

Summary: Brazil Today

Brazil: Regional Leader

Brazil is the largest country in South America. It covers close to half the continent. Almost half the people in South America live in Brazil. The country became independent in 1822. At first, emperors ruled it. In 1889, it became a republic with a constitution. Then, beginning in 1930, it was ruled by dictators and military leaders. In 1985, again Brazil became a democracy.

Brazil has the largest economy in South America. To build the economy, the government provides aid to certain industries. In the 1950s, the government started helping the automobile industry. Brazil decided to import fewer cars. By the late 1980s, Brazil was building more than 1 million cars and trucks a year. This was enough for Brazil to export its vehicles.

Only the United States exports more crops than Brazil. Brazil produces more coffee than any other country. Brazil has a strong economy, but it has difficulties. Many people lack jobs, so unemployment is a problem. Inflation is another economic problem. Unemployment and inflation have created much poverty in Brazil.

The People of Brazil

Portugal took over Brazil in the 1500s. Native Americans were forced to work on sugar cane plantations. Many Native Americans died of disease. The plantation owners brought slaves from Africa to work on the plantations. Today, many people in Brazil are descended from Africans.

Four out of five people in Brazil live in cities, and the numbers are growing. This makes cities crowded and puts many stresses on the nation.

Brazil's culture is a mix of many cultural groups. The official language is Portuguese. Most Brazilians are Catholic. More Catholics live in Brazil than in any other country. Other Brazilians practice African religions.



Before You Read

Find and underline the vocabulary word.

inflation *noun*, a general increase in the price of goods or services



After You Read

REVIEW What are the two biggest challenges to Brazil's economy? Draw a box around the sentences that explain the challenges that face Brazil's economy.

REVIEW What problems can rapid population growth cause? Highlight the sentence that describes the effects of Brazil's rapid population growth.