Brazil's Millionaire Exodus

The Largest Wealth Drain in Latin America (2025)

What's Happening

Brazil has become the Latin American country losing the most wealthy residents. According to the **Henley Private Wealth Migration Report 2025**, approximately **1,200 individuals** with investable assets of $1 million or more are projected to permanently leave Brazil in 2025. That represents a **50% increase** from the estimated 800 who departed in 2024, and nearly double the pre-pandemic figure from 2019.

These departing millionaires are taking with them an estimated **$8.4 billion** in investable wealth — roughly R$44 billion at current exchange rates.

Country	Departing Millionaires (2025)	Estimated Wealth Outflow
Brazil	**~1,200**	**$8.4 billion**
Mexico	~150	~$1 billion
Colombia	~150	~$1 billion
Argentina	~100	~$700 million
Total (4 countries)	**~1,600**	**$11+ billion**

Brazil ranks **sixth globally** for millionaire outflows in 2025, behind the United Kingdom (16,500 departures), China (7,800), India (3,500), South Korea (2,400), and Russia (1,500).

The Bigger Global Picture

The year 2025 marks a record: approximately **142,000 millionaires** worldwide are expected to relocate to a different country, a 6% increase from 2024. It is the largest voluntary migration of private wealth in recorded history.

Destination	Net Inflow (Millionaires)	Estimated Wealth Inflow
UAE	**9,800**	$63 billion
United States	**7,500**	$43.7 billion
Italy	3,600	—

Destination	Net Inflow (Millionaires)	Estimated Wealth Inflow
Switzerland	3,000	—
Saudi Arabia	2,400	—
Singapore	1,600	—
Portugal	1,400	—
Greece	1,200	—
Canada	1,000	—
Australia	1,000	—

The biggest surprise globally is the **United Kingdom**, which for the first time leads the world in millionaire departures (16,500). The collapse began after Brexit in 2016 and accelerated sharply after the Conservative government overhauled the "non-domicile" tax regime in March 2024. UK nationals submitted **183% more** applications for alternative residence programs in Q1 2025 vs. Q1 2024.

Even as the United States attracts wealthy newcomers, Americans themselves are diversifying abroad at unprecedented rates — accounting for over **30%** of all investment migration applications processed by Henley in H1 2025, a 200% increase over the same period in 2024.

Latin America's Wealth Is Shrinking

According to the **Capgemini World Wealth Report 2025**, Latin America saw an **8.5% drop** in its high-net-worth population in 2024, while globally the number of millionaires grew by 2.6%. Brazil and Mexico each experienced a **13.3% decline**.

Wealth Segment	Population	Change
$1M–$5M	~487,570	-8.6%
$5M–$30M	~85,510	-8.2%
$30M+	~13,930	-7.6%

Over the past decade (2014–2024), Brazil's millionaire population shrank by approximately **18%**. Meanwhile, two smaller Latin American countries are bucking the trend: **Costa Rica** expects 350 new millionaire residents in 2025 (~$2.8B in wealth) and **Panama** expects 300 (~$2.4B). Both grew their millionaire populations by about 70% between 2014 and 2024.

Why Are Millionaires Leaving Brazil?

Factor	Details
Personal security	Brazil had 20.8 violent deaths per 100,000 people in 2024. Growing insecurity in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro is cited as one of the most decisive factors. Andrew Amoils of New World Wealth highlighted "conditions of security" as a primary concern.
Economic instability	Public debt rose from 73.5% of GDP (end of Bolsonaro admin) to 77.6% in 2025, with projections of 82.4% by 2026. Currency volatility makes long-term wealth preservation difficult.
Tax uncertainty	Inheritance tax (ITCMD) reforms could reach the 8% federal ceiling. Proposed income tax reform includes up to 10% on annual incomes above R$1.2M and a 10% withholding tax on dividends above R$50K/month — Brazil currently does not tax dividends at all.
Regulatory complexity	Brazil's notoriously intricate tax code and frequent rule changes create low predictability. Wealthy families "seek jurisdictions that are stable, secure, and where estate and succession planning is efficient and predictable" — Michel Soler, Henley & Partners.
Political polarization	Deep left-right divisions, the temporary banning of X platform in late 2024, and ongoing fallout from the January 8, 2023 attacks on government buildings create atmosphere of alarm on both sides.

Where Are They Going?

The **United States** (particularly Florida) is the top destination. From billionaires like Alexandre Behring (3G Capital) to tech founders like Pedro Franceschi and Henrique Dubugras (Brex), the pull of Miami has been strong for years. The EB-5 investor visa makes it accessible for those with capital.

Portugal remains a favorite despite ending its Non-Habitual Resident (NHR) tax regime in January 2024 — cultural and linguistic proximity, the Golden Visa program, and perceived safety keep it attractive. **Cayman Islands, Costa Rica, and Panama** serve as regional hubs. **Spain, the UK, and Uruguay** also appear as destinations, per Brazil's Federal Revenue Service departure declarations.

A Crucial Tax Window in 2025

In 2021, Brazil's Supreme Court (STF) ruled in RE 851.108/DF that Brazilian states **cannot collect ITCMD on assets coming from abroad** without a specific federal complementary law — a law that did not yet exist as of 2025. This means Brazilian residents receiving inheritances or donations from abroad in 2025 face **no ITCMD liability** in Brazil, creating an unprecedented opportunity for international estate restructuring before the federal law closes this gap.

The Counterargument: Is It Really an "Exodus"?

A thorough investigation by **BBC News Brasil**, using data from Brazil's Federal Revenue Service, paints a more nuanced picture. By August 2025, **1,446 millionaires** (those with annual income above R$1 million) had filed permanent departure declarations — a significant number, but representing **less than 1%** of all

Brazilian millionaires.

The peak year for departures was actually **2017** (1,461 departures), during Brazil's political crisis and the height of the Lava Jato operation. The total number of Brazilian millionaires has grown enormously — from about 81,000 in 2011 to 152,000 in 2017 to over 366,000 by 2023. As a **proportion** of the total millionaire population, the departure rate has actually been declining since 2017.

Sergio Gobetti, an IPEA researcher, questions whether taxation is truly the decisive factor:

> *"Where do [millionaires] intend to migrate to in order to get more privileged treatment than they already enjoy in Brazil?"*

The Reliability of the Numbers

The Henley & Partners report has faced serious scrutiny. In July 2025, the UK-based **Tax Policy Associates** published a forensic statistical review finding multiple anomalies. When Henley dropped all property wealth from its millionaire definition between 2023 and 2025, the millionaire counts barely changed — a mathematical impossibility if the published methodology were being followed.

New World Wealth admitted to the Financial Times that property was "never actually included" in the analysis, even though all reports before 2025 stated otherwise. Tax Policy Associates concluded the numbers were either fabricated or "manually adjusted for unknown reasons."

Tax adviser Seb Sauerborn wrote that the Henley report should be treated **"like you would treat a glossy hotel brochure"** — useful for generating headlines but not suitable as the basis for serious economic or policy decisions.

The Political Divide

Perspective	Argument
From the right	Conservative outlets blamed "punitive taxation," "ideological hostility" toward wealth creators, and "populist policies" for driving capital abroad. They pointed to rising public debt, halted privatizations, and "confiscatory" reforms as evidence Brazil under Lula has become hostile to private enterprise.
From the left	Left-leaning outlets countered that the "flight" narrative is deliberately exaggerated by the wealthy to block progressive taxation. They highlighted that Brazil passed landmark income tax reform exempting those earning up to R$5,000/month. President Lula said Congress's decision to overturn measures taxing the super-rich was "not a defeat for the government, but for the Brazilian people."

Why This Matters for Ordinary People

Impact	Details
Jobs & investment	~15% of relocating millionaires are entrepreneurs (60% among multi-millionaires). Each departure can mean fewer companies hiring locally, less venture capital, and weaker demand for professional services.
Tax revenue	Brazil's federal tax revenue hit a record R$2.886 trillion in 2025 (~$520B). Losing top taxpayers can have outsized fiscal effects on funding for healthcare, education, and social programs.
Signal to the world	Millionaire migration is a "canary in the coal mine." Growing departures signal instability to international investors and markets — and the perception can become self-reinforcing.
Global competition	Countries compete to attract the wealthy through investment visas and tax incentives. Montenegro grew its millionaire population by 124% (2014–2024). UAE by 98%. Malta by 87%. Brazil shrank by 18%.
But it's complicated	If the "exodus" is exaggerated to prevent fair taxation, ordinary citizens risk being manipulated. Brazil's wealthy already enjoy some of the lowest effective tax rates among major economies — dividends untaxed, inheritance taxes capped at 8%, numerous offshore loopholes.

The Road Ahead

Michel Soler of Henley & Partners told Bloomberg Línea in January 2026 that Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina will "very likely see similar numbers to 2025 throughout 2026." The firm projects global millionaire migration could reach **165,000 relocations in 2026**.

For Brazil, the challenge is existential: **how to build a fairer tax system and fund public services without driving away the capital and talent needed for economic growth**. It's a dilemma with no easy answers, and the debate — between those who see the wealthy as "wealth creators" who must be courted and those who see them as beneficiaries of an unjust system who must pay their fair share — will define the country's economic trajectory for years to come.

Data sourced from Henley & Partners Private Wealth Migration Report 2025; Capgemini World Wealth Report 2025; Bloomberg Línea; BBC News Brasil (via Receita Federal data); InfoMoney; Revista Oeste; Poder360; Tax Policy Associates UK; IPEA; Brazil Federal Revenue Service; and Brazil Ministry of Finance. Where sources conflict — as in the discrepancy between Henley projections and Receita Federal data — both sides are presented transparently.