

BRAZIL

Date of Elections: 15 November 1986

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the seats in the Chamber of Deputies and for two-thirds (49)* of those in the Senate on the normal expiry of the members' 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 72 members** elected for 8 years, 3 coming from each of the country's 23 States and the Federal District. One-third (24) and two-thirds (48) of the Senate seats are renewed alternately every 4 years.

The Chamber of Deputies comprises 487** members elected for 4 years. The number of Deputies for each State varies according to 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 are qualified to vote if registered as electors in the constituency in which they reside; disqualified from being registered are 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 a 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 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. Cases of ineligibility are established by complementary laws. 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.

* Two-thirds of the Senate membership is 48, but in 1986 49 seats were filled since the Federal District was electing its three Senators for the first time.

* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 8.

The 487 Deputies from the country's 23 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 (as in the 1986 poll) when two-thirds of the seats are to be renewed, and for one candidate if only one-third are at stake.

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 remain at least 15 months before the end of the term of the member of Congress concerned.

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The 1986 congressional elections were the first since Brazil returned to civilian rule a year earlier. Their date was set on 23 October 1985.

On polling day, the centre-left ruling Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB), headed by Mr. Ulysses Guimaraes, swept to victory, gaining overall majorities in both enlarged Houses while the conservative Liberal Front Party (PFL), the junior partner in the outgoing governing alliance, suffered some setbacks particularly in the simultaneous state governorship races. The left-wing parties were generally unsuccessful. These results were interpreted as a vote of confidence in President of the Republic Jose Sarney's Government, especially its anti-inflationary economic strategy (the "Cruzado Plan", introduced in February 1986) and social programmes.

The newly-elected 559-member Congress was to act as a Constituent Assembly whose task would primarily be to draft a new Constitution*. This Assembly was convened for the first time on 1 February 1987.

* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 8.

Statistics

1. *Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats
in the Congress*

Number of registered electors69000000	(approx.)
Voters85%	(approx.)

Political Group	Number of Seats		
	<i>Chamber of Deputies</i>	1986	Senate Total
Brazilian Democratic Move- ment Party (PMDB)	260	39	46
Liberal Front Party (PFL)	118	7	15
Social Democratic Party (PDS)	33	2	5
Democratic Labour Party (PDT)	24	1	2
Brazilian Labour Party (PTB)	17		1
Workers' Party (PT)	16		
Liberal Party (PL)	6		1
Christian Democrat Party (PDC)			
Brazilian Communist Party (PCB)			
Communist Party of Brazil (PC do B)	3		
Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB)	1		
Christian Social Party (PSC)	1		
	487*	49	72*

* Eight seats added since previous elections.

** Three seats added since previous elections.

2. *Distribution of Members of the Congress
according to Sex*

	Senate	Chamber of Deputies
Men	72	461
Women		26
	72	487