

areas, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, hold 20 per cent of the Brazilian population while about 100 cities have a population exceeding 100 000 inhabitants. The decision to found a new federal capital, Brasilia, deep in the interior, was an attempt to direct the population from the heavily populated coastal regions to the under-developed central and western plateaux of the country.

Metropolitan Areas	Estimated Population (in thousands)
São Paulo	13 500
Rio de Janeiro	10 000
Belo Horizonte	2 300
Salvador	2 000
Fortaleza	1 600
Nova Iguaçu	1 400
Recife	1 300
Curitiba	1 300
Pôrto Alegre	1 300
Belém	1 200

Language

The official language of Brazil is Portuguese. While many Brazilian business people and government officials possess a working knowledge of either English or French, efforts to speak or at least to conduct business in Portuguese are greatly appreciated.

The Canadian Embassy can inform business visitors about interpretation and translation services which are available in major cities.

Religion

Brazil is a predominantly Christian country with 90 per cent of its population Roman Catholic, 6 per cent members of other Christian denominations, 2 per cent Jewish and 2 per cent practising other religions or philosophies, including animist cults that originated in Africa.

Education

The academic year begins in March and terminates in mid-December for the summer season.

Primary and secondary education is compulsory between the ages of 7 and 14 and is offered without cost through a