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Brazil Cultural Standards

Photo and Graphic Images to Avoid

- ~ The inverted American "OK" sign is an obscene gesture.
- ~ Purple and black are for mourning.
- ~ Handkerchiefs are also associated with funerals.

Body Language

- ~ Brazilians favor direct eye contact over indirect with people of their similar social, economic and educational position. During conversations sustained eye contact is commonplace rather than intermittent. They associate a steady gaze with sincerity.
- ~ Light touching and close proximity are construed as signs of general friendship (as opposed to romantic intimacy). There is also a fair amount of touching between man and woman and woman and woman while conversing. This includes hand on shoulders, hand on arms, and hand on hands.
- ~ Brazilians tend to stand much closer to each other than their North American counterparts. Usually one to two feet apart is normal.
- ~ Brazilians are sometimes viewed as being very forward and aggressive. This can hold true to both men and women.

Content

- ~ The age ranking of males, ages 0-14 in Brazil is 9th, and the ranking for females of the same 0-14 is 10th in the world. These figures are based on calculations made January 10, 2010.
- ~ While Brazilians are seen as quite freely passionate and spirited people, be mindful that they are also respectful and dignified. Publicly demeaning or disrespecting a Brazilian is seen as very bad etiquette.
- ~ Brazilians are very group-orientated and sociable people, and for this reason they retain a similar characteristic as the Chinese with regards to "saving face".
- ~ Brazil has such size and diversity that it is most deserving of the name "land of contrasts".
- ~ The Northeast has the greatest proportion of people of African descent the South and Southeast are home to the majority of Brazilians of European and Japanese ancestry, while indigenous peoples live largely in the North and Central-West. Regional migration and an extensive inter-racial population have made Brazil one of the most racially diverse nations.
- ~ The heritage of the Northeast coast, based on slave labor and a plantation economy, was distinct from that of the South and Southeast, where plantations existed along with small family farms. Such historical differences partly account for contemporary contrasts between these regions.
- ~ Another regional distinction, between coast and inland, arises from the fact that settlement in Brazil has always been concentrated near the coast. To say that someone is from the "interior" usually implies that they are from a rural area.



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- ~ Agriculture employs-directly or indirectly-about one-quarter of the labor force. Five million workers are wage laborers concentrated in the plantations of the North and the increasingly mechanized agricultural enterprises of the Southeast and South. More than 70 percent of these workers lack contracts and social benefits and less than 40 percent are employed year round. There are also 4.8 million landless families who survive as tenant farmers, sharecroppers, and casual laborers.
- ~ One of the most significant distinctions in Brazilian society is between those who do manual labor and those who do not. Today it is still the working class and poor who work with their hands.
- ~ The Brazilian middle class is sometimes defined as those with *colarinho e gravata* - collar and tie - because a major marker of middle-class status is a white-collar job. People, who work with their hands in Brazil, are not considered middle class.
- ~ Usually families who own houses, apartments, land or have a company are seen as “rich” by others. Brazilians are preoccupied with class distinctions.
- ~ Based on figures from 2008 26 percent of the population lives below the poverty line
- ~ While the typical household in Brazil may consist of parents and children, this is not the isolated nuclear family unit familiar to Americans. Brazilian culture puts a high premium on extended family ties and Brazilians, regardless of social class, do not like to live any distance from their relatives. Grown sons and daughters almost always remain at home until they marry and live near their parents after marriage.

Education

- ~ Like so many aspects of Brazilian life, educational opportunities are tied to social class. Brazil has never invested heavily in public education and most middle-class and elite families send their children to private school. Education is also linked to race and geography.
- ~ Access to education in Brazil is generally below international standards. At 93 per cent, the net primary enrolment rate places Brazil 59th, internationally, although, girls and boys have equal access to education. A gross enrolment rate at secondary level ranks Brazil 21st, internationally, but tertiary enrolment places Brazil at 63rd in the index. Subjective measures of education quality which measure the population’s overall satisfaction with services on offer, and the proportion of people who think children have the opportunity to learn, and grow every day, rank Brazil in the bottom 20th countries, in the index. For every primary school teacher in Brazil, there are almost 24 pupils ranking Brazil just 71st, on this variable. Further, levels of human capital are below international averages: the average Brazilian worker has undertaken just 1.6 years of secondary education, and just 0.6 year of tertiary education, placing the country 70th and 73rd, respectively, on these variables.
- ~ Two-thirds of all public monies spent on education supports universities, the other third to public primary and secondary. *While public universities in Brazil-widely considered superior to their private counterparts-charge no tuition, they have very competitive entrance exams which generally favor students who have attended costly private schools with high academic standards.*
- ~ A saying in Brazil goes like this “*Economic success comes from who one knows than what one knows, and where one is educated, influences who one knows.*”

