

Brazil

Ethnicity in Brazil

Group selection

According to the 2010 census, 47,7% of the population identifies as white, 43,1% identifies as Pardo (mixed white and black), 7,6% is Black. 1,1% of Brazilians identify as Asian ⁶¹¹. According to scientific practice, we consider Pardos and Blacks as Afro-Brazilians . So, for the first time in Brazilian history, Afro-Brazilians form with 50,7% the majority of Brazilian population. As in many Latin American countries census figures are based on self-identification questions. This means that for the first time, more people consider themselves to be Pardo or black than white. 0.4% of the population is indigenous ⁶¹².

We identify the following politically relevant ethnic groups: **Afro-Brazilian**, **Indigenous peoples** and **White**.

Power relations

1978-2002

Ethnicity was not politically salient in Brazil until 1977. The year 1978 marks the political opening of the military regime in Brazil, and with this came the emergence of an organized Afro-Brazilian “movement” (the first Afro-Brazilian organization being the Negro Unificado - Black United; ⁶¹³, 200) that had not been evident since its organizations were closed in the 1930s (along with many others) by Vargas. Burdick ⁶¹⁴ and Loveman ⁶¹⁵ note, and as Hanchard ⁶¹⁶ laments, this movement has had difficulty convincing non-whites that they are “Afro-Brazilians” (and in convincing them accordingly to mobilize on this basis, such as by choosing “pardo” on the census form). Nonetheless, this movement fits the coding criteria of an organized political group, as it claimed to represent the interests of an ethnic group. Moreover, it has not been without consequence. The 1988 Constitution has an anti-discrimination clause (a notable change in a country known historically for the robustness of its racial democracy “myth”), and the movement has compelled the collection of government data on ethnicity, a practice that had been eliminated by the military regime. At the sub-national level, the movement has had some success in compelling “positive discrimination”. For example: The 1982 state elections of Rio de Janeiro made PDT leader Leonel Brizola governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro. Once in office, Brizola fulfilled an earlier promise made to black

⁶¹¹ [Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2010]

⁶¹² [IWIGIA, 2010]

⁶¹³ [Skidmore, 2010]

⁶¹⁴ [Burdick, 1998]

⁶¹⁵ [Loveman, 1999]

⁶¹⁶ [Hanchard, 1998]

activists of his party by appointing blacks to important positions within his cabinet (⁶¹⁷, 134). Still this influence does not rise to the level of “regional autonomy” - hence, the “powerless” designation.

⁶¹⁷ [Hanchard, 1998]

As indigenous peoples faced increased external threats, they started to mobilize at the end of the 1970s. As Levinson (⁶¹⁸, 327) notes, “the status of American Indians has become a major issue in the last two decades. This led to the creation of the Union of Indian Nations (UNI) in 1980. In the 1980s the indigenous movement was highly visible through demonstrations and lobbying in the capital. As a result, in the 1988 Constitution cultural, legal and territorial rights of the indigenous peoples were recognized (⁶¹⁹). The Constitution gives Brazil’s indigenous peoples the right to inhabit their ancestral territories but not to legally own them. Indigenous peoples are considered “powerless” during this period.

⁶¹⁸ [Levinson, 1998]

⁶¹⁹ [Perz, Warren & Kennedy, 2008]

Brazil’s first affirmative action quotas were introduced by decree by the Cardoso government in 2001. They applied to all federal ministries in the field of personnel recruitment, not only for Afro-Brazilians but also women and other minority groups. Other actions directed towards a more just representation of Afro-Brazilians (and other vulnerable population groups) consisted in the creation of the preparation program for the diplomatic corps and the National Affirmative Action Program (a decree addressing government agencies and companies with government contracts) (⁶²⁰, 223).

⁶²⁰ [Skidmore, 2010]

2002-2010

Lula Inacio da Silva of the Worker Party (PT) was elected in October 2002 and reelected in October 2006. The Lula governments allowed a wider participation of formerly excluded social groups. Lula appointed four Afro-Brazilian ministers, officially recognized the racial discrimination problem and initiated various affirmative action programs to reduce racial inequality (i.e. quotas at university, Special-Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality). This kind of public policy does not produce sudden changes and can lead to growing frustration if racial inequality continues (⁶²¹). But under Lula, the black movement has had a greater influence at the national level than ever before (⁶²²).

⁶²¹ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008]

⁶²² [Campos de Sousa & Nascimento, 2008]

Lula da Silva stalled many land titling initiatives and left the government with Brazil’s worst indigenous rights record since the military regimes (⁶²³). During this period, whites are coded as “senior partner” and Afro-Brazilians as “junior partner”. Indigenous peoples continue to be powerless.

⁶²³ [MRGI, 2014]

2011-2018

Even though the government under Dilma Rousseff, elected in 2010, keeps on strengthening and broadening the existing affirmative action programs (e.g. in 2012 a law was promulgated that requires all federal universities to enact admission quotas; before there was no national law regulating admission quotas) (⁶²⁴, 4) the political in-

⁶²⁴ [Dávila, 2012]

fluence of Afro-Brazilians did decrease in comparison with the Lula legislature period (there are two Afro-Brazilian cabinet members, but no minister; and there is no Afro-Brazilian governor; from 513 deputies 22 are Afro-Brazilian and from 81 senators there are 3 Afro-Brazilian) (⁶²⁵).

During this period, indigenous peoples and Afro-Brazilians are both considered “powerless”, and whites as “dominant”.

Indigenous peoples: The political situation of the indigenous peoples in Brazil has not improved in this time period: On the contrary, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous peoples has noted a significant regression in terms of indigenous rights protection in Brazil (⁶²⁶; ⁶²⁷: 19). Despite remarkable constitutional provisions, implementation in reality - especially concerning land and self-determination rights - has been stagnant and continues to be threatened by political decisions (⁶²⁸: 2; ⁶²⁹: 176). The National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) - which plays a crucial role by operating in between the government and indigenous communities and is described to be the only government agency trusted by indigenous peoples - has been debilitated by significant cuts of its funds as well as by the politically motivated nomination of its directors (⁶³⁰; ⁶³¹: 8, 22; ⁶³²: 19). A report of the Missionary Council for Indigenous Peoples (CIMI) stated that, by 2015, there had been no new ratification of indigenous territory since the Rousseff administration (see ⁶³³: 2). According to Equal Times (2017), by mid-2017, the state has not approved a single indigenous territory for over a year.

Additionally, deepest concern among indigenous peoples is triggered by the impending constitutional amendment PEC 215, which was approved by a parliamentary commission in 2015 and has reportedly never been as close to being adopted (⁶³⁴; ⁶³⁵: 179). PEC 215 would transfer land rights recognition from the executive (the president, FUNAI and the Ministry of Justice) to the congress - where indigenous peoples have almost no representation - and thereby transforming a formerly technical process into a political one (⁶³⁶: 2; ⁶³⁷: 14; ⁶³⁸: 10). The new amendment even enables the reconsideration of land already recognized as indigenous in the past (⁶³⁹: 179). Besides these threats, indigenous people’s political influence on the national level is already marginal (⁶⁴⁰: 16; ⁶⁴¹: 14; ⁶⁴²: 5). Furthermore, given the considerations above, in this period any sort of de facto regional autonomy is absent.

Afro-Brazilians have not regained any significant political influence on national politics either and continue to be excluded from positions of power and influence, according to the special rapporteur on minorities and indigenous peoples (⁶⁴³: 1; ⁶⁴⁴: 1). After the Rousseff administration, which counted on one Afro-Brazilian minister, there is no Afro-Brazilian representation left in the cabinet of the government of Michel Temer (⁶⁴⁵: 3). There have been some government-led initiatives aimed at increasing Afro-Brazilians’ influence, like a 2014 law, that reserves 20 per cent of federal civil

⁶²⁵ [U.S. State Department, 2010]

⁶²⁶ [Equal Times, 2017]

⁶²⁷ [UNHRC, 2016a]

⁶²⁸ [MRGI, 2016]

⁶²⁹ [IWGIA, 2016]

⁶³⁰ [Equal Times, 2017]

⁶³¹ [UNHRC, 2016a]

⁶³² [USDS, 2017]

⁶³³ [MRGI, 2016]

⁶³⁴ [Equal Times, 2017]

⁶³⁵ [IWGIA, 2016]

⁶³⁶ [MRGI, 2016]

⁶³⁷ [UNHRC, 2016a]

⁶³⁸ [UNHRC, 2017]

⁶³⁹ [IWGIA, 2016]

⁶⁴⁰ [USDS, 2015]

⁶⁴¹ [UNHRC, 2016a]

⁶⁴² [UNHRC, 2017]

⁶⁴³ [MRGI, 2014]

⁶⁴⁴ [UNHRC, 2016b]

⁶⁴⁵ [Freedom House, 2017]

servant positions for Afro-Brazilians (⁶⁴⁶: 22). However, as the special rapporteur states, important decision-making posts are excluded from this quota system (⁶⁴⁷: 10). The Afro-Brazilian population disproportionately suffers from social exclusion, low wages, a lack of education opportunities, and high levels of violence (⁶⁴⁸: 2; ⁶⁴⁹: 1).

2019-2021

A new period is created after Jair Bolsonaro is elected president in 2018, in which the status of "Whites" is changed from "dominant" to "monopoly." This is due to the lack of both Afro-Brazilian and indigenous members in his cabinet (⁶⁵⁰, ⁶⁵¹). Indigenous peoples and Afrobrazilians continue to be "powerless." The Afro-Brazilian population continues to be disproportionately affected by high levels of violence, and they constitute the majority of victims of police violence throughout the country (⁶⁵²). President Bolsonaro's incendiary remarks tend to legitimize the use of violence by police and armed forces against Black citizens and portray the latter as criminals (⁶⁵³). However, even if he stands against current established quotas, he has not been able to change the law towards discrimination of these groups (⁶⁵⁴). We see a similar deterioration of the situation of indigenous peoples. Illegal extractive activities and deforestation, especially in the Amazon, have resulted in increased killings of indigenous individuals who pose a resistance to these activities, while at the same time reducing the territory they are able to inhabit (⁶⁵⁵). These activities have been allowed to continue with lack of impunity and regulation by the government (⁶⁵⁶).

A couple of successes in representation can be listed for each group, however. In 2018, the Supreme Court ruled a new quota which dictates that 20% of vacancies for military services must be filled by Afro-Brazilians (⁶⁵⁷). The Supreme Court also prevented the President's decision of shifting the FUNAI's function of land demarcation to the Ministry of Agriculture in 2019, where it could have served the interests of agro-businesses (⁶⁵⁸).

⁶⁴⁶ [BTI, 2016]

⁶⁴⁷ [UNHRC, 2016b]

⁶⁴⁸ [MRGI, 2015]

⁶⁴⁹ [MRGI, 2016]

⁶⁵⁰ [Deutsche Welle, 2019]

⁶⁵¹ [INFOBAE, 2019]

⁶⁵² [USDS, 2019]

⁶⁵³ [Angyalossy Alfonso, 2019]

⁶⁵⁴ [Angyalossy Alfonso, 2019]

⁶⁵⁵ [USDS, 2019]

⁶⁵⁶ [USDS, 2019]

⁶⁵⁷ [USDS, 2019]

⁶⁵⁸ [USDS, 2019]

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Political status of ethnic groups in Brazil

From 1946 until 1977

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites	0.54	IRRELEVANT

From 1978 until 2002

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites	0.54	DOMINANT
Afrobrazilians	0.45	POWERLESS
Indigenous peoples	0.004	POWERLESS

From 2003 until 2010

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites	0.54	SENIOR PARTNER
Afrobrazilians	0.45	JUNIOR PARTNER
Indigenous peoples	0.004	POWERLESS

From 2011 until 2018

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Afrobrazilians	0.507	POWERLESS
Whites	0.477	DOMINANT
Indigenous peoples	0.004	POWERLESS

From 2019 until 2021

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Afrobrazilians	0.507	POWERLESS
Whites	0.477	MONOPOLY
Indigenous peoples	0.004	POWERLESS



Figure 105: Political status of ethnic groups in Brazil during 1946-1977.



Figure 106: Political status of ethnic groups in Brazil during 1978-2002.



Figure 107: Political status of ethnic groups in Brazil during 2003-2010.



Figure 108: Political status of ethnic groups in Brazil during 2011-2018.



Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Brazil

From 1978 until 2021

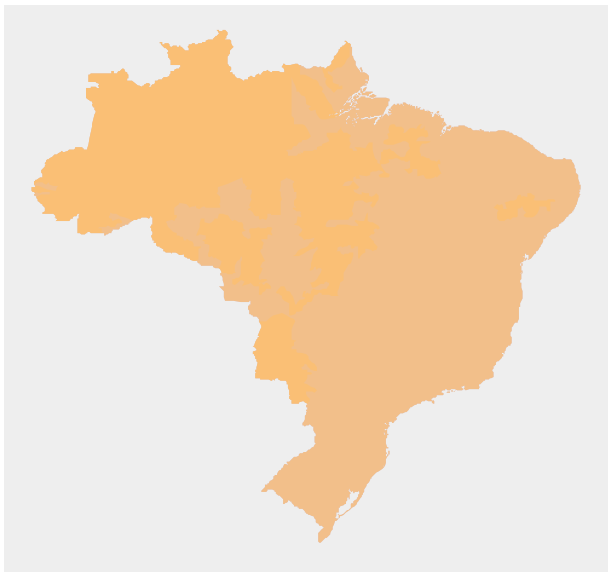


Figure 110: Map of ethnic groups in Brazil during 1978-2021.




Group name		Area in km ²	Type
	Whites	8 472 075	Statewide
	Afro-Brazilians	8 472 075	Statewide
	Indigenous peoples	3 635 961	Regionally based

Table 40: List of ethnic groups in Brazil during 1978-2021.