

Brazil: internal migration

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Internal migration has been decisive in the process of rapid urbanization that has occurred throughout Brazil in recent decades. Between 1950 and 2000, Brazil's urban population grew from 36 percent to 81 percent of the total population (Table 1). During this period, the country underwent major transformations and became an industrial and urban, rather than an agricultural and rural, society. High levels of migration from the countryside to urban areas and agricultural frontiers occurred. Internal migration flows were heaviest in movements from the northeastern to the southeastern states. The usual explanation for this movement references poverty and the lack of job opportunities in the northeast combined with the concentration of industries in the southeast, mainly in the state of São Paulo. Migration from the northeast to the southeast was characterized by a rural-to-urban migration in the 1960s and 1970s.

Lower-class people migrated, and still migrate, to the southeast because that area is Brazil's most industrialized region and has numerous job opportunities (Amaral 2008). Demand from major economic centers has caused population redistribution among the different states, agglomerating the majority of the population in urban clusters (Braga & Rezende 2010). An important feature of this process is that areas with more employment opportunities are characterized by more modern industries (the southeast) and tend to attract the female population from less developed areas (the northeast). However, migration rates from the southeast to the northeast are higher for men than for women. Areas with fewer opportunities for women to enter the

labor force attract more male migrants (Rogers & Castro 1981; Amaral 2008).

A process of spatial deconcentration has occurred since the 1970s. Internal migration is no longer predominantly a rural-to-urban phenomenon (Baeninger 2000; Cunha & Baeninger 2000; Brito et al. 2001; Amaral 2008; Braga & Rezende 2010). Demographic growth has decreased in the Brazilian regions (Table 2), due to diminishing fertility rates and changes in migration patterns (Brito et al. 2001).

Areas that had previously attracted large numbers of people (the central west and São Paulo) experienced a decrease in immigration rates in the 1980s (Cunha & Baeninger 2000). Many migrants stopped leaving states that were previously characterized by high emigration rates (Minas Gerais and Paraná); migrants in those states instead moved to areas within their own states. Levels of migration from the northeast to the southeast remained high. However, large increases in immigration rates to the northeast also occurred. These increases featured a considerable return movement to the region. São Paulo's population declined, in contrast with the growth of other metropolitan areas in the country. The migratory flow to the southeast and toward the boundary regions (north and central west) decreased. Moreover, migratory losses in the northeast and south have fallen considerably (Table 3).

With regard to the border areas (the central west and the north), the latest migration flows are directed to major municipalities in these regions. We cannot accurately create chronological differentiations between periods, as if one type of migration completely displaced another. It is important to differentiate between types of migration over time, but it is equally important to note that these types of migration occurred concomitantly at different times, and that one type is more visibly prevalent in a

Table 1 Percentage distribution of the population by residential situation and region, Brazil, 1950–2010

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1991	2000	2010
Residential situation							
Urban	36.16	45.08	55.98	67.70	75.47	81.23	*
Rural	63.84	54.92	44.02	32.30	24.53	18.77	*
Region							
North	3.94	4.13	4.43	5.59	6.98	7.60	8.32
Northeast	34.60	31.59	30.34	29.24	28.91	28.12	27.84
Southeast	43.41	43.76	42.68	43.40	42.65	42.63	42.10
South	15.09	16.75	17.65	16.00	15.05	14.79	14.37
Central West	2.95	3.77	4.90	5.78	6.41	6.85	7.37
Total population	51 944 397	70 992 343	94 508 583	121 150 573	146 917 459	169 590 693	190 632 694

Note: * These data were not yet available when this essay was completed.

Source: Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), 1950–2010 demographic censuses (<http://seriesestatisticas.ibge.gov.br>).

Table 2 Percentage population growth rates by residential situation and region, Brazil, 1950–2010

	1950–60	1960–70	1970–80	1980–91	1991–2000	2000–10
Residential situation						
Urban	5.15	5.22	4.44	2.97	2.47	*
Rural	1.55	0.57	-0.62	-0.67	-1.31	*
Region						
North	3.34	3.47	3.70	3.85	2.86	2.09
Northeast	2.08	2.40	2.16	1.83	1.31	1.07
Southeast	4.07	3.45	2.48	1.38	1.43	0.87
South	3.06	2.67	2.00	1.77	1.62	1.05
Central West	5.36	5.60	4.05	3.01	2.39	1.90
Brazil	2.99	2.89	2.48	1.93	1.64	1.17

Note: * These data were not yet available when this essay was completed.

Source: Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), 1950–2010 demographic censuses (<http://seriesestatisticas.ibge.gov.br>).

Table 3 Net migration by region, Brazil, 1960–2004

Region	1960–70*	1970–80*	1986–91**	1986/1991***	1995–2000***	1999–2004***
North	-51 063	585 397	131 218	131 323	78 584	63 741
Northeast	-1 754 761	-2 402 244	-876 534	-876 545	-788 146	-164 139
Southeast	815 884	2 262 364	640 138	640 132	482 388	-215 308
South	371 175	-1 613 377	-185 391	-185 369	-19 172	34 586
Central West	746 611	638 281	290 569	290 559	246 346	203 568

Source: * Cunha and Baeninger (2000), using information on place of previous residence (last-move data), based on 1970–1980 demographic censuses; ** Cunha and Baeninger (2000), using information on place of residence five years in the past, based on 1991 demographic census; *** Brito and Carvalho (2006), using information on place of residence five years in the past, based on 1991–2000 demographic censuses and 2004 National Household Survey (PNAD).

given period than in others (Amaral et al. 2002). The interaction between old and new trends in population flows establishes new patterns of internal migration in a country with a multiplicity of contexts (Braga & Rezende 2010). Currently, flows are directed to different locations (suburbs of large cities, medium-sized cities, and migratory returns) simultaneously with the retention of old patterns (flows from the northeast to the southeast), due to the stability of social networks among migrants (Braga & Rezende 2010; Lima & Braga 2010).

In the early 21st century, the most important flow is the urban–urban migration pattern. Two important aspects of this new pattern are the increasing significance of medium-sized cities and intra-metropolitan migration. Intra-metropolitan migration occurs between central

urban areas and peripheral territories. The upper classes segregate themselves in gated communities separate from the lower classes. Low-income people are concentrated in run-down urban areas. Internal migration has become more complex, with a wide variety of places of origin and destination and a change in the socioeconomic characteristics of migrants (Roberts 1995; Baeninger 2000; Cunha & Baeninger 2000; Cerrutti & Bertonecello 2003).

The new migration patterns are characterized by a relative decline in the number of people on the move. The decrease in population flows seems to indicate the disruption of networks between some locations. This process affects the transmission of human capital between different areas, which is important for

the development of the country. The cycle of rural exodus has also ended. This exodus was one cause of the overloading of public services and infrastructure, the growth of slums in urban centers, the rise of unemployment and informal labor, and the emptying of rural areas. Current migrants tend to be more qualified than in the past; this characteristic contributes to decentralized development (Braga & Rezende 2010).

Scholars have often hypothesized that migration worked to ease the high fertility rates of Brazil's rural areas. It was an open question whether rural-to-urban migration would decrease as a response to the decline of rural fertility, a decline that became widespread during the 1980s. If the migratory balance, in conjunction with the decline in fertility, had persistently been negative for rural areas, uninhabited areas would have appeared. However, migratory movements appear to have adjusted themselves to the decline in fertility (see Table 3). Brazil's spatial distribution appears to be moving quickly toward stabilization. Although rural-to-urban migration has decreased in the last decades, officials continue to face the challenge of implementing public policies that

prevent declining rural fertility and migratory movements from creating deserted areas.

Currently, the growth of large metropolitan areas has slowed, and flows have been redirected to medium and nonmetropolitan municipalities. In metropolitan areas, a trend toward concentrating the population in peripheral municipalities rather than in urban centers has emerged. Based on demographic and economic indicators, as well as on flows of goods and services, the municipalities of Belém, Belo Horizonte, Brasília, Campinas, Curitiba, Fortaleza, Goiânia, Porto Alegre, Recife, Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, and São Paulo and its surroundings are defined as metropolitan areas (Brito et al. 2001). Table 4 shows the distribution of Brazil's urban population in the context of municipality categories. With respect to nonmetropolitan areas, municipalities smaller than 20,000 people maintained about one-quarter of the population in 1970 and one-fifth in 1980.

Over time, this proportion declined in favor of larger municipalities, particularly those with populations of between 100,000 and 500,000 inhabitants. As for metropolitan areas, nearly half of the urban population lived in these

Table 4 Percentage distribution of the urban population by municipality category, Brazil, 1970–2000

<i>Municipality category</i>	1970	1980	1991	2000
Nonmetropolitan areas				
<20 000 inhabitants	25.82	20.92	19.07	18.57
20 000–49 999	9.48	9.91	11.29	10.60
50 000–99 999	5.77	7.40	8.07	8.28
100 000–499 999	10.29	14.84	16.41	17.31
500 000 or more	0.00	0.00	2.23	4.25
Total	51.36	53.07	57.07	59.02
Metropolitan areas				
<20 000 inhabitants	1.09	0.43	0.27	0.28
20 000–49 999	2.56	1.49	1.15	0.87
50 000–99 999	2.03	3.10	2.16	2.30
100 000–499 999	7.47	6.62	8.02	8.78
500 000 or more	1.40	4.19	4.76	4.91
Metropolitan center	34.09	31.11	26.56	23.83
Total	48.64	46.93	42.93	40.98

Source: Brito et al. (2001), based on 1970–2000 demographic censuses.

locations in 1970 and 1980, which represented the peak of urban concentration. In 1970, about 34 percent of the urban population lived in metropolitan centers. Since 1980, urban populations have spread out, leading to a reduction in the relative importance of the metropolitan centers. However, most of the population living in metropolitan areas is still found in municipalities with over 100,000 inhabitants. In 2000, nearly 92 percent of the population of metropolitan areas lived in these municipalities. Despite changes in migration patterns, 41 percent of the urban population resided in metropolitan areas in 2000, nearly 24 percent in metropolitan centers. That is, in 2000, around 33 million Brazilians lived in one of the 12 municipalities mentioned above.

We can detect population growth-rate patterns in those areas that state governments define as “metropolitan regions” (Table 5). Between 1970 and 1980, most of these regions experienced a decrease in their growth rates. Only Curitiba, in the south of Brazil, increased its population growth rate when we compare the period between 1960 and 1970 with the period between 1970 and 1980. The reduction was apparent at the time of the 1991 census. Furthermore, data from 2000 indicate that Porto Alegre, Recife, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo metropolitan regions all had growth rates below 2 percent.

An interesting aspect of the migration streams is that of returning migration. Census

data indicate that population flow rates from the southeast to the northeast have been increasing over the last few decades. São Paulo still plays a central role in attracting migrants from the northeastern region. At the same time, important returning flows from the southeast to the northeast have been increasing (Baeninger 2000; Amaral 2008). Migration is no longer solely explainable by labor determinants (Jannuzzi 2000). For instance, migration flows caused by returning migrants are more heavily populated by younger age groups, because returning migration involves entire families moving from one region to another.

Consequently, more children are involved than other age groups. For instance, the migration pattern from Paraná to Brazilian locations other than São Paulo between 1975 and 1980 reveals higher rates for the younger age group (10–14) and declining rates for people who are at least 20 years old (Schmertmann 1999). Thus, these different migration patterns are evidence that rates are not only attributable to work-related movements. Patterns of migration by age depend on the regions and time that analysts study, as well as on the reasons for migration. Migration from the northeastern region to the southeastern region is composed mainly of people in the age groups 15–19 and 30–34. This is a typical migration flow that involves people moving in search of job opportunities. In these flows, rates are higher for working-age individuals (Rogers & Castro

Table 5 Population growth rates by metropolitan region, Brazil, 1960–2000

<i>Metropolitan region</i>	<i>1960–70</i>	<i>1970–80</i>	<i>1980–91</i>	<i>1991–2000</i>
Belém	4.85	4.30	2.70	2.82
Belo Horizonte	6.25	4.67	2.50	2.40
Curitiba	5.04	5.80	3.00	3.17
Fortaleza	4.87	4.30	3.40	2.43
Porto Alegre	4.19	3.84	2.60	1.70
Recife	3.93	2.73	1.90	1.50
Rio de Janeiro	3.62	2.45	1.00	1.15
Salvador	4.77	4.39	3.20	2.15
São Paulo	5.53	4.45	1.90	1.63

Source: Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), 1960–2000 demographic censuses (<http://seriesestatisticas.ibge.gov.br>).

1981). In the case of migration from the south-east to the northeast, the flow rates of younger people are much higher. This finding is consistent with the argument that this particular migration flow is related to the movements of families. Thus, we find that migratory movements involving those regions have different patterns; the data support the argument that the southeastern region has more job opportunities for persons of working age, and the northeastern region is more attractive to people migrating as families (Amaral 2008).

Daily commutes between municipalities still characterize metropolitan areas. A growing body of research addresses this pendulum movement of people commuting daily from their homes to their places of work or study. These population flows provide indicators that reveal urban dynamics and shed light on the integration of municipalities within metropolitan areas. The 2000 census indicated that a total of 7.4 million people worked or studied outside their residential municipality (IBGE 2003).

Finally, the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics is currently implementing a new and important instrument for gathering demographic, economic, social, and health information on Brazil's population. The Continuous National Household Survey (PNAD Contínua) will replace the National Household Survey (PNAD) in the next few years. Among other areas of interest, this new instrument will increase the amount of data on, and our understanding of, internal migration in Brazil.

SEE ALSO: Africa, internal migration; Brazil: emigration, 1968 to present; Brazil: migration and demographic change, 1800–1975; China: internal migration; Internal migration: an overview

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