

Scientific Journal of Applied Social and Clinical Science

DOES OPTIONAL VOTING IMPACT THE PROFILE OF THE BRAZILIAN ELECTORATE? A STUDY ON THE 2018 ELECTIONS

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Abstract: The research aims to analyze voter turnout in the 2018 presidential elections, from two perspectives: understanding who are the voters who declared having participated in the elections and who are the voters who would participate if the elections were not mandatory. To achieve these objectives, we will use data from the Brazilian Electoral Study – ESEB, a survey applied in 2018, with a representative sample of Brazilian voters. The research concluded that the main factors associated with the propensity to attend elections are interest in politics and income, as they have an impactful effect on the individual decision to participate.

Keywords: Electoral participation, Determinants of participation, Political behavior, Optional voting.

INTRODUCTION

Voting and electoral registration are mandatory for all literate Brazilian citizens, between 18 and 70 years of age, and optional for those between 16 and 18 years of age, over 70 years of age or illiterate. Failure to comply with the law implies that, if the voter does not justify his abstention to the Electoral Court, within the deadlines established by law, he will pay a fine to the Union, which can vary from 3% to 10% of the value of 33.02 UFRI's (Tax Unit of reference).

Brazil comprises the largest compulsory electorate in the world. In total, 23 democracies adopt mandatory voting, 11 of which are in Latin America. In addition to its scope, the norm stands out for its longevity, the provision of mandatory voting for Brazilians has existed since the Constitution of 1824. The Electoral Code, created in 1932, and the Constitution of 1934 ratified the obligation to vote, which was repeated by the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil of 1988, in force since then.

Given the historical importance and size of the electorate, the study of electoral

turnout has long been part of the Brazilian public debate. Furthermore, it presents itself as a very consolidated theoretical line within Political Science, being a central theme for the understanding of democracies (DAHL, 2005[1970]; SARTORI, 1986; BOBBIO, 1986[1984]). Furthermore, the area of political behavior also has a long tradition of research on the determinants of electoral turnout (LIMA JÚNIOR, 1990; BORBA, 2008; SILVA, GIMENEZ, BORBA and RIBEIRO, 2014; RIBEIRO, BORBA and SILVA, 2015).

Although there is an abundance of research that studies the reasons that motivate Brazilians to participate in elections, few analyze whether these voters would participate if voting were not mandatory. This research sought to contribute to the literature, exploring two questions: who are the Brazilian voters who went to the polls in the 2018 elections? If voting were not mandatory, who would Brazilians participate in the elections?

To answer them, data from the 2018 Brazilian Electoral Study (ESEB) were used. This is an electoral survey applied since 2002, with representative samples of the Brazilian electoral population. The ESEB 2018 survey was applied on a national scale, with 2,506 face-to-face and household interviews, in five different regions of the country: North, Central-West, Northeast, Southeast and South, covering 127 municipalities, divided into all 27 federative units from the country. Furthermore, it has a margin of error of approximately 2.2% and a confidence interval of 95%.

In the 2018 edition, the ESEB provided two questions that allow us to analyze who are the Brazilians who declared having voted and those who would have voted if it had been optional: 1. The declared vote – “Did you vote in the last election?”; and 2. The hypothetical vote – “In this year’s elections, if voting was NOT mandatory, would you have gone to

vote?”

In addition to the questions above, ESEB collects data regarding the demographic and economic characteristics of voters, as well as a series of individual political orientations. With such data, using a quantitative methodological approach (BABBIE, 2001), it will be possible to determine the profile of the voter who would vote if it were not mandatory – which we will call “optional voting” – and the voter who declared having voted – the “declared vote”.

The debate is not merely academic and, from time to time, reaches the National Congress. According to the electoral study produced in 2016 by the Superior Electoral Court (TSE) and another by Paulo Henrique Soares (2004), the rule of mandatory voting is one of the most recurring themes within the legislative house. For example, the P.E.C. (Constitutional Amendment Proposal), number: 352/2013, which intended to end mandatory voting and make it optional, while maintaining mandatory voter registration. As well as the P.E.C. (Constitutional Amendment Proposal), number: 356/2013, which in addition to making voting optional, also eliminated the mandatory voter registration.

In addition to its practical importance, this study also contributes by exploring a variable that is still little addressed: optional voting. Given that mandatory voting is a constant in Brazil, it is not possible to compare what it was like before and after the rule. For this reason, one of the ways to get closer to an answer to how Brazilians would behave is to analyze their response to a hypothetical question, in which voting was not mandatory.

Obviously, simply declaring participation does not guarantee its completion. We know, however, that attitude is a fundamental element that precedes behavior (DALTON, 2000) and, given the limitations, we consider it a good opportunity to explore this very

relevant issue.

HISTORY OF VOTING IN BRAZIL

The history of voting in Brazil is intrinsically linked to the rule of mandatory voting; in short, in almost all national periods of suffrage, voting was compulsory and determined by law. As Kahn (1992) and Nicolau (2012) highlight, although due to punishments for abstentionists it is considered that compulsory voting in the country dates back to imperial times, it was only in 1934 that the rule gained constitutional status. Therefore, compulsory voting has always been part of the history of republican and democratic Brazil.

The current electoral code in force is from July 15, 1965 and maintains the obligation to vote, in addition to attendance being mandatory, suffrage is configured as universal, which means that the right to vote belongs to everyone, regardless of conditions of birth, economic, cultural or other special conditions (MORAES, 2009).

However, it must be noted that the obligation applies to voters' attendance at polling places, not directly to the vote, since the Brazilian voter can decide to cancel it by pressing “Blank” or typing a number that does not correspond to any of the candidates in the election in question (BIRCH, 2009; LIJPHART, 1997; POWER, 2009).

The topic divides opinions, including among scholars. The main arguments in defense of its abolition are: 1. Voting is a right, freely exercised, not a duty imposed by the State; and 2. Mandatory voting would reduce the quality of elections, by forcing the participation of “unprepared” people, not interested in participating. While in defense of maintaining the rule: 1. Voting is a pedagogical instrument of democratic participation, fostering a civic culture over time; and 2. Electoral abstention is not random, but systematic, mainly affecting

the least favored portions of the population. Therefore, mandatory voting reduces this bias and makes elections more representative of the population (SOARES, 2004).

In general terms, the compulsory nature of electoral attendance generates discussions based on two perspectives: one addresses arguments that argue against or in favor of its adoption, anchored in aspirations for democratic principles and political representation, while the other brings to light arguments based on consequences practices of adopting the norm, its advantages and disadvantages, following a logic permeated mainly by notions of cause and consequence, but which is often also anchored in normative views about what must be valued in democratic regimes.

Without going into the merits of the debate, this research proposes to carry out an empirical analysis that provides support for the discussion around the rule of mandatory voting in Brazil. To this end, it proposes to analyze the 2018 presidential elections, marked by increasing polarization (FUKS and MARQUES, 2020) around the candidates Jair Bolsonaro (PSL) and Fernando Haddad (PT). What is the profile of the voter who declared to have attended the 2018 elections? And what would you not participate in if voting were optional?

DETERMINANTS OF ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION

Before answering the questions, it is necessary to review the general theories of political participation, which can be summarized into three “classical schools”: rational choice theory (Downs model/Downsonian school), psychosociological theory (Michigan school) and sociological theory (Columbia school). In addition, the theory of civic voluntarism, by Verba, Scholzman and Brady (1995), is discussed.

The first, the theory of rational choice, is a model that goes beyond the analysis of electoral turnout, being applied in other areas of knowledge, such as Economics and Sociology. This theoretical line has, in its genesis, the concept of methodological individualism, arising from studies in the field of Economics, according to which actors behave rationally, seeking to maximize their gains and minimize their losses. Thus, Downs (1957) assumes that individuals are rational and, therefore, it is up to them to decide whether or not to vote.

The formulation creates a practical paradox (FIGUEIREDO, 2008), because the citizen's vote has very little weight on the effective decision of the elections: knowing that their vote has an infinitesimal value, the costs of participating (travel, choice) would not be worth it. the gains. The most “rational” thing would be to simply stay at home, waiting for the results of the election.

Therefore, the theory of rational choice is the most problematic to answer the dilemma of electoral participation (CASTRO, 1992). The most recent ones recognize that there are specific contexts that favor “rational” voter participation, for example, elections with strong political polarization, when the result is uncertain (HARTEVELD and WAGNER, 2022).

Furthermore, another argument is that the purpose of participation is not always in support of a candidate, but also against political opponents or in the form of protests (BORBA and RIBEIRO, 2010; BORBA, 2012;). Voters are rationally led to participate to combat opposition candidates or to “punish” the mistakes of other candidates.

Despite the advances, we agree with Castro (1992) regarding the insufficiency of the rational choice model to explain electoral turnout. Since, when taking it into concrete analyses, it becomes difficult to explain how so many voters, in most cases more than half

of them, show up on election day to vote. As the author argued: would the majority of the electorate be irrational, or would the economic theory of voting have to be modified to explain this behavior?

Unlike the centrality given to rationality by the theory of rational choice, the psychosocial model is guided by the issue of individuals' personality and their psychological motivations. The idea that emotions stimulate political behavior is not new, from Aristotle to Machiavelli, in addition to Weber (1991), debate has been promoted in this regard. More contemporaneously, several works have emerged with the intention of demonstrating the impact of affective appeals inherent to political campaigns (SCHWARTZENBERG, 1979; SULLIVAN and MASTER, 1987; SILVEIRA, 2000; WESTEN, 2007; BRADER, 2007).

The psychosocial model originates in the USA, at the University of Michigan, during the presidential elections of the forties and fifties of the 20th century. In general terms, it links the voter's behavior to a process of psychological constitution, which occurs from the absorption of certain beliefs and values, arising from the social environment in which he finds himself.

According to the authors from Michigan, Campbell, Miller, Converse and Stokes (1960), voting motivations would be much more linked to psychological predispositions, formed through a process of political socialization, than to a rational "calculation". The process was called the "funnel model", as it assumes that individual preferences are formed first and that they then serve as the basis for the formation of other attitudes, such as voting, for example.

The third, called the sociological model, does not confront the psychosociological model, it complements it. Its origins come from Columbia University, especially from

the work "The People's Choice", by Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet (1967), an empirical analysis of an electoral campaign in the small county of Erie, in Ohio, United States of America, through a detailed survey of voting intentions.

The work of this school supports the idea that the people with whom individuals interact affect their behavior and political choices, such as voting, during elections (MUTZ, 2006; HUCKFELDT and SPRAGUE, 1995; SINCLAIR, 2012). In these works, the core of the analyzes is the idea that the formation of preferences occurs through social conditions.

The contributions of the Columbia School unfolded and gave rise to at least two distinct models of analysis. One that assumes that communication between individuals defines political behavior, with voters' preferences adjusting to those of their interaction networks, due to external constraints. The other, differently, recognizes the diversity of social situations in everyday life and the inevitable insertion of individuals into different networks, resulting in a heterogeneous and dynamic distribution of political preferences (FINIFTER, 1974; HUCKFELDT and SPRAGUE, 1995).

In a more contemporary way, the study that best integrates the three models above is that of Brandy, Schlozman and Verba (1995), known as the civic voluntarism model, based on the work known as "Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics". In this work, inequality of participation is a topic dear to Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995).

The authors consider that democracy only exists in a society if all its citizens are capable of equally vocalizing their political demands. When, despite equal rights, individuals do not have the same conditions to participate politically, this imbalance of participation becomes a relevant problem for democracies (VERBA, SCHLOZMAN and BRADY, 1995).

The authors' main concern is the unevenness between groups in terms of participation, associated with the non-egalitarian vocalization of demands, which consequently provide a disproportionality in government responsiveness. For the authors, a system that denies equal rights of participation and vocalization to its citizens violates a structuring principle of the democratic regime: equal political participation.

Furthermore, the model of civic voluntarism deals not only with collective dimensions, but with the individual scope: individuals decide whether or not to actively participate in public life based on their capabilities and motivations.

From this perspective, a citizen actively participates in politics for three main reasons (HANSEN, 2019). The first is because it can be directly related to the resources that a given individual has, whether financial, time or civic skills. The second is linked to the idea of motivation, if you want to participate, whether because you are interested in politics or because you realize that your vote is important and makes a difference in public life, or even out of a sense of "civic duty". Finally, the third reason is related to what the authors call the "recruitment network". That is, people who live in groups such as churches, unions, popular and/or community movements are called to participate in a cause of interest to the group.

The analysis developed by the authors aims to identify the main characteristics of the different types of political participation, establishing a comparison between them, always keeping in mind electoral participation as a reference, since this is, as they themselves characterize, the type of participation most studied and known by Political Science.

Just as Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) suggested in the case of the United States, Elkins (2000) and Aguiar (2018) set out to

analyze which groups would be more likely to vote voluntarily in Brazil. The results suggest that variables linked to socioeconomic structure do not have a direct effect on the probability of voting, they are mediated by factors linked to political engagement.

Among the few studies that analyze electoral turnout in hypothetical scenarios, Casalecchi and Aguiar (2021) observe that, in an optional scenario, socioeconomic status (SES) plays an extremely important role, especially education, in the decision to actively participate or not of electoral elections. With operational modifications, the authors mobilized the independent variables so that it was possible to replicate the civic voluntarism model of Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995).

Silva (2020), in his analyses, also addresses the issue of electoral participation in hypothetical contexts, in which voting would be optional in Brazil and Argentina. In his work, the author discusses whether ideology could be a determining factor in individual electoral participation.

According to the study by Jairo Nicolau (2022), the main variable associated with the propensity of individual participation in an election is related to the index of interest in politics of a given individual. The author noted that, both in 2014 and 2018, interest in politics appears as a decisive factor in explaining the difference between voters. New studies on political participation, in general, and electoral participation, in particular, can assess the importance of this factor to understand other dimensions of Brazilian politics.

In general, the results point in one direction: the complexity of the paths that lead to electoral participation, specifically in a scenario in which voting was optional. That is, there are countless variables that can act and determine the individual political behavior of citizens in Brazil.

In this research, the model of civic voluntarism was used, with demographic, socioeconomic and individual variables. Unlike Casalecchi and Aguiar (2021) and Silva (2020), the objective is not restricted to analyzing the determinants of hypothetical optional voting, but also the determinants of declared turnout, so that it is possible to compare both. This way, we will know who the voters were who actually participated in the elections (or, at least, who declared having participated) and who would participate if it were not mandatory.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The analysis is based on quantitative methodology and uses descriptive data analysis techniques, as well as using logistic regression models, which are extensions of the linear model of the relationship between explanatory variables and a dependent variable, designed to meet variables of interest expressed in categories, not in continuous values.

In order to identify which Brazilians would vote if optional voting were introduced in the country, it was necessary to use a database that contains questions relating to this behavior, as well as the sociodemographic information of the respondents. In this case, the Brazilian Electoral Study (ESEB) was used, a post-election survey applied nationally, in presidential election years, since 2002.

ESEB 2018 is the fifth wave of post-election research carried out in Brazil, with the support of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), at the University of Michigan. The research was carried out using a broad methodology, between November 10th and 24th, 2018, approximately two weeks after the conclusion of that year's election. It included a sample of 2,506 household interviews, carried out with individuals aged 16 or over, in 172

municipalities in the 27 Brazilian federative units, representing the electoral population of the five regions of the country.

Sample selection took place in three stages: 1. Probabilistic selection using the Probability Proportional to Size (PPT) method, based on the number of registered voters. The sample is stratified by states and, if there are metropolitan regions, the division is made between interior and metropolitan regions; 2. Selection of census sectors based on the PPT; and 3. Selection of respondents based on gender, age, level of education, industry and number of bathrooms in the home.

The quotas were established based on the most up-to-date data from IBGE (2010 Census), PNAD (2016) and TSE (2018). After all procedures, sampling has a margin of error of 2.2% and a confidence of 95%. Thus, based on the ESEB 2018 sample, in this work the following questions were used as dependent variables (the first two in the table) and independent variables (the others).

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Descriptive analysis consists of a method that describes the main trends in existing data and observes situations that lead to new facts and subsequent quantitative analysis. Therefore, when we cross-reference the information regarding optional voting with the sex of the respondent, we find that 63% of women would not vote if voting were not mandatory. Among men, the percentage is lower, at 53%. The Chi-square test points to a magnitude of 24.9 and Cramer's V of 0.1, at a statistical significance of $p < 0.01$. This ensures that there is a statistical difference between men and women regarding optional voting.

On the other hand, when analyzing the data regarding declared effective participation, it is noted that the percentage difference between men and women is smaller. Among women, 81.6% said they had voted in the last elections.

VARIABLE	QUESTION	RESPONSE OPTIONS
Declared participation	P23. Did you vote in the last election?	1. Yes 2. No
Hypothetical voluntary participation	P24. In this year's elections, if voting was NOT mandatory, would you have gone to vote?	1. Yes 2. No 3. Maybe/It depends 4. The person doesn't know 5. The person did not respond
Gender	D02. Gender	1. Male 2. Female
Age	D01. What is your date of birth?	1. 16 and 17 years old 2. 18 to 24 years old 3. 25 to 34 years old 4. 35 to 44 years old 5. 45 to 54 years old 6. 55 to 64 years old 7. 65 years or older
Income	In which of these ranges is your family's total income last month, adding up the incomes of all the people who live with you, including yours?	1. Up to R\$954 2. From R\$954 to R\$1,908 3. More than R\$1,908 to R\$4,770 4. More than R\$4,770 to R\$9,540 5. More than R\$9,540 to R\$14,310 6. More than R\$14,310 to R\$19,080 7. More than R\$19,080 8. The person doesn't know 9. The person did not respond
Education	What grade did you study and complete?	All education levels.
Region	Interview State	All 27 states of the federation.
Race	What is your color?	1. Yellow 2. White 3. Clara 4. Indian 5. Brunette 6. Mulatto 7. Black 8. Brown 9. Black 10. Dark 11. Mixed race 12. The person doesn't know 13. The person did not respond
Interest in politics	How interested are you in politics?	1. Very interested 2. Interested 3. Not very interested 4. Not interested at all? 8. The person doesn't know 7. The person did not respond
If the person participates in any institution	I will mention some organizations and I would like you to tell me if you participate	1. Yes 2. No
Party identification	Is there a political party that represents the way the Lord thinks?	1. Yes 2. No 3. The person doesn't know 4. The person did not respond

Political Representation.	Most politicians don't care about people	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The person agrees a lot 2. The person agrees little 3. The person neither agrees nor disagrees 4. The person disagrees a little 5. The person disagrees a lot 6. The person doesn't know 7. The person did not respond
Ability to participate	How much do you agree with the following statement: "Do you understand the most important political problems in the country"	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The person completely agrees 2. The person partially agrees 3. The person neither agrees nor disagrees 4. The person partially disagrees 5. The person Completely Disagrees

TABLE I – Search variables

Source: Prepared by the author, based on data from ESEB 2018.

While among men the percentage was 79.9%. The Chi-square and Cramer's V values are also lower, despite being statistically significant ($p = 0.009$). Therefore, men and women voted in almost the same proportion, with a low difference between them.

We also tested the effects for the age groups of the participants. In optional voting scenarios, we realize that there is no very well-defined pattern for them. The biggest contrast is between the youngest age group, 16 to 24 years old, in relation to the oldest, 61 years old and over. Respectively, 62.9% and 51.3% would not participate if voting were optional. As for the declared vote scenario, the pattern is reversed. The intermediate age groups, from 25 to 40 and from 41 to 60 years old, are those who participate most. In other words, the highest percentages of participation are concentrated among adults. Furthermore, voting between 16 and 18 years old and over 70 is optional in Brazil, which ends up encouraging these age groups to turn out less at the polls than others.

The educational level of the participants demonstrated a moderate effect, not presenting very significant statistical changes in the two different scenarios, from a statistical point of view. In the scenario in which voting is not mandatory, the difference between the participation rates of the most and least

educated groups is less than 7%. Regarding the declared vote scenario, the difference is close to 5%. Thus, the inequality between the two scenarios is no more than 2%.

As for the regional variable, the South Region has the highest rate of individuals likely to participate, if voting were not mandatory, with approximately 44.84% of participants. Followed by the Northeast region, with 43.4%, Central-West with 41.67%, Southeast with 39.31% and North with 36.08%. When we analyze what actually happened in 2018, the trend is confirmed that the region has no effect on participation, those that participated most, 90% Northeast and 88% North, were followed by 79% South, 75% Southeast and 74% Midwest.

The difference between Catholics and Evangelicals is approximately 2% in participation levels in the hypothetically optional scenario and 4% in the 2018 factual scenario. Statistically low numbers, to justify some index of the impact of religion on behavior. As well as ethnicity, which proved to have no effect on the rates of declared and hypothetical participation in the elections, not exceeding differences of 4% between blacks and whites in both contexts.

On the other hand, a significant and impactful effect can be noted in two main variables: one of an attitudinal nature, interest

in politics, as Jairo Nicolau (2022) had already pointed out; and another of a structural and social nature, income. In this sense, having a high income and being interested in politics appeared as the variables that most increase the chances of electoral turnout, in scenarios in which voting is hypothetically configured as optional.

Among individuals with the lowest income, up to one minimum wage, and those with the highest income, with five minimum wages or more, there is more than a 20% chance of those with higher income going to the polls than those with lower income. In compulsory voting scenarios, the difference is non-existent, highlighting once again the impact that the rule has on the equal electoral participation of Brazilians.

When it comes to the interest in politics variable, the discrepancies are even greater. In fact, it is the variable with the greatest significance and impact regarding the individual attitude of going to the polls or not on voting days. If voting were optional in Brazil in 2018, around 31% of those who are not interested in politics would vote and approximately 63% of those interested would go to the polls, a difference of more than 30%. In the concrete scenario of mandatory voting in 2018, the difference was approximately 10% in citizens' declaration of participation.

From this point on, the reading and analysis of the data presented here were constituted through logistic regression, a technique recommended for situations in which the dependent variable is of a dichotomous or binary nature, as for the independent variables, they can be categorical or not. This model is a resource that allows us to estimate the probability associated with the occurrence of a certain event, given a set of explanatory variables, which focuses on estimating the probability of the dependent variable assuming a certain value, depending on the

known values of other variables. variables. Your results vary within the range of zero to one.

When we analyze the proposed data, we see that, in optional scenarios, many people would consider not voting in Brazil. However, the number of women who think this way is substantially greater than the number of men. These would tend to be more likely to go to the polls than those, with approximately 38% more chance of showing up.

Next, we test the effects that age group has on individuals' behavior. We note that there is no very well-defined pattern, we can say, in this sense, that there is only a slight tendency, without statistical significance, that younger individuals would stop voting to a greater extent, compared to the older age group.

The participants' level of education only had a moderate effect, without significant statistical consequences. Just like the education variable, from a quantitative point of view, the region has little effect on the individual voting behavior of citizens. Religiosity did not prove to be a statistically relevant variable to explain electoral participation, since the differences between the two analyzed, Catholic and Evangelical, presented low intensity, that is, professing one faith or another will have little impact on the individual decision.

Just as ethnicity had no impact and proved to be insignificant in terms of declared and hypothetical participation rates in the elections. In the two different contexts, the effects that an individual's ethnicity could have on their electoral behavior were tested. In the scenario regarding optional voting, we can see that the differences are not very significant. If we analyze the greatest disparity, between Blacks and Whites, we can see that the difference does not correspond to an extreme amplitude, both in the hypothetical and factual scenario of 2018.

On the other hand, a significant and

impactful effect can be noted in two main variables, interest in politics, as Jairo Nicolau (2022) had already pointed out, and income. Having a high income and being interested in politics are the variables that most increase the chances of electoral turnout, in scenarios in which voting is hypothetically configured as optional, both in a preliminary descriptive analysis and in a multivariate analysis. When considering the variable “interest in politics”, we can notice that the most interested individual would tend to vote 372 times more than the one who is less interested, in scenarios in which voting was not mandatory.

The income variable presents the same statistical behavior, as was possible to observe. In optional voting scenarios, the higher a voter’s income, the greater their propensity to participate in elections, more specifically with a 67% greater chance of participation.

The numbers resulting from these two variables, in fact, indicate a huge impact on the Brazilian electoral process and, to a certain extent, a considerable portion of the population would not be part of the decision-making process, especially those who, from a social and economic point of view, are in lower strata of Brazilian society.

The analysis of the data in Table 2 contributes to the construction of the thought that, to some extent, the rule of mandatory voting in Brazil is configured as an instrument for equalizing discrepant participation rates of the most varied groups and social cleavages in the country.

In this sense, in scenarios where voting is compulsory, women are 20% more likely to vote than men, reversing what would be presented if voting were optional and proving the impact of the rule in balancing participation. When we look at the age group, we can see that intermediaries, from 25 to 40 and from 41 to 60, are those who participated most in 2018, with 25%, 96% and 27% more

likely to participate than younger people, respectively. Regarding the impact of the education variable, we can note that the data from the mandatory voting scenario show little difference compared to those presented in the hypothetical scenario.

However, when we analyze what is demonstrated with the variables of interest in politics and income, we can once again highlight the impactful effect that the rule of mandatory voting has on the equal participation of Brazilians in electoral elections. As previously stated, in a scenario of optional electoral participation, individuals with higher incomes have around a 67% greater chance of participation; with the norm, the number drops to a 15% greater chance of participation.

When we talk about interest in politics, the results are increasingly impactful, ranging from 372 times more chance, in a hypothetical scenario, to 74 times in 2018, highlighting the impact that the rule has on equalizing participation.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The main intention of the research was to determine what would be the profile of Brazilians who would go to the polls if voting were optional in 2018. This way, we demonstrated that some classic and structural sociological variables on electoral inequality were not confirmed. As presented, variables such as ethnicity, demographic region and religion did not generate impactful effects in relation to the individual decision to vote or not. In other words, in optional scenarios, such variables would have little explanation for individual participation or non-participation rates.

Furthermore, variables such as gender, age and education had a moderate effect, that is, they somehow impact the decision to participate, however with statistically

	Odds Ratio	Std. error	z	P> z	[95% conf. Interval]	
Man	1.386325	.1318129	3.44	0.001	1.150621	1.670314
Age						
From 25 to 40	1.15827	.1654385	1.03	0.304	.8754483	1.532459
From 41 to 60	1.010606	.1483911	0.07	0.943	.7578734	1.347.619
61 or more	1.56002	.2912828	2.38	0.017	1.081923	2.249.388
Education						
Until high school, Higher or more	.8578134	.1115561	-1.18	0.238	.6648085	1.106.851
	1.034554	.1693685	0.21	0.836	.7505876	1.425.951
Ethnicity						
Brown	.9979344	.1425205	-0.01	0.988	.7542881	1.320.282
White	1.095626	.1690361	0.59	0.554	.8097231	1.482.477
Others	1.321829	.2681379	1.38	0.169	.8881904	1.967.183
Income						
From 1 to 2 SM	1.030538	.1365832	0.23	0.820	.7947847	1.336.223
From 3 to 4 SM	1.04323	.1416919	0.31	0.755	.79941	1.361.415
5 or more SM	1.67245	.3161645	2.72	0.007	1.154622	2.422.516
Region						
North	.7615788	.1436103	-1.44	0.149	.5262649	1.102.111
Southeast	.8141707	.1000971	-1.67	0.094	.6398317	1.036.013
South	.9692149	.1540891	-0.20	0.844	.7097299	132.357
Midwest	1.022061	.1993797	0.11	0.911	.697313	1.498.049
Religion						
Evangelical	.9642478	.1027991	-0.34	0.733	.7824228	1.188.327
Without Religion	.6355987	.1167289	-2.47	0.014	.4434638	.9109778
Others	.8394284	.1432709	-1.03	0.305	.6007632	1.172.908
Intpol						
Something/very	3.721298	.3805378	12.85	0.000	3.045447	4.547135
_constant	.3957889	.0890017	-4.12	0.000	.2547138	.6149993
Logistic regression		Number of notes = 2,193				
		LR chi2(20) = 266.85				
		Prob > chi2 = 0.0000				
Log likelihood = -1353.3813		Pseudo R2 = 0.0897				

TABLE I – Determinants of Optional Voting, in Logistic Regression

Source: Prepared by the author, based on data from ESEB 2018.

	Odds Ratio	Std. error	Z	P> zI	[95% conf. Interval]	
Man	.8304226	.0955377	-1.62	0.106	.6627822	1.040465
Age						
From 25 to 40	1.253378	.1998797	1.42	0.157	.9169355	1.713269
From 41 to 60	1.96856	.3364727	3.96	0.000	1.408181	2.751.939
61 or over	1.276516	.2727711	1.14	0.253	.8397273	1.940.504
Education						
Up to high school	.9536843	.1519706	0.766	.6978543	.0766	13.033
Higher or more	1.415715	.2949932	1.67	0.095	.9410457	2.129.812
Ethnicity						
Brown	1.438039	.2333278	2.24	0.025	1.046308	1.976.431
White	1.378045	.2391337	1.85	0.065	.980739	1.936.303
Others	1.241128	.2984356	0.90	0.369	.7747132	1.988.348
Income						
From 1 to 2 SM	1.21446	.1944568	1.21	0.225	.8873415	1.662.172
From 3 to 4 SM	1.232092	.2011553	1.28	0.201	.8946915	1.696.731
5 or more SM	1.157143	.2675079	0.63	0.528	.7355401	1.820.403
Region						
North	.8717731	.2345112	-0.51	0.610	.5145482	1.477.001
Southeast	.3448355	.0579715	-6.33	0.000	.2480353	.4794136
South	.387022	.0795167	-4.62	0.000	.2587316	.5789242
Midwest	.3199452	.0760343	-4.80	0.000	.2008119	.5097553
Religion						
Evangelical	.8330417	.1067673	-1.43	0.154	.6479955	1.070.931
Without Religion	.6442454	.127912	-2.21	0.027	.4365651	.9507221
Others	.9378353	.1970726	-0.31	0.760	.6212392	1.415.775
Intpol						
Something/Very	1.746457	.237909	4.09	0.000	1.337224	2.280929
_constant	4.274914	1.150971	5.40	0.000	2.522036	7.246086
Logistic regression			Number of notes = 2,215			
			LR chi2(20) = 119.72			
			Prob > chi2 = 0.0000			
Log likelihood = -1014.4362			Pseudo R2 = 0.055			

TABLE II – Determinants of Declared Vote, in Logistic Regression

Source: Prepared by the author, based on data from ESEB 2018.

insignificant indices, that is, with differences that have little impact on the decision-making process.

On the other hand, the variables of interest in politics and income undoubtedly proved to be central and determining, with explicit effects on the decision of individual electoral participation. Both variables were decisive in explaining the difference in participation among voters. Therefore, we can conclude that, if voting were not actually mandatory for Brazilians in 2018, those who would actively participate in the choice process would be those individuals who are interested in politics and who have a higher income.

As future steps, we intend to continue with some other more structural and individual

variables, which can act in an effective and impactful way to determine electoral participation. Furthermore, advance in analyzes of other variables linked to the theme of civic engagement and its determinants, such as, for example, government evaluation, support and adherence to democratic institutions and political polarization, addressing a broader time frame and, consequently, a number largest number of federal claims. This way, the aim is to move towards a completer and more complex model, identifying the determinants that permeate the voter's decision to attend or not go to the polls, in scenarios in which attendance is not mandatory.