BOLSONARISM IN BRAZIL
NATIONAL QUALITATIVE STUDY, JUNE 2021

AUTHORS
Carolina de Paula
João Feres Jr.
Walfrido Jorge Warde Jr.
Rafael Valim

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1. INTRODUCTION
1.1 PRESENTATION

The series of public opinion polls conducted on President Jair Bolsonaro’s performance and his government’s, since the 2018 election, indicates the **possible existence of Bolsonarism**. Data revealed by these quantitative surveys shows that the number of Bolsonaro’s supporters has changed along this period. The president has lost a lot of supporters among Brazilians with better education and income, but gained support from less educated people with less income. He lost support in the Southeast, a key region for his victory in 2018, but won in other regions of Brazil. And he seems to have maintained a strong support basis among the protestant evangelical electorate. **In short, despite these changes, Bolsonaro has undeniably managed to secure the loyalty of about 30% of the Brazilian electorate**, which is a remarkable feat given the incredibly adverse scenario faced by his administration that combines a deep economic crisis, the adverse effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the poor performance of his administration.
Since Bolsonaro has not significantly altered his political positions since the 2018 campaign, and there is no reason to credit his popularity on economic factors, this support is likely to be based on the values and postures adopted by him. However, due to their methodological design, qualitative surveys have not revealed much about the motivations behind this phenomenon. They do little to explore the electorate’s adherence to values and political stances adopted by Bolsonaro.

This is pioneering qualitative survey designed to delve into the motivations, values, beliefs and interests driving Bolsonaro’s supporters. Previous qualitative efforts have limited their scope to certain cities or regions of the country. Therefore, we found it necessary to obtain a countrywide picture of Bolsonarismo.
1.1 PRESENTATION
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<th>1.2 GOALS</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>To map motivations, values, beliefs and interests associated with Jair Bolsonaro and his government in two populational groups: his current supporters and those who voted for him in 2018 but have since regretted it.</td>
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<td>To cross the “support for Bolsonaro” variable with other relevant demographic variables such as age, income, education, region/state of residence, and religion.</td>
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<td><strong>C</strong></td>
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<td>To investigate political perceptions and voting options in 2018 and 2022.</td>
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<td>To explore the respondents’ media consumption habits and the manners in which they deal with political communication.</td>
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1.3 TOPICS COVERED

▶ Current life and the pandemic

Feelings related to economic difficulties in a scenario of health crisis; the perception of inflation in the daily lives of the participants, the identification of stakeholders responsible for the current condition.

▶ Values

Spontaneous and prompted reactions to a set of videos depicting Jair Bolsonaro’s statements on the following topics: (1) family and gender; (2) security (purchase and use of guns by the population); (3) corruption (Lava Jato [Operation Car Wash] and “rachadinha” [public servant’s salary split scheme]); (4) the military and politics; (5) the pandemic (vaccine, alternative medicines, science and denialism).

▶ Politics and voting trend in 2018 and 2022

Motivations for voting for Jair Bolsonaro in 2018; the reasons for regretting it or for maintaining support until the next election (2022); insights about the PT (Workers’ Party) and Lula.

▶ Information habits

Discussion on media consumption habits and preferred channels of political information.
1.4 METHOD

‣ We employed the qualitative technique of focus groups, which were conducted via Google Meet, a web-based video conferencing service, due to the restrictions imposed by the Covid pandemic.

‣ Focus groups are useful for exploring sensitive and complex topics, which are poorly addressed by the rigid structured questionnaires employed in quantitative surveys. They allow participants to express their insights and experiences on a relatively free manner.

‣ Qualitative surveys have no intention to measure frequency or percentages. The technique allows participants to talk to each other and not only answer to the questions posed by the moderator. Issues are raised and discussed in the groups. The ultimate goal is not to generate consensus, but capture diverse opinions and views on issues of interest.

‣ Participants were selected in each city by professional recruiters and the groups were moderated by an expert in this technique.
1.5 GROUP PROFILE

- To determine the demographic profiles of the groups, we started from the traditional socioeconomic variables used in public opinion polls, namely: gender, age, income, education, age, place of residence.

- Given that the support of evangelical protestants have been a repeated result in quantitative surveys, we adopted the religious designation filter “evangelical/non-evangelical” to select respondents. Thus, we could explore the hypothesis that there is something specific in the way this population sees Bolsonaro.

- Age is known to interfere with political orientation and media consumption habits. Thus, we have split the focus groups in two age categories: under 25 years old/above 25 years old.

- Given that the variable income and education are usually highly correlated, we employed them jointly as filters in the focus groups: class A/B (income above 5 minimum wages) and class C/D (income below 5 minimum wages).

- Since the chief theme of this study is Bolsonarismo, we chose to limit the groups to participants who voted for Bolsonaro in 2018. Then we inserted the filter variable of regret to capture specific differences between those who still support him and those who have changed their minds since the election.
1.5 GROUP PROFILE

- The geographic distribution of the groups covered the five regions of Brazil (South, Southeast, Center-west, North, and Northeast). We chose a state capital of political, demographic and economic relevance in each region, with the exception of the Southeast, where two capitals were included – the two largest cities in the country. Participants were selected, therefore, in the following state capitals: São Paulo (SE), Rio de Janeiro (SE), Curitiba (S), Goiânia (CW), Belém (N), and Recife (NE).

- The groups were not gender specific.

- 4 online focus groups were conducted in each capital.

- Each session took around 60-75 minutes.

- On average, there were 8 participants per group.

- The sessions were conducted May 14-29, 2021.
### 1.5 GROUP PROFILE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>REGION/STATE</th>
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<th>CLASS</th>
<th>AGE</th>
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2. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF THE ECONOMY AND THE PANDEMIC

Introductory moment in which the participants are prompted to reflect on their current situation as well as on the performance of the country’s economy.
2. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF THE ECONOMY AND THE PANDEMIC

In every city, the respondents' widespread perception was that the pandemic had worsened their situation – due to unemployment or decrease in revenue – or that of family members and friends. Inflation was clearly identified as a major problem. They repeatedly mentioned price increase of basic foodstuffs (rice, meat, oil) and fuels. Several participants still supporting the president, "evangelicals", and "above 25 years old" expressed the opinion that economic conditions were improving, although in a cautioned manner.

“...It affected my area significantly. Agreements were terminated and others celebrated. 2020 was a very tough year, and 2021 is even worse. It's clear that the number of homeless people has increased. It's grown rampantly. For most people, life's gotten a lot worse...”
(Rio de Janeiro, +25 years, A/B, any religion, regret the vote)

Exceptions are seen in the health and technology industries. Professionals of such areas – nurses and computer technicians, – report that the pandemic helped them keep their jobs or even got a new one. Only young students still living with their parents have difficulty to notice changes to the current situation.

“Prices skyrocketed, particularly, the gas price. It reached 100 BRL. That's a rip-off.”
(Belém, +25 years old, C/D, evangelical, does not regret the vote)
2. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF THE ECONOMY AND THE PANDEMIC

Regarding the causes of the current crises, the variable “vote regret” divided respondents. Those who regret say Bolsonaro was negligent in handling the health crisis and in managing the economy, while staunch supporters tended to blame governors, mayors, and “greedy” entrepreneurs and businessmen for the overall crisis. The most fanatic supporters often argued that the pandemic was an accident of nature and, thus, no one should be blamed for it. They say the president is doing whatever he can to handle the pandemic and, at the same time, save the economy. In addition, he is being attacked by other politicians and the media.

"I’d say governors are mainly responsible for such chaos. They made people stay home, the so-called “stay home enthusiasts”. The Santos harbor was affected by it, not to mention other ports such as Manaus, which is quite profitable."
(Belém, +25 years old, A/B, any religion, regret to have voted for him)

"I think the governors are to blame. The governor here wants us to pay taxes, and so forth. He only thinks about taxes. He is a very greedy man and Pernambuco is undergoing hardships…"
(Recife, +25 years old, C/D, evangelical, does not regret voting for him)
3. VALUES

In this section we had a series of five discussions about core values embraced by Bolsonaro. In the beginning of each theme, we showed a video in which the president clearly states his position.
3.1 FAMILY

Among Bolsonaro’s supporters who did not regret their votes, the intensity of the defense of “traditional family values” goes hand in hand with the participant’s religious orientation. The Holy Bible, which would command the union between men and women, is always mentioned by the evangelical Christians. The moderates, even when agreeing with Bolsonaro, add that the president should approach the topic more lightly, because he sounds aggressive and disrespectful. Radically distinct is the evaluation of those who regret their votes, with a slight exception of those respondents in this category in the city of Curitiba. They evaluate that such a conception of family is mistaken and is not becoming for a president. They also say that the family is defined by the bond of love and not by a fixed combination of the genders of its members, and that heterosexual families most often are the sources of all kinds of violence.

Link to video

“The concept of family is constantly changing. A family is not always made up of father and mother. This is where love is found. If one makes that remark, they are delegitimizing other types of families. It’s not nice.”
(Rio de Janeiro, +25 years old, C/D, any religion, regrets having voted for him)

“I agree that marriage has to be between male and female. I think it's beautiful that he defends such things. He doesn't accept it, and that's why the opposition does everything to get him out. As far as I'm concerned, marriage has to be between a man and a woman. That's in the Bible.”
(Belém, +25 years old, C/D, evangelical, does not regret the vote)
3.1 FAMILY

The “family” video also shows Bolsonaro bashing “gender ideology”. There much more consensus regarding this topic among staunch supporters. They firmly believe that under the PT, public educators were guided to “teach sex” to children and to inculcate in them the idea that homosexuality was good – a fabricated narrative that Bolsonaro used intensely during the campaign. Rare dissenters were found in the segment of those who regret, who argued that sex education is different from “teaching sex” at schools. However, most participants are not aware of that and say that parents are expected to talk to the children and guide them in what they deem “correct”.

“They want to make the children absorb this ideology. People who lead this gender ideology, who want these laws passed, they want us to accept it anyway. I don't think it's decent.”
(Recife, +25 years old, C/D, evangelical, does not regret the vote)

Participants mention a “fad” that encourages children and teenagers to experience kissing and having romantic contacts with people of the same gender. They attribute all of this to the fuzzy concept of “gender ideology”, something they vehemently reject as a threat to the family. Staunch Bolsonaro supporters cited a sex education booklet, falsely attributed to the MEC [Ministry of Education], and the false “gay kit” more than once as incontestable facts.

“I agree that you have to know how to talk to children, right? Everything has its own right time, a certain time, like that children’s booklet that was so talked about.”
(São Paulo, +25 years old, C/D, Any religion, does not regret the vote)
3.2 SECURITY AND ARMS

The video features Bolsonaro defending the relaxation of regulations on guns. There was no consensus on the topic even among staunch supporters. Some of them claimed that more private ownership of guns was needed because police enforcement is faulty in some neighborhoods (it takes the police time to arrive or they don’t even come), in order to protect a family and private property in case of a robbery or theft, and because "criminals already have theirs". Those who do not agree with such idea, in the supporters group, say that “violence begets more violence”. Those who regret voting for Bolsonaro argue that security is a duty of the state, not of each citizen.

It is noteworthy that participants coming from families of military and police officers tend to favor this measure, including women. When prompted about a potential domestic accident with guns, they say that it is a circumventable threat, as parents can teach and guide their children to deal with them, and also keep them in a safe place. In this topic, the variable religion does not appear to affect the participant’s position.

Link to video

“I agree with part of what the president said. These days, if you have a gun, it's not just God to look after you because the bad guy is smart, he’s not afraid of anything. A good citizen, even if he is trained and prepared, does not have the ability that the criminal has.”
(Belém, +25 years old, C/D, evangelical, does not regret the vote).

“I agree that citizens should have the right to have a gun in order to defend themselves. The gun license is more difficult to comment, because being armed in the country we live in... I think even people who, let’s say, might have guns that aren’t legal, might come and steal it from you. But to defend their own residence and place, the citizen could have this gun license.”
(São Paulo, 25 years old, C/D, any religion, does not regret the vote).
3.2 SECURITY AND ARMS

When talking about these issues participants in general tend to express a very idealized image of the United States. Those who advocate the right to carry guns argue that it works very well in America, which is a safer country because everyone has guns. Those who are against also use such example to argue that Brazilians are not as well educated as Americans and, therefore, would not be able to responsibly handle guns. Another very recurrent speech among the defenders of the right to own guns is that not everyone will have access to them since in order to get a permit one will have to be psychologically tested, and their behavior investigated by the Army. Thus, only dutiful citizens would be allowed to carry a gun. Several respondents drew a parallel between getting the driver’s license and a legalized gun, as an example that these vetting procedures do work.

“Participants who are for the right to have and carry guns reason that it is the person that kills and not the weapon. As far as they are concerned, bladed weapons such as knives are already available to ‘those who want to do something evil’. Others add that greater access to weapons should be combined with a stricter criminal code in order to limit any abuse for fear of more severe punishment.”

“I am for the population’s right to have and carry guns. The problem lies in the context of our country. This is an extremely violent country, one of the most violent countries in the world. Less than 5% of homicides are solved.”

(Curitiba, + 25 years old, A/B, any religion, regret to have voted for him)

“I think the bad guy would think twice before breaking into our house. I agree with Bolsonaro. Training is needed. You have to train people first. It’s like getting a license, the person goes to a psychologist first.”

(Goiânia, +25 years old, C/D, evangelical, does not regret the vote)
3.3 CORRUPTION

In the video Bolsonaro claims that “he’s gotten rid of corruption in Brazil”. This is deemed far-fetched by even his most loyal supporters. Most of the staunch supporters believe that Bolsonaro got rid of corruption in the President’s Office but not throughout government, as corruption is endemic to politics. Those who regret having voted for him, on the other hand, deride the video as a blatant lie. His staunch supporters, when encouraged to talk about the “rachadinha” (a corruption scandal involving his son Senator Flavio Bolsonaro), say that one must father from son, because a father is not responsible for the actions of his adult children. They claim that Bolsonaro is not to blame, nor should he be considered corrupt for his son’s actions. However, he would have to support the investigations with impartiality. Several respondents are convinced of the president’s honesty and his commitment to fight corruption.

Link to video

“Saying that Brazil is free of corruption is not right, but it has decreased. Corruption is a cultural issue. This is rooted in the behavior of Brazilians. We need to change the so-called “Brazilian way.”

(Recife, +25 years old, C/D, evangelical, does not regret the vote)

When questioned about “rachadinha”, Bolsonaro’s supporters recurrently argue that this is a common practice in Brazilian politics, throughout the country.

“(Rachadinha) This happens not only in Rio de Janeiro, but throughout Brazil, in all legislative bodies. Most congressmen, 99%, do this. They will always do it. People are talking about it now because he’s Bolsonaro’s son. If Bolsonaro had made any terrible mistake, it would have been discovered by now. Since they can’t find anything, they start snooping around the whole family.”

(Belém, +25 years old, C/D, evangelical, does not regret the vote)
3.3 CORRUPTION

In the same video, Bolsonaro predicates that he himself “put an end to Lava Jato [operation Car Wash]”. Most of his supporters disagree as they believe operation Car Wash shouldn't be terminated. The operation is perceived as an institutional tool that could control political corruption in general. They argue that the end of operation Car Wash would generate a widespread sentiment of political impunity. They criticized the STF [Federal Supreme Court] for having interrupted the work of operation Car Wash and annulled convictions of former president Lula. Those who have abandoned Bolsonaro claim that he was not the one who ended operation Car Wash, and that again he would be lying. However, they also see operation Car Wash positively.

Most supporters believe that Flávio Bolsonaro is involved in the “rachadinha”, but Rede Globo excessively “harps on the same string” over and over just to damage the president’s image.

“I think they should have kept it (operation Car Wash), because regarding politics, it is much easier for someone to corrupt the system than continue with their ideals and principles. Operation Car Wash should have been kept, and it should have been broadened.” (Curitiba, up to 25 years old, C/D, any religion, does not regret the vote)

“2 years of pandemic and an congressional investigation (CPI) was created. Former Judge Sérgio Moro has succeeded, operation Car Wash received a great deal of credibility. Here comes Bolsonaro. More hope for the Brazilian people. Here comes Bolsonaro, 100% hope. But I felt like I was living a lie. Hope and credibility were thrown into the trash.”

(Curitiba, + 25 years old, A/B, any religion, regret to have voted for him)
3.4 THE MILITARY

The video features Bolsonaro defending the military in a threatening tone: he argues that democratic stability rests in the hands of the military, when they are dissatisfied, democracy is at risk. The discussion in the groups shifted to themes such as the occupation of non-military jobs in government by military personnel and the cry for the return of a military dictatorship. The latter idea was espoused only by a small minority, even among Bolsonaro’s most loyal supporters. Speeches charged with enthusiasm for an authoritarian regime were limited to a few participants, generally older men, with police of military ties, and with a radical rightist profile on all topics. However, there is a larger group that evaluates Brazil’s military dictatorship (1964-1985) positively, they believe that it was a time of security, of little violence and of no corruption, and that it was bad only for leftists. There is also a view that the military regime was not a dictatorship, as actual dictatorships are like Venezuela and Cuba.

The STF (Supreme Federal Court) pops up in some respondents’ statements at this time. The court would be persecuting Bolsonaro in their opinion, which makes it difficult for him to implement his political project. Therefore, the proximity with the armed forces would help him “balance the situation”.

Link to video

“I cannot not talk about this topic because I didn’t live under the dictatorship. I only heard stories, and read about it. I hope we keep democracy. I agree with the idea of having military people debating political issues.”
(Goiânia, up to 25 years old, C/D, any religion, does not regret the vote)

“What he said about the military in the government is a matter of order, not of dictatorship. The STF says: do this, don’t do that. Bolsonaro’s hands are tied. Things need to be changed internally. It’s a change and Bolsonaro wants to change. Sometimes he has his hands tied.”
(Curitiba, +25 years old, C/D, any religion, no regrets for the vote)
3.4 THE MILITARY

If the return of a military dictatorship is rejected by most participants, the same cannot be said about military personnel occupying governmental offices. The bulk of Bolsonaro’s supporters idealize the military as people of firm values, disciplined, and obedient to hierarchy, features seen as extremely positive in a country where everything becomes a “mess”. The idea that the military are less corrupt if compared to politicians also emerges in some statements. Those who now reject Bolsonaro criticized the lack of experience and training of military people for holding technical positions in government, such as in the Ministry of Health. Several respondents, including staunch supporters, cited the negative example of General Pazzuello, whose performance was very poor as Bolsonaro’s Minister of Health at the peak of the pandemic.

“I come from a military family. I’ve been in the army. I don’t know if it’s just my perception, but after Bolsonaro won the election, I feel that particularly São Paulo seems to be safer. I don’t know, but I don’t live in an upper-class region. I think it’s safer now. I don’t know if it’s his political support, he’s support for the armed forces and the police, which in turn is triggering a greater fight against crime”

(São Paulo, +25 years old, C/D, Any religion, does not regret the vote)

In São Paulo, supporters reported an increased perception of security since Bolsonaro was elected. This would be a reflection, in the respondents’ conception, of his proximity with the police.
3.5 PANDEMIC

In the video Bolsonaro defends the use of the alternative drugs, such as chloroquine, for preventing Covid-19 infection and neglects the vaccines. Most participants affirm their intention to be vaccinated and believe that this is the appropriate way to fight the pandemic. However, loyal supporters, particularly those of an evangelical orientation, say that the late purchase of vaccines was due to the president’s caution, since vaccines cannot be safely produced overnight. In these statements, Bolsonaro appears as dedicated to protecting the health of the population. Those who do not support him anymore found the video scandalous and utterly objectionable.

Doubts emerge about the vaccine’s effectiveness. For some participants, China is to blame for the virus and so, developing a vaccine in Chinese soil would make it untrustworthy. There would also be a commercial interest in the sale of vaccines by China and other pharmaceutical industries. Some argued that ANVISA [Brazilian Health Regulatory Agency] did not authorize the vaccine in advance, thus taking the responsibility for purchasing vaccines off the president’s shoulder.

“Link to video”

“The media has broadcast that Brazil is taking a long time to vaccinate the population, but the media only intends to damage the government. Vaccines are not made overnight. It requires a lot of study, a lot of research. The government was concerned. Brazil ranks fourth in vaccination worldwide. We are above rich countries in Europe regarding vaccination. Many people have already been vaccinated here. I'm not sure whether this vaccine will work or not. China released the virus and now it is profiting from it. China is at the top of the world economy.”
(Rio de Janeiro, up to 25 years old, C/D, any religion, does not regret the vote)

“I think Bolsonaro was right at that point. At that moment he wasn't sure of anything. He chose not to buy. People say he didn't want to buy, but I agree with him. We’ve known so far that the vaccine is not 100% effective. The vaccine is just to fight the disease a little”
(Goianiá, +25 years old, C/D, evangelical, does not regret the vote)
3.5 PANDEMIC

There was no consensus regarding the early treatment of Covid-19 with the drugs advertised by the president: chloroquine and ivermectin. However, many respondents agree with Bolsonaro. They claim to have themselves taken the medication recommended by the president and survived the disease. Other participants mention friends and family members who adopted the procedure and were “cured”. Early treatment would boost immunity, which may or may not work against the virus, some argued, such as the use of vitamins. Given the uncertainties about everything regarding Covid-19, early treatment would be an alternative for some people. So, according to this widespread perception, it’s worth taking a chance. Even when prompted by the claim that scientific studies deny the drugs' effectiveness, participants argued that some doctors say the opposite. In other words, if there is no consensus among physicians, then scientific studies can also be questioned.

“Early treatment was compared to practices such as homeopathy and other popular therapies. According to this reasoning, even without scientific proof of effectiveness, many people are cured by these procedures. The lack of fear about the damage caused by drugs is noteworthy. Some radical Bolsonarians believe in the industry’s interest in selling vaccines, as the drugs are cheaper and would bring little profit.

“I’m all for science. I am for early treatment and the antidote. The more things we do against this disease, the better.”
(Recife, +25 years old, C/D, any religion, does not regret the vote)

“As a Christian I believe in Bolsonaro: you have to make use of these methods, vaccine and medicines. I took Chloroquine and Ivermectin. I didn’t take azithromycin. Because the second time I got it, it was worse. So, I took stronger antibiotics. Of a higher rank. I took the medicines the president mentioned and I got better and better. I’m sure.”
(Goiânia, +25 years old, C/D, evangelical, does not regret the vote)
4. THE VOTE IN 2018 AND 2022

Prompted discussion about the reasons for voting in 2018 and the prospects for the 2022 election.
4. THE VOTE IN 2018 AND 2022

Most respondents from all cities did not know Bolsonaro before the 2018 campaign. Evangelical supporters voted for him to defend conservative values – especially those of the “traditional family”.

The vast majority of respondents declared to have chosen Bolsonaro because he represented something new, outside of traditional politics, which is seen by them as utterly corrupt and self-serving. Many manifested a strong anti-PT and anti-Lula sentiments. Such rejection of traditional politics was also a strong motive for those who voted for Bolsonaro in 2018 but have since then withdrawn their support.

“I had never even heard of Bolsonaro. I started following him during his campaign for president. And I thought he had the ability to run the country. I have no pet politician. I liked his support for the traditional family. And his ideas for economic policy too. I think the federal administration has improved a lot. I think the country got better. I am satisfied with him.”
(Goiânia, +25 years old, C/D, evangelical, does not regret the vote)

Evangelical Christians sometimes referred to their pastors as the ones who first presented them the candidate Bolsonaro. But that was not the case in every capital. In Rio de Janeiro and Curitiba, participants say that pastors do not talk about politics in their churches. In São Paulo, Belém and Goiânia, people reported receiving advice on who to vote from the pulpit and also in church discussion groups.

“In 2018 everyone voted for Bolsonaro to get rid of the PT. The way I see it, now everyone or at least a large portion of the population will vote for the Worker’s Party to take Bolsonaro out. There is no third option.”
(Rio de Janeiro, +25 years, A/B, any religion, regret the vote)
4. THE VOTE IN 2018 AND 2022

Those who regret their vote in 2018 manifest sentiments of betrayal and disappointment. Several respondents claim it is the “greatest regret in life”. A portion of these voters would like a third option, as they also do not wish to vote for Lula or some other candidate of the PT. However, an expressive majority strongly defends the vote in Lula, especially in the 2nd round of the election. It is noteworthy that such voters mention Lula’s achievements on a nostalgic manner. Moderate supporters claim that they will continue to vote for Bolsonaro if things go on like this, while the most faithful – generally evangelical Christians – would not change their vote in any circumstance.

"Unfortunately, he took office when Brazil was in a rather bad situation. Then the pandemic came, but I still believe he will do a lot for Brazil, I will continue voting for him."

(São Paulo, +25 years old, C/D, evangelical, does not regret the vote)

The idea that Bolsonaro “does not act like president” is widespread. For those who maintain support, Bolsonaro’s aggressive behavior is positively perceived as an expression of “authenticity”, “sincerity” and “popular appeal”. Those who regret their choice report that although they saw these characteristics with some suspicion in 2018, they thought he would change his ways after becoming president, adopting a posture that the office requires.

"I think we only value what we lose. I believe Bolsonaro was elected precisely because of his speech of change. I would obviously vote for Lula. We just have to look at the number of people who went to college. No colleges were closing at that time, on the contrary. Now 9 hospitals are closing. The dollar was high but it was much lower than now."

(São Paulo, + 25 years old, A/B, any religion, regret to have voted for him)
In this section we addressed the perceptions of participants about different types of media and discussed their media consumption habits.
5. INFORMATION HABITS

As a whole, the focus groups revealed that broadcast TV news still has a strong audience – that confirms the information coming from a very recent poll that found that 53% of Brazilians prefer to get their political information from broadcast TV. But there is an age bias: younger people prefer to get their news from Internet portals (G1, UOL and Google news feed) and social media. The president’s supporters are highly suspicious of Rede Globo. Several of them report having stopped watching Globo because of the unfavorable way they treat Bolsonaro. They argue that this TV station persecutes Bolsonaro and distorts facts. Jornal Nacional, Globo’s prime time news program, is called by some as “Jornal Covid” – meaning that it specializes in giving bad news about the Covid pandemic and blaming it on Bolsonaro. This group prefers to watch news on Record and SBT, two broadcast TV channels that openly support the president. CNN is often cited by this electorate, given that the Brazilian branch of the American cable news channel provides ample space for Bolsonaro and his followers express their opinions and their versions of facts. Regretful voters are much more prone to watch Rede Globo. However, they also deem the channel journalism politically biased. 

Although many participants loyal to Bolsonaro watch political news on TV and the Internet, the direct communication channels of the president and his sons are treated as “official channels”. So, when they want to check information, that’s where they look for “the truth”. The pages of Bolsonaro, his sons and even his wife were repeatedly cited as reliable news sources.

“I liked Globo a lot, but it criticizes Bolsonaro. Now I don’t want to watch it anymore. When it’s news time I turn off the TV and do something else. I try not to watch the Jornal Nacional anymore. The Jornal Nacional only slags off Bolsonaro. I follow Bolsonaro and his wife on Instagram.”

(Goiânia, +25 years old, C/D, evangelical, does not regret the vote)

“Watching TV nowadays is a bad thing because there are many things you can do in such time. Each station has its point of view and wants to defend its side. First, Lula was the king, then Lula became the bad guy. They supported Bolsonaro in the beginning because they were against Lula, but as the easy money was cut from Globo, today Bolsonaro has become the worst guy in history. On other stations, which Bolsonaro is helping, he is already good there. So, it depends a lot on the means of communication you will see. I follow Bolsonaro and his sons.”

(Recife, +25 years old, C/D, evangelical, does not regret the vote)
5. INFORMATION HABITS

Not many participants declared following influencers on social media, even among those who belabor the "biased journalism of Globo". Instead, participants mentioned that they preferred Jovem Pan, Alexandre Garcia, Caio Copolla, Gabriel Monteiro, Arthur do Val, Nando Moura, MBL (with reservations currently) – all of them connected to Bolsonaro or to other right-wing movements. The regretful participants from classes A/B were the only ones who mentioned podcasts (residual) as a source of information: Leandro Karnal, Globo News, Gabriela Prioli and Renata Lo Prete – all of those with mainstream media connections. In general, radio was little cited, but Jovem Pan – a right-wing station, and Voz do Brasil – the official governmental program – appeared almost every time this means of communication was mentioned.

"Globo is biased. It was biased regarding operation Car Wash, it annihilated Dilma Rousseff, who was impeached in all the proceedings. Globo helped to bring her down. It helped arrest Lula with no evidence. Globo’s candidate is Sérgio Moro. He fell into Bolsonaro’s lap, he didn’t even want to be president. Globo is partially to blame, but today it is getting closer to Lula.”
Rio de Janeiro, +25 years, A/B, any religion, regret the vote)

“I can’t watch news on Globo TV any longer. They can’t take 5 minutes without slagging off the president. Then, I switch to Record. I switch to another channel. I often see it on Instagram. Bolsonaro himself... Whenever I see news on TV, I go to Bolsonaro’s Instagram to see what is real. We usually find it that they are generally overreacting and complicating things. Today the information is right in our face.”
(Recife, +25 years old, C/D, any religion, does not regret the vote)
6. CONCLUSIONS
6. CONCLUSIONS

This report contains the first analytical approach to the data collected in the study. The material is very rich and detailed and will be used as a source for a book on Bolsonarismo the authors are currently writing. In the following pages there are some concluding remarks whose analytical potential can be further developed.
6.1 DEMOCRACY AND MILITARY COUP D’ETAT

The image of the Bolsonaro supporter as a military enthusiast longing for the return of dictatorship is highly exaggerated and does not match the dominant ideas and perceptions of this social group regarding democracy.

- Respondents rarely advocated a military coup as a solution for the current crisis, even if a good portion of Bolsonaro’s followers hold the military in high regards, due to their supposed respect for hierarchy and discipline.

- In addition, adhesion to democracy was strong, even among Bolsonaro’s faithful followers.

- While mentioning the aspects that they dislike in a dictatorship, respondents mention the lack of freedom of expression. They also cite violence and oppression and often use Brazil’s military dictatorship as a historical example.

- Both staunch supporters and those who regretted say that Brazil has already overcome this phase and that it will not, or cannot, go back in history.
6.2 INFERIORITY COMPLEX

Despite Bolsonaro’s supposedly nationalist discourse, which includes the appropriation of national symbols, his followers have a very negative image of Brazil.

‣ This negative image of Brazil is present in the discourse of supporters and those who regretted. Brazilian inferiority is expressed in cultural terms, values, or even in terms of "the people's nature", a phrase that echoes racist perceptions.

‣ Only one participant in the whole study cited Europe as an example of foreign region, all other references were to the US.

‣ Brazil's negative image appeared more frequently when the topic of weapons was discussed. Faithful supporters believe that the US is an example to be followed. Even those who advocate gun control justify it by means of the moral and cultural inferiority of Brazilians: "our population is not prepared for the right to buy and carry weapons".

‣ Corruption also causes reactions that contain a debased self-image of the nation.
6.3 BOLSONARO, THE MYTH

Bolsonaro was often deemed by staunch supporters as having exceptional qualities, a person who inspires so much confidence that some people talk about him as if they had direct access to his real convictions and reasons, as if they were living inside his head.

‣ More than one evangelical supporter referred to Bolsonaro as the bearer of the divine mission to rid Brazil of corruption and fix the people’s morale.

‣ The enraged tone of Bolsonaro’s speech or even its offensive content is often attributed to his spontaneity, authenticity, frankness, loudmouth, and taken as virtues and not vices.

‣ Even recognizing that such manners are not in line with the behavior expected from a president, some supporters say his demeanor is a necessary step in his mission to break with the old ways of doing politics.

‣ Bolsonaro is also considered unlucky by his supporters because the pandemic broke out in the beginning of his second year of government. In turn, that is stopping him from fulfilling his campaign promises.
6.3 BOLSONARO, THE MYTH

The perception of Bolsonaro's exceptionality produces a “Teflon” effect: nothing negative sticks.

‣ Respondents recurrently state that political forces do not let Bolsonaro work, and that's why things aren't going as well in his government as they should.

‣ Many supporters blame the economic crisis as well as the lack of vaccines on governors and mayors, sparing Bolsonaro.

‣ When the case of corruption involving his son Flavio is raised, supporters rarely defend him, but often claim that the father has nothing to do with the issue, even though the other characters involved in the scandal were Bolsonaro’s close collaborators.

‣ Several staunch supporters firmly believe in Bolsonaro's honesty, even if they also affirm that people around him might not be. This matches the fatalistic idea that politicians are always corrupt, but Bolsonaro, for some reason, would have managed to stay out of it throughout his career.
6.4 MORAL ISOLATION OF EVANGELICALS

Evangelical participants often express a social identity set apart from the rest of society, as evangelical protestants or Christians. This separation is articulated in moral terms, as they intend that their strong adherence to supposedly Christians values guide their behavior in the world.

‣ Several participants explicitly use their religious identity as an argument to justify their positions: as I am Christian, I think so, or act this way.

‣ Evangelicals often employ the expression “righteous man”, dividing the population into two categories, the other category is almost always the “bad guys” so to speak, but it can also be “the leftists”, the “Labor Party (PT)”, the ones who despise family values or practice political corruption.

‣ Evangelical supporters dot their speeches with references to God, showing a strongly theistic conception of the world. In addition to the obvious expression of religiosity, such statements denote a high propensity to receive information and opinions from those who speak in God’s name, that is, religious leaders and other evangelical Christians.
6.4 MORAL ISOLATION OF EVANGELICALS

The moral isolation of evangelicals is linked to what can be called their communicational isolation. The metaphor is not perfect in this case since a world with communicational abundance, such as the one in which we live, does not allow a group to be totally isolated, but evangelicals have a strong elective affinity for media and information sources that support Bolsonaro.

- Evangelicals show great distaste for Rede Globo, both because they think that it persecutes Bolsonaro and because it is too liberal on issues of gender and sexual orientation.
- Coherently enough, they prefer to watch Record TV, which belongs to a major evangelical denomination (Universal Church) and SBT, whose owner is a staunch supporter of Bolsonaro.
- The social media pages of Bolsonaro, his family, and some celebrity supporters are also mentioned as sources by various members of the group.
- Pastors and church groups were mentioned as a source of political information by evangelical participants.
6.5 THE RUPTURE OF THE COMMUNICATION SPHERE

Several media consumption habits reported by evangelicals are shared by faithful non-evangelical supporters. In other words, Bolsonarism feeds on a complex and increasingly fragmented communication scenario, to which evangelicals contribute but are not the only factor.

- Very few younger participants declared to watch TV regularly. And a lot of people who work and come home late also do not watch TV.
- Among those who watch it, it is common to express rejection and distrust regarding Rede Globo, particularly among staunch supporters.
- Globo is described by some as left-wing – only one regretful participant declared that Globo also chased the Labor Party (PT) and Lula, and has now turned against Bolsonaro.
- Suspicious of TV news, Bolsonarians usually pick Rede Record and, secondly, SBT. In the realm of cable TV, CNN was more cited than GloboNews as source of information.
6.5 THE RUPTURE OF THE COMMUNICATION SPHERE

The availability of many communication channels on the internet and on social media contribute to a widespread perception that communication is politicized; that media channels take sides.

- The positive correlation between disillusionment with Bolsonaro and the preference for Globo is quite impressive, certainly another case of elective affinities.

- Many say that after watching the news, they check the veracity of the facts elsewhere on the web. This “elsewhere” often corresponded to president’s official and unofficial pages and those of his followers and family, which are often taken as portraying factual truth.

- The impression that social media has a core role in informing people is not fully confirmed. Very few participants reported following influencers.

- Facebook and Youtube were not frequently mentioned as sources of information, even when participants were directly asked.

- Voz do Brasil, an official radio program produced by the Executive branch of government, was mentioned several times as a reliable source of information, even by some regretful voters.
6.6 POST-TRUTH AND DENIALISM

The rupture of the communication sphere and the effectiveness of the Bolsonaro’s communication schemes produce a war of versions, the loss of legitimacy of traditional sources, the instability of the status of truth and the spread of denialism.

- This is evident in the way participants responded to issues pertaining Covid-19, more specifically early treatment and vaccines. The perception that reliable sources of information beyond the conflict of versions do not exist is pretty common.

- Many say they simply do not know what to say about these controversial issues. Other supporters, while realizing that the politicization of information is quite high, take sides in the dispute by adhering to the versions provided by the Bolsonaro’s communication networks.

- Fake news abounds among Bolsonaro supporters: some say there is evidence that Chloroquine and Ivermectin kill the virus, that vaccines are not effective, that the virus part of a Chinese strategy to conquer the world and make a lot of money, that the PT distributed the gay kit at schools, etc.

- Many firm supporters say that things are getting better economically, are openly optimistic, expect 2021 to be much better than 2020 and that the worst part of the crisis has already passed.
6.7 COMMUNICATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF BOLSONARO

The recurrence of the use of standard phrases to respond to questions indicates reliance on sources of information that disseminate Bolsonaro's versions of the facts – something that is corroborated by the discussion about information consumption habits.

- The perception that thieves will think twice before entering the house of someone who has a gun is very recurrent.
- The idea that the gun permits will be granted in an organized way, by means of examinations, vetting procedures, and training is widely disseminated, and respondents repeat the same phrases when talking about this issue.
- Many supporters, especially those who seem more uninformed, repeat mechanically that a vaccine would take at least four years to be ready, a phrase that Bolsonaro delivers in the video.
6.8 DEMONIZATION OF THE LEFT

Bolsonarism constructs several enemies, but none equals PT and Lula, over which Bolsonaro’s supporters project everything wrong they see in Brazil, from moral decadence to political corruption.

- Virtually all respondents declare that they voted for Bolsonaro in 2018 in order to take PT out of the power. And the reason for such vote is almost always corruption.

- But the demonization of the left speech is much stronger among staunch supporters in comparison with those who regretted their vote. They say the left is in favor of bad guys, in favor of gays (who are degenerate), and that they are the most corrupt among the corrupt.

- Virtually all firm supporters believe that homosexuality is taught at schools and that this is a left-wing project.

- Lula is the personalization of the PT and of the left in several statements.
6.9 INTENSITY OF PREFERENCES

Participants who still support Bolsonaro and intend to elect him again in 2022 express their support with a varying degree of intensity while those who regretted manifest extreme distaste for the president and his ideas.

- Bolsonaro's staunchest supporters are generally very conservative, often evangelicals who perceive themselves as morally protected from the rest of the population, or hard-nosed authoritarians who love things military. Adherence to the Bolsonaro’s anti-corruption speech is present in almost all supporters, but only a few firm supporters limit themselves to using just the anti-corruption argument to justify their position in favor of the president.

- A large group supports Bolsonaro but take exception to some of his positions, such as homophobia, guns, boisterous style, etc.

- Almost all of those deeply concerned with political corruption manifest strong anti-PT and anti-Lula sentiments.

- The ones who regretted having voted for Bolsonaro express a strong repudiation of his figure, not rarely using swear words to refer to him. The feeling of shame for their choice and for the behavior and positions of Bolsonaro is disseminated in that group. Almost everyone declares to have voted for Bolsonaro in 2018 because they were tired of PT’s corruption and yearned for renovation in politics.
6.10 LULA’S REDEMPTION

Regretting the vote in Bolsonaro in 2018 does not lead to supporting PT, but several participants are considering the possibility of voting for Lula in 2022 as others openly declare enthusiasm for the prospect that the PT leader will come back.

- The proportion of participants, regretful or not, who had voted for Lula or PT in the past is large. Only very staunch conservatives, a minority, declare absolute rejection for the left.

- Among the regretful, adherence to Lula and the PT is strong, often expressed in terms of a “return”.

- A regretful participant from Recife, while hearing another participant declare that she would vote again for PT, said: “I would definitely [vote]. I also thought that [in 2018] I had no option. Now I will vote beautifully, happy with the red shirt of the PT and making the Lula free hand sign”.

- Others say that they will vote for Lula again even if he embezzles money. A regretful participant said: “I even give the PIX of my bank account to Lula, but he has to come back”.

P. 45
CONTACTS

**IREE**
- contato@iree.org.br
- iree.org.br

**João Feres Júnior**
- jferes@iesp.uerj.br
- (21) 99633-3444

**Carolina de Paula**
- carolina.almeidapaula@gmail.com
- (21) 99204-6061