

CASE STUDY REPORT

BRASILIA DF

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 city of Brasília/DF, conducted by the Nenuca Institute for Sustainable Development – INSEA. To gather information, the INSEA 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), Brasília/DF had a population of 2,817,381 people, a demographic density of 489.06 inhabitants/km²; Average monthly salary of formal workers [2022]: 4.9 minimum wages; Percentage of employed population [2022]: 50.67%; Percentage of the population with nominal monthly per capita income of up to 1/2 minimum wage [2010]: 30.9%; Municipal Human Development Index (IDHM) [2010]: 0.824.¹

According to SNIS/Ministry of Cities (2020), the urban population of Brasília/DF served by door-to-door selective collection is 1,631,110 people. The municipality had 29 waste picker organizations and 1318 members.²

To collect primary data, the team initially identified 6 waste picker organizations in different working conditions for a more diverse understanding of reality, 3 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 6 associations and cooperatives in Brasília/DF.

The survey also covered another 20 independent workers. In this case, the sample size considered collectors who trade directly with collector organizations and directly with “junk iron” companies. After presenting the objectives, all people agreed to participate in the research. 11 women and 9 men who work individually on the streets or in spaces provided by waste picker organizations were interviewed. The interviews took place in person at their workplaces.

In total, 40 workers (20 organized and 20 independent) were interviewed in the city of Brasília/DF 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 domestic worker and a

¹ Source: Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics <https://www.ibge.gov.br/cidades-e-estados/df/brasilia.html> accessed on 07/15/2024

² Source: Platform on basic sanitation in Brazilian municipalities. <https://infosanbas.org.br/municipio/brasilia-df/> accessed on 07/15/2024

man who works as a tire repairman agreed to participate in the research and their data will be presented in topic B, which deals with Subsistence Income.

A – Establishing a baseline

- Year in which waste collection began: Variation between 1994 and 2023. In 2002 and 2009, a greater number of people began this activity.
- The main reasons why informal collectors started collecting waste are: necessity, lack of employment, to obtain income.
- Main types of workers surveyed: 20 workers organized in a cooperative/association and 20 independent workers.
- Main sources of waste for the workers surveyed: selective collection carried out by the association/cooperative or municipal and collection on the streets.
- 02 workers surveyed had alternative sources of income other than waste collection.
- 29 collectors work 5 days a week. 6 collectors work 6 days and 5 collectors work 7 days a week.
- 17 collectors work 6 hours a day, 13 collectors work 8 hours a day and the rest less than 5 hours a day.
- 34 collectors reported having access to vehicles, of which 14 are co-owners (cooperative).
- 19 interviewees reported that they had debts or obligations to buyers.
- Main reasons for not increasing earnings: lack of infrastructure, poor quality of material , low volume, lack of contract, little time for care work.
- An average of 54% of workers surveyed faced food insecurity and an average of 36% reported difficulty in having decent housing, healthcare and education, as can be seen in the graphs below .
- 27 interviewees reported not being able to live even a day without income.

B - Subsistence Income Estimate

B1 – Research on Healthy Diets

According to the Inter-Union Department of Statistics and Socioeconomic Studies - DIEESE (2024), recent studies showed that the costs of the basic food basket in the city of Brasília/DF had significant reductions in recent months, that is, (-2.66%).

Pesquisa Nacional da Cesta Básica de Alimentos
Custo e variação da cesta básica em 17 capitais
Brasil – abril de 2024

Capital	Valor da cesta	Variação mensal (%)	Porcentagem do Salário Mínimo Líquido	Tempo de trabalho	Variação no ano (%)	Variação em 12 meses (%)
São Paulo	822,84	1,18	63,00	128h12m	8,12	3,54
Rio de Janeiro	801,15	-1,37	61,34	124h50m	8,47	6,71
Florianópolis	781,53	-1,22	59,84	121h46m	3,04	1,58
Porto Alegre	775,63	-0,23	59,39	120h51m	1,19	-1,01
Campo Grande	732,75	0,37	56,10	114h10m	5,03	-0,68
Brasília	727,76	-2,66	55,72	113h23m	4,15	1,49
Vitória	726,82	-0,35	55,65	113h14m	5,51	3,26
Curitiba	726,64	-0,20	55,63	113h13m	4,22	4,70
Fortaleza	714,68	7,76	54,72	111h21m	13,37	6,70
Belo Horizonte	712,70	0,03	54,57	111h02m	8,60	6,54
Goiânia	701,01	-0,36	53,67	109h13m	4,73	-0,56
Belém	681,45	2,09	52,17	106h10m	5,58	3,13
Salvador	640,12	3,22	49,01	99h44m	14,14	9,24
Natal	632,23	4,44	48,41	98h31m	13,70	4,34
Recife	617,28	4,24	47,26	96h11m	14,72	6,01
João Pessoa	614,75	5,40	47,07	95h47m	13,36	5,01
Aracaju	582,11	4,84	44,57	90h42m	12,54	5,09

Fonte: DIEESE

The table shows that the value of the basic food basket in Brasília/MG is R\$727.76, equivalent to 55.72% of the national minimum wage. Despite this, eating outside the home has become more expensive, as a dish prepared in the center of Brasília costs an average of R\$30 reais, representing 85% of the minimum wage.

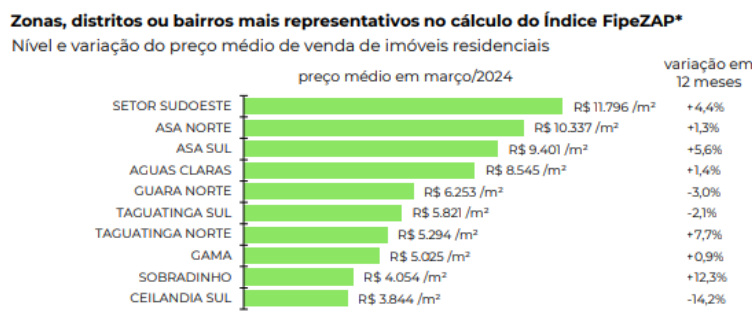
According to the Anker methodology, it is advisable to withdraw 30% of the expected profit from the sale of ready-to-eat food. **The resulting value is R\$21.00.**

When asked about the cost of food, the collectors reported an expense that varies between 200 and 1300 reais per month.

The food expense of two self-employed workers is also similar to that of waste pickers. According to the housekeeper, the monthly cost is 500 reais, while the tire repairman spends 400 reais per month.

B2 - Decent Housing Survey

According to DATAZAP (2024), Brasília/DF is the sixth capital with the most expensive properties in the country, as a result, the demand for properties around Brasília has increased. The following graph shows the variation in property prices in the pilot plan and around the capital.



Source: Fipezap-202403-residencial-venda-publico.pdf

The collectors who participated in the research reside in the central area or peripheral location, namely: Cidade Estrutural, Riacho Fundo II, Paranoá Parque and Plano Piloto (central region of Brasília). The average rental price for a two-bedroom apartment measuring 70 m² in Plano Piloto, according to real estate websites, varies between 3000 and 4000 reais per month.

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. Therefore, any expenses with medicines are not significant as the SUS, in addition to the medical service, also provides free medicines to users.

B4 – Education Costs

According to the collectors interviewed, there is no cost for education, however, expenses for children's education are not significant because the universal Brazilian education system is free and provides uniforms and school materials annually.

B5 – Costs of decent work

To detail the costs of decent work, INSEA relied on recently carried out price research on 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, which represents a significant expense for collectors. Local bus ticket prices are set by municipal governments. According to the news page Neon.com.br (2024), the **country's capital, Brasília/DF**, the cost of public transport

varies from R\$2.50 to R\$5.00 depending on the destination region, In other words, the worker spends between R\$5.00 and R\$10.00 per day on commuting.³

B6 – Savings

Savings are estimated at 10% of final living income.

C – Compiling Reference Income

The highest income found in the survey carried out among collectors in Brasília/DF is 1400 reais, while the lowest income is 400 reais per month.

The reference value consists of the nationally defined minimum wage, that is, R\$1,412.00. According to the list of occupations and salaries published on the website Salario.com.br based on official data from Novo CAGED, workers in the waste sector working in the city of Brasília/DF earn an average of R\$1,475.69 for a working day. work 44 hours a week.⁴ The average monthly income of domestic workers and rubber workers working in the city of Brasília/DF is R\$1200.00.

Rural workers earn an average of R\$1,794.71/month in the city of Belém⁵.

Civil construction workers earn an average of R\$3,763.19/month in the city of Belém⁶.

Observations and lessons learned

Among the lessons learned, we highlight the understanding that there is not much difference in the values received for the work of independent collectors when compared to members of associations/cooperatives.

Although independent collectors have a greater demand for support and infrastructure and operate in a more precarious manner, they are able to negotiate directly with buyers without expenses. This fact does not occur in cooperatives that have expenses, for example, with equipment maintenance, social security, among others. Spending on social security, although it involves a reduction in revenue, represents security for its members.

Research is essential to support inclusive public policies, however, collectors were insecure about sharing sensitive information such as income, for fear of this data being passed on to public bodies and triggering the loss of government benefits.

Recommendations:

³Source:

<https://neon.com.br/aprenda/financas-pessoais/quanto-custa-a-passage-de-onibus/#Quanto-custa-a-passage-de-onibus-nas-capitais-brasileiras> – Access on July 14, 2024 .

⁴Source: <https://www.salario.com.br/profissao/gari-cbo-514215/brasil-ia-df/>

⁵ <https://www.salario.com.br/profissao/trabalhador-rural-cbo-623110/brasil-ia-df/> accessed on 07/27/2024

⁶ <https://www.salario.com.br/profissao/construtor-civil-cbo-710205/brasil-ia-df/> accessed on 07/27/2024

We suggest that the calculation basis for decent income is aligned with the HDI of each region, due to the differences in the cost of living in each place. In Brasília, for example, collectors from associations and cooperatives spend almost 40 reais a day to travel about 30 km to their place of work, transport is very expensive.

Independent collectors reported that one of the worst parts of their job is waking up early, filling the truck with recyclable material and returning to the truck in the hot sun. It is an unworthy condition and has become routine.

About actions that can improve the living conditions of waste pickers:

Income research can be a tool for designing an ideal contract model to negotiate the remuneration of collectors with local governments. To achieve this, the cooperative must be aware of the value of each service and the cost of the infrastructure. If you don't understand the costs, you don't know how much, what and how to charge the government. If the collectors appropriate this information, they will be the ones who will price their services.

Recently, the federal government published notices for investments in infrastructure and technical assistance aimed at strengthening waste picker organizations. If on the one hand the federal government wants to structure it, on the other hand, the support of local governments in maintaining equipment is necessary, as the expenses of associations and cooperatives with funding are high and without a contract, this reduces income even further.

Another important action that the study should highlight, aiming at a decent income and improvement in the working and living conditions of collectors, refers to payment for services provided with the collection and sorting of recyclable materials arising from selective collection or direct collection from generators, as well such as environmental education and social mobilization, which are part of the work and do not receive due recognition.

Finally, payment for environmental services provided by collectors is also an action that could become a national public policy to value work.