Brazil emerges as one of EB-5's fastest-growing markets amid economic strain

eb5 **eb5investors.com**/blog/brazil-emerges-as-one-of-eb-5s-fastest-growing-markets-amid-economic-strain

EB5Investors.com Staff August 18, 2026

In the past decade, the EB-5 visa program has become a popular option for wealthy Brazilians seeking stability and opportunity in the United States amid sluggish growth, above-target inflation, and election-year uncertainty at home. The program offers not only U.S. permanent residency but also enhanced educational and health care opportunities for investors' families.

Much of that demand traces back to a single city. São Paulo is Brazil's financial capital and one of Latin America's leading hubs for high-net-worth individuals, home to roughly 433,000 millionaires—the largest concentration of wealth in the country. That pool of capital is increasingly finding its way into EB-5, and it's why São Paulo is the site of our upcoming EB-5 & Global Immigration Summit.

A key advantage for Brazilian investors is that Brazil currently has no EB-5 visa backlog, a significant edge over investors from countries facing years-long delays. That access is helping Brazilian investors diversify their assets and pursue growth in a stable environment.

The trend shows up in recent EB-5 data. In the most recent fiscal year for which figures are available, South America ranked third among world regions in EB-5 visa issuance, with Brazilian investors accounting for 157 of the region's 354 visas, according to the U.S. State Department. The rising participation underscores the program’s growing appeal among affluent Brazilians seeking a more secure and prosperous life in the U.S.

“Brazilian interest in the EB-5 program is typically driven by a combination of family, wealth-planning, and long-term mobility considerations,” said Gustavo Kanashiro, a Brazilian immigration attorney and partner at Fragomen.

A decade of rising Brazilian participation in the EB-5 program

Brazil began drawing attention in the EB-5 program around 2015; before that, it did not rank among the top 10 countries for EB-5 visa issuance. By 2016, Brazil ranked fifth, with 150 visas, accounting for 5.2% of all EB-5 visas issued worldwide. By 2019, Brazil had become the largest source of EB-5 investors outside Southeast Asia.

Data from the State Department’s annual Visa Office report show that Brazilian interest in the program remained strong until 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted global mobility. Interest rebounded afterward: amid Brazil’s economic troubles, EB-5 has remained a sought-after pathway to a U.S. green card.

That appeal is reinforced by the program’s structure. Brazil currently has no retrogression in either of the EB-5 program’s two main categories, Unreserved and Reserved, meaning Brazilian applicants get immediate visa availability—unlike, for instance, Chinese or Indian nationals in the Unreserved category, who face years of waiting.

Control and predictability draw investors to EB-5

The EB-5 program’s popularity among wealthy investors stems from a range of interconnected motivations, with the pursuit of stability as the common thread.

Chief among them is the program’s independence from third parties. “For most of the Brazilian families we work with, the appeal of the EB-5 Investor Visa Program comes down to control and certainty,” said Marcelo Gorenstein, commercial director of LCR Capital regional centers. “EB-5 is one of the few routes to a US Green Card that a family can pursue on its own terms, without an employer sponsor or the need to build a case around an extraordinary ability profile.”

Predictability matters just as much, Gorenstein said. “We’ve seen the EB-2 NIW category, long a favorite of qualified professionals, become far more selective, with I-140 approval rates falling from the low-to-mid 90% range between 2018 and 2022 to around 43% in fiscal 2024, alongside a growing visa backlog for applicants from Brazil. When it’s well structured, EB-5 offers a more direct and more predictable route to permanent residency.”

Andrés Echevarría, partner and chairman at Vivanco & Vivanco, pointed to another factor. “With no E-2 treaty in place with Brazil, unlike many other countries in Latin America, the EB-5 program is the only direct investment route available to obtain a green card,” he said.

Wealth protection and currency diversification through EB-5 investments

Many Brazilian high-net-worth individuals also view the EB-5 program as a means of protecting their wealth.

“The Brazilian real (currency) has lost significant purchasing power over the past decade,” Gorenstein said. “Put concretely: the $800,000 an investor could hold in a U.S. asset for about R$2.1 million in 2014 would cost roughly R$4.2 million to R$4.9 million to replicate today, before any return. For a Brazilian family, an EB-5 application is both a path to residency and a dollar-denominated position that hedges against continued currency erosion—a dual benefit few other options offer.”

For Brazilian families, Kanashiro said, protecting wealth is a collective decision: “It is a decision that affects wealth planning, family goals, children’s education, business interests, and long-term generational opportunities.”

Children’s education and cultural ties also drive interest

For other families, the move is driven by a desire for better educational and health care opportunities for their children. A July 2026 Department of Homeland Security rule ending open-ended “duration of status” for F-1 and J-1 students — effective September 15, 2026 — is expected to raise the cost and uncertainty of visa renewals for students already in the U.S. EB-5 offers those families a direct path to permanent residency, and eligible applicants already in the country can often file their I-526E and I-485 forms concurrently.

A green card puts investors’ children on equal footing with U.S. citizens for job opportunities and improves their long-term quality of life. Cultural factors play a role too.

“Brazilians have a close cultural and geographic connection to the United States, which remains by far their favorite destination to build a new life,” Gorenstein said.

Kanashiro added that the connection endures because of the U.S. economy, legal stability, educational opportunities, and overall quality of life. Echevarría noted that political unrest, economic instability, and high crime rates at home have historically pushed wealthy Brazilians abroad.

“For most Brazilian families, EB-5 is not simply an immigration process. It is a legacy decision that can shape the future of generations to come. Our objective is to ensure that families approach that decision fully informed, properly advised, and positioned for long-term success,” Kanashiro said.

Weighing EB-5 against other global residency options

“Brazilian investors today have access to several residence and citizenship programs around the world… The choice ultimately depends on each family’s objectives, lifestyle preferences, tax considerations, and long-term goals,” Kanashiro said.

Flexibility is also a major driver. “High-net-worth Brazilian families frequently seek diversification not only of their investments, but also of their residence and mobility options,” Kanashiro said. “From that perspective, EB-5 is often viewed as a solution that combines immigration objectives, wealth planning, and the preservation of opportunities for future generations.”

A profile of the Brazilian EB-5 investor

“[They] are typically entrepreneurs, owners of family businesses, senior executives, or successful professionals who have built substantial wealth over time and are looking to create international opportunities for their families,” Kanashiro said.

The option to invest either directly in a U.S. business or indirectly through a regional center aligns with a traditional Brazilian investment style that favors trust and tangible results, advisers say. Brazilian investors “tend to favor smaller regional center projects vs. other Latin American investors,” Echevarría said.

“Brazilian interest falls into two broad audiences,” Gorenstein said. “The first is high-net-worth families based in Brazil who are seeking a dual-residency strategy and dollar-based wealth protection… The second is Brazilians already living in the U.S. on temporary visas, student, work, or tourism, who want a permanent solution for themselves and their families.”

About 1.9 million Brazilians currently live in the U.S., accounting for roughly 41% of all Brazilians abroad, according to government estimates. According to Kanashiro, for many Brazilian families already living in the U.S., obtaining a green card provides a level of long-term certainty and flexibility “difficult to match through temporary visa categories or immigration programs with more limited residence rights.”

For Gorenstein, another characteristic that sets Brazil apart from many other markets is its preference for full-family migration rather than single applications. “This is especially true when the children are still young, often below the age of 10 or 12, and parents want to give them an American education and upbringing from an early stage."

He added that they are typically upper-middle-class and affluent families with the financial capacity to meet the $800,000 minimum investment in a Targeted Employment Area (TEA) who prioritize personal security, quality of life, education and opportunity for their children, career and economic prospects, and the diversification of wealth into international markets.

Brazil's millionaire population is growing too—reaching 386,000 in 2025, according to the UBS Global Wealth Report—and high-net-worth Brazilians seeking a second residency have been LCR's primary focus in the country over the past decade. They also "prefer to work with professionals who speak their language and understand their culture," Gorenstein said.

What Brazilian investors want to know most about the EB-5 visa

For Kanashiro, the questions clients ask boil down to two things: risk and source of funds. "First, investors want to understand the level of risk associated with an EB-5 investment," he said. "The second major concern relates to source-of-funds documentation. Many Brazilian investors have accumulated wealth over decades through businesses, real estate, equity holdings, inheritances, and multiple income streams."

Gorenstein said most LCR clients raise concerns about immigration, the financial returns of their EB-5 investments, and application processing times. "We explain that EB-5 should not be looked at as a financial investment alone. Once families see it through that lens, a Green Card and a future in the US, with the return of capital at the end of the project, the decision comes into much clearer focus," he said.

An EB-5 & Global Immigration Summit in São Paulo

Potential Brazilian EB-5 investors can attend the EB-5 & Global Immigration Summit on November 5 in São Paulo. The event will connect attendees with industry leaders and offer insights into the U.S. EB-5 program and other global citizenship-by-investment opportunities.

The city's real estate market is booming, drawing interest from international private banks and wealth managers, many of which are establishing local presences. Its population of multi-millionaires grew by nearly 300% over the past decade, earning São Paulo a spot among Knight Frank's top 40 global cities for ultra-high-net-worth individuals.

DISCLAIMER: The views expressed in this article are solely the views of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the publisher, its employees. or its affiliates. The information found on this website is intended to be general information; it is not legal or financial advice. Specific legal or financial advice can only be given by a licensed professional with full knowledge of all the facts and circumstances of your particular situation. You should seek consultation with legal, immigration, and financial experts prior to participating in the EB-5 program Posting a question on this website does not create an attorney-client relationship. All questions you post will be available to the public; do not include confidential information in your question.