

BRAZILIAN

Background and Makeup

Brazilian people are made up from different races. The Indians were already in the country when it was colonised by the Portuguese. The Africans were brought as slaves by the Europeans. The majority of these are located in the south-east and north-east of the country. The European immigrants came mainly from Portugal, Italy and Germany. Other people are of Asian origin. In the state of Sao Paulo there are many Japanese as well as some Chinese, Indonesian and Korean people. The result of this is a mixture of races and cultures.

The people are also divided into different classes according to their education and social background. An individual's outlook and behaviour will vary accordingly.

The people of Brazil could also be divided into five groups with different physical characteristics, values and priorities. For example, the people of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo are a complete mixture with many from the north and north-east settling in these cities looking for a better life. On the other hand, people in the north and north-east are hard-working and very friendly. These areas are dominated by rich landowners and the climate is dry. This is why many leave the area. Others, through poverty, are forced to stay in the area and are resigned to their fate. They are constantly saying, 'One day, if God permits, things will be better'.

Characteristics

General

Most Brazilians are optimistic by nature. For everything they try to find a way through. 'Jeitinho' is a popular word. The word 'impossible' almost does not exist in their vocabulary. They have flexibility and creativity. It is said that Brazilian pilots are the best in the world - especially in a crisis. The Brazilian tends not to be a planner, but acts spontaneously on impulse. However, most people like to see quick results. They tend not to persevere and like to move on to something else, particularly if there is no apparent result.

Brazilians are politically aware and nationalistic. They enjoy music and love football. They are a fun-loving people who like to enjoy life and do things together, discuss things and talk and sing loudly. They communicate well and are an easy-going people. They make friends quickly and would prefer to speak person to person rather than use a telephone or write letters.

Religion

Ninety per cent of the population is very religious and open to spiritual things. This means that there are many sects and new religious movements throughout the country. The majority of the people are, by tradition, Roman Catholics.

Family

Brazilians have strong family ties. Children are special, but usually children of Christian parents are not taught spiritual things in their home situation. Relatives are close to each other and everything at home belongs to the family. There are no formalities in the home and no secrets in the family circle; everything is very much in the open. The oldest child is given certain responsibilities and is treated with respect by the other children. The father is the head of the family and is respected by his wife and children. The wife is the companion, mother and homemaker. Most girls are very free in their approach to men.

Money

Money is important, but is held lightly. It is used for any immediate need, especially on food, clothing and domestic items. The family lives for today and only saves money if there is a surplus in hand.

Food & Hospitality

The Brazilian likes eating and always prepares a lot of food. He would usually happily eat beans, rice, meat and vegetables. He is not so concerned about the menu but with the quantity he is served. He likes generous portions and always presents his guests with such. He likes his food well seasoned, especially with garlic. Cafezinho, a strong type of sweetened coffee, is always served to visitors and taken after meals.

Flexibility

In some countries where the Reformation really took hold there is a tradition of rigid honesty. This is perhaps not known in Brazil where the concept of honesty is more flexible. Indeed flexibility is a common practice in many realms. It is not unusual to arrive five minutes late for work. Similarly, on the request of an employer, the workers may finish ten minutes late.

Possessions & Generosity

Possessions are also held lightly. People borrow things but do not return them quickly. If a lender wants something back he will ask for it, but only if he really needs it. By nature they tend to give rather than to lend especially within the family circle. In the same way they are generous and hospitable to their visitors. They offer their best and say, 'The house is yours'. People are regarded as important and time is always given to a visitor.

Authority & Leadership

Throughout Brazilian society there is a hierarchical system of authority. The leader is respected and rarely challenged. Typical characteristics of a good leader include: someone who has power, influence, experience, honesty, sensibility and good education. Usually people are looking for someone who can guide them well.

For Brazilian Christians the concept of a good leader can differ. For them, generally it is someone who is humble, a good listener and a servant, but also able to represent well the congregations before the society. For example, when a church is looking for a pastor people will look for a leader who is mature, wise, very relational, well-educated and has a good reputation. Particularly with regards to multicultural teams, a leader should be culturally sensitive and not ethnocentric and avoid stereotyping.

Foreigners

Expatriates are often regarded with suspicion and need to be careful in their approach to nationals. Their motives for coming to Brazil are often thought to be those of exploitation and domination. Christians have a different attitude to foreign missionaries who they regard as rich people. Brazilians never ask for anything directly, so the way a missionary speaks, asks for something or gives orders is very important. The words 'please' and 'thank you' are not very often used between close friends or in the family circle. These words do not have the same connotation as in English. The words used when asking for something very often imply 'please'.

Education

Brazilian culture is changing due to many outside influences, especially among young people. Education is regarded as important and people are respected according to the position they have achieved.

Physical Appearance

Physical appearance is very important, as are fashion, smartness and personal cleanliness. Visitors may be offered a shower when they arrive in a home after a journey. The women are generally house-proud. There is a proverb which says, 'You know a good household by the sparkle of the pans and the colour of the tea towels.'

Work

Most people find manual work degrading. They would not mow their own lawns, do gardening and so on. They would pay somebody else to do it. Many men would not do 'women's work'. Most middle class and upper class families would have a maid in the house. Many girls of these classes are not domesticated and do not learn to cook.

Things to avoid when relating to Brazilians:

1. Do not patronise them.
2. Do not impose your will on them. Give suggestions and your opinion when you want something.
3. Never generalise about them. Brazilians react badly when they hear you do this. Remember that they come from many back- grounds and cultures.
4. Do not assume that they know the customs and culture of another country when they arrive in it. Spend time with them to explain how things run and to whom they can relate and ask questions.
5. Never say that they do not have money or cannot look after their own money.
6. Never come to any conclusion about Brazilian attitudes until you really understand their position.

PROFILE OF A TYPICAL BRAZILIAN MISSIONARY

The Average Perception of a Typical Missionary

- Brave and active in 'spiritual ministry' and not 'secular ministry' such as office work, et cetera.
- Courageous to advance and confront and not to be 'polite'.
- A good evangelist.
- A soul winner.
- Successful - countable results referring to people and not things.
- Able to teach.
- Expects to see progress in his ministry (i.e. quick conversions).

The Church's Expectations

- The church does not understand cross-cultural situation ministry. It needs educating in this area.
- The church puts pressure on the missionary by asking, 'How many souls did you win?'
- The church expects a good report.
- The church expects a sacrificial life from the missionary. The missionary is expected to be living in
- poor conditions, with little money, and facing dangers in health and travel.

- The missionary should have faith to see God's provision. The church waits to hear how the Lord
- provided the missionary's needs.
- Pentecostal or Charismatic churches expect reports of how people are being set free from the
- bondage of demons and anticipates news of people being 'Baptised in the Spirit'.
- The church expects results quickly no matter how it is attained.

Characteristics of Brazilian Missionaries

- Not shy to share the gospel, but do it boldly and enthusiastically.
- People-oriented, time is not so important.
- Always willing to change their plans in order to get results. Others might see this as a lack of
- perseverance.
- Willing to try new things.
- Adventurous in spirit.
- Strong-willed. If they know what to do, what they want, then they go forward. If they do not
- do
- what they are able to do or are not given room to develop their ministry, then they get
- discouraged.
- Money is a big pressure on them.
- They are very easy-going and friendly if shown respect and treated as equals.

Possible Conflict Areas

- Over-enthusiastic.
- Too adventurous.
- Too visionary.
- Too expressive.
- Too noisy (they may talk, laugh and sing loudly).
- Too casual.
- Form close links with the nationals which may be perceived as neglecting the Mission.
- Express apologies through action rather than saying words such as 'I'm sorry'.
- Prefer informal meetings. (A highly organised meeting is considered 'cold'.)