



Brazilian Presidential Elections 2022

First Round Analysis

October 2022



In partnership with



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Overview of Results

An Overview of the First-round Results

After months of high-stakes institutional clashes, massive dissemination of fake news, and stark political polarization, Brazilians went to the voting polls last Sunday, October 2nd and voted for President, state governors, some senators, and all federal deputies, state deputies, and federal district deputies.



Presidential Elections

- Polls constantly indicated that there were only two contenders with any realistic chance of winning: former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of the left-wing Workers Party (PT) and the incumbent candidate Jair Bolsonaro, of the right-wing Liberal Party (PL).
- In the days leading up to the election, some polls suggested Lula could obtain more than 50% of the valid votes (winning the presidency in the first round). However, he fell short of that number, amassing 48.43% of the valid votes.
- The biggest surprise was that President Bolsonaro, who polls indicated only had about 35% of voter intention, actually got 43.2% of the valid votes. The 8-point discrepancy in the results has led to widespread critiques of pollsters and the realization that support for Bolsonaro was largely underestimated.
- Both Lula and Bolsonaro concentrated 91,6% of the valid votes – the highest concentration of votes by any two frontrunners since 1989.
- There was a 20.9% abstention rate, the highest of which were seen in rural areas and within the poorest voters. This number is very high, considering that voting is mandatory in Brazil.

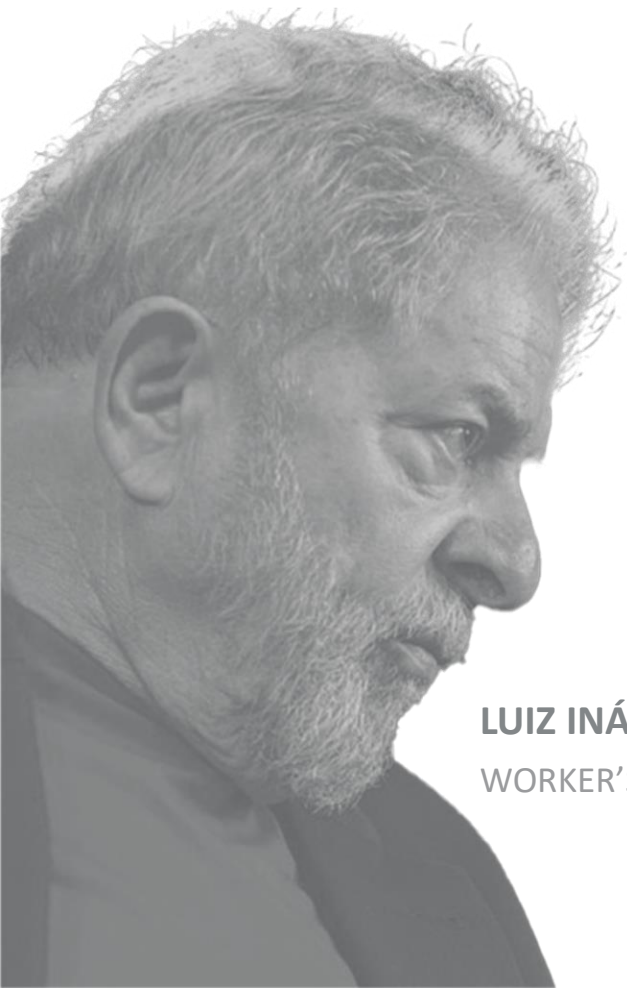


Elections for Federal Legislature, and State Governors and Legislatures

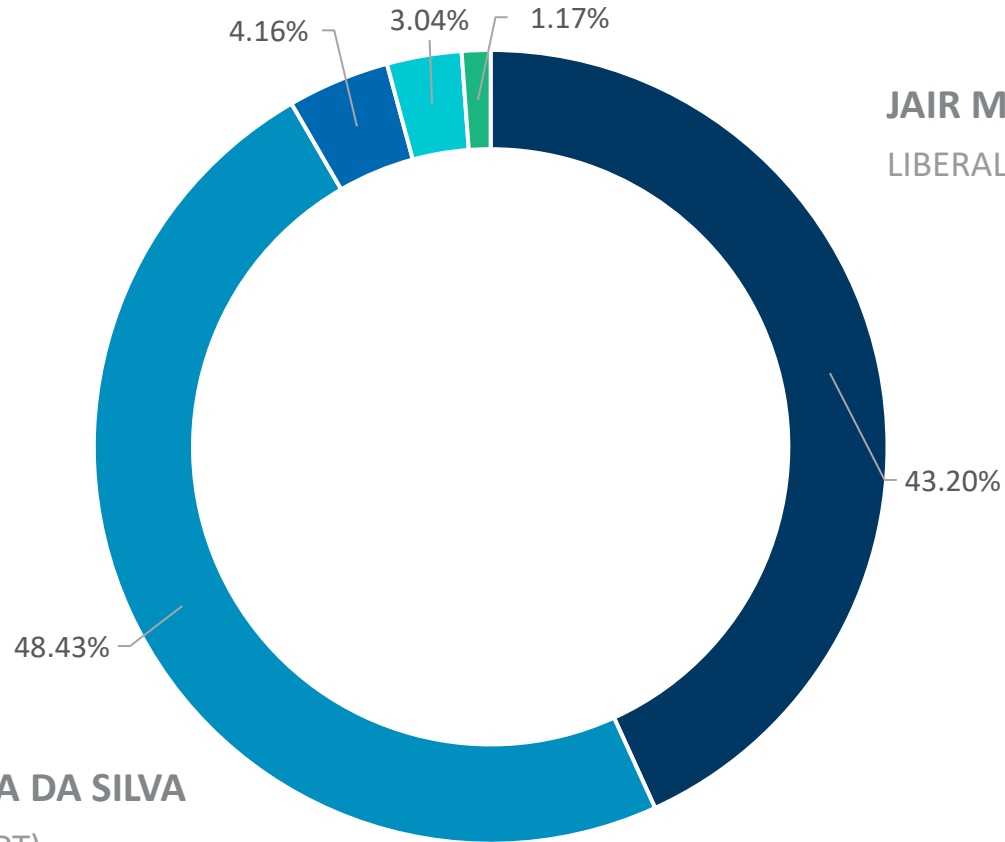
- 12 out of the 26 states are headed for runoff elections for governors. Both presidential candidates seem tied in terms of alliances with those elected in the first round .
- In Brazil’s Federal Congress, the alliance of political parties at the center of the political spectrum, called the “Centrão” (the big center), remains the most powerful caucus. Whoever wins the presidency will have to make concessions and negotiate with them in order to get bills and reforms passed.
- Bolsonaro’s party (PL) grew from 76 to 99 seats in the Federal Congress’ lower chamber, becoming the second largest caucus. In the Senate, the party went from 9 to 14 seats.
- Lula’s party (PT) also grew in both chambers, although with more timid numbers – from 56 to 68 seats.
- This indicates a continued consolidation of a conservative shift that began in 2018 due to anti-PT sentiment, and a slight governability advantage for Bolsonaro if he were to win. However, Congress is bound to remain as polarized as the presidential results themselves.

Brazilian Presidential Election 2022: First Round Results

*Final Results published by the TSE (Supreme Electoral Court) [here](#).



LUIZ INÁCIO LULA DA SILVA
WORKER'S PARTY (PT)



JAIR MESSIAS BOLSONARO
LIBERAL PARTY (PL)

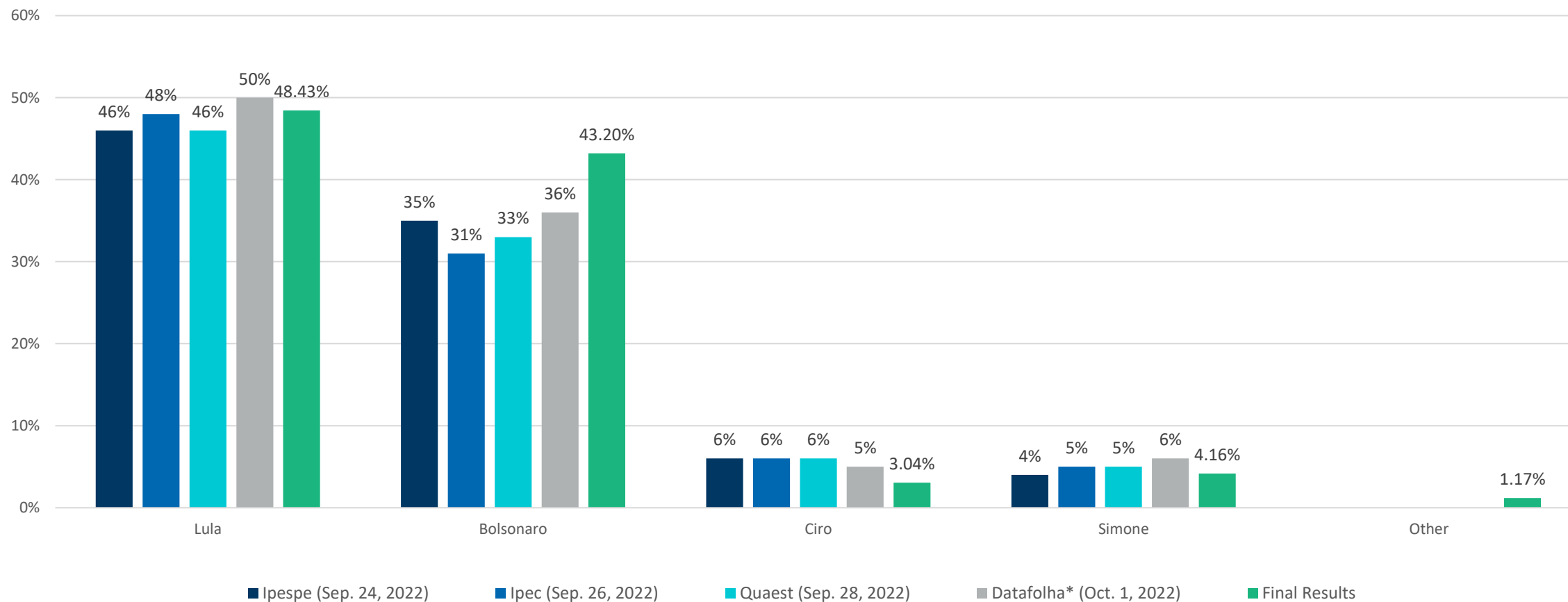


■ Bolsonaro ■ Lula ■ Simone ■ Other

Abstention rate: 20,95%
(about 32.7M Brazilians)

Comparing Polls and Official Results

First Round (Oct. 2nd)



*This poll does not consider blank or null votes, reflecting the methodology used by Brazil's Supreme Electoral Court to define the elections' result

**Polling information for [Ipespe](#), [Ipec](#), [Quaest](#), [Datafolha](#) and [Final Results](#) here.

The Polls Were Off – For Bolsonaro

Polls were accurate for other candidates, but underestimated Bolsonaro by about 8 points.

Here are a few plausible explanations:

- On election day, polls indicated that there were still 11% of voters who remained undecided, and 15% of voters who declared could change their mind up until the last minute. Those voters could account for the “unexpected” Bolsonaro votes, as well as for the high abstention rates.
- Many who participated in polls did not vote on October 2nd - lack of transportation options, long distances, working obligations and lack of information are some of the factors that traditionally contribute to this phenomenon.
- Voters who had initially planned to vote on other “third-way” candidates during the first round decided to cast a “useful vote” on Bolsonaro to ensure a runoff, given the indications of a possible first-round victory for ex-President Lula. This hypothesis also explains why other presidential candidates obtained lower results than polls indicated.
- It could be that many Bolsonaro voters abstained from participating in polling exercises because they were led by the candidate to doubt their reliability, and/or because they were embarrassed or frightened to declare their support for the controversial candidate.
- In any case, academics point out that pollsters did not have updated census information (due to be updated during the pandemic), and that polling methodologies must be reevaluated.



Geographic Distribution of Votes



■ Lula ■ Bolsonaro

- There is a clear north-south division in voting results; whereas Lula won in (most) northern and northeastern states, Bolsonaro claimed victories in the south and the southeast regions (with Minas Gerais exceptionally going for Lula).
- Bolsonaro’s victories in the center-west region evidence his domain over the so-called “arc of deforestation” - the region where agricultural advancement leads to the highest deforestation rates at the edge of the Amazonian region.
- The south-eastern region of Brazil, the largest economic center and most densely populated area, was the most polarized during the campaign and had the highest rates of undecided voters. Although both candidates dedicated most of their efforts to this region, Bolsonaro claimed victory (albeit by small margins).
- Going forward, candidates are expected to continue focusing on this region, not only because of its size, but because of abstention rates during the first round – around 20%.
- The state of Minas Gerais, with about 16 million apt voters, will be a decisive battle ground, since Lula won in the presidential election on October 2nd, but the elected governor Romeu Zema is a Bolsonaro ally who vowed to help the incumbent campaign until the second round.
- The Bolsonaro campaign has also increased efforts in the north-eastern region of Brazil because it elected many center-right congressmen and governors. Seeing that this region is traditionally favorable to the PT party and Lula, and that Bolsonaro is widely criticized, the incumbent’s campaign has used First Lady Michelle Bolsonaro to lure women and religious voters in the region.



Strategies and Alliances

Two Powerhouses Fight in the Second Round

Lula and Bolsonaro have amassed large political capital during their careers and are actively seeking to create new strategic alliances to help them achieve their goals and win the election.

- Despite his conviction on corruption charges, former President Lula has been able to maintain a remarkably large base, most notably in the north-eastern region of Brazil.
- These votes are not necessarily linked to his party (PT) but rather to himself (practically doubling the number of votes gained by the PT candidate who ran for the presidency in 2018).
- Notably, the presidential candidates that came in third and fourth place – Simone Tebet and Ciro Gomes – both declared their support for Lula.
- Lula has also formed coalitions with historical rivals like former president Fernando Henrique Cardoso and other center-right politicians, academics, artists and beyond, mobilizing all of them around the narrative of defeating Bolsonaro for the sake of democratic institutions.

- Although weak within minority voter segments and environmentalists, Bolsonaro has positioned himself as a conservative who defends traditionalist values associated with Christianity, gaining huge support from Evangelicals – a strong mobilizing force within Brazil.
- With widespread support from the agriculture sector and notable local entrepreneurs, Bolsonaro still uses his Economy Minister, Paulo Guedes, as the largest symbol of his defense of liberal economic values.
- Out of the 15 state governors elected in the first round, nine have expressed support for Bolsonaro, most notably Romeu Zema from Minas Gerais and Claudio Castro from Rio de Janeiro.
- Newly elected Senator, former judge and Justice Minister Sergio Moro, who led Operation Car Wash, also supports Bolsonaro.

Strategies for the Second Round

While some were hopeful that this final stretch would lead candidates to a more technical debate regarding concrete proposals, narratives still seek to move electoral emotions – to gain followers, or at least to increase the counterpart’s rejection rates.



Lula’s overarching narrative:

“I defend democratic institutions”

- Reiterate his past government’s victories, particularly his efforts to bring about social justice and reduce poverty.
- Continue to build on his unlikely alliances with historical rivals to position himself as a more moderate candidate.
- Campaign to avoid abstention (which could be higher on the second round).
- Reach out to religious groups to try to chip away at his rival’s support from this voter base, as well as to convince conservative undecided voters. Most recently, he signaled interest in sending a letter to Evangelical voters.
- Reach out to pragmatic factions of the agriculture sector who could easily adapt to either government.
- Attack his rival on his weak spots: his management of the pandemic and environmental policy, as well as corruption allegations against him and his family.



Bolsonaro’s overarching narrative:

“I defend economic freedom and conservative values”

- Build on his political alliances with politicians in outgoing and incoming posts at all levels and within the Executive and Legislative branches.
- Continue to portray a narrative of rivalry between himself and the Judiciary Branch, either by claims of fraud, or by claims of persecution.
- Use his wife Michelle Bolsonaro to help attract undecided voters, who polls show to be mostly women (64%), Catholics (50%) and Evangelicals (29%) and people from the Southeastern region (47%).
- Attack his rival on his weak spots: corruption charges that led him to prison, and the idea that socialist policies would lead to economic catastrophes like in neighboring countries.



— Social Media Engagement

Trending Topics on Social Media

For this special report on the Brazilian Presidential Elections of 2022, FTI Consulting developed a partnership with [Cortex Intelligence](#), a data-driven business intelligence company that maps-out interactions and engagement in social media platforms.

Engagement by Themes in Ideological Bubbles (7 days after the 1st round)



Progressive Bubble

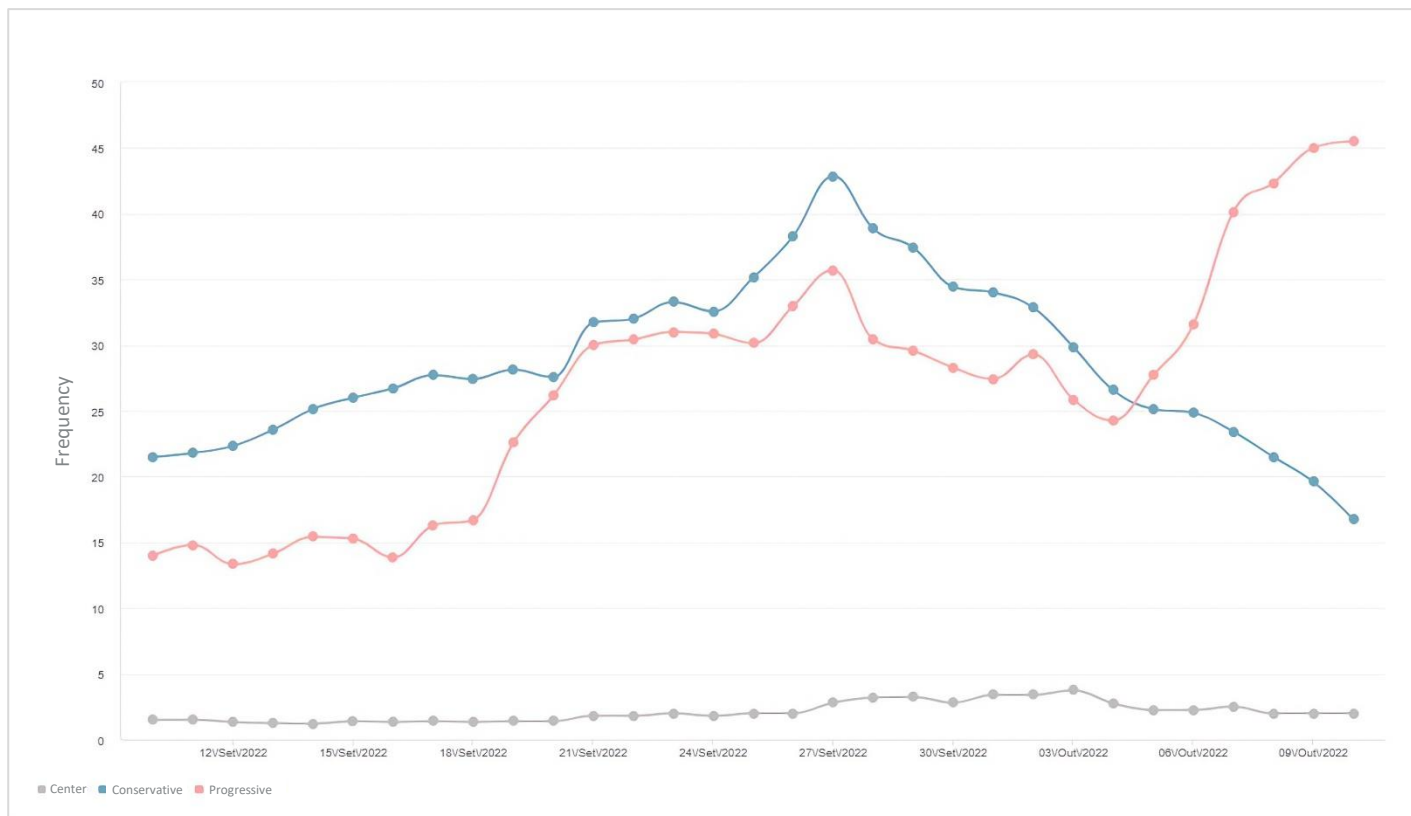
- Less engagement in social media.
- The two most relevant topics discussed by progressives during the last weeks are related to religion, mostly in response to conversations set forth by the conservative bubble.

Conservative Bubble

- More engagement in social media (507.6% higher than progressive side), indicating the strength of digital mobilization within sectors more aligned with Bolsonaro.
- More concerned with religion and topics related to conservative values such as abortion.
- Still concerned about public security and corruption.
- Fraud allegations lost traction.

Corruption is Still a Relevant Issue

Mentions of the Term “Corruption” Within Ideological Bubbles



- Cortex was also able to track specific topics on social media and determine fluxes in mentions within each ideological bubble during the last weeks.
- One of the most relevant topics for all social media users is still corruption. In the beginning of the presidential campaign, conservatives mentioned the topic recurrently due to the association between Lula and his corruption charges from “Operation Car Wash”.
- However, the situation has shifted somewhat in the last weeks and progressives are now talking about corruption more than conservatives, mainly due to accusations that Bolsonaro has mishandled the government’s “secret budget” (about R\$30 billion aimed at developing public policies in all states, with low transparency and control measures).
- There have also been accusations that Bolsonaro and his family have engaged in corrupt activities in their public and private lives.



What to Expect

No Surprises, Very Different Options

Since Democracy was reinstated in Brazil:

- All presidential candidates running for reelection won.
- All elected Presidents won in Minas Gerais, the state with the second largest electorate in the country.
- All candidates who had the most votes in the first round won in the second round.

- **No surprises:** Although President Bolsonaro’s voting intention was underestimated by polls, the resulting scenario of a runoff election between himself and ex-President Lula remains the unsurprising outcome of this first round election. Whatever the outcome, Brazilians expect to be governed by a familiar face during the next four years, giving markets some reassurance of predictability.
- Lula, who is expected to continue placing himself as a moderate, has been tasked by public opinion to stop campaigning on previous achievements and present more tangible proposals. This could allow voters to assess the actual risks of a potential Lula administration, and to understand the concessions made while creating new political alliances in recent weeks.
- Bolsonaro is expected to continue operating on the “us versus them” dichotomy that seems all encompassing and easily adaptable. Since there was no proof of fraud during the first round of voting, those concerning allegations lost relevance in the last weeks. Instead, the candidate is doubling down on his alliance with Evangelicals and claiming that this election is a fight between “good and evil”.
- Corruption, which had always been Lula’s Achilles heel, is now a delicate matter for the Bolsonaro campaign as well. This could be a bad omen for abstention rates, which in any case tend to be higher for runoff elections. If voters estimate that neither candidate is worthy of the presidential post, they might respond with apathy and avoid voting altogether.
- **Very different options:** while the local economic elites much prefer President Bolsonaro’s economic proposals, international western elites see him as “an environmental villain, Covid denialist and a direct threat to Brazil’s democracy”. In understanding this divide, as well as the real possibility of a Lula victory, local economic elites have remained relatively tepid in their support for Bolsonaro and are expected to behave in a pragmatic way after October 30th.
- This prudent posture is the way to go before the runoff election takes place, and even in the weeks after. Although former president Lula secured almost 6.2 million more votes than Bolsonaro, there are still many factors in play that make this election uncertain. Additionally, after the results are in, the new government will have to lead a polarized country and an empowered opposition.

In the meantime, click [here](#) to schedule a meeting with our team and see how we can help you navigate this complex scenario.

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