

Brazilian Family Values

The traditional Brazilian family was comprised of a husband, wife and children, and traditional values supported this family structure. However, the makeup of the family has changed somewhat in recent times. Single parent households are on the increase and it is quite common to find families with two working spouses. Even with these changes, family values run deep.

Traditional Brazilian Family Values

Traditionally, family is the foundation of social structure in Brazil. In the past, Brazilian families tended to be large and when a couple married, the individuality of that couple as a new household was recognized and respected. However newly-married couples were also expected to maintain close family ties with their parents, aunts, uncles and other extended family members. These relationships traditionally included godparents and godchildren, too. Family gatherings were, in good times, opportunities for socializing, but these relationships also provided a network to turn to in times of trouble or need. These close-knit family ties are still encouraged in Brazil, but how much interaction occurs between family members today is influenced by social and economic factors, just as it is in America and many other parts of the world.

Close family ties also carry over into the business world as well. Nepotism is actually encouraged and looked at as a way to hire employees you know and trust. However, it is such "positions of trust" that also open the door for corruption in the Brazilian government.

Changing Times

Over the last 30 years, family values in Brazil have undergone significant tests along with changes in the structure of the family. Originally, Brazil's social structure was primarily patriarchal in nature. Women were relegated to domestic duties and often lacked formal education. However, women were also the glue that helped hold the family together.

Today many Brazilian households have two working spouses, and the number of single-parent households has increased. Family is still valued highly, but divorce and marital separation are much more common. Many women are now the head of their household and the dynamics of the family often include children from more than one marriage or other union. While such changes in the social makeup of family are accepted, the importance of family has remained unchanged.

Some of these changes are attributed to a changing political climate. In an effort to build a sense of citizenship and democracy, political changes influenced women to desire more freedom and to enjoy a new level of independence. A problem women face that directly relates to the foundational family values instilled in them their whole lives is that of balancing work and home responsibilities. While women enjoy working and bringing home a paycheck, many of them are overwhelmed and stressed because they still feel responsible for household duties, caring for the children and other traditional mother-role tasks on the home front. It is not unusual to hire a nanny or housekeeper to help alleviate this stress.

Today's Family Values

With the societal changes that have touched Brazilian culture, the family structure has somewhat changed, but the values that encourage close family ties remain. Even today it is not unusual to have three generations living in the same house. Other important family values in Brazil that have withstood cultural changes include:

When children marry, they often live near the parents.

Children are considered part of the family and are included in most adult activities.

Children are expected to contribute as part of the family unit.

Grandparents and the elderly are seldom put in a nursing home; instead they most often live with their children.

Family relationships still play a key role in social and business interactions.

The Value of Family

While modern family makeup may differ from the traditional Brazilian family structure, in some instances, Brazilian family values have survived the changes. Family is valued in Brazil and close-knit relationships still provide a network of support. The main challenge to this closeness today deals with children who graduate from college and live elsewhere and family members who relocate for work and no longer live near their extended families.