



# Cultural participation in Brazil

How does cultural participation differ across  
Brazil's capital cities, and what roles do  
socioeconomic and educational factors play?

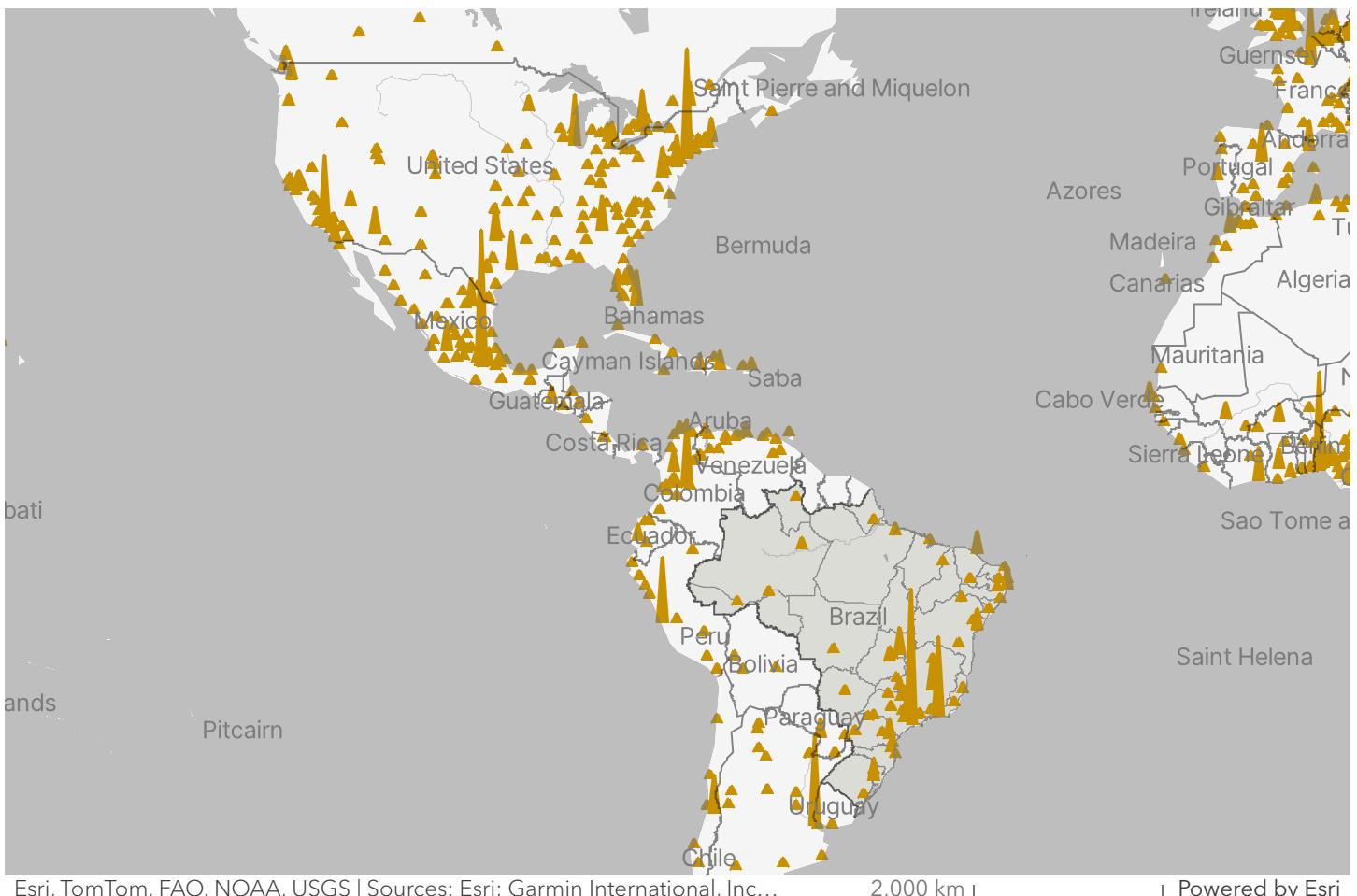
LUCIANA JUNQUEIRA

February 9, 2026

This project uses the ***Cultura nas Capitais*** study to examine how cultural participation varies across Brazil's capital cities.

Understanding Brazil's cultural dynamics requires keeping scale and heritage in mind. Many people outside Brazil picture Brazilian culture as Carnival. Although Carnival is important and attracts tourists, it is just one part of how people in Brazilian cities experience culture. This project treats Brazilian capitals as the unit of spatial analysis. The study compares participation rates across cities and macro-regions, focusing on the population aged 16 and older. By mapping and comparing participation rates spatially, the project identifies regional patterns and inequalities that are not visible in tabular summaries alone.

## World Population



Esri, TomTom, FAO, NOAA, USGS | Sources: Esri; Garmin International, Inc...

2,000 km Powered by Esri

Brazil is the largest country in Latin America, occupying nearly half of South America's land area. Unlike most of its neighbors in Latin America, Brazil's official language is Portuguese, a legacy of its colonial history from Portugal.

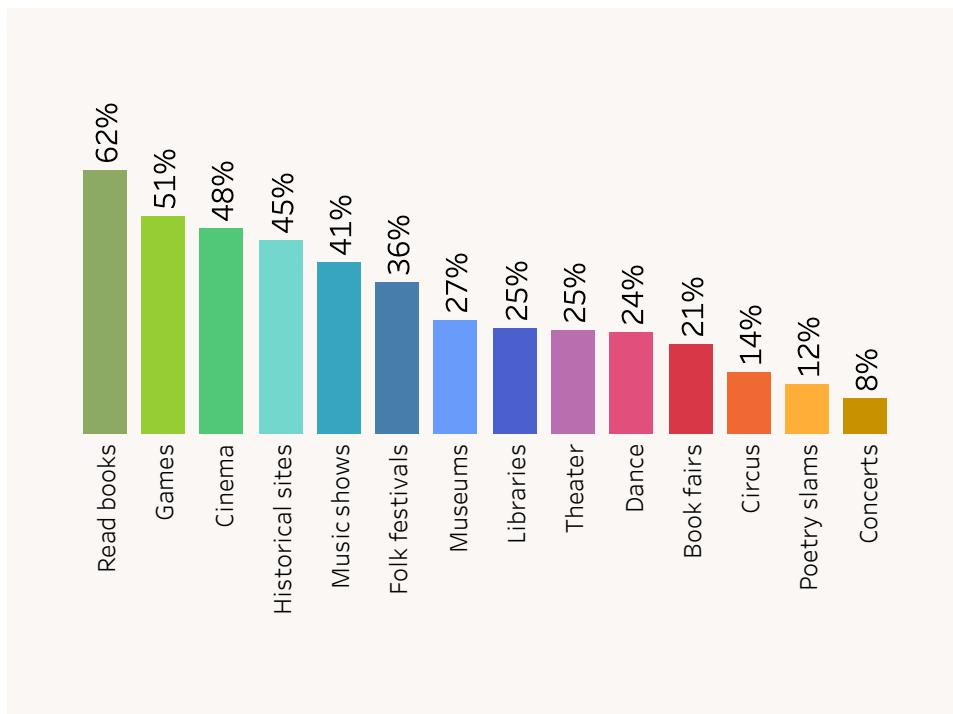
Brazil is also one of the world's most populous countries, ranking seventh with over 200 million people. Brazil's largest cities operate on a scale that often surprises international audiences. São Paulo alone has a metropolitan population comparable to New York, while Rio de Janeiro is similar in size to Los Angeles.

Recently, Brazilian cinema has attracted greater attention worldwide. Movies like **I'm Still Here** (2024) and **The Secret Agent** (2025) demonstrate the importance of the Dictatorship period to contemporary cultural production.



These international successes are just one visible part of a much larger cultural scene. Let's look at the overall results of cultural participation in the 2024 *Cultura nas Capitais* survey.

## Cultural Participation by Activity



Tableau

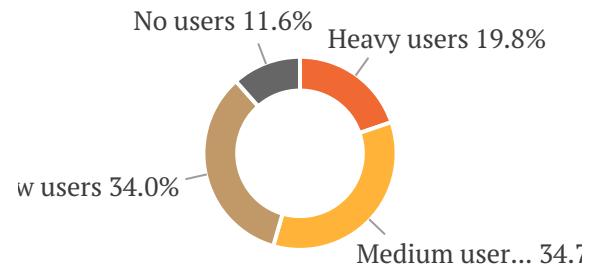
## Measuring Participation Intensity

To measure cultural participation, this project uses an intensity index based on 14 different activities reported in the 2024 Cultura nas Capitais survey. Each person gets a score based on how many activities they took part in over the past year.

People are grouped as **Heavy users** (8–14 activities), **Medium users** (4–7), **Low users** (1–3), or **No users** (0 activities).

This method shows how deeply people are involved in, or not involved in, and can help us compare cities and regions.

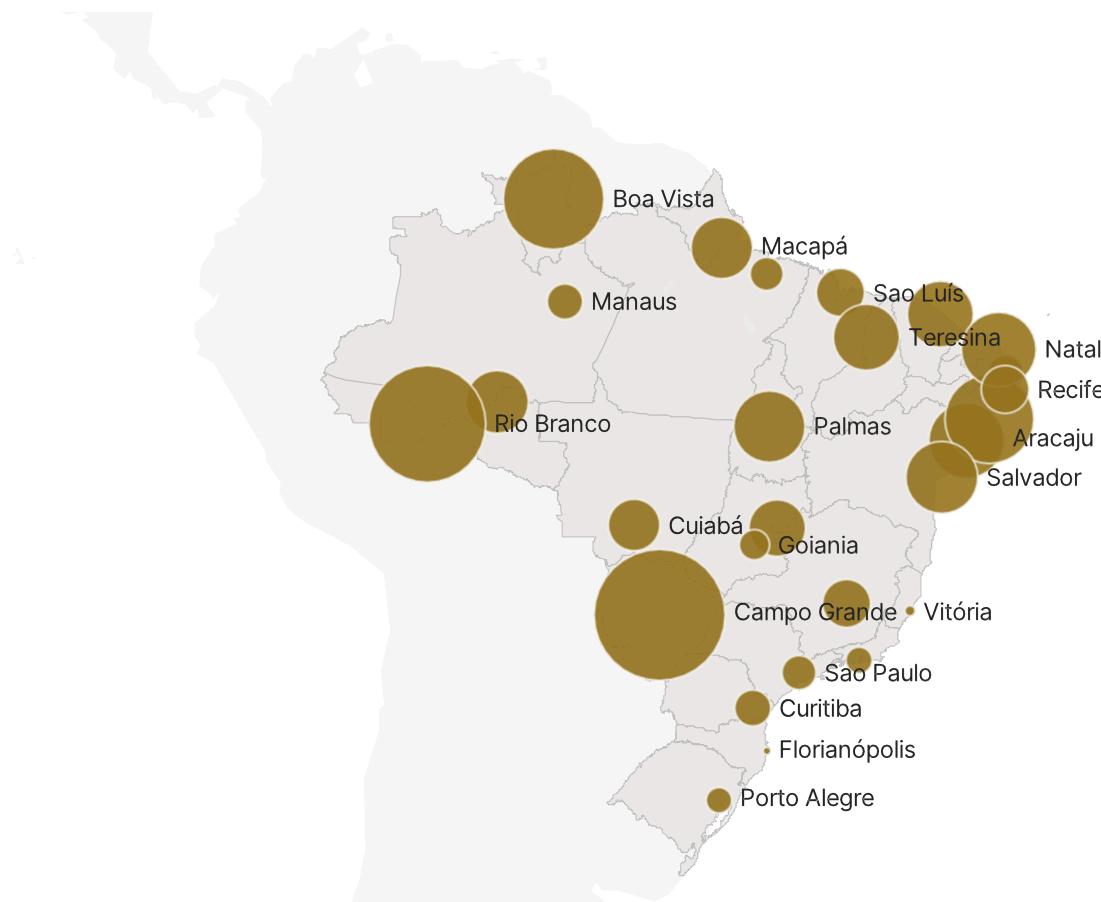
## Overall Participation Distribution



## Region inequality



The map of heavy users shows that the highest levels of cultural participation are found in a few large cities in the **South and Southeast**. São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, Curitiba, Florianópolis, and Porto Alegre stand out, with more people taking part in many cultural activities. Some cities in the Center-West have moderate participation, while most cities in the North and parts of the Northeast have fewer heavy users.



Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS | Esri, Michael Bauer Research GmbH 2024 , Instituto Brasileiro de G... Powered by [Esri](#)

### No Users: Where Cultural Participation is Scarce

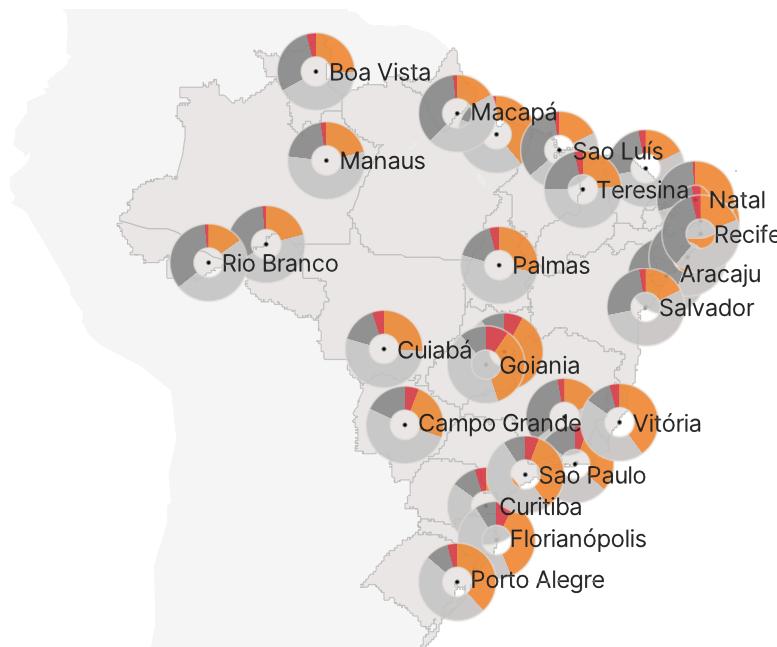
When we look at low users, the regional divide is even more obvious. Cities in the **North and Northeast** have the highest percentage of people who rarely take part in cultural activities and only do so in a few ways. On the other hand, many cities in the South and Southeast have fewer low users, which suggests that people there are more regularly and widely involved in cultural events.

Together, the maps of **heavy** and **no users** show a clear pattern of regional inequality in cultural participation.

The map below shows how socioeconomic classes are spread across the capitals, helping us see how these participation gaps relate to income differences.

## Socioeconomic Class

The socioeconomic map shows that capitals in the South and Southeast have more percentage of people in **Classes A and B**. In most northern capitals, most adults are in the lower classes **C** and **D/E**. So, regions with more middle- and upper-class residents also have higher cultural participation.



Esri, TomTom, FAO, NOAA, USGS | Esri, Michael Bauer Research GmbH 2024 , Instituto B... Powered by [Esri](#)

Socioeconomic classes distribution per city

## Education



Education level per Region

The chart above shows the education levels of adults (16 and older) in Brazil's **five regions of Brazil**. In the South and Southeast, most people have higher education, and fewer have primary schooling. In the North and Northeast, most adults have only an elementary education, and few have completed higher education. The Center-West is in the middle.

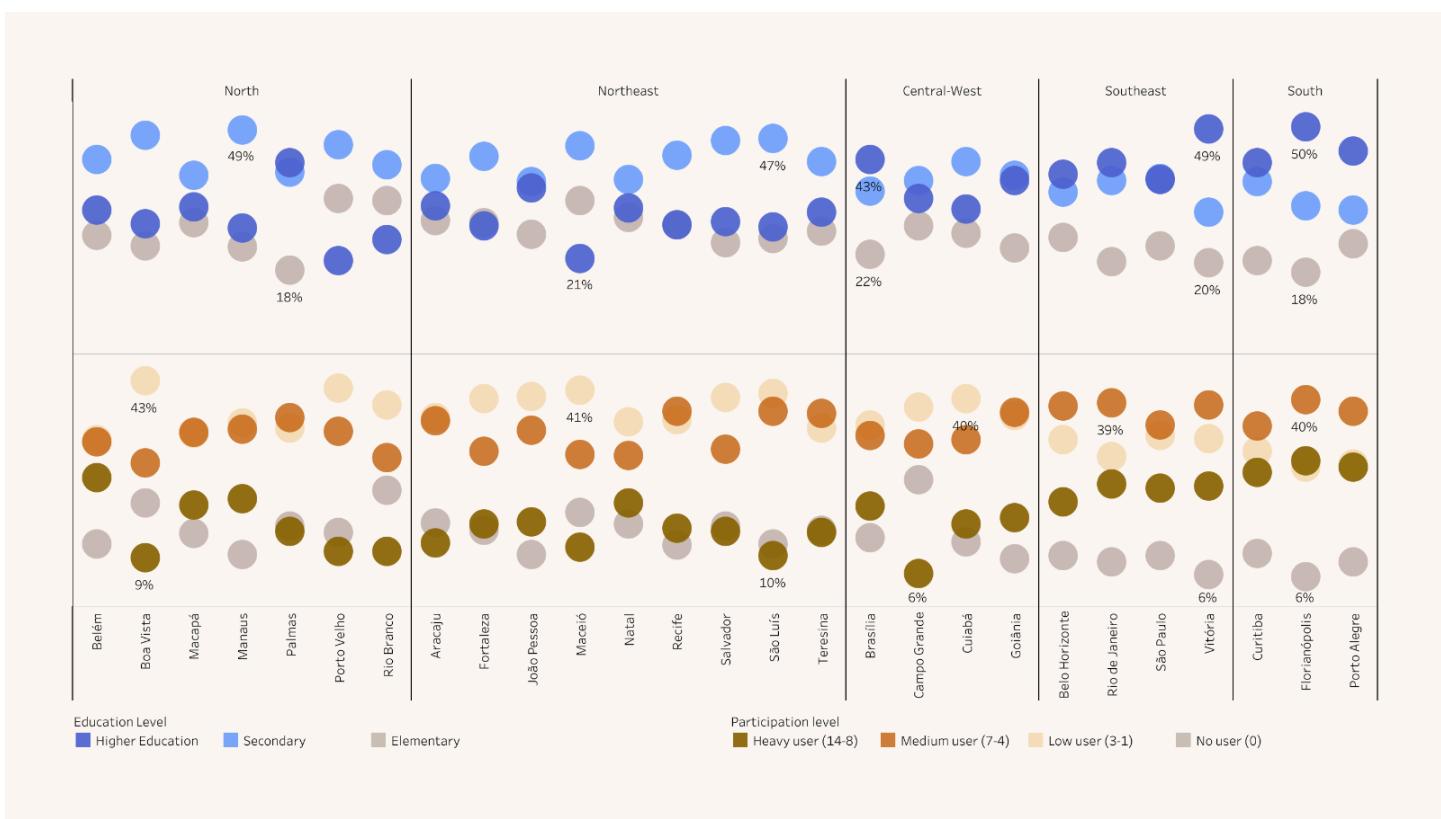


Education level per City

When we look at education by city, we see with details that some cities are outliers. Some capitals, like **Brasília**, have a higher percentage of people with higher education than nearby cities.

The graph below shows that cities with a higher percentage of higher education also have a higher percentage of people in the heavy user and medium user groups, while cities with a larger percentage of elementary education levels have more people who rarely participate.

These patterns do not prove that education causes cultural participation. However, they do show that differences in schooling and differences in cultural engagement often go together in Brazil's capitals.



Education level and Participation groups per City

## Conclusion

The maps in this story show that cultural participation is not spread evenly across Brazil's capitals. Most heavy users of culture

live in a few cities in the South and Southeast. Many capitals in the North and Northeast have more people who rarely take part.

**Socioeconomic class and education follow this same pattern: regions with more income and higher education also have more frequent cultural engagement.**

These results cover only adults living in capital cities and are based on self-reported survey data collected at a single point in time.

They do not include every type of culture or every possible reason for the patterns found. Instead of ending the discussion, the maps are meant to spark questions about how policy, infrastructure, and daily life can help expand access to culture in all parts of Brazil.

## Credits

This story was created by [Luciana Junqueira](#) as a final project for a GIS course at Santa Monica College. The analysis is based on microdata from the 2024 [Cultura nas Capitais survey](#) (~19,500 interviews with people aged 16 and older living in Brazil's capitals). All indicators used in the maps and charts are **weighted estimates**: survey weights were applied, and responses were aggregated by city so that the results represent the adult population of each capital, not just the interviewed sample. For each city, the project computed the weighted percentage of cultural participation groups (no, low, medium, heavy users), socioeconomic classes, and education levels.

Data processing and aggregation were done in **R**, producing a city-level table (with fields such as n\_weighted and the class/education shares) that was then joined to a capitals point layer in **ArcGIS Online** for mapping. Administrative boundaries for Brazil and contextual basemaps come from the **ArcGIS Living Atlas of the World**, and population context uses estimates from the [United Nations map](#). The final narrative and visualizations were assembled in **ArcGIS**.

**StoryMaps.**

For more information on the project and **Methodology** follow link to [GitHub](#)