



47.03% × 45.16%

FLÁVIO BOLSONARO · PL

LULA · PT

ANALYTICAL STUDY · EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2026 elections · first round

Brazil's 2026 first round in debate

The theses of experts from a range of institutions, set against IPSE Global's own theses and its evidence from qualitative research and social media.

KEY FINDINGS

- 1 It was not abstention, which held steady. The votes Lula lost went to another candidate.
- 2 Flávio Bolsonaro moved ahead in the final week, through tactical voting on the right.
- 3 The government was barely defended on its record: 1.3% of the debate cites its achievements.
- 4 The economy weighs on ordinary people and almost vanishes from both camps' discourse.
- 5 The PT came to be seen as preserving the system; Bolsonarism, as challenging it.
- 6 The runoff remains open: four to five votes per polling section.

Full study and versions in Portuguese and Spanish:

ipse.global/publications

Three bodies of material set against one another: experts, qualitative research and social media



Experts from a range of institutions

120 texts

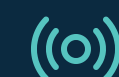
Plus some twenty programmes: theses of analysts, researchers and commentators in the press, on debate channels and in podcasts.



Qualitative research

519 people

Heard in 46 discussion groups (focus groups) in the five regions, with LabDES/UNIRIO (a laboratory at the Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro), in late 2025.



Social media

14.95 million

Interactions (likes, comments and shares) re-read by Orikom in the 24 hours after the vote.

The result is not explained by abstention, forgetting or bots



Abstention

21.08% ×
20.95%

In 2026 and in 2022: it is the highest since 1998, but it remained stable and did not affect one camp more than the other.



Short memory

7.3%

Of interactions recall Jair Bolsonaro's 2019–2022 government: the past was barely used as an argument.



Bots

under
0.5%

Of authors show signs of an automated account. The camp of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Lula) had more volume on social media and lost.

The votes Lula lost did not stay at home: they changed candidate



Lula

3.4
million
fewer

Votes compared with 2022, with losses in 98% of municipalities.



The right

5.0
million
more

Votes for Flávio Bolsonaro compared with Jair Bolsonaro in 2022; 713 municipalities changed sides, none in the opposite direction.



Final week

from 40%
to 47%

Flávio grew through tactical voting on the right; the other candidates fell from 14% to 7.8%, and Lula remained stable.

The right came out ahead and strengthened its position in Congress and in the states



Presidency

47.03% ×
45.16%

Flávio Bolsonaro of the PL (the Bolsonaro family's party) ahead of Lula of the PT (the Workers' Party) by 1.87 points. Runoff on 25 October.



Congress

121 and
28

PL deputies and senators, the largest blocs of seats in both houses. The PT elected 70 deputies and will have 9 senators.

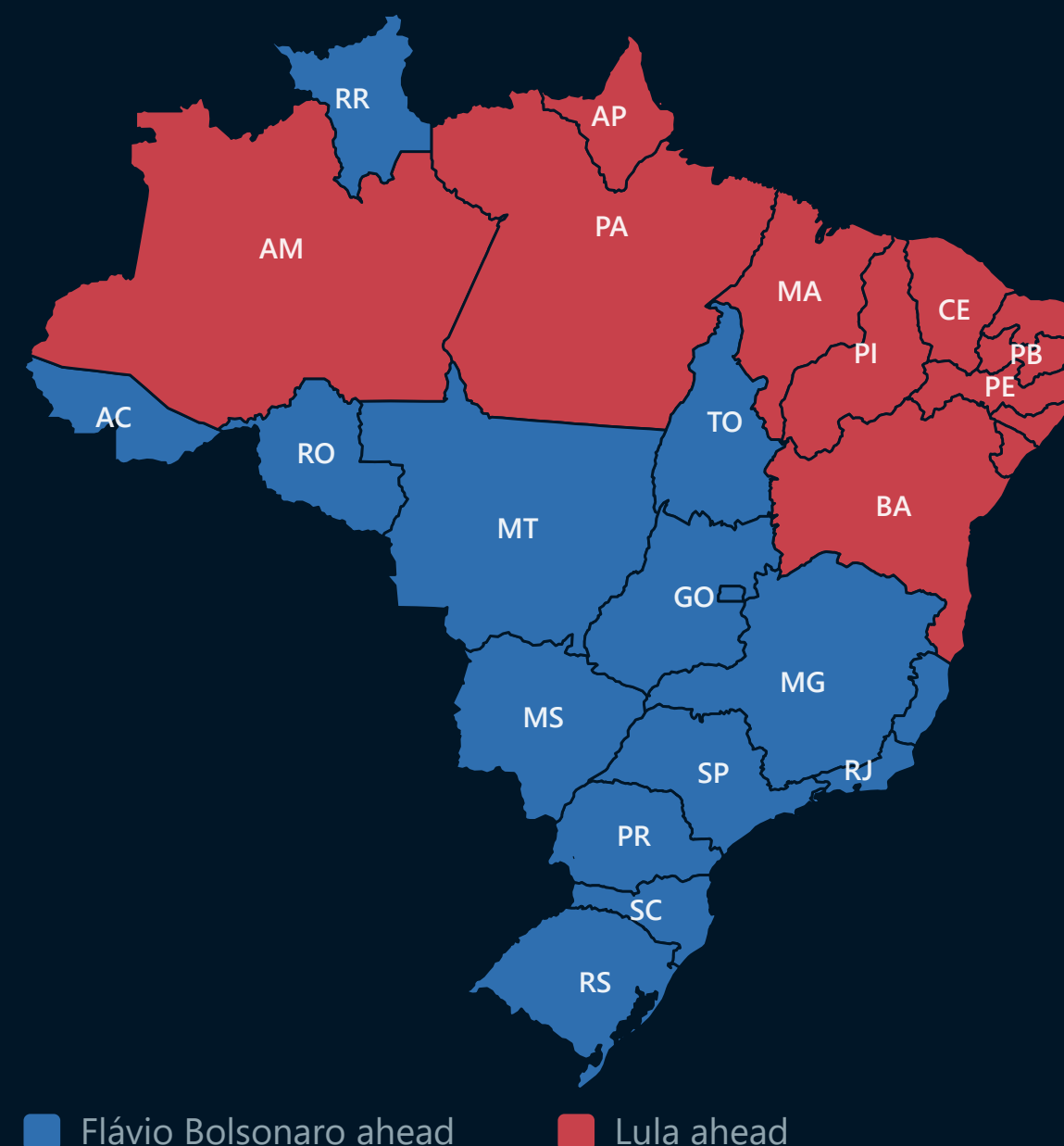
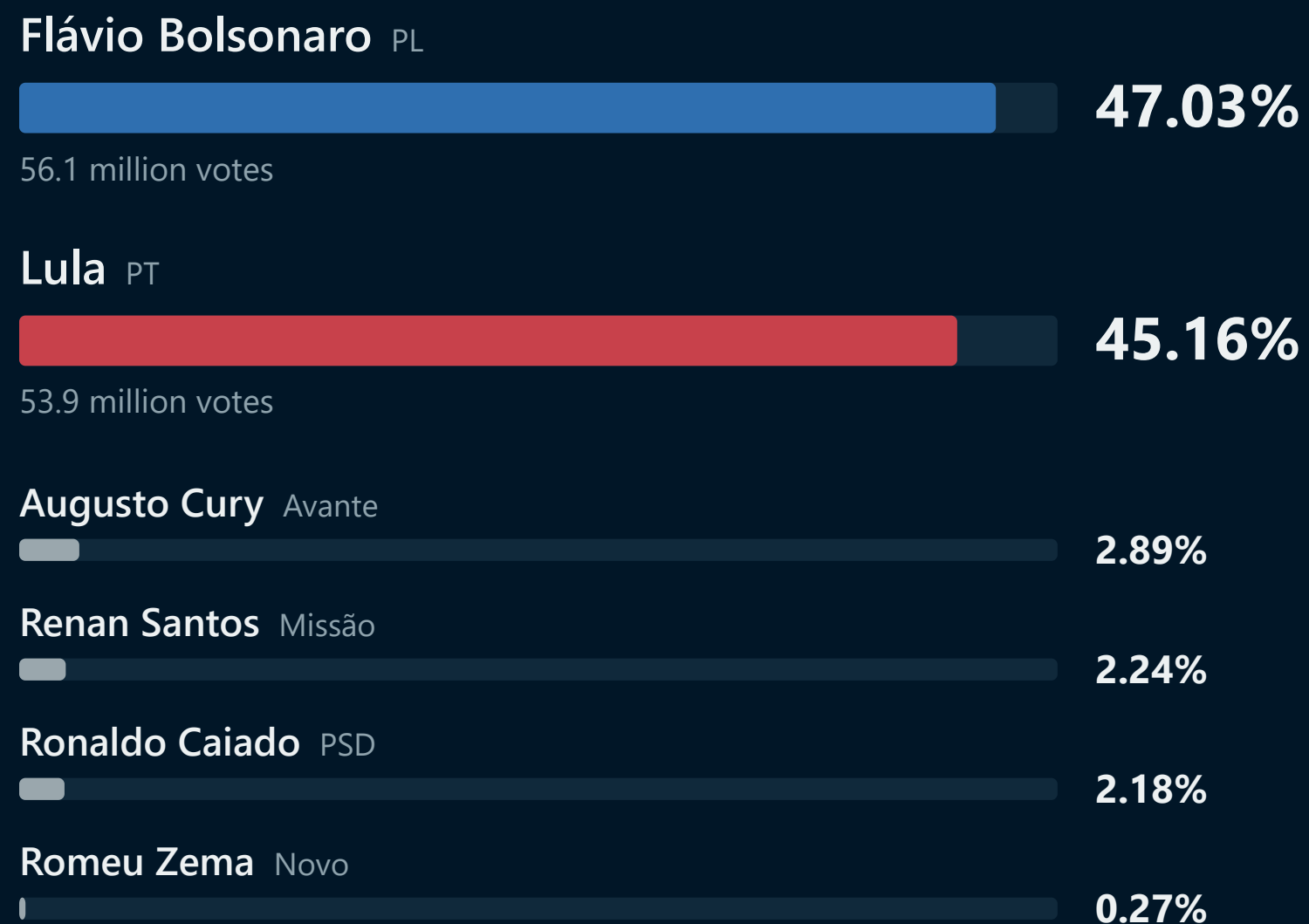


State governments

11 to 5

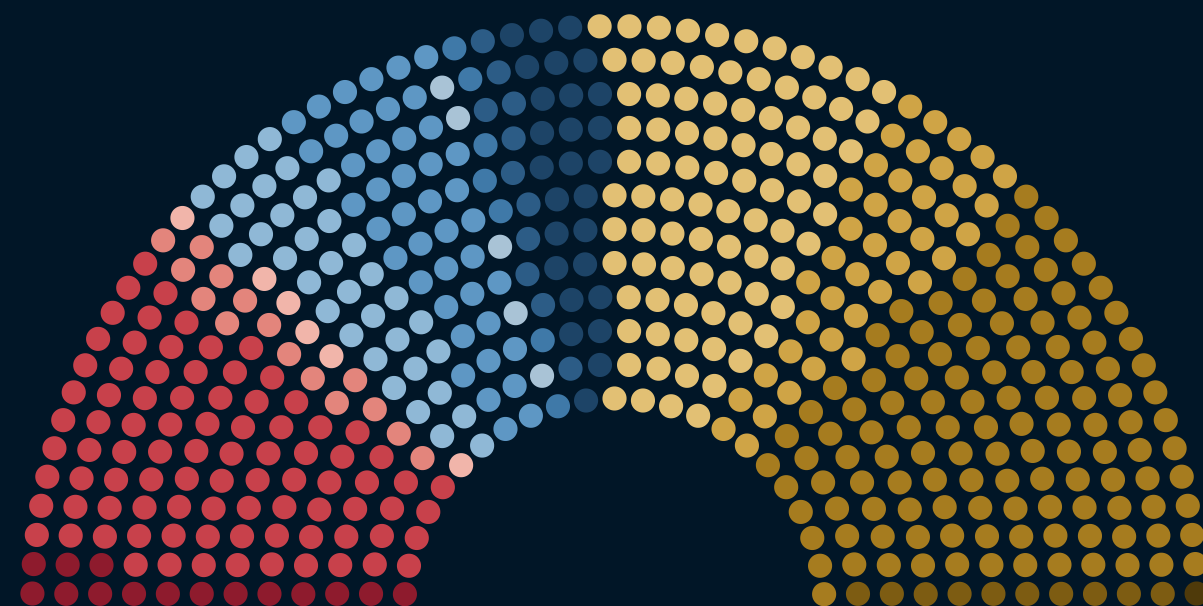
Of the 20 governors elected in the first round, 11 backed Flávio and 5 backed Lula.

Flávio Bolsonaro won 14 states and the Federal District; Lula won 12 states



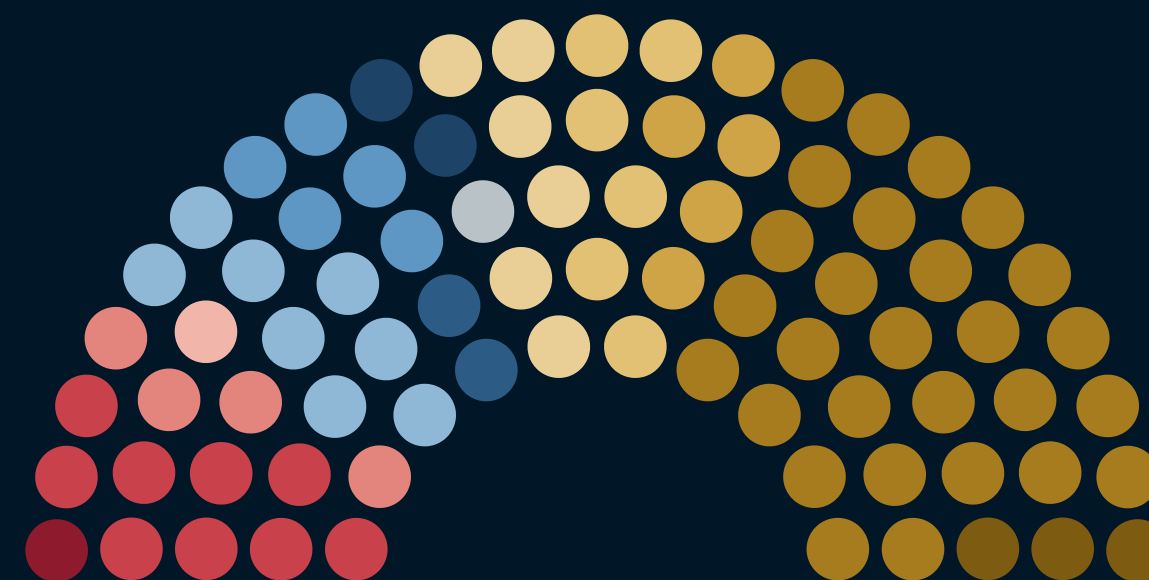
The PL will hold the largest blocs in both the Chamber and the Senate

Chamber of Deputies · 513 seats



PSOL-Rede 15	PSDB-Cidadania 11
PT-PCdoB-PV 88	Podemos 27
PSB 15	União-PP 87
PDT 6	Republicanos 41
MDB 36	PL 121
PSD 43	Novo 10
Avante 5	Missão 1
PRD-Solidariedade 7	

Senate · 81 seats



Rede 1	Podemos 2
PT 9	No party 1
PSB 4	União 6
PDT 1	PP 6
MDB 8	Republicanos 5
PSD 5	PL 28
PSDB 2	Novo 3

— THE RESULT where Lula lost

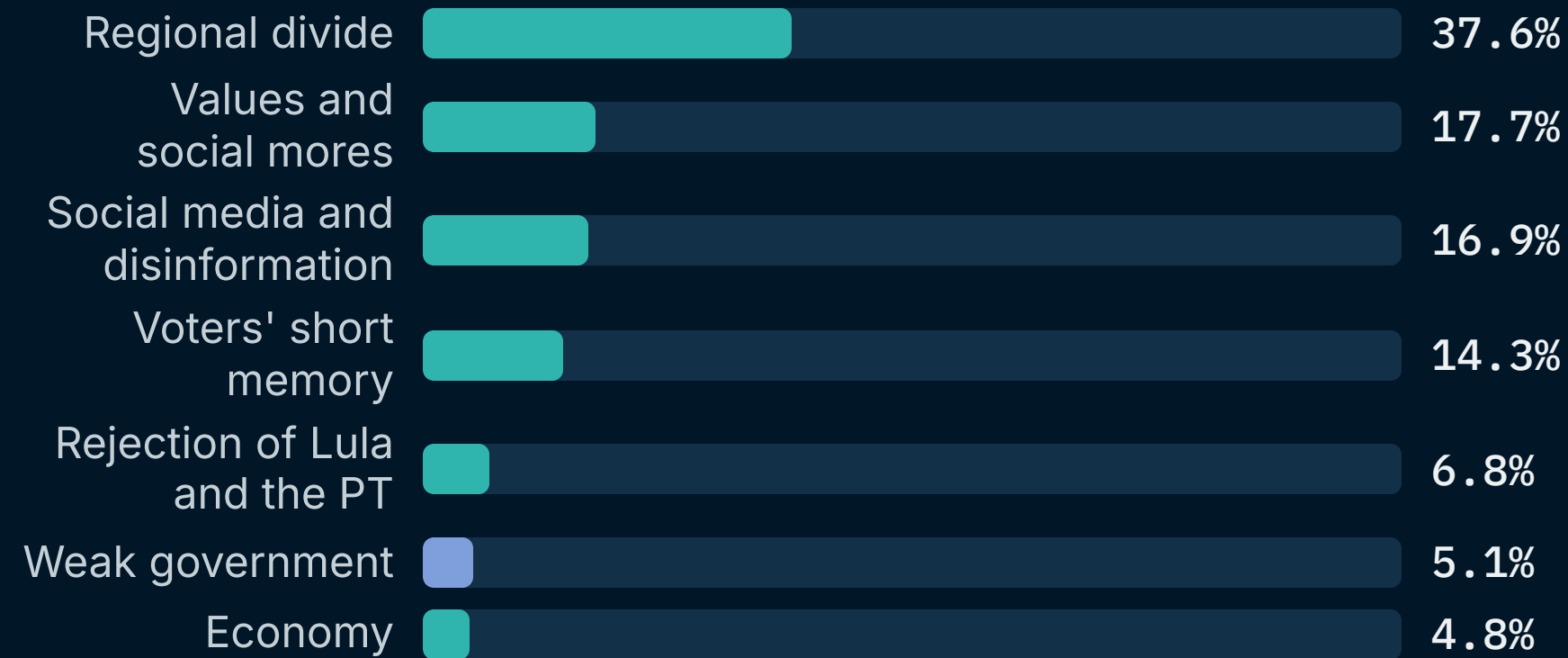
The loss was sharpest in small municipalities and where agribusiness weighs heavily

TYPE OF MUNICIPALITY	VOTE FOR LULA, 2022 TO 2026
Agriculture and livestock above 50% of the local economy	-8.8 points
Up to 5,000 inhabitants	-7.2 points
Interior (non-metropolitan areas)	-4.1 points
Brazil	-3.3 points
Above 500,000 inhabitants	-1.1 points
State capitals	-0.6 points

The defeated camp explained the defeat by the voter, not by the government

Explanations of the result in Lula's camp

As % of interactions that offer an explanation · Orikom, 4 and 5 October 2026



WHAT IS MEASURED

The explanation each publication in Lula's camp gives for the result, weighted by interactions.

WHAT THE DATA SHOW

Region, social mores, social media and short memory dominate. The weak-government hypothesis stands at 5.1%.

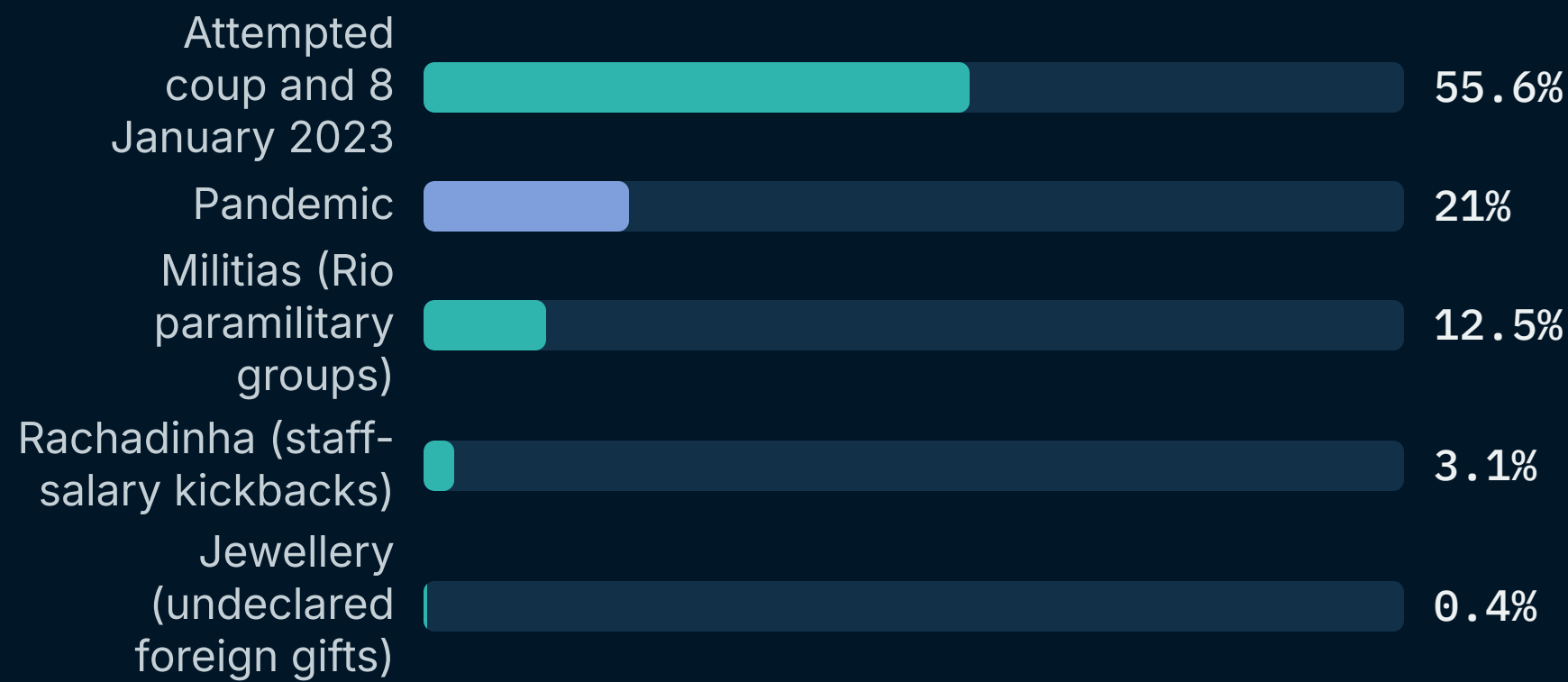
WHY IT MATTERS

Attributing the defeat to the voters' characteristics drives away those one would hope to win back.

The memory of 2019–2022 circulated little, and in the form of accusation

Episode recalled

As % of interactions that carry this memory (7.3% of the total) · Orikom, 4 and 5 October 2026



WHAT IS MEASURED

Which episode of the previous government is recalled in publications about the result.

WHAT THE DATA SHOW

The pandemic weighs less than half as much as the coup. In Flávio's camp, the subject appears in 3.3% and is denied in 68.6%.

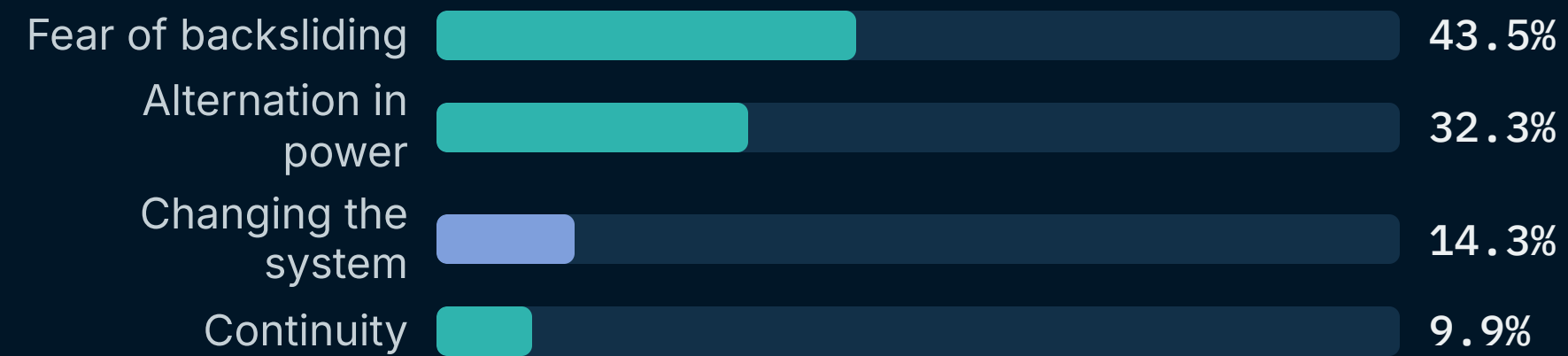
WHY IT MATTERS

Calling this short memory shifts onto the voter a work of argument that was never done.

The change that won is replacing who governs, not changing the system

Meaning given to change

As % of interactions that speak of change (38.8% of the total) · Orikom, 4 and 5 October 2026



WHAT IS MEASURED

What publications say when they speak of change.

WHAT THE DATA SHOW

Flávio is named as the bearer of change in 56.8% of cases; in his camp, change means alternation in power in 67.3%.

WHY IT MATTERS

Lula's camp answered the word change with fear of backsliding and, in doing so, handed it to the opponent.

The government was hardly ever presented by what it had done



Achievements of the current government

1.3%

Of the whole conversation about the result cites some deliverable of Lula's third term.



The delivery argument

from
13.6% to
0.5%

In publications that mention Lula, between September and the period after the vote.



Within his own camp

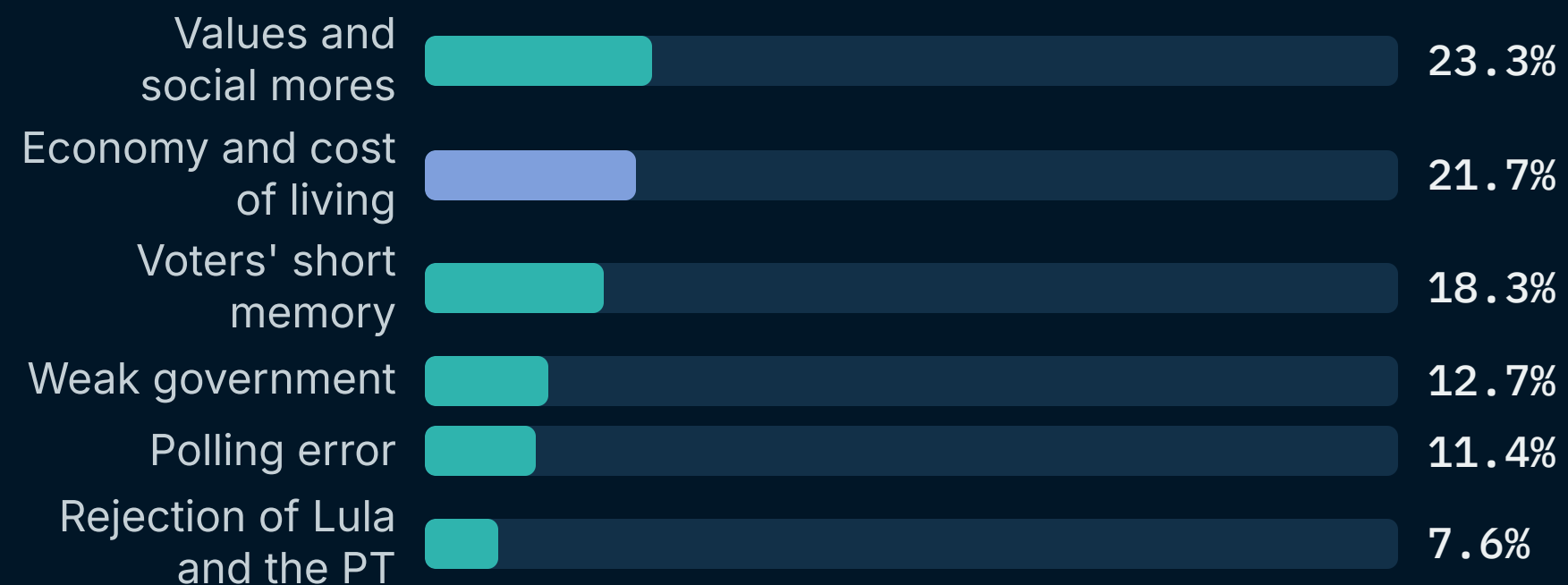
4.1%

Even among supporters, few interactions mention what the government did.

The economy explains the result for ordinary people, not for the camps

Explanations of the result among ordinary accounts

As % of interactions that offer an explanation · Orikom, 4 and 5 October 2026



WHAT IS MEASURED

The explanation given by ordinary accounts: profiles that are not politicians, media outlets or influencers.

WHAT THE DATA SHOW

The economy and weak government together exceed one third. In Lula's camp, the economy appears in 4.8%; in Flávio's, in 7.1%.

WHY IT MATTERS

The material grievance exists, and neither of the two forces has taken it up as a proposal.

Six current explanations set against IPSE's evidence

EXPLANATION	WHO HOLDS IT	WHAT THE DATA INDICATE
 Bolsonarism as a force in its own right	Folha de S.Paulo, Felipe Nunes, Jairo Nicolau	Identity combined with tactical voting against the PT
 Voters' short memory	The pro-government camp	The memory was barely mobilised
 An anti-system wave	William Waack, Josias de Souza	Rebellion in sentiment, alternation in substance
 Benefits became an acquired right	Fernando Mitre, Murilo Hidalgo	The deliverables were never even presented
 The Supreme Court (STF) decided the election	Vera Magalhães, right-wing channels	A permanent target, not the main cause
 Social media and bots	Columnists aligned with the government	There was organisation, not automation

The paradox of the anti-system vote

1



Material dissatisfaction

Life has become more expensive and work more unstable, under a model that concentrates income.

2



The PT contains and negotiates

In government, it avoids confronting the model and seeks gradual advances.

3



Read as complicity

The party appears as a partner of the system and answers for what has not changed.

4



The vote changes hands

It goes to Bolsonarism, which opposes the part of the system that protects workers.

Interpretation by IPSE Global, in dialogue with João Paulo Charleaux and with José Dirceu's interview with Breno Altman.

Four interpretive theses: system, progress, desire and authorship

1



System

The PT has come to stand for conservation; Bolsonarism, for the challenge to the system.

2



Progress

The vote extended a credit of trust to a promise of movement, without scrutiny of the method.

3



Desire

Protection that guarantees only subsistence is felt as a limit; the liberal promise offers a horizon.

4



Authorship

People want to be recognised as the authors of their own improvement, not as debtors owing gratitude.

Hypotheses by IPSE Global, grounded in the 2025 qualitative research and in psychoanalytic concepts, to be verified through direct research.

Two ways of describing the same achievement



The government made you prosper

Gratitude

It places the person in the position of beneficiary and debtor. A debt that cannot be repaid tends to turn into resentment.



The government set the conditions; you advanced

Authorship

It retains the contribution of public policy and returns to the person the credit for improving their own life.

For each side, the criticism the evidence supports



Government and the left

It explained the defeat by the voters' failings, treated forgetting as a fault of those who vote, said almost nothing about what the government did and made fear of backsliding its central argument.



Bolsonarism and the right

It denied the episodes of 2019 to 2022, disputed polls and institutions even in victory, reduced change to removing the opponent and sees the Senate as an instrument against the Supreme Court.

Four to five votes per polling section separate the two candidates



Average polling section

318
voters

The country divided by its 499,248 polling sections (the voting-booth units).



Votes in the average section

112 × 108

Flávio and Lula. Each voter who changes sides narrows the gap by two votes.



Outside the contest

98 voters

In the same section, 67 did not turn out, 19 voted for other names and 12 cast blank or spoilt votes.

Three clearly defined groups decide, not generic mobilisation



Voted for Lula in 2022
and switched

**7 per
section**

That is more than the gap between the
candidates, and each one who returns is
worth two votes.



Eliminated candidates

9 million

Voters of names that have not declared
support for either finalist.



Older voters with optional voting

614,000

Voters aged over 70, for whom voting is
not compulsory, returned to the polls in
the 2022 runoff.

Four voter profiles, four approaches

1



Over 70

The obstacle is practical: company and information about voting and free transport.

2



Spoilt their ballot

Do not argue for a candidate; ask whom they would vote for if they had to choose.

3



Eliminated candidates' voters

They have already shown that they vote and keep informed; they decide in the coming weeks.

4



Switched vote

The most valuable: they are asked to repeat a choice they have already made.

Proposal by Filipe Boni: the conversation falls to those who live alongside the voter, not to the candidate or to campaign advertising.

Three signals to watch until 25 October



Will the economy enter the debate?

And through whose voice. Today it weighs among ordinary accounts and barely appears in the two camps.



Will criticism of the judiciary grow?

With the new composition of the Senate, it may move from an interpretation of the result to a programme of action.



Will anyone win trust?

Both finalists arrive with negative trust; neither is an object of hope in the debate measured.

About the platform and this study

👁 WHAT THIS STUDY IS

A systematisation of the explanations offered by analysts, researchers and commentators from a range of institutions for the result of Brazil's 2026 first round, set against IPSE Global's theses and empirical evidence. This executive summary accompanies the full document, in A4 format.

👁 SOCIAL MEDIA

Orikom, IPSE Global's social intelligence platform, monitors social networks, the press and political advertising. For this study, the highest-reach publications about the result, between the close of voting and the afternoon of 5 October, were re-read with a fixed questionnaire. The percentages are weighted by interactions and describe the public debate, not the electorate.

👁 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The study Perceptions of the national democratic agenda, by IPSE Global with LabDES/UNIRIO: 46 discussion groups, 519 participants from the five regions, between 14 November and 20 December 2025.

👁 EXPERTS

Around 120 analysis and opinion pieces from the press, some twenty video debate programmes and interviews, and three quantitative analyses of the result, by Marco Faganello, Felipe Nunes and Filipe Boni.



IPSE Global · Orikom

IPSE Global (Intelligence in Social and Strategic Research) conducts studies of public opinion, political and electoral behaviour and public communication. Orikom is its social intelligence platform for the public debate.

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