

Campaign Finance Quotas and Descriptive Representation: Evidence from Brazil, 2002-2022

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I am a PhD candidate in Economics at Sciences Po Paris, since 2022.

My interests lie in the fields of Political Economy, Economic History and Development, with a focus on gender.

My research projects focus on the development of democratic institutions and the historical exclusion of women from them and policy remedies.

Before the PhD, I worked as a research assistant at the central bank of Greece and at the Ministry of Health.

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Can campaign finance rules be used to increase descriptive representation in elected office? Despite the adoption of gender quotas across over 130 countries since 1995 aiming to raise the share of women in parliament to 30 percent, its global average remains at 26 percent. Beyond quotas, earmarking public campaign funds for minority candidates is another policy tool that countries have experimented with to level the playing field in access to campaign resources, and remains understudied. We study the efficiency of a novel 2021 reform in Brazil that goes further than earmarking in tying the allocation of public funds to the performance of female and racial minority candidates. Joint project with Julia Cagé and Felipe Lauritzen.

Reform

In 2020, the Brazilian Supreme Court ruled that public campaign funds given to parties should be fairly distributed across gender and race. In 2021, an amendment stated that parties would receive double the amount of public funds for the performance of female and Afro-Brazilian candidates. The reform provided financial incentives for party leaders to hire and place higher-quality minority candidates in good districts.

Empirical Strategy

Using a triple-diff strategy and exploiting a unique feature in the institutional setting that induces financial incentives in federal but not in state legislative elections, we causally identify the impact of the reform on candidate performance in the 2022 general election.

$$Voteshare_{ipst} = \beta Female_{ist} \times Federal_{ist} \times Post_t + X_{ipst} \times Post_t \gamma + W_{st} \times Post_t \delta + \zeta_{ps} + \omega_t + \epsilon_{ipst}$$

Preliminary Results

We find that the reform improved the performance of white women and black men but not that of black women, suggesting an intersectionality penalty.

| | (1) | (2) | (3) |
|---------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Female × Federal × Post | 0.072** (0.028) | 0.066** (0.026) | 0.063** (0.026) |
| Mean Dep Var | 0.297 | 0.297 | 0.297 |
| SD Dep Var | 0.945 | 0.945 | 0.945 |
| Observations | 121787 | 121774 | 121774 |
| Adjusted R ² | 0.035 | 0.181 | 0.211 |
| Year, Party-State FE | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Candidate, party controls | | | ✓ |

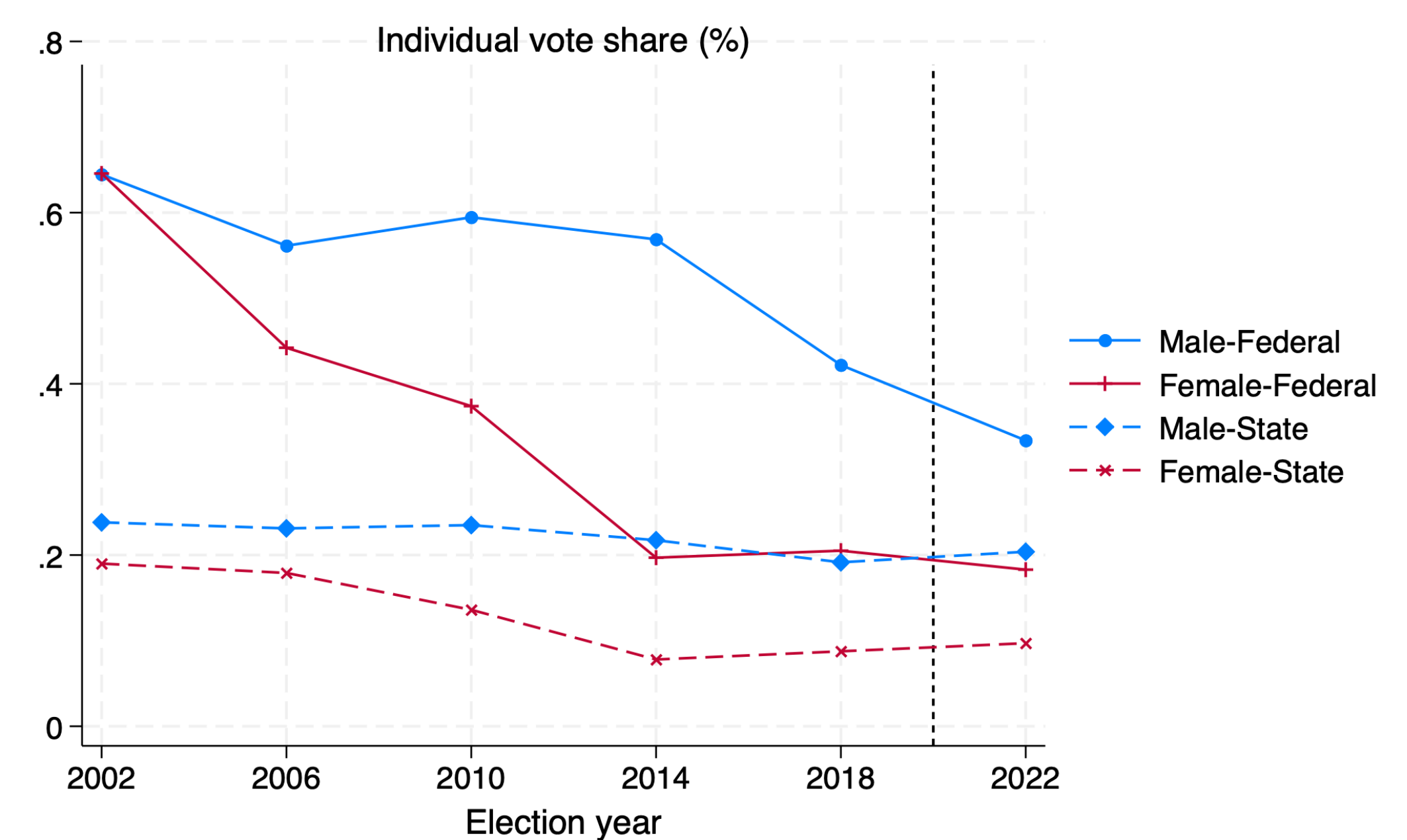
Note: This table presents the results from estimation of the equation above. The outcome is the mean vote share of a candidate as a percent of total state votes. Post dummy refers to 2022. Unit of observation is a candidate. Robust standard errors clustered at party level. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01.

Qualitative Party Interviews

We carried out qualitative interviews with party officials to explore different potential mechanisms driving the effect. We asked them about their knowledge and understanding of the reform, their perception of penalties and bindingness, and strategic response to it.

Data

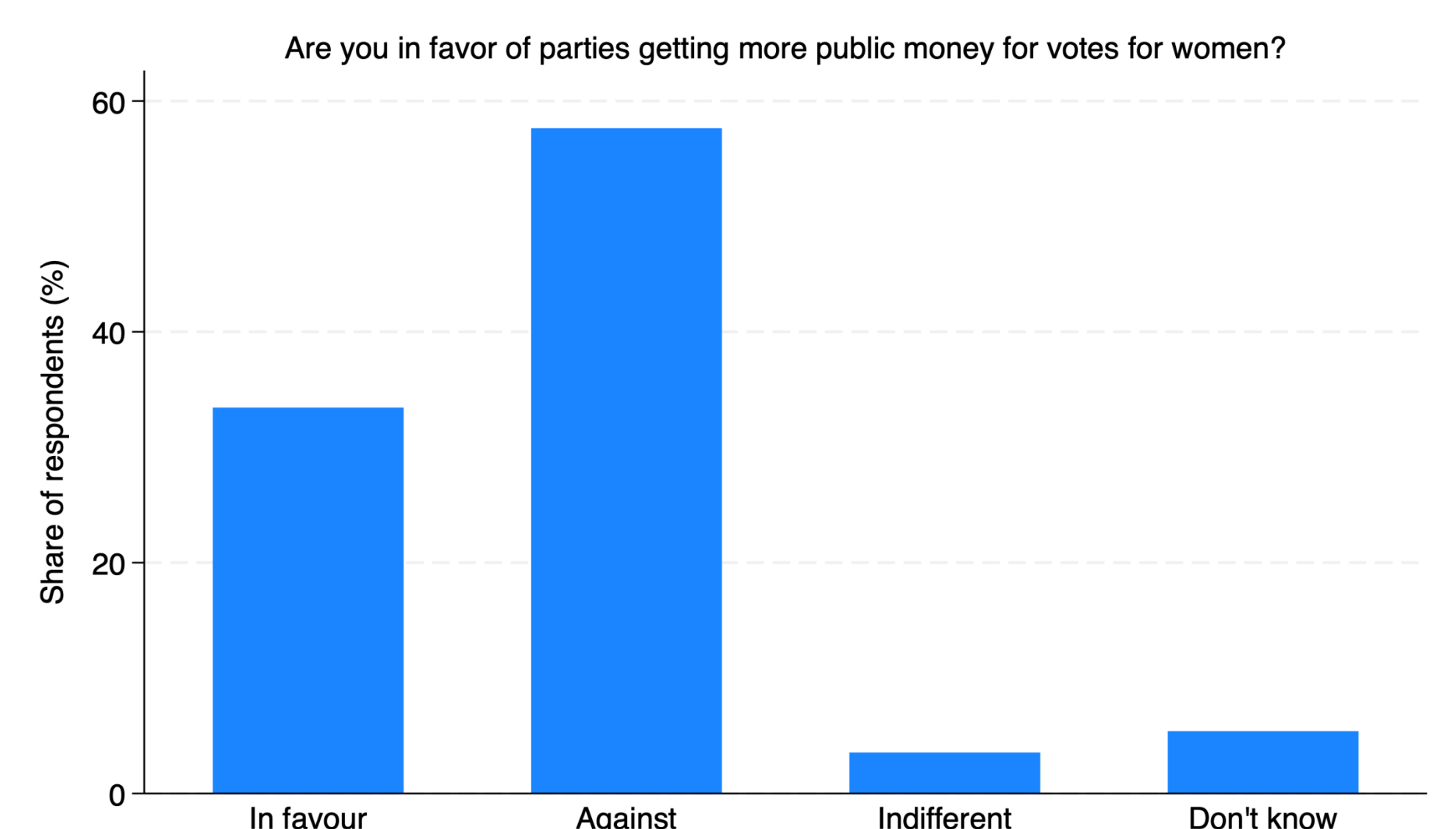
We build a novel dataset of individual candidate-level campaign donations, expenditures and electoral results for all general and municipal elections from 2002 to 2022, using official data from Brazil's Superior Electoral Court. We complement this with census data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics.



Note: This graph plots the mean shares of votes to male (blue) and female (red) candidates in federal (solid) and state (dashed) deputy elections. The vertical line indicates the timing of the reform. Source: Authors' own production.

Voter Survey Experiment

We conducted a voter survey experiment in Brazil in November 2022 to discard demand-driven effects of the reform. We surveyed 2,041 individuals across 100 municipalities. We asked respondents about their knowledge and perceptions of a set of affirmative action policies, including our reform of study. We found that providing information about the 2021 reform reduced support for redistribution ('backlash effect').



Note: This graph plots the share of survey respondents who answered that they were 'in favour', 'against', 'indifferent' or 'don't know' to the question 'Are you in favor of parties getting more public money for votes for women?' across the entire sample of 2,041 survey respondents. Source: Authors' own production.