

Brazil

Facts and Statistics

Location: Eastern South America bordering Argentina 1,224 km, Bolivia 3,400 km, Colombia 1,643 km, French Guiana 673 km, Guyana 1,119 km, Paraguay 1,290 km, Peru 1,560 km, Suriname 597 km, Uruguay 985 km, Venezuela 2,200 km

Capital: Brasilia

Climate: mostly tropical, but temperate in south

Population: 184,101,109

Ethnic Make-up: white (includes Portuguese, German, Italian, Spanish, Polish) 55%, mixed white and black 38%, black 6%, other (includes Japanese, Arab, Amerindian) 1%

Religions: Roman Catholic (nominal) 80%

Government: federative republic

Language in Brazil

Language is one of the strongest elements of Brazil's national unity. Portuguese is spoken by nearly 100 percent of the population. The only exceptions are some members of Amerindian groups and pockets of immigrants, primarily from Japan and South Korea, who have not yet learned Portuguese. The principal families of Indian languages are Tupí, Arawak, Carib, and Gê.

There is about as much difference between the Portuguese spoken in Brazil and that spoken in Portugal as between the English spoken in the United States and that spoken in the United Kingdom. Within Brazil, there are no dialects of Portuguese, but only moderate regional variation in accent, vocabulary, and use of personal nouns, pronouns, and verb conjugations. Variations tend to diminish as a result of mass media, especially national television networks that are viewed by the majority of Brazilians.

Brazilian Society & Culture

Brazilian Diversity

- . Brazil is a mixture of races and ethnicities, resulting in rich diversity.
- . Many original Portuguese settlers married native women, which created a new race, called 'mestizos'.
- . 'Mulattoes' are descendents of the Portuguese and African slaves.
- . Slavery was abolished in 1888, creating over time a further blurring of racial lines.
- . Unlike many other Latin American countries where there is a distinct Indian population, Brazilians have intermarried to the point that it sometimes seems that almost everyone has a combination of European, African and indigenous ancestry.

Brazilian Family Values

- . The family is the foundation of the social structure and forms the basis of stability for most people.
- . Families tend to be large (although family size has been diminishing in recent years) and the extended family is quite close.
- . The individual derives a social network and assistance in times of need from the family.
- . Nepotism is considered a positive thing, since it implies that employing people one knows and trusts is of primary importance.

The Brazilian Class System

- . Despite the mixing of ethnicities, there is a class system in Brazil.
- . Few Brazilians could be described as racist, although social discrimination on the basis of skin colour is a daily occurrence.
- . In general, people with darker brown skin are economically and socially disadvantaged.
- . The middle and upper classes often have only brief interaction with the lower classes - usually maids, drivers, etc.
- . Class is determined by economic status and skin color.
- . There is a great disparity in wage differentials--and therefore lifestyle and social aspirations--among the different classes
- . Although women make up 40% of the Brazilian workforce, they are typically found in lower paid jobs such as teaching, administrative support, and nursing.
- . The 1988 constitution prohibits discrimination against women, but inequities still exist. The one place where women are achieving equality is in the government.