

IS THERE STILL HOPE? THE FUTURE  
EXPECTATIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE  
FROM GUARULHOS-SP AT THE PEAK  
OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

*AINDA HÁ ESPERANÇA? AS EXPECTATIVAS  
FUTURAS DOS JOVENS DE GUARULHOS-  
SP NO AUGE DA PANDEMIA DE COVID-19*

*¿AÚN HAY ESPERANZA? LAS EXPECTATIVAS DE  
FUTURO DE LOS JÓVENES EN GUARULHOS-SP  
EN EL CENTRO DE LA PANDEMIA COVID-19*

*Daniel Arias VAZQUEZ\**

*Heber Silveira ROCHA\*\**

*Lígia Gonçalves DALL'OCCHO\*\*\**

*Alexandre Barbosa PEREIRA\*\*\*\**

**ABSTRACT:** The article analyzes the youth expectations regarding the end of the COVID-19 pandemic and the post-pandemic situation in Brazil, verifying the social, economic, and health factors allow us to understand optimism or pessimism about the future. A database resulting from the application of a survey – with 843

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\* Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP), Guarulhos-SP, Brazil. Associate Professor in the Department of Social Sciences and in the Graduate Program in Social Sciences at UNIFESP. He holds a Doctoral degree in Economic Development and a Master's degree in Social Economy and Labor (UNICAMP), and is an undergraduate in Public Administration (UNESP). Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4467-3392>. Contact: [dvazquez@unifesp.br](mailto:dvazquez@unifesp.br).

\*\* University of São Paulo (USP), São Paulo-SP, Brazil. Full Professor in the Public Policy Management Course. He holds a Doctoral degree in Political Science (UNICAMP), a Master's degree in Public Administration and Government (FGV), and an undergraduate degree in Public Policy Management (USP). Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9718-6849>. Contact: [heber@usp.br](mailto:heber@usp.br).

\*\*\* Guarulhos Public Policy Observatory, SP, Brazil. Master in Public Policy Management (USP), Doctoral degree candidate in Social Sciences (UNIFESP), and graduate in Environmental Management (USP). Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0291-2962>. Contact: [ligia.ambiental@gmail.com](mailto:ligia.ambiental@gmail.com).

\*\*\*\* Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP), Guarulhos-SP, Brazil. Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Sciences and in the Graduate Program in Social Sciences (PPGCS). He holds a Doctoral degree and a Master's degree from the Graduate Program in Social Anthropology (USP), and is an undergraduate in Social Sciences (USP). Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3977-1171>. Contact: [abpereira@unifesp.br](mailto:abpereira@unifesp.br).

participants, aged between 15 and 29, residents in Guarulhos-SP – was used to build two regression models: binary and multinomial logistics, with simple and multivariate analyses. The results reveal that only 20% were optimistic about the pandemic and the country’s future after the pandemic. Pessimism was greater among young people over 18 years old, with family income greater than three minimum wages, and those who showed worsening emotional states. Religious practice was the only reason for a minority to remain optimistic during the peak of the health crisis.

**KEYWORDS:** Future expectations. Pessimism. Youth. Pandemic.

**RESUMO:** *O artigo analisa as expectativas dos jovens quanto ao fim da pandemia de Covid-19 e à situação do Brasil pós-pandemia, verificando os fatores sociais, econômicos e de saúde que explicam o otimismo ou pessimismo em relação ao futuro. Utilizou-se dados obtidos pela aplicação de um survey – com 843 participantes, entre 15 e 29 anos, moradores de Guarulhos-SP – para a construção de dois modelos de regressão: logística binária e multinomial, com análises simples e multivariadas. Os resultados revelam que apenas 20% estavam otimistas em relação à pandemia e quanto ao futuro do país após a pandemia. O pessimismo foi maior entre os jovens maiores de idade, com renda familiar maior que três salários mínimos e que apresentaram piora no estado emocional. A prática religiosa foi o único motivo para uma minoria manter o otimismo durante o auge da crise sanitária.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Expectativas futuras. Pessimismo. Juventude. Pandemia.*

**RESUMEN:** *El artículo analiza las expectativas de los jóvenes sobre el fin de la pandemia de Covid-19 y la situación en Brasil pospandemia, verificando los factores sociales, económicos y sanitarios que explican el optimismo o el pesimismo sobre el futuro. Se utilizaron datos obtenidos de una encuesta – con 843 participantes, entre 15 y 29 años, residentes en Guarulhos-SP – para construir dos modelos de regresión: logístico binario y multinomial, con análisis simple y multivariado. Los resultados revelan que sólo el 20% se mostró optimista sobre la pandemia y el futuro del país después de la pandemia. El pesimismo fue mayor entre los jóvenes mayores de 18 años, con un ingreso familiar superior a tres salarios mínimos y que mostraron un empeoramiento en su estado emocional. La práctica religiosa fue el único motivo para que una minoría mantuviera el optimismo durante el peor momento de la crisis sanitaria.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Expectativas de futuro. Pesimismo. Juventud. Pandemia.*

## Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared a public health emergency in March 2020 due to the pandemic caused by the Sars-Cov-2 coronavirus, which led to the disease named COVID-19. According to WHO data, over 750 million people worldwide were infected between 2020 and 2023, with 37 million cases reported in Brazil and approximately 700,000 fatalities.

Despite the greater severity of the disease among older individuals, the pandemic had a detrimental impact on the mental health of young people (Vazquez *et al.*, 2022) and exacerbated restrictions on employment and income opportunities for youth, further hindering their entry into or consolidation within the labor market (Corseuil; Franca, 2022). In light of the depth of both the health and economic crises, what are young people's expectations regarding the future? What explains why some maintain optimism while pessimism predominates among the majority within this adverse context?

This article analyzes these differing expectations and seeks to identify social, economic, and health-related factors associated with either pessimism or optimism about the pandemic and the future of the country post-pandemic, from the perspective of young residents in the municipality of Guarulhos, São Paulo.

For this purpose, data were collected through the survey "*Retratos das juventudes de Guarulhos e os efeitos da pandemia de Covid-19*" (Portraits of Guarulhos Youth and the Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic), conducted by the Municipal Human Rights Observatory (2021). Data collection took place from April 29 to May 15, 2021, involving 843 young individuals aged 15 to 29 residing in Guarulhos, SP. This period immediately followed the peak of the pandemic in Brazil, when the 7-day moving average of deaths due to COVID-19 ranged from 1,900 to 2,500 between the first and last days of data collection. In terms of spatial scope, Guarulhos is the 12th most populous municipality in the country and the second most populous in the state of São Paulo, with a population of 1,291,771, according to the latest demographic census, second only to the state capital. Young people aged 15 to 29 comprise 22.5% of the total population, according to IBGE data (2022).

The first dependent variable is derived from young people's expectations during that phase of the pandemic. The second variable corresponds to their outlook on a possible post-pandemic scenario in Brazil. In both cases, the categories include optimistic, pessimistic, and neutral perspectives regarding the country's overall situation. This study aims to identify explanatory factors or those potentially associated with young people's varied future expectations, grouped into three dimensions: 1) social markers (gender, race/color, age, and religious practice); 2) economic aspects (household income, financial contribution at home, and adequate household space); 3) health status (decline in emotional well-being and whether the individual was

infected with the virus). To simplify the models, all these independent variables are dichotomous and will be further detailed in the methodological section of the article.

The central hypothesis posits that pessimism generally prevails due to the severity of the economic and health crises, being proportionately higher among the more socially vulnerable youth, who experience poorer income and housing conditions and whose mental and physical health was directly impacted by the pandemic.

The article is divided into four parts, in addition to this brief introduction. The first part provides a theoretical approach to young people’s expectations and their explanatory factors. The second section details the methodology used for data collection and analysis. The third section presents the study results, highlighting the factors associated with pessimism, and, to a lesser extent, optimism, regarding future expectations. The final considerations offer a discussion of these findings.

## **1 Youth, Engagement, and Future Expectations**

First, it is important to emphasize the use of “youths” in the plural, given that this age-related experience is shaped by particular social and economic conditions, such as social class, cultural, and geographic dimensions. During this stage of life, values and experiences acquired within the family environment are tested through new experiences encountered in the microsocial domain (such as associative and religious ties, affective relationships, and friendships) and the macrosocial domain, which includes the political, economic, and social contexts in which young people are embedded.

Secondly, it is essential to consider the current global situation affecting youth, marked by (i) the structural crisis of capitalism, which has intensified social, political, and economic instability, such as labor flexibilization, impacting all social groups, especially younger ones; (ii) the phenomenon of extended schooling for new generations, which contradicts the limited possibilities of professional inclusion and social mobility through education and employment; and (iii) the crisis of representative democracy globally, reflected in widespread public mistrust, particularly among young people, toward institutions (Tomizaki; Daniliauskas, 2018).

The literature suggests that young people are not “disinterested” or “apathetic” toward politics or the ability to organize politically, but rather disillusioned with traditional politics conducted through conventional mechanisms such as political parties within the electoral system (Araujo; Perez, 2021). Young people perceive this structure of political representation as incapable of addressing society’s demands (Boghossian, Minayo, 2009; Fuks, 2011; Sposito, 2010).

If youth participation hinges on the actual conditions for their engagement in political spaces, the central questions become: what are the social, cultural, economic, and political circumstances necessary for young people to engage? What incentives do the State and society at large provide for young people to participate in both institutional and non-institutional spaces?

To attempt to answer these questions, it is essential to consider that young people feel motivated to engage in collective actions in the public sphere when such opportunities are guided by practical issues aligned with their life experiences and daily demands, such as employment, religion, family, and education (Muxel, 2007; Singer, 2013). According to Carrano (2006, p. 4, our translation), “religious, sports, and artistic groups form the foundation of youth associativism in contemporary Brazil, (...) mobilizing collective actions that are not always recognized as political or socially relevant”.

According to Tomizaki and Daniliauskas (2018, p. 219, our translation), one reason for low youth participation may be attributed to “the lack of spaces and opportunities for exercising and learning collective life and social participation, a form of experimentation that could demonstrate to young people the concrete results of collective actions”. Conversely, low expectations lead to disillusionment and, consequently, to reduced engagement in collective actions.

Thus, contemporary youth’s future outlook has become an essential topic of discussion within youth studies in the Social Sciences. Much of the literature takes the impact of certain economic and social changes as a starting point for how young people experience youth today.

A notable contributor to this discussion is Portuguese sociologist José Machado Pais (2001), who, reflecting on Portuguese and European contexts, asserts that young people, in general, are increasingly immersed in a climate of uncertainty and crisis. This is because linear life trajectories have become progressively more difficult for young people to establish. Pais arrives at this conclusion by analyzing changes in the labor market and the phenomenon of delayed departure from the parental home or repeated returns to the security offered by familial refuge, creating so-called “yo-yo trajectories” (Pais, 2001, our translation). These trajectories are marked by increasingly unstable and uncertain transitions into adulthood, particularly with regard to marriage and the workforce.

In Brazil, this scenario of uncertainty is compounded by the precariousness of personal and professional life. Young people, especially those from lower-income backgrounds, as Corrochano (2014) notes, are forced to “get by.” In other words, they must find various ways to secure their survival, with little or no predictability as to how or when they might attain stable employment, home ownership, or a family of their own. Standing (2013), in his analysis of precarity as the new norm in labor relations, suggests that young people’s entry into the workforce will increasingly

involve precarious positions. However, these unstable and temporary jobs are also progressively extending beyond youth, becoming the norm in adult life as well.

Thus, Young people are transitioning from rites of passage, once markers of definitive entry into adulthood, into rites of impasse, where it is no longer clear when adulthood actually begins, as Pais (2009) described. These rites of impasse form the new developmental process of contemporary youth. In traditional societies, well-defined rites of passage conveyed a new status, that of adulthood, but in today’s context, these references not only fade but also point toward an unpredictable or even daunting future. According to Pais, this situation drives young people to develop various strategies to confront this impasse, either by clinging to an intense focus on the present without considering the future or by adopting a “get by” mentality, embracing precarious opportunities as they arise.

On the one hand, if life stage markers have become increasingly blurred, there are still strong expectations of ideal stages for life progression, a process Pais (2009) identified as the persistence of age-based norms. In other words, even with more indistinct boundaries between life phases, individuals remain pressured to follow life trajectories within narrowly defined age standards, such as the ideal age for completing education, entering the workforce, and even forming a family. This leads to an intensification of the impasse and dilemmas facing contemporary youth.

As a result, young people are more exposed to situations of risk and vulnerability. Le Breton (2012) suggests that contemporary youth’s risk-taking behaviors may indeed be attempts to replace traditional collective rites of passage, currently in crisis, with more individualized forms of social recognition. According to Le Breton, the absence of clear rites marking the transition from youth to adulthood generates a heightened sense of “presentification,” where the future appears increasingly remote. In this context, planning or projecting becomes an exercise in managing or attempting to control and reduce personal risks. Thus, society may already be living in what Beck (2010) termed a “risk society”.

Leccardi (2005) refers to this shift as a move from risk calculation to unpredictability and uncontrollability, which characterizes “second modernity.” While the future in the first modernity might have been viewed as open, in the second, it is defined by uncertainty and volatility, with risks no longer predictable or controllable. This shift extends the present and triggers a crisis concerning the future, suggesting the exhaustion of long-term planning and, according to Leccardi, signaling the end of the very notion of a “project”. As such, youth is increasingly characterized by fragmentation, immediacy, and short-term perspectives.

This landscape of uncertainty has been undeniably exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated social distancing measures, which, among other issues, temporarily removed young people from schools, heightened youth employment challenges, and generally increased labor market precarity, thus delay-

ing emancipation projects. These consequences are particularly severe for young people with greater socio-economic vulnerability, likely resulting in more pessimism within this group.

The notion of youth vulnerability refers to the infringement of rights that prevents young people from fully accessing citizenship. In this context, restricted access to income and public goods and services means that impoverished youth have fewer opportunities than those from upper social classes (Carmo; Guizardi, 2018). Research on youth vulnerabilities forms a substantial field of study in Brazil (Sposito, 2009; Abramo, 1997; Ribeiro, Macedo, 2018; Rocha, 2020) and Latin America (Marcial, 2007; Margulis, Urresti, 1996). A portion of this literature focuses specifically on analyzing youth experiences and realities within the peripheral areas of Brazilian metropolises (Takeiti; Vicentin, 2015).

The various vulnerabilities faced by youth in peripheral areas are key determinants in explaining their living conditions, including low income, degrading work, teenage parenthood, alcohol and drug consumption, family conflicts, and mortality (Sposito, 2009; Takeiti, Vicentin, 2015). Sposito (2009) employs the concepts of vulnerabilities and exclusion as analytical categories to understand the situation of young people in Brazil's urban peripheries. Vulnerabilities are defined in multiple ways: material and symbolic deprivation, hunger, precarious working conditions, family violence, mental health issues, sexual abuse, etc., as demonstrated by Takeiti *et al.* (2020).

In the pandemic context, numerous studies have highlighted the impact of social isolation and the uncertainties caused by the health crisis on young people. As Perez and Vommaro (2023) demonstrate, the pandemic, in a sense, intensified and exposed preexisting social vulnerabilities among a considerable portion of youth in the Brazilian and Latin American context. A special dossier organized by these two researchers provides numerous reflections on how the pandemic disproportionately affected young people's lives. Thus, although everyone felt the pandemic's effects, it was the most vulnerable youth who suffered the most, whether through difficulty in keeping up with school activities, the disruption of social relationships, or the reduction in future expectations.

In a study involving young high school graduates from the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Severo (2023) illustrates how social class experiences shape perceptions of the pandemic's impact. According to Severo, poorer youth reported material hardships and difficulties in long-term project planning, whereas more affluent youth identified the main problem as the impact on their social relationships. Similarly, Koerich and Mattos (2023), conducting research with young students in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, emphasize how social class, which assured enrollment in better-resourced schools for online learning, shaped distinct experiences of social time during the pandemic, thereby altering future expectations. Generally,

it is evident in various analyses that the pandemic has significantly impacted the lives of young people across different social strata, affecting their long-term plans. In Ecuador, Cerbino, Panchi, and Angulo (2023) argue that young people have been the most impacted by the diverse effects of the social reorganization imposed by the pandemic.

Given the profound instabilities caused by health and economic crises, examining how youth shape their future expectations is a crucial issue, highlighting the need for further studies to understand which factors and/or institutions play a significant role in this process. Despite the declining influence of institutions in shaping individuals in contemporary society, as noted by Beck (2010), Dubet (2006), and Melucci (1998), it is posited here, as a hypothesis to be tested, that one institution, in particular, holds substantial influence, especially concerning optimistic future outlooks: the churches.

Evidently, one might discuss, particularly considering the prominence of Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal churches among the popular youth in contemporary Brazil, whether this form of religiosity is also, to some extent, deinstitutionalized or functioning in a much more individualized and privatized manner (Berger, 1986). According to Jessé Souza (2010), Pentecostal or Neo-Pentecostal religions are closely associated with Brazil’s popular or working classes due, among other factors, to their ability to adapt to the aspirations of urban peripheral residents. Gutierrez (2017) further highlights how the evangelical world serves as an important space for life project development among the lower social strata, addressing aspirations such as social mobility through entrepreneurship as opposed to salaried work.

Another increasingly concerning aspect relates to the mental health of young people. An international survey conducted with over 48,000 youth across 34 countries noted a global decline in youth mental well-being, which worsened significantly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, primarily because of social isolation (Mental State of the World, 2022). In Brazil, research by the National Youth Council (CONJUVE, 2020) indicated that the pandemic most significantly affected emotional health among the various aspects of young people’s lives. Vazquez *et al.* (2022) underscore that the disruption of social bonds and interruption of core study and leisure routines during the pandemic in Brazil heightened mental health risks. Thus, worsening emotional states are anticipated to correlate with pessimistic expectations about the future, a hypothesis that will also be tested in this study.

In sum, amid the uncertainties brought on by the health crisis, which social, economic, and health-related factors are associated with optimistic or pessimistic expectations among youth? This is the central question that guided this research conducted with young people in Guarulhos, São Paulo, during the peak period of the pandemic in Brazil. The methodological procedures and obtained results will be presented in the following sections.



## **2. Methodology: Survey Design, Variable Selection, and Data Analysis**

Secondary data from the survey “*Retratos das juventudes de Guarulhos e os efeitos da pandemia de Covid-19*” (Portraits of Youth in Guarulhos and the Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic), conducted by the Human Rights Department of the Guarulhos Municipal Government, was utilized. The structured questionnaire comprised 75 questions, yielding a total of 935 responses, all provided voluntarily and spontaneously. Out of these, 843 cases met the research criteria: being aged 15 to 29 and residing in Guarulhos, São Paulo. The survey was disseminated through the municipal government’s social media channels and local communication outlets, in accordance with the procedures outlined in the 4th Analytical Report of the Municipal Human Rights Observatory (2021).

Given the exploratory, non-probabilistic nature of the applied method, the study did not predefine a sample size. However, the quantity and distribution of responses are considered highly satisfactory, encompassing all areas of the city and proportionally reflecting the population’s spatial distribution. Of the valid cases, 47% were aged 18 to 24, 30% between 15 to 17, and 23% between 25 to 29 (Observatório Municipal de Direitos Humanos, 2021).

For this article, two dependent variables were selected. The first variable pertains to the youth’s assessment of the pandemic, categorized into two positions: optimistic, when responses indicated that “the pandemic will end” or that it “does not affect my life”, and pessimistic, when responses indicated “I am pessimistic” or “we will have to live with possible effects and future pandemics”. The second variable of interest is more straightforward and reflects the youth’s sentiment regarding “a possible post-pandemic situation in Brazil,” with possible responses being: neutral, optimistic, or pessimistic. It should be noted that responses were not mandatory for either variable, resulting in missing cases: 8 for the pandemic-specific variable and 6 for the overall assessment of the country’s situation.

In total, 11 independent variables were selected, all of which are dichotomous categorical variables (represented by 0 or 1) and can be grouped into three dimensions:

- a) **Social markers** – This includes the variables gender, color/race, age, and religious practice. For gender, in addition to male and female, the question provided the options non-binary and other (open-ended). However, the low incidence (7 cases combined) precluded the inclusion of these latter categories in a quantitative study. The same approach was taken for Asians (8 cases) and Indigenous individuals (only 1) concerning skin color/race, resulting in two categories: on one side, Whites and Asians combined, and on the other, Blacks and Browns, with the Indigenous case

considered as missing. Religious practice is a dichotomous variable (yes or no), identifying practitioners regardless of religion. Finally, the age variable separates those under and over 18.

- b) **Economic aspects** – Represented by the dichotomous variables: family income above or below three minimum wages, whether the youth contributes financially at home (or not), and whether they consider themselves to have (or not) an adequate space at home for study or work.
- c) **Health status** – This dimension identifies cases in which individuals had COVID-19 at some point during the pandemic (up to the date of questionnaire response) and whether young people reported that their emotional state worsened during the pandemic, as opposed to those who stated it improved or remained unchanged.

Initially, the frequencies of all variables were calculated. Subsequently, we sought to measure the association between the two dependent variables, that is, the future expectations concerning the pandemic and the post-pandemic situation in Brazil. The chi-square test was used for association testing. Based on the results, pessimism was chosen as the category of interest.

In the regression analysis, simple models were initially conducted with all independent variables separately to assess the isolated effect of each variable. Subsequently, two multiple regression models were constructed, which considered the influence of the independent variables concurrently. This approach allowed for the examination of the effect of each factor while controlling for the others. A binary logistic regression model was applied for the pandemic’s future outlook, as the dependent variable is dichotomous (optimistic or pessimistic). Concerning Brazil’s post-pandemic situation, given the broader question related to the national context, neutrality was chosen as the reference position in a multinomial logistic regression model, to assess the factors that increase or decrease the likelihood of expressing pessimism or optimism compared to the reference category (neutrality).

The results were interpreted based on statistical significance (p-value) and the Odds Ratio (OR), which measures the impact of independent variables (X) on the odds of the event (Y) occurring. Procedures for building the logistic regression models and interpreting their results are summarized in Fernandes *et al.* (2020). Model fit was checked using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) to ensure the absence of multicollinearity, complemented by graphical and numerical residual analysis. SPSS Version 21.0 software was used for these analyses.

The results will be presented in the following section.

### 3 Results

First, we will conduct a descriptive analysis of the two dependent variables, future expectations regarding the pandemic and the post-pandemic situation of the country, and the association between them. Table 1 displays the cross-tabulated results.

**Table 1** – Cross-tabulation of future expectations regarding the pandemic and the country’s post-pandemic situation, in percentages (N = 834)\*, youth residents of Guarulhos-SP, 2021

		Expectations about the pandemic		Total	
		Optimistic	Pessimist		
Expectations about the post-pandemic situation in Brazil	Neutral	n	70	267	337
		%	20,8%	79,2%	40,4%
	Pessimist	n	25	304	329
		%	7,6%	92,4%	39,4%
	Optimistic	n	78	90	168
		%	46,4%	53,6%	20,1%
Total	n	173	661	834	
	%	20,7%	79,3%	100,0%	

**Source:** Primary data from the survey “*Retratos das juventudes de Guarulhos e os efeitos da pandemia de Covid-19*” (“Portraits of Youth in Guarulhos and the Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic”). Compiled by the authors.

(\*) Excludes 9 missing cases: 8 absent in both variables and 1 solely related to the country’s situation.

Pessimistic expectations concerning the pandemic accounted for 79.3% (661 youths), while 20.7% expressed optimism (173 cases). Regarding the post-pandemic situation in the country, 39.4% (329) of the youths expressed pessimism, 20.1% (168) were optimistic, and 40.4% (337) maintained a neutral stance. In the cross-tabulation of expectations, 79.2% of the youths who were neutral about the country’s future were pessimistic regarding the pandemic; among those who were pessimistic about the country, 92.4% were also pessimistic about the pandemic; finally, even among those who expressed optimism about the national post-pandemic outlook, the majority (53.6%) reported pessimism concerning the pandemic. A strong association was found between the two expectations, with high statistical significance as measured by chi-square ( $\chi^2 = 101.99$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

The selected independent variables were grouped into three dimensions: (a) social markers; (b) economic aspects; and (c) health status. Table 2 presents

the number of valid cases, valid percentages, and descriptive statistics for three quantitative variables.

**Table 2** – Descriptive analysis of independent variables  
(N=843)\*, youth residents of Guarulhos-SP, 2021

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Variáveis</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Social Markers</b>	<b>Sex</b>	Men	287	34,3
		Woman	549	65,7
	<b>Colour/ Race</b>	White	453	53,8
		Black	389	46,2
	<b>Religious practice</b>	No	416	50,1
		Yes	415	49,9
<b>Age</b>	Under 18	257	30,5	
	18 or more	586	69,5	
<b>Economic factors</b>	<b>Contribute financially at home</b>	No	326	40,3
		Yes	482	59,7
	<b>Suitable environment at home</b>	No	312	40,2
		Yes	495	59,8
	<b>Income Bracket</b>	Up to 3 MW	588	69,8
More than 3 MW		255	30,2	
<b>Health Situation</b>	<b>Has been infected</b>	No	661	78,8
		yes	178	21,2
	<b>Emotional state worsened</b>	No	182	21,8
		yes	654	78,2

**Source:** Primary data from the survey “*Retratos das juventudes de Guarulhos e os efeitos da pandemia de Covid-19*” (“Portraits of Youth in Guarulhos and the Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic”). Compiled by the authors.

(\*) The total sample includes 843 cases. The number of cases per variable varies due to missing data, ranging from 0 to 35 cases.

The sample shows that one-third of respondents are male, while 66% are female. Regarding race, 54% are white, whereas Black and mixed-race (pardo) individuals make up 46%. Half of the youths engage in some form of religious practice, while the other half do not. Age-wise, 30% are minors, and 70% are over 18, with an average age of 20.6 years. Concerning economic aspects, approximately 60% contribute financially to their households, and 70% live with a family income of up to three minimum wages. As for housing conditions, 40.2% reported lacking an adequate place for studying or working at home. Finally, health-related factors

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indicate that the coronavirus infected 21.2%, and 78.2% reported that their emotional well-being deteriorated during the pandemic. It is noted that all these independent variables have only two categories (0 or 1).

Which of these variables increases the likelihood of youths holding pessimistic or optimistic expectations? The central hypothesis is that socioeconomically more vulnerable youths and those whose physical and mental health was more impacted are more likely to have pessimistic expectations. The sample is highly diverse, and there are strong indications of intersections to be tested in the multivariate analysis, which defines a more vulnerable profile: women, Black individuals, very young respondents, those with lower family income, financial dependence, inadequate home space, and more disrupted social networks.

Two distinct regression models were constructed with the same independent variables (Table 2) but different dependent variables: expectations concerning the pandemic and expectations about Brazil's post-pandemic situation (Table 1). Since the first is dichotomous, binary logistic regression analysis is the most appropriate technique. The second dependent variable has three categories, pessimistic, optimistic, and neutral, and was analyzed using a multinomial logistic model, with neutrality as the reference position.

The results analysis will highlight the most important explanatory factors through Odds Ratios (OR) and statistical significance. This approach aims to identify which factors contribute to greater pessimism during the pandemic and which increase the likelihood of youths with certain characteristics falling into the pessimistic or optimistic groups, compared to those who declared neutral future expectations about the country's general situation.

Table 3 presents the results of the univariate and multivariate analyses for the first model, with pessimism concerning the pandemic as the dependent variable.

**Table 3** – The logistic regression model results, with univariate and multivariate analyses (N = 722), dependent variable: “pessimism regarding the pandemic.” Youth residents of Guarulhos-SP, 2021

Dimensions	Variáveis	Ref.	Univariate analysis			Multivariate Analysis				
			OR	IC 95% (Min–Max)		p value	OR	IC 95% (Min–Max)		p value
Social Markers	Sex	Woman	1,358	0,961	1,918	0,083				
	Colour/ Race	Black	0,67	0,479	0,939	0,02				
	Religious practice	Yes	0,602	0,428	0,847	0,004	0,572	0,390	0,838	0,004
	Age	18 or more	1,97	1,392	2,787	<0,001	1,535	1,032	2,283	0,035
Economic factors	Contributes financially	Yes	1,362	0,963	1,926	0,081				
	Suitable environment	Yes	0,783	0,546	1,121	0,181				
	Income Bracket	Up to 3 MW	0,601	0,406	0,889	0,011	0,523	0,336	0,812	0,004
Health Situation	Has been infected	Partial	1,292	0,841	1,987	0,243				
	Emotional state worsened	Yes	3,33	2,303	4,816	<0,001	3,810	2,518	5,764	<0,001

**Source:** Primary data from the survey “*Retratos das juventudes de Guarulhos e os efeitos da pandemia de Covid-19*” (“Portraits of Youth in Guarulhos and the Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic”). Compiled by the authors.

(\*) The total number of cases in the multivariate analysis is 722, due to the missing data in the independent variables.

In the univariate analysis, which captures the isolated effect of each independent variable without considering the effects of the others, five variables were found to be significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Being Black, engaging in religious practices, and having a family income of less than three minimum wages decrease the likelihood of holding pessimistic expectations regarding the pandemic. Conversely, a deterioration in emotional well-being and being an adult (over 18 years old) are positively associated with pessimism. There were no significant differences based on gender, previous infection, or the adequacy of space at home.

The multivariate analysis allows for the assessment of the effects of these factors collectively. It is common for some variables to lose their significance when controlled for others. The results of the final model, which includes only statistically relevant factors ( $p < 0.005$ ), will be highlighted here. The final multiple logistic regression model was highly significant ( $X^2(4) = 58.895$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ;  $R^2$  Nagelkerke = 0.123), revealing a good explanatory capacity, considering the complexity and diversity of individual reasons leading to the formation of future expectations, espe-

cially in a context of significant uncertainty generated by the Covid-19 pandemic in Brazil and worldwide.

Following the order established by the stepwise forward method, the first explanatory factor is an emotional state, whose deterioration increases the likelihood of pessimistic expectations regarding the pandemic by 3.8 times (OR = 0.381,  $p < 0.001$ ) compared to those who were not emotionally affected. Contrary to the prior hypothesis, family income is negatively associated; that is, youths with a family income of up to three minimum wages have nearly 50% lower chances of being pessimistic about the pandemic (OR = 0.523,  $p = 0.004$ ). Engaging in religious practices was also a protective factor, reducing the likelihood of belonging to the pessimistic group by 43% (OR = 0.572,  $p = 0.004$ ). It is important to note that these first three factors belong to distinct dimensions, health, economic, and social, respectively, demonstrating the multifaceted nature of pessimism regarding the pandemic. Finally, reaching adulthood increased the likelihood of pessimism by more than 50% (OR = 1.535,  $p = 0.035$ ) compared to minors.

The second model is a multinomial logistic regression since the dependent variable, “expectations about Brazil’s post-pandemic situation”, has three categories: pessimistic, optimistic, and neutral, with the latter chosen as the reference. Thus, the odds ratios (Odds Ratio - OR) for belonging to the groups of pessimists or optimists are compared to the youths who maintained a neutral stance. Table 4 presents the results of the univariate and multivariate analyses for this second model, with the independent variables remaining the same.

The isolated effects measured in the univariate analyses reveal positive and negative associations similar to those found in the previous model. Compared to the group with neutral expectations, the likelihood of holding pessimistic expectations about the country’s situation decreases if the youth is Black and has a family income of up to three minimum wages, which also contradicts the hypothesis of greater pessimism among those who are socioeconomically vulnerable. Similarly, having adequate space at home for study or work reduces the chances of the youth belonging to the pessimistic group. Conversely, a deterioration in emotional well-being is positively associated with pessimism, which confirms the hypothesis regarding health. However, there is no statistical significance regarding whether the individual has been infected or not.

Two variables are associated with both pessimism and optimism. The first is religious practice, which reduces the likelihood of the youth having pessimistic expectations while simultaneously increasing the chances of optimism among them, always in comparison to those who remained neutral. The second variable is age, which is positively associated with both groups; that is, minors tended to remain more neutral, while young adults had their expectations altered, with some anticipating a better future and others a worse one.

**Table 4** – Results of the multinomial logistic model, with univariate and multivariate analyses (N = 725), with the dependent variable “expectations about Brazil’s post-pandemic situation.” Youth residents of Guarulhos-SP, 2021

Dimensions	Variables	Ref.	Univariate Analysis			Multivariate Analysis				
			OR	IC 95% (Min–Max)	p value	OR	IC 95% (Min–Max)	p value		
Pessimist	Sex	Woman	0,951	0,689	1,312	0,760				
	Colour/ Race	Black	0,672	0,495	0,912	0,011				
	Religious practice	Yes	0,698	0,513	0,948	0,021	0,700	0,503	0,976	0,035
	Age	18 or more	2,010	1,434	2,817	<0,001	1,982	1,385	2,837	<0,001
	Contributes financially	Yes	0,906	0,661	1,242	0,541				
	Suitable environment	Yes	0,669	0,486	0,921	0,014	0,661	0,470	0,931	0,018
	Income Bracket	Up to 3 MW	0,693	0,500	0,961	0,028	0,614	0,425	0,886	0,009
	Has been infected	Yes	0,870	0,601	1,259	0,461				
	Emotional state	Yes	2,134	1,423	3,200	<0,001	1,985	1,284	3,069	0,002
Optimistic	Sex	Woman	0,888	0,602	1,310	0,548				
	Colour/ Race	Black	0,846	0,584	1,226	0,377				
	Religious practice	Yes	1,802	1,227	2,646	0,003	1,862	1,230	2,819	0,003
	Age	18 or more	1,509	1,012	2,252	0,044	1,977	1,271	3,075	0,003
	Contributes financially	Yes	0,927	0,630	1,366	0,703				
	Suitable environment	Yes	1,302	0,860	1,971	0,212				
	Income Bracket	Até 3 SM	1,163	0,763	1,774	0,482				
	Has been infected	Yes	0,798	0,503	1,265	0,337				
	Emotional state worsened	Yes	0,672	0,447	1,012	0,057				

**Source:** Primary data from the survey “*Retratos das juventudes de Guarulhos e os efeitos da pandemia de Covid-19*” (“Portraits of Youth in Guarulhos and the Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic”). Compiled by the authors.

(\*) The total number of cases in the multivariate analysis is 725, due to missing data from the independent variables.



The multiple multinomial regression model demonstrated good explanatory capacity ( $X^2(12) = 87.06$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ; Pseudo  $R^2$  Nagelkerke = 0.124). Regarding pessimistic expectations, in order of relevance, youth who reported a deterioration in emotional well-being (OR = 1.985,  $p = 0.002$ ) and those over 18 years old (OR = 1.982,  $p < 0.001$ ) have double the chances of exhibiting pessimism compared to those in the neutral group. If the family income is lower (up to three minimum wages), it reduces the likelihood of pessimism by almost 40% (OR = 0.614,  $p = 0.009$ ), while having adequate space at home also decreases these chances by 34% (OR = 0.661,  $p = 0.018$ ). Finally, religious practice was also a protective factor, reducing the chances of pessimism by 30% (OR = 0.700,  $p = 0.035$ ), always in relation to remaining neutral. In the multivariate analysis, the variable of skin color/race lost its statistical significance.

Conversely, optimism among youth had only two significant factors: age and religious practice, both positively associated. Being over 18 years old increases the chances of optimism by 98% (OR = 0.977,  $p = 0.003$ ), while religious practice raises these chances by 86% (OR = 0.862,  $p = 0.003$ ) in relation to remaining neutral. Considering that age also increases the chances of pessimism, this variable appears more as a trend in positioning among young adults, rather than neutrality, which is more common among younger individuals, than as an explanatory factor of pessimism or optimism regarding the future of Brazil post-pandemic. Thus, optimism seems to be reduced to a matter of faith in light of the country's dramatic situation at the pandemic's peak.

These findings will be discussed in the concluding remarks.

## **Final considerations**

The research analyzed the expectations of young residents of Guarulhos-SP concerning the pandemic and the future situation of Brazil post-pandemic. A total of 843 participants aged between 15 and 29 years took part. Data collection was conducted from April 29 to May 15, 2021, days after the registration of more than 4,000 deaths from COVID-19 in a single day and still during the strongest wave of the pandemic in Brazil. Given the severity of the situation, approximately 80% of youth were pessimistic regarding the pandemic, while 20% were optimistic. Regarding the future of the country after the pandemic, 40% had pessimistic expectations, another 40% stated they were neutral, and only 20% were optimistic.

A strong association between the two expectations is noted; however, expectations regarding the pandemic were worse. Among those who were pessimistic about the future of the country, 92% were also pessimistic regarding the pandemic. Even among those most optimistic about Brazil's post-pandemic situation, the majority

(53.6%) were pessimistic about the pandemic. Beyond describing this scenario, the research aimed to investigate the causes of these future expectations.

To achieve this, the study sought to identify associated factors of three types: a) social markers (gender, color/race, age, and religious practice); b) economic aspects (family income, financial dependence, and adequate space in the household); c) health situation (deterioration in emotional state and whether the coronavirus had infected the youth). All these independent variables are qualitative and dichotomous. The central hypothesis posited that youth with greater socioeconomic vulnerability and those whose health had been affected exhibited higher levels of pessimism regarding the pandemic and the future of the country. To test this hypothesis, a binary logistic regression model was employed for expectations related to the pandemic (pessimistic versus optimistic) and another multinomial regression model for future expectations for the country, using the neutral position as a reference.

Regarding the health situation, future expectations are independent of whether the youth has been infected with Covid-19. However, a strong association is noted with a deterioration in the emotional state during the pandemic, which increases the likelihood of pessimistic expectations regarding the pandemic by nearly four (4) times and doubles (2) the chances of pessimism concerning Brazil’s post-pandemic future, confirming the negative effects of the pandemic on the mental health of youth, as indicated by the literature. For instance, Vazquez *et al.* (2022) demonstrate that screen time exposure and disrupted sleep patterns (switching day for night), both related to changes in the routines of youth due to social isolation and school closures, are strongly associated with symptoms of anxiety and depression during the pandemic. According to the authors, 9th-grade students in elementary and high schools in state and municipal public schools located in the peripheries of the municipalities of São Paulo-SP and Guarulhos-SP showed a positive screening for severe depressive symptoms in 10.5% of cases and for severe anxious symptoms in 47.5% of cases. The future consequences of this deterioration in emotional state are not limited to the formation of expectations, as mental disorders tend to remain stable into adulthood in more than half of the cases, as noted by Lavigne *et al.* (1998) in a seminal study conducted more than two decades prior to the coronavirus crisis.

Concerning socioeconomic vulnerability, the results indicate that youth with a family income of less than three minimum wages (70% of the sample) had approximately 50% lower chances of exhibiting pessimism for both expectations compared to those with income above this threshold. On the other hand, having adequate space at home (59% of the sample) reduces the chances of pessimism (34%) regarding the country’s situation but does not affect expectations related to the pandemic. In multivariate analyses, no differences were found concerning gender, skin color/race, and the financial dependence of youth. In other words, the evidence is insufficient to demonstrate that the most vulnerable individuals were more pessimistic.

According to Taiketi *et al.* (2020), vulnerability and risk are considered synonymous in the fields of public health and social psychology when addressing stress-inducing events motivated by the youths themselves and the social and cultural determinants that lead to risk situations. Given the inability to confirm the relationship between objective life conditions and the expectations of young people, it is recommended that future studies analyze the determinants of youth emotional states beyond material factors and income.

Two social markers proved relevant in both models: adulthood and religiosity. The former increases the likelihood of pessimism regarding the pandemic by 53% compared to individuals under 18 years of age. With respect to the future of the country, adulthood nearly doubled the chances of both pessimism and optimism in comparison to neutrality; this group exhibited less neutrality, a position more commonly found among younger individuals. Thus, the uncertainties surrounding the transition to adulthood, as reflected in the works of Pais (2001; 2009) and Leccardi (2005), which are now exacerbated by the context of the pandemic, would explain why younger individuals remain neutral, lacking the capacity to project their futures. This difference highlights the plurality of experiences among youth within the same age group.

Religious practice, in turn, accounts for a reduction of 43% and 30% in the chances of pessimism regarding the pandemic and the post-pandemic situation in Brazil, respectively. Additionally, it increased the likelihood of optimism concerning the future of the country by 86%, serving as the only determining factor for this outlook, since adulthood was also associated with pessimism, as previously established. Thus, despite the trend toward a diminished role of institutions in shaping individuals in contemporary society (Beck, 2010; Dubet, 2006; Melucci, 1998), religion has functioned as a significant institution that enables young people to construct more optimistic perspectives about their futures. This observation could be justified by the fact that Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal religions have increasingly expanded their presence among lower socioeconomic classes (Souza, 2010), addressing, among other issues, precisely those related to future prospects (Gutierrez, 2017).

Based on the main findings of this study and in dialogue with the existing literature on the subject, the following conclusions can be drawn: 1) the deterioration of the emotional state of youth is strongly associated with pessimistic expectations, as anticipated; 2) greater pessimism was also observed among young people with a family income exceeding three minimum wages compared to those who are economically disadvantaged, contradicting this prior hypothesis; 3) only religion served as a reason for a minority to maintain faith in better days following the pandemic, revealing a strong influence of this institution on the formation of future expectations among youth.

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