



Quotas for Women in the Brazilian Legislative System

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The Implementation of Quotas: Latin American Experiences

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In 1996, Brazil joined other Latin American countries in adopting mandatory quotas for lists of proportional representation candidacies. The first experience involved the Chamber of the Council, the equivalent of local legislative power. In 1998, mandatory quotas began to be applied at the federal and regional levels.

This paper evaluates the initial results of the application of gender quotas in the Brazilian legislative competition. It is based on research beginning in 1996, and it aims to assess both the process and the impact of the quota system.¹ The results of the 1992 municipal elections, prior to the adoption of quotas, are compared with those of 1996 and 2000, after the quota system was in place. The Federal Chamber and the State Assemblies are studied via a comparison of four elections, in 1990, 1994, 1998 and 2002. The first two elections preceded the adoption of quotas.

The first part of this paper briefly introduces the politics surrounding quotas and the position of the women's movement in recent decades. It is followed by a broad review of the process that led to the adoption of quotas in Brazil. The third part deals with the electoral results in quantitative terms. The final segment attempts to identify some of the factors that have influenced these results up to the present day.

Overview of the Political System

Brazil is a federative, presidential republic, composed of 26 states and a federal district with a bicameral parliamentary representative system—the Federal Senate or Upper House and the Lower Chamber, the formation of which is based on a system of proportional representation (PR) in each state. Legislative power is organized on three levels: the federal level, made up of the Federal Senate and the Chamber of

Deputies, forming the National Congress; the state level, consisting of legislative assemblies; and the municipal level, comprising city councils. Senators have a mandate of eight years, while all others legislate for four years. Local legislative and executive elections take place every two years. With the exception of the Senate, the legislative electoral system is proportional representation. Federal representation is circumscribed by the characteristics of each state. The magnitude of the districts varies according to the size of the electorate, but each state has a minimum of eight and a maximum of 70 representatives. The voting system is based on an open party list.

Thirty official political parties participate in the elections. These include about eight large and medium-sized parties as well as several left-wing parties, such as the Communist Party (PCdoB) and the Green Party (PV), which have shown some institutional stability. However, most political parties in Brazil go through name changes and amalgamations, and are poorly organized.

The Political Path of Women in the Brazilian Democratic Context

Brazilian women obtained the right to vote in 1932, 51 years after the proclamation of the republic and of the qualified male vote. This fact is frequently considered a reason for their late entry into politics and one of the causes of the existing asymmetry in relation to the political participation of women. But this cannot be considered the sole reason. Indeed, when considering the country as part of the international scene, Brazil is found to be ahead of some European nations when it comes to voting achievements; it is on the same level as the average Western country. Nevertheless, this situation has engendered a structural deficit for women in the political world.

In the Brazilian case, two historical factors must also be mentioned when considering the difficulties of integrating women into the political realm. First, Brazilian democracy has a troubled history. It has gone through two dictatorial periods—1937–45 and 1964–84—a total of 38 years of authoritarianism and the suspension of civil rights. Second, historically, the country's political culture has been based on patronage.

Although women have traditionally enjoyed a political presence during important moments in the country's history, it was not until the early 1980s that there was effective change in regard to their participation in national politics and institutions. Socioeconomic factors, such as the increased number of women in the work force and in schools, and political factors, such as the return of a democratic environment, were determinants in this process. The return of democracy brought about more substantial growth in the participation of women. The presence of women in the Federal Chamber increased from 1.7% in 1982 to 5.3% in 1986, the first polls after the end of the dictatorship. It is important to note that the elected parliamentary representatives were also responsible for organizing a national assembly to write a new constitution. The constitution was signed in 1988, and remains in effect today. This event secured a democratic state after 20 years of dictatorship. One of the most remarkable aspects of the process was the systematic presence of members of the women's movement, along with elected congresswomen—known as 'the lipstick lobby'. The constitution granted many social and civil rights for the population as a whole, and specifically for the women of Brazil.

After the 1986 elections, the rise in female representation in the legislature slowed, as will be shown in following sections. Political representation of Brazilian women gained a new boost during the last federal elections, in October 2002. The results suggest that the election of Luís Inácio Lula da Silva as president had an impact on all electoral levels. In the legislative branch, the number of centre-leftist members increased. There was also a considerable rise in the number of women, both in the Chamber of Deputies and in the Senate.² These elections also seemed to have an effect on the female presence in executive offices—state governors and mayors—which used to include few women (see Table 1). The first female state governor, Roseana Sarney of Maranhão, was only elected in 1994, and re-elected in 1998.³ In the 2002

elections, two states elected female governors. Approximately six percent of elected mayors in 2000 were women.

Table 1: Elected Female Mayors in Brazil, 1992–96⁴

Regions	1992	1996	% Growth
Brazil	171	302	76.6
North	19	28	47.4
Northeast	92	153	66.3
Southwest	38	64	68.4
South	11	30	172.7
Centre-west	11	27	145.5

Source: Data published by Superior Electoral Tribunal (TSE), indicates a 10.2% growth in the number of municipalities in the country. A similar trend had already been observed in previous elections, with a 59.8% increase between 1988 and 1992 (IBAM, 1997).

Despite these recent results, the participation of Brazilian women in parliament remains very low in percentile terms when compared with other Latin American countries. In addition, it remains low even when compared with the participation of women in non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community associations and other kinds of organizations in Brazil.

The Brazilian Process of Adopting Quotas: A Brief Retrospect

In Brazil, the debate on the adoption of quotas as a means of increasing the presence of women in political institutions and party leaderships began in the late 1980s, and accompanied the return of democracy to the country. The Labour Democratic Party (PDT) and the Worker’s Party (PT) were the first to discuss and adopt a form of quotas in their national and regional directories, in 1986 and 1991⁵ respectively. Since then, other parties, mainly from the left, have followed suit, with quotas varying between 20 and 30 percent. Among the larger parties, though, only the PT and the PDT (both considered to lie on the left of the political spectrum) implemented quotas for party directories. This measure helps to explain their percentage increase in female participation, as can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: National Members of the Six Main Political Parties, 1986–2002

Political parties	1986			1991			1996			1999			2002		
	Total	Fem.	%	Total	Fem.	%	Total	Fem.	%	Total	Fem.	%	Total	Fem.	%
PPB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	160	8	5.0	385	27	7.0
PFL	121	3	2.5	121	2	1.7	177	3	1.7	190	5	2.6	200	10	5.0
PMDB	121	3	3.3	121	4	3.3	141	9	6.4	119	8	6.7	119	9	6.7
PSDB	-	-	-	121	8	6.6	121	6	5.0	236	19	8.1	203	17	8.4
PDT	119	11	9.2	119	11	9.2	121	18	14.9	160	29	18.1	191	33	17
PT	81	5	6.2	82	5	6.1	86	27	31.0	62	19	31.0	81	24	30.0

Brazil, though, is unlike many other nations whose projects for implementing a quota law for legislative mandates originated in the previous experiences of political parties that adopted quotas in their lists of candidates for election. There is no record to suggest that Brazilian parties, prior to the passing of the quota law, adopted quotas in their candidate lists in a spontaneous way. This fact does not stem just from the resistance of party leaders. Before the adoption of quotas, there was neither an official position nor organized lobbying by feminist factions inside the parties that could have led to a quota in the candidate lists for legislative seats.

The Approval of Quotas Legislation for Legislative Candidates

The first proposal for quotas was approved in 1995. It was presented that year by a member of the Chamber of Deputies, Marta Suplicy (PT), and dealt only with legislative seats in municipal districts. It established that a minimum of 20 percent of the candidates had to be female. At the same time, the number of candidates increased to 120 percent of the total number of disputed seats.

The approval of quotas in Brazil was not marked by debate or great controversy, as observed in other countries. It must be mentioned that their introduction did not stem from a position of consensus or a maturity of the debate in Brazilian society, but, rather, from the absence of both. There was a brief interval between the concept being proposed, by a congresswoman and not by departments or women's rights commissions in the parties, and its approval by parliament. The proposal was not supposed to mobilize broad sectors of society. In fact, the feminist movement seemed divided. On the one hand, there were some positive expectations, while, on the other, there was some questioning of the initiative's worth.⁶ Thus, in the beginning, the future of a quota system assumed an ambiguous character among the women's movement. It was considered innovative, while, at the same time, its effectiveness and nature were viewed with caution.

The atmosphere resulting from the fourth World Conference on Women seems to have increased the attractiveness of the proposal in parliament. However, it was not debated intensely in the National Congress. Some parties with rightist tendencies were openly opposed to quotas. Suplicy affirmed that, during the negotiations, several leftist members of parliament, including members of her own party, raised some objections. Yet most abstained from the debate, as evidenced by documental research. There was some questioning of the constitutionality of the proposal, but not enough to refute it. Its eventual approval (by means of leadership voting) seems to have been due to the articulating capabilities of several congresswomen and a certain practical sense on the part of party leaders. These leaders wished to avoid any conflicts with women and seemed to anticipate the limited applicability of the proposal.⁷

Between 1995 and 1997, representatives in National Congress presented eight proposals for quotas. By the end of 1997, rules for future elections had been established and the reservation (in the form of quotas) had become permanent legislation. Law number 9.504 established a 25 percent quota of state and federal representatives in the parliamentary elections of 1998. The minimum percentage for the following elections would be raised to 30 percent of each sex. Consequently, the number of seats to be filled in each party's list was increased from 120 percent to a maximum of 150 percent of the disputed seats. The filling of the quotas remained guided by the norm approved in 1996.

During this process, some positions that seemed to illustrate the debate on these experiences in other countries⁸ were also present in the Brazilian case, although in a very discrete form. Favourable arguments by party leaders normally underlined the transitory character of the idea, its contribution to legitimizing democracy, and its symbolic role in encouraging women and in ending prejudice, both implicit and explicit. A more substantive argument, which was exposed to little debate, was defended by the author of the proposal, Suplicy, and by other feminists. It concentrated on a critique of the paradigm of equality and on

defending the concept of gender parity as an organizing principle of representative democracy. In this case, quotas are not considered merely a strategy for boosting and highlighting the participation issue, but are considered to be a path to parity.

There were also arguments of a different nature. Objections to the discriminatory character of the proposal prevailed. It was seen as a denial of equal rights and opportunities, or as a way of confirming the incapacity of women. Although more common among conservative sectors of the women's movement and centre and right-wing parties, such questioning could also be observed among members of left-wing parties, including Suplicy's own party, the PT. There was another line of criticism—a position similar to that of authors like Varikas and Squires⁹—which questioned the extent to which quotas could lead to changes to structural and cultural factors that support the exclusion of women. It was argued that a quota policy would have a superficial effect, and a search for broader mechanisms of reform in the political framework of representation was suggested as political priority.

After the initial period, the quota proposal seemed to be assimilated by the feminist movement in general and by the political realm in particular. Among politicians, some sectors incorporated it in a formal manner, because of its political and electoral appeal—that is, defending women's rights. Other sectors took advantage of its possible benefits, either symbolic, cultural or material (it would now be possible to alter the number of women in the representational arena).

As quotas became a part of the nation's political reality, their results tended to breed new discussions. Some conservative sectors that were against the policy gathered data and used it to reaffirm the inefficacy of quotas, by questioning the interest of women in competing for seats, and to query their ability to be elected. Sectors on the left argued that the results reinforced the need to intervene in structural, political, cultural and economic obstacles that constrain or impede the ascent of women to the political élite. However, feminist NGOs and organized women in centre and left-wing parties believe that quotas should be considered a privileged, almost exclusive means of bringing more women into positions of power. In the case of the legislative competition, the criticism basically centres on the resistance of, or lack of interest among, party leaders in making this policy viable.

Electoral Results in Brazil and the Impact of Quotas

Results in the Municipal Chambers¹⁰

As noted above, there is no systematic information on candidates in municipal elections prior to 1996. Even the 1996 data is estimated, since 37.25 percent of the candidates could not be identified by gender. Therefore, it is not possible to make a comparison with preceding periods, given that the quota law includes candidacies. Of those candidates that could be identified by gender in the country's 5,505 municipalities, 17.32 percent were women. It is important to remember that, in 1996, the minimum gender quota was set at 20 percent, rising to 30 percent in 2000. In 2000, the achieved index was 19.2 percent of the total. Apparently, the observed increase in the number of female candidacies between 1996 and 2000 was small, and the increase in the index was far less than the minimum established percentage. None of the 30 officially registered political parties managed to observe the minimum quota. The Unified Workers Socialist Party (PSTU), a small extreme left-wing party with no representation in Congress, presented 22.2 percent of female candidates, followed by a small right-wing party, the National Order Reconstruction Party (PRONA), with 22.19 percent. The six largest parties, which spanned the political spectrum,¹¹ were all situated in the 18 percent range, with the exception of the PT (20.17 percent). Although higher rates were observed among smaller parties, the percentage of their female candidates compared to the overall number of candidates is very small: 0.09 percent in the PSTU; and 0.3 per cent in PRONA.

Table 3: Council Representatives Elected in Brazil, 1992–2000

Elected	1992	1996	2000
Total	53,108	58,704	60,262
Elected Women	3,964	6,598	7,001
% Elected Women	7.46	11.23	11.62

Source: IBAM, 2000; TSE, 2000.

In the case of elected candidates, the lack of data does not permit an analysis of a historical statistical series. Table 3 shows that there was a significant increase in the number of elected female candidates between 1992 and 1996. Since no information is available on the 1988 elections, it is debatable whether the increase is due to quotas or whether it was caused by a preceding trend. However, a comparison of the 1996 and 2000 elections shows that the percentages of elected councilwomen remained stable. In 1996, women occupied 11.23 percent of available seats at the legislative level. In 2000, this figure was 11.62 percent of the total.

When elected candidates identified by gender are considered, the four parties that proportionally elected the largest number of women in 1996 were the small ones. Indeed, the first two places were occupied by centre and right-wing parties defined as ‘dwarves’, that is, very small parties that are not normally present in Congress: the PGT with female representation of 14.3 percent (0.02 percent of the total number of elected women in the country); and the PRTB. Left-wing parties came next, the PCdoB, followed by the Socialist Popular Party (PPS). When the six largest parties are considered, the PT elected 9.8 percent and the rest were situated in the eight percent zone. In 2000, these indices rose somewhat, but small parties were still the ones to elect more women (see Table 4). Once again, it is important to note that, with the exception of the PT (14.1 percent), the remaining three parties reached, at best, 0.5 percent of the total number of elected councilpersons in the country. The portion of women elected by the remaining five large parties varied between nine and 12 percent.¹²

Table 4: First Political Parties to Elect Councilwomen, 2000

Party	Number of councilwomen	% Elected councillors	Ideological profile
PRONA	30	16.7	Right
PT	2485	14.1	Left
PC do B	149	13.4	Left
PST	407	13.3	Centre

There is little discrepancy regarding the percentages of elected women in the parties. However, the lack of earlier data hinders an analysis of the possible effects of the quotas on different parties. Nevertheless, the data does confirm the view that women tend to be more accepted in smaller parties, with emphasis on the left-wing ones, and face greater difficulties in the larger parties, even more so in the more conservative ones.

The Elections of 1998 and 2002 to the State Assemblies and the Federal Chamber

Elections to the state legislatures and the Federal Chamber were held in 1998. Although this was the country's second general experience of the quota system, it was the first time that it was applied on a regional and federal scale. The minimum quota for each gender became 25 percent. In 2002, the second election for these levels of representation took place, with a definitive quota, stipulated by law, of 30 percent.

The quotas for State Assemblies

Table 5 allows us to highlight several features. One of them concerns the rise in the number of female candidates, a trend detected before the adoption of quotas. Subsequently, an increase can be observed between the first and second election, but it was smaller, particularly when the increase in the minimum percentage of places for each gender is considered.

Table 5: Women Candidates and Women Elected to State Assemblies, Brazil, 1982–2002

Year	Candidates	% Total	Elected	% Total	% Growth
1982	-	-	28	3.0	-
1986	-	-	31	3.3	10.7
1990	-	-	58	5.5	87.0
1994	591	7.2	82	7.8	45.5
1998	1,270	12.6	101	9.7	23.2
2002	1,863	14.6	129	12.5	28.5

None of the parties observed the quotas, and, as with city councils, the smaller parties had higher percentages of female candidacies in the state context. When compared to the performance of the major parties in the last elections (see Table 6) one can suggest that the quota system has had an impact on centre and right-wing candidacies. The main left-wing party, however, was minimally affected. In this case, the percentage of female candidates even decreased slightly during the 2002 elections.

Table 6: Total and Percentage of Women Elected to State Assemblies: Six Main Parties, 1994–2002

Party	1994			1998			2002		
	Total general	Women	%	Total general	Women	%	Total general	Women	%
PFL	157	8	5.1	169	14	8.8	120	9	7.5
PPR/PPB	113	4	3.5	107	9	8.4	93	7	7.5
PMDB	205	11	5.4	171	18	10.5	134	22	16.4
PSDB	97	8	8.3	150	15	10.0	138	23	16.7
PDT	86	8	9.3	71	6	8.5	62	6	9.8
PT	92	16	17.4	85	16	18.8	147	29	19.7

A new examination of Table 5 clearly shows that the Legislative Assemblies present a stable growth in female participation. In absolute terms, this growth was higher during the last election, but, in relative terms, the largest increase can be perceived to have occurred in 1990, when the first election after the constitutive process took place. Quotas do not seem to alter a pre-existing trend, but they can consolidate it.

The electoral results for the Federal Chamber

As a basis for comparison, four elections were considered: 1990 and 1994,¹³ before the application of the quota system, and 1998 and 2002, after quotas were established. Table 7 presents evidence that shows that, between 1994 and 1998, there were significant increases in the percentages of female candidacies, a fact that can be interpreted as being due to the effect of quotas. However, the number of female candidates remained relatively small and far from the quota of 25 percent. Changes occurring between 1998 and 2002, although positive, cannot be considered very significant. Not even half of the minimum percentage established for the election, that is, a 30 percent quota, was achieved.

Table 7: Percentage of Women Candidates to the Federal Chamber, 1990–2002

Year	Total candidates	Women	% Women candidates
1990	3,596	229	6.4
1994	3,007	185	6.2
1998	3,361	348	10.4
2002	4,176	481	11.5

What occurred in the city councils and the state assemblies resembled what happened among the political parties: none reached the 30 percent mark in regard to female candidacies. Small parties of all ideological persuasions obtained the highest percentages. The percentage of female candidates among the six parties that have been examined more systematically (including the PT), did not reach 14 percent (see Table 8). The smallest impact was on the PT. Even though it had the highest proportion of women in the group, it achieved smaller growth, compared to 1994. Since 1990, the PT has had more female candidates than any of the other parties. The adoption of quotas did not do much to alter these levels. In terms of a comparison of the evolution of the candidacies, a suggestion can be made that, as in the case of state parliaments, the quotas tend to have an initially positive impact on the centre or centre-right parties competing for seats in the Federal Chamber. Such parties are normally not receptive to the ingression of groups traditionally considered as outsiders in the political realm.

Table 8: Women Candidates to the Federal Chamber: Six Main Parties, 1990–2002

Parties	1990			1994			1998			2002		
	Total	Women	%	Total	Women	%	Total	Women	%	Total	Women	%
PDS/PPR/PPB	211	8	3.8	262	14	5.3	228	21	7.4	193	11	5.7
PFL	281	12	4.3	233	6	2.6	272	22	8.1	225	21	9.3
PMDB	444	19	4.3	396	24	6.1	344	42	12.2	307	33	10.7
PSDB	240	17	7.1	271	17	6.3	287	26	9.1	264	33	12.5
PDT	385	22	5.7	304	13	4.3	299	28	9.5	276	31	11.2
PT	377	41	10.9	373	38	10.2	326	40	12.3	417	58	13.9

By examining the data relating to all three electoral levels—city councils, state assemblies and the Federal Chamber—one can perceive that the percentage of women competing for legislative positions decreases as the complexity of the dispute increases. The data also suggests that the policy of quotas had an initially positive impact, but its goals were far from being achieved in all four elections. This difficulty tends to be more significant at the federal level than at the municipal level.

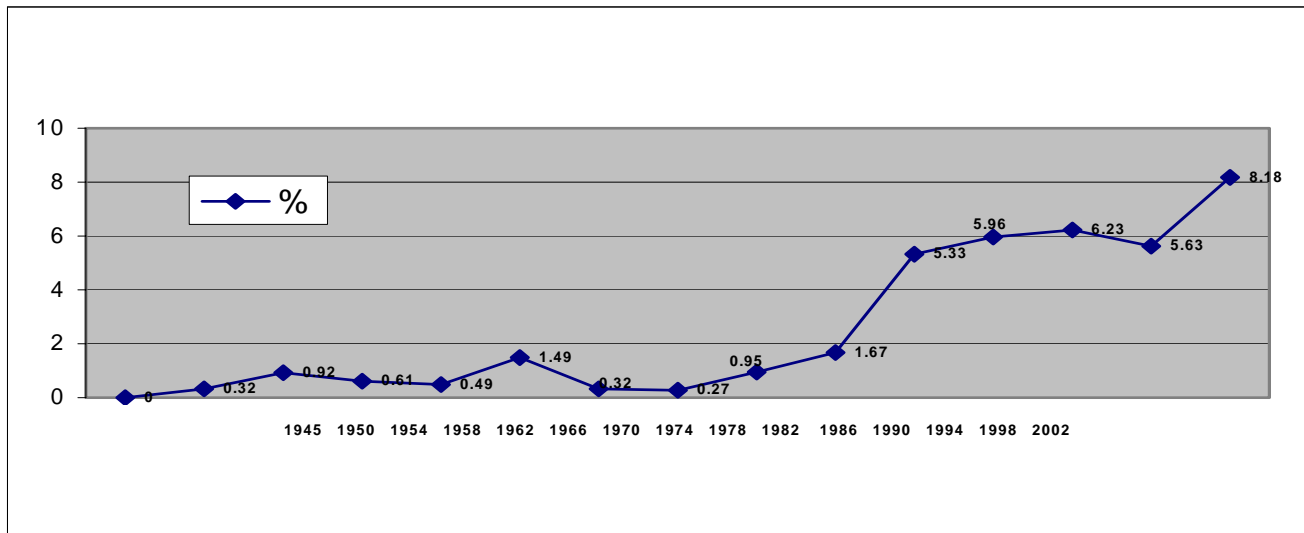
Elections to the Federal Chamber Before and After the Quotas

Analysis of the elected contingent must be interpreted in the more general context of the evolution of the female presence in the Brazilian Federal Chamber. As previously mentioned, the largest change in the female presence occurred between 1982 and 1986, when the first democratic elections in 20 years took place. After this, growth diminished and, during the 1998 elections, when quotas were adopted for the first time, a decrease in the contingent of elected women can be observed. Table 9 and Figure 1 illustrate the evolution of women's participation in the Federal Chamber and, at the same time, the lack of an initial impact of the quota system on the elections of 1998. In fact, there was a rapid decrease in the already incipient percentage of elected women: from 6.2 percent in 1994 to 5.2 percent in 1998. The results of the 2002 elections were much more favourable. The percentage of elected congresswomen reached 8.2 percent of the total, an increase of 45.3 percent in comparison to the previous elections. Still, this increase does not beat the one registered in 1986 in relative terms. When *the relation between all female candidacies and the ones who were elected* is considered, one can perceive that, in 1994, 17 percent of all candidates got elected. In 1998, 8.3 percent of candidates were elected. In 2002, although the elected percentage in relation to all elected candidates increased, *the proportion of elected females decreased to seven percent of the candidacies*. Indeed, it seems impossible to establish a direct relation between the high levels of female candidacies and the high levels of elected females, as suggested in previous studies (IPU, 1997). In the Brazilian case this is a significant issue, since one of the strong arguments in favour of the quota system is to ensure a greater number of female candidates in order to widen the universe of elected females. Low numbers of competing women is due to the resistance of party leaders to the idea of increasing the number of female candidates.

Table 9: Presence of Women in the Federal Chamber, 1945–2002

Year	Total	Women	%
1945	286	0	0
1950	304	1	0.32
1954	326	3	0.92
1958	326	2	0.61
1962	409	2	0.49
1966	409	6	1.49
1970	310	1	0.32
1974	326	1	0.27
1978	420	4	0.95
1982	479	8	1.67
1986	487	26	5.33
1990	503	28	5.96
1994	513	32	6.23
1998	513	29	5.63
2002	513	42	8.18

Figure 1: Percentage of Women Elected to the National Congress, 1945–2002



In 1998 and 2002 the smallest parties elected most women in relative terms. In addition, there was a trend of left-wing parties electing more females than centre and right-wing ones (Table 10).

Table 10: Percentage of Elected Women to the Federal Chamber: First Political Parties, 2002

Political party	Women elected	% total councilpersons	Ideological profile
PCdoB	5	41.6%	Left
PST	1	33.3%	Right-centre
PSD	1	25.0%	Right-centre
PT	14	15.4%	Left

If we consider the six main parties that are being followed, the first three places belong to the PT, the PSDB and the PFL, respectively (Table 11). The number of parties that elected women also widened. In 1994, ten organizations elected female officials; in 1998, only seven did so. In 2002, this number increased again to 11 parties, out of a total of 30. There was also a general increase in the number of parties that elected representatives of either gender. However, due to the switching of parties by various congresspersons, not all parties that elected candidates were able to secure their seats in the National Congress.¹⁴ The fact that 11 parties elected women is also due to the fragmentation of the Brazilian party system. Although the specific literature normally defines a large party as one that has at least 30 percent congressional representation, in the case of Brazil, in 2002, the PT achieved the largest share with 17.7 percent, and only four parties provide more than ten percent of all congresspersons.

Table 11: Women Elected to the Federal Chamber: Six Main Parties, 1990–2002

Political Party	1990			1994			1998			2002		
	Total	Women	%	Total	Women	%	Total	Women	%	Total	Women	%
PPB	42	4	9.3	52	3	5.8	60	0	0.0	49	1	2.0
PFL	83	3	3.6	89	2	2.3	105	5	4.8	84	6	7.1
PMDB	108	5	5.6	107	8	7.5	83	8	9.6	74	4	5.4
PSDB	38	1	2.5	63	5	7.9	99	7	7.1	71	6	8.5
PDT	46	6	10.3	34	2	5.9	25	1	4.0	21	1	4.8
PT	35	5	14.3	50	7	14.5	58	5	8.6	91	14	15.4

The distribution of the total number of elected women based on the most general ideological profile—left, right and centre—shows that 50 percent were elected by the left, 26.2 percent by the centre and 16.7 percent by the right (Figure 2). The concentration is the same if we observe the percentage of elected deputies in comparison to the overall number of elected candidates in their respective parties, gathering them in each of the three categories: 14.4 percent of the elected candidates in leftist parties are female; in the centre parties, the proportion is 6.1 percent; and in the rightist parties, it is 5.3 percent (Table 12). Even when the undefined are considered (they can be viewed as centre or centre-right candidates), this concentration holds true. An initial comparison with the previous elections—1994 and 1998—reveals a transformation in the ideological profile of the elected congresswomen. In 1994, there was a decrease in the number of leftist representatives and those in the centre became more numerous. This trend continued

during the 1998 elections, after the quotas were adopted. In 2002, there was an increase in female representation, mainly due to the results of left-wing parties.

Figure 2: Women Elected in 2002: Ideological Profile

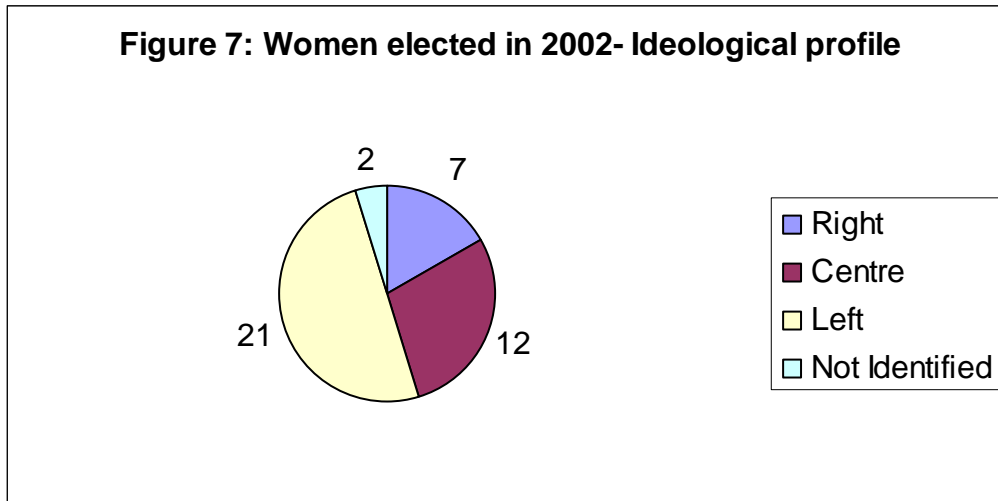


Table 12: Percentage of Elected Women Representatives: Ideological Profile, 2002

Ideological profile	Total	Women elected	% Women elected
Right	133	7	5.3%
Centre	197	12	6.1%
Left	146	21	14.4%
No definition	7	2	28.6%

It is important to note that the left, in alliance with several parties from the centre, was victorious in the 2002 elections. The PT not only elected the president, but it also elected a greater number of senators and its level of representation in the Federal Chamber rose by 57 percent. Other left-wing parties also increased their numbers of representatives. The centre-right alliance, which supported the federal government for eight years, now has fewer representatives. Nevertheless, two parties, one on the right (the PFL) and one in the centre (the PSDB), increased their female presence (Table 11).

Periods of significant political change can influence the gender composition of parliamentary representation. This tendency has been observed in other nations¹⁵ and is suggested by the evolution of the female presence in the Brazilian parliament. It is a factor that must be taken into account in this analysis.

The comparison between the two elections that took place after the adoption of quotas suggests an impact on the first election candidacies, but not on its results. In 2002 there was a further rise in the number of female candidacies, but it was smaller than in the previous election. The percentage of women elected grew considerably. Yet, when one examines the party profile of the elected females, including those in the

Senate, it is fair to state that the more intense electoral environment may have had a greater influence on the increase than did the quotas. At the same time, the data shows that the quotas had a more significant impact on the candidacies in large centre and right-wing parties. Generally, these were the more conservative and traditional parties, whose spheres of influence were already firmly occupied. New political actors tended to find it harder to gain access to these organizations. However, the general data indicates that the quota system did not have a considerable impact in electoral terms on all levels: city council, state assemblies and the Federal Chamber.

An Interpretation of the Results

The issue of the female presence in the representative levels involves distinct analytical dimensions. Its origin includes a background of historical exclusion, social trajectories marked by its gender condition, aspects related to the socio-economic situation and elements of the political system, such as the political culture, the party and the electoral system.¹⁶ These factors also tend to influence the outcome of the quota system. As suggested by various studies,¹⁷ positive results derived from the quota system appear to be conditioned by a combination of factors, such as the degree of organization and the strength of women's movements within party structures, the political culture and the conditions of the electoral system. In regard to the latter, the type of voting list, closed or open, appears to be relevant in order to understand the results of the quota system in Brazil. Other specific issues can also be considered as relevant in relation to the results.

The Electoral System

A matter that has been the subject of much debate within PR systems concerns the relation between potential female access and the types of electoral lists. Open list systems tend to be identified with more individualized competition. Party politics tend to yield less weight than the personal influence of the individual candidate, thus spurring competition among candidates of the same party.¹⁸ Nevertheless, not all authors are in full agreement on this issue; some defend positive aspects of the open list.¹⁹ The literature suggests that closed or semi-closed lists tend to be more favourable towards women than open lists. Some evidence, however, tends to contend this thesis, as in the case of Finland. Finland is a country with an open list system and has the third most significant level of female participation in parliament in the world. This reinforces the analytical view that takes into account multiple causes when studying female access to politics.

Unlike the controversies that exist concerning the influence of the types of lists on the election of women, the relation between list systems and the quota system seems clearer. The effectiveness of the quota system seems to be more evident when the results obtained by this system are analysed according to the type of system and the type of electoral lists effective in each country.²⁰

In Latin America, there are some discrepancies regarding the results achieved under the quota laws in countries whose electoral systems use closed or semi-closed lists and those that use open lists. This is a significant point, since these nations (on the same continent) share some common traits, in terms of culture, economic policies and democratic construction (although the degree of political organization and the type of electoral system may vary). The weakest results to date were obtained in Panama, where the percentage of female members of the House of Representatives increased from 9.0 percent to 9.7 percent, and in Brazil. Peru, however, has an open list system (like Brazil) and has achieved more positive electoral results.

This brief discussion suggests that quotas tend to be more effective in systems with closed or semi-closed lists than in those with open lists. In countries with an electoral system like that of Brazil, forming a list of

candidates tends to be a formal and legal procedure. Voters vote for a candidate, not for the list. Votes can favour a particular candidate, irrespective of the associated party, thus resulting in an individualized competition.²¹ Voters gain awareness of the candidates by means of electoral propaganda. Often, candidates that have a broad support base or considerable financial resources launch a propaganda campaign independent of that of their party. Being part of a list of party names, therefore, does not guarantee the support of the party or that the candidate has visibility in the electoral race. Moreover, in the internal dynamics of each party, what is most important, above all, is the number of votes that each candidate obtains.

Some researchers argue that semi-closed or closed lists allow for greater interference by the party in respect of the organization and presentation of candidates. In this case, quotas could be more effective. At the same time, the Argentine case demonstrates that the closed list can work better for the implementation of quotas when women have enough political strength to impose other requirements, such as alternate sequencing of names according sex, or some kind of sanction when the quota is incomplete. This also holds true for the semi-closed list. Otherwise, females tend to be positioned at the bottom of the list.

Aspects of the Brazilian Quota law

As mentioned previously, in addition to the list system, there are two aspects that further weaken the Brazilian legislation on quotas. The first one concerns fulfilment of established percentages. According to the law, if the minimum established percentage (30 percent from 2000) is not satisfied by one gender, it cannot be met by candidates of the opposite sex. But the parties are not obliged to occupy all of the positions; there are no restrictions or punishments for not doing so. The second aspect relates to the contingent of competing candidates, which has had an indirect effect on the law. The 1997 legislation increased the number of competing candidates by 50 percent. In other words, a party can present up to 150 percent of the candidates for the total number of seats up for election. It becomes harder to fill the seats and alterations in list formation if proceedings are not enforced since the total number of places is big enough to include all.

Interviews with candidates and party leaders showed that this scenario, in both the 1998 and 2000 elections, led to the incomplete fulfilment of the quotas by most parties. It also resulted in the absence of female mobilization and debates when the lists of candidates were being formed. In this context, the possibilities for female mobilization tended to be small and their possible symbolic effect minimized. In fact, the lack of objective mechanisms to generate or stimulate debate leads to the conclusion that the process was marked by bureaucratic and formal procedures.

Features of the Brazilian electoral system and the type of quota legislation that was adopted appear to explain why quotas were approved with relative ease for all parties, irrespective of their ideological profile, in a country still characterised by unclear citizenship issues and various forms of gender inequality. The quota system had little influence on promoting modifications of the inner logic of the country's electoral processes and, consequently, of the situation of woman in terms of proportional representation.

The Electoral Campaign and Public Financing

The literature highlights the fact that the conditions surrounding electoral campaigns—pertaining to support groups, the media, and, above all, financial resources—are relevant factors when considering the eligibility of women. In Brazil, these factors seem to be decisive when competing in the electoral campaign. The main problem resides in the absence of public financing of political campaigns. Although parties receive a certain amount of public funds, the amount is a function of the number of seats involved and, in fact, is insignificant when the overall costs of a campaign are considered. Each party distributes its funds according to its own political criteria, based on the electoral appeal of the candidates.

During the official campaigning period, the electoral legislation grants all parties taking part in the elections free space in the media—radio and television. Time is distributed according to each party's influence in the National Congress, and the parties must determine how much time each candidate will be allocated or even which candidates can have access to this time. There is no evidence of discrimination against female candidates. A research project on the Free Television Advertisement Time-Table (HGPE), for candidates in the state of Rio de Janeiro, shows a certain balance between the percentage of candidates of each gender and their access to the HGPE. However, an analysis of the time distribution clearly reveals the dominance of male candidates with the longest exposure or those that represent priorities for their parties.

The continental influences on the country, the individual character of the competition and the absence of public financing means that candidates need some form of more established political capital. The latter can take several forms. Many political agents recognize financial capital as a fundamental factor, all the more in state and federal campaigns.²² Support groups are another form of capital, in cases where candidates are community or union leaders, or where they represent specific interest groups. Individual charisma can also be a decisive asset in the political competition. Religious leaders, artists, soccer players and others tend to possess it. Belonging to a family of politicians can also be considered an important form of capital.

Women, when examining the first two forms of political capital, have a structural disadvantage even before entering the competition. In regard to financial capital, they are at a disadvantage because they earn less money and possess fewer resources. In the second case, with the exception of community associations, their disadvantage is due to the fact they do not occupy the more important positions in these movements. These points help to explain the prevailing profile of elected females: either women coming from community associations, normally elected by the left, or women possessing family capital (spouses, sisters or daughters of politicians), usually elected by the centre or right. The fact that the quota law does not include any kind of affirmative action mechanism or an instrument to ensure the democratic distribution of campaign resources contributes to the fact that the adoption of quotas cannot produce more substantial changes to this scenario.

Political Parties

A final factor that is relevant in this review is related to the organization and the strength of women inside the parties. Due to limited space, only a brief reference will be made to this subject. The history of organization of the feminist movement in Brazil, stemming from the re-democratization process, has created a certain amount of tension between the 'autonomous movements' and women defined as 'partisans'.²³ For some time, participation in political parties was not considered a feminist activity, and was viewed with distrust by participants in the 'autonomous women's movements'. This tension hampered women's efforts to organize inside the political parties, including those on the left. In addition, there were difficulties due to frequent amalgamations and name changes, not to mention the organizational difficulties inherent in the Brazilian party system. Most parties, with the exception of a few left-wing ones, do not have an internal organization that functions as a structured and permanent channel for the participation of their militants and affiliates. Therefore, access to the party's resources, to its structure and to its political decision-making tends to be limited to the authorities that command the party's mechanisms. Interviews showed that few parties held internal meetings or defined specific strategies to fulfil the quotas. This was the case even among parties that had some form of organized female representation.

Final Considerations

The results can also be evaluated based on their symbolic and cultural dimensions. In this aspect, the experience is still relatively recent for a consistent review of its effects. The issue of female participation

was most visible in the 2002 elections, including a female candidate for the presidency of the republic, a vice-presidential candidate in the governmental party, and five women running for state government (two were elected). The themes of gender rights and public policy gained more space in debates and in electoral propaganda. Also, affirmative action initiatives were discussed and it was suggested that they be included in many government policies. These are noteworthy achievements that can be considered to be positive results, symbolic or indirect, of the quota system.

Quantitative results can also influence subjectively many political actors. Among women, the electoral gains can either stimulate or inhibit their willingness to enter the competition. Leaders can perceive the electoral power that can be held by women in their parties, but they can also reinforce some existing prejudices, such as the concept of 'feminine apathy' in politics or the inaptitude of women to compete. Simplistic interpretations that focus on the absence of willing female candidates, or their weak performances in elections, have been noted by party leaders and by part of the media. In this case, the results are interpreted as a female problem and as an expression of their lack of interest in politics, not as a consequence of difficulties arising from a structural situation and from features of the nation's political system.

When considering the central aspect of this paper, the electoral results in Brazil, it can be said that the results obtained to date do not suggest a very favourable balance, although the data does not justify categorical conclusions. While results on the candidacy level have in part been positive, they have been very weak at the electoral level. The recent (2002) elections suggest that other factors had played a part.

It must be noted that the limitations perceived until now suggest a need to focus on features of the electoral system and the quota legislation. It is imperative, however, to widen the debate to include other economic, cultural and social conditions that restrain the participation of Brazilian women in politics.

Notes

¹ The first part of this research project was included in the author's doctoral thesis, completed in January 2000. The second part was initiated in October 2000 and is in the process of being concluded. The research is based on statistical and qualitative data—interviews with participants in the political process and analyses of documents. Up to the present, 96 interviews have been carried out, including with party leaders, parliamentary representatives, candidates for elective office and women participating in specific women's departments of political parties.

² Until 2002, 7.4 % of the Senate was made up of women. In 2002, eight female Senators were elected (of 54), amounting to 14.8% of the total.

³ In April 2002, due to a license of the elected governor, Benedita da Silva, the vice-governor, became governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro. She was the first-ever black woman to occupy this position in Brazil.

⁴ Data published by the Superior Electoral Tribunal (TSE) indicates 10.2% growth in the number of municipalities in the country. A similar trend had already been observed in previous elections, with a 59.8% increase between 1988 and 1992 (IBAM, 1997).

⁵ Although the PT has the most extensive experience, the process of quotas adoption for its instances was marked by intense controversy, and the proposal was initially rejected. Its policy of a minimum of 30 percent of female positions includes the national, regional and municipal directories.

⁶ This subject was briefly discussed in the feminist preparatory meeting on Gender and Power at the Fourth World Conference on Women. However, the approved recommendations did not include quotas.

⁷ As can be seen in Araújo, 2000.

⁸ Philips, 1995.

⁹ Varikas, 1995; Squires, 1996.

¹⁰ The lack of systematic statistical data until 2000 affects in particular the municipal elections. In this case, the lack of identification holds for all candidates in some states and for significant percentages in some important and populous states, like São Paulo.

¹¹ To ensure a more systematic evaluation, two parties in each ideological sphere were chosen: the PT and the PDT for the left; the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB) and the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB) for the centre; and the Brazilian People's Party (PPB) and the Liberal Front Party (PFL) for the right. The PDT has been outmatched by the Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB) in number of congresspersons. Yet, for reasons of comparison, the same parties were considered in all elections.

¹² Definitions of large and medium-sized parties tend to vary a little, according to the electoral results for the National Congress. Given the fragility of the party legislation, after the election most congresspersons switched parties (according to their interests), creating new force correlations. Normally, the parties that sustain the government tend to receive elected congresspersons that were under different headings.

¹³ In Brazil the mandate lasts for four years. Elections of councillors and mayors do not coincide with the election of members of the House of Representatives, governors and president. Thus an election occurs every two years.

¹⁴ In 2002, 19 parties elected congresspersons, but during the beginning of the legislature 35 members of the Congress had switched their headings, reducing the number of parties represented in the Federal Chamber to 15. The PSD and the PST, which elected four and three congresspersons respectively, (each including a woman), will not be represented because all of the elected candidates switched parties even before the start of the new legislature.

¹⁵ Short, 1996.

¹⁶ See, for example, Lovenduski and Norris, 1993; 1996; Reynolds, 1999; and Inglehart and Norris, 2000.

¹⁷ Polanco, 1999; Viegas and Farias, 2001; Araújo, 2001; Htun and Jones, 2002.

¹⁸ Nicolau and Schimitt, 1995; Nohlen, 1995.

¹⁹ Lima Junior, 1997.

²⁰ Polanco, 1999; Araújo, 2001; Htun and Jones, 2002.

²¹ In Brazil, the sum of votes in the party and the votes for candidates form the electoral quotient. This has contributed to the fact that elected candidates could not obtain enough votes.

²² The financial aspect was the most cited item by interviewees.

²³ See Goldberg, 1989.

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