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MORE POLITICS, MORE WOMEN, AND MORE WOMEN, MORE POLITICS? THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE, GENDER POLITICS, AND FEMALE REPRESENTATION¹

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Summary

The unequal access of women to Brazilian legislative arenas has a direct impact on contemporary democracy. The approval of changes to formal rules, through Amendments to the Constitution, Bills, and Resolutions of the Chamber and Senate, for example, could guarantee greater access for these women to spaces of representation. On the other hand, these same propositions could be used to produce public policies that negatively affect the interests of this group. In order to describe which actors are responsible for proposing new rules or changing existing ones, this paper seeks to analyze the projects presented at the National Congress between the period 1989-2018, which deal with gender issues, whether in a more general way, such as national policies to combat gender violence, and those that promote parity, such as that deal more specifically with women's access to political representation. Through various descriptive statistics, we sought to understand whether the increase in the number of women elected to the Federal Legislative Power had an impact on the production of gender policies and how policies for access to the Legislature have sought to increase gender parity in this space of representation.

Key-Words: female representation; gender policies; Legislative power; institutional changes.

Introduction

For institutionalism, institutions matter for the production of political results due to their power to constrain the actors involved. This current provides a new theoretical perspective for the study of decisions and political outcomes, considering that the rules that structure the decision-making process would be responsible not only for the stability of decisions but also for the outcome of the choice (SHEPSLE, 1986; LIMONGI, 1994; PERES, 2008). In this way, political institutions come to be considered as the central explanatory variables of processes and decisions (OSTROM, 1991; IMMERGUT, 1998; PERES, 2008). In this perspective, the rules of the political game shape the strategies available to the actors, so that the alteration of these norms produces effects on the behavior of parliamentarians and, consequently, on the outcome of policies. In this work, this perception will be used to investigate gender inequality in the Federal Legislative Power and the possible relationship between institutional changes, gender policies and female representation in Brazilian politics.

The approval of changes to formal rules, through Amendments to the Constitution (PEC's), Bills (PL's), and Resolutions of the Chamber and Senate (PRC's e PRS's)⁴, for example, can guarantee greater access for women to spaces of representation. On the other

⁴ In Portuguese, they are called Projetos de Emenda à Constituição (PEC's), Projetos de Lei (PL's), Projetos de Resolução da Câmara (PRC's) e Projetos de Resolução do Senado (PRS's). Therefore, throughout this article, we will use these acronyms to refer to projects that propose changes to formal rules.

hand, these same propositions can be used to produce public policies that directly affect the interests of this group. To understand which actors are responsible for proposing new standards or changing existing ones, this work seeks to analyze PECs, PLs, PRC's and PRSs proposed between the period 1989-2018, which deal with themes of gender, or more generally, such as national policies to combat violence and promote parity between men and women in the various spheres of Brazilian society, such as those that deal more specifically with political representation, involving changes in formal rules that seek to encourage the entry and permanence of women in the Federal Legislative Power. For this purpose, the authors of the propositions, their menus, and justifications were analyzed, as well as the stage of processing of these norms in the National Congress. From the aggregated data about the proposals, it was possible to draw descriptive statistics about the percentage of proposals that concern gender policy in the chosen period, the political parties and actors that are proposing such changes, as well as the justifications presented.

This text consists of four more sections, in addition to this introduction. In the first part, the theme of representation is discussed based on the understanding that women's unequal access to legislative arenas has a direct impact on contemporary democracy. In a second moment, the potential role that institutional changes have in achieving gender parity is addressed. Afterward, the methods used to carry out this work are described, and, finally, it concludes with the presentation of the results found and some reflections on the main actors responsible for promoting these changes in the National Congress.

Women's political rights and female representation

In the Brazilian context, the exercise of a “differentiated citizenship” is identified, in which formal equality among citizens does not occur only with the incorporation of individuals into the nation-state. The term citizenship, as defended by Holston (2008, p. 5), would, in fact, be “a measure of difference and a means of distancing people from another”, thus being based “on differentiation and not equating kinds of citizens”. These distinctions can be observed in the categories of gender, race, class, occupation, income, and education, among countless other distinctive elements that are used as criteria for the selective distribution of rights among the population of a territory. The same can be extended to political rights since these “refer to citizen participation in the government of society. Its exercise is limited to a portion of the population and consists of the ability to make political

demonstrations, to organize political parties, to vote, to be voted on” (CARVALHO, 2002, p. 9, *translated by the author*).

In recent decades, the issue of inequality in the participation of men and women in institutional spheres has acquired greater visibility due to the perception that formal equality of rights does not effectively correspond to equitable access to material resources – both economic and social. cultural – and symbolic, as well as the possibilities of participation and expression in the political field (BIROLI, 2013; BOURDIEU, 1989; THERBORN, 2004). In this way, “the normative assumption of the equal value of individuals is systematically broken in the daily life of contemporary liberal democratic societies” since equal participation in decisions that affect them, directly and indirectly, is not guaranteed to all of society (BIROLI, 2013, p. 12, *translated by the author*).

Thus, the emergence of the issue of equality of representation occurs after contemporary democratic theory consolidates the idea that the participation of different groups in the decision-making process is essential for the development of democracy (DAHL, 1989; LIJPHART, 1999). Certainly, the path in search of political equality between the sexes becomes the central element of the process of building a more perfect democracy, because, as Arend Lijphart (1999, p. 282) points out, “political equality is a basic goal of democracy and the degree of political equality is, therefore, an important indicator of democratic quality”.

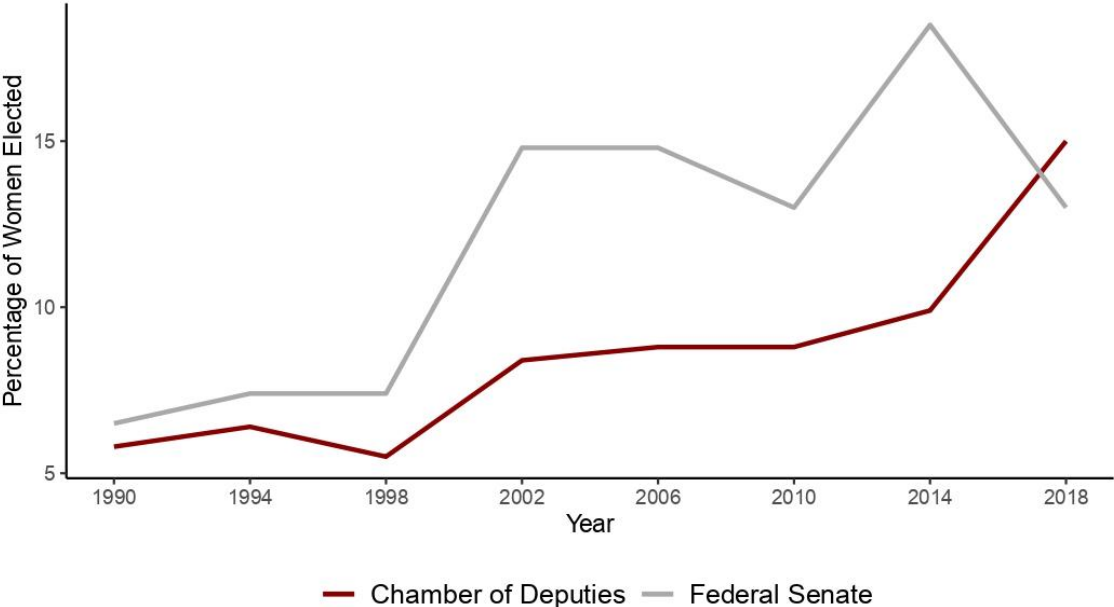
At the same time, women's claims also gain greater centrality with the impact of the political actions of feminist movements, which seek to provide gradual changes in society's mentality through the implementation of public policies aimed at transforming the social condition of women. This demand for equity reflects the idea that real democracy is only achieved with “the guarantee of the full participation of all social segments, especially women” (UTRERAS, 2002, p. 84, *translated by the author*). In this way, the low political representation of women in the political-institutional game, based on the “almost absence of women from their scenario [,] can be thought of as a compromising element of our current stage of democratic consolidation” (MATOS, 2010, p. 18, *translated by the author*).

The collective imagination of women's deprivation in accessing public space creates forms of exclusion within society itself, producing deep marks on female citizenship, whose reflection can be seen in the inequality of representation in almost all spaces of power, such as in the legislative sphere, executive, judiciary, in positions of party leadership, among others (FERREIRA, 2004). Although more than half of the voters in Brazilian society are women, representing about 52.5% (TSE, 2021b), only 15% of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies are occupied by women, a number practically similar to that registered in the Senate, with

only 14.8% female representation (BRAZIL, 2018). These numbers demonstrate that access to politics for women does not correspond to their proportion in Brazilian society, evidencing the permanence of a culture of exclusion of this group in Brazilian institutions (MIGUEL, BIROLI, 2014).

Despite this adverse environment for women in the public sphere, when analyzing the possible roots of inequality between genders, it is important to consider that they gradually acquired rights through their participatory efforts and clashes in decision-making spaces. The elaboration of the Constitution in 1988 was fundamental for women to conquer new rights and obtain greater legitimacy in their claims, contributing to increasing female participation in institutions, “also encouraging them to organize themselves politically, which reveals the importance of women's movements in this process” (FERREIRA, 2004, p. 12, *translated by the author*). In graph 1, below, it is possible to observe the increase in women elected to the Legislative sphere in Brazil between the years 1990 and 2018.

Graph 1 - Percentage of Women Elected to the Chamber of Deputies and the Federal Senate (1990-2018)



Source: Chamber of Deputies and Federal Senate websites. Self elaboration.

In terms of elected representatives, in 1994 there was a percentage of 6.53% of women who had access to seats in the National Congress. In the year following the implementation of

the quota policy⁵, in 1998, only 5.56% of women were elected, showing a drop of one percentage point in relation to the previous period (PORTO, 2000). This low rate after the adoption of affirmative action can be explained by the fact that women ended up disputing the election among themselves, thus fragmenting voters' votes (MIGUEL, 2000). In the elections of the following years, the coefficient of women elected gradually increased, although not very expressively. The most relevant inflection occurred in 2014 and 2018, when the female gender came to represent, respectively, 10.37% and 14.87% of the seats in the National Congress. Based on these data, there is a slight increase in the percentage of elected female candidates, although this gradual increase should be considered an important advance in the participation of women in the political sphere.

Although rights have been expanded in the national historical process, there is a constant effort to seek to understand the reasons that promote the permanence of gender inequality in Brazilian society, since the coexistence "between the increase in women's participation in various arenas of society and the persistence of limits to equal opportunities" (MIGUEL, BIROLI, 2014, p. 6, *translated by the author*). This small percentage of women in the decision-making spaces of Brazilian institutional policy has led to reflections in the related literature on the quality of the democratic process in Brazil, with the main concern being the reduction of democratic practice, "the quality of attention that is given to public policies [...] [and] the quality of overcoming the persistent social inequalities that plague the country" (MATOS, 2010, p. 18, *translated by the author*). The defense of the greater presence of women in political decision-making spaces is related to the argument that this element is central to the deepening of democracy, insofar as they can improve parliamentary political standards and behavior, in addition to allowing the creation of structures that give more detailed attention to gender issues (SACCHET, 2009; SAWER, 2002).

One of the possible ways of transforming this scenario is through the approval of new rules, or with the alteration of the precepts already in force, in order to stimulate greater participation of women in the different spaces of power, because if the norms matter for the conformation of the results, their modifications and those responsible for promoting such change must also be considered for the analysis.

⁵ A more in-depth analysis of the implementation of the Quota Law in Brazil will be made in the next section of this work.

The shift towards achieving gender parity in Brazilian politics

Just as the rules of the political game shape the strategies available to actors, changing these rules has an effect on the behavior of politicians and, therefore, on the outcome of policies. But analyzing these changes and their effects, as well as the role of the actors responsible for them, has been a topic dear to neoinstitutionalism. For this work, both the change (analyzed from the proposition of resolutions, amendments to the constitution and laws) and the agents responsible for such changes, especially their gender, are considered in order to understand the importance of female representation in the political sphere, not only for democracy but also for the proposition of new projects that guarantee or expand the equal access of women to elective spaces of representation.

The mobilizations and demands of feminist movements, together with the demands made by civil society, questioning public institutions to implement legal measures capable of correcting, at least, the disproportionality of the presence of women in decision-making spaces, resulted in Law n°. 9504, of September 30, 1997, known as the Quota Law. The implementation of the candidacies quota system determines that “of the number of vacancies resulting from the established rules [...], each party or coalition will fill a minimum of 30% (thirty percent) and a maximum of 70% (seventy percent) for candidates of each sex” (TSE, 2021a, *translated by the author*).

Even so, the female presence in decision-making spaces remains asymmetric and incoherent in relation to the proportion of women in the electorate, remaining below the expectations of the implementation of quotas, due to their “low quality” (SCHWINDT-BAYER, 2016, p. 60). This recognition becomes valid since the quota of candidacies is intended to impact the last level of relevance of the political structure, that is, to affect the outcome of the election. However, this measure would not act in this stage, but in the party offer of candidates and, therefore, would not consider that the election is also impacted by the electoral system⁶.

⁶ For a debate about the potential and limits of the quota policy adopted by Brazil, as well as a discussion about the aspects that can influence the chance of electing the female gender, see ARAÚJO, 2001; ARAÚJO, ALVES, 2007. Furthermore, for an analysis of the Quota Law adopted by Brazil and for a comparison with the measures implemented by other Latin American countries, see SCHWINDT-BAYER, 2016.

Under this understanding, the size of the quota⁷, the placement mandate⁸ and the quota law's enforcement mechanisms⁹ constitute three dimensions of the electoral quota system that influence the percentage of women elected (SCHWINDT-BAYER, 2016). Thus, quotas would simply give “women access to a minimum percentage of a party’s ballot rather than guaranteeing a specific percentage of legislative seats. In other words, setting a quota of 30% does not guarantee that 30% of the legislature will be female” (SCHWINDT-BAYER, 2016, p. 57). Furthermore, given the absence of the placement mandate, the second dimension indicated, it becomes “unlikely to put women in positions where they can actually win office”, making the quota an ineffective mechanism for increasing female representation (SCHWINDT-BAYER, 2016, p. 58).

Finally, with regard to the mechanisms for enforcing the quota law, the way in which it is used and the form of punishment for political parties that do not comply with the determined percentage can also influence the success of this mechanism. Faced with a restricted application of the quota and a fragile inspection apparatus, party associations can create stratagems to violate the reservation of seats in party candidates, thus inhibiting their real objective of increasing the number of women elected in the political sphere (SCHWINDT- BAYER, 2016).

However, the approval of this mechanism certainly expresses the recognition of the claims of the women's movements and the political struggle of the other groups involved, in addition to evidencing a lack of identification between representatives and those represented. As discussed by Bernard Manin (1995, 1997), political representation is intrinsically related to the idea of delegation of decision-making power. Based on this assumption, the author suggests a detachment and a decline in the relations of identification between the government and society, “between representatives and those represented and the determination of public policy by the electorate” (MANIN, 1995, p. 7, *translated by the author*).

This discussion can provide subsidies to think that women find it difficult to feel represented, to forward their demands, and for these claims to be accepted and implemented. In this sense, fighting for policies that reduce the boundaries between the government and the electorate and that make it possible to overcome formal inequalities of representation is, therefore, one of the ways to seek to overcome the numerous manifestations of exclusion

⁷ The quota size refers to the percentage of candidacies that will be reserved for women and that will be nominated by political parties (SCHWINDT-BAYER, 2016).

⁸ The placement mandate establishes that female candidates must be placed in favorable positions in party cells (SCHWINDT-BAYER, 2016).

⁹ The inspection mechanisms, determined by electoral law, establish the implications for political parties that do not comply with the quota (SCHWINDT-BAYER, 2016).

present in Brazilian society, in addition to reducing the challenges for the practice of democracy. Thus, marginalized social groups, such as women, blacks, indigenous people, and other minorities, when entering the public sphere, can problematize their condition of inequality and question the structural arrangements that make up such an organization (SANTOS, AVRITZER, 2020). By occupying positions in the spaces of power and in institutional politics, these individuals would be giving “political expression, in public debate, to perspectives, needs and interests related to their social position” and, with that, they would provide opportunities for them to influence decisions and the productions of norms that directly affect their interests (BIROLI, 2016, p. 722, *translated by the author*).

Methodology

To carry out this work and in order to select the propositions related to the gender issue, advanced textual research was made on the websites of the Chamber of Deputies and the Federal Senate, with the following words: women, woman, quota, sex, feminine and gender. We sought to find the appearance of these words in the menu, full content, or indexing of projects that had been proposed between 01/01/1989 and 12/31/2018. This first search resulted in just over 4950 propositions, but we know that many of the words added in the search led to propositions that had no relation to the theme of gender — For example, the term “gender” itself embraced projects that were related to music or food, without any association with the objective of the search. Furthermore, the word “quotas” encompassed several propositions that related to monetary quotas for transport, among other services for Senators, regardless of gender or even the authorization of granting counter-guarantees between Brazilian states.

To exclude all projects that were not related to the gender theme, a second filter was applied to the results found, done manually by the authors. Both authors analyzed the menus and entire contents of the propositions, removing from the database all propositions that did not concern the theme of gender. In the end, a database was built with 1,836 propositions in total. During this analysis of the menus and entire contents, the authors also separated the projects into those that concerned the access of women to the sphere of legislative representation. The propositions classified as involving access were subdivided into (1) projects directly related to measures that favored the entry of women into the political sphere, through changes in electoral rules, such as quotas for candidacies, and (2) propositions that promoted the permanence of women or the expansion of their powers once within these

spaces, such as rules for maternity leave for senators or the guarantee of female presence in positions of great importance in the Legislative Houses, such as committee tables and other mechanisms that seek to guarantee the permanence of women in this space of power. Of the 1,836 projects analyzed, 124 concerned women's access to the legislature, 43 of which were classified as directly and 81 as indirectly.

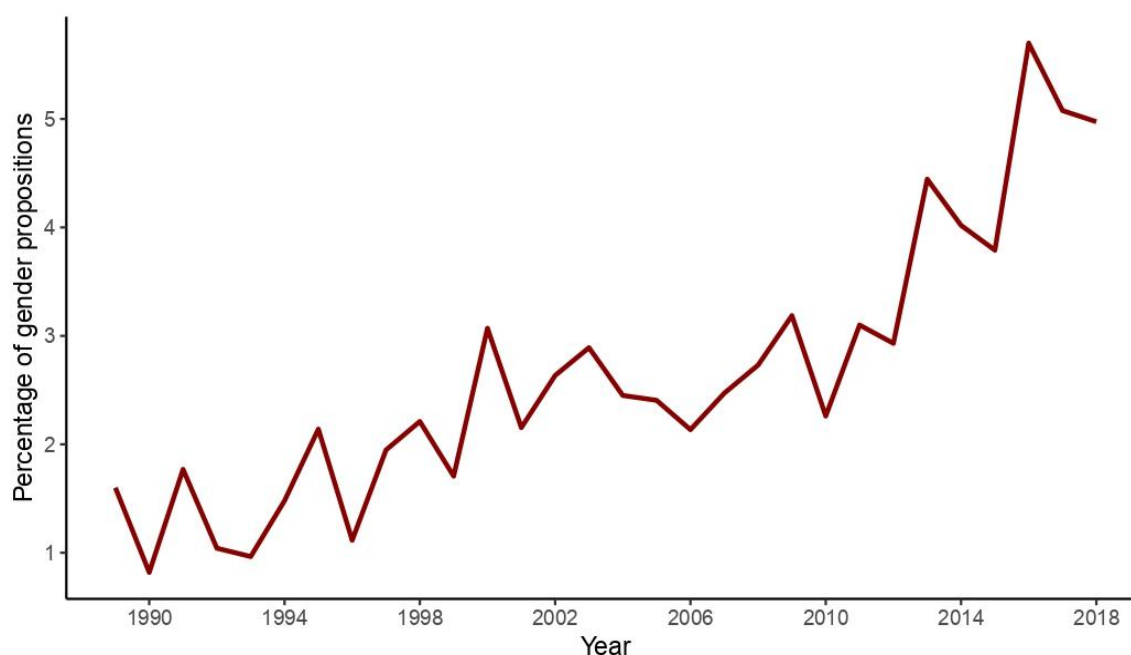
It is important to note that this number concerns propositions and not necessarily approvals. In fact, of the 124 projects classified as referring to access, only 8 were approved, 2 of them referring to projects that related to direct access, PL 2695/1997, which became Law no. 9,504, of September 30, 1997, and PL 5498/2009, which became Law 12034 of 2009, which regulates and amends the previous law, seeking to guarantee that parties actually cast 30% of candidates, because until then, in practice, almost no party filled the seats reserved for women candidates, leaving them empty. Thus, it is necessary to pay attention to the difference between propositions and approvals, a difference that we will demonstrate later. In the next section, more descriptive analyzes and some conclusions are presented.

Results and Conclusions

The most immediate analysis of the data, as can be seen in graph 2 below, demonstrates that the percentage of propositions related to the theme of gender increased significantly over time when compared with the total of propositions of all themes in the period, although this growth did not occur in a linear way, but with moments of greater or lower intensity of proposals presented by parliamentarians between the period 1989-2018¹⁰. At the beginning of the 1990s, the number of projects with this interest was approximately fifty proposals, which represents less than 2% of the total of propositions. The representation of gender propositions in relation to the total continued to grow, reaching its highest peak, so far, in 2016, when 5.7% of the projects proposed by the legislative houses dealt with the theme of gender.

¹⁰ The non-linearity can be explained by the difference shown in the number of propositions made between the years of a legislature. According to Batista (2019), the largest volume of propositions from deputies is observed in the first year of the legislature. After that, the number of propositions falls, reaching the minimum point always in the last year of the legislature.

Graph 2 - Percentage of proposals with the theme of gender per year



Source: Chamber of Deputies and Federal Senate websites. Self elaboration.

When looking at the actors who proposed such projects, most of the proposals related to the gender issue between 1989 and 2018, about 63.62%, were presented by male deputies, while women were responsible for approximately 30.72% of the projects, as shown in Table 1 below. The remaining 5.6% came from multiple authors or some other institution other than the National Congress, such as the Superior Electoral Court (TSE), and the Executive Branch, among other bodies.

Table 1 - Gender-themed propositions presented by male and female parliamentarians

Gender	Number of prepositions	Percentage
Men	1168	63,62
Women	564	30,72
Multiple Authors	38	2,07
Others	66	3,59

Source: Chamber of Deputies and Federal Senate websites. Self elaboration.

A question that could be made from the analysis of the data concerns the low number of gender-themed propositions forwarded by the Federal Executive Branch. Although there are other mechanisms through which the President of the Republic could propose public gender policies – such as through provisional measures, for example – between the analyzed

period, the Executive was responsible for a small portion of proposals, representing only 16 of the 1836 projects that make up the database, less than 1%. A preliminary analysis of provisional measures filtered from the same words that were used to assemble the database for this work showed that between 1989 and 2018 the Executive proposed less than 40 provisional measures with the theme of gender. Thus, one must question why the Federal Executive Branch is responsible for a negligible portion of the analyzed propositions.

Regarding the differentiation between male and female parliamentarians who proposed projects related to the gender issue, as the majority of elected representatives are male, corresponding to approximately 85% of the Chamber of Deputies and the Federal Senate, it was already expected that they would also be the main responsible for the largest number of propositions that concern the theme of gender. However, the analysis of the projects that refer to women's access to Legislative Power shows an inversion in the percentage of actors who presented these proposals, as can be seen in Table 2 below.

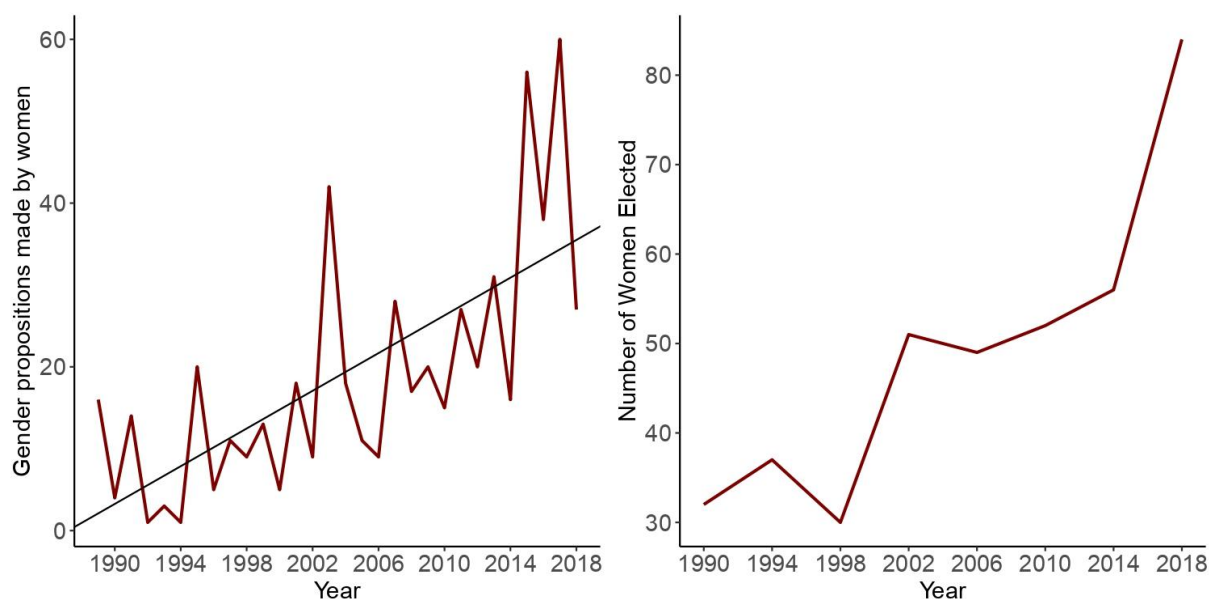
Table 2 - Absolute number of propositions involving access and direct access by women to the Legislative Power

	Access Propositions	Direct Access Propositions
Total	124	43
Approved	8	2
Men	52	17
Women	58	23
Executive	1	1

Source: Chamber of Deputies and Federal Senate websites. Self elaboration.

Even with a low representation of female parliamentarians in the National Congress, during the period 1989-2018, most propositions regarding the access of women in the legislative arena were presented by them. This demonstrates the importance of female representation in the congress to guarantee greater parity, and also provides a strong indication of the existence of causality between the increase in the election of women to the Brazilian Congress and the growth of proposals with content related to the theme of gender in a way that general or more specifically on the access of women to the Legislative Power.

Figure 1 - Gender-themed propositions submitted by women versus women elected between 1990-2018



Source: Chamber of Deputies and Federal Senate websites. Self elaboration.

The Figure 1 above shows the number of women elected for the two houses of the Brazilian congress in the period from 1988 to 2018, again demonstrating an increase in the participation of the female gender in elective positions. Together with these data, Figure 1 also shows the number of gender-themed propositions - PECs, PLs, PRCs and PRSs - presented by female parliamentarians. As can be seen, the increase in the number of projects that concern the theme of gender did not occur linearly, but with moments of greater or lesser intensity of propositions¹¹. Some of the most intense moments, however, find implications in the historical context and in the most cherished discussions at the time. Although more specific analyzes are needed to explain the increase in the number of propositions related to gender issues around 1996, it can be inferred that the mid-1990s was the period in which attention turned to the debate on the low participation of women in national policy, generating countless efforts to approve measures that would increase the occupation of vacancies in the National Congress by the female gender, which culminated in the implementation of Law no. 9,504, of September 30, 1997, known as the Quota Law.

In the period after the 2000s, in line with the increase in the number of women elected to the Federal Legislative Power, there was also an increase in the percentage of propositions referring to the theme of gender made by women. Although more sophisticated tests are

¹¹ Again, it is necessary to pay attention to the different level in the number of propositions between the years of the same legislature, with regard to the oscillations presented.

needed to verify the causality between the participation of women in elective positions and the increase in projects with interests that directly affect them, the data presented indicate an association between the variables.

Table 3 - Propositions related to gender issues approved by the Legislature

Legislature	Approved propositions	Approved female propositions	Percentage of approved female propositions
48ª legislatura	4	1	25,00
49ª legislatura	6	4	66,67
50ª legislatura	14	6	42,86
51ª legislatura	12	7	58,33
52ª legislatura	16	11	68,75
53ª legislatura	14	7	50,00
54ª legislatura	16	4	25,00
55ª legislatura	33	19	57,58

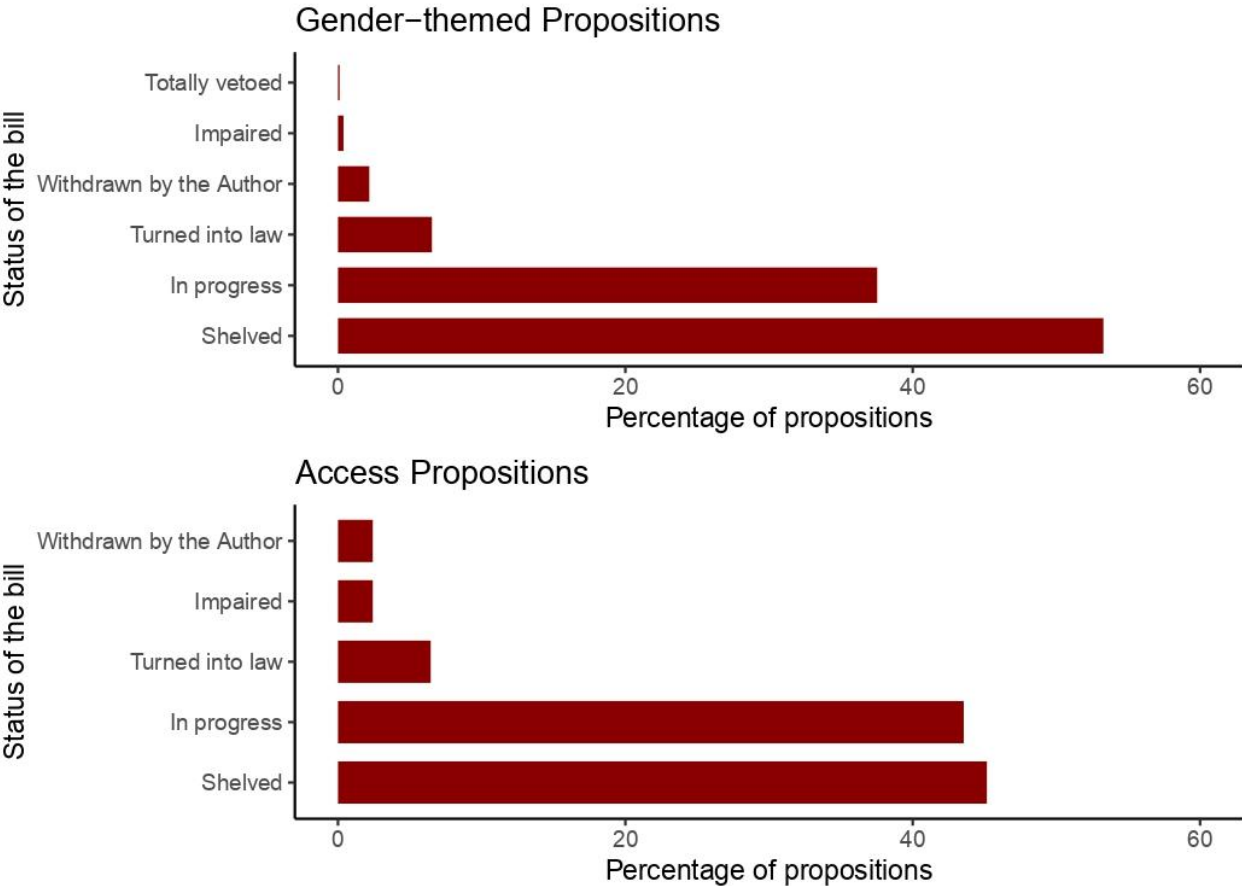
Source: Chamber of Deputies and Federal Senate websites. Self elaboration.

Table 3 above shows the number of proposals related to the gender issue approved in each of the legislatures analyzed between the period 1989 and 2018. As evidenced earlier, even though women occupy a low percentage of the seats in the National Congress, they were responsible for most of the approved projects with a gender theme, representing more than 50% of these proposals. Except for the 48th Legislature and the 54th Legislature, in which women parliamentarians were responsible for only 25% of the approved proposals, the average of projects proposed by women that was transformed into a legal norm is approximately 58%, a high number when compared to the percentage of women parliamentarians who compose the legislative houses. This data is relevant as it demonstrates that the presence of women in Brazilian institutional policy reflects the greater proposition of public policies that translate the interests of this group, therefore, the debate on measures that seek to increase the coefficient of women in the political sphere is crucial.

However, it should be considered that elected women, in addition to representing specific interests of a single group (the demands of the female gender), also represent the set of citizens, even though there are “general expectations that women politicians will share the concerns of women in the community”, since “it is women politicians who belong to or have belonged to women's organizations who are more aware of gender and gender-related issues” (SAWER, 2001, p. 8). In this sense, changes in the essence and composition of participatory and representative spaces to seek social and political equality can be stimulated through

mechanisms of institutional changes and political initiatives, such as the formulation of public policies that aim to correct the disproportionate participation of women in the political sphere or that are intended to promote greater gender equality in society as a whole.

Figure 2 – Percentage of the status of gender-themed and access propositions



Source: Chamber of Deputies and Federal Senate websites. Self elaboration.

In Figure 2 above, only 6.53% of the gender-themed projects proposed from 1989 to 2018 were approved and transformed into a legal norm. Concerning those in progress, these represent approximately 37,5% of the proposals, which can also be interpreted as a way of obstructing the approval of these guidelines that relate to the theme of gender. Finally, the analysis of these data shows that more than 50% of the projects were shelved, either by decision of the parliamentarians themselves or by the end of the legislatures in the National Congress, without being asked to unarchive these proposals at the beginning of the new legislature, allowing to continue, thus, their processing from the stage at which they had been interrupted.

These numbers are similar when analyzing only the projects that concern the access of women in the Legislative. In the same way, as the propositions involving gender policy in general, those about access in politics also have a high percentage of archiving, reaching almost 45% of the proposals. However, the most notable difference resides in those in progress. Comparatively, the propositions that deal with the access of women to the Legislative have a higher “in progress” status percentage, about 6% more than those that refer to the gender theme in general, practically equivalent to the number of propositions of this type shelved. One of the possible explanations for this number is related to the fact that these proposals require a longer discussion time until they are approved, or even this could be a strategy to stop this type of proposal from obstructing the agenda.

Although the vast majority of the propositions analyzed have a positive character and represent an advance in the gender theme, one of the bills selected to compose the database stands out due to its regressive aspect. PL 798/2003, which alters the wording of §5, of art. 10 of Law No. 9,504, of September 30, 1997, aims to suppress the quota law during the filling of the remaining vacancies in proportional elections. According to the project presented by deputy Roberto Magalhães (PSDB-PE):

Art. 1st Paragraph 5 of art. 10 of Law No. 9,504, of September 30, 1997, becomes effective with the following wording:

Art. 10

.....
.....

§5 In the event that the conventions for the selection of candidates do not indicate the maximum number of candidates provided for in the caput and in §§ 1 and 2 of this article, the governing bodies of the respective parties may fill the remaining vacancies up to forty days before the election. , regardless of the percentages provided for in § 3 of this article for both sexes (BRAZIL, 2003, p. 1, *translated by the author*).

The justification for this proposal is based on the argument of non-compliance with the apparent constitutional principle “of equality and repugnant to the democratic principle of freedom of access to public positions” (BRAZIL, 2003, p. 2, *translated by the author*). As a result, this bill was shelved in 2004 after the author's request for its withdrawal was granted. By presupposing the reasons for such a request, it could be assumed that the parliamentarian would have recognized the content of the proposition or, then, the deputy would probably have received numerous criticisms from the other representatives, thus motivating the request to withdraw the proposal. However, when analyzing the document sent by deputy Roberto Magalhães to the president of the Chamber of Deputies at the time, deputy João Paulo Cunha (PT-SP), none of these arguments appears explicitly in the content of the request. The

justification is based on the prevailing “opinion that such matter, with electoral content, should be previously discussed in the Political Reform Commission” (BRAZIL, 2004, p. 1, *translated by the author*).

Therefore, one of the central aspects in this discussion involves the actors responsible for promoting changes in State institutions, since changes in the norms that govern the political system are made by the elected themselves, having the characteristic of being endogenous (NORTH, 1990). Thus, the rules can remain unchanged as long as there is a majority that can uphold them, that is, the majority imperative determines that the rules of the legislative process will always reflect the preference of the individuals who are in greater numbers (KREHBIEL, 1992).

In this sense, the complexity of developing an effective public policy to reduce the inequality of representation between genders in the institutional and power spheres permeates the most varied issues. Among them, most decisions on “laws and policies that directly affect women are made in Brazil, even today and as it has been throughout our history, by men” (MIGUEL, BIROLI, 2014, p. 9, *translated by the author*). However, as this work tried to show, the presence of women in politics has raised positive effects in the proposition of projects with content related to gender themes, either in general or specifically about proposals aimed at approving mechanisms to encourage the entry of women into the Legislative Power.

In this way, the possibility of generating changes in the rules to promote the entry of new actors into state institutions would mean disturbing the instruments of power distribution and the dominant and entrenched practices within the political field, to displace current interests by introducing new propositions. based on the preferences of newly incorporated groups. For the analysis of institutional change, “clearly, institutional ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ have different interests when it comes to interpreting rules or dedicating resources to their enforcement” (MAHONEY, THELEN, 2010, p. 14).

Finally, it is important to highlight that the objective of this research is not to provide final explanations for these institutional changes that aim to provide real equality between the genders and guarantee greater access for women to spaces of representation, or to affirm a causal relationship between their approval and the increase in the number of women elected, and vice versa, although the data are indicative of this. Although more analyzes and inferential statistics are needed, it is believed to be essential to carry out an exploratory work, hitherto unpublished, of data description so that explanatory hypotheses can be formulated later. In short, the expected objective is that the data analyzed and the results presented serve

as a basis for future formulations and questions in studies on female representation, the Brazilian legislative agenda, institutional changes, or other fields of related interest.

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