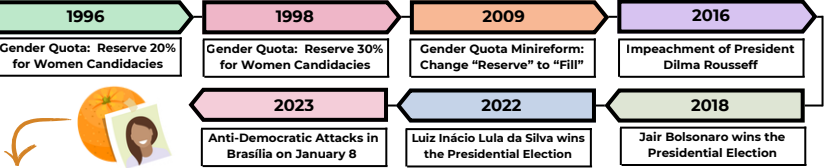




Perceptions of Democracy, Political Gender Inequality and Laranjas Candidates in Brazil

INTRODUCTION

Since the 2000s, Brazilian democracy has faced political crisis, polarization¹ and growing skepticism toward democratic institutions², as well as persistent challenges to the effectiveness of gender quotas and to women’s political representation, driven by informal practices by political parties that circumvent this affirmative policy.³



Laranja Candidate: Someone registered as a candidate, often to meet legal gender requirements, without receiving effective party support or financial resources⁴

OBJECTIVES

Examine whether Brazil’s political crises have affected satisfaction with democracy and trust in the National Congress. Analyze women’s formal political participation after gender quotas and assess whether it became real political representation for federal deputies. Investigate Laranjas’s candidacies and their relation to gender.

METHODOLOGY

The Brazilian Superior Electoral Court (TSE) open data⁵ and the Latinobarómetro public opinion survey⁶ were used. All blanks, "No Answer," and "Don't know" responses were excluded. "N" refers to the number of observations.

Statistic	Value	Statistic	Value	Statistic	Value
Years covered	1995–2024	Years covered	2002–2024	Years covered	1995–2024
No. of years	24	No. of years	18	No. of years	24
Total responses	26,252	Total responses	19,785	Total responses	26,734
Average per year	1,093.8	Average per year	1,099.2	Average per year	1,113.9
Years not covered	1999, 2012, 2014, 2019, 2021, 2022	Years not covered	2012, 2014, 2019, 2021, 2022	Years not covered	1999, 2012, 2014, 2019, 2021, 2022

Figure 1: Data Amount Collected for Satisfaction with democracy in Brazil

Figure 2: Data Amount Collected for Brazilian Opinion on "Democracy may have problems but it is still the best form of government" (Churchil's Quote)

Figure 3: Data Amount Collected for the Brazilians Trust in the National Congress, 1995–2024

Potential Laranja: Candidate who receives less than 1% of Votes and/or Campaign Financial Resources of the Last Candidate Elected from the same state/year.

RESULTS: DEMOCRACY

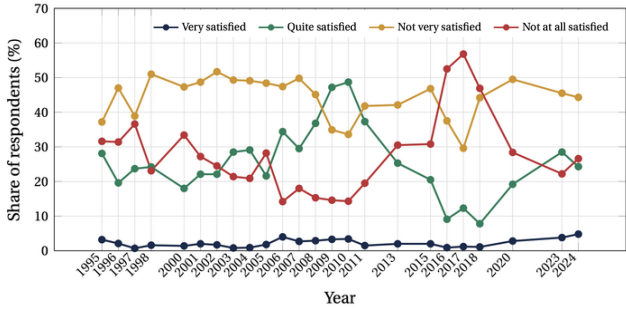


Figure 4: Satisfaction with democracy in Brazil, 1995–2024

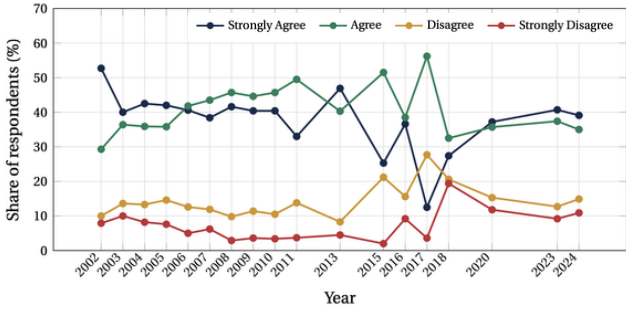


Figure 5: Brazilian Opinion about "Democracy may have problems but it is still the best form of government" (Churchil's Quote), 2002–2024

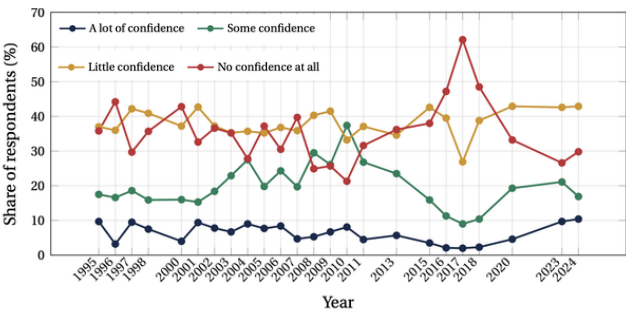


Figure 6: Brazilians Trust in the National Congress, 1995–2024

RESULTS: GENDER AND LARANJAS

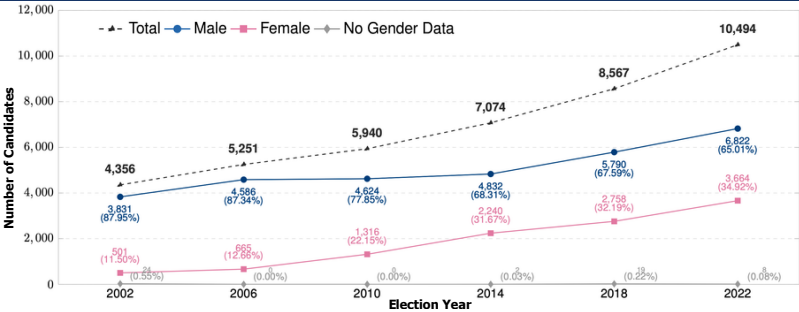


Figure 7: Candidates for Federal Deputy Classified by Gender, 2002–2022

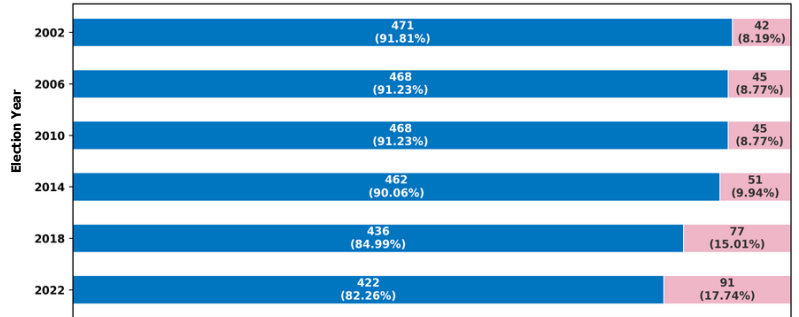


Figure 8: Gender Representation in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies (513 seats), 2002 - 2022

Year	Total "Laranjas"		Female "Laranjas"			Male "Laranjas"			No Gender Data	
	N	% of Total Candidates	N	% of Total Candidates	% of Female Candidates	N	% of Total Candidates	% of Male Candidates	N	% of Total Candidates
2002	497	11.41	88	2.02	17.56	409	9.39	10.68	0	0.00
2006	600	11.43	112	2.13	16.84	488	9.29	10.64	0	0.00
2010	966	16.26	362	6.09	27.51	604	10.17	13.06	0	0.00
2014	1698	24.00	903	12.77	40.31	793	11.21	16.41	2	0.03
2018	1375	16.05	751	8.77	27.23	620	7.24	10.71	4	0.05
2022	3062	29.18	1366	13.02	37.28	1693	16.13	24.82	3	0.03

Figure 9: Potential Laranjas Federal Deputy Candidates based on Votes, 2002–2022

Year	Total "Laranjas"		Female "Laranjas"			Male "Laranjas"		
	N	% of Total Candidates	N	% of Total Candidates	% of Female Candidates	N	% of Total Candidates	% of Male Candidates
2002	234	5.40	29	0.67	5.79	205	4.73	5.35
2006	668	12.72	97	1.85	14.59	571	10.87	12.45
2010	1102	18.55	261	4.39	19.83	841	14.16	18.19
2014	1817	25.69	782	11.06	34.91	1035	14.63	21.42
2018	2360	27.61	805	9.42	29.19	1555	18.19	26.86
2022	2455	23.41	789	7.52	21.53	1666	15.89	24.42

Figure 10: Potential Laranjas Federal Deputy Candidates based on Financial Campaign Resources, 2002–2022

CONCLUSION

Political crises weakened satisfaction with democracy and trust in Congress, but did not overturn the perception that democracy remains the best form of government. The crisis is therefore less about democracy itself and more about the political actors and institutions responsible for governing and representing it.

Took more than a decade for the gender quota to be met. When it did in 2014, female "laranja" candidacies reached their highest level, limiting it as a mechanism for political inclusion. Growth in women's candidacies didn't translate into elected representation. Over two decades, women's representation among elected federal deputies increased by less than 10%.

The debate on gender representation in Brazil needs to shift from the strictly legal realm (the quota system) to informal party practices that operate alongside the law and undermine it. The "laranja candidate" is a strategic, rational response by parties to a legal requirement that lacks oversight of how parties distribute resources and political support internally.

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