

In the name of God

Shaping public opinion about homosexuals in Brazil

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01/18/2019

Abstract

Is brazilians' opinion about gay marriage conditioned to ideology and religion? Theory suggests politicians choose policies according to where they place themselves on a left-right scale, but is this true when it comes to public? My argument is, since people elect by representative democracy, they have the same opinion as deputies do; also, ideology and religion are very connected, as literature suggests, so, their opinion about same sex civil union must be connected with these two variables. The argument is tested by, first, analysing public and deputies opinion about the issue, and then, to understand if their opinion is shaped by ideology and religion, a regression test was used. In general terms, the hypotheses were confirmed, but only religion seems to be a determinant factor.

KEYWORDS: *LGBT, IDEOLOGY, RELIGION.*

Introduction

Are voters opinion shaped by ideology and religion? Do they think the same as deputies? Representative democracy has its own problems, but *representation* should not be one, unfortunately, it is. We elect people for the office thinking they will take our issues into consideration, but, sometimes, it does not happen. So, this article tries to investigate if this is true in Brazil about one specific topic: lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transsexuals (LGBTs) being under-represented (or not) in the country; also it tries to explain voters opinion about the issue. It is an important question about the quality of democracy.

The literature discusses the way representation is treated on democracies when it has to understand how minorities have been taken as an important issue for its quality. There are those who defend minorities should be included - physically - in Congress, and so their problems will be more discussed, and there are those who found out that what is really important is the party position in the ideological scale. Also, religion has been an important concern when legislators choose policies. Therefore, I built, based on theory, four hypotheses to be tested: first, since Brazil does not have a LGBT representation, the public opinion is the same as Congress (we do not elect LGBTs for the office), thus, Brazil might be a homophobic country, because we choose not to take this issue into an agenda. On the other hand, however, Congress is filled with differences in ideologic terms, so this matter might be defended by the left, and fought by the religious right.

The empirical strategy revolves around using a Descriptive Analysis and a Regression Model, whereupon, the first tries to see if the opinion of the public about same-sex marriage corresponds to the opinion of the deputies in Brazil. The second technique is a try to explain if public opinion is conditioned to the ideology and the religious of the respondent. I use two databases for that: one survey about the deputies opinion and the second about public opinion. Besides that, I chose to use some data available by the government of Brazil to see the situation of the LGBT community.

The results, unfortunately, did not corroborated the part of the hypotheses, but they had some implications for the presented study and for others. There is something very particular about Brazilian culture that we have to try to investigate and understand how their opinions are shaped; in other words, to know how they choose certain politics (and rights) instead of others. However, *religion* seems to be a determinant factor about their opinion on the issue.

This paper is an attempt to measure the quality of representative democracy in Brazil through one particular under-represented - at least in political terms - group. There are not many works about this issue in Brazil

that puts LGBTs and politics, combining factors of public and deputies opinion, so I am trying to fill this gap. This is relevant to understand our culture and also to know how legislators choose one policy instead of another.

Accordingly, this article is divided in five sections: first, I present the theories about this topic, second my argument with the hypotheses I test; third, the data and research design explored here, followed by the results and findings. Lastly, the implications of the study and the main conclusions. Also, in the end I present a brief appendix about the LGBT situation in Brazil

Literature Review

The idea of representation has been debated by two concepts: *standing for* and *acting for* (Pitkin, 1972); they both understand political representation in a democracy through how politicians behave about their position (acting for) or by who they are (standing for). In other words, the term means to act in the name of who elected the candidates (Carreirao, 2015), that is, their job is only to work for the people's interest.

The presence of minorities is an important issue on democracies (Miguel, 2000), once they are part of the society, nevertheless, they do not have the strength needed to make a difference on politics, due to the fact that, in general terms, the numbers on minorities are still very low, despite evidences that indicates that in politics there are no differences between gender and/or sex (Seltzer, Newman & Leighton, 1997).

Political representation of women has been a big concern for democracies in the world, and this is a powerful tool to measure the quality of democracy in those countries. Furthermore, gender and politics are not only a concern of politicians, but also an object of study of Political Science and they have been analyzed by many scholars (Norris & Lovenduski, 1989; Seltzer, Newman & Leighton, 1997; Chaney, 2006; Childs & Krook, 2009; Lawless & Fox, 2012; Ballington & Kahane, 2014; Erzeel & Celis 2016). The LGBT community, however, has not been very developed in science and politics, despite several works (Alexander, 2002; Haider-Markel, 2011; Reynolds, 2013; Sampaio & Germano, 2014).

Being part of a group does not necessarily increase the chances of representation, but it is known that the chances for that happens are higher (Haidermarkel, 2000). Having black people and women on Congress are a good thing for democracy and for the minority represented by the group, of course it does not guarantee that their interests will be attended. Furthermore, there are evidences that show gender and race are not particularly reasons for choosing a policy instead of another: it actually depends on the ideology of the party to select what is important and what is not (Frederick, 2011). LGBT agenda can also be a strategy for political benefit: once legislators talk and do an effort to include this issue on their platforms, people will see them as politicians who are working for democracy, inclusiveness and equality (Reynolds, 2013).

As it happens to women, when there are legislators that represent the community, laws about sexual orientation are more likely to have a space on national Congress (Reynolds, 2013). Moreover, democracies with more inclusiveness work better at making a stable and fair society (Norris, 2008). In Brazil, women have gained gradually more power on politics, but it still stands between 10% of the Congress ¹, although there are more than 50% of female electorate ². On LGBT, the scenario is worse: the first Senator openly gay was elected only in 2018, Fabiano Contarato from REDE party ³. In other words, it might be indicative of how Brazilians see public policy: if voters do not elect LGBT people for the office, it means that they are not very worried about this particular community.

However, if ideology matters, it can be expect that conservative people to reject more the idea of having policies about LGBT, due to the fact that they are, in the political spectrum, close to the right, once they value tradition, order and moral; on the other hand, the left is more liberal, at least in social terms, thus,

¹More information available here: http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2043_A.htm Accessed in 12/22/2018.

²More information available here: <http://www.tse.jus.br/imprensa/noticias-tse/2018/Marco/mulheres-representam-52-do-eleitorado-brasileiro> accessed in 24/12/2018.

³More information about Contarato available here: <https://especiais.gazetadopovo.com.br/eleicoes/2018/candidatos/es/senador/fabiano-contarato/> Accessed in 12/22/2018.

terms such as *progressive, equality and justice* are in the forefront of their ideas (Frederico, Napier & Jost, 2009).

Religion also seems to be a great determinant (Heywood, 2003) of preferences for policies about LGBT, after all, religious person denies the advance of minorities in general (Ferreira, 2016), once they want to maintain order and tradition, like the right.

Argument

Representation is one of the main concerns in a democracy, but if it does not fulfill the duty, public opinion will decrease on a government. It is a questionable topic, after all, that is why the vote is for. Furthermore, such as women, LGBTs have been under representation in political terms in Brazil, due to the fact that there are few politicians openly homosexuals.

Theory in Political Science (discussed above) shows that for an effective representation of minorities, it is necessary for Congress to have LGBT people talking about policies on their favor. If there are not, it means society does not elect them, and so it prefers not to talk about policies for them, thus Congress has the same opinion as voters (they are elected by them, after all). Also, Congress and society might be homophobic, once they choose not to talk about them.

Hypothesis 1: in Brazil, public opinion about LGBT people is the same as Congress.

Hypothesis 2: Brazil is a homophobic country.

On the other hand, parties determine policies, and theory says the left is more worried about minority than the right, which could mean that ideology matters. Besides that, religion also seems to be a determinant factor on policy positions.

Hypothesis 3: ideology and religion explain policy positions about LGBT.

The figure 1 below summarizes the theory presented here.

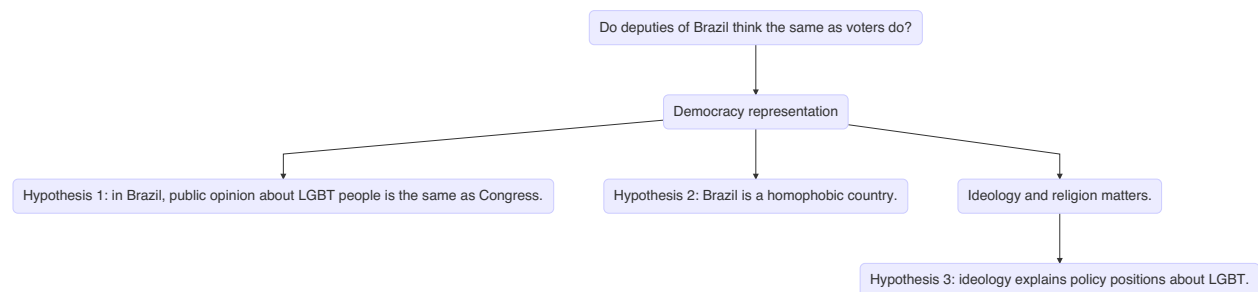


Figure 1 - Theory

Research Design and Data

The argument is tested using two databases: the first about the deputies in Brazil available from the *Observatorio de Elites Parlamentarias en America Latina (PELA)* ⁴ over the year of 2010, and the second about public opinion available from the *Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP)* ⁵ also over the year of 2010. This year was chosen because it is the most recent period available in the databases with the variables I need. Due to the fact that my research question involves two objects (deputies and public opinion), these two databases are very important, first for analyzing the opinion of the deputies and public, second for understanding if their position is conditioned by other characteristics, such as ideology and religion.

⁴More information of how to get data here: <http://americo.usal.es/oir/elites/index.htm> Accessed in 12/26/2018

⁵Data available here: <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/> Accessed in 12/26/2018

In methodological terms, the variable of interest (or dependent variable) is their position (in favor or against) the union of same-sex couples (*same-sex civil union*), which will be described in a first moment (for hypotheses 1 and 2), and then, to know if deputies and public opinion is associated, I chose to do a *Descriptive Analysis*, because their answers to the survey will be in plots that can be used to analyse them.

To test hypotheses 3, a regression model is necessary, once I want to explain how they stand on this question. So the model is presented below:

$$\text{Opinion about same-sex marriage} = \text{ideology} + \text{frequency of religious worship}.$$

To summarize, my two objects of analysis are (1) deputy interviewed by PELA, and (2) person interviewed by LAPOP; the year is 2010 and the techniques are Correspondence Analysis and Regression. The dependent variable is *opinion about same-sex marriage*; the model has two independent variables: *ideology* and *frequency of religious worship*.

All the variables presented here are categorical and they are in total 12 variables, as tables 1 and 2 show below:

Table 1: LAPOP Database

Variable__code	Meaning	Scale
q1	Sex	1-Man; 2- Woman
d5	Do you approve or disapprove that homosexuals run for office?	1- Strongly disapprove/10- Strongly approve
d6	Do you approve or disapprove that homosexuals have the right to get married?	1- Strongly disapprove/10- Strongly approve
l1	How do you place yourself on a left-right scale?	1- Left/10- Right
q3c	What is your religion?	1- Catholic, 2 -Protestant, 3- Not Christian, 4- None, 5- Evangelical Pentecostal, 6- Mormon, 7- Traditional or Native Religions, 8- Kardecist Spiritist, 10- Jewish, 11- Atheist, 12- Jehovah's Witness
q5a	How often do you go to religious cult?	1- More than once a week, 2- Once a week, 3- Once or twice a month, 4- Once or twice a year, 5- Never or almost never
q5b	How important is religion in your life?	1- Very important, 2- Something important, 3- Little important, 4- Not important

Table 2: LAPOP Database

Variable__code	Meaning	Scale
SOCD4	Sex	1- Man/2- Woman
VAL1	Do you approve or disapprove that homosexuals have the right to get married?	1- Strongly disapprove/10- Strongly approve
ID1	How do you place yourself on a left-right scale?	1- Left/10- Right
RE1a	What is your religion?	1- Catholic, 2- Protestant, 3- Not Christian, 4- Evangelical Pentecostal, 6- Traditional or Native Religions, 9- Others

Variable__code	Meaning	Scale
RE1b	How often do you go to religious cult?	5- More than once a week, 4- Once a week, 3- Once a month, 2- Once or twice a year, 1- Never or almost never, 9- Others

In sum, the object of analysis is the interviewed by *lapop* and *pela* in 2010; the database were taken from their own website. The techniques are both quantitative and, first, I chose to do a descriptive analysis, including an exploratory analysis, and then a linear regression, which are on the next section.

Findings/Results⁶

LAPOP Data

LGBT

An important question⁷, first, is to know if Brazilians would agree that a homosexual run for office on elections and, fortunately, LAPOP (public opinion) has that on its survey: *do you approve or disapprove that homosexuals run for office?*⁸, it is a scale from 1 to 10, which the first means that they *strongly disapprove*, and the second that they *strongly approve*. The descriptive data on graph 1 does not show differences among men and women, both seem to have the same opinion. However, when this data is crossed in a chi square test, as shown on table 3, the p-value is significant (0.013) and 9 degrees of freedom.

⁶The *script* and database used in this section are available on GitHub <https://github.com/RenataCavalcanti/Data>, and on Dataverse <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/O6PQTW>

⁷The survey of 2010 is available here: http://datasets.americasbarometer.org/database/files/17600748482010_Brasil_Questionnaire_Portuguese.pdf

⁸Question code is *d5*.

Graph 1 – Should homosexuals run for office?



Source: LAPOP

Graph 1 is divided by sex and it is noticeable that, first, the majority of men and women do not have a problem about homosexuals running for office, but the data is extensive splitted by 10 groups, which could be an indicative of matter. Comparing the first and the last clusters, in total, 499 people strongly disapprove, while 1155 strongly approve that homosexuals run for office.

Table 3: Chi-Square

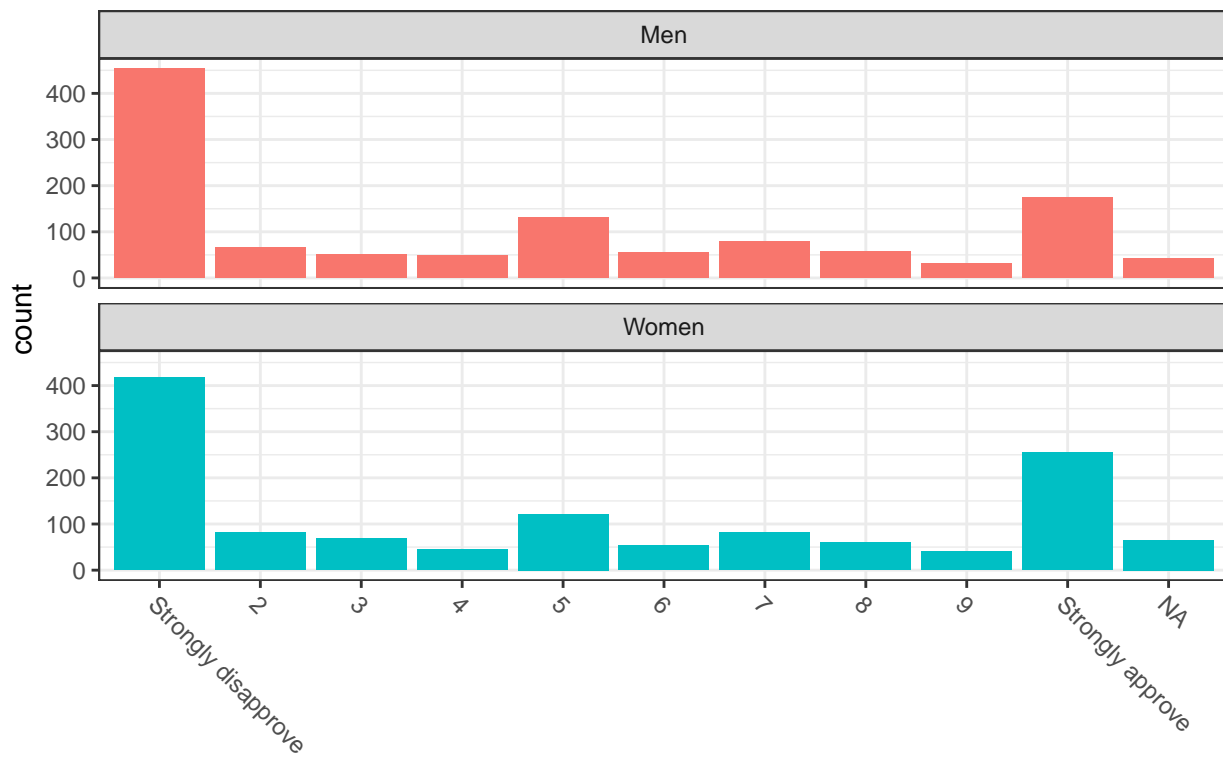
Coefficients	Value
X-Squared	20.86
P-Value	0.013
df	9
N	2482

Again, table 3 is a chi-square test whereupon I used the variables described on graph 1; this test was chosen due to its utility to compare different groups, which, in this model is between men and women. As seen above, p-value was significant with 9 degrees of freedom, which means the null hypothesis is rejected and there is a relationship between gender and agreement about homosexuals running for office.

Despite that, Brazilians seem to have something against the civil union of people of the same sex. According to the data, the majority of men and women *strongly disapprove* same sex civil union ⁹; as graph 2 shows, women are more sympathetic with this idea than men, but when we go to the number of disagreement, it increases on both sexes.

⁹Question code: d6

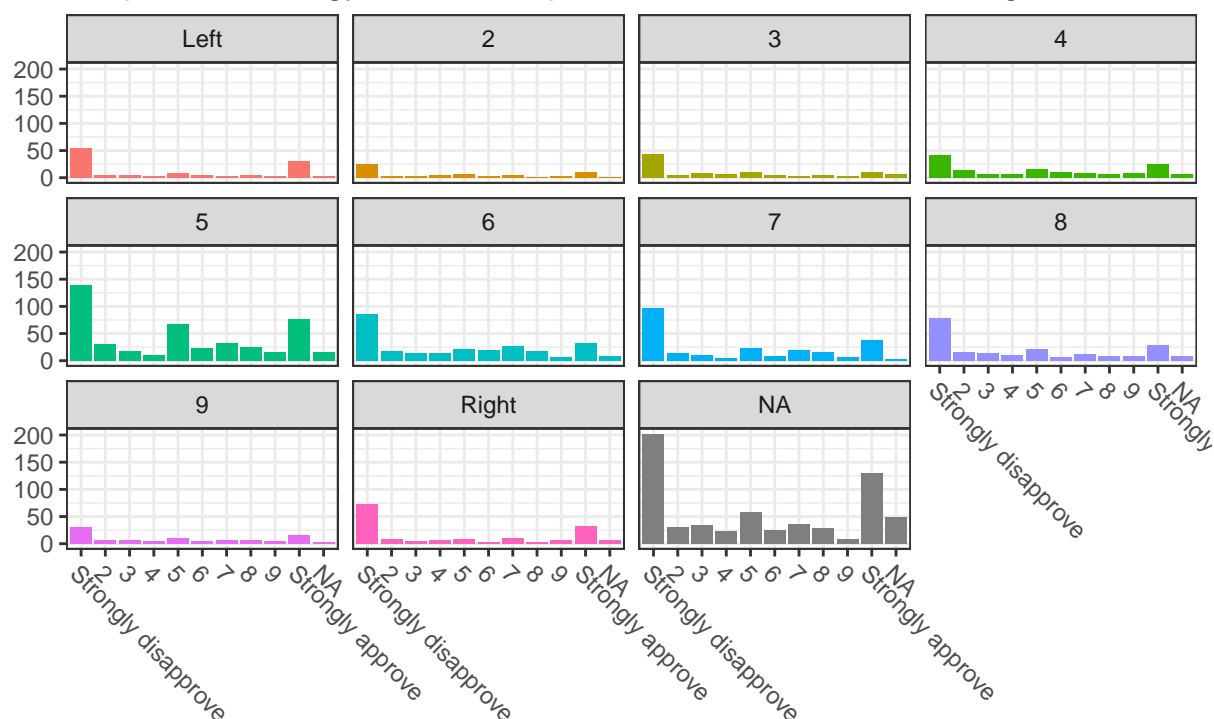
Graph 2 – Should homosexuals have the right to get married?



Source: LAPOP

Comparing the public opinion with ideology and opinion about same sex civil union, we can see that even the majority of people on the extreme left strongly disapprove. These results can be better seen on graph 3.

Graph 3 – Ideology vs. Public opinion about same sex marriage



Source: LAPOP

Religion

There are some important questions about the religious profile of Brazilians, which I chose to describe them first. The questions on the survey are: *what is your religion, if you have one?*¹⁰; and *meetings (frequency) of any religious organization?*¹¹

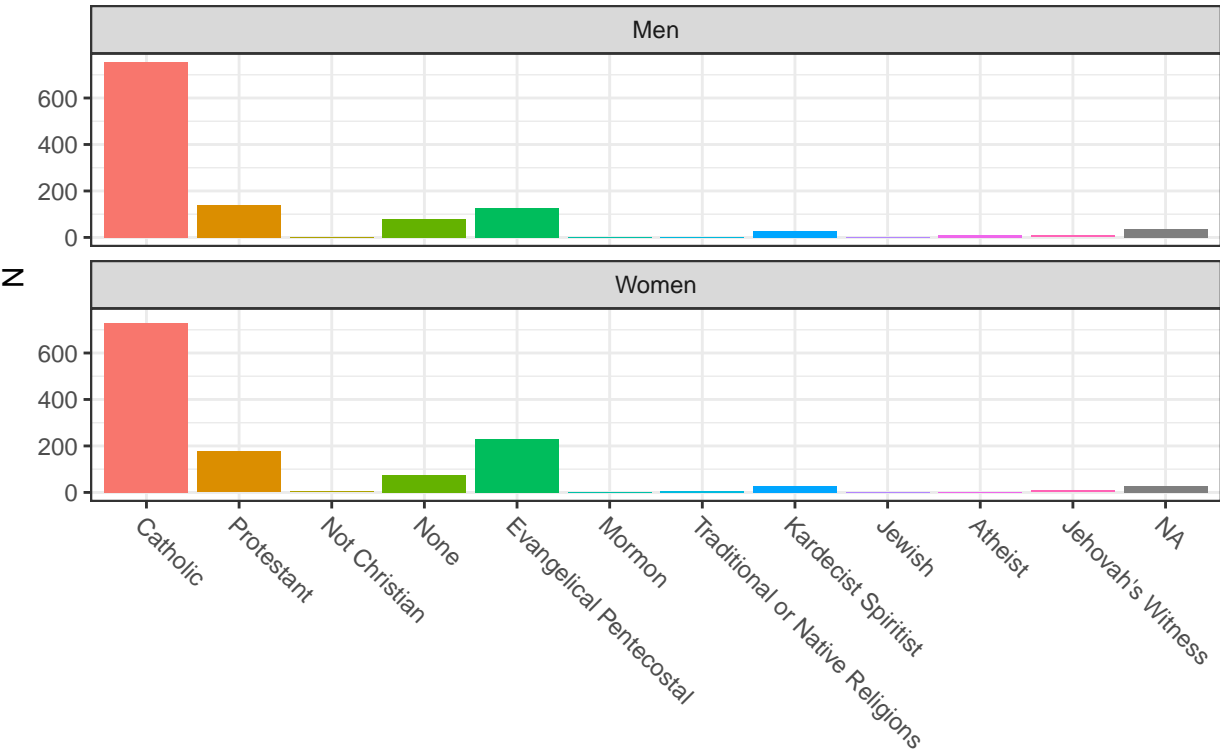
As the data shows, there are more catholics in Brazil, followed by evangelical pentecostal and protestants (graph 4). Also, the graph below shows that both men and women go on the same way. Despite that, catholics are the cluster that go least to the church, as we can see on graph 5; protestants and pentecostals attend more to the cults. Still, the majority, independent of religion type, think it is very important for them (graph 6) or has some importance on their lives¹².

¹⁰Question code is: *q3c*.

¹¹Question code is: *q5a*.

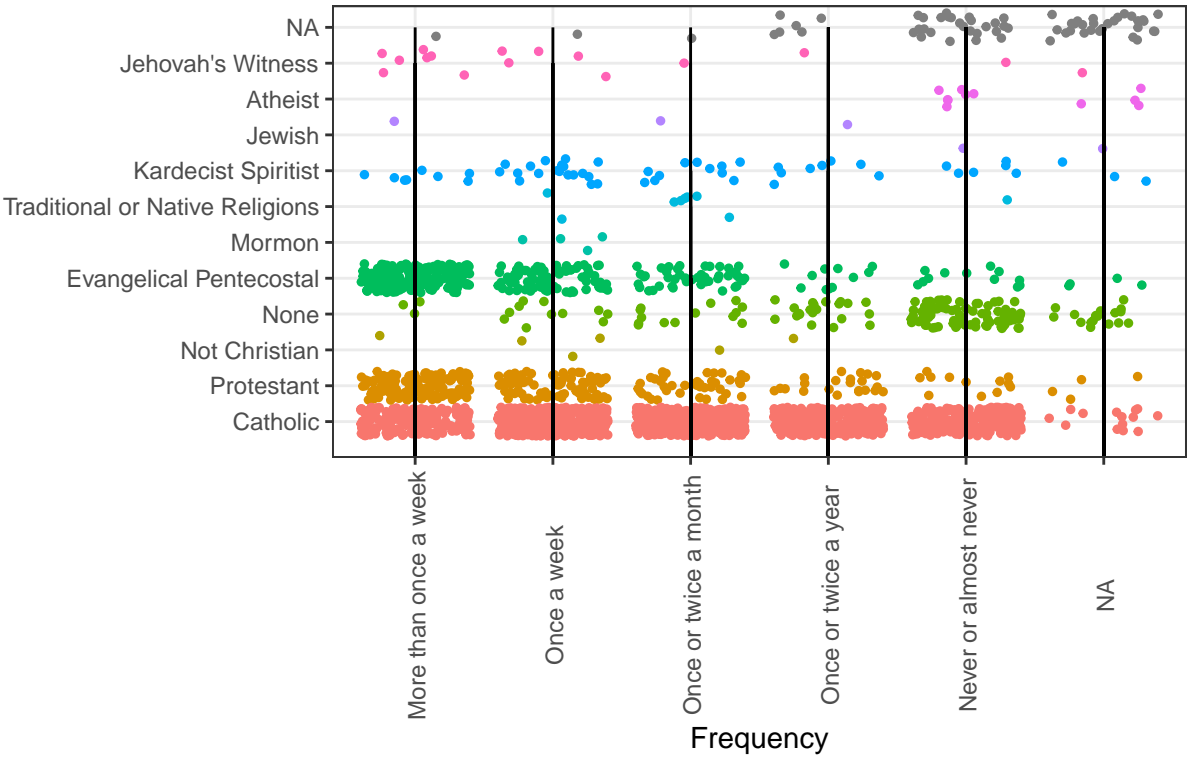
¹²Question code is: *q5b*

Graph 4 – Religion by sex



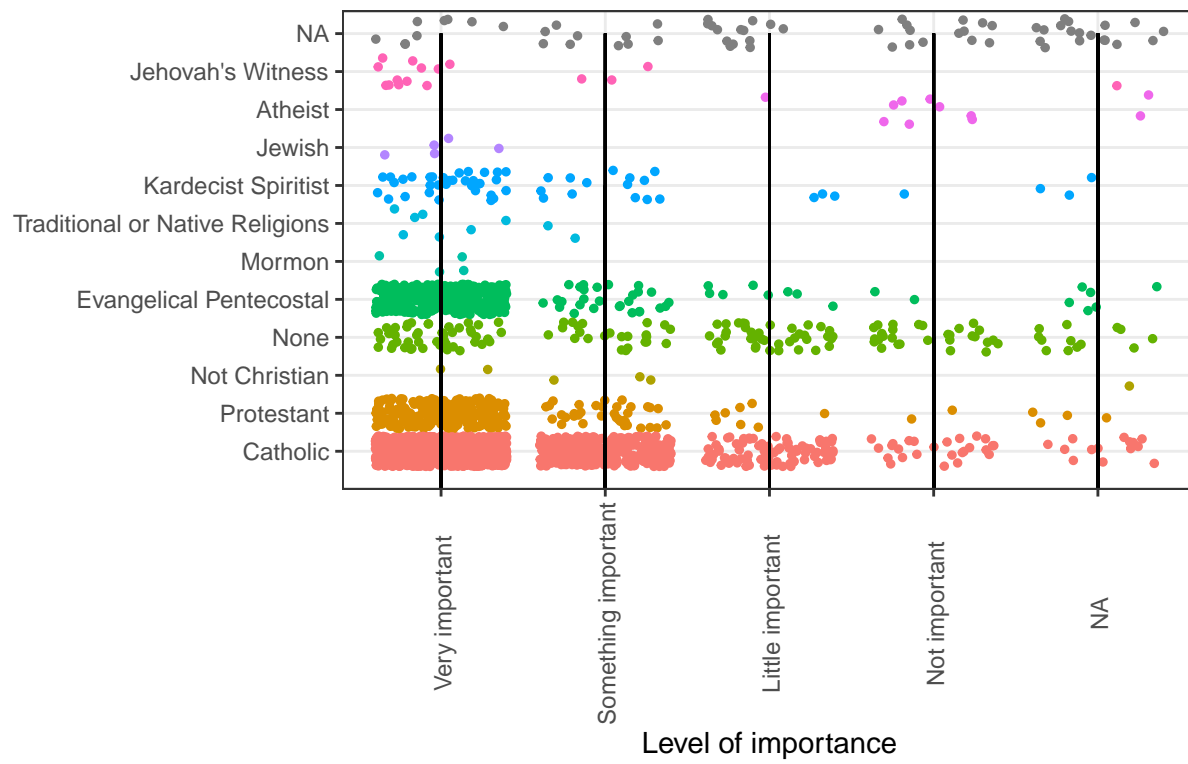
Source: LAPOP

Graph 5 – Frequency of Religious Services



Source: LAPOP

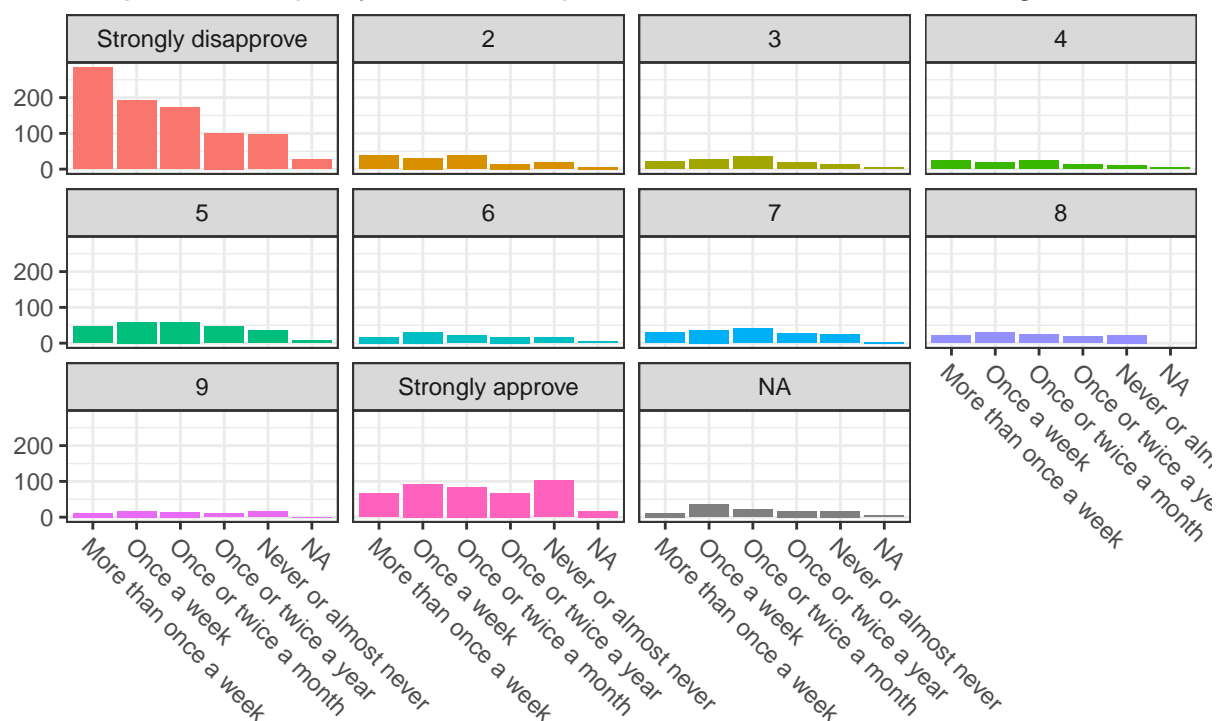
Graph 6 – Importance of Religion



Source: LAPOP

Also, it seems that those who have more frequency on religious cults tend to reject more the same sex civil union (graph 7)

Graph 7 – Frequency vs. Public opinion about same sex marriage



Source: LAPOP

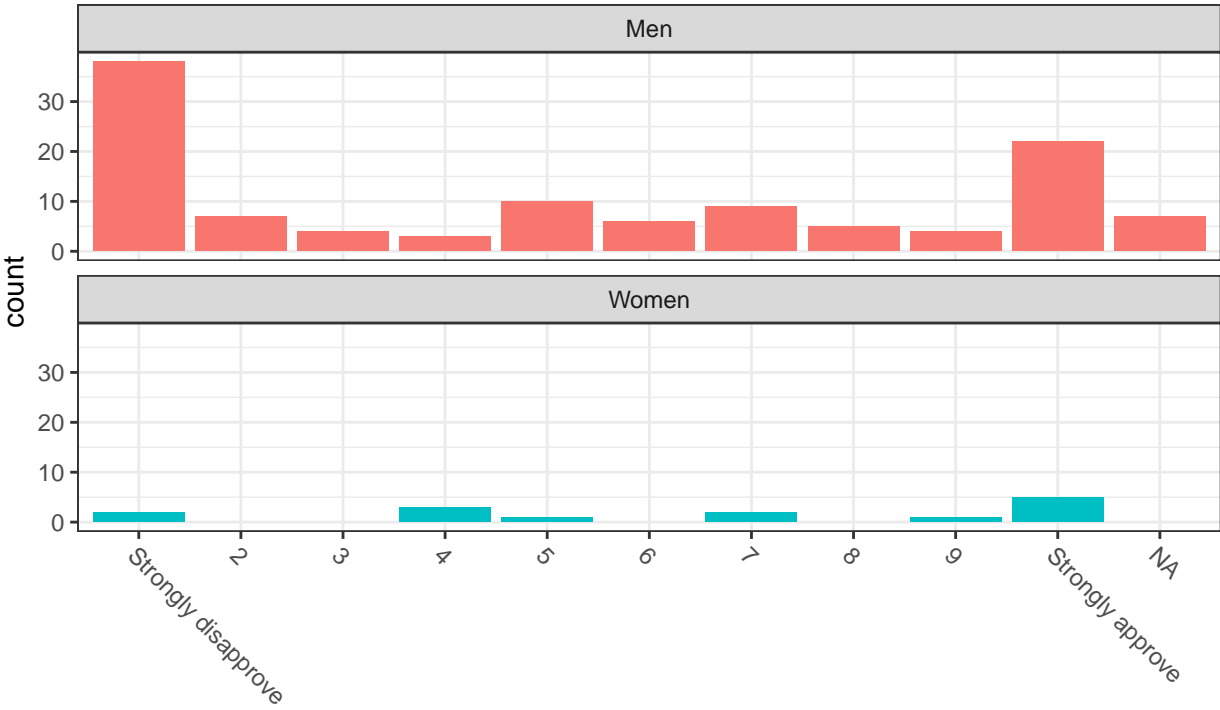
PELA Data

LGBT

On the survey about the deputies in Brazil, there is only one question focused on LGBTs in Brazil: if they disapprove or approve homosexuals the right to get married. Although the number of female deputies is way too low, they approve more with same sex marriage than man; male deputies, however, *strongly disapprove* that homosexuals have this right. Graph 8 details those numbers better. Statistically, the chi-square test, on table 4, indicates that there are no differences among female and male deputies, since p-value is 0.078, with 9 degrees of freedom, so the null hypothesis can not be rejected, which means these variables are not associated.

Graph 8 – Should homosexuals have the right to get married?

Deputies survey



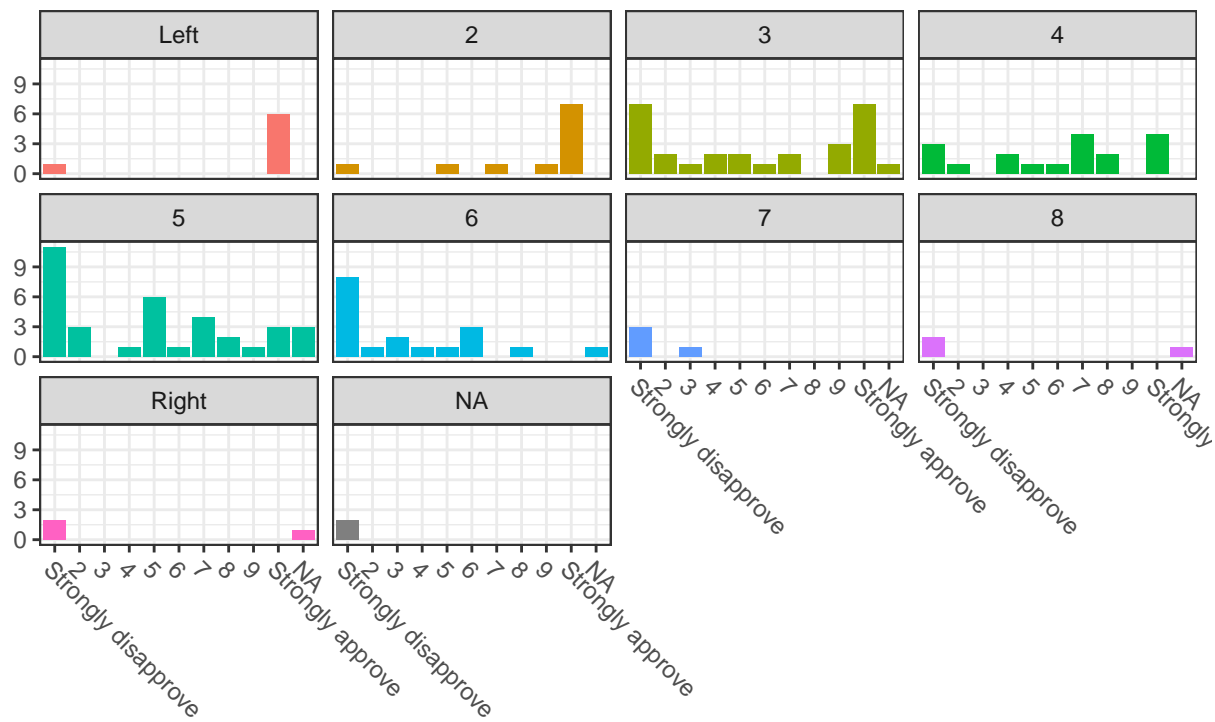
Source: PELA

Table 4: Chi-Square

Coefficients	Value
X-Squared	15.49
P-Value	0.078
df	9
N	129

Also, graph 9 shows that the majority of deputies seem to *strongly disapprove* same sex marriage, as is goes on the right, the bar increases.

Graph 9 – Ideology vs. Deputies opinion about same sex marriage

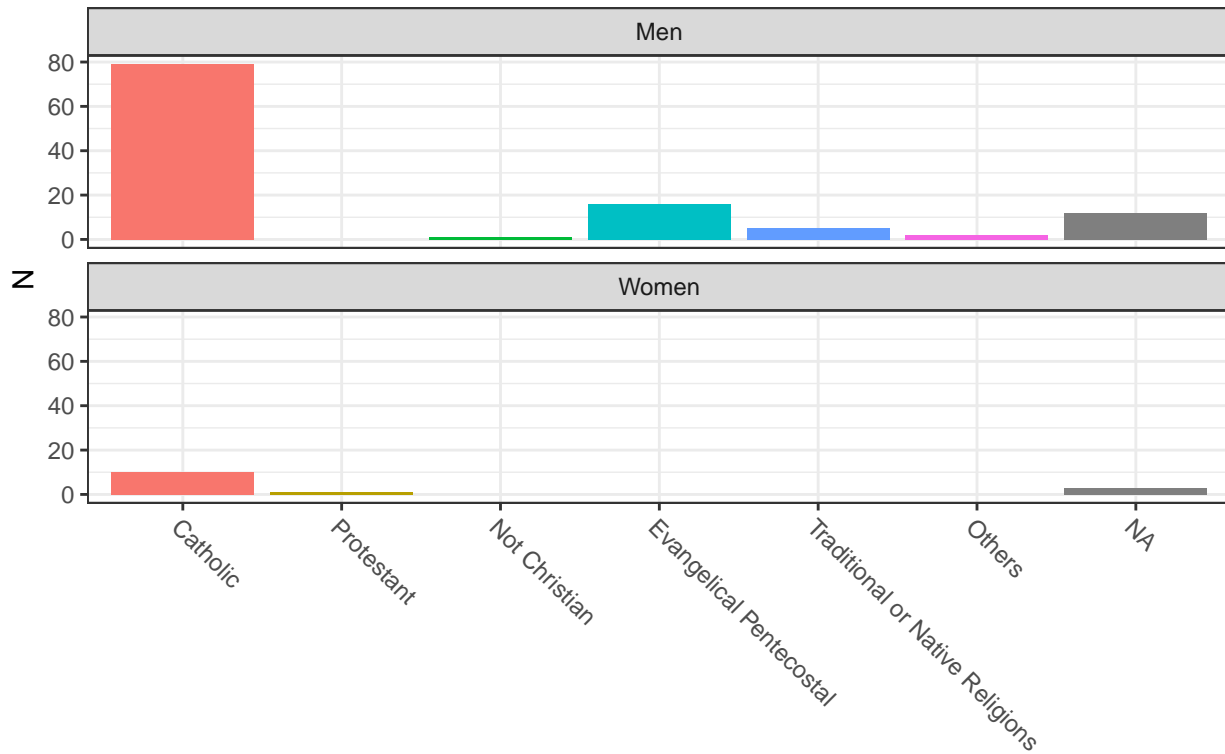


Source: PELA

Religion

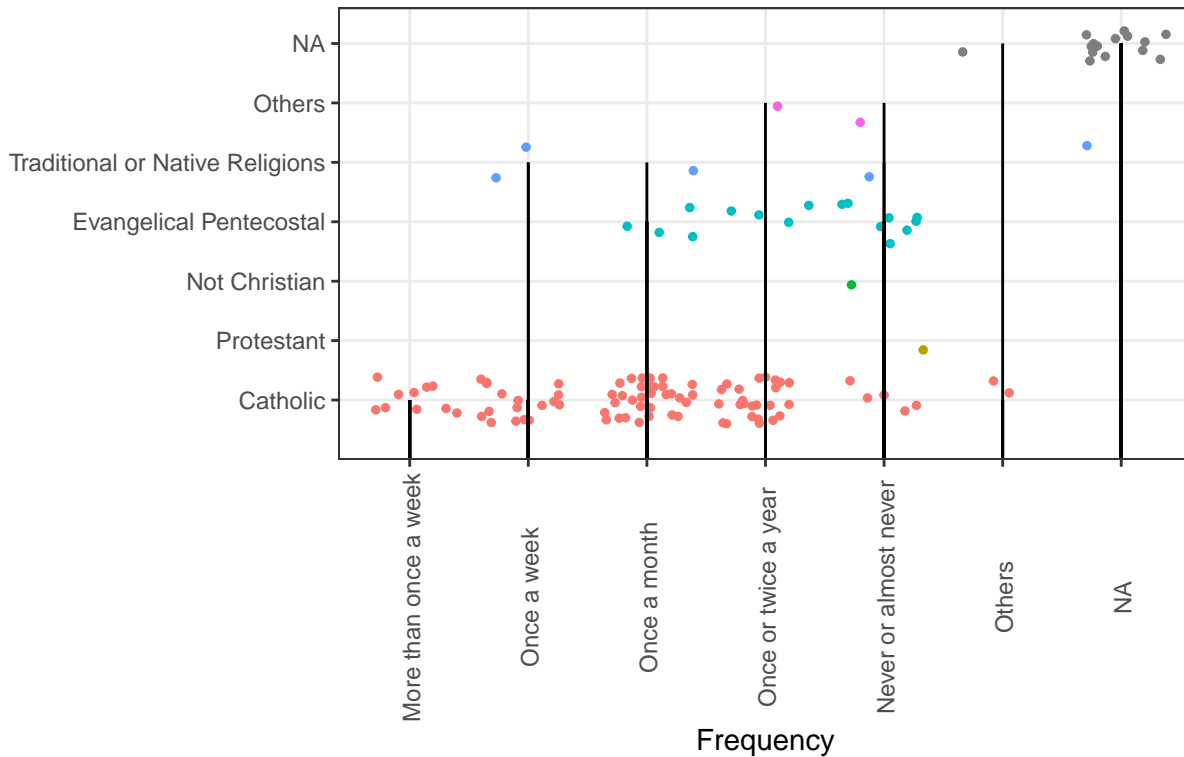
As expected, the data shows (graph 10) that Congress is filled more with catholics, followed by pentecostals and protestants; again, it is important to notice that the number of women is very low. About their frequency, catholic deputies are often attending to religious services (graph 11), while the majority of religious people does not go very often.

Graph 10 – Deputies religion by sex



Source: PELA

Graph 11 – Deputies' Frequency of Religious Services

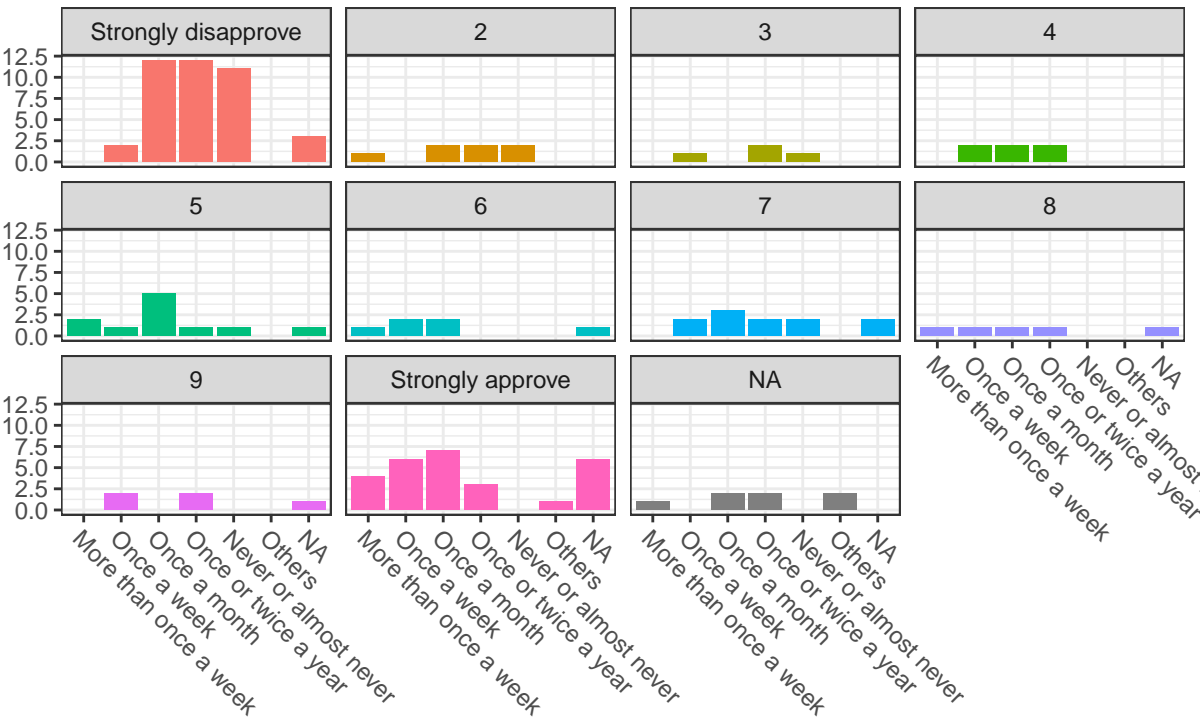


Source: PELA

About same sex civil union, the majority of deputies seem to *strongly disapprove*, no matter the frequency on

cults (graph 12).

Graph 12 – Frequency vs. Deputies opinion about same sex marriage



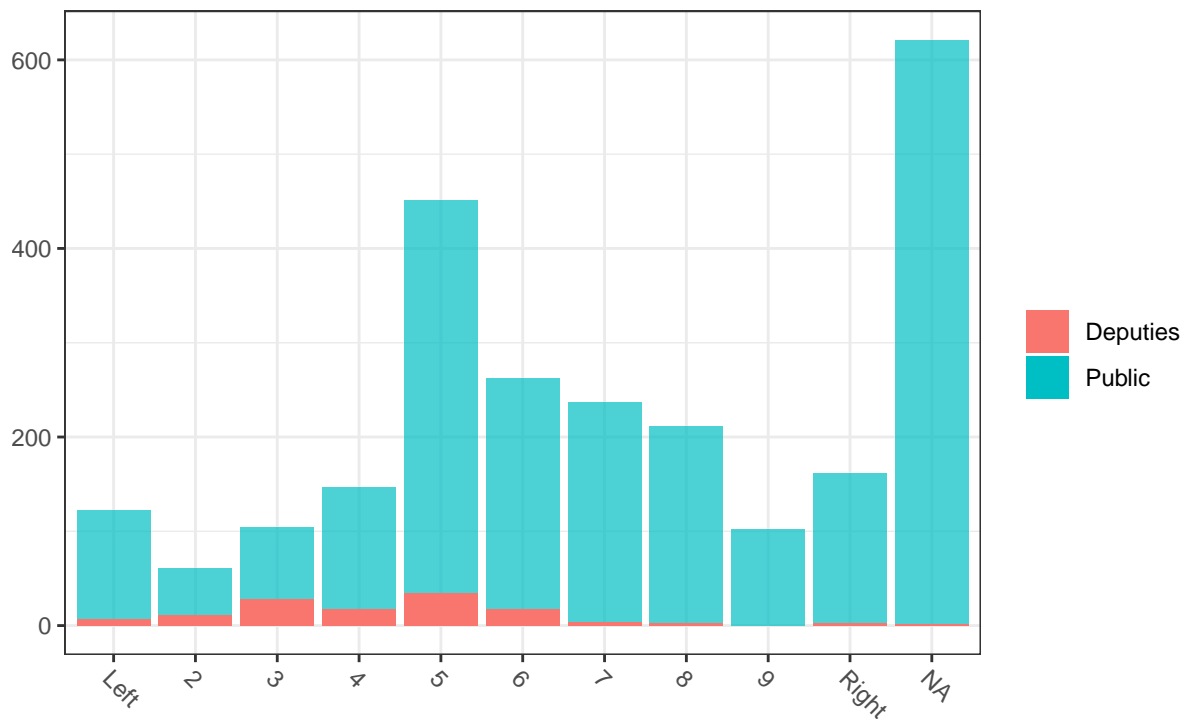
Source: PELA

Comparing the data

On the LAPOP survey, the respondent is asked to place themselves on the right or on the left in the scale ¹³, same question for PELA ¹⁴. As we can see on graph 13, in 2010 the majority of public placed themselves on the center, but comparing the left with the right, we see that the right is more numerous, while for deputies, the majority who answered the survey stood on the left.

¹³Question code is: *L1*
¹⁴Question code is: *ID1*

Graph 13 – Public and deputies ideology

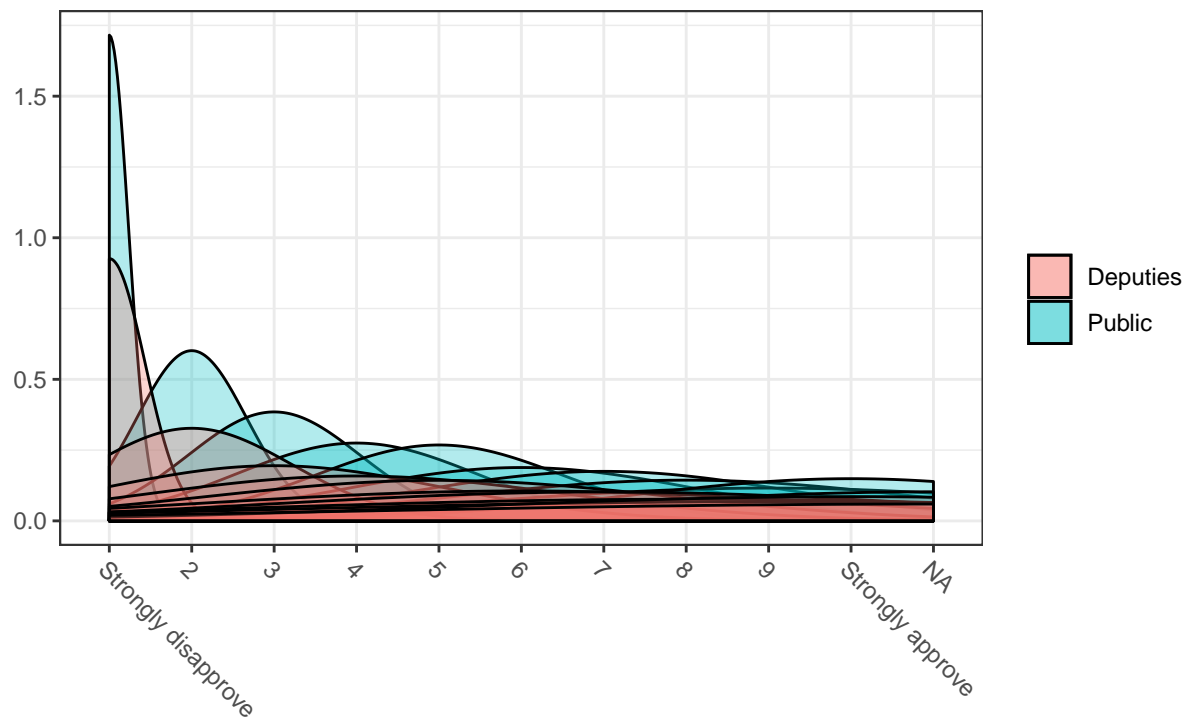


Source: PELA and LAPOP

In short, we have that, in total, deputies and public have the same opinion about same sex civil union, once they, in general terms, *strongly disapprove* that. It means hypothesis 1 (public and Congress have the same opinion about LGBT issues) is confirmed: voters and Congress do not approve gay marriage; hypothesis 2 (Brazil as a homophobic Country), however is uncertain, once, at least voters, have a different opinion when asked if it is okay that a homosexual run for office. Unfortunately, there is only one question on the PELA survey for the deputies. Graph 14 below shows that public and deputies opinions converge.

Also, it is important to notice, as discussed above, that the majority of deputies and voters are catholics and they are followed by protestants and pentecostals.

Graph 14 – Public and deputies opinion about same sex civil union



Source: PELA and LAPOP

Regression Model

As discussed above, my model concentrates between two important characteristics about Brazilians: their religious and ideology; but the main question here is if this individuality is conditioned to their answer about same sex marriage. I believe the null hypothesis will be rejected, and I expect that people who stand to the right of the ideological scale tend to disapprove the idea of gay marriage; following this idea, religion might have something to do with that, once it is also expect that religious people tend to place themselves on the right. It is actually an interactive model, whereupon, first, I want to investigate the relationship between ideology and disapprove or approve of same sex marriage, and second, if being a religious affects that.

Regression Assumptions

The regression results (presented after discussing the assumptions), and it indicates a high significance on p-value, since it was low than 0.05; also, the model explains 3% (Adjusted R² = 0.035) of the public answer to same sex marriage.

Before understanding better the results, however, the regression's assumptions must be checked:

Linearity

The model equation does indeed represent a linear regression:

$$\text{Marriage approval}(Y) = a + (B1\text{Ideology}(X1)) + (B2\text{Frequency of religious services}(X1))$$

In other words, the assumption is satisfied for the model

Residuals

This assumption indicates that the mean of residuals must be zero (or very close). The test below shows that this assumption is true for the model, since the mean is close to zero (table 5). It means that the model does not violate this assumption.

Table 5: Residual Mean

Residual_mean
8.354e-16

Homoscedasticity

The model does not violate homoscedasticity assumption, as table 6 shows; p=value is higher than 0.05, which means I cannot reject the null hypothesis and infer that heteroscedasticity is not indeed present.

Table 6: Homocedasticity Test

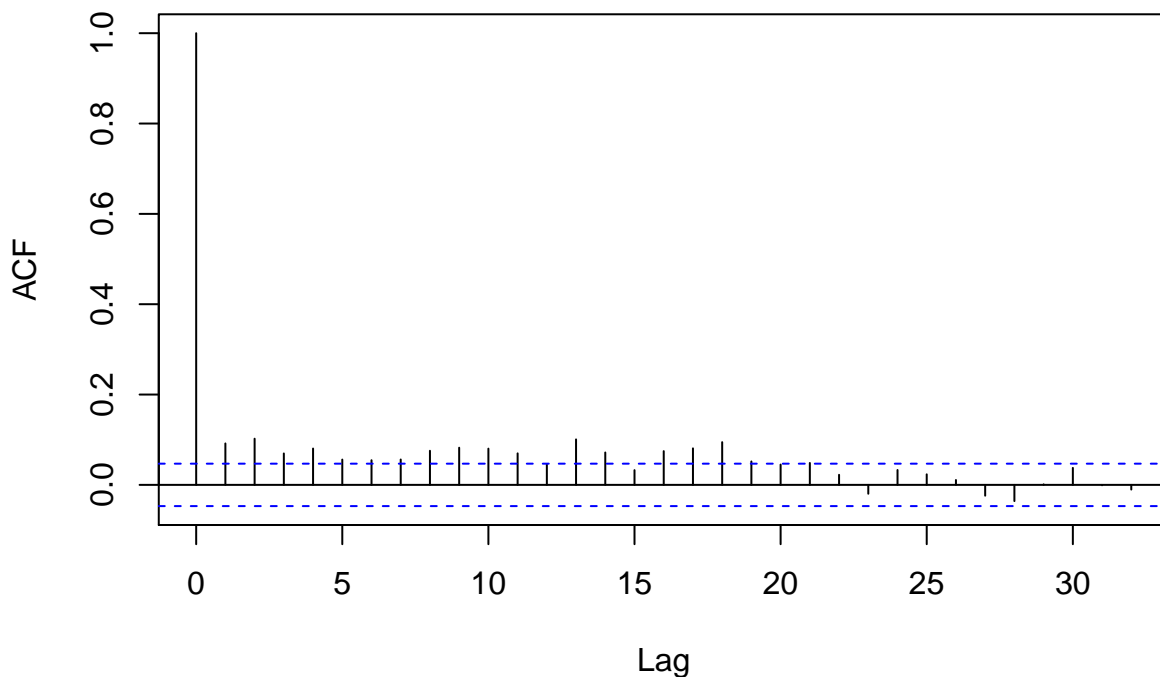
Coefficients	Value
ChiSquare	2.162
df	1
p-value	0.1412

Thus, this assumption is satisfied for the model.

Autocorrelation of residuals

The residuals on the model are not autocorrelated, and the current value is not dependent on other variable, as graph 15 shows, so the assumption was not violated.

Graph 15 – No autocorrelation



Correlation between the independent variables

The independent variables must not be autocorrelated. Test indicates that p-value is higher than 0.05, so null hypothesis cannot be rejected, which means the assumption is true for the model (table 7).

Table 7: Pearson's product-moment correlation: 11 and q5a

Test statistic	df	P value	Alternative hypothesis	cor
-0.6645	1800	0.5065	two.sided	-0.01566

Variability

If variability value on the independent variables need to be higher than 0. As shown below this test did not function correctly, and it might have happened because those variables are categorical. In sum, this assumption might have been violated (table 8).

Table 8: Variability Test

Variable	Value
Ideology(11)	NA
Religion Frequency	NA

Multicollinearity

The value of the test must be low than 2, so, if it is true, the model does not present multicollinearity. As it can be seen, the assumption holds for true and there is no perfect multicollinearity (table 9).

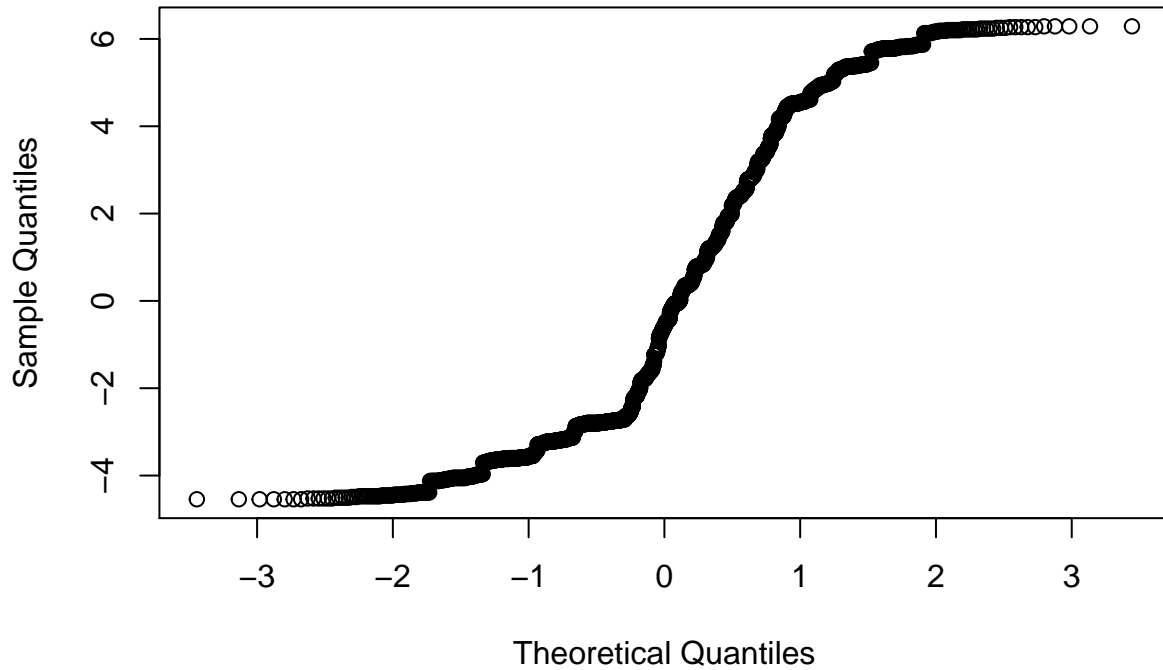
Table 9: Multicollinearity Test

Coefficients	Ideology	Religion_Frequency
GVIF	1.02	1.02
df	9	4
$GVIF^{(1/(2*DF))}$	1.001	1.002

Normality

Normality test indicates that this assumption did not violate its principal, once all the points fall approximately, as seen below on graph 11.

Graph 16 – Normal Q–Q Plot



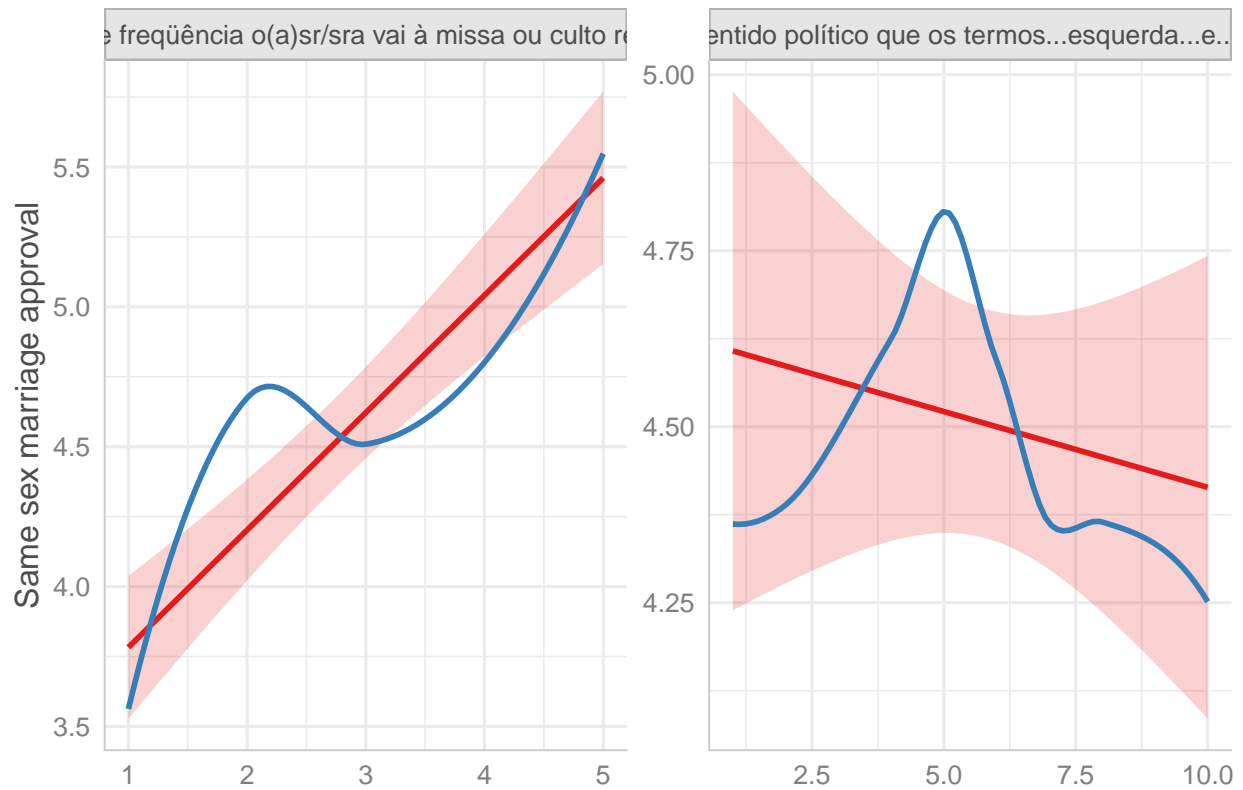
Model - Ideology, Religion and Approval of Gay Marriage

Since the assumptions were checked, now I can discuss the results of the regression. As I said before, p-value was significant (lower than 0.05) and it can be seen on table 10. However, the marginal effects (graph 18) show that *ideology (l1)* (the second plot) does not seem to be linearly correlated to the response *same sex marriage*, but *frequency of religious services (q5a)* (the first plot) seem to explain better the answer.

Table 10: Regression Results

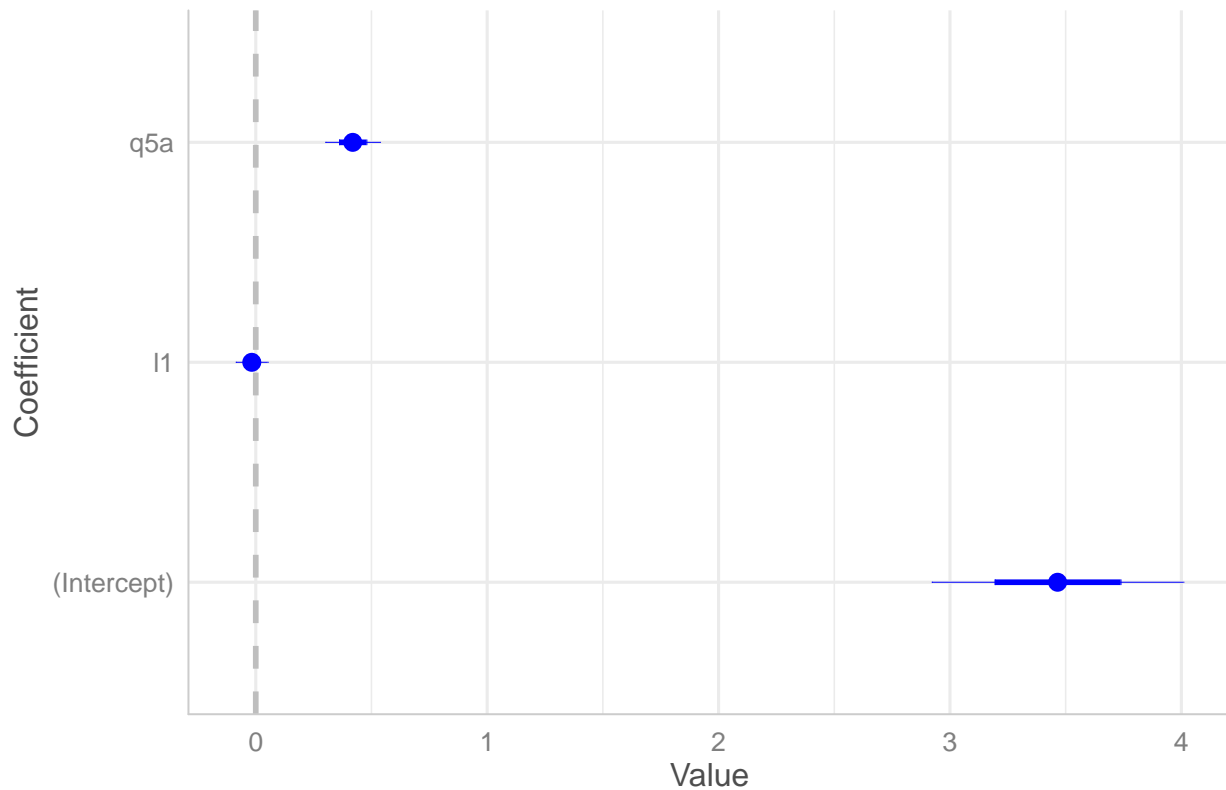
Observations	Residual_Std._Error	R2	Adjusted_R2	p_value
1743	3.405	0.04232	0.03512	9.541e-11

Graph 17 – Marginal effects



Again, to be sure, graph 18 shows the coefficients of the model. The first plot is the religion variable (q5a) and the second is ideology (l1), and it shows, in sum, that ideology is not significant, but frequency of religious services is, once the lines do not touch the *zero* point.

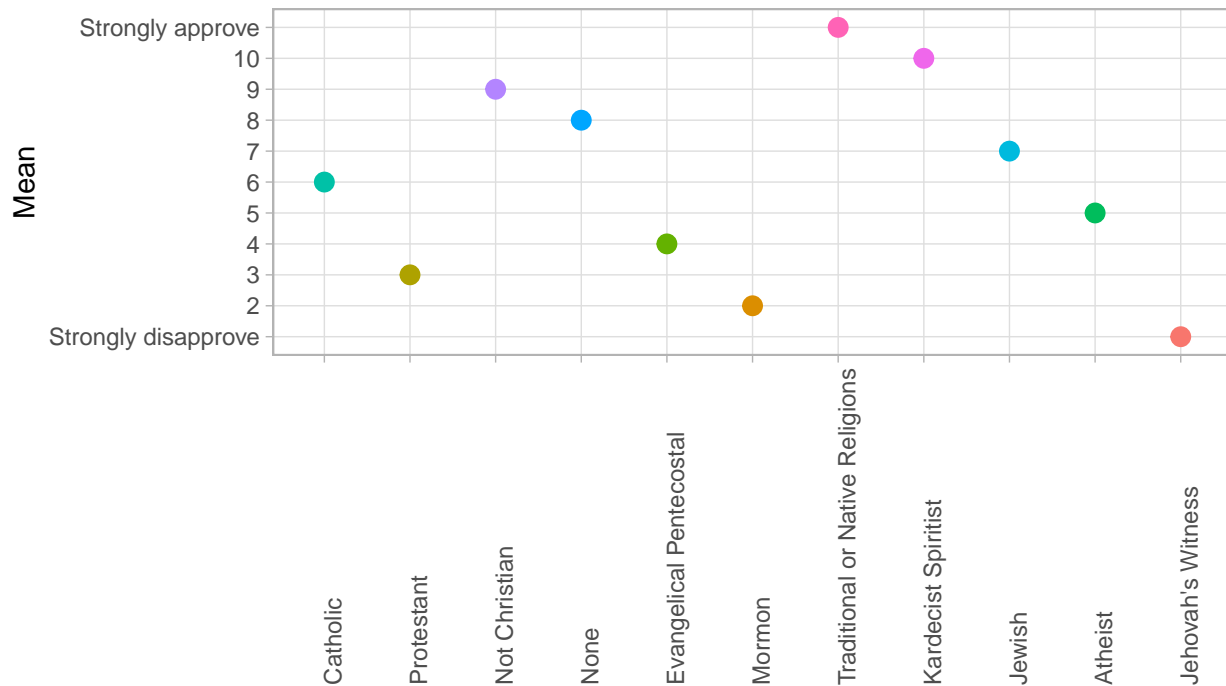
Graph 18 – Coefficient Regression Plot



In sum, the model is significant, but only *frequency of religious services* explains in part the disapproval/approval of gay marriage.

To end this section, I would also like to see which one of the religions presented on the survey disapproves the most the right of same sex marriage. Graph 19 shows the distribution of the answer for gay marriage question according to the religion of the respondent. On the graph we see that the answer of Jeovah's Witness, Mormons and Protestants are more concentrated on *strongly disapprove* than the others, so it seems that these groups resist more to the idea of two people from the same sex getting married. However, it is important to remember catholics are more numerous(they are on the middle), followed by protestants and pentecostals, and there were few atheists and Jeovah's Witnesses people who answered the survey; the other answers have been more evenly distributed, but always tending to *strongly* rejection. Traditional/Native religions are the ones who *strongly approve* the most, followed by Kardecist Spiritist and not Christians.

Graph 19 – Religion rejection vs. Public opinion about same sex marriage



Source: LAPOP

Implications and Conclusions

This work tried to explain how the opinions about LGBTs on Brazil are shaped; I had three hypotheses to be tested by two different ways. First I chose to look at the representation concept and investigate if people and Congress think the same about the homosexual issue of having the right of civil union. The data used here confirmed previous hypothesis: in fact, deputies and public think the same and they do not approve that homosexuals have the right of getting married. About the second hypothesis, that Brazil is a homophobic country, I could not confirm until see the rest of the analysis, due to the fact that Brazilians think it is okay for a homosexual to run for office.

The other hypothesis was also corroborated, but with reservations. As theory suggests, ideology is a determinant factor for choosing certain politics instead of others; also, since ideology is associated with religion, I thought religion could be a determinant factor for rejecting LGBTs rights. Well, it might be real in other countries. As seen above, people who placed themselves on the left scale disapprove the civil union of people from the same sex on the same intensity as people on the right; on the other hand, religion is a determinant factor: people who go often to cults tend to reject gay marriage more than people who go few times (or never). I believe these results can also confirm hypothesis 2 that Brazil is a homophobic country, since the majority of people in Brazil is religious, but, of course, more studies are needed for that.

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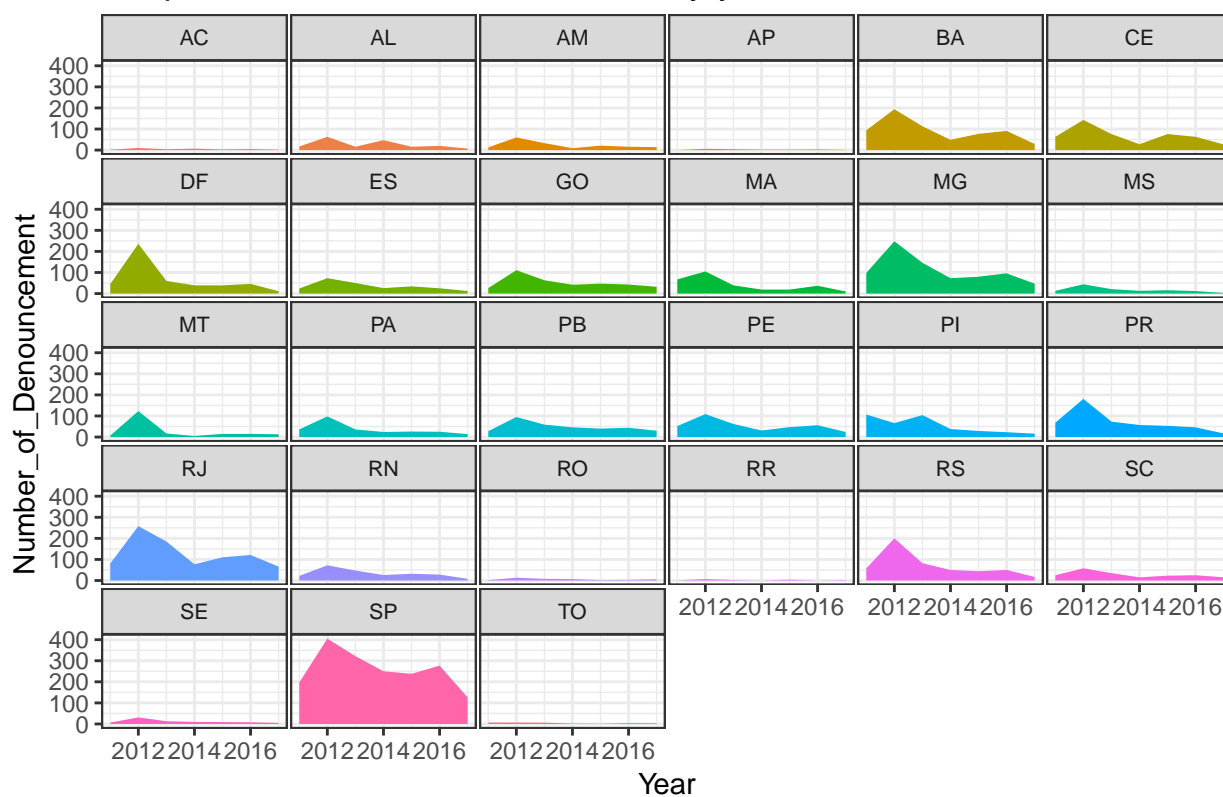
APPENDIX

According to the *Ministerio de Direitos Humanos (MDH)*¹⁵, in 2017, Brazil registered 1720 complaints against LGBT people. Although the number is decreasing, in three years, S??o Paulo and Rio de Janeiro were the states with more denouncements, as shown on graph A1.

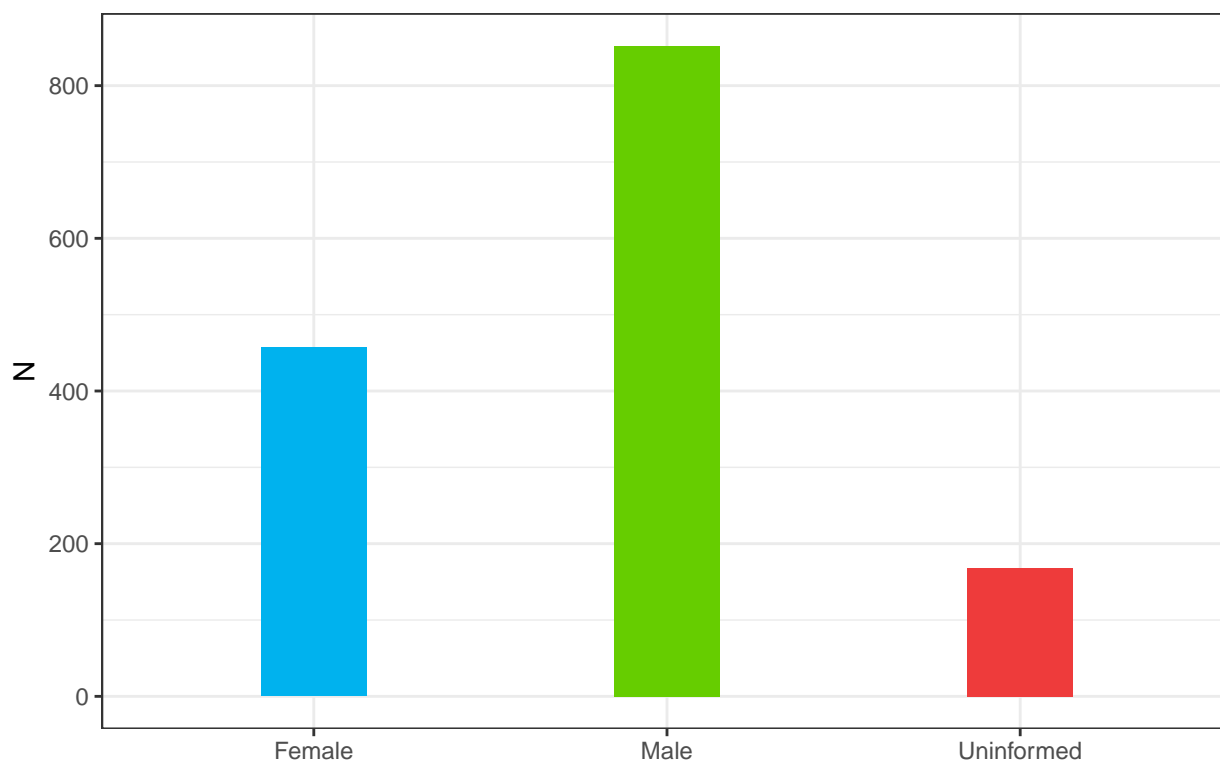
Also, the data shows (graph A2) that men are more attacked than women, at least they denounce more than women. In gender identity terms, gays and transvestites have the highest numbers of complaints (graph A3), followed by transsexuals and lesbians.

¹⁵More information available here: <http://www.mdh.gov.br/informacao-ao-cidadao/ouvidoria/dados-disque-100> Accessed in 12/23/2018.

Graph A1 – LGBT denouncement by year



Graph A2 – LGBT victim's profile (2017)



Graph A3 – LGBT victim's profile by gender identity (2017)

