

*the  
Brazilian  
Population*



## | **the Brazilian Population** |

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**In 2000** Brazil's population reached 169,7 million, the fifth largest in the world after that of China, India, the United States of America (US), and Indonesia. The Brazilian population is predominantly young with 48 per cent under the age of 29.

#### **Population and Its Annual Rate of Growth**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Population (million)</b>	<b>Compound Annual Rate of Growth (%)</b>
1776	1,9	–
1876	10,9	1,8%
1900	17,3	1,9%
1940	41,2	2,2%
1950	51,9	2,3%
1960	70,1	3,1%
1970	93,2	2,9%
1980	121,3	2,7%
1991	149,8	1,8%
2000	169,8	1,3%
2004	180,0	1,5%

Considering the high rate of population growth during the early and mid-20th century, Brazil has undergone a dramatic demographic transformation since the 1960s. This trend is largely due to a massive urbanisation process and economic modernisation. The fertility rate was projected to be 2,1 live births per woman by 2000. This would be dramatically lower than the 1960 rate of 6,3. The population growth rate of 3 per cent a year in the 1960s, fell to 1,3 per cent for the period 1991–2000.

During the past 50 years the structure of the Brazilian population according to age has changed. The proportion under 14 years of age has fallen from 43 per cent to 29,7 per cent, while the fraction over 60 years of age has risen from 4 per cent to 8,7 per cent. Life expectancy at birth has increased from 46 years in 1950 to 71,3 years in 2003. The literacy rate was 50 per cent in 1950. Today it is 85,3 per cent.



## distribution of population

**Although** Brazil is the fifth most populous nation, its nationwide demographic density is low compared with other countries. The population is concentrated along the Atlantic coastal areas of the south-eastern and north-eastern states. Industrial activity is concentrated in the south-eastern region, with 50 per cent of the industrial production located in the state of São Paulo. Migration from the north-east to the south-east, as well as from rural to urban areas has been heavy since 1970. More recently, the population flow has turned towards the less inhabited central-western and northern regions.

**Population Distribution and Inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> (1)**

Region	1970 Population Density/ million km <sup>2</sup>		1980 Population Density/ million km <sup>2</sup>		2000 Population Density/ million km <sup>2</sup>	
	million	km <sup>2</sup>	million	km <sup>2</sup>	million	km <sup>2</sup>
North	3,6	0,9	6,0	1,7	12,9	3,12
North-east	28,1	18,1	35,5	22,9	47,7	30,66
South-east	39,9	43,1	52,7	57,0	72,4	78,11
South	16,5	28,7	19,4	33,6	25,1	43,51
West-Central	5,1	3,2	7,7	4,1	11,6	7,22
All Brazil	93,2	10,9	121,3	14,3	169,8	19,86

(1) For administrative and statistical purposes Brazil is divided into five regions, based on broadly similar features, with perimeters following state boundaries.

# five regions of brazil

*five regions of brazil*



- Northern region
- North-eastern region
- West-central region
- South-eastern region
- Southern region



## Northern region

*States of Amazonas, Pará, Acre, Rondônia, Roraima, Amapá and Tocantins.*

**This** region lies mostly within the Amazon basin. It is largely covered by lush, tropical rain forests. The Amazon River traverses the middle of the region from west to east before emptying into the Atlantic Ocean. There are also numerous other rivers in the area. By volume, this area has the largest concentration of freshwater in the world – one-fifth of all the earth’s fresh water reserves. There are two main Amazonian cities: Manaus, capital of the State of Amazonas, and Belém, capital of the State of Pará.

## North-eastern region

*States of Maranhão, Piauí, Ceará, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Bahia, Alagoas and Sergipe.*

**Vast** stretches of this region, which contains nearly 30 per cent of the Brazilian population, are chronically subject to drought. The area

has important economic possibilities, however, including sizeable oil fields. The Federal Government has been giving the north-east increased attention and large resources have been allocated to its improvement – with considerable success.

Pernambuco and Bahia were the first major centres of colonial Brazil and they still exert a very strong influence on Brazilian culture. Much of what is characteristically Brazilian in music, folklore, cuisine and social habits originated in this region. The two largest cities in the north-east are Recife and Salvador.



### South-eastern region

*States of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Minas Gerais, and Espírito Santo*

**The** highly industrialised areas around the cities of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Belo Horizonte form the economic hub of Brazil. The majority of the country's population is concentrated in this region. The area is rich in minerals and its agriculture is the most advanced in the country, producing coffee and grains for export, as well as a variety of both fresh and

processed foodstuffs, milk and meat for domestic consumption.



### Southern region

*States of Paraná, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul*

**This** region is also highly developed. Here, too, there is a good balance between the rural and the manufacturing sectors. Toward the south, the plateau drops to the wide plains called *pampas* where the traditional grazing activities produced the *gaúcho*, the Brazilian equivalent of the cowboy. In the west, located on the border between Brazil and Argentina, is Iguazu Falls, one of the most beautiful natural wonders in the world. Less than 20 km away – on the Paraná River that separates Brazil and Paraguay – is Itaipu, the largest hydroelectric dam in the world. The largest city in this region is Porto Alegre, capital of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil's southernmost state.

### West-central region

*States of Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso do Sul, Goiás and the Distrito Federal*

**This** region, covered with extensive savannahs and tropical grasslands, is still sparsely populated. Once one of



*five regions of brazil*

the most isolated areas of the country, it has experienced a rapid expansion of its rural production and has established new industries. The nation's capital, Brasília, founded in 1960, is located in this region. The federal government has set aside vast areas as reservations in the west-central region for the native Indian tribes that originally lived in them. Also in this region is the wildlife paradise, the Mato Grosso swamplands (Pantanal Matogrossense).

### ***Inhabitants in Metropolitan Areas***

<b>City</b>	<b>1970 (million)</b>	<b>2000 (million)</b>
São Paulo	5,9	17,8
Rio de Janeiro	4,3	10,8
Belo Horizonte	1,2	4,8
Porto Alegre	0,9	3,6
Recife	1,1	3,3
Salvador	1,0	3,0
Fortaleza	0,8	2,9
Curitiba	0,6	2,7
Brasília	0,5	2,0
Belém	0,6	1,8

## **major cities**



### **Brasília**

**Since** the second half of the 18th century, Brazil's governing authorities considered transferring the seat of government from Rio de Janeiro to some inland area, safe from naval attacks. The first Republican Constitution (1891) went as far as defining where the future Federal District would be – a rectangle within the State of Goiás, in the heart of the country. But it was not until 1956, after eight years of surveying, that the actual design and construction of the new capital began under President Juscelino Kubitschek. The site chosen for Brasília comprises 5 814 km<sup>2</sup> of a then sparsely inhabited plateau carved out of the State of Goiás, 1 100 m above sea level and 1 200 km from Rio de Janeiro. Brazilian architect and

## major cities

urban planner, Lúcio Costa, won the competition for the urban master plan. The major government buildings were designed by the Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer. Landscape designer Roberto Burle Marx planned the layout and selection of plant varieties to add a vivid green backdrop to the otherwise dry, yellow landscape of the savannah vegetation. On 21 April 1960, Brasília was officially inaugurated and started functioning as the new capital of Brazil.

### São Paulo



**São Paulo** was founded by the Jesuits in 1554, on a plateau 760 m above sea level, but only 72 km from the coast, as a mission centre for early settlers and the Indians who inhabited the area. For a long time it remained a small town. Around 1850 it began to grow and became richer thanks to the highly productive coffee plantations in the state. Later on, the income from coffee exports and the increasing population provided capital and human resources for the foundation of an industrial base. Today there are over 20 000 industrial plants of all types and sizes concentrated in the city and the surrounding municipalities employing 600 000 workers. São Paulo is also the major financial centre in Brazil with nearly 2 000 banking agencies.

### Rio de Janeiro

With the inauguration of Brasília, **Rio de Janeiro** ceased to be Brazil's capital. Being the second largest city in Brazil, Rio is still a major cultural capital and, to some extent, the 'emotional' capital as well. Rio de Janeiro has a majestic beauty, with built-up areas nestled between a magnificent bay and dazzling beaches on one side, and an abruptly rising mountain range, covered by a luxuriant



# major

tropical forest, on the other. This unique landscape makes Rio one of the most beautiful cities in the world, justifying its title of 'Marvellous City' (*Cidade Maravilhosa*). Rio's cultural life is intense and varied. Economically it is a service industry centre, a key financial centre, and the producer of foodstuffs, building materials, electrical equipment, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, beverages and textiles. But it is in the pursuit of leisure that Rio is outstanding. With its world-famous beaches (such as Copacabana and Ipanema) free to all, its splendid bay, one of the loveliest in the world, and its wonderful climate, a blend of summer and springtime, Rio de Janeiro is a city that lives in and for the sun.

## Salvador



**Salvador**, capital of the state of Bahia, was the first major port and the capital of colonial Brazil for almost two centuries. The city lies between green tropical hills and broad beaches along the Bay of Todos os Santos. It was built on two levels with administration buildings and residences constructed on the hills, forts, docks and warehouses on the beaches. To this day the city is still divided into upper

and lower cities. From 1500 to 1815 Salvador was the nation's busiest port. A significant portion of the sugar from the north-east, and gold and diamonds from the mines in the south-east passed through Salvador. It was a golden age for the town. Magnificent homes and churches resplendent in gold decoration were built. Many of the city's baroque churches, private homes, squares and even the hand-chipped paving bricks have been preserved as part of Brazil's historic heritage.

In Salvador, more than anywhere else in the country, the African influence in the make-up of Brazilian culture is readily visible, from the spicy dishes still called by their African names (*caruru, vatapá, acarajé*), to the ceremonies of *candomblé* which honour both African deities and Catholic saints, to the *capoeira* schools where a unique African form of ritualistic fighting is taught.



## major cities

### Belo Horizonte

**Belo Horizonte**, the first modern Brazilian city to spring from an architect's drawing board, was especially designed for its role as the capital of the state of Minas Gerais. Its wide, landscaped avenues and carefully planned residential suburbs have, however, suffered the impact of the country's high rate of urbanisation. Belo Horizonte is the distributing and processing centre of a rich agricultural and mining region and the nucleus of a burgeoning industrial complex. Its chief manufactures are steel, steel products, automobiles and textiles. Gold, manganese, and gemstones of the surrounding region are processed in the city. Belo Horizonte is also a leading cultural centre, with three universities, a historical museum, numerous libraries and sports stadiums. The climate is fresh and cool.



### Curitiba

**Curitiba**, standing some 914 m above sea level on the plateau of Serra do Mar, is the capital of the progressive state of Paraná. Since the late 1800s, Curitiba's bracing climate and picturesque location have attracted immigrants of Slav, German and Italian origin. Curitiba grew rapidly after 1950 and it is known for the sensible manner in which it became a major city without losing a comfortable life-style. Curitiba

is setting international standards, not only for its sound environmental policies, but also for the enthusiastic way its citizens embrace and uphold them. The city derives its economic prosperity from its role as commercial and processing centre for the expanding agricultural and ranch areas in the hinterlands as well as from its diverse industrial output.



### Recife

**Recife** was built as a port city along tropical, white-sand beaches lined with palm trees. It is the capital of the north-eastern state of Pernambuco. Recife is a fast-growing urban area that has been called the 'Venice of Brazil' because it is intersected by numerous waterways and connected by

many bridges. The city got its name from the coral reefs that line the coast. Local fishermen go out into the high seas in *jangadas*, crude log rafts with beautiful sails unique to the area, which require expert navigational skills to manoeuvre. Recife exports great quantities of the hinterland's products, including sugar, cotton and coffee.

## Porto Alegre

**Porto Alegre**, the largest city in the south of Brazil, is the capital of the state of Rio Grande do Sul. The city was founded in 1742 by immigrants from the Azores. Since the 19th century the city has received numerous German and Italian settlers. Lying as it does at the junction of five rivers, it has become an important port as well as one of the chief industrial and commercial centres in Brazil. Products of the rich agricultural and pastoral hinterland, such as leather, canned beef and rice, are exported from Porto Alegre to destinations as far away as Europe and Japan.

major cities



## races

**There** are three basic racial sources for the Brazilian people. To the original inhabitants (Indians) were added successive waves of Europeans (mainly Portuguese) and Africans (mostly from the sub-Saharan west coast).

In the 16th century the area which is now Brazil was inhabited by several hundred indigenous tribes which, while racially similar, spoke different

races

languages and had different cultures. Groups speaking the Tupí and Guaraní languages lived along the coast and in the adjoining hinterland, and they intermarried with the Portuguese settlers. Many tribes speaking other languages (Gê, Arwak and Karib), however, lived in the interior and they took longer to establish contact with the outsiders. At the beginning of the 21st century Brazil's native Indians number about 700 000. They are divided into roughly 215 groups and

they speak some 170 different languages. The

Indians live in vast areas (946 452 km<sup>2</sup>), equal to 11,12 per cent of Brazil's total territory, which have been set aside for them by the Federal Government. In

these areas, which total nearly three-quarters of the size of South Africa or Angola, the Indians

are free to preserve their life style.

Starting in the middle of the 16th century, Africans belonging to the Bantu and to the Sudanic ethnic groups (a large proportion of the Sudanic group came from the Yoruba nation from what is today Nigeria and Benin) were brought to Brazil to work as slaves in the sugar cane plantations,

and later in the gold and diamond mines and the coffee plantations. The integration process that had begun between the Europeans and the Indians rapidly spread to include the black slaves.

This racial mixing went on as Brazil began, at the end of the 19th century, to receive increasing numbers of immigrants from all over the world. Portugal remained the single most important source of migrants to Brazil, with Italy second, followed by Lebanon. In the first half of the 20th century, as a consequence of war or economic pressures, sizeable contingents of immigrants came to Brazil from parts of western, central and eastern Europe. In 1908, 640 immigrants came to Brazil from Japan. Because of the welcoming social environment, a Japanese migration trend was established. By 1969, 247 312 Japanese had immigrated to Brazil. Today Brazilians of Japanese descent are the largest such group outside Japan.



*language*

## language

**Portuguese** is the official language of Brazil. Except for the languages spoken by Indian tribes living in remote reservations, Portuguese is the only language of daily life. There are no regional dialects. Brazil is the only Portuguese-speaking country in South America.

*religion*

**religion**

*religion*



**The** country was officially Catholic for four centuries, from the Portuguese discovery in 1500 to the end of the Empire in 1889, and the law officially proscribed other religions as illegal. The Republican Constitution of 1891 established the separation of the State and the Church, and guaranteed freedom of religion. Nowadays, 73.8 per cent of the population declare themselves

to be Roman Catholic. However, Brazil is also a country of religious tolerance, of a variety of faiths and syncretism.

Recently Protestant groups in Brazil have been growing in number, rising from 9 per cent in 1991 to 15.4 per cent in 2000. There are sizeable

memberships in independent Pentecostal churches as well as followers of mainstream Protestant denominations from Europe and the US such as Episcopal, Methodist, Lutheran and Baptist.

There are over a million-and-a-half Spiritualists or Kardecists who follow the doctrines of the 19th century French psychic researcher, Allan Kardec (central to Spiritualism is the belief in reincarnation). Brazil's diversity includes converts to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons), small minorities of Jews, Muslims and Buddhists and numerous adherents of Candomblé.

Candomblé is a religion that was brought to Brazil by the Yoruba slaves from Nigeria and Benin. Today many Brazilians from every social and economic group participate in both Catholicism and Candomblé. To the slave-owners and Catholic officials, African slaves were heathens to be converted. To that end, the masters prohibited their rituals. In order to continue their traditional practices while still appeasing their owners, slaves coupled their animistic deities with corresponding personalities in Catholicism. Oxalá, a male god of procreation and harvest, for instance, was identified with Jesus. Iemanjá, goddess of the sea, was associated with Our Lady of Conception. Throughout the year, the two religions had many corresponding festivals. While the slaves kept their traditional observances (some native Indian beliefs were also added to Candomblé), their owners celebrated too, apparently convinced that they and their slaves were practising one faith. The Catholic Church was content to let matters lie, hoping that, over the years, African tradition would eventually die off and Christian beliefs would be strengthened. This has not been the case. Candomblé is practised all over Brazil. Umbanda, a religion derived from Candomblé coupled with the Christian and spiritual beliefs found in Kardecism, is also practised widely.