

A map of the Maré favela in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, overlaid on a blue grid. The map shows various neighborhoods and landmarks, with several areas highlighted in light blue. White lines connect these highlighted areas to a large white graphic on the left side of the page. The graphic consists of several white squares of varying sizes, some of which are connected by thin white lines, resembling a stylized staircase or a network diagram. The highlighted areas on the map include: Praia de Ramos, Roquete Pinto, Parque União, Rubens Vaz, Nova Holanda, Parque Maré, Nova Maré, Baixa do Sapateiro, Morro do Timbau, Bento Ribeiro Dantas, Conjunto Pinheiro, Vila, and Conjunto Esperança. Other labels on the map include Baía de Guanabara, Canal do Cunha, Linha Amarela, and Linha Vermelha. A north arrow is located in the bottom right corner.

# BUILDING THE BARRI CADA DES

Mental health, violence, culture  
and resilience in Maré



# BUILDING THE BARRICADES

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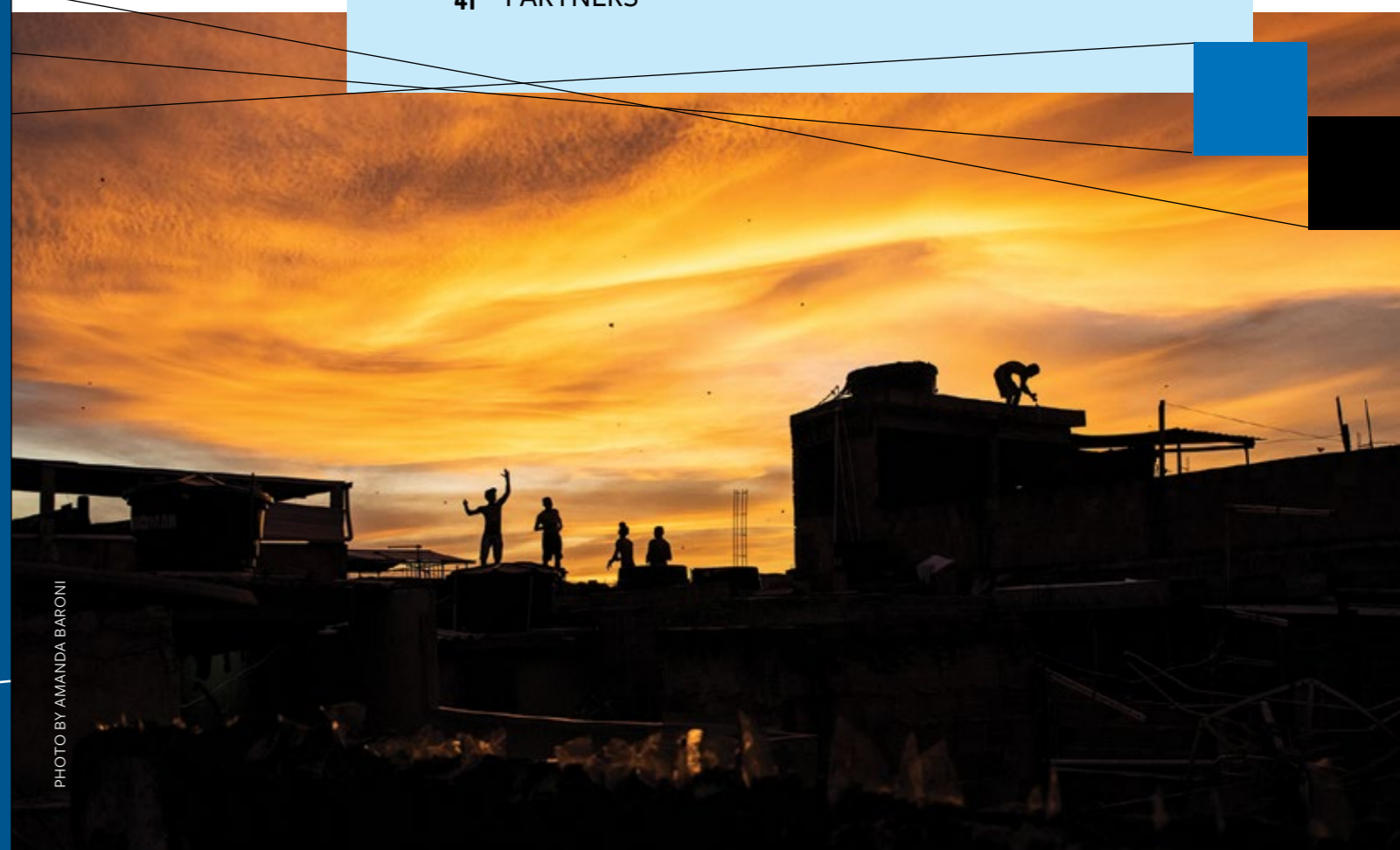


PHOTO BY AMANDA BARONI

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are immensely grateful to the residents of Maré who opened their doors and their lives to our researchers, courageously and generously sharing personal stories about how they live with – and confront – adversity in their daily lives. Without this, we would not have been able to produce this first investigation into the mental health of the population of this territory.

We also want to acknowledge the fundamental role of the partnerships established between the three universities that participated in Building The Barricades, as well as the involvement of individual researchers who dared to go beyond the conventional limits of academic research in order to produce new knowledge. We want to pay tribute to and thank the teams at QMUL, UFRJ and UFRGS, who trusted in this work and fulfilled the complex demands of this initiative, even in exceptionally troubled times.

At every stage of this journey we were accompanied by ‘critical friends’, whose own work sheds light on the intersection between violence, poverty, culture and mental health. We would like to express our special thanks to Silvia Ramos and Pedro Gabriel Delgado, who engaged in constructive dialogue with our team during the process of the investigation. And, last but not least, we would like to thank Anabela Paiva for her dedication and consummate skill in summarising the articles resulting from the studies and analyses in the original Portuguese version of this Bulletin, which has now been so carefully translated and adapted into English Jan Onoszko and Damian Platt.

This work was only made possible by the long-standing partnership between Redes da Maré and People’s Palace Projects, which is sustained by our mutual respect and pleasure in working together.

*Eliana Sousa Silva and Paul Heritage*

## NOTE ON THE ENGLISH VERSION OF THE BUILDING THE BARRICADES BULLETIN

Rio de Janeiro’s *favelas* house one quarter of the giant city’s inhabitants. *Favelas* are usually self-built communities constructed on unregulated land, but can sometimes include areas of standard, low-income public housing. Brazilian *favelas* bloomed in the context of a twentieth century rural exodus and population explosion, accompanied by inadequate government public housing policies. *Favelas* are diverse, multifaceted communities with thriving local economies and a predominantly young population.

Tragically, long-term criminalisation of *favelas* and the illegal drugs boom of the 1970s and 1980s empowered armed gangs, known locally as drug ‘factions’. Today, drug factions dominate entire *favelas* and engage in turf wars with rivals and with the police, who respond with extreme violence. In 2019, police in the state of Rio (population 17.5 million), who typically shoot first and ask questions later, killed 1810 alleged criminals in alleged confrontations. This figure is almost double that of the 1003 fatal victims of police action in the entire USA (population 328.3 million) that year. And, to complicate matters, in the last two decades, illegal paramilitary groups connected to police and politicians, simply called ‘militia’, have occupied numerous *favelas*, especially in the west of the city.

Maré – the word means ‘tide’ in English, but also shares the same root as the French word for swamp, *marais* – is a large community formed by sixteen individual *favelas*. Maré began with a collection of wooden houses built on stilts over salt marshes at the edge of Rio’s Guanabara Bay. Fishermen and migrant workers from impoverished rural communities in Brazil’s Northeast were among the first inhabitants. Today, their descendants live alongside new residents from as far away as Angola, in one of South America’s most densely populated and vibrant urban communities. Culturally rich, Maré possesses a sophisticated network of civil society initiatives and organisations, including the formidable Redes da Maré, which developed Building The Barricades alongside People’s Palace Projects.

To live in a *favela* in Rio, and in many other places in Brazil, is to live *with* the permanent threat of lethal violence, and *without* the rule of law. Building The Barricades is an essential pioneering study that helps us to comprehend the psychological impact of this unacceptable situation on millions of lives.

*Damian Platt*

# INTRODUCTION

How good is the mental health of the residents of Rio de Janeiro's *favelas*? What is the effect of armed violence on the minds and bodies of people living in these communities? How do they manage their well-being amid the risk of everyday violence? These questions guided the Building The Barricades research, a three-year investigation into the sixteen *favelas* that make up the Maré Complex in Rio de Janeiro.

Carried out between 2018 and 2020, the project is a pioneering initiative, which aims to measure and analyse the impact of violence on the health of residents in low-income neighbourhoods. It also investigates how Maré residents consume culture and develop resilience – the capacity to react positively to trauma and problems.

People exposed to violence are vulnerable to mental distress and a lower quality of life. Post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, phobias and attempted suicide are some of the mental disorders affecting those who live in situations of armed conflict. Their physical health, and social and emotional relationships are frequently damaged.

This report summarises the main findings of the Building The Barricades research.<sup>1</sup> There is also a more detailed analysis of the quantitative data from the research in *The Lancet Regional Health – Americas* (Volume 4, September 2021). In addition to a demographic profile, providing data on race, gender, age, education, occupation, income, cultural practices and religion, the survey also provides information about residents' exposure to violence: the kind of situations that frighten them, their perceptions about their own physical and mental health, cultural practices, and patterns of legal and illegal drug use.

To address such a wide range of issues, the project united researchers from the fields of Psychiatry, Social Sciences, Economics and Culture,<sup>2</sup> using both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Building The Barricades interviewed 1411 Maré residents aged eighteen and over. Most of this group – a total of 1211 people – were randomly selected to create a typical sample of Maré's adult population. Data from this sample was added to information obtained during the qualitative research, which consisted of twenty-seven interviews and four focus groups.

The survey reveals that Maré residents experience situations of extreme violence, such as being caught in gun battles or witnessing murders, with startling frequency. The data also shows that a majority of this population lives in a permanent state of fear. A fifth of respondents believe that this emotional state harms their physical health; nearly a third describe an impact on their mental health.

Building The Barricades interviewed a further 200 people, who regularly frequent Maré's open-use drug scenes, for a specific study. A very similar questionnaire to the one applied in the domestic survey was used, with additional questions related to living on the streets. This research also had a qualitative stage, consisting of eight interviews and a focus group.

Results show that those who frequent the open-use drug scene are even more exposed to violence than Maré's adult population as a whole. Although often presented as potential aggressors, these people are more commonly victims of violence and display high levels of mental distress.

Another aspect of the research involved creative projects carried out with young artists and residents of Maré's *favelas*. These included poetry workshops, which were developed into the audio-drama *Becos*.<sup>3</sup> The project *Maré From Home* brought together texts and photographs taken by local residents and photographers during the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>4</sup> Some of the images can be found in this report. The *Normal Sounds* choir, set up with those who frequent Maré's open-use drug scenes, had to be suspended due to the pandemic.

Building The Barricades proves how harmful regular exposure to armed violence can be for the mental health of a large population living with gang conflict and brutal police incursions. The main results of the survey are below.

<sup>1</sup> Complete studies both in Portuguese and English are available on the Redes da Maré and People's Palace Projects websites: <https://peoplespalaceprojects.org.uk/en/projects/building-the-barricades/> and <https://www.redesdamare.org.br/br/info/63/construindo-pontes>

<sup>2</sup> Building The Barricades is the result of a partnership between Redes da Maré, a civil society organisation which has operated in the area since 1997; People's Palace Projects, a research centre from Queen Mary University, London; Social Services and Psychiatry faculties of Rio de Janeiro Federal University (UFRJ); and the Cultural Economy Studies Centre (NECCULT) at Rio Grande do Sul Federal University (UFRGS).

<sup>3</sup> Listen to *Becos* at <https://becos.art.br/>

<sup>4</sup> Find out more information about the project at <https://www.amaredecasa.org.br>



PHOTO BY IZABEL DOS SANTOS CAMARGO



PHOTO BY JAILTON NUNES

# MULTIPLE MARÉS



PHOTO BY LEONARDO DA SILVA

Flanked by three main routes into the city of Rio de Janeiro and by the Guanabara Bay, Maré was officially recognised as a neighbourhood in 1994. Larger than 96% of Brazilian municipalities, this group of *favelas* has more than 47,000 households<sup>5</sup> and about 140,000 residents, 37% of whom originally came from Brazil's rural Northeast. Maré has more than 3000 commercial establishments, fifty schools, seven health clinics and one emergency unit. Despite these numbers, the provision of public policies is insufficient, both in quality and quantity, to ensure residents their basic rights.

The first residences in this territory date back to the early twentieth century, when fishermen and small traders settled next to the Guanabara Bay. By the 1950s, their improvised housing lined Avenida Brasil, a new highway being constructed to link Rio's suburbs to the city centre. Today, Maré's population is mainly black and Northeastern, giving it a rich and unique cultural specificity. Alongside these cultures are 'newer' ones, such as those brought by Angolan immigrants and Brazilians from the state of Minas Gerais. Geographically, Maré is located between the main access roads to the city through which about one million people from all social backgrounds and different regions of Rio de Janeiro circulate daily. This position gives Maré unparalleled visibility but, at the same time, is a reason for poor local air quality. Extreme levels of carbon dioxide, released daily, cause many health problems for residents.

Rio de Janeiro's municipal authority formally recognised Maré as a neighbourhood in 1994. However, Maré has not benefited from this status. On the contrary, residents deal with many challenges, since public bodies have failed to identify the specificities and demands of each of the sixteen *favelas* that make up Maré. And, fundamentally, residents do not have their right to public safety upheld.

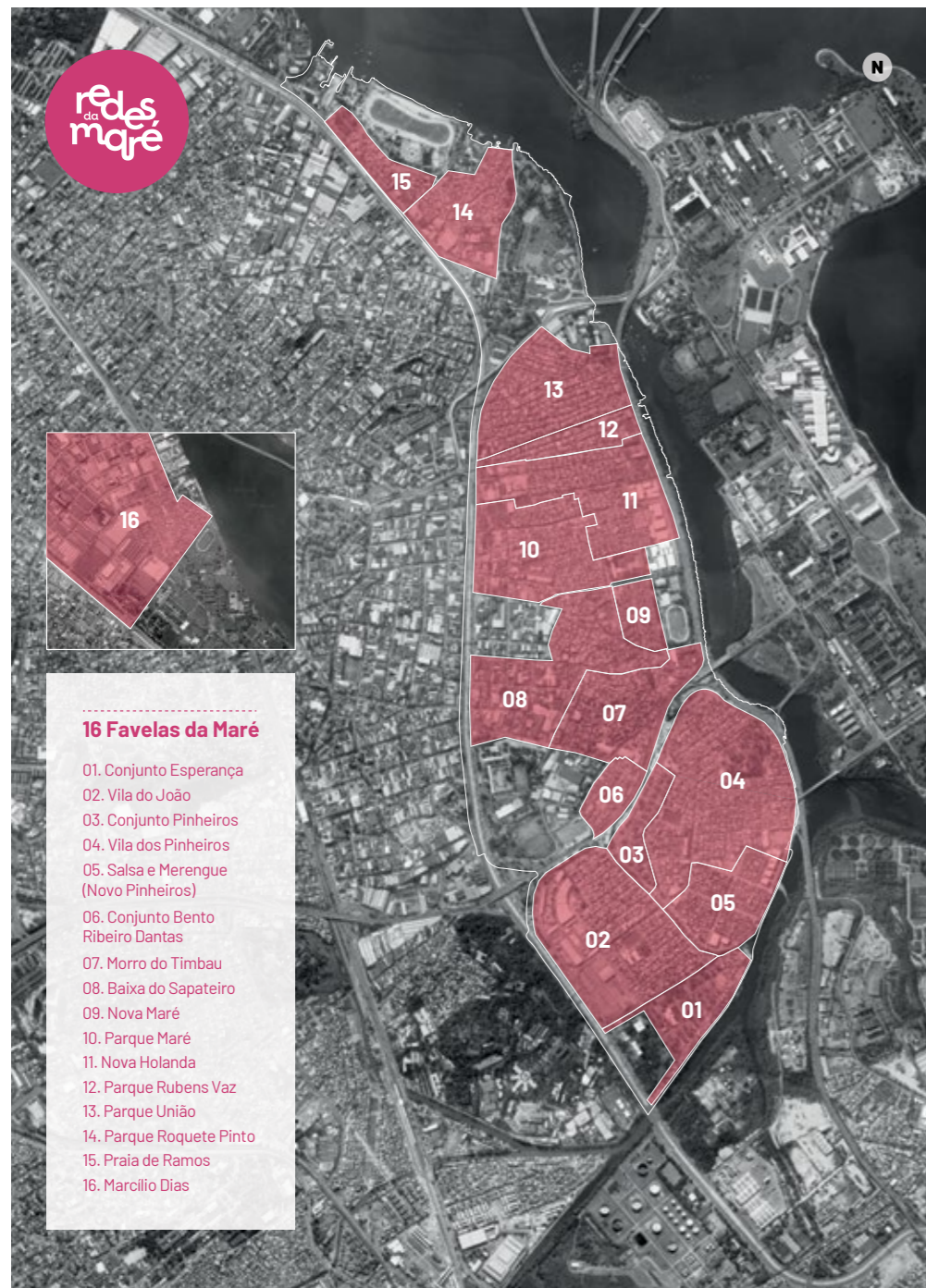
Maré suffers from long-standing structural problems and, significantly, from the stigma of violence. This is partially due to the presence of illegal armed groups that interfere with and control specific power relations, fermenting a dynamic of violence and instability in the community. This situation is worsened by the fact that the state itself, through the action of police and security forces, disregards and violates the rights of the civilian population.

<sup>5</sup> In 2013 the Maré Census, carried out by Redes da Maré, identified 47,776 households.

## HOW WE CONDUCTED THE RESEARCH

Anyone who lives in or visits Maré will know that the region is not homogeneous. Nova Holanda is different to Parque União, which, in turn, is distinct from Vila do João, and so on. Different terrain, histories, types of housing and economic activities make each of the sixteen communities unique.

Each of Maré's favelas has contrasting experiences of violence. In order to carry out a truly representative survey of Maré, the Building The Barricades team divided the sixteen favelas into three groups, delimited by urban and housing characteristics and by different regimes of control by armed groups. One of the groups, called Area 1, is dominated by the presence of one drug-trafficking faction. In Area 2, there is another faction; in another group of favelas, called Area 3, control is exercised by militia groups.



In each of these three territories, around 400 households were randomly selected to make up a representative sample of Maré's population. Researchers visited each home. Once in the house, a family member aged eighteen and over was randomly selected to answer the questionnaire. In all, 1211 people were interviewed.<sup>6</sup> Approximately one in every forty households in Maré was visited.

Respondents answered an extensive questionnaire, divided into the following sections:

- **Profile of the interviewee:** gender, age, race, length of residence in Maré, education, income and occupation, amongst other data;
- **Cultural, artistic and leisure interests:** internet use, sports or physical activities, religious affiliations and attendance, and community participation;
- **Physical and emotional health:** illnesses, treatment and access to health services. This section had fifty-three questions about psychological symptoms noticed by respondents during the previous week;
- **Legal and illegal drug use:** from alcohol to crack;
- **Experience of violence in the territory:** with a focus on exposure to armed violence;
- **Well-being and quality of life:** personal satisfaction with life in general, work, finances, relationships with family and friends, housing conditions, security, leisure, physical and mental health.

The qualitative phase adopted several approaches. Twenty in-depth interviews were conducted with residents; seven interviews with health professionals, social workers and Redes

da Maré employees; alongside four focus groups made up by participants from artistic projects, professionals from the Maré Women's Support Network, the researchers who administered the questionnaires from door to door, and a group of current and former open-use drug scene regulars.

The Building The Barricades team incorporated questions from pre-established research instruments to produce indicators to measure various aspects of the experience of Maré's residents. The *General Symptom Index*, looking at mental and emotional distress, was calculated, as was a *Subjective Quality of Life Index*, which measures an individual's satisfaction with various areas of life. Several indices were developed for the project: the *Exposure to Armed Violence Index* which combines information on the number, intensity and frequency of violent episodes; the *Subjective Violence Index*, which measures how often people feel threatened; and the *Cultural Participation Index* which measures the frequency with which people access arts and cultural practices, activities and facilities. In this Bulletin, only some results of this work will be mentioned, but the methodology used for each index and its results can be read in the complete studies, available online.

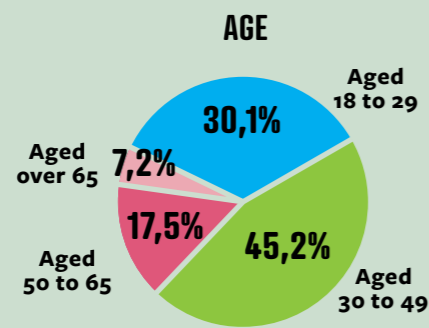
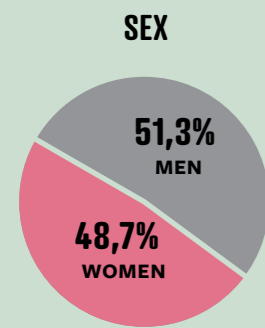
During the research, armed violence affected team members. Nine police operations took place in different areas of Maré during the period in which the interviews were conducted, leading to activities being cancelled. Other challenges included extreme rainstorms that, at times, prevented the researchers from travelling, as well as the need to work in the evening and at weekends in order to find residents at home.

<sup>6</sup> All respondents authorised the use of their information for academic purposes. Their names and communities of residence were kept confidential. Brazil's National Research Ethics Commission approved the research protocol.

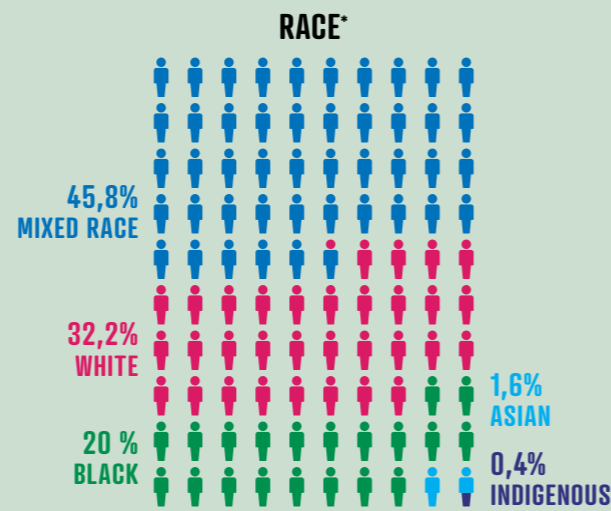
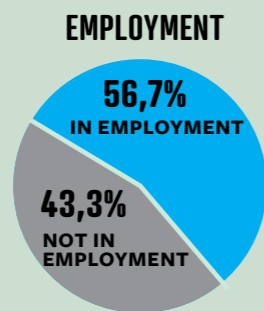
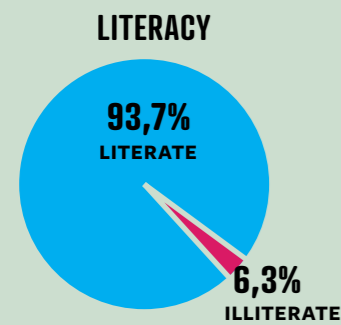
## A PROFILE OF MARÉ'S ADULTS

Building The Barricades focused on **Maré's adult population aged eighteen and over, an estimated group of 101,549 inhabitants.** From the responses collected, most of the population identifies as black/mixed race and is aged between eighteen and fifty. Just over half of respondents were women.

The survey shows a significant difference in the percentage of people who identify as black or mixed race compared with the 2013 *Maré Population Census*. At the time of the census, 52% of the adult population were registered as mixed race and 9% were black. In 2019, when the Building The Barricades household survey was carried out, 20% of adults in Maré identified as black and 45.8% as mixed race.



**76,162**  
adults in Maré are  
aged under 50



\*According to self-identification by respondents

Approximately **6,400** Maré residents don't know how to read or write

### EDUCATION

- 5,4% Did not start Primary Education
- 35,2% Did not complete Primary Education
- 7,4% Completed Primary Education
- 16,7% Did not complete Secondary Education
- 28,1% Completed Secondary Education
- 4,6% Did not complete Higher Education
- 2,6% Completed Higher Education

### HOUSEHOLD MONTHLY INCOME <sup>7</sup>

- 25,9% Up to R\$ 1 mil
- 49,6% R\$ 1.500 to R\$ 2.500
- 24,5% R\$ 3.000 and above

<sup>7</sup> Research participants chose from options ranging from R\$ 500 to R\$ 5000 at intervals of 500. In January 2021, one Brazilian Real was worth US\$ 0.19.



PHOTO BY FAGNER FRANÇA

# ARMED VIOLENCE AND DAILY LIFE



PHOTO BY JONAS WILLIAME

For the purpose of this research, armed violence is defined in relation to the circulation of firearms and the large number of armed conflicts and deaths in the territories. Experience of this violence is concentrated in Rio de Janeiro's *favelas* and peripheral communities. Victims are mainly those who live or travel in places where armed groups operate. For these communities, suffering, witnessing and fearing violent acts is part of a harrowing daily routine.

Life in Maré is profoundly affected by such violence. The day-to-day is marked by gunfire and shootouts, police operations, military occupations, conflicts between armed groups, injuries, murders, deaths following intervention by state actors, the closure of public facilities and restriction of movement.

Violence in *favelas* with a presence of armed groups has specific characteristics:

- Violent incidents are repeated and frequent;
- Violence occurs where people live;
- The perpetrator of violence is often a neighbour or an acquaintance;
- The violence often involves weapons of war (grenades, automatic rifles, machine guns);
- State security forces do not protect residents;
- Police forces only enter the neighbourhood in groups and during operations, which result in victims and rights violations;
- Local armed groups impose rules and punishments on residents.

Maré's *Public Security Bulletin*,<sup>8</sup> produced and distributed by Redes da Maré since 2016, eloquently demonstrates the devastation caused by armed violence in the *favelas*. **Between 2016 and 2020, this survey registered 151 deaths and 147 injuries caused by firearms.** The data below shows the incidences relating to the years of the Building The Barricades research. It is worth noting that, in these three years, the number of deaths in police operations (58) was much higher than those recorded in conflicts between armed groups (34). Likewise, those injured in police operations (57) outnumber those injured in conflicts between drug-trafficking factions (31).

OCCURRENCES	2018	2019	2020
Police operations	16	39	16
Deaths in police operations	19	34	5
Injuries in police operations	10	30	17
Conflicts between armed groups	27	30	26
Deaths in conflicts between armed groups	5	15	14
Injuries in conflicts between armed groups	7	15	9

Fonte: Boletim de Segurança Pública/ Redes da Maré

<sup>8</sup> Available at <https://www.redesdamare.org.br/br/publicacoes>

But the impact of armed conflict goes beyond injuries or deaths. According to a survey by Redes, in 2018, schools closed for ten days and health clinics for eleven days. In that same year, the rate<sup>9</sup> of deaths resulting from the intervention of state agents – the number of fatalities during operations and other police actions in Maré – was 13.7,<sup>10</sup> much higher than that for Rio de Janeiro's municipal area, which was 8.4.<sup>11</sup>

In 2019, thirty-nine police operations led to twenty-four days of school closure and shut down health clinics for twenty-five days. The death rate during police actions increased dramatically, reaching 23.4, more than the double that registered for Rio's municipal area that year, which was 10.9.

In 2020, during the coronavirus pandemic, and thanks to the mobilisation of *favela* residents, collectives, organisations and social movements, the Supreme Federal Court granted an injunction, suspending police operations in *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro except in exceptional cases. The measure resulted in a 59% reduction in police operations that year. Five deaths were recorded in these actions, with seventeen people injured. Health services were closed for eight days.

The Building The Barricades researchers asked respondents if they were victims of, or witnessed, events such as shootouts, assaults or gunfire, amongst other situations. The results are shocking: the proportion of Maré residents who experienced violence in the twelve months prior to the survey is significantly high.

In addition to presenting how often Maré residents were exposed to shootouts, murders and assaults, this research compares how often these situations of violence were reported by participants in the three areas analysed as part of the study.

Generally speaking, in Areas 1 and 2, where drug-trafficking factions operate, the proportion of people who say they have suffered or witnessed violent acts is higher than in Area 3, where the militia operates. It is important to qualify such results. We know from the interviews carried out in the qualitative research – and from the researchers' experience in Maré – that militia members coerce residents in ways that are not easily captured in research dedicated to understanding the impact of war-like violence on mental health. In these places, violence is not experienced by the public in the display of weapons and conflict with police forces, but through demand for financial payment and the control of activities and behaviour.

Contrasts between the areas with drug-trafficking groups and those with the militia are evidence of the complexity of the phenomenon of violence in Maré, as well as its impacts on *favela* residents. It is important to take these aspects into account when reading the data, as well as other elements, which were not the subject of the Building The Barricades research. The results presented here indicate a need to undertake further study, based on these findings, to understand the specificities that exist in the context of Maré's *favelas*.

<sup>9</sup> The number of events divided by 100,000.

<sup>10</sup> The death rates due to interventions by state actors in Maré were calculated by the project *De Olho na Maré*, by Redes da Maré.

<sup>11</sup> Source: Institute of Public Security.



## CAUGHT UP IN A SHOOTOUT

Gun battles are the most emblematic events involving armed violence. In Maré's conflict zones – sites where there are consistent clashes between rival groups and with security forces – residents live in permanent tension. In 2019, the year of the house-to-house survey, in addition to thirty-nine police operations (thirteen of which used armoured helicopters), there were five clashes between armed groups and seventy-three reports of shots being fired without obvious cause.

The questionnaire administered by the research proved that this is a common experience. Of the 1211 respondents, **44% report being caught in the middle of a gun battle in the previous twelve months**. Using the sample as a basis, the research estimates that **44,000 residents have experienced this situation** during the same period. Of those caught in the middle of an exchange of fire, 73% have suffered this experience more than once, which corresponds to 32% of all adult residents.

*In the middle of a lesson, scared that the helicopters would shoot down, we spent hours hidden in the bathroom.... The police came in and were shooting, the children threw themselves on the floor and we couldn't run away, we didn't know what to do... it was terrifying.*

(Female, black, aged twenty-one, resident)

Among those who reported having gone through a situation of this type, we found that there are:

- More men (53%) than women (47%);
- More black and mixed race people (46%) than white people (39%);
- More young people: 59% of people aged eighteen to twenty-nine were caught in the middle of a shootout (the percentage is 44.5% for those aged thirty to forty-nine; 29% for those aged fifty to sixty-five and 12% amongst those aged over sixty-six).

The percentage difference of people who have been through this experience in different areas of Maré is noteworthy. In Areas 1 and 2, where different drug-trafficking factions operate, 50% and 48% of residents, respectively, say they have been caught in the middle of gunfire. In Area 3, controlled by militia groups, where reports of armed conflicts and especially, police operations, are practically non-existent, only 5% report having experienced this. One hypothesis to explain this discrepancy is that policing and other types of interactions involving police officers and criminal groups operate differently in Maré's various territories, particularly those where the militia are present.

## WITNESSING DEATHS OR INJURIES BY FIREARMS

No less than **17% of Maré's residents aged eighteen and over have seen someone being shot or murdered** in the year prior to the survey – a percentage that corresponds to a total of 17,019 people. Results show that 55% of these individuals, or 9% of all adult residents in Maré, have witnessed this act more than once in the period.

Territorial differences also appear in this category. In Area 1, 23% of people witnessed someone being shot; in Area 2, 15%. In Area 3, occupied by militia forces, the proportion of residents who witnessed an event of this type is only 2.1%. Once again, this difference demonstrates the variety of public security contexts in Maré, especially with regard to police interventions.

## HAS ANYONE CLOSE TO YOU EVER BEEN KILLED OR INJURED?

This question dramatically reveals the extensive reach of violence in Maré. Unlike other questions, which take into account the period of a year before the survey, this question refers to the entire lifetime of the interviewee. **About a quarter of residents (25.5%) know a close acquaintance who has been injured or murdered. More than half of these people (51.7%, or 13% of all adult residents) report more than one victim** among their relationships.

Area 2 residents are the most affected: 28.2% know someone close to them who has been killed or shot. In Area 1, the proportion is 25%. Even in Area 3, the percentage is significant: 14%. The fact that this result is greater than the ones in the previous questions can be justified by the lack of a specific time period. The unlimited time frame allows the answer to refer to experiences that took place when the person lived in another Maré territory, or from a time in the past when the situation was different.

*A friend of ours died in a shooting, Paulo, he died the year before last; my hairdresser was shot with a rifle, she went to the window to see what was happening and died, and there was a neighbour who went to buy bread in the morning wearing headphones, he didn't hear the shooting start and died in the street carrying his bread.*

(Male, aged twenty-three, resident)<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Due to difficulties with remote communication during the research's qualitative phase of interviews, carried out during the pandemic, some interviewees didn't declare all the requested information, such as age or race.

## WITNESSING PHYSICAL ASSAULTS

Almost **a quarter (24%) of Maré's adult residents have witnessed someone being beaten up or assaulted** in the twelve months prior to the survey – an estimated total of 23,753 people. For 63% of these people (or 15% of the adult population), this has happened more than once.

Again, the percentage of witnesses of these assaults was higher in Areas 1 and 2 (30% and 23%, respectively) than in Area 3 (7.3%).

*The worst time was when the militia was here, they beat you up, grabbed you in the street, hit you...*  
(Male, black, aged twenty-nine, resident)

*I confess that when I witnessed the situation of my son ... and my nephew, sitting on the floor getting beaten up ... I cried.*  
(Male, black, aged forty-six, resident)

## HOUSE RAIDS AND MATERIAL DAMAGE

**Thirteen in every 100 Maré residents aged eighteen and over have had their homes raided** in the twelve months prior to the Building The Barricades survey. This percentage indicates that a total of 13,357 households have been invaded, often accompanied by verbal abuse, extortion and material loss. Among residents who have had their homes raided, 47% have experienced this situation more than once. Results show that **12% of residents report that they or their family members have suffered some type of material loss.**

As with other events, Area 3 has a low incidence of house raids: only 1.3% of residents report the problem. This type of violation occurs more frequently in Area 1, where 20% of the interviewees claim to have experienced such violence. In Area 2, the percentage is 11%. The difference is explained by the much lower number of police operations in Area 3, and in Area 2 by the prevalence of high-rise buildings, which seem to inhibit household searches.

*It's happened before when I've been asleep and been woken up with a machine gun in my face. They enter, open the door...*  
(Female, aged fifty-three, resident)

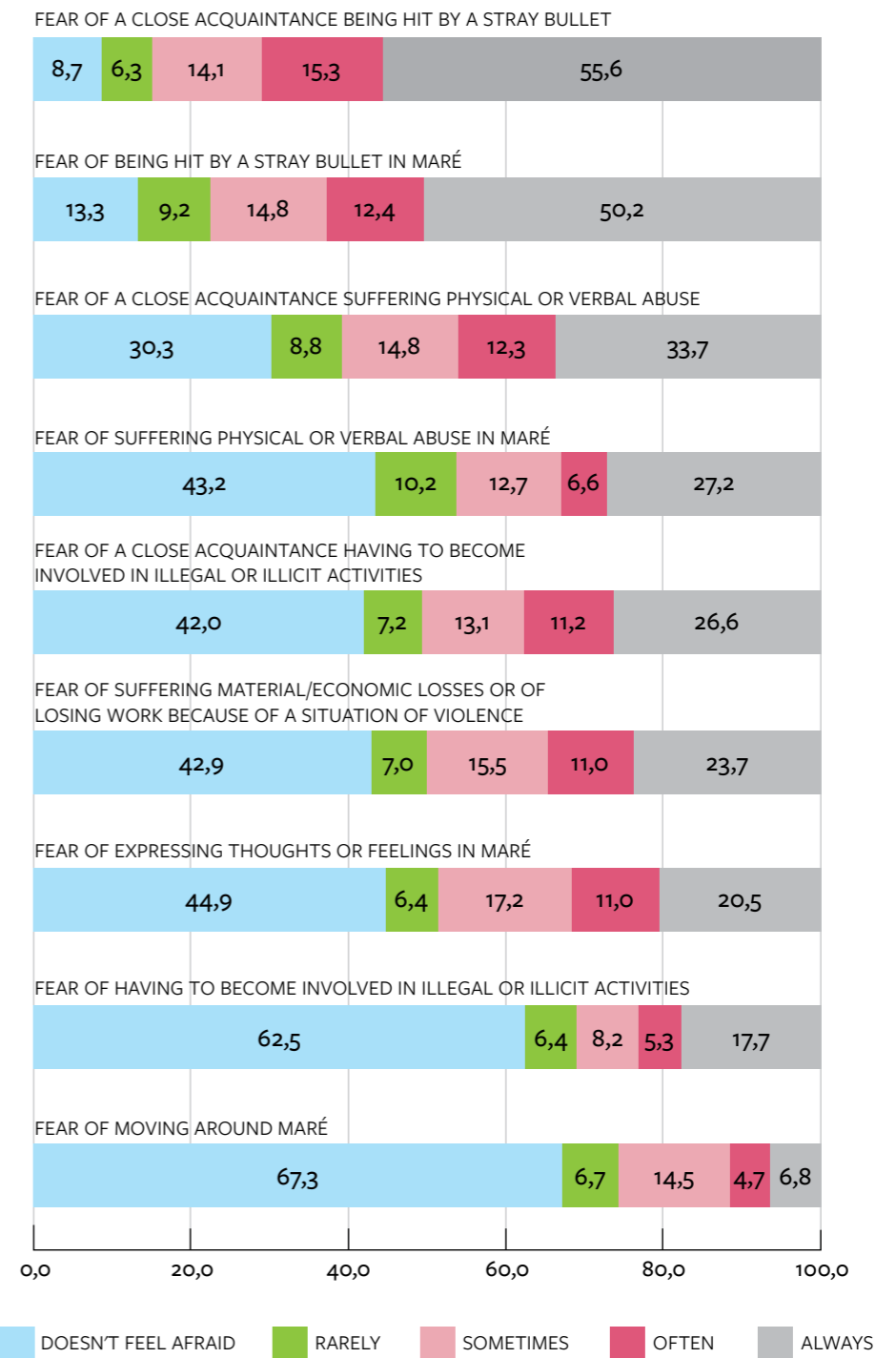
*My television smashed on the floor, he yanked it like this to see what was behind it, but yanked it with such hatred that it fell on the floor, you know? They're things I won't forget.*  
(Male, black, aged twenty-two, resident)

## FEAR: A CONSTANT COMPANION

The impact of armed violence on *favela* residents goes well beyond objective dimensions like death and property damage. Violence restricts the movement of people and ideas, causes trauma, affects health and reduces trust in institutions. Building The Barricades sought to understand the complex consequences of violence on Maré's population based on quantitative data and on residents' reports.

The following graph represents different expressions of fear and their frequency, based on data obtained in interviews with Maré's population.

### FEAR OF ARMED VIOLENCE AND FEELINGS OF INSECURITY IN MARÉ



Source: Data from the Building The Barricades research, 2020-2021

In general, the responses about fear of violence and feelings of insecurity by Maré's population are concentrated at the scale's two extremes – 'never' and 'always'.

**Half of the population (50.2%) 'always' feel afraid of being shot by a firearm in Maré. An even larger number (55.6%) 'always' feel afraid that someone close to them will be shot.**

If we add to these groups those who state they're 'often' afraid, the number of those who 'frequently' feel afraid of being hit by a stray bullet<sup>13</sup> is 63% – rising to 71% when referring to another person. Therefore, the fear of armed violence accompanies most residents on a daily basis.

Despite this, **the majority of those interviewed – 67.3% – state that they aren't afraid of moving around Maré**, a fear reported by 11.5% of participants. Likewise, **62.5% of the population aren't afraid that they might have to engage in illicit or illegal activities.**

It's worth noting that about **a third of Maré's population (31.5%) is often afraid to say what they think and feel.** Another 35% are afraid of suffering some economic or material loss.

## HEALTH AND ARMED VIOLENCE

Maré residents feel the impact of routine violence on their bodies. According to the results of the Building The Barricades research, **a fifth of the population (20%) believes that violence in Maré affects their physical health.** Results show that 37% of respondents have reported at least one physical health problem in the three months prior to the survey. The main problems highlighted by those who reported physical afflictions are high blood pressure (30% of reported problems) and degenerative muscle and joint conditions, such as back problems (23%).

An even larger number of Maré's inhabitants have identified mental and emotional problems caused by violence: in total, **31% have identified harmful effects on their mental and emotional health.** A fifth (19.5%) of those who answered the questionnaire say they have suffered from some mental health problem in the three months prior to the survey. Among those who have said they noticed mental and emotional consequences, the most common disorders are bouts of depression (26%) and anxiety (25.5%).

A higher number of residents directly exposed to violence report harmful consequences: among those who found themselves in the middle of gun battles, **44% believe their mental health has suffered** and **29% have noticed effects on their physical health.** For those who have not experienced this situation, the percentages are 21% and 12.5%.

Of those caught up in shooting incidents, 12% report having suicidal thoughts and **30% have had thoughts of death**, an indication of the damage to mental health caused by exposure to violence. Those who have been through this experience have or have had physical symptoms such as difficulty sleeping (44%); loss of appetite (33%); nausea and stomach upsets (28%) and chills or indigestion (21.5%).

As with the reports of exposure to violence, issues relating to health problems differ depending on the individual *favela* where the respondent lives. For this finding, it is essential to observe the differences in the activities of illegal armed groups – the militia and drug dealers – in each area.

Reports of damage to health vary according to the territory. In Areas 1 and 2, where drug factions operate, the percentage of individuals who believe that their physical health has been damaged by exposure to violence is 23% and 19.5%, respectively. In Area 3, the proportion is 8%.

Considerable differences regarding mental health are observed: 33% of respondents in Areas 1 and 2 say their mental and emotional health has been damaged by violence in Maré, while in Area 3 this percentage is 12%.

*I have this friend who, when he hears a shot, or something like that, sends me a message.... Are you at home? Are you out? Let me know because I'm worried about you.*

(Male, black, resident)

*I'm afraid when a friend or family member goes out. I'm afraid someone will get shot, you know? I think it's very sad when I hear stories like: So-and-so was leaving for work and was shot, a child was doing something and was shot.*

(Female, white, aged forty-one, resident)

The fear of armed violence is expressed non-verbally, in residents' habits and behaviour. In areas around the dividing lines – boundaries between rival groups' territories – building constructions follow particular norms. Bricks are always stacked so as to better protect residents from gunshots. The residents' automatic reaction to gunfights is also revealing. At the first shot everyone runs, without delay, to the room considered the safest and adopts protective positions.

*Reports of the children's mothers say [that] when they hear a helicopter, the children shake all over with fear. It even makes them defecate. They can't leave the house. Several women report health problems.*

(Female, participant in the focus group with professionals from Maré)

*So it stays in your head. Kind of like ..., because I have a child, I can't go out, or when I go out, I have to go out looking around everywhere to see what things are like, to see if it's not dangerous.*

(Male, black, aged twenty-nine, resident)

<sup>13</sup> Although the term 'stray bullet' is criticised for playing down the acts of those shooting in populated areas where there is a risk of hitting people not involved in the conflict, the term was used in the survey questionnaire because it is commonly used to designate firearm projectiles that hit people not involved in the fact or event that prompted the shooting.

## LEGAL AND ILLEGAL DRUG USE

Despite the plentiful and ready availability of legal and illegal drugs in Maré, of the participants in the Building The Barricades household survey, 17% say they have never taken any psychoactive substance – not even legal ones, such as alcohol and cigarettes. These remain the most commonly used drugs amongst members of the representative sample of Maré’s adult population: 78.8% of them have tried alcohol and 36.7% tobacco at some point in their lives. Of the 1211 respondents, 13.8% report having used marijuana and 4.1% cocaine.

The survey investigated how often people use these substances. Alcohol is the most common: 27% of respondents drink on a daily or weekly basis, 11.8% are regular tobacco smokers and 4.1% regularly use marijuana.

### EXPERIENCES WITH AND RECENT USE OF PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES

SUBSTANCE	PROPORTION OF MARÉ’S ADULT POPULATION WHO...		
	(...) TRIED IT AT LEAST ONCE IN THEIR LIFE	(...) USED IT IN THE LAST THREE MONTHS	(...) USED IT REGULARLY* IN THE LAST THREE MONTHS
Tobacco derivatives	36,7%	14,5%	11,8%
Alcohol	78,8%	49,0%	27,1%
Marijuana	13,8%	5,0%	4,1%
Cocaine	4,1%	0,30%	0,3%
Crack	0,6%	0,08%	0,08%
Amphetamines or ecstasy	1,0%	0,16%	0,0%
Inhalants	1,1%	0,08%	0,0%
Hypnotics/sedatives	0,3%	0,0%	0,0%
Hallucinogens	1,0%	0,04%	0,0%
Opioids	0,1%	0,00%	0,0%
Other substances	0,2%	0,05%	0,05%

\*Daily or weekly use

Source: Data from the Building The Barricades research, 2020-2021

## VIOLENCE MAKES ACCESS TO SERVICES DIFFICULT

One of the most serious effects of armed violence in favela territories are the barriers it creates in accessing public services and facilities, including healthcare. Health professionals working in clinics, and the families who need to access them, face regular difficulties in reaching services. Health centres frequently close their doors and cancel home visits due to conflicts or operations. According to the survey data, 54% of adults in Maré have suffered some kind of restriction in accessing public facilities as a result of violent incidents. In 2019, Maré’s health centres had to close for twenty-five days due to police operations, meaning 15,000 consultations were not carried out.

As with other aspects of violence in Maré, restrictions on movement is mostly reported in Areas 1 (65% of respondents) and 2 (57%). In Area 3, 3.9% of survey participants have had their access to services restricted.

The research also revealed other harmful impacts of armed violence:

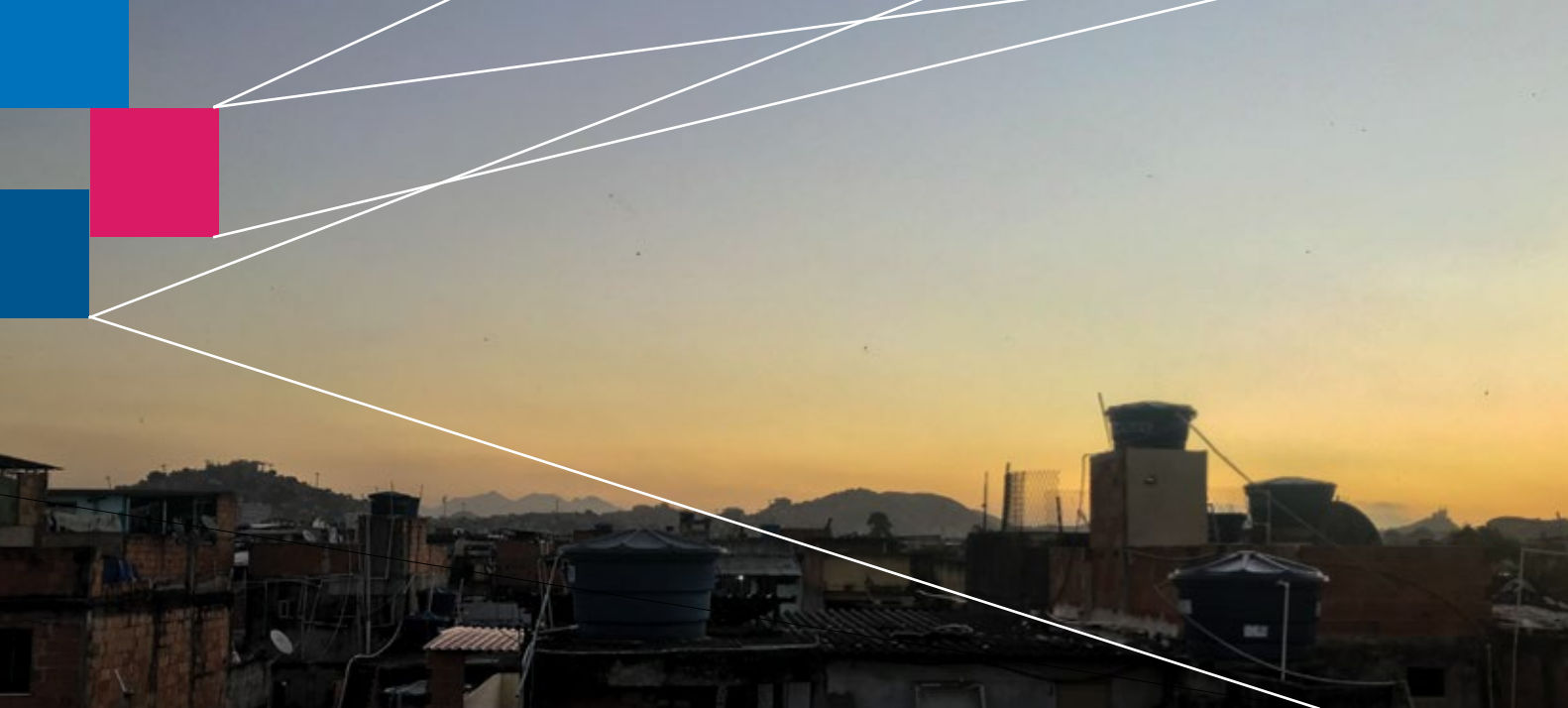
- 26.5% of the resident population have suffered some negative impact to their work, school or university, due to violent incidents in Maré during the year prior to the survey. Of those who reported this type of situation, 84% of people have experienced it more than once.
- 5.5% of residents have suffered discrimination, prejudice or racism in Maré. Another 5% have reported that a family member suffered similar abuse.
- 11% of the population have suffered verbal abuse in the twelve months prior to the research; 8% have had family members who suffered this type of violence.

*Let’s say you have an appointment at 10am, but the shooting started at the back of my street at 9:40am and this conflict lasts half an hour .... I missed the appointment, because the doctor needs to follow a schedule, right?*

(Male, resident)

*I’ve learned a lot from therapy and I think favelas need that. I think there should be a lot, really a lot of psychologists in the family clinics because ... this is not a luxury, it’s a necessity.*

(male, white, resident)



# RESILIENCE, RESISTENCE, SURVIVAL

PHOTO BY JAILTON NUNES

How can you make life bearable when fear is a constant companion? How can you believe in the future when deaths, neglect and violence make individuals mistrust institutions and the state? How can you build resilience – the ability to recognise and overcome painful and traumatic events?

The Building The Barricades survey sought answers to these questions among Maré's residents. Maintaining bonds of affection and mutual support, being associated with a religion, and access to spaces and activities are important factors in promoting well-being. Cultural habits in Maré were the subject of a specific study, presented below.

## SUPPORT NETWORKS

Support networks formed by family, friends and neighbours are essential to deal with adversity, including the effects of violence. On average, Maré's households have 3.5 members. An estimated 72% of homes house three or more people. There are married couples in 55% of households and children in 56%.

In the interviews, Maré's population have shown they are satisfied with aspects of their lives, such as family and friends. Of those interviewed, **80% are satisfied<sup>14</sup> with their family and 85% with the people they live with.** In addition, **82% say they have 'a true friend'** and 66% say they have seen a friend in the last week. The majority of the population (69%) say they are satisfied with the number and quality of their friendships.

To analyse resilience, the research compared the results about perceptions of well-being to indicators like the *Exposure to Armed Violence Index*.<sup>15</sup> In general, lower levels of satisfaction and well-being are associated with greater exposure to armed violence. Being in a marital relationship, for example, is associated with less exposure to episodes of armed violence, regardless of age.

*This wife of mine, she changed my thinking from water to wine. She showed me other ways of life, showed me other places.... I was following a path, I managed to continue my life journey with my studies...*

(Male, black, aged twenty-two, resident)

<sup>14</sup> This percentage is the sum of the percentages of those who said they were 'somewhat satisfied', 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the relationship with their family.

<sup>15</sup> This index combines information about the incidence of episodes, taking into account the number, intensity and frequency of people's experiences.

## RELIGION

For interviewees, religious faith generates a sense of belonging and protection. According to the survey, **71% of Maré's adult population practices a religion**, and 36.5% attend a religious venue once a week or more. The largest groups are Catholics (about 30%) and Pentecostal Evangelicals (28.5%).

*I've been through a lot of difficulties, I lost a relative, I have a relative in prison.... I lost my father in an awful accident. If it wasn't for my faith I wouldn't be here talking to you, I'd already be crazy or something.*

(Male, aged thirty-two, resident)

## SPORTS AND ACTIVITIES

**Almost half (46%) of Maré's adults practice a sport or physical activity.** Of these, 56.7% say they exercise daily and 31% at least once a week. The most mentioned activities are walking (28.4%), football (23.6%) and gymnastics and/or weight training (18.7%).

Physical activity is more common among men (57.1%) than women (35.9%). More than half of young people aged eighteen to twenty-nine exercise (57%), 43.8% of those aged between thirty and forty-nine also exercise, as do 39.5% of those aged between fifty and sixty-five and 32% of those aged over 65.

For those who undertake physical activities, the *Exposure to Armed Violence Index* is 30% higher than amongst those who don't exercise. The relationship may indicate that using and visiting facilities is linked to a lifestyle with more time spent outside and in public spaces, which would increase the chances of being exposed to episodes of violence.

## ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH YOUR LIFE?

The Building The Barricades survey questionnaire measured Maré residents' perception of their well-being and quality of life based on a consolidated method, known as MANSAs.<sup>16</sup> Participants gave answers about thirteen aspects of their lives, from their financial situation to sex life, as well as security, physical health, mental health and the number and quality of friendships. Almost a quarter (24.3%) of the adults interviewed in Maré say they are 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with their lives. A much smaller group (11.9%) say they are 'very dissatisfied' or 'dissatisfied'.

<sup>16</sup> Manchester Short Assessment of Quality of Life

## CULTURE AND LEISURE IN MARÉ

Access to leisure and cultural opportunities, in specific venues or at home, is an important factor in promoting well-being and overcoming daily stress. One aim of the Building The Barricades research was to find out if the adult population of Maré has knowledge of local leisure and cultural venues, and makes use of them.

The survey found that **71% of Maré's adult population know at least one arts and cultural venue in the territory**, and 45% know and are able to name two or more of them. Places most remembered by respondents are the Maré Museum, the Maré Olympic Village, the Lona Cultural (Cultural Marquee) and the Maré Arts Centre.

Knowing, however, doesn't mean visiting. Results show that 75% of respondents, even though they know the places, hadn't visited any in the three months prior to the survey. And for 7% of the venues mentioned, they visit less than once a month. So, only 18% of responses show that residents take advantage of cultural facilities at least once a month or more.

*I visit the Village [Olympic Village], do a little run to keep myself healthy .... We practice sports, we enjoy the little square we have there, but ... we stay there, in that state of alert, not knowing what could happen.*

(Male, aged forty-six, black, resident)

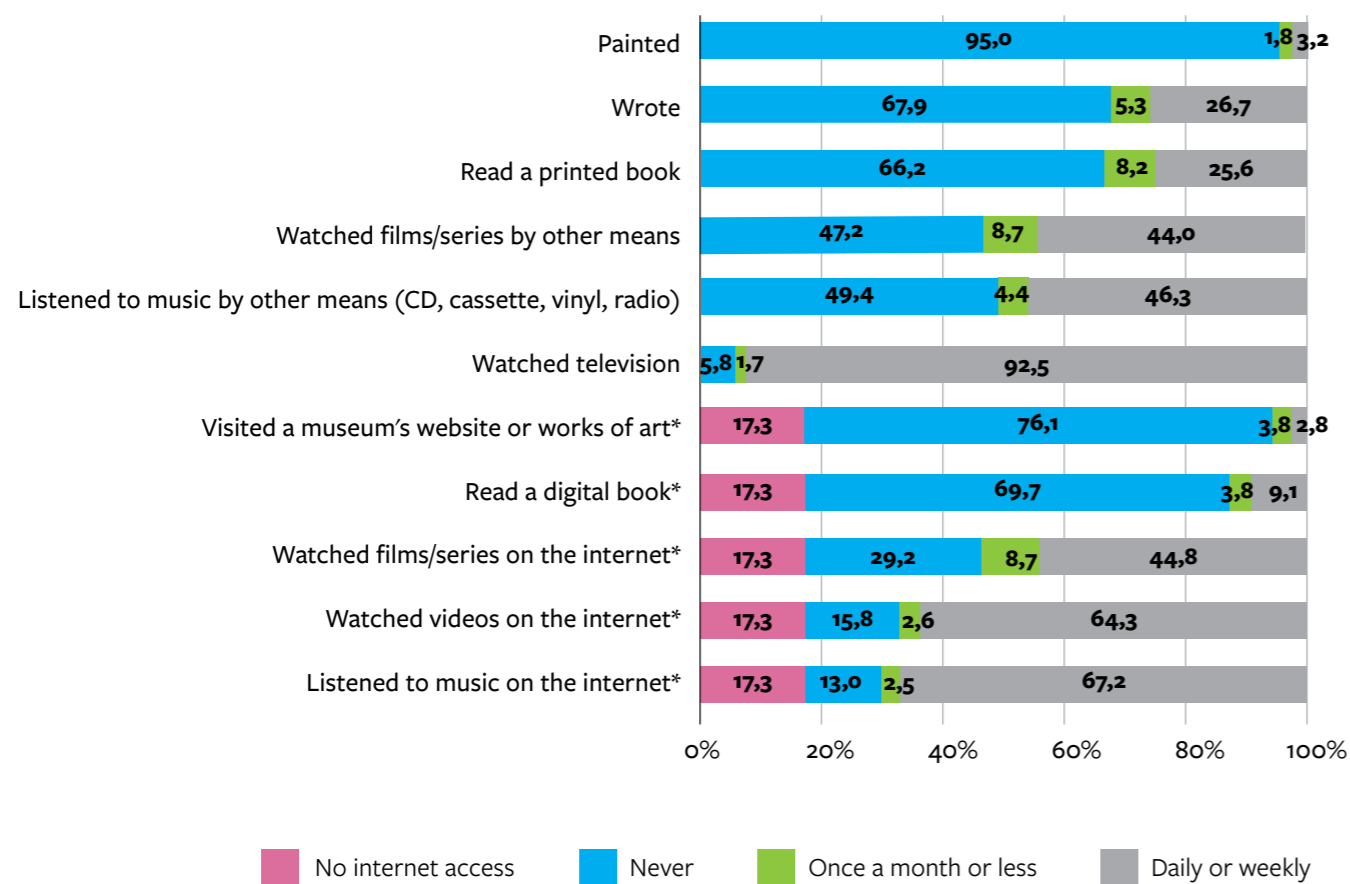


PHOTO BY LARISSA PAIVA

## CULTURAL CONSUMPTION IN MARÉ

To better understand the choices made by Maré's residents, cultural activities were divided into two categories: those practiced inside, and those practiced outside the home. The following are classified as indoor activities: watching television, listening to music on the internet or through other means (radio, CD and vinyl), painting, writing, reading printed and/or digital books and watching films and series on the internet or on other media (DVD and television). External activities are: listening to live music, going to the theatre, photography, singing/dancing, visiting a museum and going to the cinema. Answers about these activities were grouped into three levels in the graph below: don't practice/participate, practice once a month or less and practice weekly.

ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL PRACTICES CARRIED OUT AT HOME (%)



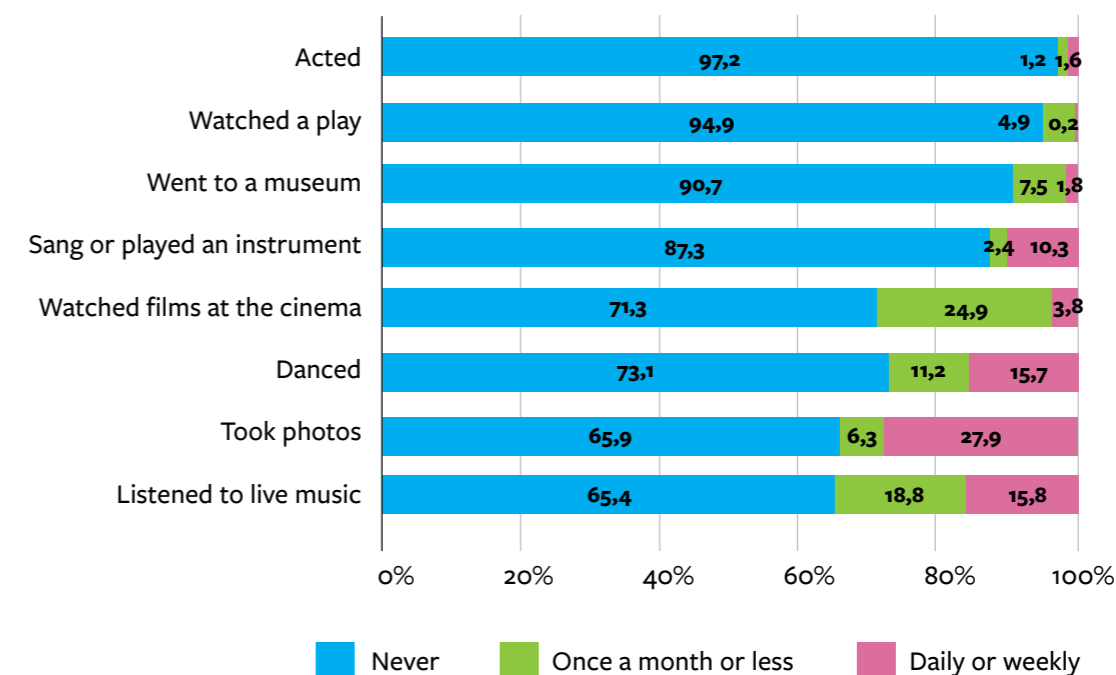
\*Activities carried out on the internet

Source: Data from the Building The Barricades research, 2020-2021

**Among activities practiced at home, the most popular is watching television.** A large part of Maré's adult population does this, and the vast majority on a weekly or daily basis (92.5%). This is followed by music listened to over the internet, reported as a daily practice by 67.2% of people, and videos watched on the internet (64.3%). These percentages are significant despite the fact that almost a quarter (24.6%) of Maré's population did not have access to the internet in the three months prior to the survey. Listening to music by other means (such as CDs and radio) has been cited as a frequent habit by 46.3% of respondents, and watching films or series by other means (such as DVD, Blu-ray or TV) by 44%. Watching films or series over the internet is practiced by 44.8%, almost the same percentage as those who watch through other means, such as DVD, Blu-ray or TV (44.8%).

The survey shows that the internet is a popular way of accessing culture in Maré, where **83% of the adult population has access to the internet.** But the quality of services still leaves something to be desired. **Almost a fifth of those who use the internet (18%) rate their connection as bad or terrible** and only 40.9% as regular. Most, therefore, face difficulties in taking advantage of cultural products available online.

ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL PRACTICES PERFORMED OUTSIDE THE HOME (%)



Source: Data from the Building The Barricades research, 2020-2021

Unlike activities carried out indoors, only a minority of residents consume culture outside their homes. Listening to live music, taking photographs, dancing and going to the cinema are popular options among Maré's residents. There is a difference, however, in how often these activities are carried out. Photography, for example, is the most daily and frequent activity cited, as it is a weekly or daily cultural habit for almost 28% of people. Although going to the cinema is a habit for around 25% of Maré's adult population, only 3.8% report doing this activity weekly. Most people who go to the cinema do so once a month or less often. Going to the museum and the theatre are not regular activities.

When comparing, it is possible to see that younger and more educated people engage in cultural practices more actively. Men predominate, especially in external activities.

At home, young people are the most active in consuming culture on the internet: 92% listen to music and 89% watch videos over the internet. Among those over sixty-five, only 5.8% and 10% carry out such activities, respectively.

When it comes to external practices, 44.6% of young people go to live music shows, compared with 14.5% of those aged over sixty-five. People aged eighteen to twenty-nine also go to the cinema much more (50.3%) than those aged sixty-five and over (2.1%)

## HOW TO INCREASE ACCESS TO CULTURE IN MARÉ

Although the purpose of the Building The Barricades research is not to recommend public policies, the study based on culture suggests actions that could increase and diversify cultural activities in the daily lives of the territory's residents. Here are some suggestions:

- Cultural activities practiced by Maré's population are concentrated in only a few venues. It is important to disseminate information about all cultural venues and facilities, publicising the programmes offered. At the same time, places where cultural activities take place informally need to be publicised and licensed.
- Internet access is still limited for most of Maré's residents. Access to a good-quality connection has great potential to increase the population's consumption of culture.
- The public for cultural activities in Maré is mostly young, male and educated. Policies are needed to engage older people, women and people with lower incomes and education levels, including good-quality internet provision for these groups.
- It is important to make cultural venues safe and reliable, which can be done through social action and information campaigns.
- Where Maré's residents consume culture intensively, the variety of activities is low. It is important to diversify the artistic practices available, especially museums, places to read and theatre.

# ARMED VIOLENCE AFFECTS REGULAR USERS OF THE OPEN-USE DRUG SCENES

PHOTOS BY JONAS WILLIAME



If the effects of armed violence on *favela* residents are poorly documented in research, knowledge about how legal and illegal drug users experience and suffer from this daily violence is even more rare. The Building The Barricades survey allowed for an unprecedented and large-scale study on the subject, producing data from interviews with 200 people who regularly frequent the open-use drug scene in Maré.

Since the end of 2012, Maré has been home to ‘scenes’ – places with a high concentration of people selling and using crack and other drugs. The implementation of Police Pacification Units (known locally as ‘UPPs’)¹⁷ in the nearby Manguinhos and Jacarezinho *favelas* caused users to migrate, increasing the trade and use of drugs in and around Maré. Today, crack is sold in the Parque Maré, Nova Holanda, Parque Rubens Vaz and Parque União *favelas*.

In 2015, Redes da Maré began carrying out research and interventions at one of these scenes on Rua Flavia Farnese. In 2018, they opened *Espaço Normal* as the first support centre for drug users in a *favela*. At *Espaço Normal*, people suffering the harmful effects of drug abuse can meet and receive support, develop harm reduction practices and promote self-care.

Building The Barricades used *Espaço Normal* to conduct interviews with regulars and users about their exposure to violence and its effects on their physical and mental health. The participants were users of existing scenes in Maré and its surroundings at the time of the research.

Respondents answered a questionnaire similar to the one administered to the general public of Maré residents, with additional questions specifically related to living on the streets, forms of violence suffered by this population and the risk of contracting infectious diseases. The similarity of the two research instruments allowed for comparisons to be made. The research also had a qualitative stage, which included interviews with former users of the open-use drug scenes, public service professionals and members of the *Espaço Normal* team. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted online and the focus group was carried out following strict protocols to prevent infection.

The results capture a rare profile of users and demonstrate that, contrary to common belief, the greatest victims of violence associated with the drug trade are the substance users themselves.

## THE PROFILE OF OPEN-USE DRUG SCENE USERS

The group of open-use drug scene users in Maré differs from the general population, with more men, a greater proportion of young and black people and lower education levels.

### SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE – PEOPLE AT THE OPEN-USE DRUG SCENES VS MARÉ’S ADULT POPULATION

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS	PEOPLE AT THE OPEN-USE DRUG SCENES (%)	MARÉ’S ADULT POPULATION (%)
Male	71,5	48,7
Black	48,7	20,0
White	13,7	32,2
Aged 1, to 40	75,0	57,0
Didn’t complete or start primary education	64,0	40,6

Source: Data from the Building The Barricades research, 2020-2021

**Almost 90% of respondents are homeless:** 27% have been homeless for between two and five years; 30% have been homeless for more than five years.

*Practically, drug scenes are where people who use any type of drug gather, for some it’s just a place to visit, to go and use whatever is available and then rush around, ‘raise funds’ as they say today, to do any kind of work, but for others it is a place to live.*

(Maré resident and former regular of the Rua Flavia Farnese scene)

## DISCRIMINATION AND PREJUDICE

Feeling discriminated against is much more common for those who use the scenes in Maré. **Of those interviewed, 28.4% report having been victims of discrimination and prejudice;** among Maré’s adult population, 5.6% report having experienced the same. In addition, more than half (53%) say they feel ashamed when with other people – a feeling shared by 25% of Maré residents.

17 Pacification units are permanent police bases inside favelas.

## EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE

Contrary to common assumption, rigid rules and power hierarchies govern open-use drug scenes. A 2015 survey by Redes da Maré and the Centre for Security and Citizenship Studies (CESeC) with Flavia Farnese's regular users showed that local 'leaders' resolved conflicts and demanded compliance with behavioural norms. The most serious cases, involving assaults and violations of residents' property, were referred to representatives of the armed groups that control the territory and led to physical punishment or expulsion of the accused from the *favela*.

In the survey carried out by the Building The Barricades research team, the proportion of scene users who reported an experience of violence is much higher than that observed among the adult population in general. **Just over two-thirds have been caught in the middle of a shootout; over half have witnessed a beating or assault and over a third have seen someone shot or killed.** See the table below for the comparison between the two groups.

EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE IN MARÉ IN THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS	PEOPLE AT THE OPEN-USE DRUG SCENES (%)	MARÉ'S ADULT POPULATION (%)
Was caught in the middle of a shooting incident	67,0	43,9
Saw someone being beaten up or assaulted	56,1	23,8
Saw someone being shot or killed	36,2	16,9
They, or someone from their family, had access to public services restricted because of a situation of violence	10,3	53,7
Suffered detriment to work, or school/university because of violence	17,0	33,5
Knows a close acquaintance shot or killed in Maré	37,9	25,5
Suffered verbal abuse	34,9	10,8
Was the victim of discrimination or prejudice (racism, homophobia, misogyny)	28,4	5,6
Suffered material loss due to situations of violence	16,0	8,0
Suffered extortion	11,2	1,8
Was physically assaulted or abused	19,4	1,8
Was sexually harassed in a public place	9,7	3,2

Source: Data from the Building The Barricades research, 2020-2021

One of the causes of **the high percentage of people caught up in shootings (67%), which is much greater than for Maré's population (44%),** is the location of the scenes. Some are on the dividing lines, where conflicts between rival factions take place. This is one explanation for the **large proportion of this group of people who has seen someone being shot or killed (36%), which is much higher than that found for all residents (17%).**

The **large percentage of scene users who have witnessed beatings and assaults – 56%, which is more than double than Maré's general population (24%) – is an expressive indication of the violence** to which these users are subjected, including because of their disorders caused by addiction.

*It was right there, you understand? There were several other cases, several. My friend was shot while sitting on the couch, in the twenty-nine scene, understand? It wasn't the police, but the conflict, the war that drugs cause.*

(Male, black, aged twenty-seven, former user of *Espaço Normal*)

Likewise, **the proportionately higher number of people who reported having suffered a physical assault is noteworthy: 19.4%, compared with only 1.8% of Maré's adult population.** This exposure to violence is directly linked to the control of the drug-using population by armed groups. In addition to the rules mentioned above, one of the factors is the association of crack users with the Comando Vermelho faction, the only one that sells this drug in Maré. Due to this link, members of the rival faction often punish those scene users who enter their territories.

*He lives on the other side of the divide. I think it's still Nova Holanda.... He uses his marijuana, so he stops there, uses his drugs and comes back. They caught him, beat him up badly, hurt him a lot, and told him to pass on the message: They don't want anyone from the other side, they don't want anyone wandering across the dividing line*

(Female, black, member of the *Espaço Normal* focus group)

Respondents have reported violations, often committed by police officers: **24% have lost documents or personal property and 11% have been deprived of medication due to interventions by state actors;** 16% have had to leave Maré or elsewhere for fear of the threats they suffered. In addition, 11.2% have suffered extortion, while only 1.8% of Maré's adult population have reported the same experiences.

## FEAR AND INSECURITY

Contrary to what might be expected, the fear of exposure to armed violence and victimisation is not necessarily greater among open-use drug scene regulars compared with respondents in the household survey. The fear of being hit by a stray bullet is the same in the two groups. But the fear of a close acquaintance suffering violence, whether from bullets or assaults, is significantly higher among residents than among drug users who visit Maré.

### PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE WHO ARE ALWAYS OR OFTEN AFRAID OF SITUATIONS OF VIOLENCE IN MARÉ. PEOPLE AT THE OPEN-USE DRUG SCENES VS. MARÉ'S ADULT POPULATION

ALWAYS OR OFTEN FEEL AFRAID OF...	PEOPLE AT THE OPEN-USE DRUG SCENES (%)	MARÉ'S ADULT POPULATION (%)
Being hit by a stray bullet in Maré	61,1	62,7
A close acquaintance being hit by a stray bullet in Maré	52,2	70,9
Suffering physical or verbal abuse in Maré	44,7	33,8
A close acquaintance suffering a physical or verbal abuse in Maré	38,2	46,0
Suffering economic/material losses or losing work because of situations of violence in Maré	39,2	34,7
Becoming involved in illegal or illicit activities	48,7	22,9
A close acquaintance having to become involved in illegal or illicit activities	42,3	37,7
Expressing thoughts or feelings in Maré	36,0	31,5
Moving around Maré	19,3	11,5

Source: Data from the Building The Barricades research, 2020-2021

The categories in which respondents expressed the most fear seem to be associated with drug use and homelessness. **Espaço Normal respondents are more afraid of suffering physical abuse** (44.7% compared with 33.8% of Maré's resident population); **moving around Maré** (19.3%, while in the household sample the percentage is 11.5%) and **engaging in illicit or illegal activities** (48.7% – double the 22.9% of Maré's adult population).

Both the surveys report experiences of being exposed to violence, but the fears expressed in the research undertaken with people who use drugs show that, even though crimes against property can be attributed to crack users, crimes against life and episodes of violence related to compulsive crack use mainly affect this population. This finding goes against popular prejudice, which often stigmatises crack users as perpetrators of violent crime.

## COMMUNITY CARE AND SUPPORT NETWORKS

The rise of crack scenes in Maré has provoked responses from public authorities. Outreach teams from the *Consultório de Rua*, a municipal initiative that provides care for homeless people, provided health services. Another project operating was *Programa Proximidade*, run by the Municipal Department for Social Development. The programme ran until 2016, and listened to crack and other drug users at the scenes, aiming to offer them treatment and social support. In 2014, the Miriam Makeba centre, offering psychological support focused on drug and alcohol abuse, and a shelter for adults, UAA *Metamorfose Ambulante*, were opened.

In 2016, a forum focused on care and services for drug and alcohol users was set up in Maré, bringing together the organisations mentioned above and others, including family health clinics such as the Stella Maris and Nelson Carneiro CREAS centres (which offer specialised social care), a drop-in centre called Centro POP José Saramago, and Hotel Solidário de Bonsucesso, a homeless hostel. One action developed by the forum is called ATENDA which, until the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, offered regular health care and social welfare at the scenes, in addition to cultural activities.

Alongside these initiatives, *Espaço Normal* offers a safe space for scene regulars and others. Today, it is a place of reference for a wider population, which isn't homeless but has problems associated with alcohol and other drug use. At *Espaço Normal* they can find professionals who support and advise users, as well as a place to rest and attend to personal hygiene. One of the *Espaço Normal* team's most important tasks is to mediate between users and the public services, enhancing and improving the effectiveness of care.

*The ... social worker from Espaço Normal sent a reference letter for me so I could go to the clinic, where we're seen by ourselves or with a professional from Redes who is used to monitoring us at the scene. That's the only way we can access this service. That's the reality.*

(Male, black, aged twenty-seven, former resident of the Rua Flavia Farnese scene)

Unfortunately, in 2018 and 2019, under former Mayor Marcelo Crivella, the city government drastically cut resources allocated to public health, leading to the partial dismantling of the sector. More than 5000 health professionals were laid off, entire NASF teams (family health and primary care centres) were removed and there were repeated delays in the transfer of funds to social organisations responsible for managing the health units, causing a lack of medication and supplies in addition to payment delays. As a result, public services started to operate extremely badly, exacerbating the difficulties of Maré's homeless population.

*Primary Health Care Centres were stripped down ... The professionals, today ... don't cover the entire territory, they don't cover the entire region of Maré ... and this is very serious.*

(Healthcare professional)



PHOTO BY FAGNER FRANÇA

## LESSONS LEARNED



PHOTO BY JULIANA OLIVEIRA

The Building The Barricades research was looking for answers to three main questions: What is the mental health of the residents in Maré's sixteen *favelas*? What are the effects of armed violence on this population's health? How do people take care of their well-being and deal with the day-to-day risks that come with the challenges of armed violence?

Based on information provided by 1411 people and dozens of reports obtained in interviews and discussion groups, we present findings that challenge common beliefs and require action. The results show that, contrary to the view held by some – that *favela* populations are accustomed to armed violence in their daily lives – the residents of these territories are deeply affected by armed conflict, abuses of various kinds and violations that affect them on a very frequent basis.

The Building The Barricades project shows that the routine of conflicts, deaths and injuries causes significant levels of mental distress in the population of Maré, where 44% of residents have reported having been caught in the middle of a shooting in the twelve months prior to the survey, and 17% have witnessed someone being shot or murdered in the same period. Of those interviewed, 71% are often or always afraid that someone close to them will be hit by a stray bullet, and 63% live with the fear of becoming victims themselves.

Exposure to violence is even greater among regulars of Maré's open-use drug scenes: 67% of them have been caught in the middle of a shooting, 56% have seen someone being assaulted and 36.2% have seen a person shot or killed.

Stress and grief caused by repeated violence have serious consequences for the mental and physical health of the residents of the Maré *favelas*. A fifth of the population believes that violence in Maré has affected their physical health, and 31% perceive that their mental and emotional health has been harmed. Family relationships and friendships are factors that promote resilience in this troubled context. Other important factors for well-being, such as the use of health services and cultural and sports practices, are difficult to access as a result of the violence itself, poor internet provision, limited access to leisure and cultural spaces, and a lack of knowledge about the options available in the territory.

These issues demand government action to support Maré residents and reduce the factors that expose citizens to so much routine violence. Perhaps the most important necessity is an immediate change to the Public Security policy adopted by Rio de Janeiro's authorities towards *favela* territories, involving a pointless 'War on Drugs' based on violent police incursions, which expose the population to armed conflict. Rather than representing protection, police forces are associated with fear for most residents of Maré.

We hope that the data and analysis of the Building The Barricades research will contribute to a critical assessment of government actions in low income neighbourhoods, and for the state's presence to be marked less by operations and gun violence and more by policies that guarantee the well-being of residents of *favelas* and marginalised regions.

# PARTNERS

## BUILDING THE BARRICADES WAS DEVISED AND PRODUCED BY PPP AND REDES DA MARÉ:

### PEOPLE'S PALACE PROJECTS – PPP

People's Palace Projects is a non-governmental organisation dedicated to the research and development of projects in arts and social justice, based at the Drama Department at Queen Mary University of London. For more than two decades, PPP has sought to understand the social and human impact of cultural activities in the United Kingdom, Latin America – mainly in Brazil's *favelas* and indigenous territories – and Asia, through academic research and artistic co-creation. Choirs with homeless people and drug users, work with women and girls who are victims of domestic violence and artistic residencies in indigenous reserves are among the highlights of PPP's projects.

### REDES DA MARÉ

Redes da Maré, based in Rio de Janeiro, is a civil society organisation created by residents of one of the largest groups of *favelas* in Brazil. For more than two decades, its mission has been to draw together the networks necessary to improve the quality of life and guarantee the basic rights of more than 140,000 residents in Maré's sixteen *favelas*. Currently, it has more than forty projects which directly benefit more than 4500 residents, in the fields of Education, Art, Culture and Memory, the Right to Public Security and Justice and Territorial Development, seeking to overcome the historical inequality faced by *favela* populations.

## SUPPORTED BY A PARTNERSHIP OF THE FOLLOWING ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS:

### QUEEN MARY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

With over two centuries of history, Queen Mary University of London, based in the British capital, is an internationally-recognised leader in high quality research and teaching. The institution's mission is the inclusion and diversity of people, ideas and opinions, and focuses on three main areas of research and teaching: Humanities and Social Sciences; Science and Engineering; Medicine and Dentistry.

### ESCOLA DE SERVIÇO SOCIAL – UFRJ

The research group 'Policies for the Prevention of Violence, Access to Justice and Education in Human Rights' is linked to the Social Services Postgraduate Programme at Rio de Janeiro's Federal University (UFRJ). It has already coordinated different research projects in the field of Access to Justice, Alternative Forms of Conflict Resolution, Violence Prevention, Public Safety and Homeless Populations. Currently, the group is dedicated to studying urban violence in territories controlled by armed groups and its intersection with structural racism, gender violence and drug policies.

### PROJAD - IPUB – UFRJ

Created in 1938, the Institute of Psychiatry at Rio de Janeiro's Federal University (IPUB – UFRJ) is a supplementary body of the Health Sciences Centre (CCS), whose purpose is to develop teaching, research, extension studies and welfare activities in the field of Psychiatry and Mental Health. Since 1996, IPUB's PROJAD programme to study drug misuse and offer care has been carrying out welfare, research and teaching activities focused on problems related to drug use. Among the studies developed are research projects on access to treatment for people with drug problems, published in several national and international scientific journals.

### NECCULT

NECCULT is a centre for the study of the creative economy and culture with an interdisciplinary teaching, research and extension study environment linked to UFRGS university's Faculty of Economic Sciences. NECCULT was created in 2015, from the convergence of different initiatives in the study of the creative economy, culture and innovation. It seeks to add to the work developed by the Creative Economy Observatory of Rio Grande do Sul and the CNPq research group in Creative Economy, Culture and Development.

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