



WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL  
of Philadelphia

# Brazil

*Federative Republic of Brazil*



## Key Facts



**World Freedom Press Global Index Ranking (Overall):** Ranked 105 (32.79)

**Head of State / Head of Government:** President Jair BOLSONARO (since 1 January 2019); Vice President Antonio Hamilton Martins MOURAO (since 1 January 2019)

**Capital city:** Brasilia

**Population:** 208,846,892 (July 2018 est.)

**Official Language(s):** Portuguese

**Ethnic Groups:** white 47.7%, mulatto (mixed white and black) 43.1%, black 7.6%, Asian 1.1%, indigenous 0.4% (2010 est.)

**Currency:** Brazilian real

**Gross domestic product (PPP):** 2.056 trillion USD (2017)

**Internet penetration:** 60.9% (2016)

**Most trusted medium of information:** N/A

**Legal System:** civil law

**Political system:** federal presidential republic

**Journalists killed/Jailed 2019:** 0

**Media Environment:** Brazil has a state-run communication network that operates a radio and a TV network; more than 1,000 radio stations and more than 100 TV channels are currently operating - mostly privately owned; private media ownership highly concentrated. Broadcasting airwaves are public in Brazil, and a federal government agency grants licenses to media companies operating radio and television

stations. There are five large privately owned national television networks-TV Globo, SBT, TV Record, TV Bandeirantes, and TV Manchete, as well as hundreds of local and regional television stations (256 stations in 1992) operating under an affiliation system similar to the United States. Radio ownership in Brazil follows a format similar to that of television. However, radio networks are a trend of the twenty-first century. Until the turn of the century, most radio stations were still family owned. In April 1996, there were 1,822 radio stations in Brazil, and radio was still the most pervasive mass media in the country (88 percent of households). In 1967 the “Press Code” was enacted by the Brazilian government, the third article prohibits media ownership by foreign companies or foreign nationals. The following article goes even further, stating that only Brazilian-born citizens might be responsible for managing, editing and producing news shows, including news stories, debates, opinion and commentary. The code prohibits journalists from using aliases and writing anonymous pieces but guarantees the media's right to maintain privacy of sources. The second part of the code prescribes the penalties (citations, fines, and sentences) for violating each article of the law. In an attempt to prevent fake news from spreading, the main Brazilian media outlets set up joint fact-checking projects during the campaign. The ‘Fato ou Fake’ team – comprising eight print, online, radio, and television outlets – fact-checked 759 quotes from politicians and several hundred rumours. Another 24 news brands joined ‘Projeto Comprova’, a coalition that received more than 67,000 messages through its WhatsApp account.

**Media Issues:** With threats, physical attacks during demonstrations and murders, Brazil continues to be one of Latin America’s most violent countries for the media, and journalists are often killed in connection with their work. In most cases, these reporters, radio hosts, bloggers or other information providers were covering stories linked to corruption, public policy or organized crime in small or mid-sized cities, where they are more vulnerable. Jair Bolsonaro’s election as president in October 2018 after a campaign marked by hate speech, disinformation, violence against journalists and contempt for human rights heralds a dark era for democracy and press freedom in Brazil. Media ownership continues to be very concentrated, especially in the hands of big business families that are often closely linked to the political class. The confidentiality of journalists’ sources is under constant attack and many investigative reporters have been subjected to abusive judicial proceedings.

## Popular Forms of Media Consumption

---

**Television:** The growth of television viewership in Brazil is a unique and impressive phenomenon yet to be completely explored. TV sets numbered only 200 in the entire country on September 18, 1950, when commercial broadcasting started in São Paulo. By the end of 1980, only 30 years later, there were estimated 20 million TV sets in the country. By that time, Brazil alone had more TV sets than the rest of Latin America combined. Television households increased from 7 percent in 1964 to 51 percent in 1979, and then again to 75 percent in 1990, easily reaching more than 80 percent by the end of the century. More recent data estimated a total of 36.5 million TV sets in Brazil, and 209 TV sets per 1,000 people in 2002. Television broadcasts now reach all of Brazil.

**Social Networks:** Brazilians remain some of the heaviest users of social media in the world and usage of all the top social and messaging brands has gone up significantly again over the last year. Growth was particularly strong among Instagram (+10), WhatsApp (+5), and YouTube (+8) users. Throughout the presidential campaign (and after it), Bolsonaro’s frequent tweets and Facebook Live appearances forced a change in traditional media coverage, as journalists had to keep a constant watch not only over the president’s social media accounts but also on those of his allies. Before taking office, the Brazilian

president announced 14 of his 22 ministers through Twitter.

**Digital Media:** After three years of successive drops in circulation, the efforts of the newspaper industry to attract digital subscribers seemed to be paying off.<sup>2</sup> Overall daily print and digital subscriptions of the top ten paid-for papers rose 2.9% year-on-year – a 33% rise in digital subscriptions.