

CASE STUDY REPORT

BELÉM – PARÁ

BRAZIL



City	Belém, Pará, Brazil
Organization	Instituto Nenuca de Desenvolvimento Sustentável - INSEA
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Introduction and methodology

SYSTEMIQ developed a survey with the aim of evaluating the subsistence income of recyclable material collectors and also identifying the income capable of satisfying the basic needs for a dignified life.

The purpose of this report is to present the survey carried out in the municipality of Belém/PA, conducted by the Nenuca Institute for Sustainable Development – INSEA. To gather information, INSEA's technical team relied on secondary data (using reliable sources) and primary data (structured interviews based on a questionnaire made available by SYSTEMIQ).

According to the last census (2022), Belém/PA had a population of 1,303,403 people, a demographic density of 1,230.25 inhabitants/km²; Average monthly salary of formal workers [2022], 3.6 minimum wages; Percentage of employed population [2022], 36.40%; Percentage of the population with nominal monthly per capita income of up to 1/2 minimum wage [2010], 39%; Municipal Human Development Index (IDHM) [2010] 0.746.¹

According to SNIS/Ministry of Cities (2022), the urban population of Belém/PA served with door-to-door selective collection is 32,994 people. The municipality had 10 waste picker organizations and 219 members.²

To collect primary data, the team initially identified 5 waste picker organizations in different working conditions for a more diverse understanding of reality, 2 in more structured conditions (equipped warehouses providing better working conditions) and 3 in more precarious conditions (without inadequate work equipment and structures). Contacts were then made with the leaders of these organizations to present the research objectives. After expressing interest in participating in the study, the technical team interviewed 12 women and 8 men in person, totaling 20 waste pickers who work in 5 associations and cooperatives in Belém/PA.

The survey also covered another 20 independent workers who collect on the streets and sell directly to scrap dealers and scrap yards. After presenting the objectives, all people agreed to participate in the research. Eight women and 12 men who work individually on the streets were interviewed. The interviews took place in person at their workplaces.

In total, 40 workers were interviewed (20 organized in associations and cooperatives and 20 independent) in the municipality of Belém/PA between the months of June and July/2024.

In order to qualify the study, the technical team interviewed two self-employed workers to compare information about decent income. A woman who works as a manicurist and a man who works as a bricklayer agreed to participate in the research and their data will be presented in topic B, which deals with Subsistence Income.

¹Source: <https://cidades.ibge.gov.br/brasil/pa/belem/panorama>

²Source: <http://app4.mdr.gov.br/serieHistorica/#> Accessed on 07/16/2024.

A – Establishing a baseline

Collectors who work in the solid waste area were interviewed. The collector with the longest experience in collecting has been working for 40 years, that is, he started working in 1984 and the collector who joined this area most recently was in 2024.

The main reason that led people interviewed to work with solid waste was unemployment.

Main types of workers surveyed: 20 workers organized in a cooperative/association and 20 independent workers.

The main sources of waste collection for collectors who are members of associations/cooperatives are: commerce, companies and homes. The source of collection for independent collectors is materials disposed on the streets, illegal waste disposal points and homes.

Of the total number of interviewees, 35 reported having the activity of collecting recyclable materials as their only source of income and 05 collectors reported having another income activity.

Regarding the days worked, 28 said they worked 6 days a week, 07 worked 5 days a week, 03 said they worked 7 days a week and 02 reported working 3 days a week.

Regarding working hours: 19 collectors work 8 hours a day, 8 collectors work 10 hours a day, 3 work 9 hours a day, 02 work 7 hours a day, 2 work 12 hours a day, 2 work 18 hours a day and 4 work less than 5 hours a day.

Regarding access to vehicles (human-powered carts, animal-powered carts, motorcycles, tricycles, vans and trucks): 31 reported having access to vehicles, 20 of which were co-owners (cooperative/association).

All interviewees reported having no obligations/debts with their buyers.

Main reasons that limit income: lack of equipment and inadequate infrastructure .

37 collectors reported having faced food insecurity in the last 12 months, 06 reported not having safe housing, 27 reported not having access to basic sanitation.

Regarding staying away from home due to work, 04 eventually sleep in the collectors' organization due to tiredness, distance, precarious urban mobility and very bad traffic.

In relation to education: 01 reported studying a degree in administration at night, 01 stated having technical training, 01 said he was studying vocational education to try to change profession. 27 reported being unable to study due to lack of documents, low or no education and lack of time.

B - Subsistence Income Estimate

B1 – Research on Healthy Diets

According to DIEESE (2024), the basic food basket in Belém/PA is equivalent to R\$695.58,³ that is, 53% of the national minimum wage, however it does not include a diet considered healthy. For the World Health Organization (WHO), a diet rich in fiber, proteins and carbohydrates must contain fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains and proteins.⁴

The price of a meal with adequate nutritional values costs an average of R\$43.00 reais in the city of Belém/PA.

The collectors interviewed spend an average of R\$28.00 reais per day and R\$560.00 reais per month on food. According to the Anker methodology, it is advisable to withdraw 30% of the expected profit from the sale of ready-to-eat food. **The resulting value is R\$19.60.**

For the manicurist interviewed, her monthly food cost is R\$1,800.00 reais while the bricklayer spends R\$700.00 reais per month.

B2 - Decent Housing Survey

The INSEA technical team researched rental values in 10 neighborhoods located in the central and peripheral regions of Belém/PA. The average rental value for two-bedroom properties is R\$1,940.50 reais.⁵

B3 – Healthcare Costs

The collectors interviewed reported that they access the SUS - Unified Health System. This is a public policy in Brazil that guarantees all Brazilians the right to free health services for the treatment of all diseases, from pregnancy and throughout of life.

It is worth noting that, according to the Federal Council of Medicine (CFM), investments in public health actions and services in Belém/PA in 2017 per inhabitant was R\$247.48 .⁶ A reality that clashes when compared to other capitals.

The low public investment, combined with the slowness of services, justifies the precariousness of the health system, forcing the most vulnerable population to resort to clinics which, although private, are popular, with more affordable prices.

In this way, any expenses with medicines are not significant as the SUS, despite the slowness, provides the service free of charge to users.

B4 – Education Costs

³ <https://www.dieese.org.br/analisecestabasica/2024/202406cestabasica.pdf> accessed on 07/15/2024.

⁴ <https://www.paho.org/pt/topicos/alimentacao-saudavel> accessed on 07/15/2024.

⁵ <https://www.olx.com.br/imoveis/aluguel/estado-pa/regiao-de-belem> accessed on 07/15/2024.

⁶ <https://cremepa.org.br/noticias/gasto-com-saude-publica> (15/07/2024) time: 15:57 local time

Regarding education expenses, 39 of the collectors interviewed reported that they do not have these costs, however, the expenses for their children's education are not significant because the education system is free. 1 interviewee reported spending on education in the amount of R\$560.00.

B5 – Costs of decent work

To detail the costs of decent work, INSEA relied on price research recently carried out with the main safety equipment used by collectors' associations and cooperatives. The following table shows the unit cost of gloves for collecting and sorting recyclable materials, caps, pants, shirts and boots.

Uniform and PPE Kit Price - Average price				
Qty.	Item	Value	Duration	Monthly value
1	Pair of collection and sorting gloves	R\$ 9.00	15 days	R\$ 18.00
1	Flat cap	R\$ 13.94	semi-annual	R\$ 2.32
1	Denim pants	R\$ 66.90	quarterly	R\$ 22.30
1	Short sleeve knit shirt	R\$ 29.77	bimonthly	R\$ 14.89
1	Long sleeve knit shirt	R\$ 34.90	quarterly	R\$ 11.63
1	Pair of boots	R\$ 99.99	semi-annual	R\$ 16.67
	Average kit value	R\$ 254.50		R\$ 85.81

INSEA survey, February/March 2024.

Another cost for decent work is transportation. Local bus ticket prices are set by municipal governments. According to the news page Neon.com.br (2024), in **Belém**, the capital of Pará, the average cost is **R\$4.00**, that is, the worker spends an average of R\$8.00 on daily commuting from their home to the workplace.⁷

B6 – Savings

Savings are estimated at 10% of final living income.

C – Compiling Reference Income

The reference value consists of the nationally defined minimum wage, that is, R\$1,412.00 reais.

⁷ Source:

<https://neon.com.br/aprenda/financas-pessoais/quanto-custa-a-passagem-de-onibus/#Quanto-custa-a-passagem-de-onibus-nas-capitais-br-asileiras> – Access on 07/14/2024

According to the list of occupations and salaries published on the website www.salario.com.br based on official data from Novo CAGED, workers in the waste sector working in the city of Belém/PA earn an average of R\$2,145.09 for a 44-hour working week.⁸

The average monthly income of the self-employed workers interviewed, that is, the manicurist and the bricklayer who work in the city of Belém/PA, is R\$2,475.35 and R\$2,502.80 reais respectively.

Despite this, the value of the monthly income of waste pickers who work in the collection of recyclable materials in Belém/PA draws attention. Monthly, the highest amount received for work is R\$2,600 reais, while the lowest amount is R\$200.00. How can a person have a dignified life when their income corresponds to 14% of the minimum wage?

A rural worker earns an average of R\$1,419.79 in the city of Belém⁹.

Civil construction workers earn an average of R\$3,105.14/month in the city of Belém¹⁰.

Observations and lessons learned

The interviews with independent collectors initially caused surprise because they never had any institutional support. In this sense, the study placed them in a prominent position because in addition to the approach and dialogue, empathetic listening awakened in the workers the recognition of the importance of their work and interest in collaborating.

In this sense, the study of a decent income must point to values compatible with the work that has been carried out for at least 40 years in Belém. A decent income must consider the mental health of these workers whose self-esteem is low and are not even recognized or valued, despite the relevance social and environmental aspects of their work.

Another aspect that the income study should consider refers to unhealthy conditions resulting from the poor quality of the material discarded by a society that does not properly separate its waste and is unaware or blind to these workers.

The study must include payment for environmental services, since tons of materials are correctly destined for recycling industries, moving the entire production chain and preserving the environment by recovering the raw material.

Finally, all these aspects combined can motivate public managers to hire services in this category, as in addition to carrying out selective collection, they act in sorting, environmental education, social mobilization and, if properly valued, can encourage and motivate new jobs.

⁸ <https://www.salario.com.br/profissao/coletor-de-lixo-cbo-514205/belem-pa/> accessed on 16/07/2024- 11:52 h

⁹ <https://www.salario.com.br/profissao/trabalhador-rural-cbo-623110/belem-pa/> accessed on 07/27/2024

¹⁰ <https://www.salario.com.br/profissao/construtor-civil-cbo-710205/belem-pa/> accessed on 07/27/2024