

## BRAZIL

**Dates of Elections:** 1 September 1978 (indirect Senate elections)  
15 November 1978 (direct elections)

### **Purpose of Elections**

Elections were held for all the members of the Chamber of Deputies and two-thirds (44) of the members of the Senate on the normal expiry of their term of office.

### **Characteristics of Parliament**

The bicameral Parliament of Brazil, the National Congress, consists of the Federal Senate and the Chamber of Deputies.

The Senate is composed of 66 members elected for 8 years, 3 coming from each of the country's 22 States. One-third (22) and two-thirds (44) of the Senate seats are renewed alternately every 4 years.

The Chamber of Deputies comprises 420 members\* elected for 4 years. The number of Deputies for each State is a function of the population of that State. Each State has a minimum of 6 Deputies and each of the country's Federal Territories (except for the Territory of Fernando de Noronha) is allotted 2 Deputies.

### **Electoral System**

All citizens who are at least 18 years of age and literate are qualified to vote if registered as electors in the constituency in which they reside; disqualified from being registered are persons incapable of expressing themselves in the national language, the insane, prisoners and persons not having full exercise of their political rights, as well as military personnel below the rank of sergeant.

Electoral registers are drawn up on the municipal level and revised prior to each election. Voting is compulsory, abstention being punishable by fine.

Candidates for Congress must be Brazilian by birth, have full exercise of their political rights and be members of one of the country's two official political parties. Persons running for the Chamber of Deputies must moreover be at least 21 years of age and resident in the State in which they seek election, whereas candidates to the Senate must be at least 35 years old. Persons convicted of acts committed against national, security, the political, economic and social order, and various morality codes are among those ineligible for the Congress. Offices considered incompatible with the parliamentary mandate include a number of high public and military positions and certain posts in public or semi-public corporations.

\* See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections XI* (1976-1977), p. 11.

The 420 Deputies from the country's 22 States are elected according to a party-list system with seats allotted proportionally among the lists according to the method of highest average. The seats won by each list are afterwards allocated to the candidates who have collected the most preferential votes cast by the electorate.

Simple majority vote applies to Senate elections, each elector voting for two candidates when (as in the 1978 poll) two-thirds of the seats are to be renewed, and for one candidate if only one-third are at stake. This was the traditional procedure provided for in Brazilian constitutional law. Nevertheless, in the 1978 elections, one-third of the Senators were for the first time elected through an indirect and nominal vote by electoral colleges comprising deputies to the assemblies of Federal States and representatives of municipal councils; this occurred by virtue of a constitutional amendment promulgated in April 1977\*. The remaining (one-third) Senate seats were filled according to the customary direct and majority vote.

Substitutes elected at the same time as titular members of Congress are called upon to fill seats which become vacant between general elections. A by-election is held if no substitute is available and there remains at least 15 months before the end of the term of the member of Congress concerned.

#### General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The 1978 congressional elections were held simultaneously with those for the Federal State assemblies, and one month after those for President of the Republic, in which General da Oliveira Figueiredo was chosen to succeed retiring President Ernesto Geisel.

As at recent (1966, 1970 and 1974) general elections, the ruling National Renewal Alliance (ARENA) was opposed only by the Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB). The electoral campaign proceeded without incident even though candidates did not dispose of free radio and television time to publicize their party's platform, as they had in 1974. By virtue of the "Falcao" law, the mass media could only be used to divulge the names, faces and biographies of candidates.

As was the case in 1974, outgoing President Geisel played an active part in the campaign. While ARENA candidates advocated the abolition of the laws of exception (which remained in force until 31 December 1978) and pointed to the success of the Government's accomplishments, the MDB emphasized the need to struggle against inflation (estimated at 38%), the rise in the cost of living, the complete restoration of a democratic system, and the granting of amnesty to all persons tried or convicted for political and similar crimes.

Although the MDB obtained more votes than four years earlier, it did not succeed in gaining the Chamber of Deputies majority which it had hoped for, the difference in standing between the two major parties undergoing only slight alteration. Though out-pollled, ARENA also maintained its dominant position in the Senate, winning 21 of the 22 seats filled by indirect election on 1 September 1978.

On 19 January, President Figueiredo announced the composition of his Government.

\* See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections JT/(1976-1977)*, p. 11.

## Statistics

*I. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats  
in the Chamber of Deputies*

Number of registered electors. . . . .	46,036,573
<b>Voters</b> . . . . .	37,629,125(81.73%)
Blank or void ballot papers. . . . .	7,772,282
Valid votes. . . . .	29,856,913

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained	Number of Seats won at 1974 Elections
National Renewal Alliance (ARENA). . . . .	578	15,053,387	231 <b>204</b>
Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB). . . . .	295	14,803,526	189 160 420* 364

\* 56 seats added since last elections.

*2. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the Senate*

Number of registered electors. . . . .	45,863,792
<b>Voters</b> . . . . .	37,501,281(81.76%)
Blank or void ballot papers. . . . .	6,731,243
Valid votes. . . . .	30,770,038

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained	Number of Seats won at 1978 Elections	Total Number of Seats
National Renewal Alliance (ARENA). . . . .	50	13,239,418	36	<b>41</b>
Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB). . . . .	43	17,530,620	9 45*	<b>26</b> <b>67*</b>

\* As a result of the merger of the States of Guanabara and Rio de Janeiro, the Senate has 67 members until the next elections.

3. *Distribution of Members of Congress according to Sex*

	Chamber of Deputies	Senate
<b>Men</b> . . . . .	416	66
Women . . . . .	4	1
	420	67

4. *Average Age of Members of Congress*

Chambers of Deputies. . . . .	46 years
Senate. . . . .	56.5 years