

BRAZIL



Country Profiles

This profile is a part of our Leading Multiculturalism: Canada's Impact on Global Diversity Policies series

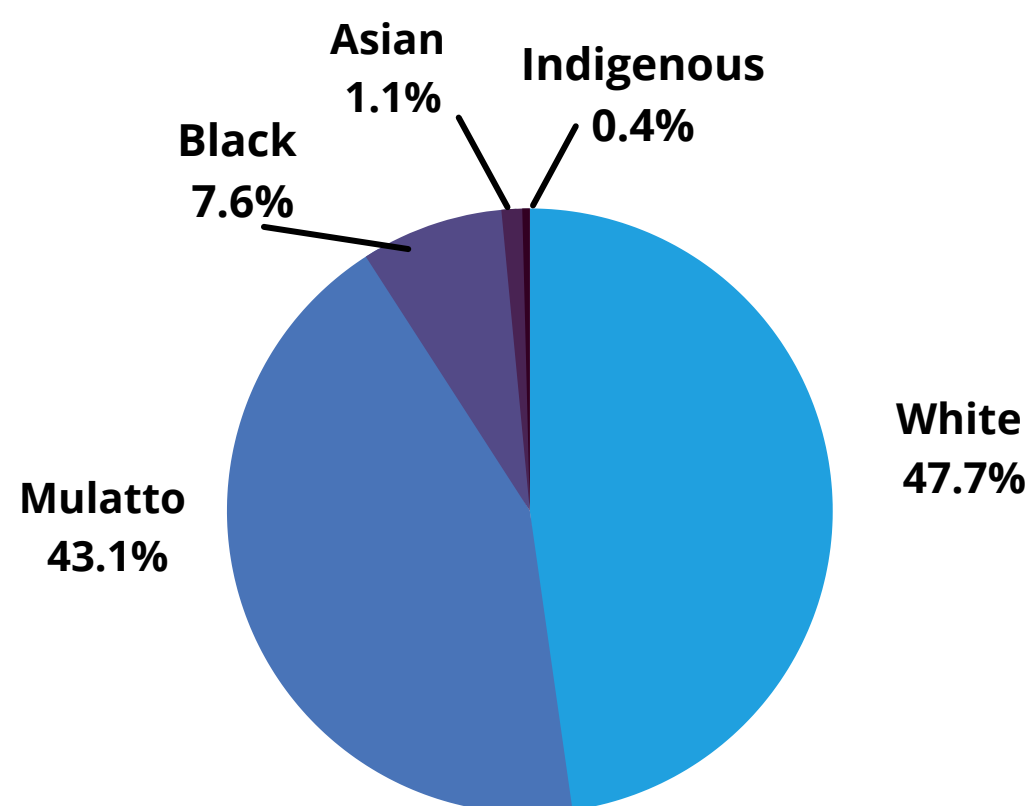
You can view all country profiles at: www.mosaicinstitute.ca/leading-multiculturalism



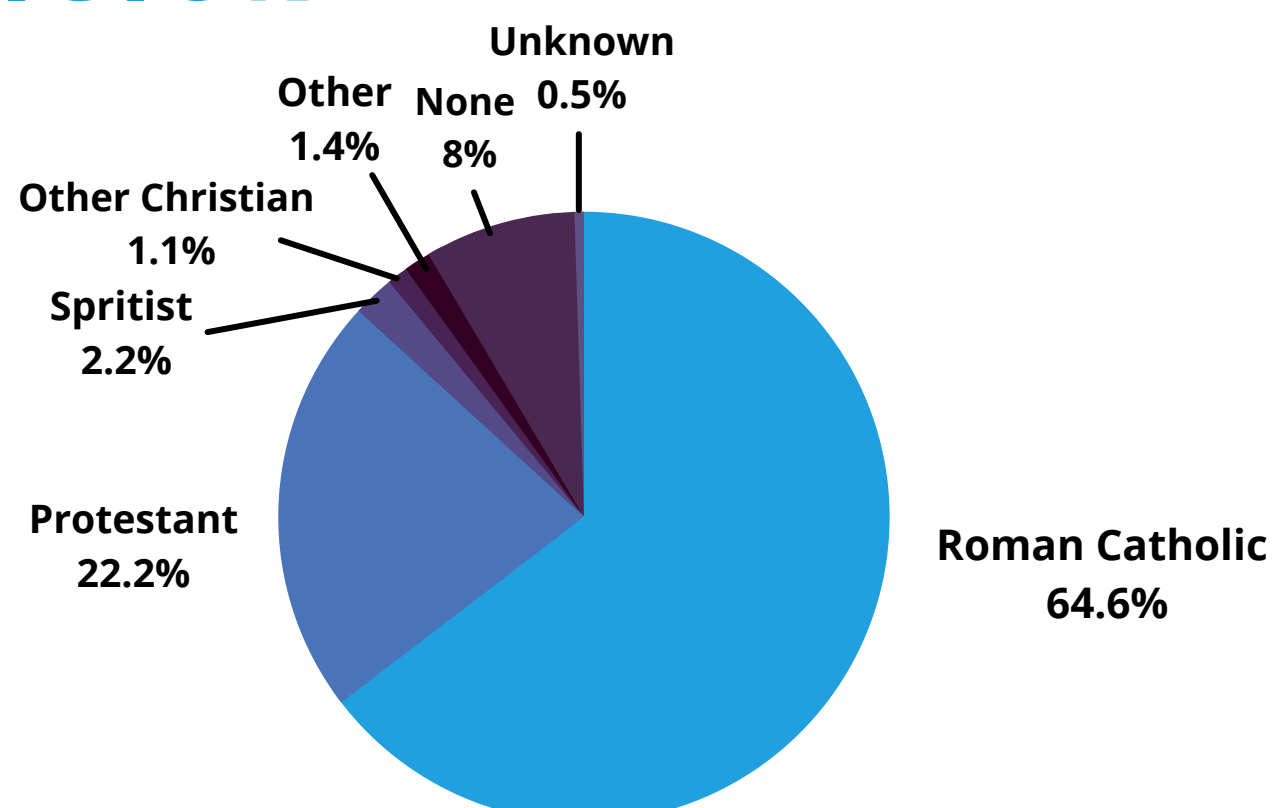
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Between 1964-1982, Brazil was ruled by a military dictatorship. Its re-democratization in the 1980s resulted in the promulgation of a new Constitution in 1988 that is highly liberal, providing extensive protections of human rights, recognizing diversity within the state, and banning racism. Since then, initiatives including affirmative action programs and recognition of key dates in Afro-Brazilian history, have been passed by the government.

DEMOGRAPHICS



RELIGION



MULTICULTURALISM POLICY

Term: Racial Democracy

Approach: Bottom-Up, government action typically following activism from Afro-Brazilian organizations.

DOMESTIC

- argue for a “Brazilian model” based on racial democracy, instead of multiculturalism
- 1988 Constitution- highly democratic, hyper liberal, after two-plus decades of military junta rule
 - recognized ethnic and cultural diversity as a reality for the first time, but no explicit recognition of multiculturalism in Constitution
- Early 2000's- creation of government agencies dealing with racial equality, including the Conselho Nacional de Promoção da Igualdade Racial (National Council for Promotion of Racial Equality)
- Affirmative Action policies began to be implemented in 2001 and is now required by federal law at federal universities, usually taking the form of quotas

INTERNATIONAL

Treaties

- ✓ International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- ✓ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Brazil

Backgroundⁱ

- Population: 211,715,930 (2020 est.)
- Demographics: White, 47.7%; Mulatto, 43.1%; Black, 7.6%; Asian, 1.1%; Indigenous, 0.4%
- Languages: Portuguese, with large number of Indigenous languages.
- Religion: Roman Catholic, 64.6%; Protestant, 22.2%; Spiritist, 2.2%; other Christian, 1.1%; other, 1.4%; none, 8%.
- Term: Racial Democracyⁱⁱ
- Top Down or Bottom Up: Both Top-Down and Bottom-Up

Brazil is a large and diverse South American nation with a population of 211 million and a population almost evenly split between those of European descent (47.7%) and Black and Mulatto descent (50.7%), with smaller Indigenous and Asian minorities. In addition to being the largest country by population and area in South America, Brazil is a unique case to explore because of both what it is not, and what it is becoming: it has traditionally rejected the ideas of multiculturalism (*pluriculturalismo*), viewing it as a North American phenomenon.ⁱⁱⁱ This meant the idea of multiculturalism lay contrary to Brazil's conception of being a 'racial democracy,' wherein Brazilians see themselves as living in a racially harmonious society.^{iv} In recent years, however, this conception has begun to be challenged due to the wide racial inequalities that exist in Brazil.^v

Between 1964-1982, Brazil was ruled by a military dictatorship. Its re-democratization in the 1980s resulted in the promulgation of a new Constitution in 1988^{vi} that is highly liberal, providing extensive protections of human rights, recognizing diversity within the state, and banning racism. Since then, various other initiatives, including affirmative action programs and recognition of key dates in Afro-Brazilian history, have been passed by the government, often following activism from Afro-Brazilian organizations. This reflects the mixed, both the top-down and bottom-up, approach to recognizing cultural diversity in Brazil.

Brazil is a signatory to both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and although it is not a large promoter of multiculturalism abroad, Article 4 of the Brazilian Constitution does set out that Brazilian international relations are to be guided by a "prevalence of human rights."^{vii} Overall, Brazil is a complex society in the midst of transition from seeing itself as a racial democracy, wherein all races were seen to be living harmoniously, to an as-of-yet unformed conception that provides greater recognition and emphasis on cultural diversity and difference.

Comparative Analysis: Domestic Legal

Approach

Both top-down, through state reforms, and bottom-up, through activism.^{viii}

Article 215 of the Brazilian Constitution says that the state shall “foster the appreciation and diffusion of cultural expression.” This includes protection of the rights of all groups “participating in the national civilization process,” and the establishment of commemorative dates of significance for ethnic communities. It also includes the establishment of a “National Culture Plan” (see: “practical”).

Article 231 and 232 protect the rights of “Indians” (Aboriginals), including their customs, languages, traditions, and respect for their property.

- However, these rights are under threat by regional authorities and landowners in the Amazonia region.^{ix}

The Luiz Inácio Lula de Silva presidency in the early 2000’s has led to the creation of several government agencies dealing with racial equality, including the Conselho Nacional de Promoção da Igualdade Racial (National Council for Promotion of Racial Equality) and others.^x

Constitutional Protections

Brazil wrote a new, highly democratic and hyper liberal constitution in 1988, after two-plus decades of military junta rule. This new Constitution included:

- Article 3 (IV) declares that a “fundamental objective” of the Brazilian state is “to promote the well-being of all, without prejudice as to origin, race, sex, colour, age and any other forms of discrimination.”
- Chapter 1 includes protection for basic rights, including the freedom of speech (Article 5 [IV; IX]), conscience and of religion (Article 5 [VI-VIII]), assembly (Article 5 [XVI]), and association (Article 5 [XVII-XXI]).
- Article 5 (XL) says that the “law shall punish any discrimination which may attempt against fundamental rights and liberties”
- The subsequent Article 5 (XLI) makes racism a “non-bailable” offense that is subject to incarceration.
- Article 5 (LXXVIII), paragraph 3, says that international human rights treaties and conventions that are passed in each House of the National Congress with 3/5 of the vote, automatically obtain the status of constitutional amendments.
- Chapter 2 includes “social rights,” within which is Article 7 (XXX), prohibiting differences in wage based on sex, age, colour, or marital status.

Explicit Recognition of Multiculturalism

The new constitution recognized ethnic and cultural diversity as a reality for the first time,^{xi} but still no explicit recognition of multiculturalism in Constitution.

Comparative Analysis: Domestic Practical

Valuing and Active Promotion of Diversity

The Brazilian term for multiculturalism is *pluriculturalismo*, however most Brazilians take for granted that other cultures exist within the larger Brazilian whole and see multiculturalism as North American; instead, they argue for a “Brazilian model” based on racial democracy.^{xii}

Brazil is a place with extreme racial inequality, with Blacks making up at least 44% of the population and only earning 41% of what the average light-skin Brazilian male earns. Thus, while official portraits paint a picture of harmony, the reality is complex.^{xiii}

Most Brazilians dislike the pointing out of difference between groups within society and thus the "universalist ideals" of Brazilian nationalism.^{xiv}

Brazil has always seen itself as a **racial democracy** with three races (Indigenous, Blacks, and Portuguese) existing in harmony.^{xv}

Article 13 of the Brazilian Constitution specifies Portuguese as the official language of Brazil; however, Article 231-232 allows for Indigenous peoples to protect their languages.

- Article 215, subparagraph 3, of the Constitution requires the government to draw up a "National Culture Plan," a multiyear plan aimed that will train personnel to "manage cultural in its multiple dimensions" and attain the "appreciation of the value of ethnic and regional diversity."

National Holidays include National Black Consciousness Day (November 20) and National Official Day Against Racism (May 13).^{xvi}

Federal Law 10,639/03 requires the teaching of Black Brazilian history in schools.^{xvii}

Multiculturalism as a Means to Integration

Brazil's traditional focus on "racial democracy" means that multiculturalism does not play a big role in linking to democratic values or generate a connection to the state; it is a country in transition towards a more inclusive understanding of its diversity.

Affirmative Action Policies

Affirmative Action policies began to be implemented in 2001 and is now required by federal law at federal universities, usually taking the form of quotas. Some private companies have since voluntary adopted affirmative action policies but they are the exception, not the rule.^{xviii}

Comparative Analysis: International

International Treaties

Brazil acceded to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1992.^{xix}

Brazil was an original signatory to the International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1966. Unlike Canada, Brazil recognizes Article XIV, which allows for the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to receive and consider complaints from Brazil.^{xx}

International Promotion of Multiculturalism

Article 4 (II) of the Brazilian Constitution declares that Brazil's international relations are to be guided by the "prevalence of human rights"^{xxi}

ⁱ "Brazil," The World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency, accessed October 29, 2020

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/br.html>

ⁱⁱ Felipe Arocena, "Multiculturalism in Brazil, Bolivia, and Peru," *Race and Class* 49, no. 4 (2008): 2, DOI: 10.1177/0306396808089284

ⁱⁱⁱ A.E. Da Costa, "Educator Experiences with Anti-racist *Pluriculturalismo*," In *Reimagining Black Difference and Politics in Brazil* (Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2014), 10-11. https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1057/9781137386342_8

^{iv} Arocena, "Multiculturalism in Brazil, Bolivia, and Peru," 2.

-
- v Edmilson de Almeida Pereira and Steven F. White, "Brazil: Interactions and Conflicts in a Multicultural Society," in *Global Multiculturalism: Comparative Perspectives on Ethnicity, Race, and Nation*, ed. Cornwell, Grant H. and Stoddard, Eve Welsh (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers., 2001), 123.
- vi "Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil," Organization of American States, accessed October 29, 2020, https://www.oas.org/es/sla/ddi/docs/acceso_informacion_base_dc_leyes_pais_b_1_en.pdf
- vii Organization of American States, "Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil."
- viii Da Costa, "Educator Experiences with Anti-racist *Pluriculturalismo*," 32.
- ix Donna Lee Van Cott, *The Friendly Liquidation of the Past* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), 268.
- x Da Costa, "Educator Experiences with Anti-racist *Pluriculturalismo*," 35.
- xi Arocena, "Multiculturalism in Brazil, Bolivia, and Peru," 1-21.
- xii Da Costa, "Educator Experiences with Anti-racist *Pluriculturalismo*," 10-11.
- xiii de Almeida Pereira White, "Brazil: Interactions and Conflicts in a Multicultural Society," 123.
- xiv de Almeida Pereira and White, "Brazil: Interactions and Conflicts in a Multicultural Society," 126.
- xv Arocena, "Multiculturalism in Brazil, Bolivia, and Peru," 2.
- xvi Arocena, "Multiculturalism in Brazil, Bolivia, and Peru," 1-21.
- xvii Da Costa, "Educator Experiences with Anti-racist *Pluriculturalismo*," 157.
- xviii Edward Telles and Marcelo Paixão, "Affirmative Action in Brazil," *LASAForum* 44, no.2 (2013): 10-12. <https://forum.lasaweb.org/files/vol44-issue2/Debates4.pdf>
- xix "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," United Nations Treaty Collection, United Nations, accessed October 29, 2020, https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-4&chapter=4&clang=_en
- xx "International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination," United Nations Treaty Collection, United Nations, accessed October 29, 2020, https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=IV-2&chapter=4&lang=en
- xxi Organization of American States, "Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil."