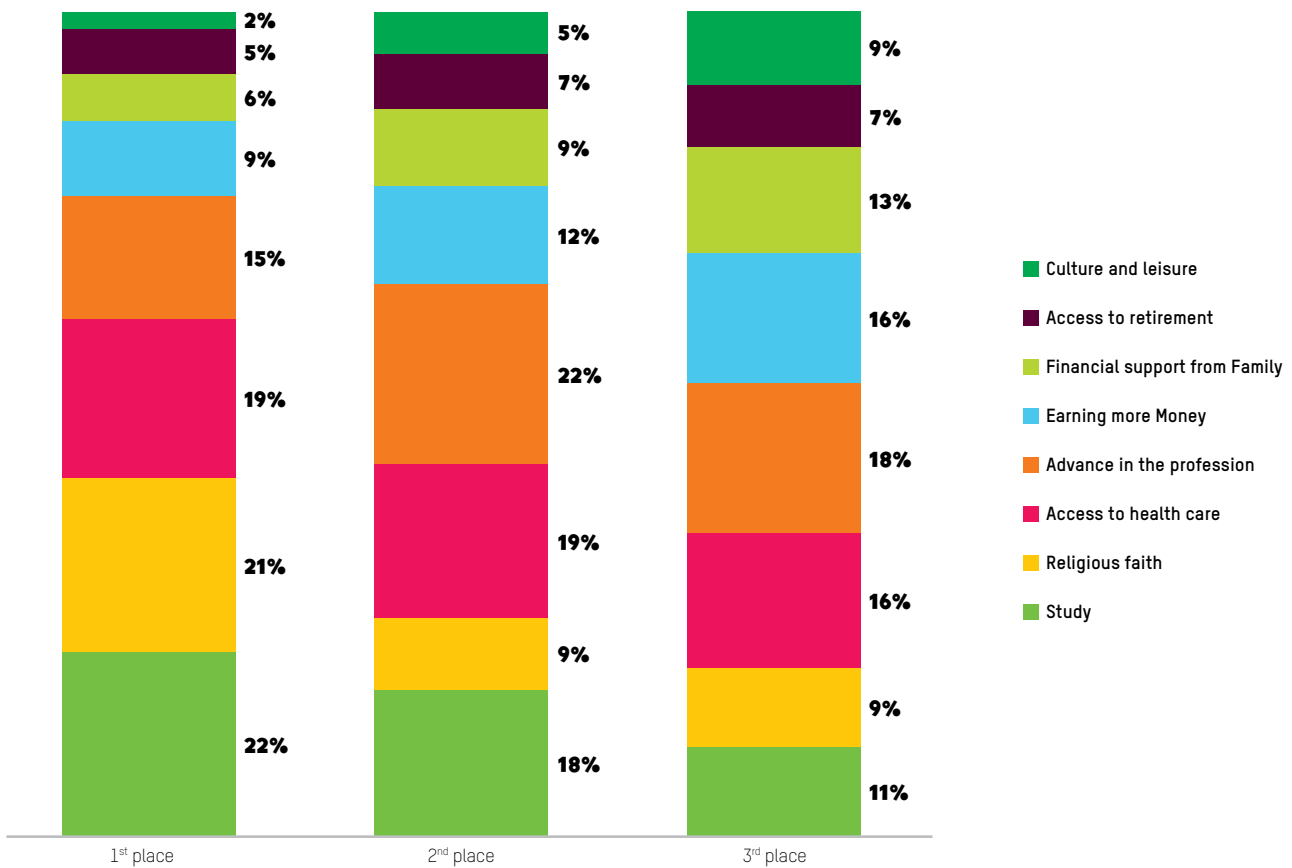
When asked to rank eight factors listed in the questionnaire for “a better life from now on,” the top factor for the most respondents (28%) was “study” (Graph 8).

Then came “religious faith” and “access to health care,” according to 21% and 19%, respectively. Together, “religious faith,” “study” and “access to health care” are top priorities for 62% of Brazilians.


Considering the first, second, third and fourth priorities together, “advance in the profession” (with 69%), “study” (with 60%) and “religious faith” (with 49%) stand out. Among the lowest priority topics, “access to retirement” and “culture and leisure” are mentioned in the four priority rounds by only 27% and 31% of respondents, respectively.

**GRAPH 8.**  
Brazil – Priorities for a better life – 2020

Source: Oxfam Brasil/Datafolha 2020.



Question: Now I would like you to classify factors you find important to have a better life from now on, from the most to the least important factor.



It is worth noting how, in the midst of a serious economic crisis worsened by the Covid-19 pandemic, income does not appear as a priority for a better life – “earn more money” was the top priority for only 9% of respondents, being mentioned in 37% of the answers referring to the three main aspects – a trend that increases in the lowest-income stratum.

Based on respondents who earn up to one minimum wage, “earn more money” is the top priority for only 8% – 4 p.p. below those who earned more than five minimum wages.

It is also noteworthy that the health crisis caused by the novel coronavirus was not enough to place “access to health care” as a top priority. With 18%, the topic comes third, repeating the 2019 survey’s findings.

## 2. PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER AND RACE

### 2.1. FOR THE CONSOLIDATED MAJORITY, GENDER AND RACE IMPACT INCOME

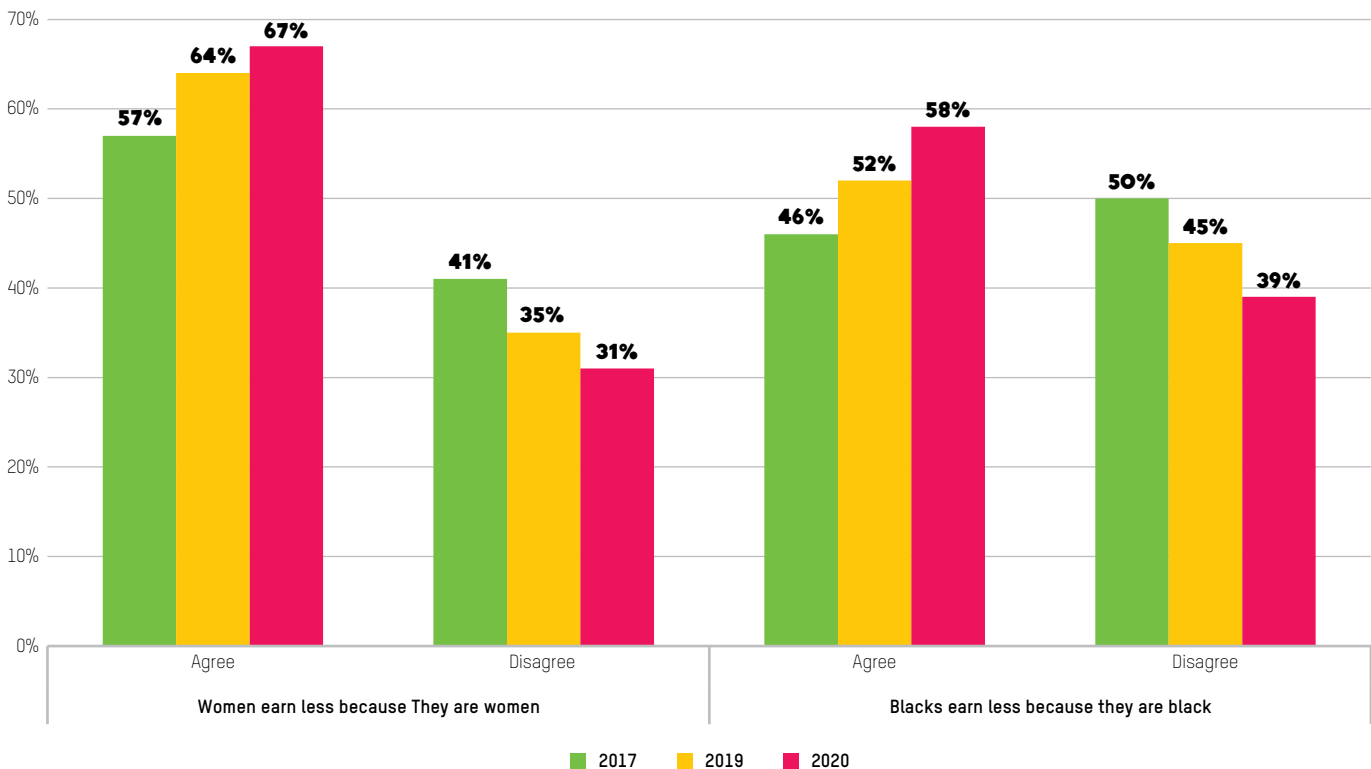
Public perception of gender and race discrimination in the labour market consolidated throughout the three editions of the survey (Graph 9) – a relevant fact since identifying the problem is a condition for government support to solutions.

In 2020, 67% of Brazilians totally or partially agreed that “women earn less in the labour market because they are women,” compared to 31% who disagreed. In 2019, total or partial agreement was 64% (57% in 2017) and total or partial disagreement was 35% (41% in 2017). Therefore, between 2017 and 2020, the difference between those who agree and those who disagree increased more than twice, going from 16 pp to 36 pp.

As expected, agreement is higher among women compared to men: 73% of women agree with that statement compared to 62% of men; in 2019, 69% and 58% agreed, respectively. Despite the majority in both groups, that is an important 11-p.p. difference.

**GRAPH 9.**  
Brazil – Perceptions on the impact of gender and race on income – 2017 to 2020

Source: Oxfam Brasil/Datafolha 2020



Question: Agree/disagree with the statements that “women earn less than men in the labour market because they are women” and that “blacks earn less than whites in the labour market because they are black.”

Note: 1% answered “Neither agree nor disagree” with the gender statement in 2020, 2019 and 2017; 1% provided that answer in 2020, 2019 and 2017 to the statement on race. 1% answered “Don’t know” on gender in 2020, 2019 and 2017, and 2% on race.

A similar scenario was found regarding racism and its relationship with income in the labour market, consolidating the perception about this connection throughout the three editions of the survey. In 2020, 58% of Brazilians totally or partially agreed with the statement that “blacks earn less in the labour market because they are black,” while 39% totally or partially disagreed with it. In 2019, 52% had agreed (46% in 2017) and 45% had disagreed (50% in 2017). Therefore, between 2017 and 2020, the perception of racism in the labour market was reversed, going from 4 p.p. in favour of disagreement to 19 p.p. in favour of agreement.

Analysing agreement in 2020, 57% of people who declared themselves “*pardo*” (mixed-race) believed that black people earned less because they were black, a number that rises to 69% among self-declared “blacks.” Among self-declared whites, agreement is 53%. Thus, there is a 16-pp difference between blacks’ and whites’ agreement rates – a little more than twice the result from the 2019 survey, which was 7 pp.

Even so, agreement regarding the existence of racism in the labour market still prevails among whites, with a 11-pp difference between agreement (53%) and disagreement (42%). Thus, racism as a factor for income is predominant in respondents’ answers, and that was even more evident in other expressions of racism, as will be seen below.

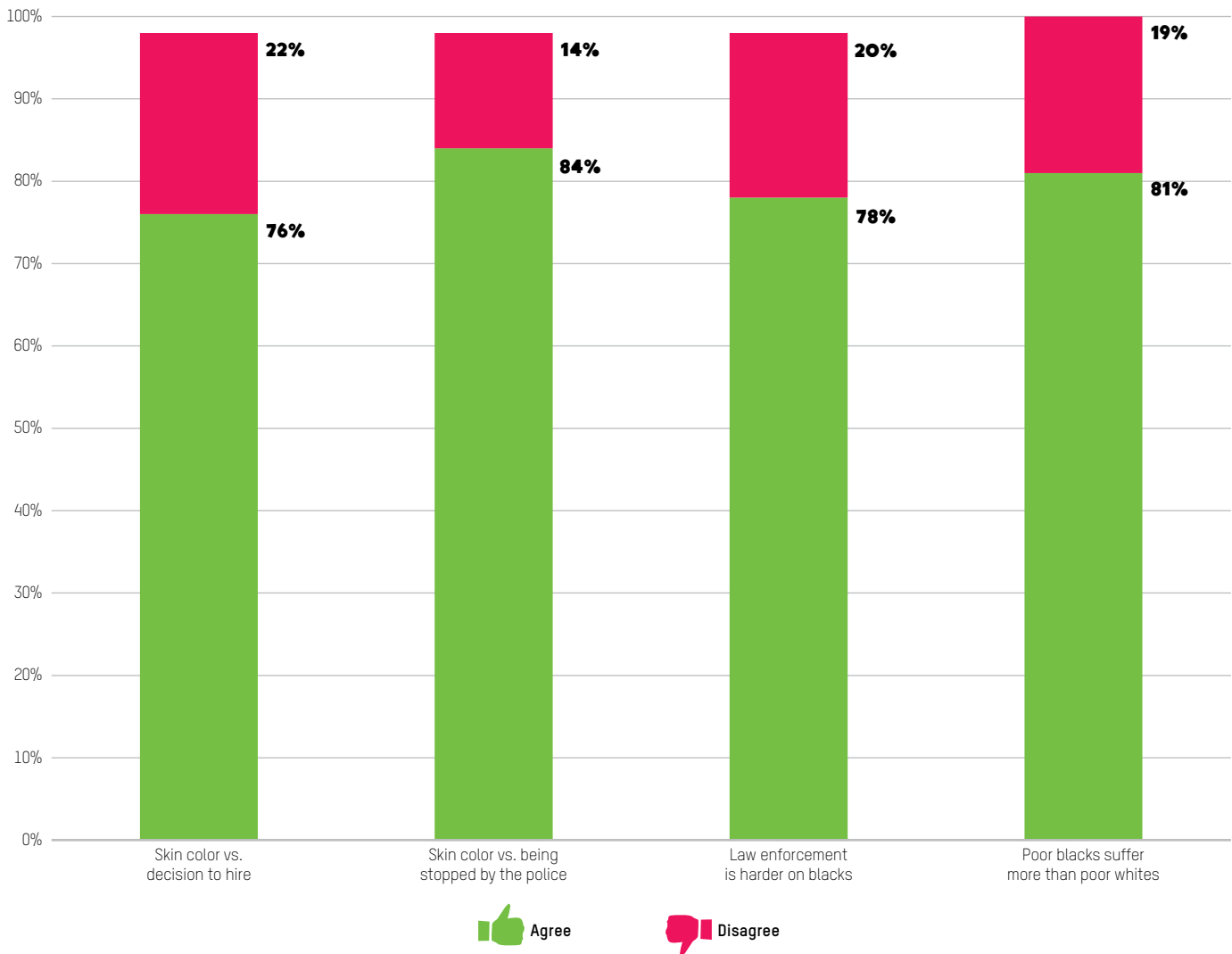


## 2.2. SKIN COLOUR MATTERS

Skin colour is a wide-ranging determinant for one’s chances of being hired by a company or stopped by the police. It also affects how a person is treated by the courts and it makes poor people’s lives harder, as shown in Graph 10.

### GRAPH 10. Brasil – Percepções sobre o racismo – 2020

Source: Oxfam Brasil/Datafolha 2020.



Question: Agree/disagree with the statements that “Skin colour affects a police officer’s decision to stop someone”; “Courts are harder on blacks”; “Poor blacks suffer more from inequality in Brazil than poor whites” and “Skin colour affects companies’ hiring decisions.”

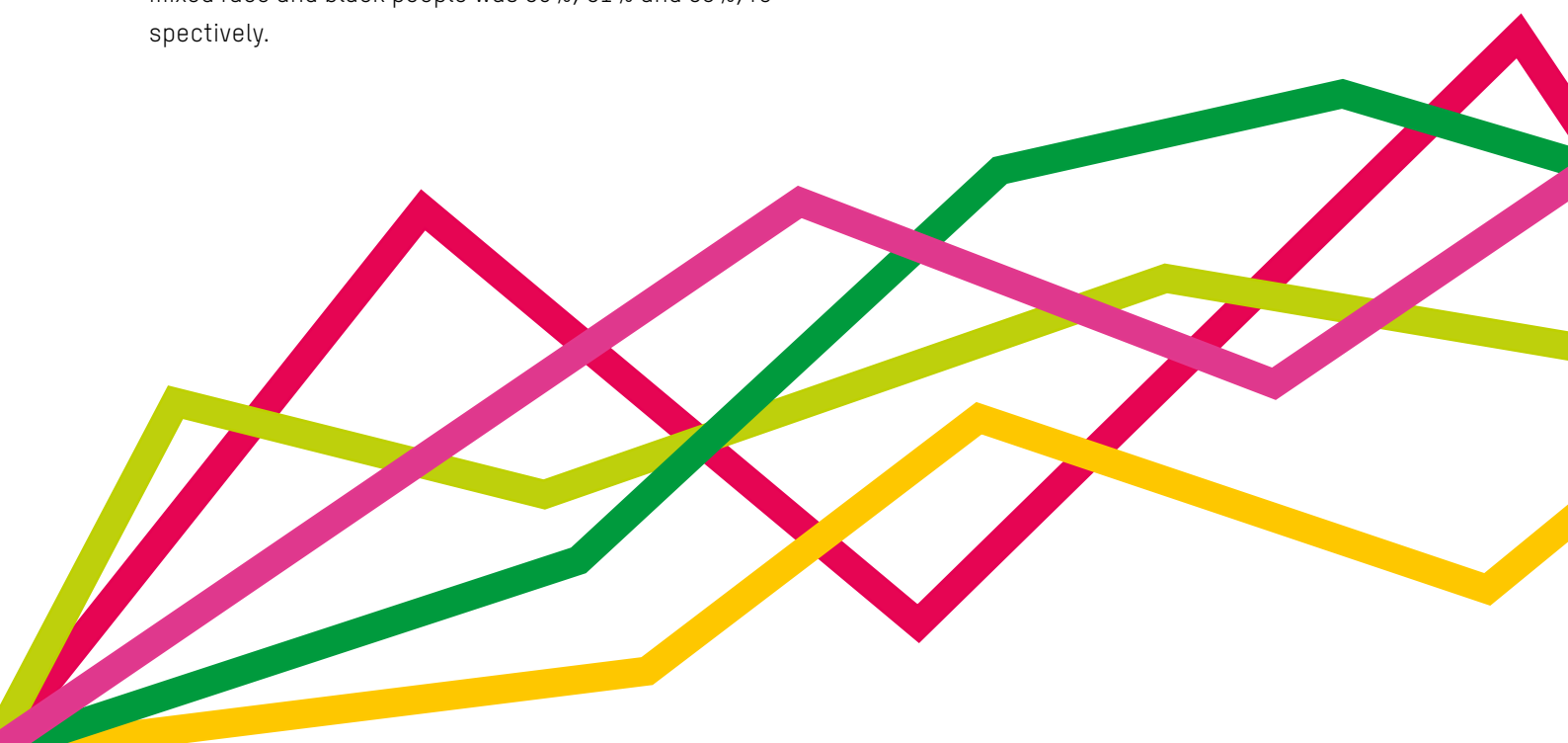
Note: 1% answered “Neither agree nor disagree” with all the statements except for 0% on being stopped by the police. 1% answered “Don’t know” regarding all four statements.

Directly related to income, skin colour influences companies' decisions to hire according to 76% of Brazilians, compared to 72% in 2019. This agreement is 77% among self-declared mixed-race people and reaches 86% among self-declared black people; 71% of whites said they totally or partially agreed with the statement.

Perception of police racism in Brazil is strong. In 2020, 84% of the population believed that skin colour influenced a police officer's decision to stop someone; in 2019, they were 81%. That agreement is 87% and 89% among self-declared mixed race and black people, respectively; in 2019, 81% of self-declared mixed-race people and 88% of self-declared blacks agreed with the statement. Agreement is high even among white people – less victimized by the police:<sup>8</sup> 81%, compared to 79% in 2019.

The courts are tougher on black people for 78% of Brazilians, compared to 71% in 2019. That perception increases to 81% among self-declared mixed-race people and 83% among self-declared blacks; in 2019, they were 72% (mixed-race) and 76% (black). Agreement is 72% among white people, compared to 66% in 2019.

There is strong perception that poverty hits black people harder: 81% of Brazilians agree with the statement that "poor blacks suffer more from inequality in Brazil than poor whites" – the same figure from 2019. The statement has the agreement of 77% of whites, 82% of mixed-raced people and 84% of blacks; in 2019, agreement by white, mixed race and black people was 80%, 81% and 85%, respectively.

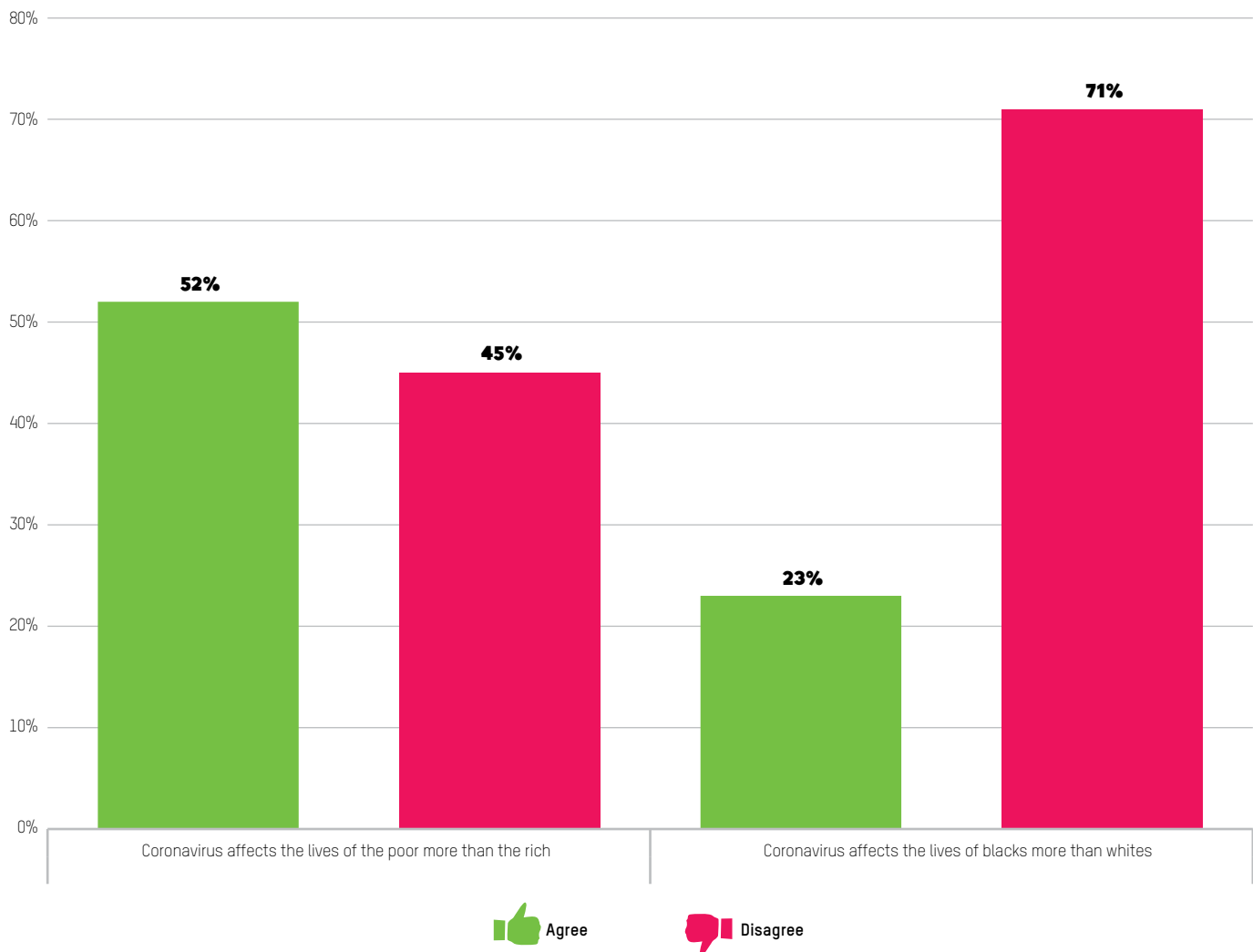


However, such strong and consolidated perception of racial inequality in Brazil does not translate into perception of the unequal impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in the country, despite the data and facts reported (see **Graph 11**). Only 23% of Brazilians agree that the coronavirus affects black people more than white people while 71% disagree; 52% of Brazilians agree that the coronavirus affects the lives of the poor more than the rich while 45%

disagree with that statement. Black people are 75.2% of Brazilians in the poorest 10% in the country.<sup>9</sup> According to a study that looked into deaths from natural causes in the city of São Paulo in 2020, including those caused by Covid-19, excess mortality among blacks (25%) in the period was more than twice as high as among whites (11.5 %).<sup>10</sup>

**GRAPH 11.**  
**Unequal impact of the pandemic in Brazil – 2020**

Source: Oxfam Brasil/Datafolha 2020.



Question: Agree/disagree with the statements that “the coronavirus affects the lives of the poor more than the rich” and “the coronavirus affects the lives of blacks more than whites.”

Note: 2% answered “neither agree nor disagree” to both statements. Those who said they do not know are 1% for the first statement and 3% for the second statement.

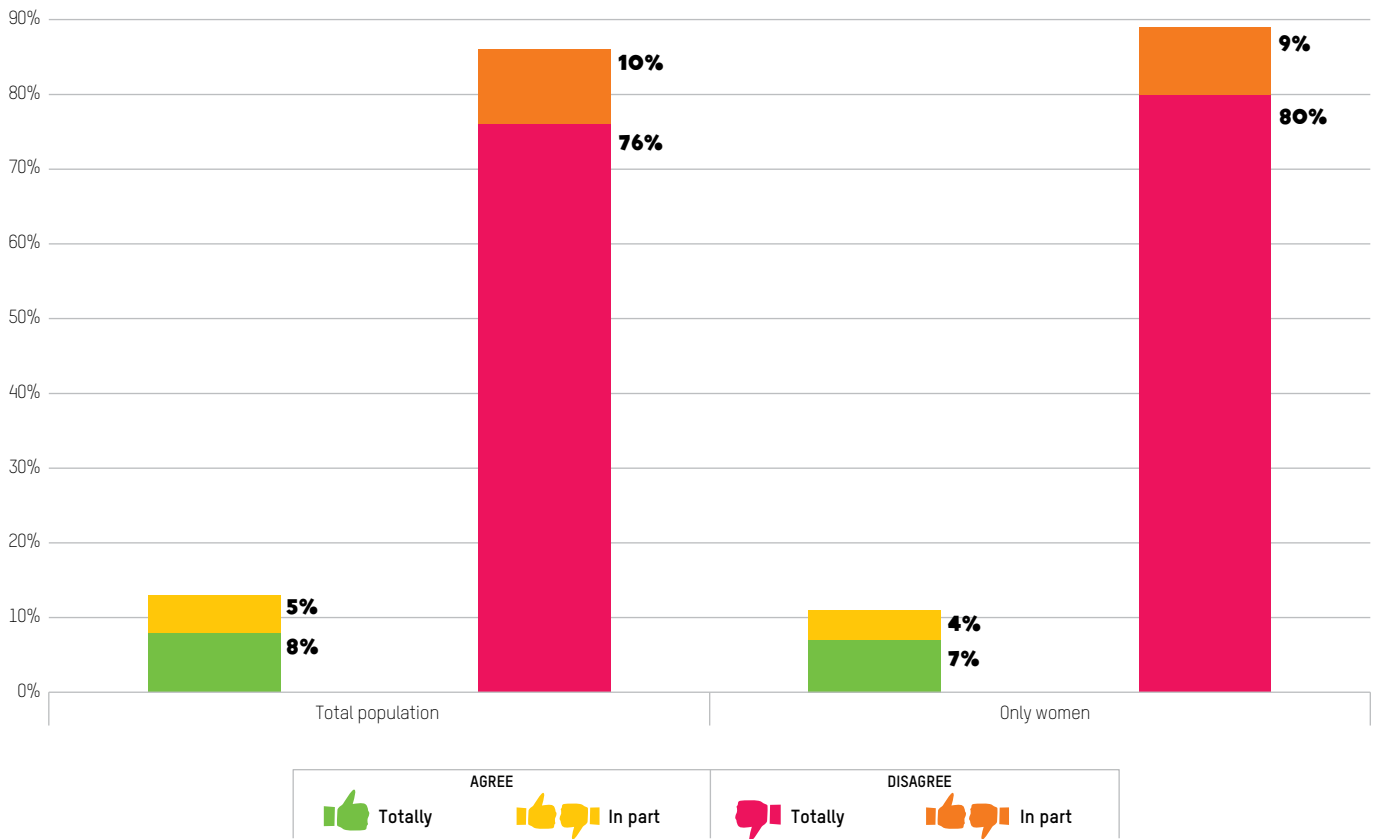


### 2.3. WOMEN'S PLACE

Most of the population disagree with the traditional domestic role assigned to women. As shown in **Graph 12**, 86% of Brazilians totally or partially disagreed with the statement that “Women should only care for their homes and children, and not have outside employment” in 2020 – virtually the same figure found in 2019; 13% agreed.

**GRAPH 12.**  
**Brazil – Women’s role is only to care for their homes and children**

Source: Oxfam Brasil/Datafolha 2020.



Question: Agree/disagree with the statement that “Women should only care for their homes and children and not have outside employment.”

Note: Less than 1% answered “neither agree nor disagree” or “I don’t know” to this question, both for the total of respondents and for women respondents alone.

Among women, total or partial disagreement with the statement reaches 89%, compared to 83% of men. That perception is in conflict with reality, since women work 18 hours a week on average, taking care of people or doing household chores, while men do that for only 10 hours a week.<sup>11</sup> Women’s disproportionately high burden of care has increased in the context of the pandemic.<sup>12</sup>

### 3. PERCEPTIONS OF TAXATION AND SOCIAL POLICIES

#### 3.1. MORE SUPPORT FOR TAXES, BOTH OVERALL AND ON THE RICH

In a context of serious health crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, virtually all countries have suffered the effects of the economic downturn resulting from social distancing policies, which were necessary to reduce the spread of the coronavirus and for the proper functioning of health care systems.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, economic slowdown has caused or worsened fiscal crises as a result of the drop in tax collection coupled with higher demand for public services, starting with high-cost health care, social protection measures and economic recovery. In response, several countries established emergency taxation to try to balance public accounts, as happened recently in Argentina<sup>13</sup> and Chile.<sup>14</sup>

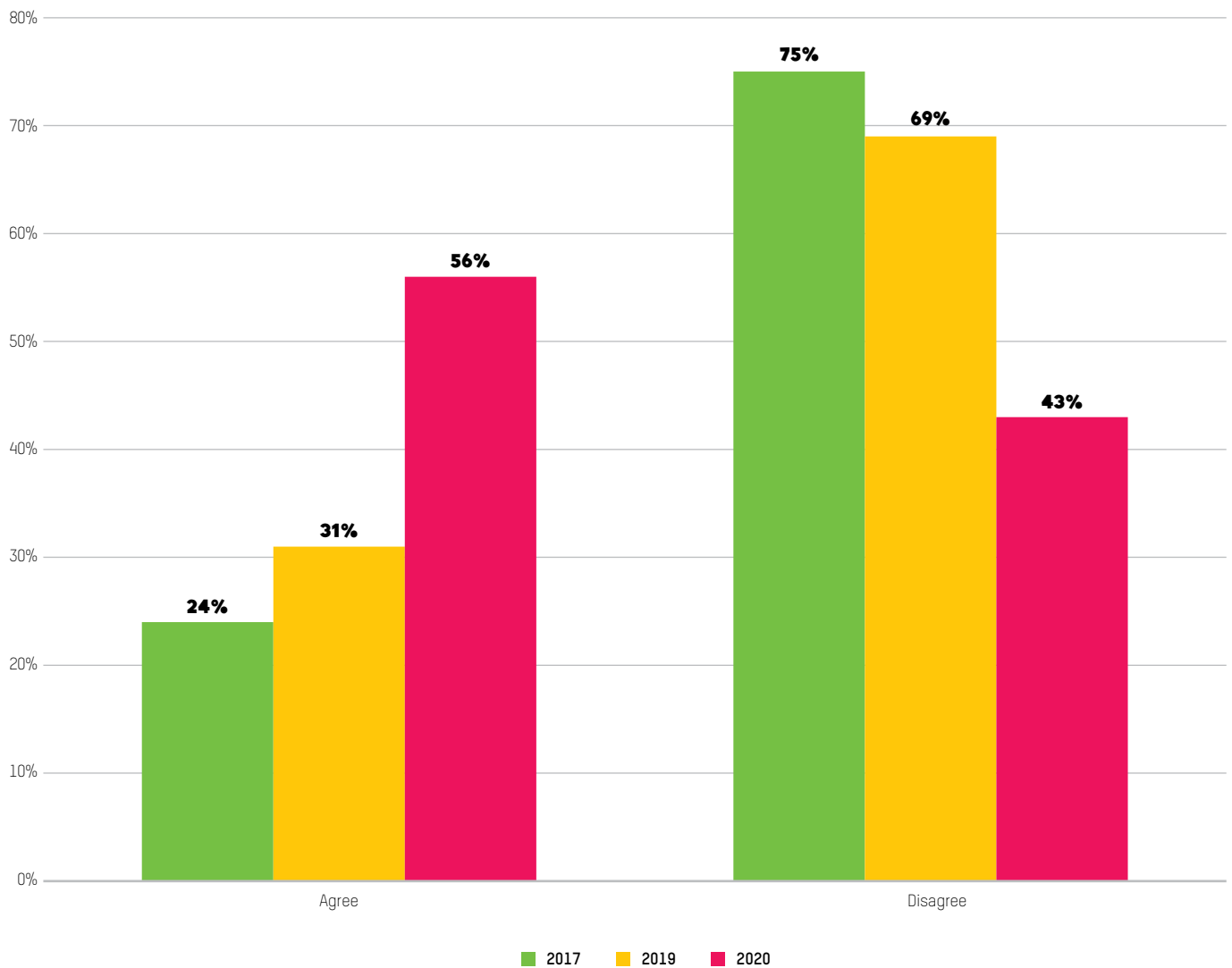
In Brazil, while there have been no emergency taxation measures and the tax reform debate is on hold, public perception is consolidating in favour of increasing taxation to fund social policies such as education, health care and housing. In 2020, 56% of Brazilians fully or partially supported raising taxes in general to ensure better education, health care and housing for those in need; in 2019, they were 31%. Support for raising taxes only for the richest was even stronger: 84%, up from 77% in 2019.

The numbers are noteworthy as they point to an unprecedented reversal in support for a general increase in taxation. In 2017, there was a 51-pp difference in favour of disagreement about increasing taxation for all as a way to expand funding for social policies – 75% disagreed and 24% agreed with it. In 2019, that difference dropped to 38 pp – 69% disagreed and 31% agreed. Finally, in 2020, there was a shift towards social support for the measure, with a 13-pp difference in favour of raising taxes for all (see **Graph 13**).



**GRAPH 13.**  
**Brazil – Support to increasing taxes in general to fund social policies – 2017 to 2020**

Sources: Oxfam Brasil/Datafolha 2020.



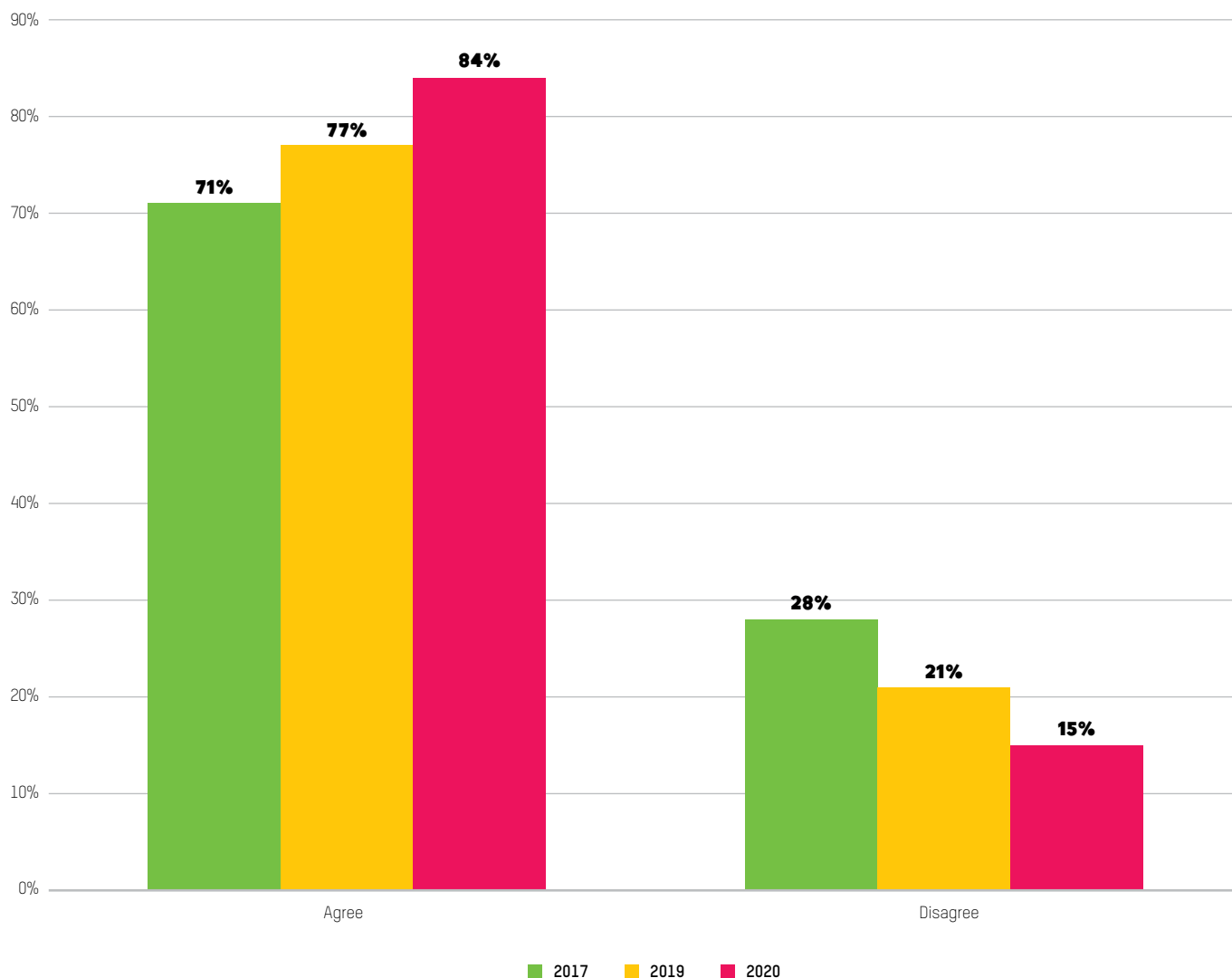
Question: Agreement with the statement that "governments should raise taxes in general to ensure better education, more health care and more housing for people in need."

Note: Figures in this Graph refer to the sum of partial and total agreement.

Broad support for higher taxes on the richest to fund social policies could be seen since the first survey, with a difference of 43 pp. The margin increased by 47% between 2017 and 2020, reaching 63 pp (see Graph 14).

**GRAPH 14.**  
**Brazil – Support for higher taxes on the very rich to fund social policies – 2017 to 2020**

Fontes: Oxfam Brasil/Datafolha 2020.



Question: Agree/disagree with the statement that “The federal government should increase taxes for the very rich only, to ensure better education, health care and housing for people in need.”

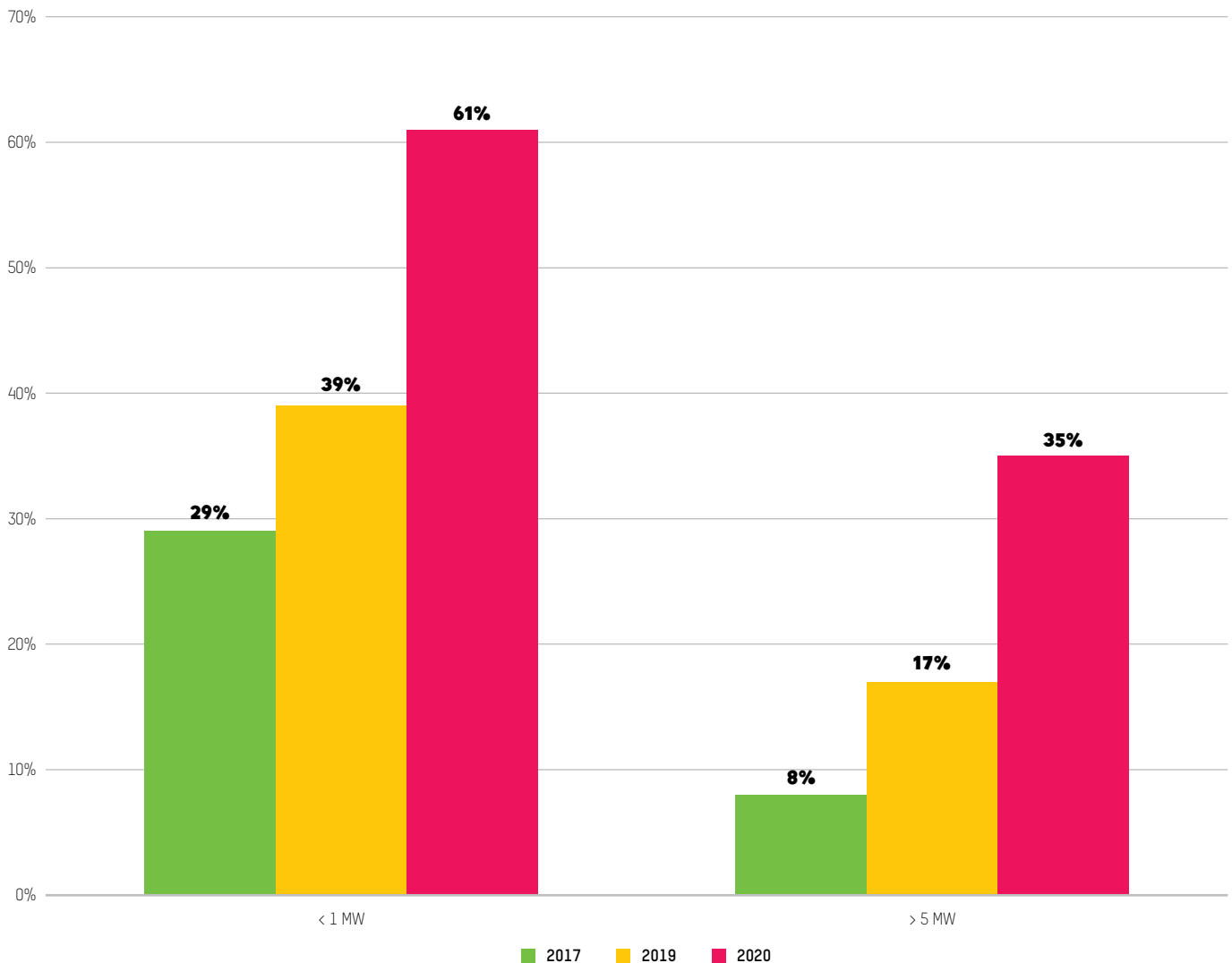
Note: Figures refer to the sum of partial and total agreement.

An analysis of support for taxation in general by income strata points to sustained increase along the three editions of the survey (see **Graph 15**). In the group that earns up to one minimum wage, there was an increase of 32 pp between 2017 and 2020, that is, support for higher taxes for all to fund social policies more than doubled in the period, going from 29% to 61%. While the increase was a

little lower among Brazilians with income above five minimum wages – 27 pp – it was higher if compared to 2020 – from 8% in 2017 to 35%, that is, it increased more than four times. In the latter case, however, even with that significant increase, more Brazilians with income above five minimum wages disagree (62%) than agree (35%).

**GRAPH 15.**  
**Brazil – Support for taxation of people in general to fund for social policies – 2017 to 2020**

Sources: Oxfam Brasil/Datafolha 2017, 2019 and 2020.



Question: Agree/disagree with the statement that “The federal government should increase taxes in general to provide better education, more health care and more housing for people in need.”

Note: Figures refer to the sum of partial and total agreement.

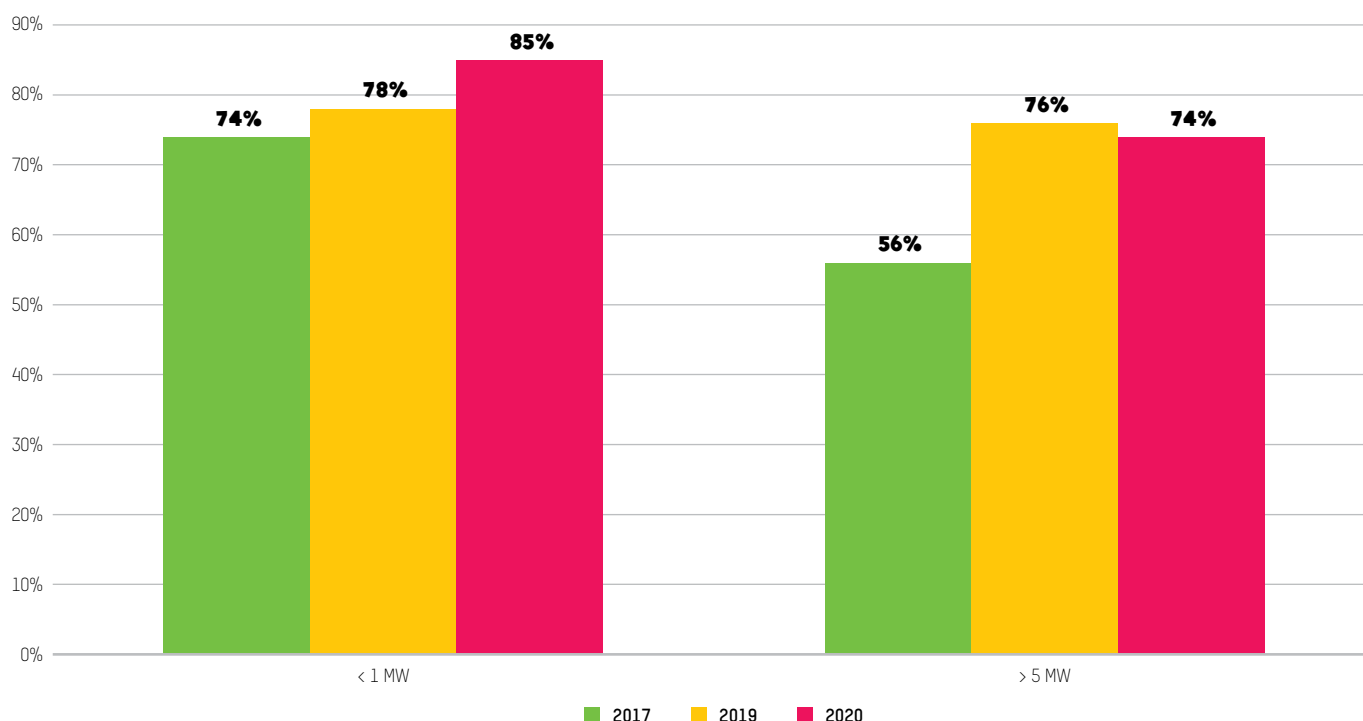
Support for increased taxation on wealthier people to fund social policies such as health care, education and housing varies less when we look at income strata in the three editions of the survey (see **Graph 16**). Among Brazilians earning up to one minimum wage, support rose from 74% in 2017 to 85% in 2020. Considering people with income above five minimum wages, support went

from 56% in 2017 to 74% in 2020. In the latter case, there was a slight negative fluctuation in support, which had reached 76% in 2019 for the stratum that earns more than five minimum wages. So, even though the richest support tax increases that affect them less enthusiastically, agreement is strong: 74%, over 24% who disagree.

### GRAPH 16.

#### Brazil – Support to taxation of the very rich to fund social policies – 2017 to 2020

Sources: Oxfam Brasil/Datafolha 2017, 2019 and 2020.



Question: Agree/disagree with the statement that “The federal government should increase taxes on the very rich to ensure better education, more health care and more housing for people in need.”

Note: Figures refer to the sum of partial and total agreement.

Agreement with taxing the top of the income pyramid increases when the expression “very rich people” becomes concrete. In this case, 84% of the population supports higher taxation of “people who earn more than R\$ 40,000 per month” to “reduce taxes on products such as food, gasoline, clothing, medicine and home appliances.” In 2019, 82% of people supported it. This support is high and reasonably constant even when looking at distinct income strata, with a peak of 86% for Brazilians earning 1-2 minimum wages and a floor of 72% for people with income above five minimum wages – precisely the richest.

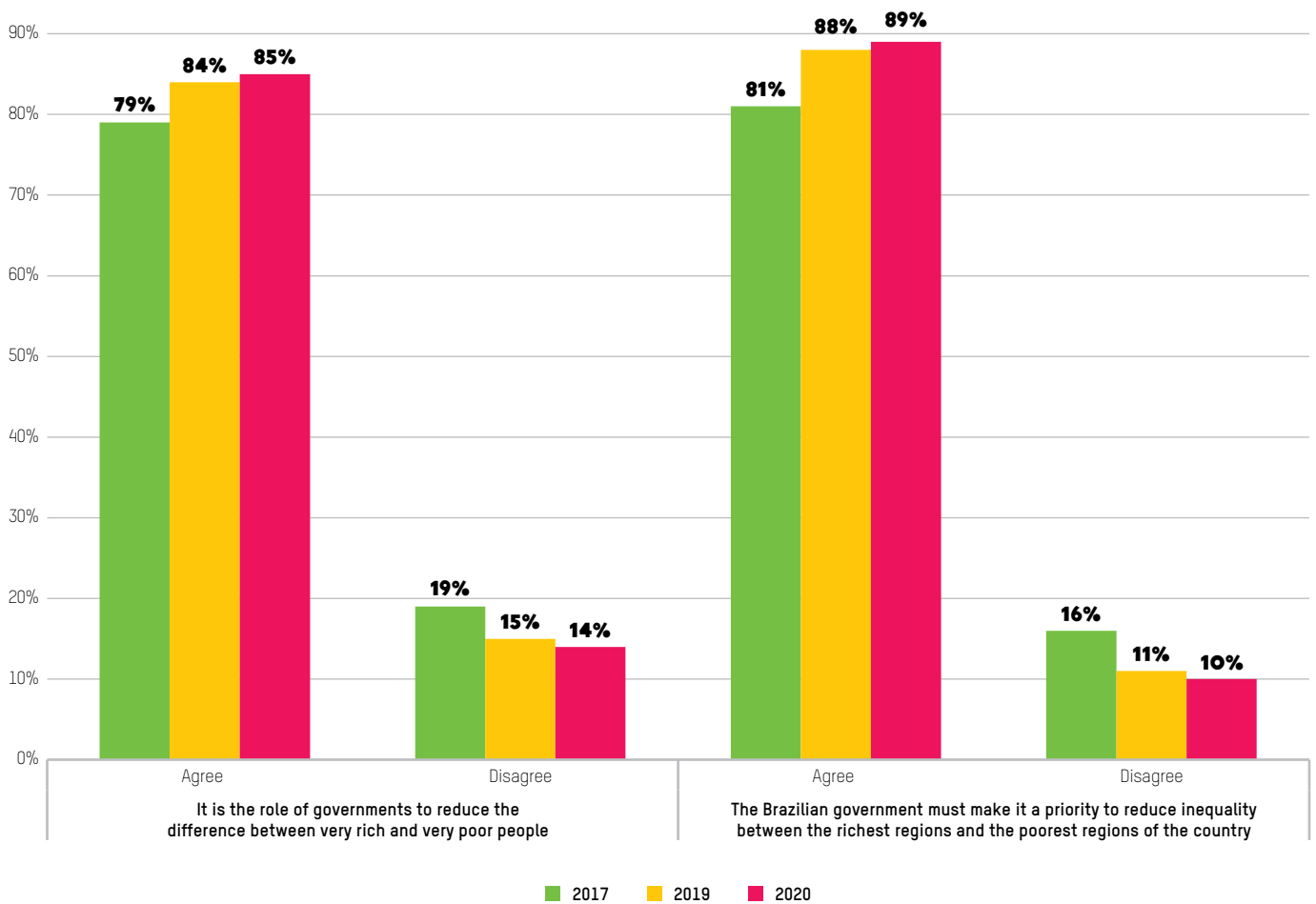
### 3.2. AN ACTIVE STATE AND UNIVERSAL POLICIES

Brazilians’ support for government action to combat inequalities maintained its upward trend in this third edition of the survey. In 2020, 85% totally or partially agreed that “in a country like Brazil, it is the government’s obligation to reduce the difference between the very rich and the very poor,” compared to 84% in 2019 and 79% in 2017.

There is broad public perception of the importance of State action in reducing regional inequalities as provided for in Article 3, item III of the 1988 Federal Constitution. In 2020, 89% of Brazilians totally or partially agreed that “the Brazilian government must make it a priority to reduce inequality between richer and poorer regions of the country”; they were 88% in 2019 and 81% in 2017 (see Graph 17).

**GRAPH 17.**  
**Brazil – Role of the State in reducing inequalities – 2017 to 2020**

Sources: Oxfam Brasil/Datafolha 2017, 2019 and 2020.



Question: Agreement/disagreement with the statements that “In a country like Brazil, it is the role of governments to reduce the difference between very rich and very poor people” and “The Brazilian government must make it a priority to reduce inequality between the richest regions and the poorest regions of the country.”

Note: Figures refer to the sum of partial and total agreement.

When testing opinions on the nature of public policies – universal, targeted or no State intervention – a strong universalist tendency and very little space for privatising public services are found. This is another set of opinions that support the constitutional principles established by our society in 1988 through the Federal Constitution.

As shown in **Graph 18**, support for universal policies varies between 58% and 72% of responses, depending on the services tested. In the case of education, in 2020, 58% of Brazilians believed that the government should provide day care centres and universities for all – they had been 64% in 2019, while 39% wanted those services only for those who could not afford to pay for them, compared to 33% in 2019. In 2020, 69% supported universal elementary and secondary education – they were 75% in 2019, and only 29% of respondents supported targeting those who could not afford it, compared to 22% in 2019. As for health care policies, support for universality and targeting was 65% and 35% in 2020, respectively (compared to 70% and 29% in 2019) in the case of surgeries and treatments for serious illnesses; 62% and 37% (compared to 68% and 30% in 2019) in the case of medical tests, and 72% and 27% (compared to 73% and 25% in 2019) for care at health units and hospitals.





## GRAPH 18. Brazil – Support for universalistic, targeted or no state intervention in education and health care

Source: Oxfam Brasil/Datafolha 2020.



Question: "In your opinion, should the government provide [specific service] for all Brazilians, only for Brazilians who cannot afford to pay or for no one – and everyone should pay for that service."

## 4. PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC POLICIES AND THE PANDEMIC

### 4.1. THE ROLE OF INCOME TRANSFER PROGRAMS

The health crisis caused by Covid-19 had a global impact, requiring protective measures aimed at reducing the spread of the coronavirus, given the lack of treatments for the disease – and, for most of 2020, lack of vaccines, which would only reach their final test stages in early December. Social isolation measures have been adopted in several countries, considering their effectiveness as a way to reduce people's circulation and therefore the transmission rate.

Given the strong economic impact of the coronavirus, billions of people need immediate financial assistance, along with access to social protection measures for those who will remain vulnerable in the long term.<sup>15</sup>

In March 2020, as a result of relevant civil society mobilization and decisive action by the opposition, Congress passed an emergency aid program – one of the most important public policies adopted during the pandemic. With monthly instalments of R\$ 600 – and twice as much in some cases – paid between April and August and R\$ 300 between September and December 2020, the emergency aid program had informal and self-employed workers as its top priorities, as they were severely affected by the economic crisis resulting from the pandemic. Some 67.8 million Brazilians received it in 2020 and about half of the country's population were affected by it, with an estimated cost of R\$ 321.8 billion.<sup>16</sup>

Studies show that the program reduced extreme poverty in Brazil to its lowest levels in history – a remarkable achievement when considering the seriousness of the economic crisis resulting from the pandemic. According to Getúlio Vargas Foundation' Social Policy Centre FGV

Social, those living below the extreme poverty line were 4.5% in August 2020; by comparison, 11% of the population were living in poverty at the end of 2019.<sup>17</sup> Economists point out<sup>18</sup> that emergency aid helped to mitigate the fall in Brazil's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2020.

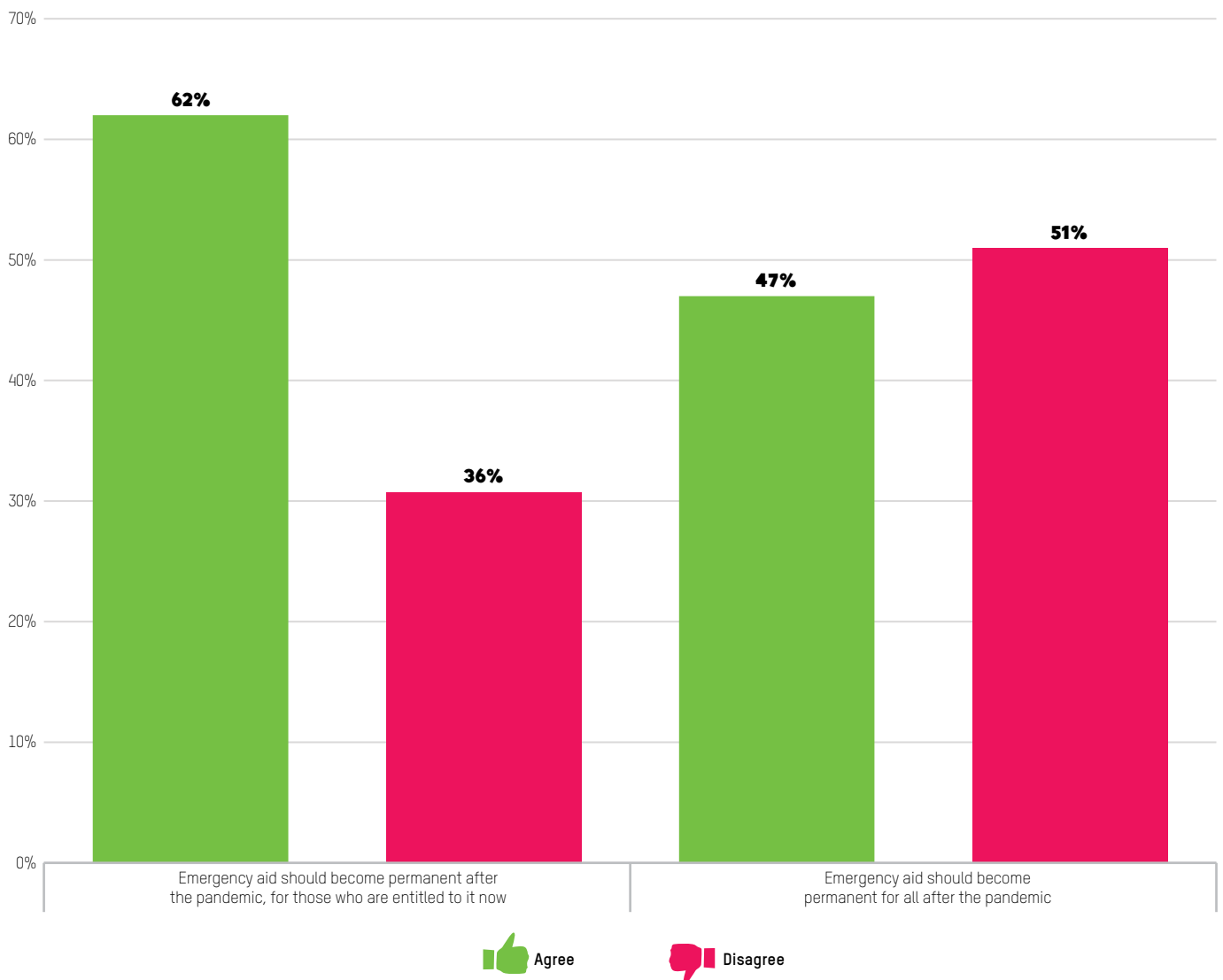
Despite its undeniable positive effect, the program was not renewed at the end of 2020, which contributed to reverse its beneficial effects in the early months of 2021.<sup>19</sup> The portion of the population living in poverty, which had reached a historic low of 4.8% in August 2020 and was 8.5% in December – already reflecting the reduction of the benefit by half as of September, reached 12.8% in January 2021, the highest rate since the early 2010s. Since mid-February 2021, the renewal of emergency aid was discussed, but for a limited time, with lower instalments and fewer beneficiaries. The new emergency aid only started to be paid in April 2021.<sup>20</sup>

The survey sought to assess public perception of emergency aid, specifically about its maintenance after the end of the pandemic. In that context, 62% of Brazilians fully or partially agreed that it should continue for the same people who were entitled to it in December 2020, while 36% disagreed. Most respondents disagreed with maintaining post-pandemic emergency aid for all Brazilians, but by a small margin: 51% over 47%, showing that resistance to universal income transfer policies remains (see **Graph 19**).

### GRAPH 19.

#### Support to keeping the emergency aid program after the end of the pandemic – 2020

Source: Oxfam Brasil/Datafolha 2020.



Question: Agreement/disagreement with the statements “Emergency aid should become permanent after the pandemic, for those who are entitled to it now” and “Emergency aid should become permanent for all after the pandemic.”

# HIGHER AGREEMENT

Analysing the microdata about support for keeping emergency aid after the pandemic for those who were entitled to it in December 2020.

WOMEN  
**64%**



**70%**  
YOUNG  
aged 16 - 24

**80%**  
Household income  
UP TO 1 MW

**72%**  
elementary  
EDUCATION



INDIGENOUS  
**72%**



CATHOLICS  
**64%**



BLACKS  
AND MIXED  
RACE  
**65%**

NORTH  
**67%**

**68%**  
NORTHEAST



**65%**  
Cities with up to  
50,000 PEOPLE

beneficiaries



BOLSA FAMÍLIA  
**78%**



**72%**  
EMERGENCY  
AID



**55%**  
Household income  
ABOVE 5 MW

**50%**  
Higher  
EDUCATION

NOT  
beneficiaries

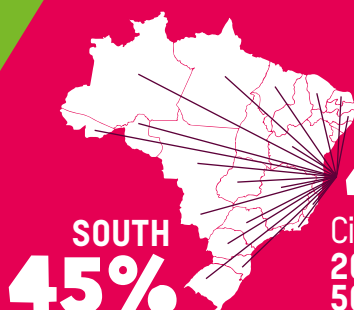


BOLSA FAMÍLIA

**40%**



**45%**  
EMERGENCY  
AID



SOUTH  
**45%**

**44%**  
Cities with  
200,000 TO  
500,000  
PEOPLE



WHITE  
**43%**

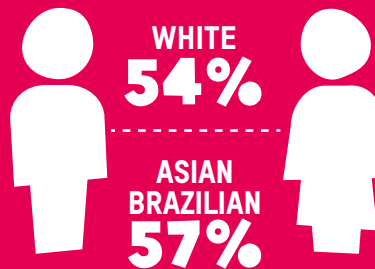
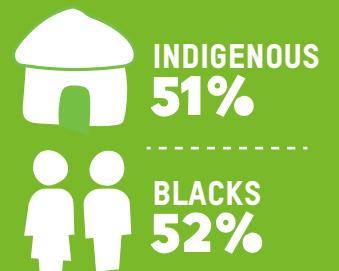
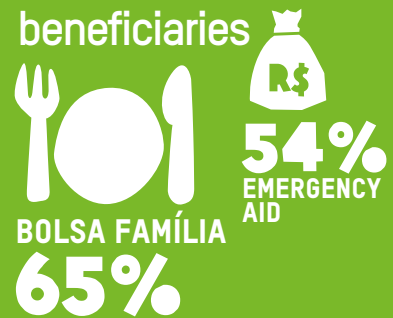
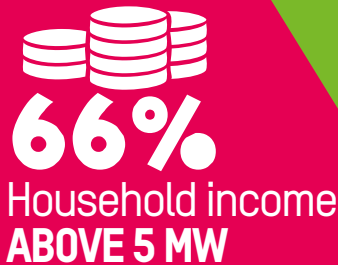
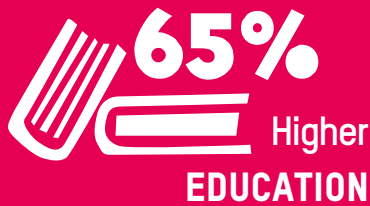
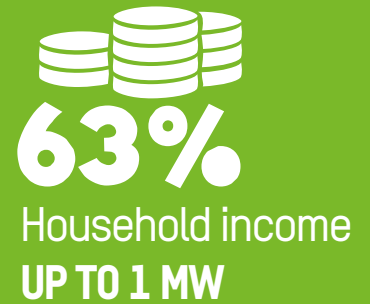
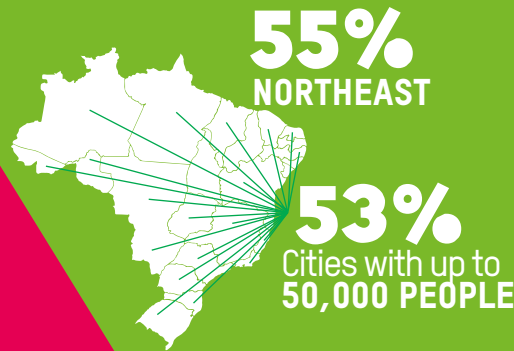
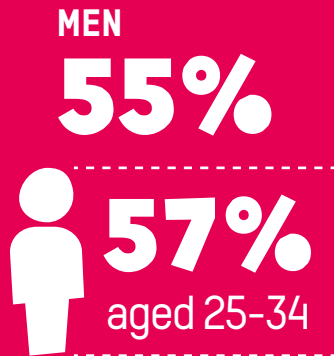
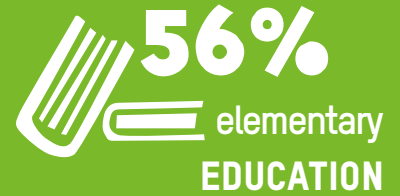
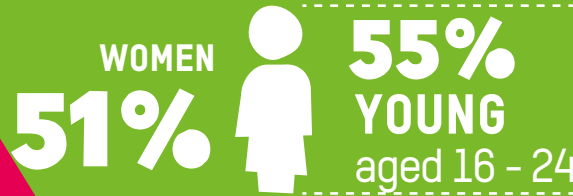
ASIAN  
BRAZILIAN  
**40%**



# HIGHER DISAGREEMENT

# HIGHER AGREEMENT

Support to with keeping emergency aid for all after the pandemic.



# HIGHER DISAGREEMENT

## 5. INEQUALITIES AND US: WAYS TO REDUCE

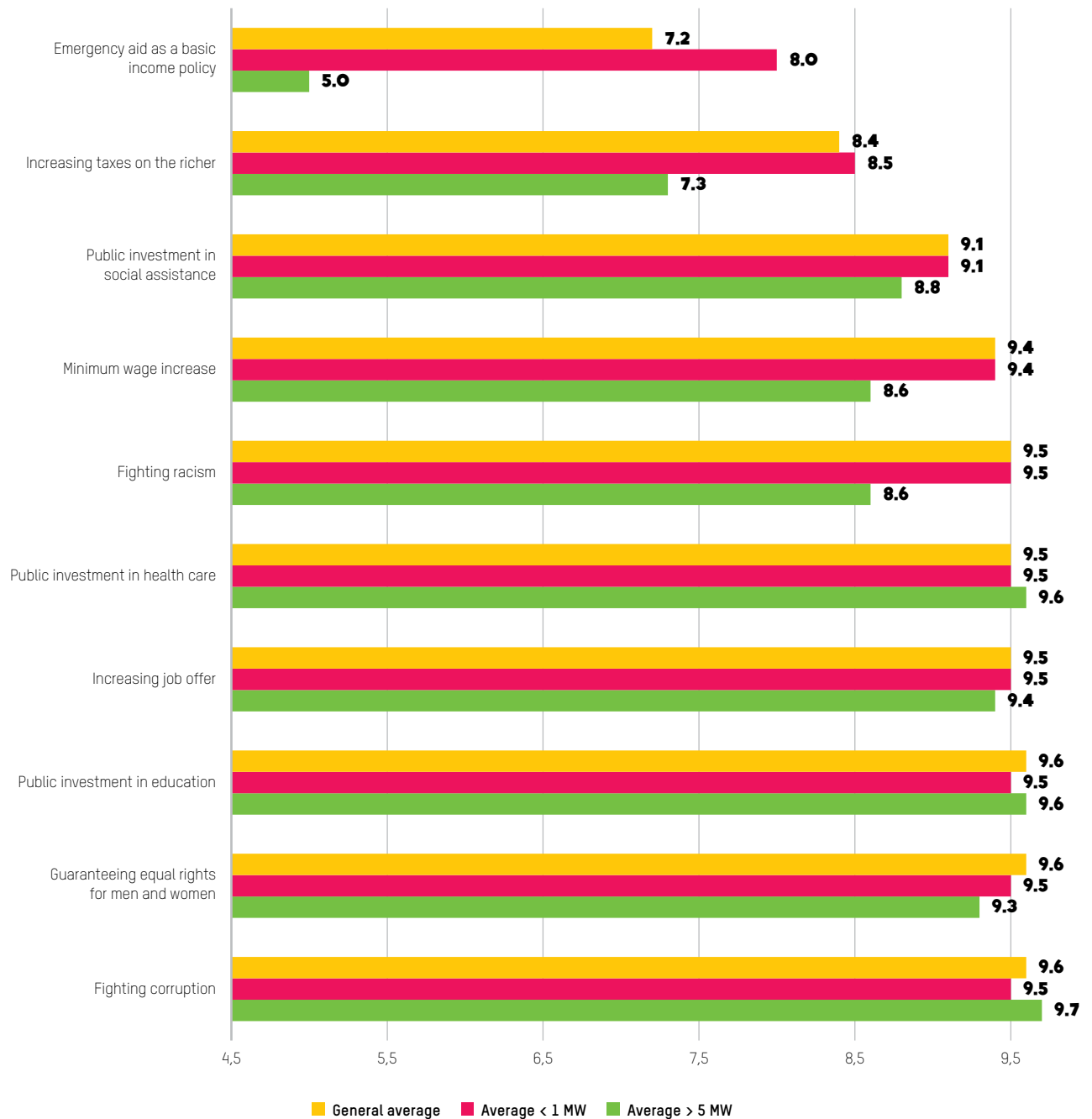
Oxfam Brasil is working to reduce inequalities in Brazil. To achieve that goal, we advocate the pathway set out in our Federal Constitution, which must be followed and fully implemented. This stance comes out of historic lessons we have learned since our country's redemocratization.

All those principles and structural policies, along with effective policies and constantly changing behaviours, make up a powerful agenda to build a society with justice and solidarity. Oxfam Brasil tested the response of people interviewed by the Datafolha Institute to assess the importance of certain measures for reducing inequalities in the opinion of Brazilian men and women. **Graph 20** summarizes the results.



## GRAPH 20. Brazil – Average degrees of importance for ten priority measures to reduce inequalities

Source: Oxfam Brasil/Datafolha 2020.



Question: "On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means not at all important and 10 means very important, how important do you consider each measure to reduce the gap between the richest and the poorest in Brazil?"

As a rule, respondents ascribed high importance to all measures, with no item averaging below 7. Oxfam Brasil has proposed some approaches to these measures, in dialog with other social organizations and the population's expectations.

**Equal rights for women and men [9,6] and fighting racism [9.5]:**

Policies to fight discrimination against women and racism are structuring aspects of Brazil's inequalities. Gender policies that ensure day care and other services (reducing the time women spend on these activities), as well as paternity leaves to balance care for newborns, have not advanced much yet. On race, there are monumental challenges involving inclusive education, quotas in universities, companies and public services as well as fighting institutional racism.



**Proposed agenda:** Oxfam Brasil advocates setting goals to reduce race or gender inequality and implementing policies that vehemently fight institutional racism and promote equality.

**Fighting corruption [9.6]:** The fight against corruption has broad popular support in all income brackets, but more so among people with higher income. Corruption is a long-standing, central issue in the country, which must be confronted, since it not only takes resources away from social policies but also undermines people's trust in our democratic institutions.



**Proposed agenda:** Oxfam Brasil advocates a State that works for all rather than defending the interests of a few. We must develop accountability and transparency mechanisms, including effective regulation of lobbies and stronger structures for civil society to participate. The Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches must work to recover confidence in public institutions rather than destroy them, to make the fight against corruption effective.

**Public investment in health care [9.5] and education [9.6]:**

These policies enjoy broad support among all social strata and have positive distributive impacts on the finances of the poor and the lower middle class.<sup>21</sup> The extent of inequalities in Brazil and the large number of people in situations of poverty demand continuous, long-term, progressive and high-quality social investments.



**Proposed agenda:** Public funding must be guaranteed to meet people's universal constitutional rights to health care and education and to expand other social policies. To that end, the Spending Ceiling amendment be repealed. Fiscal adjustment must prioritize other policies such as those related to taxation. Social spending must be broader, more efficient and more effective. Allocation and execution of public policies and funding must be transparent, allowing society to control them.



**Increasing Job opportunities [9.5] and raising the minimum wage [9.4]:**

Inclusive distributive policies in the labour market, such as more formal jobs and a real raise in the minimum wage, have the greatest potential for short-term income redistribution,<sup>22</sup> which may be why they enjoy broad support in society. Brazil must tackle its low job opportunities and ensure that unemployment is overcome through the creation of decent jobs.



**Proposed agenda:** Oxfam Brasil advocates decent formal jobs for all and a review of the labour reform in its precarisation of labour and flexibilization of rights. Real raises in the minimum wage have been a pillar for reducing Brazil's income inequalities in recent years, and they must be resumed, with due fiscal caution.

**Increasing taxes for the richer [8,2]:** tax reform is a top priority for Congress, in light of its potential positive impact on income distribution. The very broad support for increasing taxes for richer people to fund social policies corroborates this analysis. A tax reform based on fairness and solidarity is a crucial tool to ensure fiscal soundness with income redistribution.



**Proposed agenda:** A tax reform that ends the regressive nature of our tax system is necessary both to improve its current level of injustice and to face economic recovery and fiscal balance challenges. It is important to ensure that the tax changes to be defined by Congress and governments are in line with the Federal Constitution.

**Public investment in social assistance [9.1] and emergency aid as a permanent basic income policy:**

broad support for social protection policies is confirmed here. However, social assistance and particularly the Bolsa Família Program (PBF) are progressive – that is, they have higher impact on the poorest in reducing inequality – and it has contributed to lifting millions of Brazilians out of poverty, but it is also widely criticized – and stigmatized – by higher income strata. It is not by chance that the average score for this measure is 6.4 among those earning more than five minimum wages, in contrast with 8.4 among those earning up to one minimum wage. In 2020, emergency aid proved to be a transformative policy in terms of reducing poverty and extreme poverty, even at a critical moment of health and economic crisis. Reviewing income transfer programs and policies and possibly implementing a basic income policy, in light of the 2020 results, is part of an essential agenda of measures aimed at reducing economic inequality in Brazil.

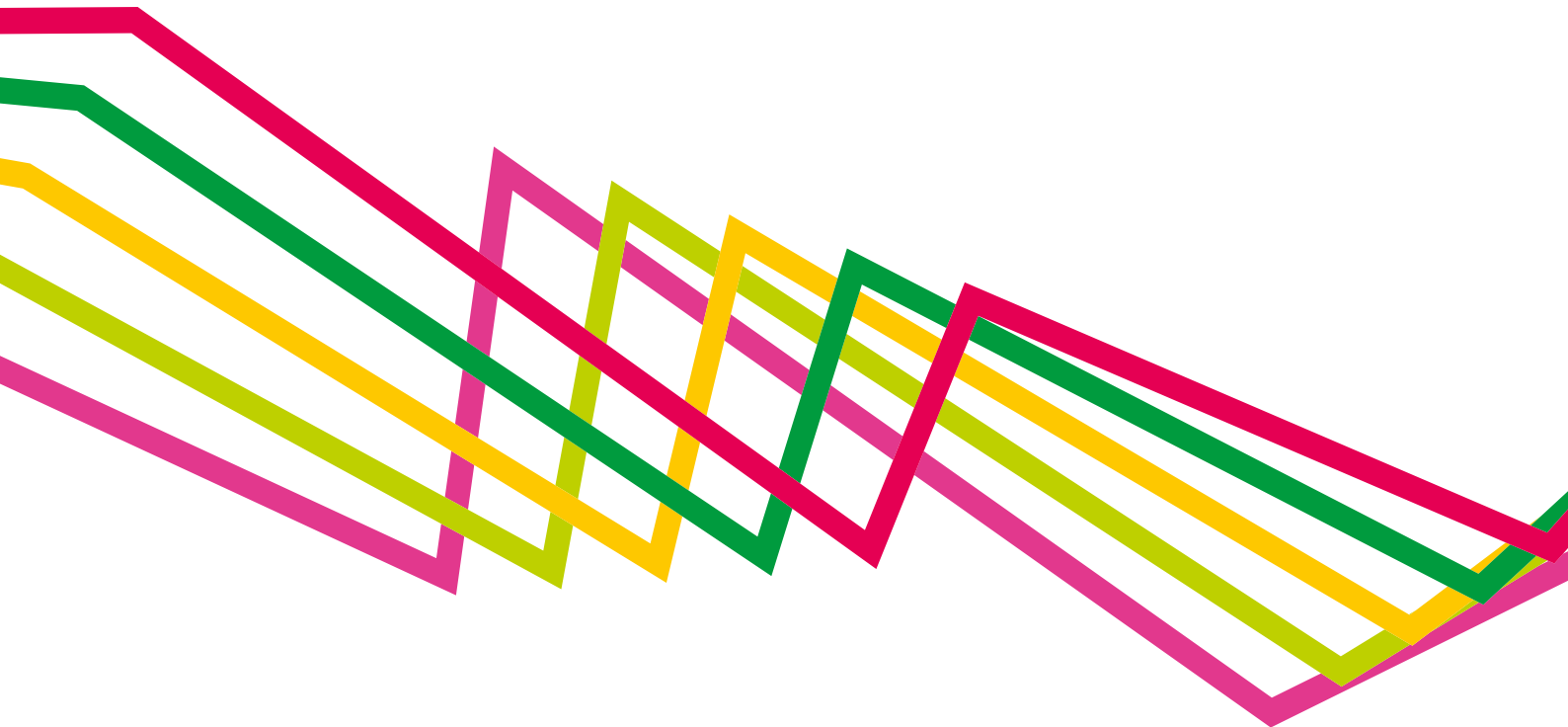


**Proposed agenda:** Oxfam Brasil advocates keeping and expanding the Bolsa Família Program and social assistance policies to ensure decent standards of living for those who need them most, thus reducing poverty and social exclusion in Brazil. Emergency aid must be guaranteed while no effectively safe health and economic conditions are in place for all workers, who should be paid what they need to maintain their incomes and decent living conditions. Then a permanent income transfer program should be further debated. That debate is currently led by the Mixed Parliamentary Front in Defence of Basic Income, of which Oxfam Brasil is a member.

## REFERENCES

- 1 The explanation about the methodology was taken from the final document produced by Instituto Datafolha. That is the source of all methodological information.
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