

Brazil – Election Results

20 Charts that Explain Brazil’s New Political Power Structure

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Presidential Elections: Two-Party System Is No More

From 1994 until 2014, presidential elections have been a contest between the Party of Brazilian Social Democracy (PSDB) and the Workers’ Party (PT). In a very fragmented political space (see section titled, “Lower House: A New World Record in Fragmentation” on page 3 for details), presidential disputes were, to some extent, surprisingly predictable, with those two parties concentrating efforts in such contests, dominating programmed debates and reaping at least 70% of first-round votes (see Figure 1). PSDB won the 1994 and 1998 elections outright, and both parties faced each other in runoffs in 2002, 2006, 2010, and 2014, with the PT candidate winning in the final round. This year, Jair Bolsonaro and his Social Liberal Party (PSL) took the lead in the center-right/right wing space from PSDB in the first round and beat the PT candidate in the runoff (see Figure 2).

Figure 1. Share of Valid Votes in the First Round of Presidential Election (%)

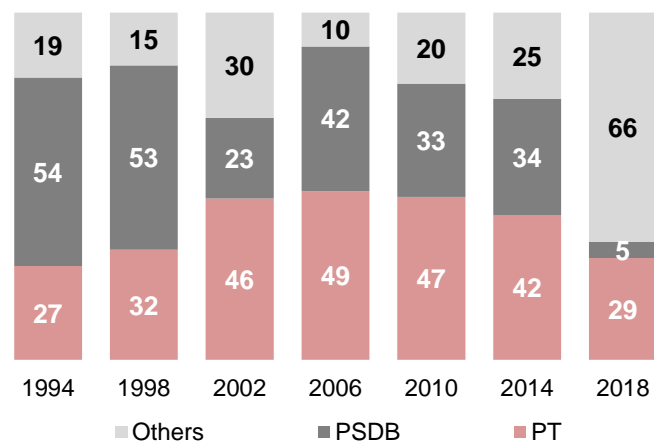
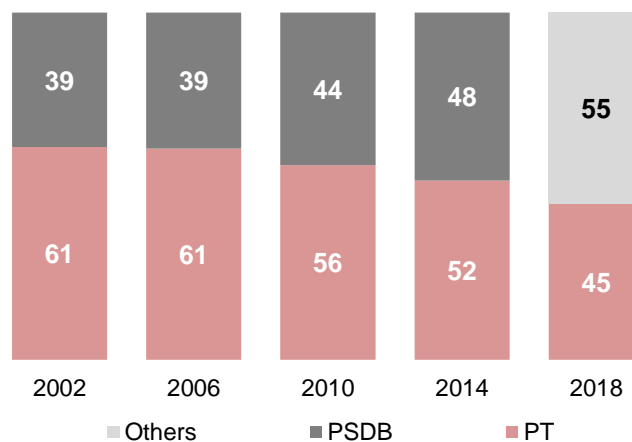


Figure 2. Share of Valid Votes in the Second Round of Presidential Election (%)



Sources: Electoral Court, Santander.

State Government Elections: New Players, Less Concentration

The races in Brazil’s 26 states, plus the federal district, also reflected the relative weakening of traditional large parties and the emergence of new forces. The number of state elections not won by any of the three most successful parties in gubernatorial races since 1994 (PSDB, the Brazilian Democratic Movement – MDB, and PT) jumped to 17, from 10 in 2014 (see Figure 3). In terms of population, those three parties will now govern over about half of Brazil’s population, from 80% in 2014 and no less than 65% in any other year since 1994 (Figure 4). This year 12 parties elected at least one state governor (from 9 in 2014 – Figure 5) – newcomer Novo won Minas Gerais, Brazil’s second most populous state; the Christian Socialist Party (PSC), which never had won a state government election, will now rule over Amazonas and Rio de Janeiro (the third most populous state); Bolsonaro’s PSL won Rondônia, Roraima, and Santa Catarina (three relatively small states that add up to around 10% of Brazil’s Population. Applying the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (a common measure of market concentration) to the “market share” of each party (share of total states won and share of population governed), we can conclude that Sunday elections produced the least amount of concentrated power in the states since 1994 (Figure 6).



Figure 3. Number of State Government Elections Won by Party (out of 27)

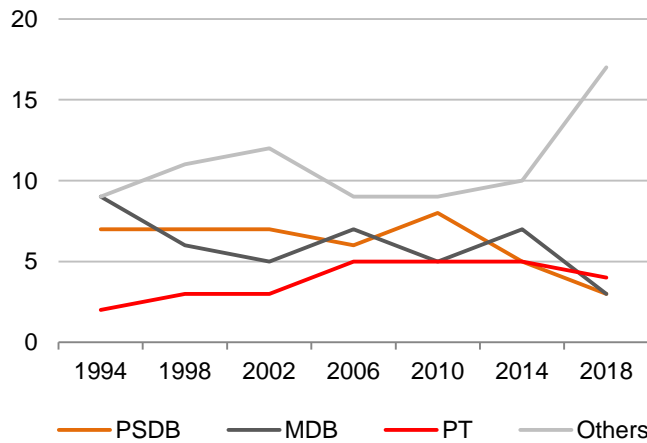


Figure 4. Share of Population under State Governors by Parties (%)

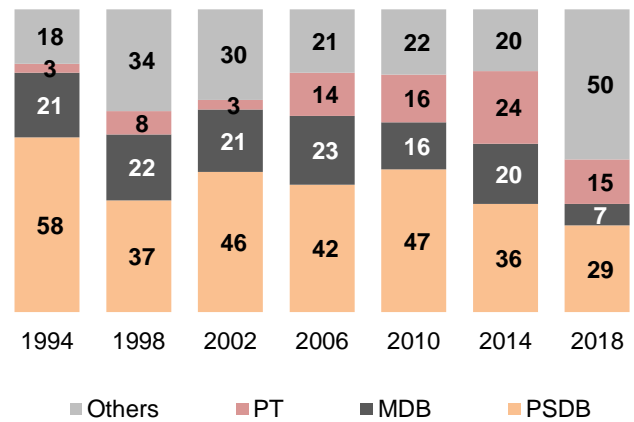


Figure 5. Number of Parties Winning at Least One Election for State Governor

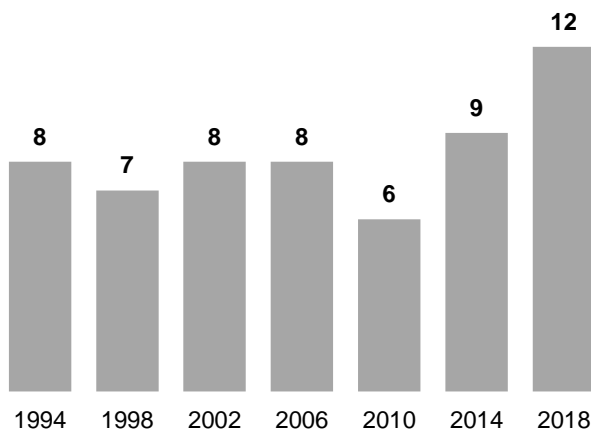
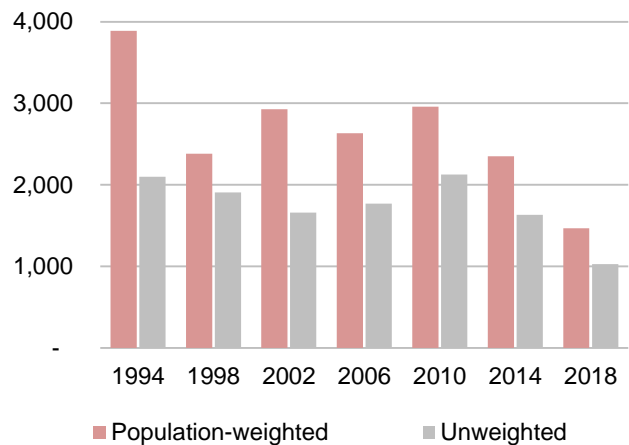


Figure 6. Herfindahl-Hirschman Index for Brazilian State Governments



Sources: Electoral Court, Santander.

Lower House: Power Shifts to the Extremes

Lower House elections were marked by a strong coattail effect, with Bolsonaro’s PSL jumping from 8 to 52 deputies and becoming the House’s second-largest party (PT remains the largest, with 56 seats). PSL’s gains were mostly on the back of losses from traditional center-right parties, such as PSDB, the Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB), the Democrats (DEM), the Progressive Party (PP) and the Party of the Republic (PR). Other winners were the Brazilian Republican Party (PRB), the New Party (Novo), and leftists Democratic Labor Party (PDT) and Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB) – Figures 7 and 8.

To evaluate the left/right distribution, we divided into quartiles the 30 parties that elected at least one representative, according to the ranking of the relative positioning of each party in the latest wave of the Brazilian Legislative Survey, coordinated by political science professors Cesar Zucco Jr. and Timothy Power. Hence, there is the same (rounded) number of parties in each bucket we are using as qualitative unit of analysis (left, center-left, center-right, and right). According to this criterion, the binary left/right distribution of seats little changed from the outgoing to the incoming deputies: the left field will have 199 representatives (from 196); the right field will have 314 deputies from 2019 (from 315 – differences do not add up to zero because the most recent list of seating deputies has two less than the total of 513 seats). The right field continues, in theory, to have enough deputies to approve constitutional amendments (3/5 of total seats – 308 votes – are required for that) – Figure 9.

The main power shifts were within each field, with seats migrating from center-left and center-right to hard left and right. Most notably, 29 seats migrated from the center-right to right (where PSL is).



Figure 7. Parties With Largest Net Seat Gains at the Lower House (Number of Seats Relative to Current)

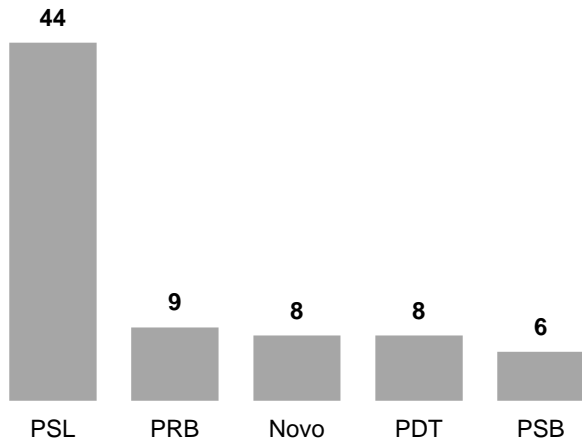


Figure 8. Parties with Largest Net Seat Losses at the Lower House (Number of Seats Relative to Current)

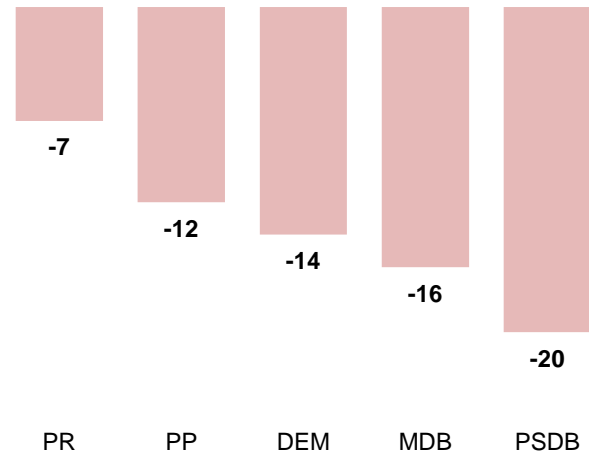
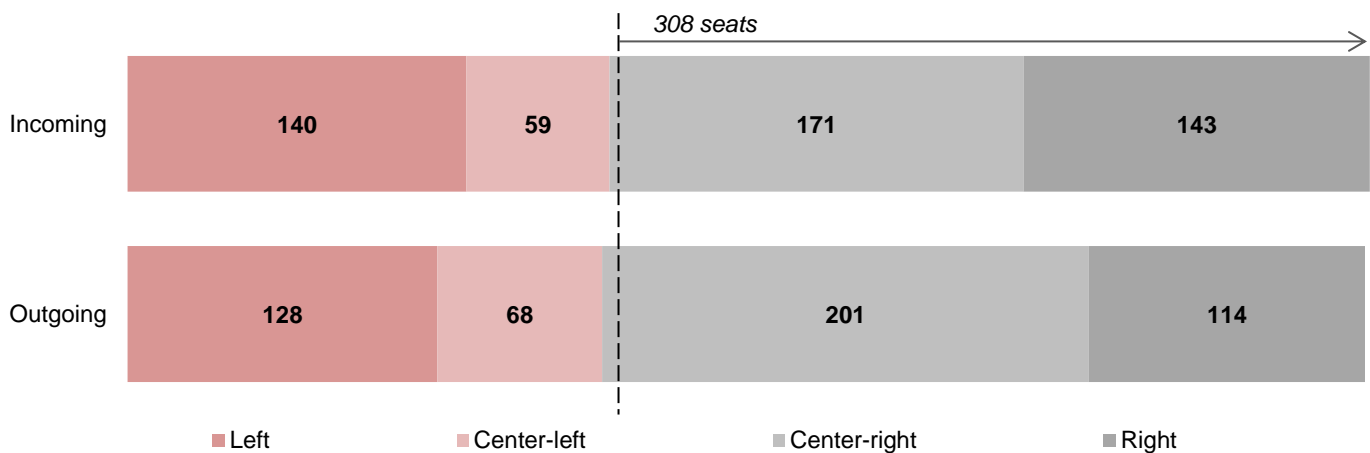


Figure 9. Composition of the Lower House According to Ideological Distribution



Sources: Electoral Court, Brazilian Legislative Survey, Santander.

Lower House: A New World Record in Fragmentation

According to a comprehensive database comprising 1,400 elections in 140 countries compiled by political scientist Michael Gallagher at Trinity College Dublin, the parliament elected in Brazil in 2014 had been the most fragmented ever, with 13.2 effective parties (a measure adjusted for the number of parties represented by their respective weights in the parliament’s composition). That mark was surpassed this year: the incoming parliament will have 30 parties represented, with the effective number of parties jumping to 16.5 (Figure 10). However, this is likely to be soon attenuated: a “barrier clause” recently established will cancel the distribution of public resources (the public financing fund and television advertisement time) to 12 parties that did not reach minimum criteria of elected representatives or share of votes in different states. This will probably provide strong incentives for small parties to merge or for representatives to migrate to larger parties, hence diminishing the pulverization of the system.

The two largest parties in the Lower House (PT and PSL) will control only 21% of the seats, the lowest since 1994 (Figure 12). The share of seats allocated to the four historically most successful parties (PT, PSDB, DEM, and MBD) fell to 29% (from 41% in 2014) – Figure 13.



Figure 10. Brazil Lower House Effective Number of Parties

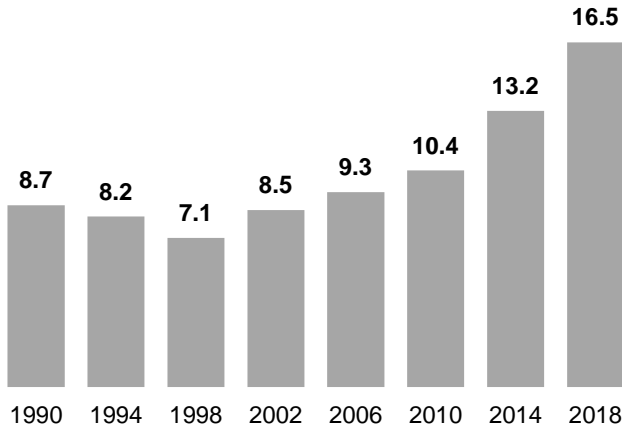


Figure 11. Effective Number of Parties in Recent Parliamentary Elections

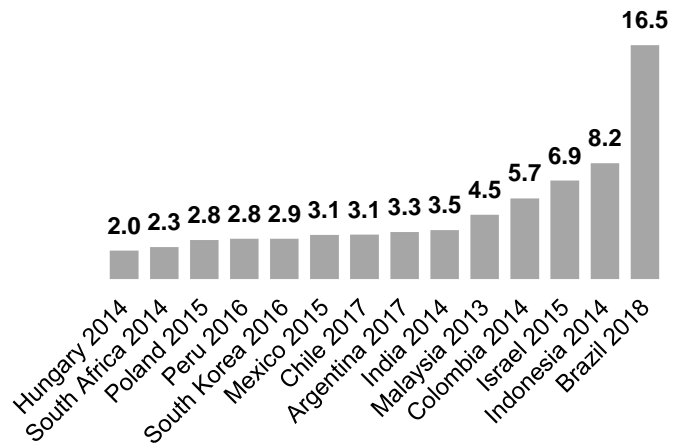


Figure 12. Aggregate Share of Seats of the Largest Parties in the Lower House (%)

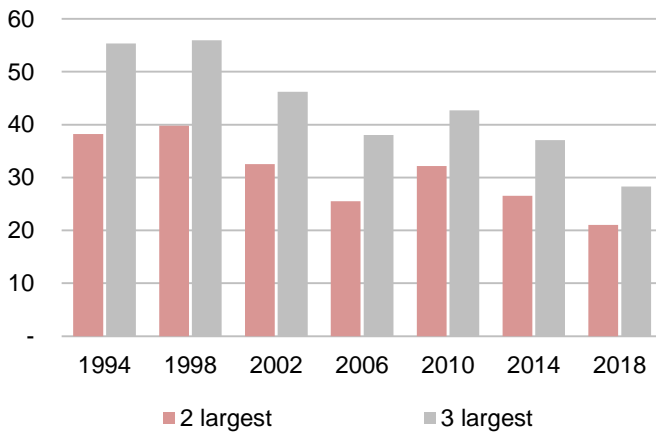
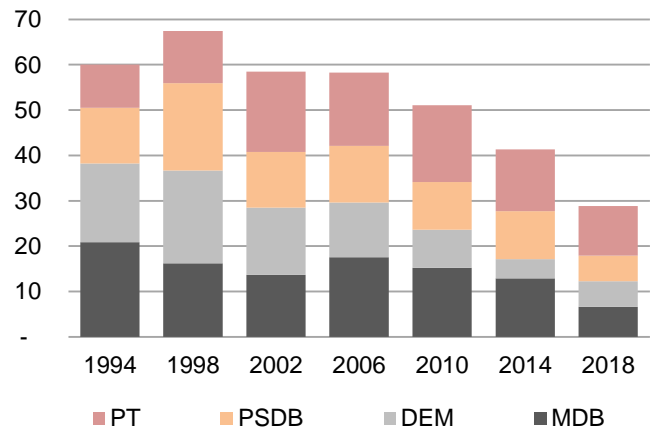


Figure 13. Share of Seats Won in Lower House Elections (% of Total)



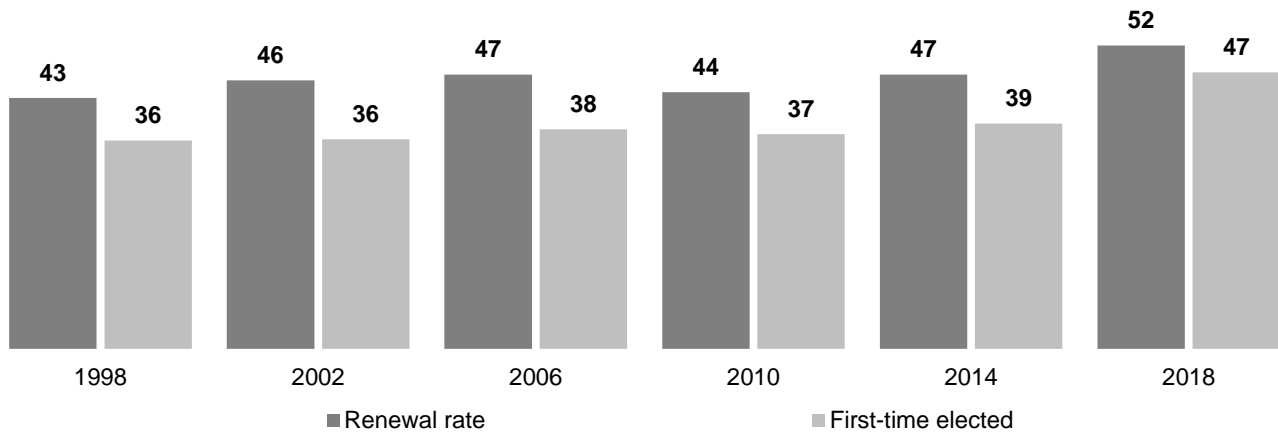
Sources: Michael Gallagher election indices dataset, Jairo Nicolau, Electoral Court, Santander.

Lower House: If You Want Renewal, You've Got It

The renewal rate (the complement of the reelection rate) in the Lower House was the highest since 1994, at 52%. Among the representatives elected, about half (47%) were elected deputies for the first time (Figure 14).



Figure 14. Lower House Renewal Rates (%)



Sources: DIAP, Lower House, Santander.

Senate: Also More Fragmented

Of the 54 Senate seats (2/3 of total) up for renewal this year, PSL and Rede grabbed the most (4 each), whereas MDB, PSDB, and PT lost 7, 4, and 3, respectively (Figures 15 and 16). In the new Senate, the right field will be one seat short of the majority required to approve constitutional amendments — however, this may change soon depending on what the 4 newly elected senators from Rede — nominally a center-left party, but it allowed for independent candidacies — will do next year. As in the Lower House, center-right parties lost territory to the hard right. In the left field, seats migrated toward the center (Figure 17).

Figure 15. Parties With Largest Net Seat Gains at the Senate (Number of Seats Relative to Current)

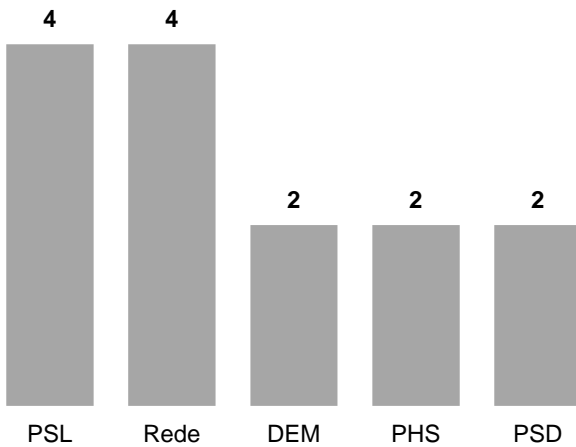
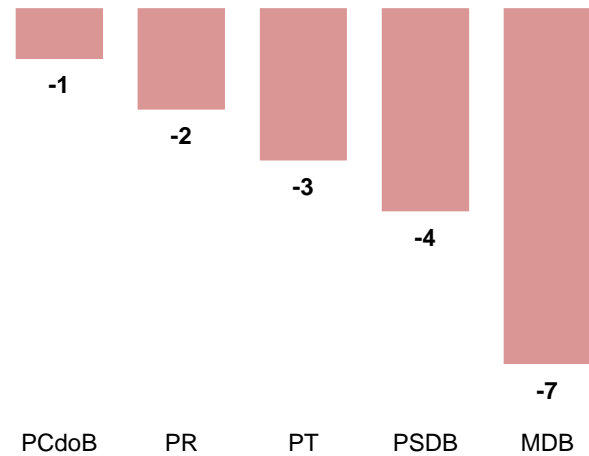


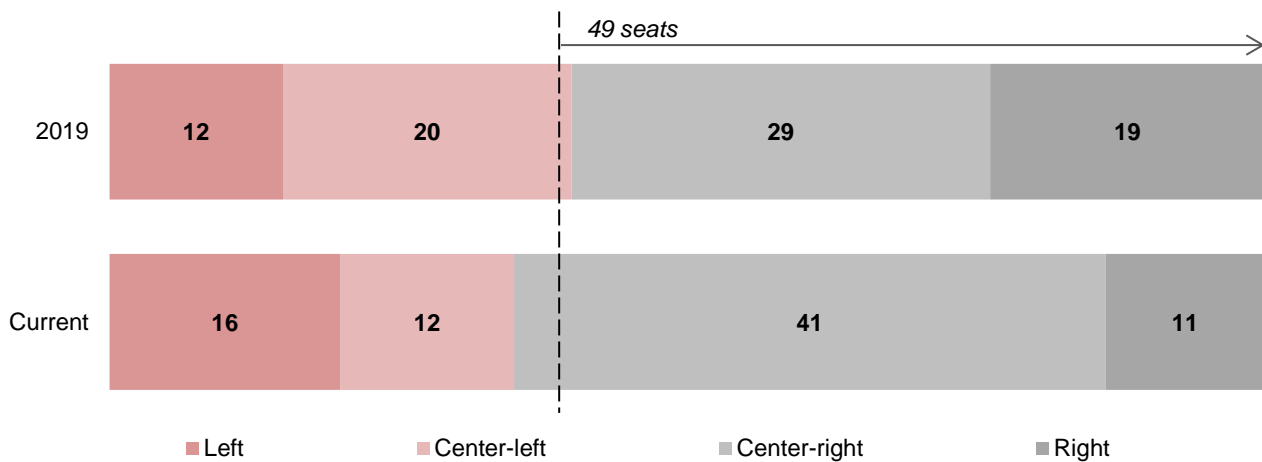
Figure 16. Parties with Largest Net Seat Losses at the Senate (Number of Seats Relative to Current)



Sources: Electoral Court, Santander.



Figure 17. Composition of the Senate According to Ideological Distribution



Sources: Electoral Court, Brazilian Legislative Survey, Santander.

As in the Lower House, fragmentation has increased. The three largest parties will have, on aggregate, only 32% of total seats, the lowest since 1994 (Figure 18). The sum of the seats held by the four historically largest parties (PT, PSDB, DEM, and PT) will be only 42%, down from 58% in 2014 and from 86% in 1998 (Figure 19).

Figure 18. Aggregate Share of Seats of the Largest Parties in the Senate (%)

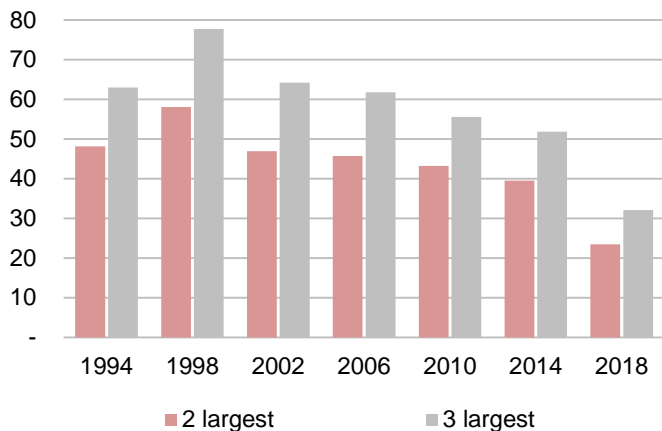
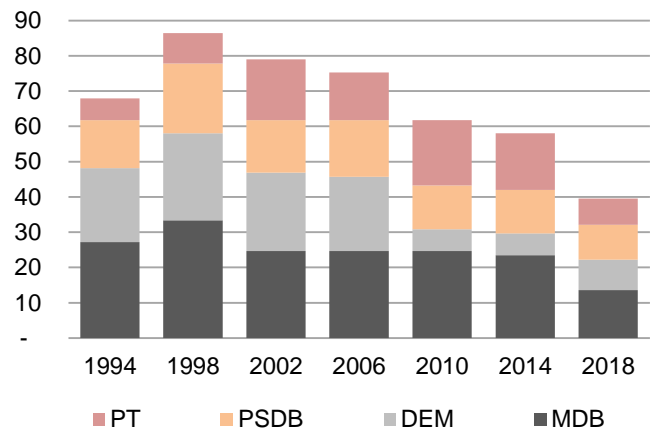


Figure 19. Share of Senate Seats Held after Elections (% of Total)



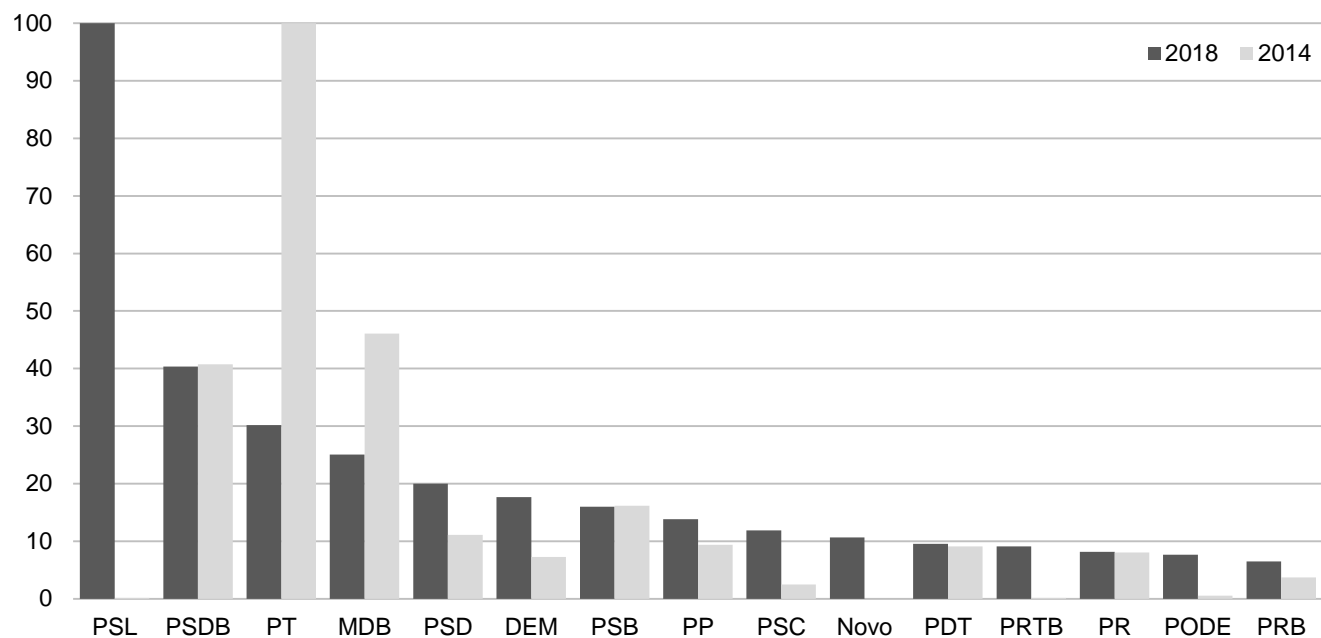
Sources: Electoral Court, Santander.

An Attempt to Sum It All Up – The Political Power Index

Of course it is impossible to summarize in a single number the results of such large elections in a vast and fragmented country, which, of course, only increases the temptation for a social scientist to do so. We built a “Political Power Index” by adding up the shares of each party in four government levels: state governments (weighted by population), Lower House, Senate, and presidency (here we, arbitrarily, attributed a 0.9 share to the president’s party and 0.1 to the vice-president’s party). We rescaled (linearly) the result so the maximum value equals 100. Results after the 2014 and 2018 elections are in the chart below. Not surprisingly, given the fragmentation in the states and Congress, the president’s party tends to determine the highest scores. Here the main shifts, besides the obvious decline of PT and rise of PSL, is the decrease in MDB’s score, which translated into higher scores for other parties such as PSD, DEM, PP, PSC, and Novo.



Figure 20. Political Power Index after General Elections



Sources: Electoral Court, IBGE, Santander estimates.



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