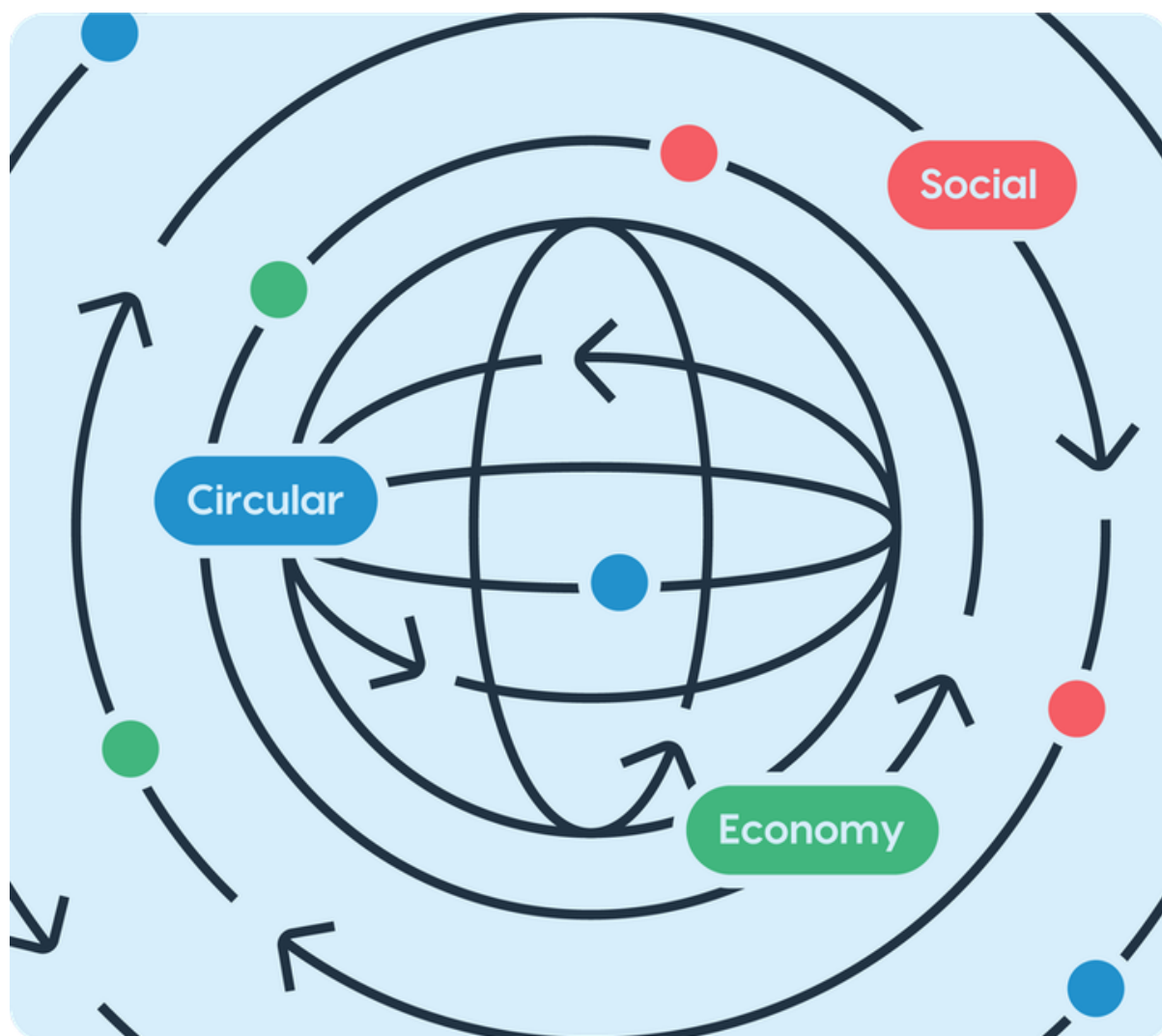


Circular and Social Economy Policy Profile

● Brazil



This country snapshot is part of the international research initiative “Social economy embedding circular economy: Theory, practice and potential,” which examines the relationship between social and solidarity economy policies and circular economy policies at the national, regional, and municipal levels in 12 country-specific profiles.



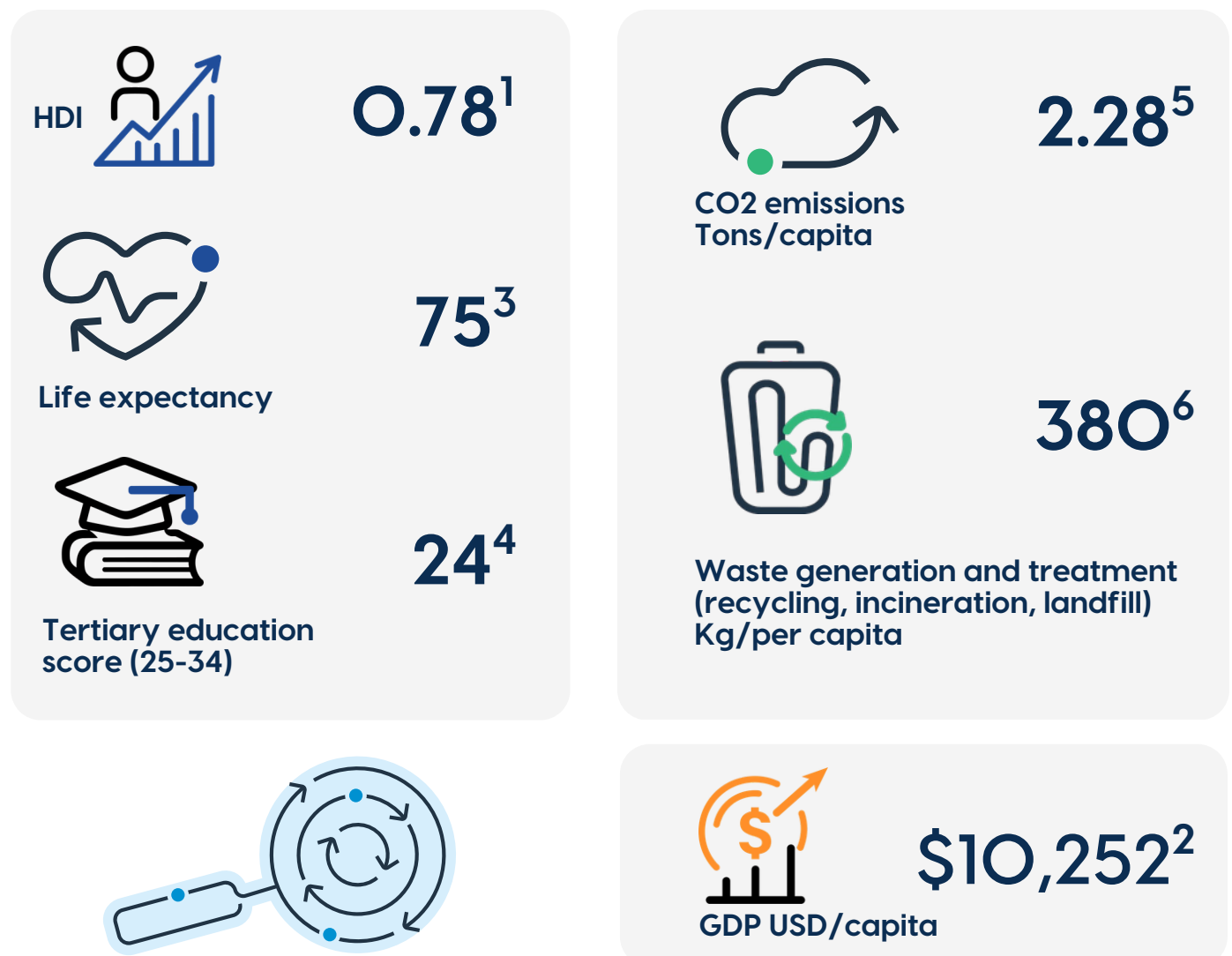
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Toward an inclusive circular economy

Brazil is developing circular and social economy policies that integrate environmental sustainability with social inclusion. National strategies promote circular value chains, while cooperatives and solidarity-based organizations are recognized as key actors. Together, these frameworks contribute to a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable economic development.

Country context

Brazil's level of development and quality of life rank in the high development category (HDI of 0.78). Environmentally, Brazil's CO₂ emissions per person have decreased to 2.28 tonnes and are below the global average of 4.8 tons per year.



● Circular economy

The Brazilian government describes circular economy (CE) as “an alternative to the current linear production model, which does not provide for the healthy return of materials to the economic cycle or to nature⁷.” Decree No. 12.082 (June 27, 2024) established Brazil’s National Strategy for a Circular Economy (ENEC)⁸, promoting a change from a linear model toward sustainable resource use and circular value chains. It sets directives to cut pollution, extend product lifecycles, and promote sustainable production and consumption, while also emphasizing social inclusion by addressing gender, racial, and socioeconomic disparities. The decree also created a National Forum on Circular Economy to monitor progress, positioning Brazil within global sustainability efforts and fostering economic innovation.



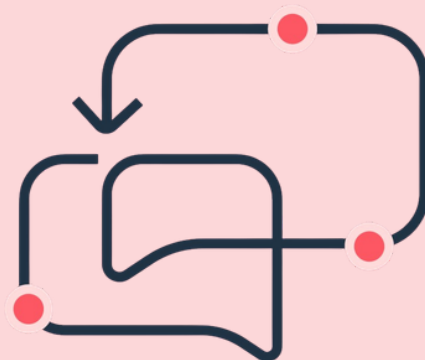
Institutional framework

The Ministry of Development, Industry, Commerce, and Services (MDIC) is responsible for the circular economy in Brazil. The MDIC coordinates the National Circular Economy Forum, which sets goals, standards, and indicators for the private sector. The MDIC also launched the National Circular Economy Strategy⁹, aimed at promoting the transition to a circular economy.

● Social economy

In Brazil, social economy (SE), or Popular and Solidarity Economy, encompasses "(...) activities of production and commercialization of goods and services, distribution, consumption, and credit, guided by the principles of self-management, fair and solidarity trade, cooperation, and solidarity, democratic and participatory management, equitable distribution of collectively produced wealth, integrated and sustainable local, regional, and territorial development, respect for ecosystems, environmental preservation, and the valorization of human beings, work, and culture¹⁰."

Brazil's SE approach emphasizes solidarity and social inclusion in economic activities, often through cooperatives and other collective enterprises that prioritize people over profit, as shown by Brazil's National Solidarity Economy policy implemented through the SENAES, which supports thousands of worker-led cooperatives and solidarity enterprises registered in the national Solidarity Economy Information System (SIES)¹¹.



Institutional framework

The Ministry of Labor and Employment (MTE) oversees the recently approved National Policy for Solidarity Economy, which establishes guidelines and programs to support cooperative and self-managed enterprises in fostering income generation, social justice, and sustainability. Within this framework, Bill 6606/19¹² (formerly PL 4685/2012) received presidential approval on December 5, 2024, and came into force as Law No. 15.068¹³ on December 23, 2024. This law formally recognizes solidarity economy enterprises and strengthens their access to public support, financing, and institutional protection within Brazil's economic policy framework.

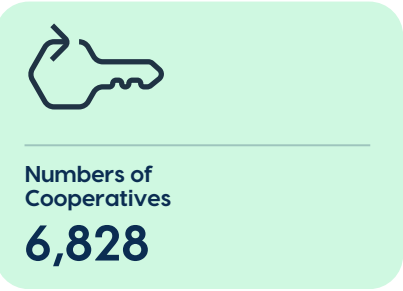


Cooperatives



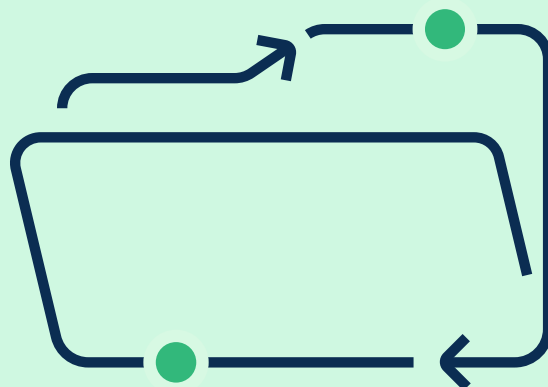
Cooperatives play a vital role in Brazil: its 6,828 cooperatives include a total of 14.6 million members, in a country of 213.5 million people¹⁴. The movement keeps growing, supported by the Brazilian Cooperative Organization (OCB)¹⁵. Brazilian cooperatives are also recognized for their resilience and long-term sustainability, with many operating for decades and demonstrating strong adaptability in the face of economic shocks, including the crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020¹⁶.

Cooperatives are especially well-represented in agriculture and livestock, transportation, healthcare, credit unions, and consumer cooperatives.



● Public policies

CE and SE convergence



Brazil's circular economy framework integrates social and solidarity economy actors through a mix of regulatory, economic, and capacity-building instruments across governance levels.

At the federal level, a 2010 National Solid Waste Policy (Lei nº 12.305/2010)¹⁷ formally incorporates cooperatives and waste picker associations (catadores) into waste collection, recycling and reverse logistic systems, framing recyclable materials as both economic and social assets and mandating shared responsibility across producers, consumers, and governments.

Economic instruments, including targeted funding and environmental credit schemes—such as the São Paulo Environmental Credit Program (Decree nº 59.260/2013)¹⁸—provide financial incentives to strengthen the operational capacity and market integration of SSE organizations.

Informational and capacity-building instruments are reinforced by the National Circular Economy Strategy (Decree nº 12.082/2024)¹⁹, which embeds SSE actors in national governance structures, supports technical assistance and skills development, and establishes a National Forum on Circular Economy to coordinate implementation and monitor progress.

At state and municipal levels, complementary measures—such as São Paulo's State Program for Solid Waste Projects (Decree nº 57.817/2012)²⁰, the Environmental Credit Program (Decree nº 59.260/2013)²¹ and local ordinances—translate these principles into practice through mandated partnerships with cooperatives, public–social collaboration, and localized capacity-building, positioning SE organizations as central actors in Brazil's inclusive circular transition.



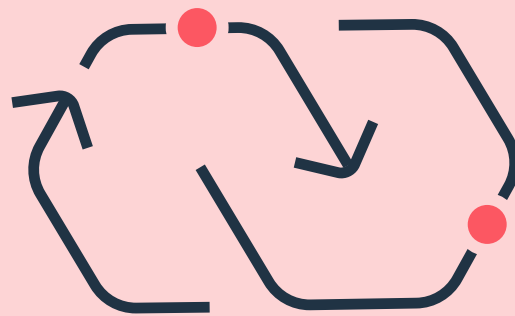
● Zoom in on São Paulo

São Paulo, Brazil's largest city and state, illustrates commitment to sustainable development and the integration of social and solidarity economy actors into circular economy policies. The Cooperativa de Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis da Zona Sul²² is a powerful example of how cooperative models can scale and consolidate under supportive public policies. Through initiatives such as SP Coopera Program, Municipal Cooperativism Week, and the São Paulo Municipal Public Services Regulatory Agency (SP Regula)²³, the cooperative has benefited from targeted financial support, capacity-building, and institutional recognition, strengthening its operations and social impact.

These local measures align with a broader national framework, notably Brazil's National Solid Waste Policy, which connects recycling and waste reduction to the empowerment of cooperatives. Supported by both municipal and federal strategies—such as São Paulo's Circular Economy Manual and the National Circular Economy Strategy—the cooperative has diversified its activities, generated additional jobs, and contributed to environmental sustainability. Complementary initiatives, such as "Ligue os Pontos"²⁴ and the "Sustainable School Menu"²⁵ further demonstrate how circular economy practices can benefit both communities and the planet.



● More information



Social and solidarity economy and the circular economy in Brazil

- The [Fórum Nacional de Economia Circular](#) coordinates discussions and initiatives aimed at advancing circular economy practices in Brazil.

Regional federations and circular economy networks

- The Brazilian Cooperative Organization ([OCB](#)) represents the interests of cooperatives across Brazil and promotes sustainable practices.



Find out more about social and circular economy policy convergence in 12 countries in [PortailCoop's Circular Economy collection](#). [PortailCoop](#) is the largest digital library on cooperative research in the world.

Researcher: Athos Carlos Silva. Editor: Barbara Duroselle

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● Notes and references

¹ (2023) [UNDP Human Development Index and its components](#)

² (2024) [Worldometer: GDP per capita](#)

³ (2023) [UNDP Human Development Index and its components](#)

⁴ (2025) [OECD Education at a glance](#) - The “25–34-year-olds with tertiary education” score measures the share of young adults who have completed higher education (college, university, or an equivalent post-secondary degree); higher scores are generally associated with stronger Human Development Index (HDI) outcomes.

⁵ (2024) [Our world in data: CO₂ emissions per capita](#)

⁶ (2023) Ministério do Meio Ambiente e Mudança do Clima: [Resíduos Sólidos Urbanos](#)

⁷ Ministério da Fazenda: [Circular economy](#)

⁸ Ministério da Fazenda : [National Plan for Circular Economy](#)

⁹ Ministério do Desenvolvimento, Indústria, Comércio e Serviços: [Governo Federal lança a Estratégia Nacional de Economia Circular \(2024\)](#)

¹⁰ Ministério do Trabalho e Emprego: [Secretaria Nacional de Economia Popular e Solidária](#)

¹¹ [Diário do Desenvolvimento \(2020\)](#), Secretaria Nacional de Economia Popular e Solidária (Senaes)

¹² Câmara dos Deputados: [Projeto de Lei PL 6606/2019 \(Nº Anterior: PL 4685/2012\)](#)

¹³ Legislação Informatizada: [Lei Nº 15.068, de 23 de Dezembro de 2024 - Publicação Original](#)

¹⁴ Coops4Dev: [Brazil](#)

¹⁵ [Brazilian Cooperative Organization \(OCB\)](#)

¹⁶ Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada: [Estudo evidencia o impacto devastador da pandemia para micro e pequenas empresas](#)

¹⁷ Presidência da República, Casa Civil: [Lei Nº 12.305, de 2 de Agosto de 2010](#)

¹⁸ São Paulo Environmental Credit Program: [Decreto Nº 59.260, de 5 de Junho de 2013](#)

¹⁹ National Circular Economy Strategy: [Decreto Nº 12.082, de 27 de Junho de 2024](#)

²⁰ São Paulo’s State Program for Solid Waste Projects: [Decreto Nº 57.817, de 28 Fevereiro de 2012](#)

²¹ Environmental Credit Program: [Decreto Nº 59.260, de 5 de Junho de 2013](#)

²² [Cooperativa de Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis da Zona Sul](#)

²³ [São Paulo Municipal Public Services Regulatory Agency](#)

²⁴ [Prefeitura de São Paulo Ligue os Pontos](#)

²⁵ Prefeitura de São Paulo : [Cardápio Escolar Sustentável](#)

