

# BRAZIL

**Name:** Letícia Sorg

**Year of Fellowship:** 2009 /2010

---

**1) What is the basic political system in your country (e.g. democratic, semi-authoritarian, authoritarian or other type of hybrid regime)?**

Democracy with several parties. After a period of military dictatorship (1964-1985), there have been direct elections for president since 1989. The first left wing president elected was Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

**2) What are the main features of your media landscape? (private/public, print/broadcast/internet usage, ownership concentration, government control, etc.)**

The private sector owns the vast majority of the media outlets in Brazil. Even TV, by far the most important medium in the country, is almost completely commercial. EBC (Brazilian Broadcasting Company), an attempt to build a public broadcasting company, was created in 2007. It is still struggling to establish its coverage throughout the country and is under criticism because of its close ties with the government. There are fears that the EBC ends up as a state, not public, broadcaster. The main broadcasting company in Brazil is TV Globo, present in more than 98% of the Brazilian cities. Its main rival is TV Record, owned by the founder of the Church of the Universal Kingdom of God. The huge power of these broadcasting companies prompts debates over ownership concentration in the country, even though there are some legal restrictions to cross ownership.

Concerning print media, the number of newspapers and their circulation are growing in the country. According to the National Association of Newspapers, the total circulation of daily newspapers grew 5% in 2008 year on year and there were, in 2008, 673 daily papers in the country, 182 titles more than in 2001. The main problem resides in the low readership among the population. In 2008, it was estimated a circulation of 8,4 million newspapers' copies per day nationally - too little for a population of 190 million people. The main newspaper is the broadsheet *Folha de S. Paulo*, with 311 thousand copies per day. There are three main weekly newsmagazines in the country, *Veja* (Editora Abril) being the most important, selling 1,2 million copies per week.

The penetration of the internet, although still low compared to developed countries, is increasing very quickly. According to Ibope figures, in 2006, 32,5 million inhabitants aged 16 or older had access to the web either in their homes, work or elsewhere. In 2008, there were 63,2 million people in the same situation.

The most interesting phenomenon concerning media in the country is the penetration of mobile phones. The Brazilian Agency for Telecommunications estimates that there are 176 million cell phones in the country, or 91,9 cell phones for every 100 inhabitants. The traditional media outlets are still discovering the potential of these devices as a platform for news and entertainment.

**3) Where does your country come in the rankings of Freedom House (on freedom of the press) and Reporters Without Borders?**

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=251&year=2009>  
<http://www.rsf.org/en-classement1003-2009.html>

According to the Freedom House, Brazil's total score is 42, classified as partially free. The Reporters Without Borders' report puts Brazil in 75 position among 175 countries. The latter has a very good summary of what is happening in the country right now.

**4) Would you broadly agree with their characterisation of your situation?**

Yes. Both reports accurately portrait the media situation in the country.

**5) a) what are the main challenges facing the media in your country in the next five years (economic, political, technological etc)?**

Despite the fact that the economic situation in Brazil is relatively better than in other countries affect by the global crisis, there are still challenges for media companies, especially because the number of readers, for example, is still small, and the internet penetration is still low compared to developed countries.

There are still some legal questions to be addressed, among others, the one concerning media ownership (preventing politicians to own broadcasting companies, for example). The case of Sarney against *O Estado de S. Paulo* (mentioned by Reporters Without Borders) has not been solved yet and its ending may influence the course of similar cases in Brazil, potentially posing a threat to freedom of press in the country.

**b) what are the main limits on the practice of a free press in your country, based on your own practical experience of working there?**

If, in general, the national press is free to act, the regional press faces greater problems such as economic and political pressure. The proximity of journalists and the subjects of their articles about wrong doings, such as corruption and traffic, and the lack of an independent and efficient legal apparatus to deal with the issue pose a real threat to press freedom in the country.

**6) What are the main roles that new media play in your country?**

Brazilians have a significant presence in many a social media website and spend a very considerable amount of time online. Interacting with friends and consuming entertainment are, arguably, the most popular activities online. The major audience drivers concerning news on the web are portals (Uol, Globo.com, Terra, and Ig) that have a role as internet providers. A very significant part of the audience of newspapers', magazines' and broadcasters' websites is obtained through partnerships with these portals, which offers, roughly, a mix of news, entertainment and sports.