

# Youth, education, and work in Brazil (2012-2022)

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## Introduction

In contemporary western societies, certain experiences are generally expected of young people, such as continuing their studies and gradual insertion into the labor market (Madeira, 1986). Young people's trajectories are heterogeneous, especially in countries such as Brazil, notable for high socioeconomic inequalities and incipient systems of social protection (Cardoso, 2013; Lavinias, 2021).

Historically, the practices and expectations of young people shift over time, due to cultural and demographic transformations and the organization of the productive systems. Dubar (2001) contends, for example, that the professional insertion of young people is a "modern" problem. In central capitalist countries, its appearance dates to the separation between school and work in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and to the disruption of the labor markets following the crisis of the Fordist model in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Subsequently, the occupational insertion of young people became a public problem. In Brazil, the structural changes that defined the youth condition took on other aspects. A reason was the selective nature of the expansion of public education, which only picked up pace after the reinstatement of democracy. The problem of the relationship between school and work followed the modernization of the Brazilian economy (Tommasi and Corrochano, 2020),

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embodied in the division between propaedeutic and vocational education in the assignment of social positions among the young (Menezes, 2023).

On the other hand, a limited temporality reflects the cyclical and circumstantial transformations of the labor markets, as well as the periods of expansion and contraction of the educational systems. Furthermore, particularly among young people from the mass sections, work and educational trajectories are irregular and interchangeable (Dayrrel, 2007; Guimarães, Brito and Comin, 2020). This phenomenon, added to the lower average levels of professional experience and qualification, makes them vulnerable to unemployment and informal employment during economic crises (Mont'Alvao and Ribeiro, 2020). Changes in the teaching systems also tend to affect youth cohorts (Sposito and Souza, 2014), instituting typical chances for social mobility and educational achievement for each generation.

Considering these two temporalities that define the youth condition, in this paper we analyze microdata from the Continuous National Household Sample Survey (PNAD-C) concerning the 2012-2022 period, to investigate educational and work opportunities open to young people. The data relating to schooling are prioritized for the group aged between fifteen and seventeen, due to the role performed by basic education in inserting these individuals into a system of rights and responsibilities. For the group aged between 18 and 24, meanwhile, we examine the connections between education and work<sup>1</sup>.

The 2010s began following a period notable for economic growth and an advance in non-contributory social policies. The period 2012-2022, however, caused a break in this positive cycle, due to the combined effects of the 2014-2016 economic crisis; the lack of federal coordination and an increase in inequalities, following the gradual evolution of public policies, which had been observed since the democratization process (Abrucio, 2022); and the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-2022, with negative effects being felt in both employment levels and educational statistics (Corseuil, Franca and Poloponsky, 2020; Bof and Moraes, 2023). The analysis of the education and work indicators during this difficult period allows us to engage with the studies on the transformations of the youth condition, either considering the experience of young women and men over the last ten years, or considering the trends that suggest new youth experiences.

The rest of the paper is divided into three topics. The first analyzes the educational engagement and achievement of young people aged between fifteen and seventeen,

1. The 2013 Youth Statute (Law n. 12,852) classifies young people as being individuals aged between 15 and 29. The group aged 25 to 29 is important for us to understand the youth condition, but will not be the focus of assessment in this paper.

focusing on the period from 2012 to 2022. Complementing the descriptive approach, we implemented a logistic regression model to identify the effects of variables of a socio-demographic nature and social origin on the chances of enrollment in secondary school, as well as the changes of this effect over the ten-year period. Next, the second topic addresses how the educational and work experiences are connected among young people aged between 18 and 24. Finally, the third topic summarizes the most important evidence found by this paper, identifying the contextual and long-term trends that define the youth condition.

### The stratification of access to basic education in Brazil

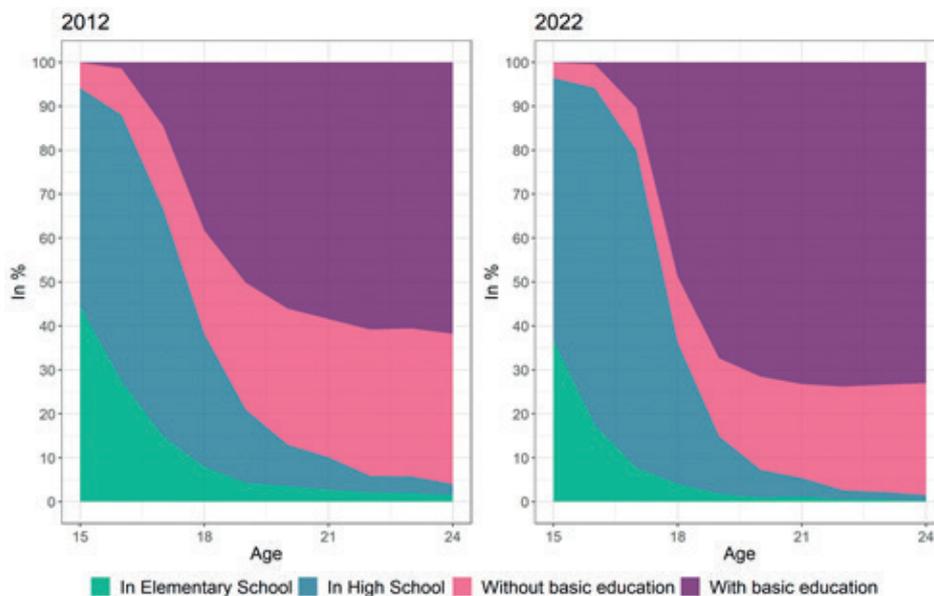
Figure 1 presents, by age, four types of educational engagement and achievement: young people enrolled in elementary school; those enrolled in secondary school; those who do not attend school and who have not completed high school; and those young people who are not included in the educational system, but who have graduated high school. The data are presented separately for the years 2012 and 2022.

The access to basic education evolved positively during the period. High school attendance increased among young people aged between fifteen and seventeen, a change that was balanced by the drop in the proportion of young people enrolled in elementary school but who were not part of the school system and did not have high school education. The increase in the number of those enrolled in high school is noticeable among those aged sixteen (a rise of 16.1 p.p.) and seventeen (20.4 p.p.).

The data point to the continuity of two phenomena that have been observable since the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. On the one hand, the drop in the proportion of adolescents not attending school, and, on the other, the tendency towards the inclusion of individuals aged between fifteen and seventeen in high school, with a reduction in the age-grade distortion (Sposito and Souza, 2014; Ribeiro, Ceneviva and Brito, 2015; Brito, 2017). In short, youth cohorts came to experience better conditions of continuity in school and school attendance at the proper age. As a result of these trends, for the 18 to 24 age group, the proportion of individuals with high school education increased during the 2012-2022 period, especially among those aged 19 (a growth of 17.2 p.p.).

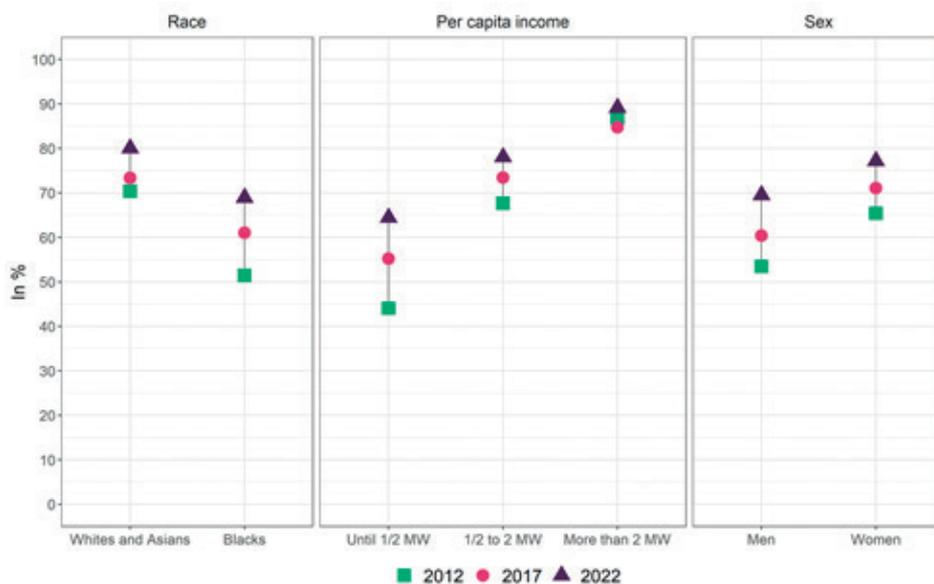
The improvement of chances of access, continuity and graduation was the fruit of a diverse set of educational policies, in place since the mid-1990s, that have sought to mitigate the barriers to access and progress in school. In the long-term, deeper social changes have altered intergenerational relations and thus associated the first stage of youth with a commitment to achieving basic schooling (Cabanes, 2007; Souza, 2018).

FIGURE 1  
*Educational engagement and achievement of young people (2012-2022)*



Source: PNAD-C (2012-2022). Own calculations.

FIGURE 2  
*Enrollment in secondary education among young people aged 15 to 17 (2012-2022)*



MW refers to the minimum-wage.

Source: PNAD-C (2012-2022). Own calculations.

The educational inclusion of socially vulnerable groups has been attributed to the expansion of enrollment and the creation of a program of evening classes (Costa and Oliveira, 2014), as well as improvements in welfare through social policies. However, we cannot ignore that, in 2022, 6.2% of young people aged fifteen to seventeen were not enrolled in school and had not concluded their basic schooling. These individuals are excluded from an essential means of accessing their rights and are invisible to educational statistics, available in the School Census and in standardized learning assessment tests.

The persistence of educational inequalities is most evident when we calculate the net rate of enrollment in high school<sup>2</sup> for students aged between fifteen and seventeen. Even if most of the young people in this age group are in school, the educational progression is still affected by inequalities. Figure 2 provides a panoramic view of the situation.

The data reveal important inequalities between men and women, with the first group completing the time series with a 69.5% net rate of enrollment, which is lower than the female indicator of 77.2%. The differences are even more significant among racial and household income per capita groups, with young, poor Blacks showing net rates of enrollment in high school much lower than the 85% target established by the National Education Plan (PNE) for the 2014-2024 period.

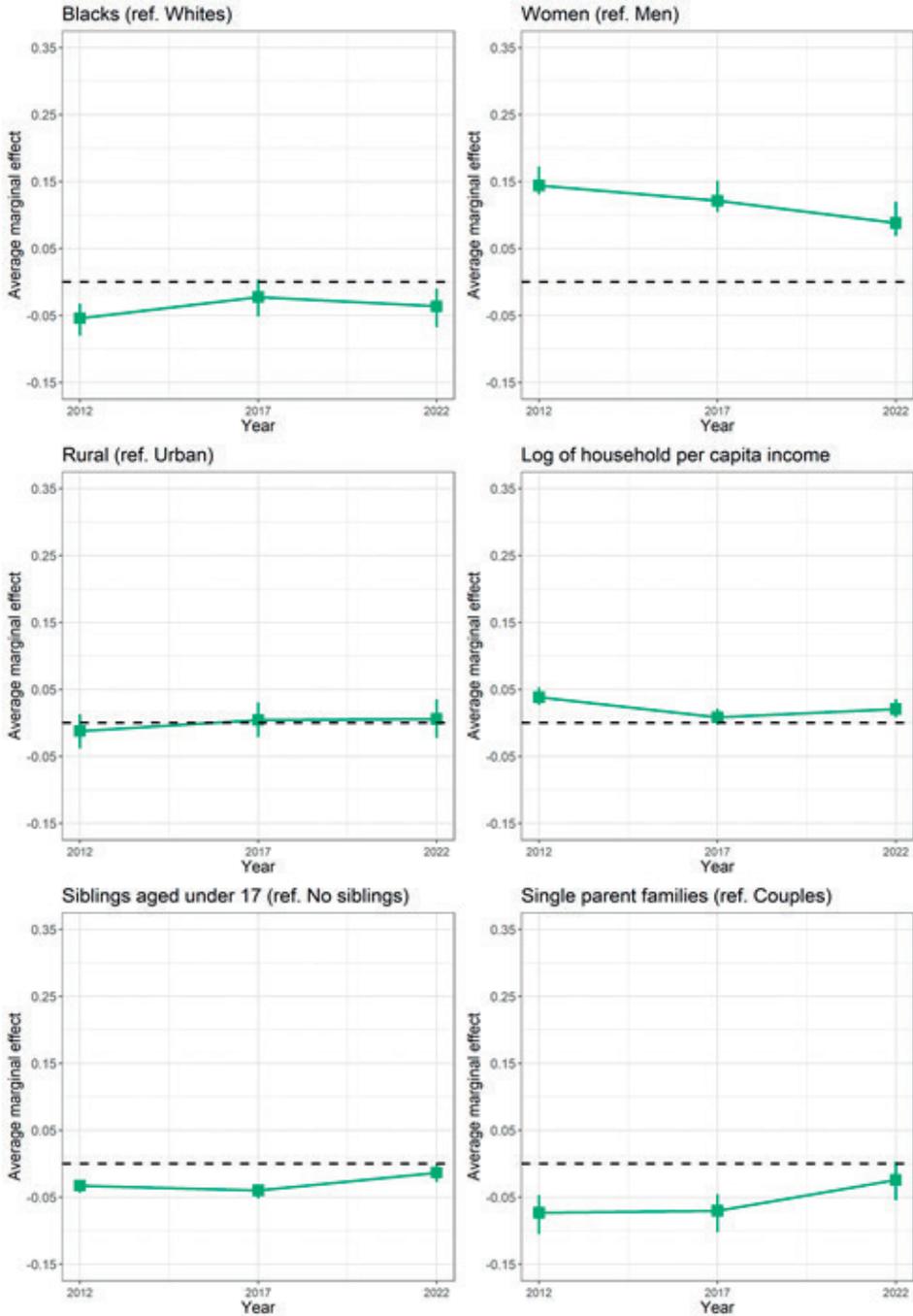
Among young Blacks, the net rate of enrollment in high school rose between 2012 and 2017, while it remained stable among young whites and those of Asian descent. The outcome was a reduction in the distance between the racial groups regarding access to basic education at the proper age. Between 2017 and 2022, the indicator rose in the two racial groups, reaching 80% among young whites and those of Asian descent, and 68.9% among young Blacks. As a result, in the period covered by Figure 2, the ratio of the net rate of enrollment dropped from 1.37 to 1.16 between the racial groups. The indicator relating to household income per capita behaved similarly, remaining stagnant among young people from households with a higher per capita income, while rising significantly among young people from poor households. This meant that the ratio of the indicator dropped from 1.97 to 1.38 over the ten-year period.

Despite the inequalities being still notable, Figure 2 confirms an ongoing process of increased access to secondary education and a drop in the age-grade distortion, with positive effects on the groups in the worst positions of the educational strata. But making the picture more complex, sociodemographic variables have effects that often overlap on youth trajectories. To understand the changes and continuity of the

2. Proportion of individuals enrolled in secondary education or who have concluded basic education.

FIGURE 3

*Average marginal effects of variables selected in the engagement in secondary education, for young people aged between 15 and 17 (2012-2022)*



Note: Confidence intervals calculated for a significance of 95%.

Source: PNAD-C (2012-2022). Own calculations.

educational inequalities, we implemented a logistic regression model to calculate the likelihood of a young person aged between fifteen and seventeen being enrolled in or having completed secondary education.

Aimed at dialoguing with the sociological studies focused on educational inequalities (Silva and Hasenbalg, 2000; Ribeiro, 2011; Marteleto, Carvalhaes and Hubert, 2012; Brito, 2017), as explanatory variables we included race, sex, home location (urban or rural), the natural logarithm of the household income per capita, the household composition, the number of siblings under the age of 17 in the household, and mother's schooling level. The results are controlled by Federal State and the age of the young person<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, the calculations recognize the complex sample plan of the PNAD-C and are based on an unconditional model of transition, which includes those individuals who completed elementary school as well as those who did not and who are lagging their correct school grade or do not attend school<sup>4</sup>.

Appendix 1 provides data on the coefficients of the model, while Figure 3 presents the average marginal effects of the explanatory variables in each year of the PNAD-C. The average marginal effect informs the average difference in the probability of the dependent variable, in percentage points, when each explanatory variable is altered in all units of the sample and the other indicators remain constant.

Even when controlling by means of variables related to social origin, home location and socioeconomic conditions, young Black people have less chance of entering and remaining in high school at the proper age. This evidence updates the findings of Brito (2014) concerning educational statistics for the period 1970-2010. The study identified a decrease in racial inequalities in elementary school attendance, but a persistent feature in secondary education, which led the author to characterize this educational level as a bottleneck in the trajectories pursued by young Blacks.

In 2012, the color variable exercised a negative and significant effect on the chances of young Blacks enrolling in secondary education, a situation which ceased in 2017. This trend is in line with the descriptive findings. What is surprising, however, is that the racial inequalities grew again in 2022. In the final year of the replication of the model, regardless of the differences in social origin, income and residential location, the likelihood of a young Black person being in high school at

3. The use of age as a control variable is a usual procedure in studies on educational transitions (Marteleto, Carvalhaes and Hubert, 2012; Brito, 2017), considering that the likelihood of enrollment is heterogeneous in an age group.

4. An unconditional model considers a full cohort, without prior school progression filters. This means that the unconditional models identify higher inequalities than conditional models (Marteleto, Carvalhal and Hubert, 2012), which would include only those young people who complete elementary school.

the proper age was 3.6 p.p. lower than that experienced by a young white person. Although this effect is less than that recorded in 2012 (-5.4 p.p.), the phenomenon indicates a setback at the end of the time series, to the detriment of the educational opportunities of young Black people. The differences between the years are statistically significant for a  $p$ -value  $< 0.1$ <sup>5</sup>.

The difference between men and women, meanwhile, drops continually in the series, with statistically significant changes for a  $p$ -value  $< 0.05$ . In 2022, the chances of enrollment in secondary education remained higher among females aged fifteen to seventeen than among males (8.8 p.p.). It is worth remembering that the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a reversal of the gender hiatus in secondary education, to the benefit of the female population (Beltrão and Alves, 2009). In the period covered by Figure 2, the net enrollment rates remained higher among girls aged fifteen to seventeen, but boys experienced an important advance during the ten-year period, cutting the distance between them and the girls.

The factor involving residence in a rural zone did not alter the likelihood of enrollment in secondary education in any of the aforementioned years. If school engagement is unequal among young people from urban and rural areas (Simielli and Moraes, 2022), by controlling the results using other variables, the residential location did not present statistically significant effects. The inclusion of the household income and the Federal States (whose territorial inequalities are notable, regarding rural/urban distribution) certainly performs an important role in mitigating the effect of the residential location on the likelihood of enrolling in secondary education. On the other hand, it is surprising that the natural logarithm of household income per capita, which had a positive effect in 2012, lost importance in 2017 but regained statistical significance in 2022<sup>6</sup>. The results indicate a possible pendular movement over the decade. If this tendency were to be confirmed, it would represent a deterioration of the relative position of poor adolescents in the educational tiering.

Considering the household composition, the study performed by Ribeiro (2011) underlined the negative effect of single-parenting and the number of siblings on the chances of educational transition. This trend had been observed in the final years of basic education, given how resources are divided up in poor residences. In a scenario of little resources and insufficient socialization policies for care activities,

5. The same model was implemented in mutually excluding observations. Hence, the significance test 'z', in the numerator, includes the difference between the average marginal effects; and in the denominator, the square root of the sum of the standard errors taken to the second power (Mize, Doan and Long, 2019).

6. The difference between 2012 and 2017 is statistically significant for a  $p$ -value  $< 0.01$ , as is the difference between 2012 and 2022.

the presence of children and adolescents can impair the ability of the families to guarantee progress through school. In our model, having siblings under the age of 17 reduces the chances of a young person attending high school at the proper age, even though this effect did drop during the period<sup>7</sup>. The results indicate conflicts over distribution and the division of reproductive labor in the households that have a high dependency ratio, hindering school enrollment and attendance.

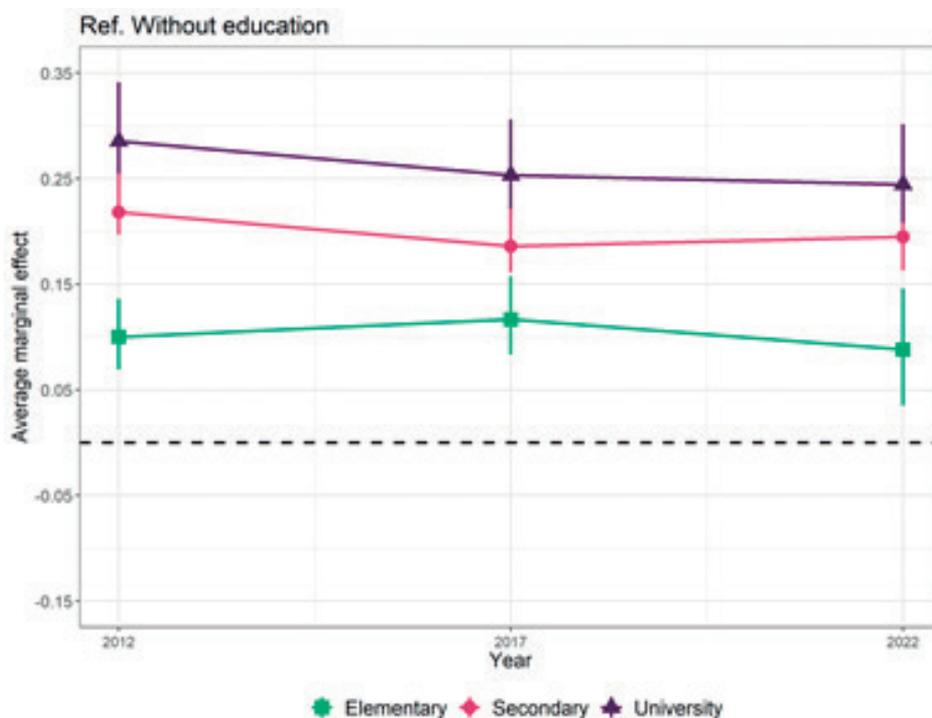
The effect of single parenting raises doubts. In 2012 and 2017, the chances of enrollment in secondary education were 7.3 p.p. lower among young people living in single-parent households (the majority of which were headed by women). This effect decreased significantly in 2022 to a  $p$ -value  $< 0.05$ . Such a significant variation in a short period may well have been caused by contextual changes in both the family life and the teaching systems. The end of the series was notable not only for restrictions of young people's insertion into the labor market (Costa, Barbosa and Hecksher, 2022), but also for the adoption of less rigid school attendance and progression criteria during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is likely that the possibility of school attendance increased during the period of distance teaching, with advances in the formal enrollment of young people living in vulnerable households and subject to greater imbalances in the distribution of productive and reproductive labor. It is also possible that the results are pointing to changes in the association between the domestic structure, household income, and engagement in basic education. Considering this paper scope, further studies should investigate this phenomenon.

Finally, Figure 4 identifies the effect of the mother's education on the likelihood of enrollment in secondary education for young people aged between fifteen and seventeen. This is the most important variable for the transmission of intergenerational inequalities, in line with the studies dedicated to family mediation between the individual and modern institutions. The sociological studies underline the role of the mother's education in the transmission of resources, values, and knowledge that are necessary for the participation of the young people in educational institutions. Depending upon the results, such role reveals the reproduction of social positions or the existence of opportunities for intergenerational mobility (Picanço and Morais, 2016).

Silva and Hasenbalg (2000) found that the increased access to basic education, between 1970 and 1990, was followed by a weakening of social determinations in the academic achievements of young people. This positive change did not, however, affect the influence of the mother's level of schooling on academic achievement. Marteleto, Carvalhal and Hubert (2012) implemented an unconditional model

7. The change is statistically significant for a  $p$ -value  $< 0.05$ .

FIGURE 4  
*Effect of mother's schooling on the likelihood of engagement in secondary education, for young people aged 15 to 17 (2012-2022)*



Note: Confidence intervals calculated for a significance of 95%.

Source: PNAD-C (2012-2022). Own calculations.

of transition and identified a reduction, between 1992 and 2007, of the effect of mother's schooling on high school attendance. Despite some specific transformations over time, the studies stand together in affirming that social origin remains the most important variable in predicting school progression (Brito, 2017).

Figure 4 attests to the continuity of this phenomenon, since mother's schooling exercises an incremental effect on the chances of engagement in secondary education at the proper age. By comparing the results of the same category year by year, the differences between the average marginal effects are not statistically significant, thus denoting the continuity of the influence of social origin on the access to educational opportunities. In 2022, when compared to a young person whose mother did not receive formal schooling, a young person whose mother graduated university experiences a 24.4 p.p. greater chance of attending high school. In the other levels of education, the effects are less notable, but still significant<sup>8</sup>.

8. The differences between university education and secondary school are not statistically significant.

This topic addressed elements that condition the outlook of personal achievements that are within the reach of the individuals. Certain phenomena have been consolidated in Brazil, including the improvement of attendance and school education among young people. It is in these terms that the “prolonged coexistence” with the school environment can be understood, since the beginning of the century, as an important experience among young people from poor backgrounds (Peregrino, 2009). Regardless of how much the economic scenario deteriorates, we can conjecture that poorer families make more of an effort for their children to keep studying. To this we can add the provision of social welfare policies, set forth by the 1988 Constitution and developed over the subsequent decades, focused on meeting the essential needs during the transition to adulthood.

On the other hand, the age-grade distortion is still a challenge to educational policies. The descriptive and inferential data point to systematic inequalities in school access and flow in secondary education, some of which are almost stable (mother’s level of education) or affected by setbacks between 2017 and 2022 (racial inequalities). Schooling is a founding experience for the youth condition, but the position of the individuals in the educational system remains bound to the “place” they occupy in the social world. This determines, or at least significantly affects, their chances of gaining access to material and symbolic resources.

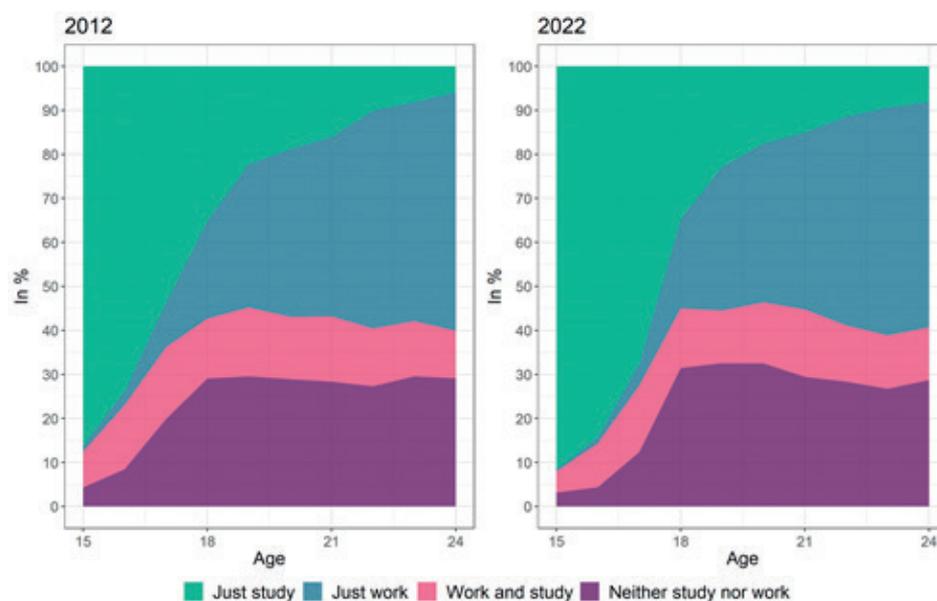
### Forms of articulation between study and work

Over recent decades, children and adolescents have progressively moved away from the labor market (Abramo, Venturi and Corrochano, 2020). Coming of age figures as a pivotal moment in personal trajectories, when young people enter higher education and/or begin to pursue paid occupations. The connection of adolescence to studies is the result of the expansion of the provision of public schooling, the creation of income transfer policies, and the extension of the right to basic education (Gonzalez, 2009). However, young people’s trajectories are not entirely predictable, since they depend upon a structure of socioeconomic opportunities and the conditions available for access to school and work (Guimarães, Brito and Comin, 2020).

To address this matter, Figure 5 presents the education and work indicators by age, comparing the years 2012 and 2022. Among young people aged between fifteen and seventeen, sole dedication to study is the most common experience, a scenario that has become more established over the decade. For those individuals aged be-

When we compare the average marginal effects of these two categories with the reference group, the differences are statistically significant for a  $p$ -valor  $< 0.01$ .

FIGURE 5  
*Study and work among young people, by age (2012-2022)*



Source: PNAD-C (2012-2022). Own calculations.

tween 18 and 24, the articulations between education and work are more varied, with young that just works and those who neither study nor work predominating.

During the 2012-2022 period, the proportion of young people who do not study dropped in the group aged between fifteen and seventeen, but increased in the following age group. For young people aged between 18 and 24, the indicator had decreased in the 1990s and 2000s (Costa, Rocha and Silva, 2018), this being a “novelty” of the last decade. Those individuals who neither study nor work generally suffer long-term negative consequences in their professional careers (Rocha *et al.*, 2020). In fact, this issue should be interpreted considering the low expectations of personal achievement and the refractory character of the structure of socioeconomic opportunities.

Full dedication to studies strengthened during the period, especially among adolescents, but also among young people aged 22 to 24. The rise of the indicator in this group is due to the expansion of higher education and the inclusion of young people without basic education in the school system. Other changes included a reduction in the number of young people who only work, and a weakening, in the case of individuals aged fifteen to seventeen, of the connection between study and work.

While educational engagement stems from deeper social changes, such as the normative role of the family and the State, economic activity involves a strong cyclical component. The consequences are visible among young people, who find themselves pressured by family demands to generate income, and a labor market that is hostile to workers with few qualifications and professional experience. Not surprisingly, for young people aged between 18 and 24, unemployment and inactivity rates increased during the 2014-2016 economic crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic (Corseuil, Franca and Poloponsky, 2020; Rocha and Vaz, 2020), which led to a decrease of 1.4 p.p. in the employment level between 2012 and 2022.

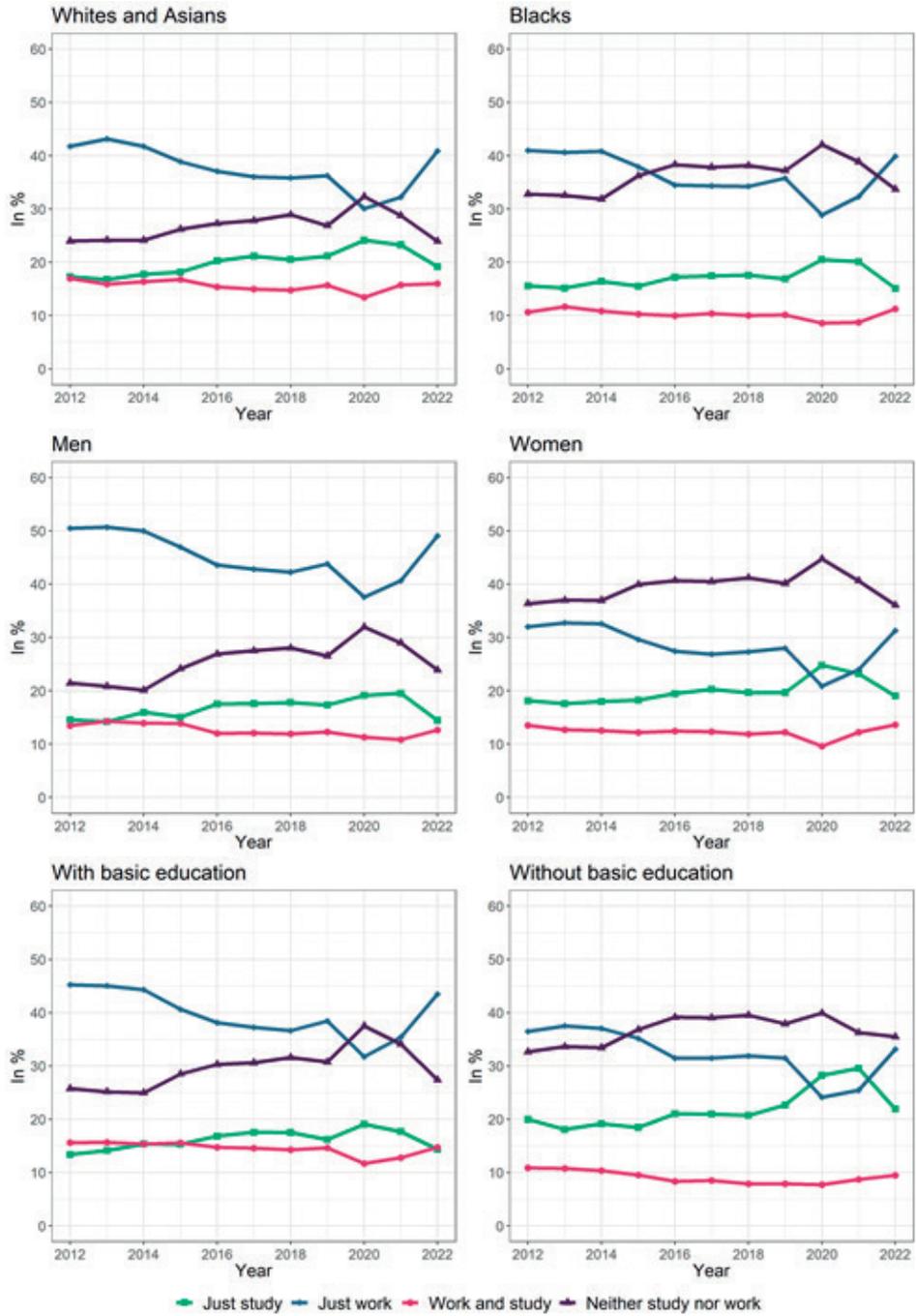
As of the legal age, young people tend to participate in increasingly diverse social environments. This means that the group aged between 18 and 24 are especially revealing in terms of socioeconomic inequalities. Figure 6 focuses on this age group and presents the study and work situations, according to different divisions. Over the last decade, the proportion of young people working dropped, regardless of the individual characteristics and/or their belonging to groups. The level of occupation started growing again between 2020 and 2022, which led to a rise in the number of young people who just work.

Through until 2020, the proportion of young people between 18 and 24 years of age who neither studied nor worked increased in general, with a similar drop in the proportion of young people who just work. This trend was inverted between 2020 and 2022, when the Brazilian economics started to pick up. On the other hand, the proportion of young people who only studied increased through until 2020, but started dropping once again between 2020 and 2022. Education appears to be an established experience for some groups, while the changes over the course of the time series result in their insertion into the labor market.

The proportion of individuals who neither study nor work is greater among young Black people than among young whites and individuals of Asian descent (in 2022, the figures were, respectively, 33.7% and 23.9%). The educational engagement of young whites and of Asian descent is greater than that observed among young Blacks, which is expressed both in the proportion of young people who only study (in 2022, 19.2% against 15.1%) and in the group of individuals who both work and study (16% against 11.3%). This phenomenon can be attributed to the greater contingent of young whites and of Asian descent enrolled in higher education<sup>9</sup>. University education is still a critical point in youth trajectories, despite the creation of programs of inclusion and continuity for young Blacks from poor

9. In 2002, the net rate of enrollment in higher education was 34.5% among young whites and of Asian descent aged between 18 and 24, but just 18.1% among young Blacks.

FIGURE 6  
*Study and work by groups of young people aged 18 to 24 (2012-2022)*



Source: PNAD-C (2012-2022). Own calculations.

backgrounds that began in the 2000s (Brito, 2017)<sup>10</sup>. Entry into higher education remains bound to social origin (Senkevics, Carvalhaes and Ribeiro, 2022), which contributes to the low rate of educational engagement among young Black people aged between 18 and 24.

In the case of young people who did not complete high school, the growth of the group that only studies was balanced by a drop in the number of young people who only work. This data highlights the importance of Adult Education since many individuals did not complete the basic education. However, among young people aged between 18 and 24 who neither study nor work, the rate of conclusion of high school jumped from 46.9% to 63.1% in the decade. Given the increase in basic education, the policies concerning access and continuity in higher education, as well as the policies relating to insertion into the labor market, are increasingly more decisive.

The study conducted by Costa and Ulyssea (2014) demonstrated that the group of those who neither study nor work were composed by fewer women between the 1990s and 2000s. Probable causes include changes in the family structure and an improvement in the conditions involved in female economic participation. In line with this trend, the proportion of women composing this group fell from 62.6% to 59.6% between 2012 and 2022<sup>11</sup>. Beginning in 2014, this phenomenon unfolded during a labor market crisis, when the employment level fell significantly among young men.

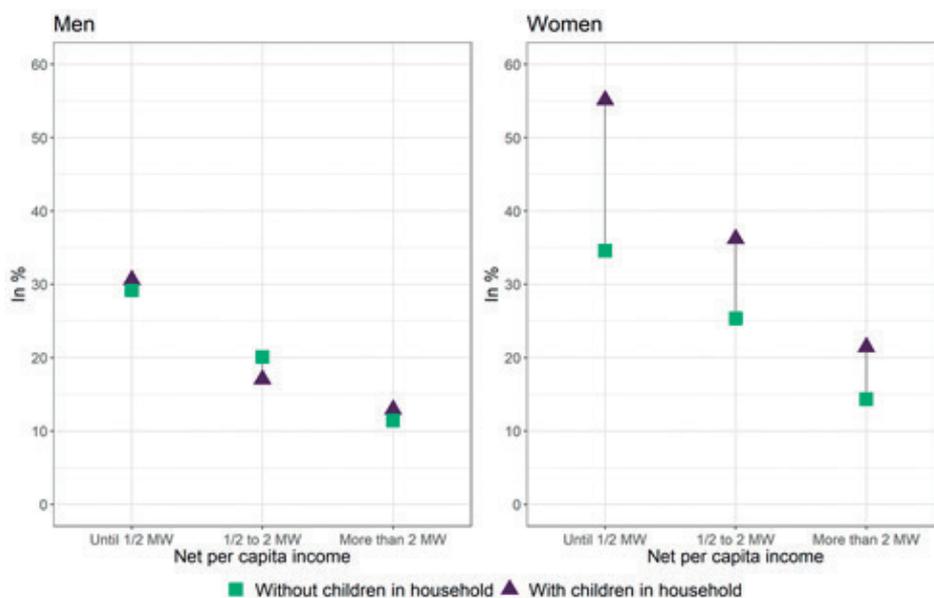
Among young Black people and young women, the prevalence of the group that neither studies nor works is the result of low prospects for insertion into the labor market, to which we can add the overload faced by women in performing domestic chores and care work (Camarano *et al.*, 2006; Sposito, Souza and Silva, 2018). The phenomenon reflects a particular articulation between the organization of the productive system and the family dynamics that guide behavior and personal expectations.

If this condition raises concern in the public debate, it is also true that the group involving those who neither study nor work is heterogeneous. In the case of the differences observed between men and women, those individuals who are excluded from the education system and do not have paid work are stratified between those young men who are unemployed and discouraged, on the one hand, and young women who are engaged in unpaid reproductive work, on the other (Rocha and Vaz, 2020).

10. In the decade between 2012 and 2022, the net rate of enrollment in higher education rose from 28.9% to 34.5% among young whites and of Asian descent, but from just 11.6% to 18.1% among young Black people.

11. Costa and Ulyssea (2014) investigated the group that did not study, work or look for work. If we consider the inactive individuals who do not study, the proportion of women also drops: from 71.7% to 65.6% between 2012 and 2022.

FIGURE 7  
*Proportion of young people aged 18 to 24 who neither study nor work, by sex, net household income per capita, and household arrangement (2022)*



MW refers to the minimum-wage.

Source: PNAD-C (2022). Own calculations.

To look at the problem from another angle, Figure 7 presents the proportion of young people aged 18 to 24 who do not study or work, here based upon the intersection of gender, net household per capita income<sup>12</sup> and household arrangements: those with children under 12 and others without children in residence.

For women, the proportion of young people not working or studying is greater in poorer households. When we compare those young people who reside with and without children, the differences are statistically significant ( $p$ -value < 0.01) only for women in households with a net household per capita income of less than two minimum wages. Furthermore, even though the differences between men and women are relevant when we look at households without children, the female indicator increases disproportionately in households with children.

The engagement in reproductive work, experienced by women who reside with children, hinders their dedication of time and energy to “external” activities. This applies to both participation in the labor market and to engagement in educational

12. The net household income does not include the income of the individual themselves. The use of this variable is due to the fact that the personal income would increase (and, therefore, be correlated with) the household income.

institutions. The phenomenon does not determine the male condition, since men are less affected by family care obligations. In poor households, the difficulty in accessing public care services, added to the impossibility of contracting private services, explains the inequalities between household arrangements. This means that the offering of public childcare is essential in providing poor young people with the possibility of studying and participating in the labor market, an argument that dialogues with the literature on costs of reproductive work in female trajectories (Ramos, Aguas and Furtado, 2011; Guiginsky and Wajnman, 2019).

In this topic, we discussed how the articulation between education and work has changed over the last decade, considering the typical experiences of youth exclusion. While there is a certain convergence between young people aged fifteen to seventeen, for whom the educational stratification is concentrated on the characteristics of the flow and on the division between the public and private systems, for young people between 18 and 24, the obstacles continue to be the low rates of entry into higher education, the difficulties of professional insertion, and the pressures that push them into productive and reproductive work. This is a scenario in which the advances in basic schooling were not followed by better positioning of young people in the productive system.

## Discussion

Different situational and structural changes have affected the articulation between work, education, and family life for young people in Brazil. For the fifteen to seventeen age group, access to educational institutions and the exclusive dedication to their studies has improved since the return to democracy, due to the massification of school attendance. We saw the continuity of this process in the decade between 2012 and 2022, evident in the increase of the net enrollment rate in high school. Furthermore, this phenomenon continued despite the impoverishment of Brazilian families during the economic crises that began in the 2010s. Educational inequalities are still significant, however, when we compare the racial groups and household income per capita.

The results of a logistic regression model indicate that, for young people aged fifteen to seventeen, mother's schooling is the most important variable in predicting engagement in secondary education at the proper age. The racial inequalities, meanwhile, receded between 2012 and 2017, but regained statistical significance in 2022. Based upon this evidence (including a possible pendular shift in income inequalities), further studies could investigate the effects of dropping out and the so-called "fail culture" in the fluctuation of inequalities in enrollment and school

flow. Other topics also deserve attention, such as the role of youth sociability in school engagement and the fact that, besides formally dropping out of basic education, many young people experience irregular flow and poor school performance.

Among the variables involved in the household composition, the number of siblings continued to exercise statistically significant and negative effects during the period, while single parenting lost significance in 2022. We can infer that this phenomenon arises from contextual changes in family dynamics and in the organization of teaching systems, especially the easing up of school monitoring during the Covid-19 pandemic. Future investigations could test this hypothesis and examine the relationship, which is at times unclear, between family life and school activities, underlining how participation in secondary education has been affected by socio-economic changes and decisions in education management.

For young people aged 18 to 24, the inequalities are reflected in the possible combinations between work and study. While basic education advanced from 2012 to 2022, entry into higher education still presented limits, above all among young Black people. The chances of insertion into the labor market vary depending upon economic cycles, and after successive crises, the employment level fell among young people aged between 18 and 24. Some of the consequences were the increased proportion of young people neither studying nor working through until 2020, a notably tendency among young Blacks, women, and those without basic education. Next, an economic growth allowed for an improvement in the youth employment level between 2020 and 2022.

The paper also highlighted that the combined exclusion of studies and work is a typical experience of poor women who live with children. The household composition does not affect men, meaning that the gender inequality is higher in households with children. For sociological studies of the youth, the most important message is the need for us to recognize the household as a unit of analysis. For public policies, there is a demand to develop multi-sectoral policies, which intersect income transfers with investments in different schooling levels. It is also vital to recognize the role of public childcare in the socialization of care activities and, consequently, in female engagement in educational institutions and the labor market.

The analysis of different indicators allows us to establish that an aprioristic youth condition does not exist, but rather modes of existence which, depending upon the position of the individuals in institutions and networks of inter-personal relations, define their rights and responsibilities (Guimarães, 2005). At the beginning of this paper, we established that two temporalities define the youth condition. On the one hand, combining the long-term transformations, one can see a gradual consolidation of the role of the young student since the return of democracy, even though school

engagement at the proper age depends upon the intergenerational transmission of social opportunities. The advances were less visible in the group aged 18 to 24, given the selectivity of higher education in Brazil and the fact that, for this age group, the positional character of the education is more evident, depending not only on absolute values of academic training, but also on the relative benefits of schooling (comparing the individuals with each other) for insertion into the labor market.

On the other hand, short-term and cyclical transformations tend to maximize youth inequalities, when young Black people without a basic education face additional difficulties during economic crises. The problem of professional insertion follows the formation of the Brazilian labor market and, as a result, many young people are excluded from the principal sources of material and symbolic resources in market societies. During economic crises, the typical chances of economic participation drop substantially, which is not noted in school attendance. In other words, the cyclical transformations are manifested in the occupational trajectories and condition the chances of economic participation, while school attendance is defined by long-term changes in the offer of basic education and the interface between families and the education system.

Some issues could be addressed in more depth. Brazil has experienced a fast demographic transition, with the youth increasingly losing space in the population structure. This phenomenon is redefining the position of young people in the productive system and the reach of social security policies. Further studies should therefore investigate how the youth indicators on education and work are associated with demographic transformations, especially the population-ageing and its impacts on the labor market dynamics and the Brazilian welfare system. Other relevant issues are the role of the household composition in the mediation between the individual and the productive system in different economic cycles, as well as the characteristics of the occupations available to young people. Whatever the case, this paper has contributed by providing a review of the youth conditions over the last ten years, which supports an agenda of investigations and public policies.

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## APPENDIX 1

*Coefficients of the regression model (2012-2022)*

	2012	2017	2022
<i>Race (ref. Whites)</i>			
Blacks	-0.293*** (0.066)	-0.127 (0.08)	-0.237* (0.097)
<i>Sex (ref. Men)</i>			
Women	0.784*** (0.059)	0.683*** (0.069)	0.576*** (0.086)
<i>Location of residence (ref. Urban)</i>			
Rural	-0.066 (0.07)	0.025 (0.075)	0.038 (0.096)
<i>Log of the household income per capita</i>			
	0.210*** (0.037)	0.048 (0.035)	0.134** (0.044)
<i>Siblings aged under 17 in the household (ref. No siblings)</i>			
With siblings	-0.179*** (0.025)	-0.225*** (0.029)	-0.087* (0.044)
<i>Household arrangement (ref. Couples)</i>			
Single parents	-0.393*** (0.08)	-0.387*** (0.078)	-0.154 (0.093)
<i>Mother's education (ref. No schooling)</i>			
Primary School	0.484*** (0.082)	0.584*** (0.086)	0.458** (0.149)
High school	1.119*** (0.078)	0.981*** (0.086)	1.136*** (0.11)
Higher education	1.557*** (0.146)	1.439*** (0.145)	1.155*** (0.169)
Intercept	-9.768***	-11.275***	-12.685***

Note: Results controlled by Federal State (UF) and the age of the young person. Standard errors in brackets.

\*\*\* p < 0.001, \*\* p < 0.01, \* p < 0.05.

Source: PNAD-C (2012-2022). Own calculations.

### **Abstract**

#### *Youth, education, and work in Brazil (2012-2022)*

By analyzing PNAD-C microdata (2012-2022), this article investigates educational opportunities and access to work among young people. The net enrollment rate in secondary education increased among young people aged 15 to 17 years, but a transition model indicates that racial inequalities in access to secondary education grew between 2017 and 2022, while the mother's education conditions the basic education at proper age. Furthermore, the role of the young student was consolidated among adolescents aged 15 to 17 years, but for the group aged 18 to 24 years, exclusion from studies and work prevails among young black and female students. Finally, living with children is decisive for access to opportunities among poor women.

Keywords: Youth; Education; Work; Inequalities.

### **Resumo**

#### *Juventude, educação e trabalho no Brasil (2012-2022)*

Ao analisar os microdados da PNAD-C (2012-2022), este artigo investiga as oportunidades educacionais e de acesso ao trabalho entre os jovens. A taxa líquida de matrícula no ensino médio avançou entre os jovens com 15 a 17 anos, mas um modelo de transições indica que as desigualdades raciais no acesso ao ensino médio aumentaram entre 2017 e 2022, enquanto a escolaridade da mãe condiciona a formação básica na idade adequada. Ademais, o papel do jovem-estudante se consolidou entre os adolescentes com 15 a 17 anos, mas, para o grupo com 18 a 24 anos, a exclusão dos estudos e do trabalho prevalece entre os jovens negros e do sexo feminino. Por fim, a residência com crianças é decisiva para o acesso a oportunidades entre as mulheres pobres.

Palavras-chave: Juventude; Educação; Trabalho; Desigualdades.

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