



## QUÃO DIFERENTE É O SISTEMA POLÍTICO BRASILEIRO? UM ESTUDO COMPARATIVO

### HOW DIFFERENT IS THE BRAZILIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM? A COMPARATIVE STUDY

### ¿CUÁN DIFERENTE ES EL SISTEMA POLÍTICO BRASILEÑO? UN ESTUDIO COMPARATIVO

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**Resumo:** Este artigo apresenta uma comparação atualizada do sistema político brasileiro com o de 33 outros países. Mostramos que o Brasil é atípico no que diz respeito ao número de partidos efetivos, ao orçamento total do governo alocado ao poder legislativo e aos recursos públicos alocados aos partidos (para financiar campanhas e operações regulares dos partidos). O Brasil também é o único país de nossa amostra em que o judiciário organiza e supervisiona o processo eleitoral. Também encontramos uma correlação positiva entre o financiamento público total e o número total de partidos efetivos.

**Palavra-chave:** Partidos Políticos; Financiamento Público; Sistemas Políticos.

**Abstract:** This paper provides an up-to-date comparison of Brazil's political system with that of 33 other countries. We show that Brazil is an outlier with respect to the number of effective parties, the total government budget allocated to the legislative power, and the public funds allocated to parties (to fund campaigns and regular party operations). Brazil is also unique in its electoral management body: it is the only country in our sample in which the judiciary both organizes and oversees the electoral process. We also find a positive correlation between total public funding and the total number of effective parties.

**Keywords:** Political Parties; Public Funding; Political Systems.

**Resumen:** Este documento presenta una comparación actualizada del sistema político de Brasil con el de otros 33 países. Mostramos que Brasil es un caso atípico con respecto al número de partidos efectivos, el presupuesto total asignado al poder legislativo y los fondos públicos asignados a los partidos (para financiar campañas y operaciones partidarias regulares). Brasil también es el único país de nuestra muestra en el que el poder judicial organiza y supervisa el proceso electoral. También encontramos una correlación positiva entre la financiación pública total y el número total de partidos efectivos.

**Palabras clave:** Partidos políticos; Financiamiento público; Sistemas políticos.

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## 1 Introduction

The Brazilian political system possesses some extreme features, such as the number of political parties, the amount of resources allocated by the government to these parties, and the cost of political campaigns. As stated by Mainwaring (1991), “Brazil’s electoral legislation have either no parallel or few parallels in the world.” Focusing primarily on the 1979-96 period, Mainwaring (1999) presents a comprehensive analysis of the Brazilian political system at that time, emphasizing the weakness of parties.

Newer data indicates that some of these features might have become more extreme. Zucco and Power (2021) document how the Brazilian parliamentary fragmentation, which was already considered extreme in the mid-1980’s, has “skyrocketed” since then. The authors argue that this rise is driven by strategic considerations of politicians, in particular, it is “far more enticing for most politicians to be a high-ranking member of a small party than a low-ranking member of a large one, and these incentives have intensified during the period under consideration”. An important part of this benefit is the control of the increasing public funds for campaigns and to finance party operations.

Years ago, Mainwaring (1999) and Samuels (2001a,b,c) called attention to the expensive electoral campaigns in Brazil, especially if we take into account this cost relative to the Brazilian per capita income. Avelino and Fisch (2020) show that this cost (at least for Lower Chamber campaigns) has risen significantly in the period 2002-2014. The authors speculate about two complementary explanations: the rise of the Labor Party (PT) as a viable competitor in executive elections, and the concurrent increase in party fragmentation.

The extreme party fragmentation in Brazil might also affect governability and cooperation between the executive and legislative branches of the government. It can influence a party’s ability to impose voting discipline upon its members, pork barrel distribution, and other policy decisions. It is up for debate if and how the Brazilian party fragmentation affects policymaking – e.g., see Mainwaring (1997) and Figueiredo and Lomongi (2000) for discussion and related papers.

In this paper, we contribute to this literature by presenting recent data comparing Brazil to a group of 33 other countries.<sup>4</sup> Our main focus is to provide new light into the relationship between party fragmentation and some important policy outcomes; in particular, the total government budget allocated to the legislative power and the public funds allocated to parties (to fund campaigns and regular party operation).

Compared to our sample, some of the most extreme features of Brazil are the following.

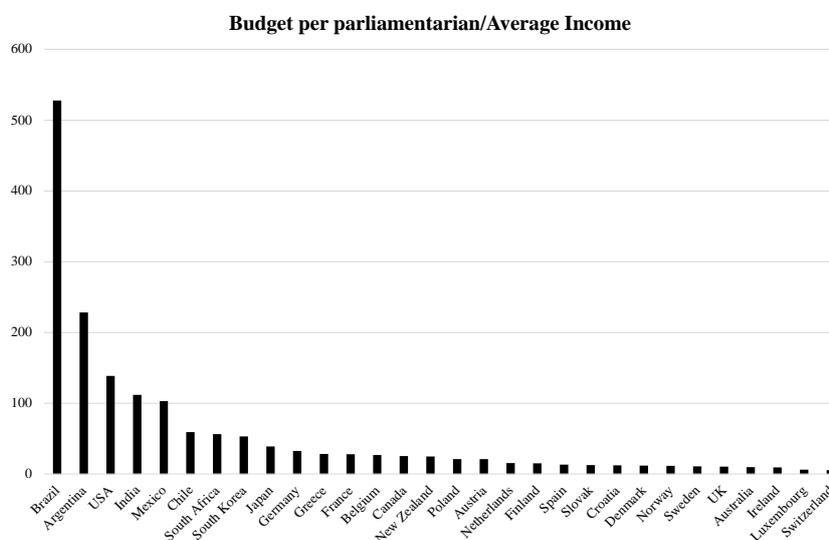
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<sup>4</sup> Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and United States.

First, Brazil has by far the highest number of effective parties<sup>5</sup> at 15.63. Belgium is a distant second with 10.08, followed by Chile with 9.54. The average number of effective parties in our sample (excluding Brazil) is only 4.51.

Second, Brazil is also an outlier regarding the amount of money that the government allocates to the legislative power. For each country in our sample, we compute the total budget allocated to the (federal) legislative power and divide it by the number of parliamentarians, to obtain the budget per parliamentarian (BPP). We then divide the BPP by the average income of each country. This ratio represents the relative resources allocated to the legislative. The result is presented in Figure 1. Brazil has the highest ratio at 528. This means that the overall legislative budget per parliamentarian (US\$ 5,013,706) is 528 times higher than the average income in Brazil (US\$ 9,500). Argentina is a distant second, with a ratio that is less than half of Brazil's ratio. The average ratio in our sample (excluding Brazil) is only 40.

**Figure 1 – Budget per parliamentarian to average income ratio.**



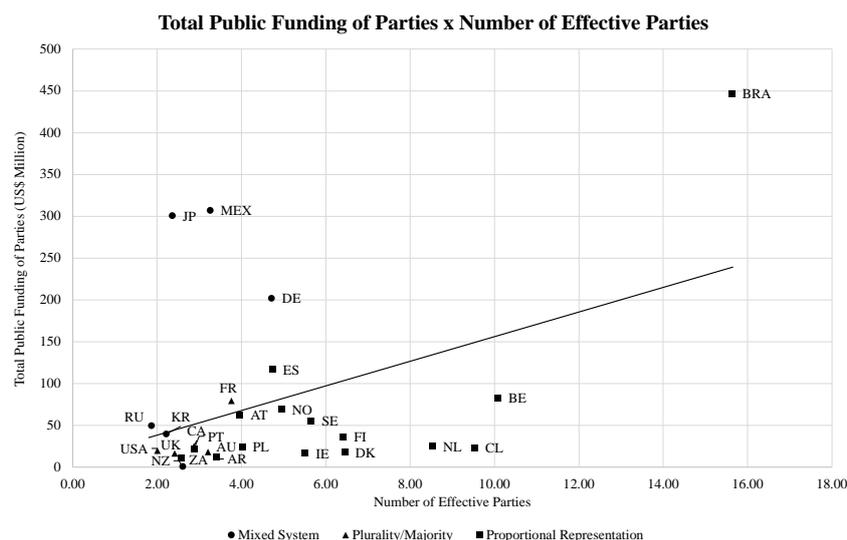
Sources: IPU Parline, IFS, St. Louis Fed and World Bank, multiple years – see Table 13 for details.

Third, Brazil is an outlier in terms of the total public funding of parties (the average annual monetary transfers from the government to the parties, both to fund campaigns and to fund their operation).<sup>6</sup> Together political parties in Brazil receive, on average, US\$ 446 million per year. Mexico comes second with US\$ 307 million. Excluding Brazil, the average in our sample is only US\$ 65.40 million. On Figure 2 we present a simple regression of this total public funding on the effective number of parties.

<sup>5</sup> As defined by Laakso and Taagepera (1979). Data refers to the number of parties as of May/12/2021.

<sup>6</sup> For theoretical models of public funding of parties, see for example Ortuño-Ortín and Schultz (2005), Portugal et al. (2007) and Troumpounis (2012).

**Figure 2** – Total Public Funding of Parties versus Number of Effective Parties.



Sources: Parliament website, EMB website, IFS and St. Louis Fed, multiple years – see Table 15 for details.

In addition to these three main points, Brazil is also unique in its electoral management body: it is the only country in our sample in which the judiciary both organizes and oversees the electoral process. Because of the peculiar centralization of the Brazilian electoral management body, we can contrast the annual budget of the Brazilian Superior Electoral Court (TSE) to other government units. We show that average annual budget of the TSE (US\$ 2.2 billion) is larger than the annual budget of the Chamber of Deputies (US\$ 1.9 billion), Senate (US\$ 1.4 billion), and Ministry of Environment (US\$ 1.3 billion). It is almost two-thirds of the budget of the whole Federal Justice (US\$ 3.5 billion). While we were not able to obtain reliable data on the cost of the electoral management body of the other countries in our sample, the contrast of the cost of the TSE and other government units leads us to conjecture that the cost of the Brazilian electoral management body is relatively high. Future research should investigate whether party fragmentation might have a causal effect on the high cost of the legislative power and the apparent high cost of the electoral management body.

We also present a series of other comparisons: political system, legislative structure, and electoral system for the national legislative. In most of these dimensions, Brazil does not come out as outlier. For example, Brazil and 15 other countries in our sample use an open List Proportional Representation. However, as noted by Mainwaring (1999), the details of how the Brazilian system operates makes it unique and leads to a weak party system. Finally, only Brazil and four other countries in our sample enforce the obligation to vote.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the political system (for example, parliamentary, presidential or presidential-parliamentary) and legislative structure (bicameral, unicameral and the number of parliamentarians) for each country in our sample.

Section 3 discuss the different electoral systems: proportional representation, plurality/majority and mixed. As observed above, vote is obligatory in Brazil. Therefore, in Section 4 we examine the rules for compulsory voting and the turnout in the countries in our sample. Section 5 defines the number of effective parties following Laakso and Taagepera (1979) and present this number for the countries in our sample. Political Finance is the subject of Section 6, which includes a discussion of parliament's budget and public funding of parties and electoral campaigns. Section 7 presents different classifications of electoral management bodies. Section 8 concludes with a summary of our findings and an invitation for further research to explain why Brazil is an outlier in so many dimensions. Appendix 1 contains more details about our dataset.

## **2 Political System and Legislative Structure**

In this section, we classify the political system and the legislative structure of the 34 countries in our sample, following the classification used by International Parliamentary Union (IPU). These are: communist system, monarchy, parliamentary system, presidential system, presidential-parliamentary, and transitional system. In our sample, we find three types.

First, in presidential systems, the head of the government leads the executive branch, which is separate from the legislative branch. Second, in parliamentary systems, the executive derives its democratic legitimacy from its ability to command the confidence of the legislature, typically a parliament, and is also held accountable to that parliament. Finally, in presidential-parliamentary systems, the prime minister and cabinet are accountable both to the president and to the parliament. The president chooses the prime minister and the cabinet but the parliament must support this choice.

We also divide the countries into two legislative structures. Countries with bicameral parliament have two assemblies (lower chamber and upper chamber), while countries with a unicameral parliament only have one chamber (or house).

The classification is presented in Table 1. In our sample, 23 (68%) of the countries have two chambers and 11 (32%) have a unique chamber. Among the 11 countries with a unicameral parliament, 10 have a parliamentary system and only 1 has a presidential system. The classification of the political system among the countries with a bicameral parliament is more diversified: 14 countries have a parliamentary system, 5 have a presidential system, and 4 have a presidential-parliamentary system. In particular, in Brazil, the legislative power is exercised by the bicameral National Congress (Chamber of Deputies and Federal Senate) and the executive power is exercised by the president. The president is head of state and government, is directly elected to a four-year term, and is eligible for one consecutive reelection.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> In Brazil, the president can hold office for more than two terms if they are not consecutive.

**Table 1** – Political System and Structure of Parliament

	<b>Parliamentary</b>	<b>Presidential</b>	<b>Presidential-Parliamentary</b>
	Australia	Argentina	Austria
	Belgium	<b>Brazil</b>	France
	Canada	Chile	Poland
	Germany	Mexico	Russia
	India	United States	
	Ireland		
	Italy		
<b>Bicameral</b>	Japan		
	Netherlands		
	Slovenia		
	South Africa		
	Spain		
	Switzerland		
	United Kingdom		
	Croatia	South Korea	
	Denmark		
	Finland		
	Greece		
	Luxembourg		
<b>Unicameral</b>	New Zealand		
	Norway		
	Portugal		
	Slovakia		
	Sweden		

Source: IPU Parline data, 2021.

**Table 2** – Number of Legislative Seats and Inhabitants per parliamentarian (IPP)

Country	Europe		Country	Other Countries	
	Number of Seats	IPP		Number of Seats	IPP
Russia	620	232,077	India	790	1,657,030
Germany	667	122,501	United States	535	597,998
Spain	615	75,444	<b>Brazil</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>357,244</b>
Netherlands	225	75,280	Mexico	628	200,463
France	925	69,683	Japan	713	179,488
Poland	560	68,330	South Korea	300	168,647
Italy	951	62,570	Argentina	329	131,970
Belgium	210	53,752	South Africa	490	112,839
United Kingdom	1450	49,912	Australia	227	104,846
Portugal	230	45,296	Chile	205	86,649
Greece	300	37,393	Canada	443	81,151
Slovakia	150	36,260	New Zealand	120	38,458
Austria	244	35,570			
Switzerland	246	33,821			
Denmark	179	31,782			
Norway	169	30,769			
Croatia	151	28,053			
Sweden	349	27,977			
Finland	200	27,410			
Ireland	220	21,364			
Slovenia	130	15,962			
Luxembourg	60	9,450			

Source: IPU Parline data, 2021.

Note: The number of legislative seats combines lower and upper chambers. The IPP divides the population by the number of legislative seats.

Table 2 presents the number of parliamentarians in each country.<sup>8</sup> In order to facilitate the analysis and allow a better comparison, we divided the countries into two groups: European countries and other countries. Using data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union, we are able to obtain the statutory number of members per country, that is, the total number of parliamentarians. Note that this measure combines the number in both chambers in bicameral parliaments. For example, in Brazil, the number of seats in the Chamber of Deputies is 513 and in the Senate is 81, which results in a total of 594 seats.

Additionally, we include a variable named Inhabitants Per Parliamentarian (IPP), which is the ratio of the population by the statutory number of parliamentarians (number of seats). Table 2 compares the IPP across countries and shows that smaller countries such as New Zealand and Luxembourg tend to have relatively larger parliaments. According to Larcinese (2010), this happens to ensure sufficient representation in parliament. If you reduce the size of the parliament you take the risk of reducing its representativeness. With 357,244 inhabitants per parliamentarian, Brazil has one of the smallest parliaments relative to the size of its population. In our sample, only India and the United States have relatively smaller parliaments.

### 3 Electoral System for National Legislative

Electoral systems differ in their electoral formula (which defines how to allocate seats among parties and candidates), their ballot structure (i.e., whether the voter votes for a candidate or a party and whether the voter makes a single choice or expresses a series of preferences), and their district magnitude (how many representatives to the legislature each district elects). According to International IDEA definitions for electoral systems, the countries in our sample can be divided into three main families with subdivisions as follows:

- 1) Proportional Representation (PR), subdivided into List PR (open or closed) and Single Transferable Vote;
- 2) Plurality/Majority, subdivided into First Past the Post, Alternative Vote, and Two-Round System;
- 3) Mixed, subdivided into Mixed Member Proportional and Parallel System.

Under **Proportional Representation**, the distribution of seats corresponds closely to the proportion of the total votes cast for each party. In **List PR**, each party (or each coalition) presents a list of candidates for a multi-member electoral district. The voters vote for a party, and parties receive seats in proportion to their overall share of the vote. There are two forms of List PR: open and closed. In **Closed List PR**, the parties predefine an ordered list of candidates and the candidates are elected according to their positions on those lists. For example, if a party receives two seats, the first two names in the presented list are elected. In **Open List PR**, voters

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<sup>8</sup> Throughout the paper, we use the term **parliamentarian** to refer to a member of the federal legislative power, including both the upper and lower chambers. This follows the terminology adopted by IPU.

can influence (or even define) the order of the list by directly voting on candidates. **Single Transferable Vote** uses multi-member districts, with voters ranking candidates in order of preference on the ballot. A formula defines a quota for the election of a single candidate. Any candidate who has more first preference votes than the quota is immediately elected. If any seat is unfilled, the candidate with the lowest number of first preferences is eliminated and the corresponding votes are redistributed according to the second preferences on the ballot. At the same time, the surplus votes of elected candidates are redistributed according to the second preferences on the ballot. This process continues until sufficient candidates are declared elected.<sup>9</sup>

In **Plurality/Majority**, the winners are those candidates or parties with the most votes. In general, this system uses single-member districts<sup>10</sup> and the voters vote for candidates rather than political parties. In **First Past The Post**, the winning candidate is the one with the highest number of votes, even if this is not an absolute majority of valid votes. In **Alternative Vote**, voters use numbers to mark their preferences on the ballot. A candidate who receives an absolute majority (more than half) of valid first preference votes is declared elected. If no candidate achieves an absolute majority of first preferences, the least successful candidates are eliminated and their votes reallocated according to their second preferences until one candidate has an absolute majority. Finally, the **Two-Round System** requires a second election if no candidate or party achieves a given level of votes (most commonly an absolute majority) in the first election round.

**Mixed** electoral systems combine elements of Plurality/Majority and Proportional Representation. A proportion of the parliament seats is defined with a Plurality/Majority method, while the other part is defined using a PR method. Mixed systems come in two varieties. **Mixed Member Proportional** (MMP), in general, combines elements of First Past the Post and List PR. Under MMP, the Proportional Representation seats are awarded to compensate for any disproportionality produced by the district seat results (from the plurality/majority system). For example, if one party wins 20% of the national votes but no district seats, then they would be awarded enough seats from the PR lists to bring their representation up to approximately 20% of the parliament. **Parallel Systems** are similar to MMP, but the PR component does not compensate for any disproportionality within the plurality/majority districts.

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<sup>9</sup> Definition based on ACE Electoral Knowledge Network.

<sup>10</sup> Single-member electoral districts have a single representative in the corresponding legislative body.

**Table 3** – Lower Chamber: Electoral System

	<b>List</b>	<b>PR</b>	<b>Single Transferable Vote</b>
	Argentina*	Netherlands	Ireland
	Austria	Norway	
	Belgium	Poland	
	<b>Brazil</b>	Portugal*	
<b>Proportional</b>	Chile	Slovakia	
<b>Representation</b>	Croatia	Slovenia	
	Denmark	South Africa*	
	Finland	Spain*	
	Greece	Sweden	
-	Luxembourg	Switzerland	-
	<b>First Past the Post</b>	<b>Alternative Vote</b>	<b>Two-Round System</b>
	Canada	Australia	France
<b>Plurality/Majority</b>	India		
	United Kingdom		
	United States		
	<b>Mixed Member Proportional</b>	<b>Parallel System</b>	
	Germany	Italy	
<b>Mixed System</b>	Mexico	Japan	
	New Zealand	Russia	
	South Korea		

Source: International IDEA and IPU Parline data, 2021.

Note: \*Closed list proportional representation

Table 3 shows the distribution of countries according to their electoral systems for lower chamber elections. Out of 34 countries in our sample, 20 adopt the List PR. Most of those use Open List PR - only four of them adopt Closed List PR. Six countries use Plurality/Majority systems for the lower chamber elections, while seven adopt a mixed system.

Brazil's Lower Chamber is elected via Open List PR in multi-seat constituencies to serve 4-year terms. During our sample period until the 2018 election, before the campaign

starts, political parties could choose to run alone in the elections or form coalitions. In the case of forming coalitions, all votes directed to parties that are members of the coalitions would be considered as votes for the coalition. A constitutional amendment (Emenda Constitucional n° 97 approved in 2017) prohibited coalitions starting with the 2020 elections, but a recent constitutional amendment proposal (PEC 125/11) aims to reinstate them. Voters cast their vote for either a political party or an individual candidate. Votes given to candidates from each party are pooled and added to the votes received by that party to give a total party vote (or coalition vote), which will be used to determine the number of seats won by each party (or coalition). The candidates with the most votes on each party list (or coalition list) win the seats allocated to that party (or coalition). The Chamber of Deputies is composed of 513 seats, and it has a minimum of 8 representatives per state and the Federal District and a maximum of 70 representatives per state, distributed according to the population of each state.

**Table 4** – Upper Chamber: Electoral System

	<b>List PR</b>	<b>Single Transferable Vote</b>
<b>Proportional Representation</b>	Argentina*	Australia
	Chile	
<b>First Past the Post</b>		
	<b>Brazil</b>	
<b>Plurality/Majority</b>	Poland	
	United States	
	<b>Mixed Member Proportional</b>	<b>Parallel System</b>
	Mexico	Italy
<b>Mixed System</b>		Japan
		Spain

Source: International IDEA and IPU Parline data, 2021.

Note: \*Closed list proportional representation

Table 4 classifies the electoral system for the upper chamber of ten countries. This number is reduced because the other countries in our sample either do not have upper chambers, or their members are not elected by popular vote. Out of these 10 countries, three use PR (two countries use List PR and one uses Single Transferable Vote), three adopt First Past the Post, and four use the Mixed system (three countries use Parallel System and one uses MMP) for the upper chamber elections.

Senators (the members of the upper chamber) in Brazil are elected through a First Past the Post system. The 26 states and the federal district elect three senators each, to serve 8-year terms. Upper chamber elections occur each four years, alternating one-seat and two-seat elections. In the latter, according to the Superior Electoral Court<sup>11</sup>, each voter can vote for two senators. These two votes have equal weight, the voting order does not matter in the final result, and it is not possible to vote twice for the same candidate (if the second vote is repeated, it will be automatically canceled). Both members of upper chamber (Senate) and lower chamber (Chamber of Deputies) can be reelected indefinitely.

#### **4 Compulsory Voting and Turnout**

In this section, we use data from International IDEA to identify which countries practice compulsory voting (eligible citizens must register and vote in elections) and their respective voter turnout.

Table 5 allows us to compare this data across countries. We calculate voter turnout as follows. First, for each election, we obtain the voter turnout by dividing the total number of votes cast (valid or invalid) by the number of names on the voters' register. Then, we average the voter turnout of the last four elections available in the database. We restrict our calculation to parliamentary elections only, as some countries do not have presidential elections.

Table 6 indicates which countries in our sample have compulsory voting laws. The second column presents the type of sanctions that each country imposes against non-voters. The type 1 sanction is a fine while the type 2 sanction imposes certain barriers for non-voters, such as barriers to get a job within the public sector or barriers to obtain some services and goods from some public offices. The third column indicates whether the compulsory voting laws are enforced in practice, according to International IDEA. The fourth and fifth columns list the amount of the fine, in local currency and in US dollars.

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<sup>11</sup> [www12.senado.leg.br/noticias/eleitor-votara-em-dois-candidatos-ao-senado-e-voto-repetido-sera-anulado](http://www12.senado.leg.br/noticias/eleitor-votara-em-dois-candidatos-ao-senado-e-voto-repetido-sera-anulado).

**Table 5** – Parliamentary Election Turnout and Compulsory Voting

Country	Europe		Country	Other Countries	
	Voter Turnout	Compulsory Voting		Voter Turnout	Compulsory Voting
Luxembourg	90.86%	Yes	Australia	92.34%	Yes
Belgium	89.51%	Yes	<b>Brazil</b>	<b>81.39%</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Denmark	86.21%	No	Argentina	78.98%	Yes
Sweden	84.90%	No	New Zealand	78.29%	No
Italy	78.07%	No	South Africa	73.39%	No
Netherlands	78.06%	No	Chile	67.81%	No
Norway	77.57%	No	Canada	64.14%	No
Austria	77.33%	No	India	62.51%	No
Germany	74.03%	No	Japan	62.18%	No
Spain	70.94%	No	United States	57.31%	No
United Kingdom	67.19%	No	South Korea	56.13%	No
Finland	66.99%	No	Mexico	54.50%	Yes*
Ireland	66.20%	No			
Greece	63.78%	Yes*			
Slovakia	60.90%	No			
Slovenia	58.27%	No			
Russia	56.84%	No			
France	56.56%	No			
Portugal	55.53%	No			
Poland	53.87%	No			
Croatia	53.62%	No			
Switzerland	47.85%	No			

Source: International IDEA data, data collected in 2021.

Note: \*Country with compulsory voting laws that are not enforced.

**Table 6** – Compulsory Voting

Country	Type of Sanction	Enforced	Amount of Fine	Amount of Fine (USD)
Argentina	1,2	Yes	AR \$50	\$0.709
Australia	1	Yes	AU \$20	\$13.76
Belgium	1,2	Yes	EUR \$10	\$11.42
<b>Brazil</b>	<b>1,2</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>R\$ 3.51</b>	<b>\$0.681</b>
Greece	None	No	-	-
Luxembourg	1	Yes	EUR \$100	\$114.2
Mexico	None	No	-	-

Source: International IDEA data and International Financial Statistics (IFS), data collected in 2021.

Note: We used the variable National Currency per U.S dollar (period average) from IFS to convert the values to Year 2020 US Dollars.

Table 5 shows that countries with compulsory voting have a higher voter turnout in parliamentary elections. Luxembourg and Belgium have the highest voter turnout in the “Europe” group, while Australia, Brazil and Argentina have the highest voter turnout in the “Other Countries” group. Note that the reason why the voter turnout in Greece and Mexico are low is because the compulsory voting laws are not enforced in practice, as presented in Table 6.

Brazil is part of a small group of countries that practices compulsory voting. Compulsory voting was introduced in Brazil in 1932, and was reiterated by Brazil's current Federal Constitution, enacted in 1988.<sup>12</sup> Electors who do not vote have to justify their abstention. If they do not, they will be forced to pay a fine. If they do not pay the fine, sanctions are imposed on non-voters, such as restrictions to obtain a passport or identity card, restrictions to apply for any public position or function, and restrictions on the types of loan they can obtain from federal or local government sources, or from any credit institution administered totally or partially by the government.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The 1988 Constitution's provisions on political rights are in Articles 14 to 16.

<sup>13</sup> Currently, voting is voluntary for the illiterate, those over 16 and under 18 years of age, and those over 70 years of age.

## 5 Political Parties

In this section, we compare the number of political parties across countries. For this, we built Table 7 using two measures: total parties and effective parties. The first measure is the total number of political parties with at least one seat in parliament. This data was obtained in each country's Parliament website. The second measure is a concept introduced by Laakso and Taagepera (1979). According to the authors, the number of effective parties is defined as:

$$N = \frac{1}{\sum_{i=1}^n p_i^2},$$

where  $p_i$  is the fractional share of seats of the  $i$ -th party and  $n$  is the number of parties with at least one seat. If all shares are equal,  $N$  equals the actual number of parties. In contrast, if one party has super majority, then  $N$  is closer to one. Data regarding the number of seats in the lower chamber of each political party was obtained from each country's Electoral Management body website.

Table 7 shows that Brazil has one of the largest number of total parties. In our sample, only India has a larger number. However, India has only about 3 effective parties, while Brazil has more than 15. After India, with 24 parties, Brazil has 1 more party than Spain and 3 more than Croatia, the third and the fourth countries with the largest number of political parties, respectively. In relation to the number of effective parties, Brazil is the country with the highest number (15.63), followed by Belgium (10.08) and Chile (9.54).

The number of parties may have important implications for the political system. Colomer (2012) finds that there is a strong negative correlation between the number of parties in government and the degree of policy change. The greater the number of parties, the smaller the changes. Moreover, as we will discuss in the next section, another possible consequence of a large number of political parties is the high transfer of public money to political parties and elections.

**Table 7 – Number of Political Parties**

Country	Europe		Country	Other Countries	
	Total Parties	Effective Parties		Total Parties	Effective Parties
Spain	23	4.74	India	36	3.09
Croatia	21	4.45	<b>Brazil</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>15.63</b>
Poland	18	4.02	Argentina	19	3.42
Netherlands	17	8.54	Chile	16	9.54
Denmark	15	6.45	South Africa	14	2.57
Italy	15	6.29	Mexico	9	3.26
Belgium	12	10.08	Australia	7	3.21
Switzerland	11	5.71	South Korea	7	2.22
United Kingdom	11	2.42	Japan	6	2.36
Slovenia	10	6.62	Canada	5	2.88
Finland	10	6.42	New Zealand	5	2.61
Portugal	10	2.87	United States	2	2.01
Ireland	9	5.51			
Norway	9	4.95			
France	9	3.76			
Sweden	8	5.66			
Luxembourg	7	4.56			
Slovakia	6	5.48			
Germany	6	4.72			
Greece	6	2.71			
Austria	5	3.97			
Russia	4	1.87			

Source: Each country's Parliament website as of May/12/2021.

Note: For its computation, the number of Effective Parties consider the fractional share of seats of political parties only in the lower chamber.

## **6 Political Finance**

According to Falguera, Jones, and Ohman (2015) political finance refers to all money in the political process. The open and transparent funding of parties and candidates is extremely important in the fight against corruption and to guarantee public trust. Moreover, transparency protects against the infiltration of illicit money into politics and encourages parties and candidates to adhere to the rules. This section focuses on two forms of political finance: parliament's budget (Section 6.1) and public funding of political parties and electoral campaigns (Section 6.2).

### **6.1 Parliament's Budget**

In this section, we compare the total annual legislative cost across countries. For example, in Brazil this means the annual cost of the Chamber of Deputies and Senate. The results are presented in Table 8.

We calculate the budget in the first column as follows. First, for each country, we obtained the variable "Parliament's budget, per year" from IPU's Open Data Platform. Second, we converted this annual value (provided in national currency) to US dollars using the variable National Currency per US Dollar (period average) from International Financial Statistics (IFS). Third, we deflated the values to 2020 US dollars using the annual US Implicit Price Deflator (from Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis). Finally, for each country, we averaged the values of parliament's budget for the years we have available. IPU's Open Data Platform does not provide the parliament's budget data for all countries in all years. For example, Brazil has data from 2015 to 2019, and, as a result, we average the values of parliament's budget for these years. Argentina, however, only has data for 2013, which means that the parliament's budget showed by Table 8 is the parliament's budget for the year 2013 in 2020 US dollars. Table 13 in Appendix 1 presents the years we have available in our sample for each country.

To obtain the second column, we compute the ratio of parliament's budget to GDP for each year in the database and then average those ratios for each country. We used the variable GDP (Current US\$) from World Bank database to compute this ratio. The United States is the country with the highest budget in absolute terms, at \$4.7 billion, while Brazil has the second largest budget, at \$3 billion. Only Japan, Argentina, France and Germany have budgets around \$1 billion, which is a third of Brazil's budget. All other countries have budgets below \$0.71 billion. In relative terms, Argentina has the highest Budget to GDP ratio, at 0.18%, while Brazil's ratio is close, at 0.15 %. All other countries have ratios below 0.8 %.

**Table 8** – Parliament’s Budget

Country	Europe		Other Countries		
	Budget*	Budget/ GDP	Country	Budget*	Budget /GDP
France	1.08	0.04%	United States	4.73	0.02%
Germany	1.02	0.03%	<b>Brazil</b>	<b>2.98</b>	<b>0.15%</b>
United Kingdom	0.69	0.02%	Japan	1.12	0.02%
Belgium	0.27	0.05%	Argentina	1.10	0.18%
Austria	0.26	0.06%	Mexico	0.71	0.05%
Spain	0.25	0.02%	Canada	0.55	0.03%
Sweden	0.23	0.04%	South Korea	0.51	0.03%
Norway	0.23	0.04%	Chile	0.19	0.07%
Netherlands	0.21	0.02%	South Africa	0.18	0.05%
Poland	0.19	0.03%	India	0.17	0.01%
Greece	0.18	0.08%	Australia	0.14	0.01%
Finland	0.16	0.06%	New Zealand	0.13	0.06%
Ireland	0.15	0.04%			
Denmark	0.13	0.04%			
Switzerland	0.12	0.02%			
Luxembourg	0.04	0.07%			
Slovakia	0.04	0.04%			
Croatia	0.03	0.05%			

Source: IPU Parline, International Financial Statistics (IFS), Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis and World Bank – multiple years, see Table 13 for details.

Note: \*In billions of 2020 US dollars.

**Table 9** – Budget per parliamentarian (BPP)

Country	Europe		Other Countries		
	BPP*	BPP/Average Income	Country	BPP*	BPP/Average Income
Germany	1.53	33	<b>Brazil</b>	<b>5.01</b>	<b>528</b>
Greece	0.61	28	Argentina	3.34	228
France	1.17	28	United States	8.84	139
Belgium	1.30	27	India	0.22	112
Poland	0.34	21	Mexico	1.14	103
Austria	1.06	21	Chile	0.91	59
Netherlands	0.92	16	South Africa	0.37	56
Finland	0.80	15	South Korea	1.69	53
Spain	0.40	13	Japan	1.57	39
Slovakia	0.26	13	Canada	1.25	26
Croatia	0.19	12	New Zealand	1.08	25
Denmark	0.73	12	Australia	0.64	10
Norway	1.36	12			
Sweden	0.67	11			
United Kingdom	0.48	11			
Ireland	0.70	9			
Luxembourg	0.74	6			
Switzerland	0.49	6			

Source: IPU Parline, International Financial Statistics (IFS), Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis and World Bank – multiple years, see Table 13 for details.

Note: \*In millions of 2020 US dollars.

Table 9 contains relations between the parliament's budget, total number of parliamentarians (considering both chambers), and average income. The first column shows the budget per parliamentarian (BPP) calculated dividing the parliament's budget by the number of parliamentarians. The second column shows the BPP divided by average income. We calculated the average income for each year by dividing the deflated GDP in 2020 US dollars by the Population of that year and then averaging the average income for the years in our sample. Data on the size of the population were obtained from the World Bank database. We can see that

Brazil has the highest BPP-to-Average Income ratio at 528, that is, the budget per parliamentary in Brazil is 528 times the average income in Brazil. Argentina has the second highest ratio, at 228, less than half of Brazil's. United States has the third highest, at 139. After that, only India and Mexico have ratios above 100. All other countries have ratios below 59.

## 6.2 Public Funding of Parties and Electoral Campaigns

We investigate two types of direct public funding to political parties and candidates: regularly provided funding and funding to campaigns. We were able to obtain data for 26 out of the 34 countries in our sample. Our data was mainly collected from each country's electoral management body website. For example, data on public funding of political parties in Brazil is from the Superior Electoral Court website. We also obtained some information in news and reports from recognized organizations. For instance, data on public funding of political parties in Russia in 2012 was reported by the Council of Europe, and data of government subsidies to political parties in Japan in 2020 was announced by Japan Press Weekly. Table 14 in Appendix 1 shows all sources we used for each country in our sample.

We used the same strategy and sources described in Section 6.1 above to deflate the values to 2020 US dollars. In relation to regularly provided funding, after deflating all the values to 2020 US dollars, we average the values for the years we have available in our sample for each country. The values of funding to campaigns are not provided annually (only provided in an election year). To take electoral cycles into account, we calculate annual values as follows. For countries with a regular electoral cycle, we divide the funding value by the electoral cycle. For example, in Brazil, federal and local election happens every four years, so we divide the funding value by four. For countries with irregular electoral cycles, we sum the funding value of all elections and then divide by the total period. For example, we have data for Canada's general elections that happened in 2006, 2008, 2011, and 2015. The election previous to 2006 occurred in 2004; hence we considered the 11-year period from 2005 to 2015. We summed the deflated value of campaign funding in the years in our data and divided it by 11.

We could not collect data regarding public funding to political parties and candidates for all countries in all years. Thus, as before, our average years are different for each country. For example, Brazil has data of regularly provided funding from 2015 to 2019 and funding to campaigns in 2018 and 2020. Mexico has data of regularly provided funding from 2015 to 2020 and funding to campaigns in 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2018. Moreover, some countries only have one type of direct public funding to political parties and candidates. Sweden, for instance, only has regularly provided funding, while New Zealand only provides funding for campaigns. Table 15 in Appendix 1 summarizes the years in our sample for each country and each type of direct public funding.

In Table 10, the column Total Public Funding displays the sum of regularly provided

funding and funding to campaigns in millions of 2020 US dollars. Note that, with approximately \$446 million per year on average, Brazil spends the highest level of public money for political parties and elections, well above all other countries in our sample. Mexico is the country with the second-highest total public funding with approximately \$307 million, which is \$139 million less than Brazil. Only three more countries in our sample spend more than \$100 million.

**Table 10** – Public Funding of Political Parties and Candidates

<b>Country</b>	<b>Europe Total Public Funding*</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Other Countries Total Public Funding*</b>
Germany	201.89	<b>Brazil</b>	<b>446.44</b>
Spain	116.70	Mexico	307.08
Belgium	82.80	Japan	300.61
France	79.33	South Korea	39.66
Norway	68.92	Canada	25.34
Austria	62.21	Chile	23.27
Sweden	55.75	United States	19.80
Russia	49.73	Australia	18.29
Finland	36.13	Argentina	12.52
Netherlands	25.14	South Africa	11.27
Poland	24.62	New Zealand	1.01
Portugal	21.74		
Denmark	17.99		
Ireland	16.78		
United Kingdom	16.59		

Source: Based on each country's Electoral Management body website, News and Reports, International Financial Statistics (IFS) and Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis – multiple years, see Table 15 for details. Note: \*In millions of 2020 US dollars.

Finally, Table 11 shows the total public funding as a proportion of GDP. As in Section 6.1, data of GDP is from World Bank. In order to facilitate the analysis and allow a better comparison, we used parts-per-million notation. One part per million (ppm) denotes one part per 1,000,000 parts, and a value of  $10^{-6}$ . For example, Mexico has the highest ratio of total public funding per GDP, at 239 ppm. This means that for each one million dollars of GDP, approximately \$239 are spent in public funding of political parties and candidates every year, on average. Brazil is a close second, at 197 ppm. Belgium is the third, at 155 ppm.

**Table 11** – Public Funding of Political Parties and Candidates as a proportion of GDP

Europe		Other Countries	
Country	Total Public Funding/GDP (in parts per million)	Country	Total Public Funding/GDP (in parts per million)
Belgium	155	Mexico	239
Norway	145	<b>Brazil</b>	<b>197</b>
Finland	134	Chile	80
Austria	128	Japan	58
Sweden	100	South Africa	30
Portugal	89	South Korea	23
Spain	85	Argentina	22
Denmark	51	Canada	14
Germany	51	Australia	12
Ireland	49	New Zealand	5
Poland	43	United States	1
France	28		
Russia	28		
Netherlands	27		
United Kingdom	6		

Source: Based on each country's Electoral Management body website, News and Reports, International Financial Statistics (IFS), Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis and World Bank – multiple years, see Table 15 for details.

Note: We used parts-per-million notation. One part per million (ppm) denotes one part per 1,000,000 parts, and a value of  $10^{-6}$ .

## 7 Electoral Management Bodies

An electoral management body (EMB) is an organization or body that has the sole purpose of, and is legally responsible for, managing some or all of the elements that are essential for the conduct of elections and direct democracy instruments (CATT ET AL, 2014). There are three main models of electoral management: Independent, Governmental and Mixed models.

According to International IDEA definitions, the Independent model of electoral

management is used in countries where elections are organized and managed by an EMB that is institutionally independent and autonomous from the executive branch of government. The Governmental model is used where elections are organized and managed by the executive branch through a ministry (such as the Ministry of the Interior) and/or through local authorities. Finally, the Mixed model is a combination of both models mentioned above. Under this model, elections are organized by the governmental EMB, with some level of oversight provided by the independent EMB.

In this section, we use a similar approach to define the model of electoral management. The data is summarized in Table 12. First, we verify which power is responsible for implementing the election (rows of Table 12). We then identify the power responsible for the election oversight (columns of Table 12). For both the organization and oversight, we use three classifications: Executive, Judiciary and Other. If Executive or Judiciary are shown to be responsible for organization or oversight, this means that this power directly organizes or oversees the elections. Other means that an independent body organizes or oversees the elections. This body can be indirectly subordinated to one of the three powers (Legislative, Executive or Judiciary). For example, in Japan, the election is implemented by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, and the oversight is guaranteed by the Central Election Management Council, an extraordinary organ attached to the Executive. In Portugal, the election is implemented by Ministry of Internal Administration, and the National Electoral Commission (NEC) is responsible for oversight, which is an independent body of electoral administration of the state that is attached to the Legislative (*Assembleia da República*).

Table 12 shows that Brazil's electoral authority is the only one in our sample that is fully subordinated to the judiciary, that is, the judiciary is directly responsible for both organization and oversight of the elections. The Superior Electoral Court is the highest judicial body of the Brazilian Electoral Justice.

**Table 12** – Model of Electoral Management: Organization and Oversight

<b>Organization/Oversight</b>	<b>Executive</b>	<b>Judiciary</b>	<b>Other</b>	
	Belgium	Luxembourg	Argentina	France
	Denmark	Norway		Japan
	Finland	Sweden		Netherlands
<b>Executive</b>	Germany	Switzerland		Portugal
	Greece	United Kingdom		Slovakia

Ireland      United States      Spain  
 Italy

Judiciary	Brazil
	Australia
	Austria
	Canada
	Chile
	Croatia
	India
<b>Other</b>	Mexico
	New Zealand
	Poland
	Russia
	Slovenia
	South Africa
	South Korea

Source: own elaboration, based on data collected from IDEA in 2021.

### 7.1 Brazilian Superior Electoral Court

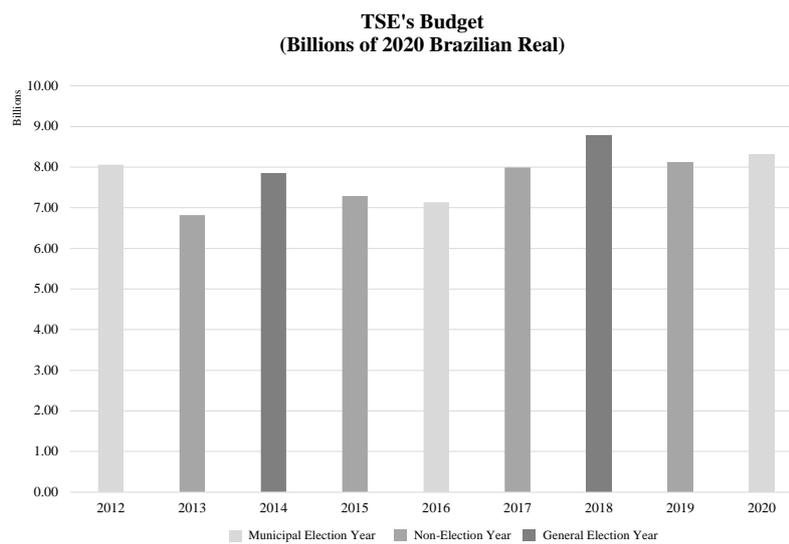
This section shows the annual budget of the Brazilian Superior Electoral Court (TSE), which is the Brazilian EMB. We obtained the TSE budget data from the Annual Budget Law (LOA) on the website of the Chamber of Deputies<sup>14</sup> and adjusted the data in three ways. First, we excluded from the TSE budget the values allocated to the regular party operation funding (*Fundo Partidário*). The values allocated to the campaign funding (*Fundo Especial de Financiamento de Campanha, FEFC*) are not part of the TSE budget. Consequently, our adjusted TSE budget does not include government funds transferred to parties. Second, we deflated the values to 2020 US dollars as we did in section 6. Third, we deflated the values to 2020 Brazilian Real using the annual Brazilian Implicit Price Deflator (from IBGE). In both

<sup>14</sup> <https://www2.camara.leg.br/orcamento-da-uniao/leis-orcamentarias/loa>.

ways, in order to facilitate the analysis, we converted the values to billions. The results are presented in Figure 3(a) and Figure 3(b).

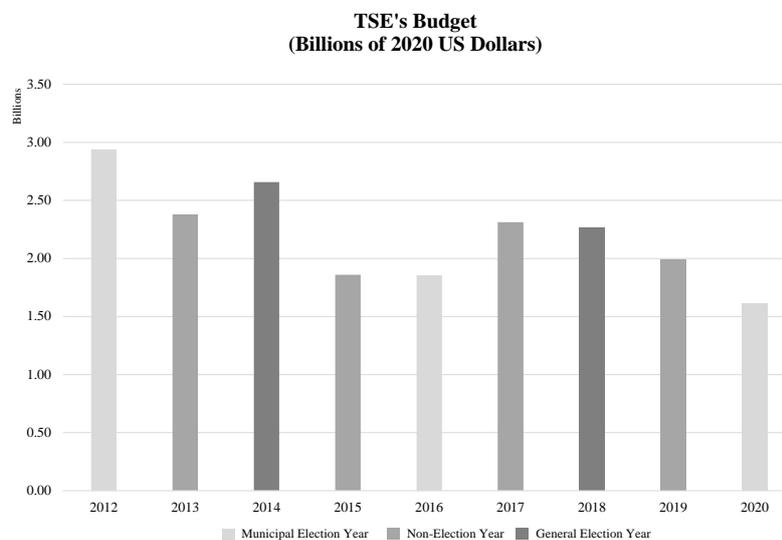
Figure 3(a) shows that the lowest annual budget in the period was R\$ 6.8 billion (in 2013), while the highest was R\$ 8.8 billion (in 2018). Over the years in our sample, the average budget was R\$ 7.8 billion. The average budget in election years (2012, 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2020) was R\$ 8.03 billion, while the average budget in non-election years (2013, 2015, 2017 and 2019) was R\$ 7.6 billion. Therefore, the budget difference between election years and non-election years is relatively small. Figure 3(b) converts the values to 2020 US Dollars.

**Figure 3(a)** – Budget of the Brazilian Superior Electoral Court (Brazilian Real).



Sources: Brazil's Chamber of Deputies website and IBGE, 2021.

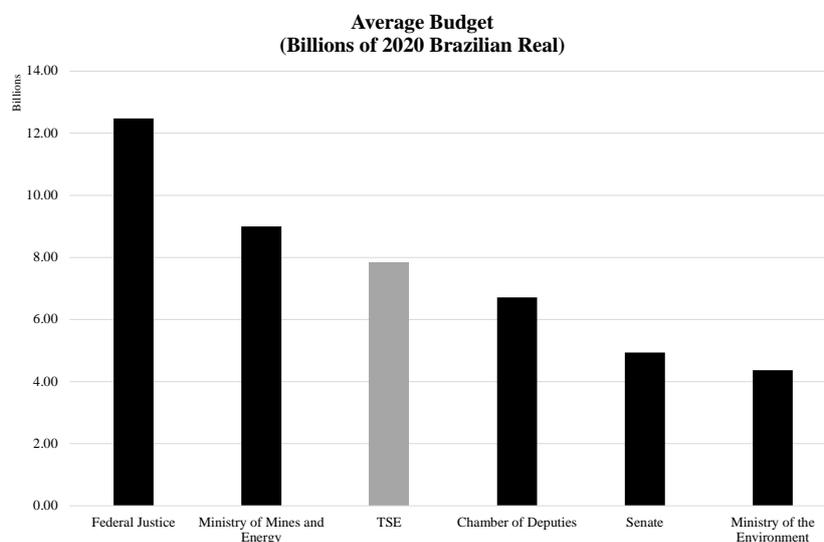
**Figure 3(b)** – Budget of the Brazilian Superior Electoral Court (US Dollars).



Sources: Brazil's Chamber of Deputies website, IFS, and St. Louis Fed, 2021.

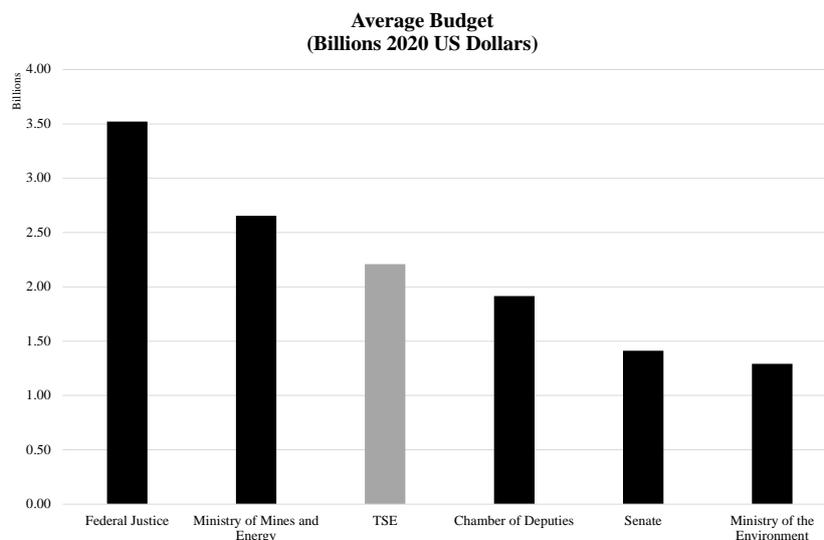
We then compare the budget of the TSE with the budget of other federal budgetary units: the Federal Justice, Ministry of Mines and Energy, Chamber of Deputies, Senate, and Ministry of the Environment. For each budgetary unit, we compute the average annual budget in the eight years of our sample (from 2012 to 2020). The comparison is summarized in Figure 4(a) and Figure 4(b).

**Figure 4(a)** – Average Budget of Selected Brazilian Budgetary Units (Brazilian Real).



Sources: Brazil’s Chamber of Deputies website and IBGE, 2021.

**Figure 4(b)** – Average Budget of Selected Brazilian Budgetary Units (US Dollars).



Sources: Brazil’s Chamber of Deputies website, IFS, and St. Louis Fed, data collected in 2021.

Figure 4(b) shows that the average annual budget of the TSE (US\$ 2.2 billion) is larger than the annual budget of the Chamber of Deputies (US\$ 1.9 billion), Senate (US\$ 1.4 billion), and Ministry of Environment (US\$ 1.3 billion). It is also similar to the budget of the Minister of

Mines and Energy (US\$ 2.7 billion), and it is almost two-thirds of the budget of the whole Federal Justice (US\$ 3.5 billion).

## 8 Conclusion

It is a well-known fact that Brazil is an outlier with respect to the effective number of parties. An important question that the literature has tried to answer is: what are the causes and consequences of this party fragmentation? This is a complex question to answer since party fragmentation can affect and be affected by the political system. Therefore, to shed light on this question, it is fundamental to contrast different dimensions of the political systems across countries. To this end, this paper provides an up-to-date comparison of Brazil's political system with that of 33 other countries.

We show that Brazil is an outlier with respect to the effective number of parties, the total government budget allocated to the legislative power, and the public funds allocated to parties (to fund campaigns and regular party operations). As noted by Ames (2001): “The tragedy of the Brazilian system is not that it benefits elites; the problem is that it primarily benefits itself – that is, the politicians and civil servants who operate within it”.

As Figure 2 indicates, there is a positive correlation between total public funding and the total number of effective parties. Of course, this does not indicate causation, which can go either way. One needs to investigate whether the high number of effective parties is pressing for more public funds for political activities, or the availability of large funds incentivizes the multiplication of parties. These are important questions, in face of present efforts to change the Brazilian political system.

Moreover, while party fragmentation in Brazil might play an important role on how politicians in the executive and legislative branches negotiate policies and the allocation of resources, party fragmentation might also play an important role on the relationship between these two powers and the judiciary. Brazil is the only country in our sample in which the judiciary both organizes and oversees the electoral process. We find that the annual budget of the Brazilian Superior Electoral Court (TSE) is very high when compared to other government units in Brazil. An open question is whether the TSE's budget is high because the actual cost of organizing and overseeing the electoral process in Brazil is high, or because of different strategic reasons in the game (interaction) between the judiciary and the legislative.

Although there have been attempts to explain the special characteristics of Brazil's political system, more research is necessary to better explain why there are so many parties in Brazil and what are the consequences of this party fragmentation. In particular, we emphasize that Brazil has a high public spending on parties, on the legislative power, and on the Brazilian Superior Electoral Court. We hope that this paper will encourage research to explore these issues.

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**Appendix 1****Table 13** – Parliament's Budget, years available in IPU Parline database

<b>Europe</b>		<b>Other Countries</b>	
<b>Country</b>	<b>Years Available</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Years Available</b>
France	2018, 2019	United States	2015-2019
Germany	2015-2019	<b>Brazil</b>	<b>2015-2019</b>
United Kingdom	2013, 2018, 2019	Japan	2015-2019
Belgium	2013-2017	Argentina	2013
Austria	2015-2019	Mexico	2014, 2019
Spain	2013-2017	Canada	2014-2018
Sweden	2013-2017	South Korea	2013, 2015-2017
Norway	2013	Chile	2015-2019
Netherlands	2013	South Africa	2013-2017
Poland	2013, 2018, 2019	India	2013, 2018, 2019
Greece	2013-2017	Australia	2013-2017
Finland	2013, 2018, 2019	New Zealand	2015-2019
Ireland	2015-2019		
Denmark	2015-2019		
Switzerland	2015-2019		
Luxembourg	2013-2017		
Slovakia	2013		
Croatia	2013, 2018, 2019		

Source: IPU Parline, data collected in 2021.

**Table 14** – Public Funding of Political Parties and Candidates, Sources

<b>Europe</b>		<b>Other Countries</b>	
<b>Country</b>	<b>Sources</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Sources</b>
Germany	Bundestag	<b>Brazil</b>	<b>Tribunal Superior Eleitoral</b>
Spain	Portal de la transparencia	Mexico	Instituto Nacional Electoral (INE)
Belgium	Levif	Japan	Japan Press Weekly
France	Le monde, Lexpress, TIF, Vie publique	South Korea	National Electoral Commission
Norway	Statistisk sentralbyra (SSB)	Canada	Elections Canada
Austria	The Austrian Parliament	Chile	Servicio Electoral de Chile
Sweden	Sveriges Riksdag	United States	Federal Election Commission (FEC)
Russia	Council of Europe	Australia	Australian Electoral Commission
Finland	LOC, National Audit Office	Argentina	Dirección Nacional Electoral
Netherlands	Council of Europe	South Africa	Electoral Commission (IEC)
Poland	Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza	New Zealand	Electoral Commission
Portugal	Observador, ECFP		
Denmark	Ministry of the Interior		
Ireland	SIPO		
United Kingdom	The Electoral Commission		

Source: Own elaboration based on each country's Electoral Management body website, News and Reports, data collected in 2021.

**Table 15** – Public Funding of Political Parties and Candidates, years available in our sample

Country	Europe		Country	Other Countries	
	Regular Funding	Campaigns		Regular Funding	Campaigns
Germany	2012-2019	-	<b>Brazil</b>	<b>2012-2019</b>	<b>2018, 2020</b>
Spain	2017-2019	2015, 2016	Mexico	2012-2020	2009, 2012, 2015, 2018
Belgium	2016-2019	-	Japan	2016-2020	-
France	2014-2018, 2020	-	South Korea	2014, 2017- 2019	-
Norway	2012-2019	-	Canada	-	2006, 2008, 2011, 2015
Austria	2014	-	Chile	2016-2019	2012, 2013, 2016, 2017
Sweden	2016-2019	-	United States	-	2008, 2012, 2016, 2020
Russia	2010	-	Australia	-	2010, 2013, 2016, 2019
Finland	2015, 2017, 2018	-	Argentina	2015-2019	2019
Netherlands	2006	-	South Africa	2012-2019	-
Poland	2012-2019	2011, 2014	New Zealand	-	2011, 2014, 2017
Portugal	2012-2018	2011, 2014-2016, 2019			
Denmark	2016-2019	-			
Ireland	2015-2019	2014, 2016, 2018, 2019			
United Kingdom	2016-2019	-			

Source: Own elaboration based on each country's Electoral Management body website, News and Reports, data collected in 2021.

Note: Countries with no data in column Regular Funding (Campaigns) means that this country does not provide a Regular Funding (Funding to Campaigns). Information regarding the type of direct public funding each country provides for political parties and candidates is from International IDEA.

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