

Brazil Counts Tonight

Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren · Jerusalem · Sunday 25 October 2026 · 14 Cheshvan 5787

Update, Monday 26 October 2026

The count has spoken. With all 499,248 sections counted, Brazil's electoral court (TSE) gave Lula 51.79% of valid votes and Flávio Bolsonaro 48.21%, a margin of about 4.4 million, even though the last pre-vote polls had Flávio slightly ahead. The map split almost evenly: Lula won 13 states, and Flávio won 13 plus the Federal District. Flávio has not conceded and says he will seek to annul the election over a two-hour extension of voting ordered by Justice Cristiano Zanin, which Brazil's electoral court says changed nothing, so the courts may yet have the next word.

Brazil chooses its president today. Polls open at 8:00 and close at 17:00 Brasília time. Brazilians vote on electronic machines, and the answer usually comes the same night.

Where it stands. In the first round on 4 October, Senator Flávio Bolsonaro took 47.03 percent of the valid votes and President Lula took 45.16 percent, according to the final count of Brazil's Superior Electoral Court. Nobody passed 50 percent, so the top two meet again today.

The last polls, released yesterday, could hardly be closer. Datafolha and Quaest both put Flávio at 51 percent of valid votes and Lula at 49, a technical tie inside a two-point margin. AtlasIntel had 50.8 to 49.2, CNT/MDA 50.7 to 49.3, and BTG/Nexus 50.5 to 49.5, every one of them inside its margin of error.

AFP points out two facts worth holding side by side. No first-round loser in the history of Brazilian democracy has come back to win a runoff. And most polls did not see Flávio's first-round lead coming at all. Put together, they say one thing: tonight's count is the story, not yesterday's survey.

Why Israel is watching. Relations between Brazil and Israel run at the level of *chargé d'affaires*. Brazil recalled its ambassador from Israel in 2024, and Lula's government has not approved a new Israeli ambassador since. At the UN General Assembly on 22 September, Lula accused Israel's government of a "genocide of women and children" in Gaza. Flávio has pledged to move Brazil's embassy to Jerusalem within the first six months of his term and to visit Israel early on. Prime Minister Netanyahu called him on 8 October, after the first round, and the two exchanged invitations.

Brazil's Jewish community is watching too. Conib, its national umbrella body, counted 989 antisemitic incidents in 2025, up 149 percent from 397 in 2022.

And on Tuesday, Israel votes. Two democracies, two days apart, each full of voters who have been told by forecasts what they are about to do.

A word from this week's portion. This week we read Vayeira. Avraham sits at the door of his tent in the heat of the day, three days after his brit, and three strangers arrive with news that sounds impossible: Sarah, in her old age, will have a son. Sarah laughs to herself. The answer comes back in one line: "Is anything too wondrous for the L-rd?" (Bereishit 18:14).

That verse is not a prediction. It is a reminder of what a prediction is. A poll is a careful snapshot of what people said on Thursday and Friday. Today they do something different. They stand in line, they vote, and then the count speaks. The future was never the pollster's to own. It belongs to G-d, and He works through people who show up.

Whatever Brazil decides tonight, Israel will need wisdom: an open hand if a friend arrives, and steady patience if the chill goes on. And on Tuesday we go to our own ballot boxes, with the same humility.

All glory to the Ribono shel Olam · Errors are mine

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