

Brazil's Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva Wins Presidential Election

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SÃO PAULO—Brazil's leftist former president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva beat conservative incumbent Jair Bolsonaro in the country's closest presidential race in history Sunday, cementing Latin America's shift to the left and marking an extraordinary comeback for a man who was in jail for corruption three years ago. After a marathon of campaign rallies in the poorest corners of the country to appeal to voters hungry for a return to Brazil's more prosperous past, Mr. da Silva, who last presided over Brazil from 2003 to 2010, clinched 60 million votes to secure 50.9% of the electorate to 49.1% for his rival in the runoff, with 99.5% of the votes counted, electoral authorities reported. Mr. Bolsonaro became the first president to fail to win re-election in the 25 years since a constitutional amendment made re-election possible. Mr. da Silva's victory in Brazil, home to 215 million people, means that every major country in Latin America, from Argentina to Mexico, will be led by a leftist government when he takes office on Jan. 1. The seventh son of illiterate farm workers who later lost a finger in an industrial accident, Mr. da Silva, 77, has an almost mythical connection with Brazil's working class and is seen as an icon by the Latin American left. On the campaign trail, he pledged to increase the minimum wage and spend on the poor—popular proposals among millions of families suffering from the fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic and the global economic crisis. Mr. da Silva's victory was met with elation among supporters who filled São Paulo's main Paulista Avenue, many draped in the red flag of his Workers' Party. For Mr. da Silva—better known in Brazil and internationally as Lula—it was his sixth presidential race since 1989, marking a return to power 12 years after he left office. Mr. Bolsonaro had faced an uphill battle to remain president, even though he surprised analysts by doing better than expected in the Oct. 2 first round of voting by getting 43.2% of the ballots. Mr. Bolsonaro's opponents criticized him for the government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, which has killed nearly 700,000 people. Many Brazilians also blame him for a rise in poverty and hunger that now affects 33 million people, according to the Brazilian research group Penssan. For many voters, Mr. da Silva offered a return to a more prosperous past. In his two terms that ended in 2010, more than 25 million people rose out of poverty, according to the Getulio Vargas Foundation. Many Brazilians for the first time became homeowners and splurged on appliances. A Chinese-fed commodities boom left Brazil flush with cash, able to pay off international loans and attract the admiration of world leaders, among them then-President Barack Obama, who at a summit referred to Mr. da Silva as "my man" and called him "the most popular politician on earth." Germano Silva, a laboratory technician, recalled how it was under the da Silva years that he could afford to travel by airplane for the first time instead of taking a long bus ride. He put three children through college, thanks to a government scholarship program. "My vote was one of gratitude," he said after casting his ballot. "We hope things will get better now, for us, for everyone—there are so many people in need, unemployed, going hungry, people living on the streets." (Article will be updated) Write to Luciana Magalhaes at luciana.magalhaes@wsj.com and Samantha Pearson at samantha.pearson@wsj.com

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