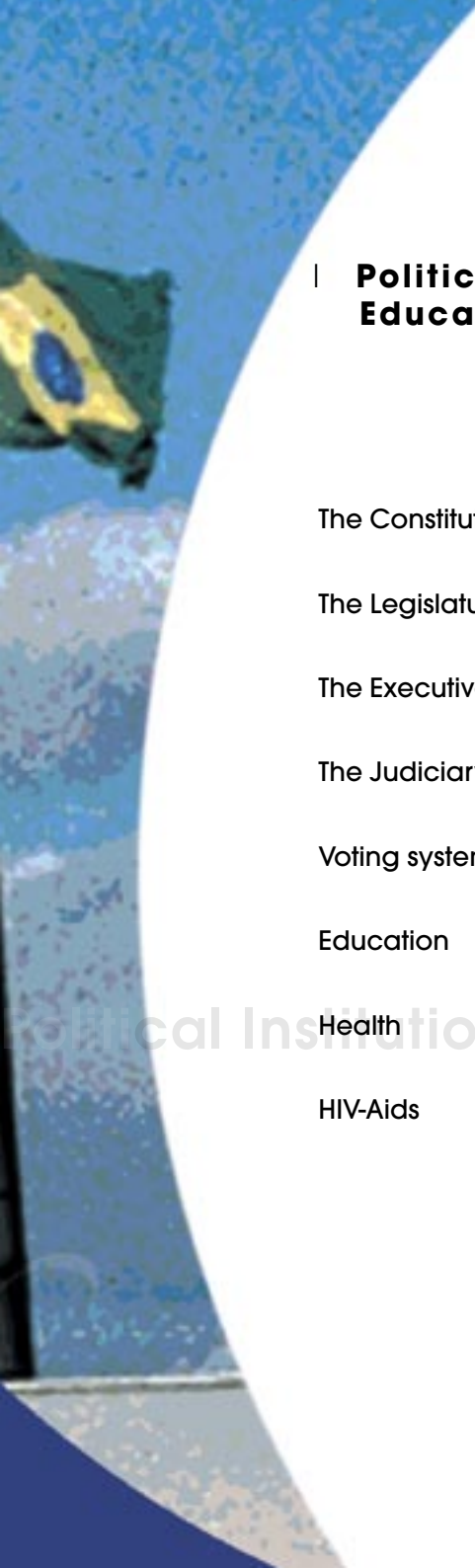




*Political
Institutions,
Education
& Health*



| **Political Institutions, Education & Health** |

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Coat of Arms



Brazilian flag

the constitution and the federal structure

After the monarchy had been abolished, Brazil's first Constitution under the Republic (1891) established a presidential system with three independent powers: the Executive, the Legislative and the Judicial powers. This structure was retained in Brazil's six subsequent republican constitutions, including the present Constitution, drafted by a specially empowered National Congress elected in 1984 and formally promulgated on 5 October 1988. The 1988 Constitution incorporates a great many new concepts ranging from environmental protection to increased powers for the Legislature in its relationship with the Executive. Since 1992 important amendments have been adopted mostly pertaining to economic issues.

Brazil is a federal republic comprising 26 states and one Federal District where Brasília, the capital of the country, is situated. Each state has its own government, with a structure that mirrors the federal level, enjoying all the powers (defined in its own Constitution) that are not specifically reserved for the federal government or assigned to the Municipal Councils. The head of the state executive is the Governor, elected by direct popular vote under the Federal Constitution. The one-chamber state legislature is a State Assembly. The state judiciary follows the federal pattern and has its jurisdiction defined so as to avoid any conflict or superimposition with the federal courts.

At the municipal level there are over 5 561 Municipal Councils, which are autonomous in strictly local affairs. The Municipal Councils operate under the provisions of the Basic Law of Municipalities.

the constitution and the federal structure

the legislature



*The Seal of
the Republic*

The national legislature is the National Congress (*Congresso Nacional*), composed of two houses, the Chamber of Deputies (*Câmara dos Deputados*) and the Federal Senate (*Senado Federal*).

The number of members in the Chamber of Deputies from each State and the Federal District is proportional to its population. Deputies are elected for four-year terms by direct secret ballot under the system of universal franchise which is adopted for all elections to public office.

The Senate is composed of 3 Senators from each state and the Federal District, elected for a term of eight years. Senatorial elections are staggered (one-third and then two-thirds) every four years, in elections held concomitantly with those for the Chamber of Deputies. A Deputy and a Senator can stand for re-election without restriction. There are 81 Senators and 513 members of the Chamber of Deputies.

*The Presidential office building
(Planalto palace)*



the executive

the executive

The Executive, with its powers clearly defined in the Constitution, is headed by the President of the Republic. The President and the Vice-President are elected for a four-year term. An amendment to the Constitution in 1997 permits the President and the Vice-President to serve for a second consecutive term.

The President appoints the Cabinet Ministers who are directly responsible to him or her and who may be dismissed at any time. A Minister may be summoned to appear before the Chamber of Deputies, the Senate, or any of its committees.

the judiciary

Judicial powers are vested in the Federal Supreme Court (*Supremo Tribunal Federal*), in the Superior Court of Justice (*Superior Tribunal de Justiça*), regional courts, and in specific courts for electoral, labour, military and other matters. The justices and judges of all the courts, at both the federal and the state levels, are appointed for life.

The Federal Supreme Court is at the apex of the judicial system. It has its seat in the national capital, Brasília, but holds jurisdiction throughout the country. It is composed of 11 justices, of proven legal and constitutional training and experience, appointed by the President of the Republic, with the prior approval of the Senate.



The Supreme Court

voting system



The Congress

Voting is universal and compulsory for all literate citizens from 18 to 70 years of age. Voting is optional for citizens aged 16 and 17, for senior citizens above 70, and for illiterates of any age. In the last municipal elections in 2000, more than 95 per cent of the votes were cast in electronic voting machines. Because of that, the

preliminary results were announced in less than two hours after the polls had closed and the official results in 18 of the 26 states were known in just 24 hours.

Candidates must belong to a political party. The registration of a political party is effected by the Higher Electoral Tribunal, following the fulfilment

of certain minimum requirements established by legislation. In a presidential or a gubernatorial election a candidate must receive an absolute majority to win the election. If no candidate receives this mandate the two candidates gaining the highest number of votes compete in a run-off election (second round) held 20 days after the first election.

voting system

education



The Brazilian educational system includes both public (federal, state and municipal) and private institutions, ranging from pre-school, elementary (First Level – *I Grau*), and secondary (Second Level – *II Grau*) to university and postgraduate levels. Education is compulsory from seven to fourteen years of age. All public education is free. Three meals are provided by the government each school day to 37,5 million (2004) pre-school (under seven years of age) and elementary school children (aged seven to fourteen). Non-profit private schools are also eligible to receive public funding. The 1988 Brazilian Constitution as amended allocates at least 25 per cent of state and local tax revenues to education. In the last 25 years significant advances have been made in the Bra-

education

zilian educational structure. In 1964, there were 10 million students attending school at all levels. In 2004, there were 52,7 million students: 6,9 million in pre-school; 34,1 million at the elementary level; 9,1 million at the secondary level; and 2,7 million at university. Nowadays, 94,5 per cent of the high school-aged youth are enrolled in school.

After successful results in Campinas and in the Federal District, the federal government has implemented a school grant programme throughout the country. The main objective of this programme is to encourage school attendance. The programme is structured as follows: in exchange for a monthly allowance, mothers sign an agreement pledging to keep their children at school. The local authority provides an allowance which replaces any income gained from child labour with the assurance on the part of the families benefiting from the Programme that the children will stay in school.

The federal government maintains at least one federal university in each state. Owing to the great demand for higher education and the lack of places, colleges (*faculdades*) and universities in Brazil, both public and private, require an entrance exam called *vestibular*. Upon completion of a full academic course of study, university students may obtain the *bacharel* degree or, with an additional year spent in teacher training, the *licenciado* degree. In 2003 there were a total of 1 859 tertiary institutions – offering 16 453 courses.

Until the 1980s there were few postgraduate courses in Brazil. However, in 2003 more than 2 400 postgraduate courses were available (with 112 000 students enrolled), most of which benefit from highly capable faculties, on a par with similar institutions in other countries.

health

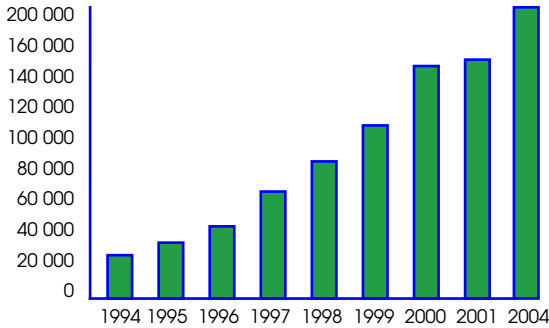


The Brazilian Health System is one of the largest public-health networks in the world. It is decentralised and devolves the operation of services and the implementation of various activities to the states and municipalities. The management of the system also relies on the participation of society, which operates through state and municipal health councils in the planning and control of actions implemented by the Government.

The Family Health Programme is the structural axis of the new model of health care, and it is aimed at expanding access by the population to basic health and preventive services, by means of Community Agents and Family-Health Teams.

Community Health Agents – of which there are more than 201 000 working in 19 900 Health Teams – are responsible for the monthly monitoring of over 96 million people all over the country. The number of Community Health Agents, which in 1994 was under 30 000, was multiplied nearly sevenfold in only ten years.

Community health agents (number of agents)



Source: Ministry of Health

The Child Health and Breastfeeding Programme was responsible for the expansion of the National Network of Human Milk Banks to 173 units. Deemed one of the best in the world, the network collects more than 100 000 l of human milk a year, benefiting more than 70 000 newborn infants considered to be at risk. Another important achievement of the programme is the vaccination of 90 per cent of the children from birth to one year of age against 13 diseases.

Infant mortality up to the age of one year for each thousand born alive has decreased from 47,8 in the early 1990s to 27,8 in 2002.

In the field of nourishment and nutrition, the Healthy Nourishment Programme is aimed at reducing and controlling malnutrition and deficiencies in micronutrients in health services, as well as at promoting healthy nourishment throughout the different cycles of life.

HIV-AIDS



The reduction of the incidence of AIDS in Brazil is an achievement of the health programmes put into practice in the last three years. Currently, the epidemic is still growing, yet at decreasing rates.

In 1995, the number of cases of AIDS in Brazil was 11,9 per 100 000 inhabitants. In 2003 this figure rose to 18 per 100 000, and has remained at this threshold.

hiv-aids

In 1999 the situation started to change. Since then the Ministry of Health has accredited 130 maternity hospitals for treatment with AZT injections, which has reduced the transmission of the virus to infants by up to 95 per cent.

Anti-retroviral medicines were purchased and distributed to 115 000 people carrying HIV-AIDS. Similar and generic medicines are now being produced in Brazil. This ensures cost reduction and maintenance of the policy of universality aimed at providing access to anti-retroviral medicines.

In addition to measures aimed at informing the population on contact risks, the Ministry of Health distributed condoms to the population.