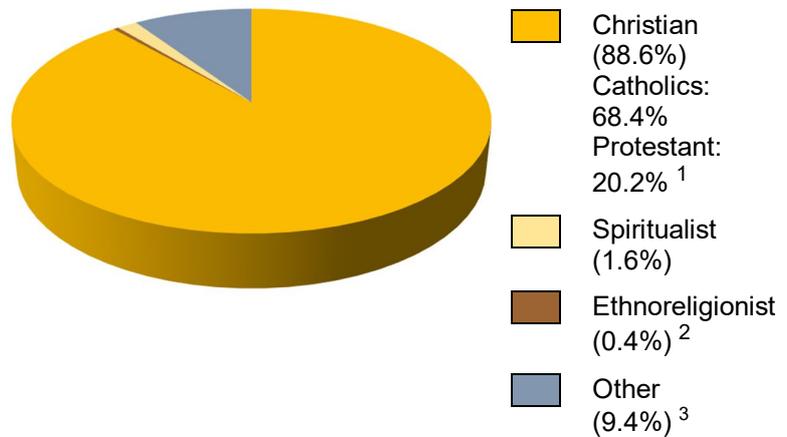


BRAZIL



Area⁴: 8,514,900 km ²	Population⁵: 204,450,649	Political system: Democracy	Major Language(s): Portuguese
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Legal framework on Freedom of Religion and actual application

The Brazilian Constitution, promulgated in 1988, guarantees freedom of belief and worship (Articles 5 and 19). Article 210, paragraph 1, considers religious education as an optional subject to be administered by elementary level public schools. Law No. 7716 (1989) criminalizes discrimination based on race, color, ethnicity, religion or nationality.

Perception and rejection of discrimination is growing in Brazil. The campaign against discrimination began with race, and was followed by gender and more recently with religion. Since 1989 a federal agency has been responsible for implementing public policies against discrimination (initially Secretariat for Human Rights, now Ministry of Women, Racial Equality and Human Rights). However, only recently was an agency specifically dedicated to religious discrimination created, called the Religious Diversity and Human Rights Advisory.

Despite the government's concern about tackling all forms of discrimination – including religious – Brazil has conflicts at governmental level regarding the concept of secularism and its application in public policy. The dispute is similar to that found in other Western countries and is mainly about topics such as abortion, gay marriage and confessional religious education.

On the subject of abortion and gay marriage, pro-life campaigners are associated with religious fundamentalism⁶. Religious groups and pro-life activists claim the allegations of fundamentalism and confessionalism are used to inhibit their freedom of speech in defense of human rights.

In the period covered by this report, controversy surrounded the right of doctors and public officials⁷ to conscientious objection, and on possible legal changes concerning abortion⁸. Another polemic issue was the inclusion of gender theory within the official core mandatory school curriculum. This generated controversy in several Brazilian cities, with the declared involvement of priests and pastors from various Christian denominations.⁹

Religious education in Brazilian public schools is strongly opposed, despite receiving backing in the constitution. The Catholic Church argues that such education is essential for religious formation and that all faiths have a place in public schools. Opponents argue that this position undermines the principle that the state is secular.¹⁰ At stake is the possibility of a ban on religious education in

schools or the state taking control of religious education, which has ramifications regarding belief and practice.

Incidents

There have been many attempts recently to quantify cases of religious intolerance¹¹. The Religious Diversity and Human Rights Advisory is planning a national study¹². Meanwhile, available data refers to complaints sent to competent agencies by Dial 100, a national system that receives telephone complaints, and newspaper news compilations.

Dial 100 recorded 543 complaints of rights violations of a religious nature between 2011 and 2014. Of these, 216 cases concerned the victim's religion including 35 percent African-American religions, 27 percent evangelicals, 12 percent spiritualists, 10 percent Catholic, 4 percent atheists, 3 percent Jewish, 2 percent Muslim and 7 percent other¹³. Allegations involving African-American religions and Muslims were disproportionately high given that the former are only 0.35 percent of the total population, and the latter 0.01 percent.

The numbers vary slightly between 2012-2013 (340 occurrences) and 2014-2015 (372 occurrences). Rio de Janeiro and the Federal District were the states with the largest number of registered cases¹⁴. Rio de Janeiro is also the state with greatest religious diversity, with the highest percentage of followers of African-American religions.¹⁵

The organization KOINONIA Ecumenical Presence and Service keeps a survey of religious intolerance with data compiled from newspaper reports. Occurrences are placed on a map¹⁶. For the period 2014-2015, KOINONIA listed 30 web news items regarding the issue in question. In these cases, the report recorded the victim's religion in 26 cases and the perpetrators' religion in 7 cases. Among the victims, 61 percent were of African-American religions, 23 percent were Catholic and 11 percent Muslim. Especially given their small numbers in relative terms, there was again the preponderance of attacks against African-American religions and Muslims. In the case of the perpetrators, where the registration of the religion was more difficult, 86 percent of cases were attributed to evangelicals or Pentecostals (in Brazil, often the term 'evangelical' is used to refer specifically to the Pentecostals, although it can be used for all Protestants).

The documented incidents generally concern situations involving visible symbols or places of worship or other such enclosed spaces designated for religious practices. People who use religious ornaments and veils, "terreiros" ("backyard", denomination of ritual place) of African-American religions or Catholic monuments are among the most common targets.

In Salvador, capital of Bahia state, a young man was denied entry into a courthouse because he wore a cap typical of the Candomblés, an African-American religion.¹⁷ In Rio de Janeiro, a group threw a stone which hit the head of an 11-year-old girl wearing a costume from the Candomblé. The incident took place as she walked along the street with friends and family. The group shouted: "Come out, Satan, burning! You go to hell".¹⁸

Other women wearing head veils were attacked. The Muslim Beneficent Society of Rio de Janeiro reported several cases¹⁹. In one case, a man scolded and beat a flight attendant on a busy street during the day. In another, a bus driver forced a passenger off the vehicle accusing her of being a suicide bomber. In another instance, a teacher was threatened with dismissal after parents said they did not want "Bin Laden's wife" teaching their children.

Attacks on "terreiros" can range from verbal abuse and bottles thrown, as occurred in Paraíba state,²⁰ to their total destruction, as happened in Ceará state.²¹ Even the Catholic Church suffers from attacks on buildings. In Rio Grande do Norte state, a man used an iron bar to break into a chapel, smashing items inside and destroying an image of the chapel's patron, Saint Expeditus.²²

A different case, in São Paulo, involved a judge who ruled in favor of followers of traditional African religions who were offended by programs produced by two television broadcasters. The judge ruled that the broadcasters create television programs giving the aggrieved right of reply.²³

Prospects for Freedom of Religion

Brazil's population is largely Catholic, even though the proportion of Catholics has greatly declined in recent decades. This decrease is proportional to the increase of Pentecostal Protestants. Hence, there was a minimal proportionate decline in the number of Christians across the country.

More significant than people abandoning the Catholic Church is Brazil's increasing religious diversity. Most of its population professed a "popular Catholicism" with little reference to the institutional Catholic Church. This population is gravitating to other Christian denominations, and in some cases different religions altogether²⁴. Buddhism is the main oriental religion, mainly as a result of Japanese immigration. The Muslim population is very small, although the recent immigration of Syrians means it has increased recently²⁵.

Growing religious diversity has caused intolerance and in some cases conflict. That said, Brazilians themselves are becoming more aware of religious intolerance and hence the increase in cases may reflect an increasing tendency to report incidents rather than an upsurge in the actual number of alleged religious freedom violations per se.

The situation of the followers of African-American religions is the most precarious. They are victims of racism, relating back to Brazil's period of slavery.

Prejudice against Muslims has risen in response to the perceived link between Islam and terrorism. Pentecostals suffer prejudice from the secularist mindset that accuses them of fundamentalism. Pentecostal condemnation of behaviors and attitudes that differ from their own has tended to cause some followers to be violent towards others. However, this aggressive behavior of few members cannot be attributed to all, as with the Muslims.

Religious intolerance in Brazil has reached a delicate moment. Traditional forms of intolerance, concealed beneath the image of an integrated society, are denounced with a desire to overcome it. However, new situations have emerged resulting from religious diversification and the influence of international conflicts. In this context, interreligious dialogue is particularly important as a means of overcoming prejudices and enabling social cohesion.

¹ Including 12.76 of Pentecostals

² African-American religions

³ Affiliation categories and data analysis for year 2009 by Center for Social Policies, Faculty Getúlio Vargas, in http://www.cps.fgv.br/cps/bd/rel3/REN_texto_FGV_CPS_Neri.pdf, accessed in 18/01/2016.

⁴ Source <http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=Brazil>.

⁵ Estimated 2015, in <http://pesquisa.in.gov.br/imprensa/jsp/visualiza/index.jsp?jornal=1&pagina=98&data=28/08/2015>.

⁶ <http://www.arquemesonline.com.br/noticia.asp?cod=294422&codDep=30>.

⁷ <http://g1.globo.com/rio-de-janeiro/noticia/2015/05/alerj-derruba-veto-projeto-de-lei-e-aborto-legal-pode-ser-negado.html>.

⁸ <http://www.regiaooroeste.com/portal/materias.php?id=128845>.

⁹ <http://alias.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,falsa-ameaca,1727566>.

¹⁰ <http://www.paulopes.com.br/2015/06/ensino-religioso-confessional-esta-no-fim-indica-audiencia.html#.Vp-LNyorLIU>.

¹¹ The surveys found not distinguishes between episodes of intolerance, discrimination and persecution. Most of the reported cases refers to situations of intolerance or discrimination, according to the nomenclature used in this report, but there are also cases of persecution with physical threats to victims.

¹² Religious Diversity and Human Rights Advisory, personal information.

¹³ <http://www.sdh.gov.br/noticias/2015/agosto/sdh-participa-de-audiencia-publica-sobre-diversidade-religiosa-e-laicidade-do-estado>.

¹⁴ Source: Religious Diversity and Human Rights Advisory.

¹⁵ http://www.cps.fgv.br/cps/bd/rel3/REN_texto_FGV_CPS_Neri.pdf.

¹⁶ <https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?t=m&msa=0&z=4&source=embed&ie=UTF8&mid=zUsVg4t0WmdU.kP1o9jIDJhhU>

¹⁷ <http://www.correio24horas.com.br/detalhe/noticia/estudante-e-expulso-de-forum-por-se-recusar-a-tirar-adereco-do-candomble/?cHash=a282d57487cbfca98dae5d7f88dd4d5b>.

¹⁸ <http://extra.globo.com/casos-de-policial/vitima-de-intolerancia-religiosa-menina-de-11-anos-apedrejada-na-cabeca-apos-festa-de-candomble-16456208.html>.

¹⁹ <http://www.ebc.com.br/cidadania/2015/08/muculmanos-estao-entre-principais-vitimas-de-intolerancia-religiosa-no-rio>.

²⁰ http://www.jornaldaparaiba.com.br/policial/noticia/154872_terreiro-de-candomble-e-atacado-e-vitimas-suspeitam-de-intolerancia.

²¹ <http://tablet.opovo.com.br/app/opovo/destaque/index/2015/06/25/5095131/terreiro-de-candomble-e-destruido-praticantes-recorrem-a-assembleia.shtml>.

²² <http://noticias.uol.com.br/cotidiano/ultimas-noticias/2015/03/31/homem-surta-e-quebra-imagens-de-igreja-em-sao-goncalo-do-amarante-rn.htm>.

²³ <http://gente.ig.com.br/2015-05-12/record-e-rede-mulher-sao-condenadas-por-ofender-religioses-afro-brasileiras.html>.

²⁴ http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=S0103-40142004000300003&script=sci_arttext.

²⁵ http://www.bbc.com/portuguese/noticias/2015/09/150904_brasil_refugiados_sirios_comparacao_internacional_lgb.