

Brazil

Federative Republic of Brazil



Key Facts



OAS Membership Date: 26 May 1991

Head of State / Head of Government: President Jair Bolsonaro

Capital city: Brasilia

Population: 208,846,892

Language(s): Portuguese

Religions: Protestant 34.8%, Hindu 24.8%, Roman Catholic 7.1%, Muslim 6.8%, Jehovah's Witness 1.3%, Rastafarian 0.5%, other Christian 20.8%, other 0.9%, none 3.1%

Ethnic Groups: White (47.7%), Mulatto (43.1%), Black (7.6%)

Currency: Brazilian Real (BRL)

Gross domestic product (PPP): \$3.248 trillion (2017 est.)

Legal System: civil law; note - a new civil law code was enacted in 2002, replacing the 1916 code

Political system: Brazil is a federal presidential republic. The President and vice president are directly elected on the same ballot by absolute majority popular vote for a single 4-year term, and are eligible for a second term. The Cabinet is appointed by the president. The bicameral National Congress, or Congresso Nacional, consists of: the Federal Senate or Senado Federal (81 seats; 3 members each from 26 states and 3 from the federal district, directly elected by simple majority vote to serve 8-year terms, with one-third and two-thirds of the membership elected alternately every 4 years) and the Chamber of Deputies or Camara dos Deputados (513 seats; members directly elected by proportional representation vote to serve 4-year terms). The highest judicial body is the Supreme Federal Court or Supremo Tribunal Federal. Justices are appointed by the president and approved by the Federal Senate, and are appointed to serve until mandatory retirement at age 75.

Economy: Brazil has the eighth-largest economy in the world, but is currently recovering from a recession in 2015 and 2016 that ranks as the worst in the country's history. The economy has been negatively affected by multiple recent corruption scandals involving private companies and government officials, including the impeachment and conviction of Former President Dilma Rousseff in August 2016. Sanctions against the firms involved have limited their business opportunities, producing a ripple effect on associated businesses and contractors. To restore credibility to government finances, the Brazilian government pursued a series of fiscal reforms in 2017, including a cap on public spending, a reduction in barriers to foreign investment, and an increase in revenue-earning infrastructure projects. Brazil is a member of the Common Market of the South (Mercosur), a trade bloc that includes Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay; Venezuela's membership in the organization was suspended in August 2017. Services comprise 72.7% of Brazil's GDP, industry 20.7%, and agriculture 6.6%. Key exports include transport equipment, iron ore, soybeans, footwear, coffee, and automobiles.

Diplomatic Relations

Relations to the OAS: Brazil is a founding member of the OAS, having signed the Organization's Charter of 1948 in Bogota, Colombia. Brazil is signatory to a wide range of OAS treaties and conventions, including the American Convention on Human Rights (1969) and Additional Protocols, the Inter-American Democratic Charter (2001), the Social Charter of the Americas (2012), and the Inter-American Convention against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Related Forms of Intolerance (2013). Brazil is party to two joint OAS exercises: the Lima Group, an unofficial multilateral anti-Maduro coalition with the aim of peacefully addressing the crisis in Venezuela, and the Permanent Council Working Group on Nicaragua. Brazil is also a member of the Group of Friends of Haiti, an organization working in conjunction with the OAS to support the institutional strengthening of Haiti's electoral process. Several domestic partnerships also exist between the OAS and Brazil, such as the OAS scholarship fund for the Coimbra Group of Brazilian Universities (GCUB), a consortium of 50 Brazilian higher education institutes.

Relations to Venezuela: In past decades, several joint economic ventures, such as a high-voltage power line and a joint oil refinery, have fostered cooperation between the governments of Brazil and Venezuela. However, diplomatic relations have recently soured in light of the Venezuelan crisis – in December 2018, the Venezuelan government expelled the Brazilian ambassador from their capital city of Caracas, and Brazil retaliated in kind by expelling the Venezuelan ambassador from their own capital. This diplomatic falling-out was preceded by increasing rhetorical tensions between the two nations' leaders; in 2016, Venezuelan President Maduro claimed that former Brazilian President Michel Temer, who succeeded Dilma Rousseff after her ousting, was not a legitimate head of state. Additionally, the Brazilian government, along with most of its Latin American neighbors, has mounted increasing criticism against the Maduro government's human rights violations. Brazil was instrumental in the 2017 suspension of Venezuela's membership in Mercosur, a South American trade bloc which includes, along with Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Along with the United States and Colombia, Brazil has amassed hundreds of tons of medical and food aid along its border with Venezuela, which the Venezuelan government refuses to let through. President Bolsonaro has also taken steps to militarize the Brazil-Venezuela border, heightening the risk of conflict between the two nations.