

PROARMAS IN THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS: ANALYZING THE PERFORMANCE OF LAWMAKERS

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analyzing the performance of lawmakers**

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SUMMARY

05

INTRODUCTION

06 How this research was done

08 Productivity and predominant themes

12

LAWMAKERS' PROFILE

14

CONCLUSION



INTRODUCTION

The debate about the civilian population's access to firearms in Brazil has gained notoriety in recent years, becoming a priority topic in public discourse. What could have been only a discussion about the regulation of a specific industry has become a catalyst for Brazilian politics, mobilizing voters, creating support bases and defining political alignments. In this context, the PROARMAS group emerged as one of the main proponents of this agenda in the national political scene.

PROARMAS is an association that advocates the expansion of civilian gun ownership, inspired by the National Rifle Association (NRA) in the United States — the largest lobbyist of the arms industry in the world. Founded by lawyer and law professor Marcos Pollon in 2020, the organization defines itself as “an initiative to create content on the political, philosophical, legal and technical issues of firearms and civilian access to firearms”.

In the 2022 election, PROARMAS funded several campaigns and helped elect 22 congresspeople: 15 federal deputies and 7 senators, totaling of 18.6 million votes. This achievement demonstrates their social and political mobilization capabilities around the gun rights agenda and reveals how central this topic has become in the formation of new Brazilian political leaders.

This report derives from the study “[What the National Congress says about civilian gun](#)

[ownership](#), released by Fogo Cruzado (Crossfire) Institute in June, 2024. That research had already described a significant shift in the pattern of gun rhetoric in the Brazilian Congress — the 55th legislature (2015-2018) marked the first time in history that pro-gun ownership discourse surpassed gun control discourse. The current analysis seeks to further understand the specific performance of the group of congresspeople elected with the help of PROARMAS - which shall be herein called the **PROARMAS group**.

The systematic monitoring of these lawmakers is crucial for public debate and for Brazilian politics. Understanding their agendas, their discursive strategies and their political engagement allows us to understand not only the dynamics of the debate on guns, but also the new outline of national politics and, maybe, the future of democracy. This is because the gun rights issue, more than an issue of regulation in itself, functions as an agglutinating element for world-views and broader political projects, mobilizing voters and creating consistent support bases.

By analyzing the performance of these lawmakers, this report seeks to

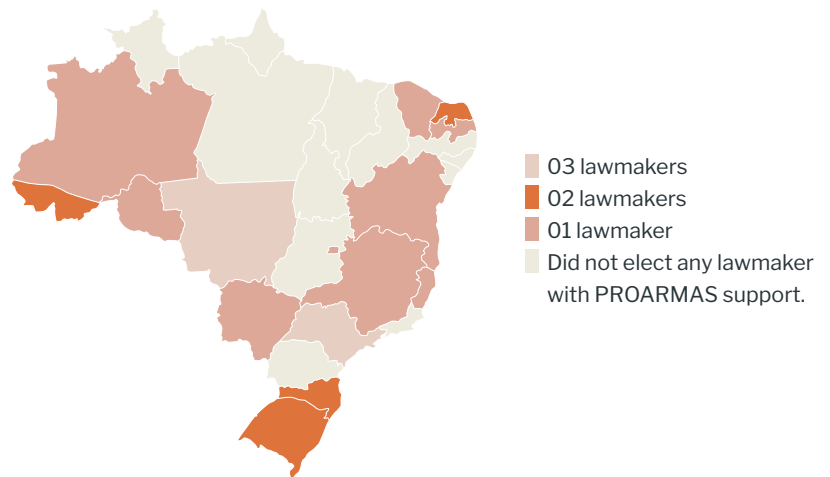
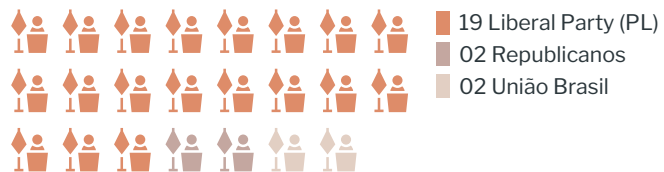
provide subsidies for a more informed, evidence-based public debate. The issue of civilian gun ownership is connected to one of the main challenges faced by the Brazilian population: the high number of violent deaths¹. But its relevance is even greater in the context of growing

political forces rising up against the rule of law. In other words, the data presented here contribute to a public discourse that takes into account the preservation of both life and the democratic order.

HOW THIS RESEARCH WAS DONE

For this report, 739 bills (PLs) filed between the years of 2023 and 2024 in the Congress were analyzed, sponsored by the 23² congresspeople elected with PROARMAS support³. Out of those, 569 bills were originated at the Chamber of Deputies, and 170, at the Senate.

23 CONGRESSPEOPLE



¹ Home to about 9% of the world's population, Latin America and the Caribbean constitute the most violent region on the planet, where about 39% of homicides take place (IGARAPÉ Institute, 2018). Brazil also stands out for the highest number of violent deaths in the region: more than 1 million 250 thousand people were murdered between 1996 and 2020 – 70% by gunfire (SIM/ Datasus, 2022). It is therefore safe to state that violence, especially gun violence, is one of the main problems in Brazilian society, and should be one of the top priorities for decision makers.

² The congresswoman Amália Barros died in the first half of 2024. Nelson Barbudo, her successor, took her seat in the Chamber of Deputies. The research considers Amália Barros and Nelson Barbudo as two separate sponsors, meaning 23 lawmakers were analyzed. Source: Congresso em Foco, 2024. Who is Nelson Barbudo, the successor who will take over Amália de Barros' seat in the Chamber. Available at <<https://www.congressoemfoco.com.br/noticia/7099/quem-e-nelson-barbudo-suplente-que-assume-vaga-de-amalia-barros-na-camara>> Access on March 20, 2025.

³ Information about which elected officials received support from PROARMAS was obtained through the organization's own website.

Aiming to identify patterns in the legislative performance of these lawmakers, a database was created with all the bills for each sponsor, collected from the websites of the Chamber and the Senate. The data were subsequently aggregated and analyzed to identify the main topics covered, the patterns of legislative production and the priorities of those lawmakers.

The bills were categorized into 27 different themes, allowing us to identify which are the priority areas for these lawmakers and how the issue of guns is inserted in a broader context of legislative action. Furthermore, a comparative analysis was made between the productivity

of these lawmakers and the general average of the Congress.

The progression of bills in the legislative process was also considered, highlighting those that became law or that were ready to be taken to the floor for consideration. The goal is to understand the effectiveness of the actions of congresspeople and their goals. The study also analyzes the profile of these lawmakers, describing traits such as gender, state of origin and previous terms in office.

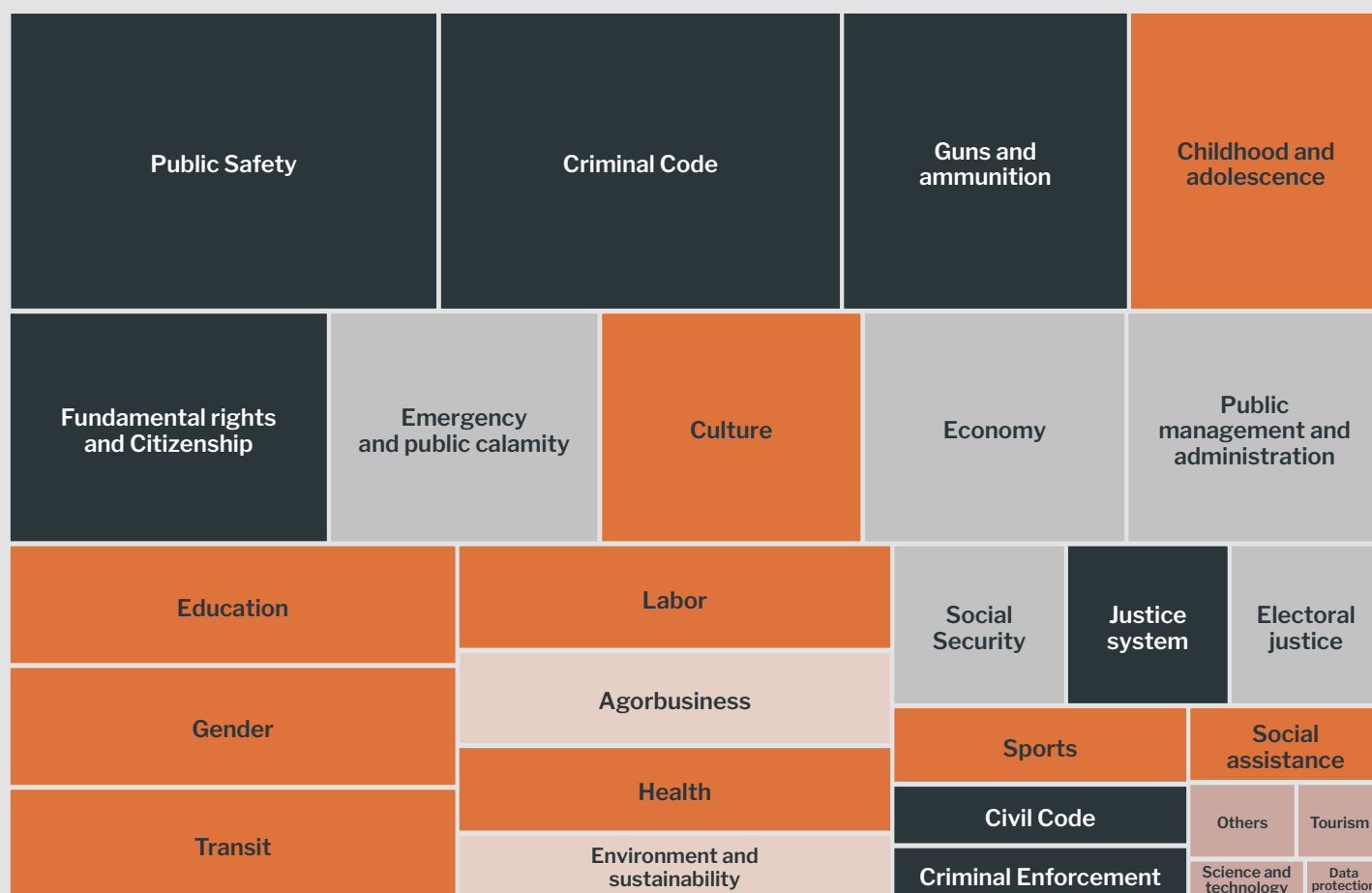
⁴ The distinction between sponsoring bills and pushing them through is an important element to assess whether the lawmaker is committed to (or capable of) promoting effective change in society, or whether they are more focused on engaging the base that elected them, regardless of the effective practical consequences.



PRODUCTIVITY AND PREDOMINANT THEMES

In the first two years of the 57th legislature of the Brazilian Federal Congress, PROARMAS lawmakers showed a productivity significantly higher than the average of the National Congress, regarding the bill sponsorship. While the general average was 19 bills per congressperson during the two-year period of the analysis, the PROARMAS group introduced in average 32 bills per sponsor, an amount 68% higher than the general average of the parliament.

Among the 739 bills analyzed, 439 were introduced in 2023, and 300, in 2024. In 2023, while lawmakers in general sponsored 11 bills in average, PROARMAS sponsored in average 19 of them. In 2024, the overall average stood at 9, while PROARMAS maintained an average of 14 bills, that address these subjects:



- Justice, Rights and Security
- Social Development and Well-being
- Economy and Administration
- Natural Resources and Infrastructure
- Others

Contrary to what common sense might believe, an analysis of the topics addressed by PROARMAS lawmakers reveals that “guns and ammunition” is not their main theme. In fact, this theme only appears in third place, with 52 bills. Their preferred themes were:

1. Public Safety (78 bills)
2. Criminal Code (73 bills)
3. Guns and ammunition (52 bills)
4. Childhood and adolescence (46 bills)
5. Fundamental rights and citizenship (45 bills)

In addition to the 52 bills included as “Guns and ammunition”, other 5 gun-related bills were included in the “Criminal Code” category. It is important to note, however, that under the theme of “Guns and ammunition” there are bills that do not deal exclusively with the topic but share different themes. In these bills, there is a tendency to weaponize complex social problems, such as domestic violence against women and lack of safety in the school environment, to justify loosening restrictions to gun ownership. Among those were bills granting priority and tax exemptions to women who suffered violence and want to buy firearms, authorizing schoolteachers and school workers to carry guns, and requiring mandatory armed security in education facilities. These legislative initiatives bypass the debate on structural public policies to prevent violence, betting on individual gun ownership as a solution to issues that require multidisciplinary and preventive approaches, potentially aggravating the very problems they claim to solve.

When analyzing in more detail the three major themes, the prevalence of certain subtopics reveals the priorities of these lawmakers. Under Public Safety, the most recurrent subtopics were “law enforcement” (36 bills)

and “school violence” (10 bills). In the Criminal Code theme, the highlight is the subtopic “hardening of punishment”, which appears in 53 out of the 73 bills in this category, thus showing a strong trend in the way these lawmakers work. And regarding Childhood and Adolescence, the main subtopics were gender and sexuality and the Child and Adolescent Statute (ECA).

Themes will often overlap. Schools, which work mostly with children and adolescents, are among the main concerns in the Public Safety theme; however, the hardening of punishment often translates into attempts to lower the age of criminal responsibility. This kind of overlap highlights how the theme of childhood and adolescence is both a subject and a weapon in a moralizing and punitive agenda that, under the pretext of protecting children and adolescents, proposes restrictions on fundamental rights. A morality-based agenda is characterized by its focus on regulation private behavior, use of rhetoric filled with evaluative language, such as “moral degradation”, “preservation of innocence”, “indoctrination”, “gender ideology” or “threat to the traditional family”, and creation of moral panic by exaggerating anecdotal situations.

Within this agenda, there were bills aimed at criminalizing gender identity discussions, or banning “gender-related pedagogical activities” in schools, medical treatments for transgender youth, or participation of minors in LGBTQIA+ events. Those bills often use vague and imprecise language such as “sexualization of

children” and “early sexualization” to justify interventions in educational and cultural policies, thus asserting control over artistic and pedagogical content. Instead of strengthening protection networks or expanding social rights, these bills focus on punitive measures, such as increasing the length of incarceration for adolescent offenders, and on interventions that restrict the autonomy of health and education professionals, deferring to parents or guardians on sensitive issues of development and identity.



Cabo Gilberto Silva

(Chamber - PL/Paraíba)

- Born on April 1, 1981 in Santa Rita, state of Paraíba
- Lawyer and military police officer
- Serving his first term as a federal deputy
- He was investigated by the Federal Police in November 2024 for speeches bashing the police chief Fábio Alvarez Shor, who works with Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes investigating former President Jair Bolsonaro

125 bills (77 in 2023 and 48 in 2024)
12 bills ready for consideration
50 bills attached to related bills



Capitão Alberto Neto

(Chamber - PL/Amazonas)

- Born on May 5, 1982, in Fortaleza, state of Ceará
- Military police officer
- Serving his second term as a federal deputy
- PL party whip in the Chamber
- He lost the mayor election in the city of Manaus, in which he obtained 45% of the votes

95 bills (54 in 2023 and 41 in 2024)
2 bills ready for consideration
38 bills attached to related bills



Marcos Pollon

(Chamber - PL/Mato Grosso do Sul)

- Born on January 19, 1981, in Campo Grande, state of Mato Grosso do Sul
- Lawyer
- Serving his first term as a federal deputy
- Founder of PROARMAS group
- He was the most voted federal deputy of his state in the 2022 election, with 103,111 votes

89 bills (57 in 2023 and 32 in 2024)
14 bills ready for consideration
36 bills attached to related bills

Three lawmakers stood out for the number of bills they introduced:

Despite their high productivity in bill sponsorship, an analysis of legislative progression reveals that few of those bills have moved significantly through the legislative process. In January 2025, of the 739 bills analyzed:

- **22 bills were archived**
- **15 bills were withdrawn by the sponsor**
- **70 bills were ready for consideration**
- **21 bills have been sent to the other legislative house**
- **Only 4 have become law:**

◇ Designates the title of National Capital of Cassava Flour to the Municipality of Cruzeiro do Sul, in the state of Acre ([Law 15051/2024](#))

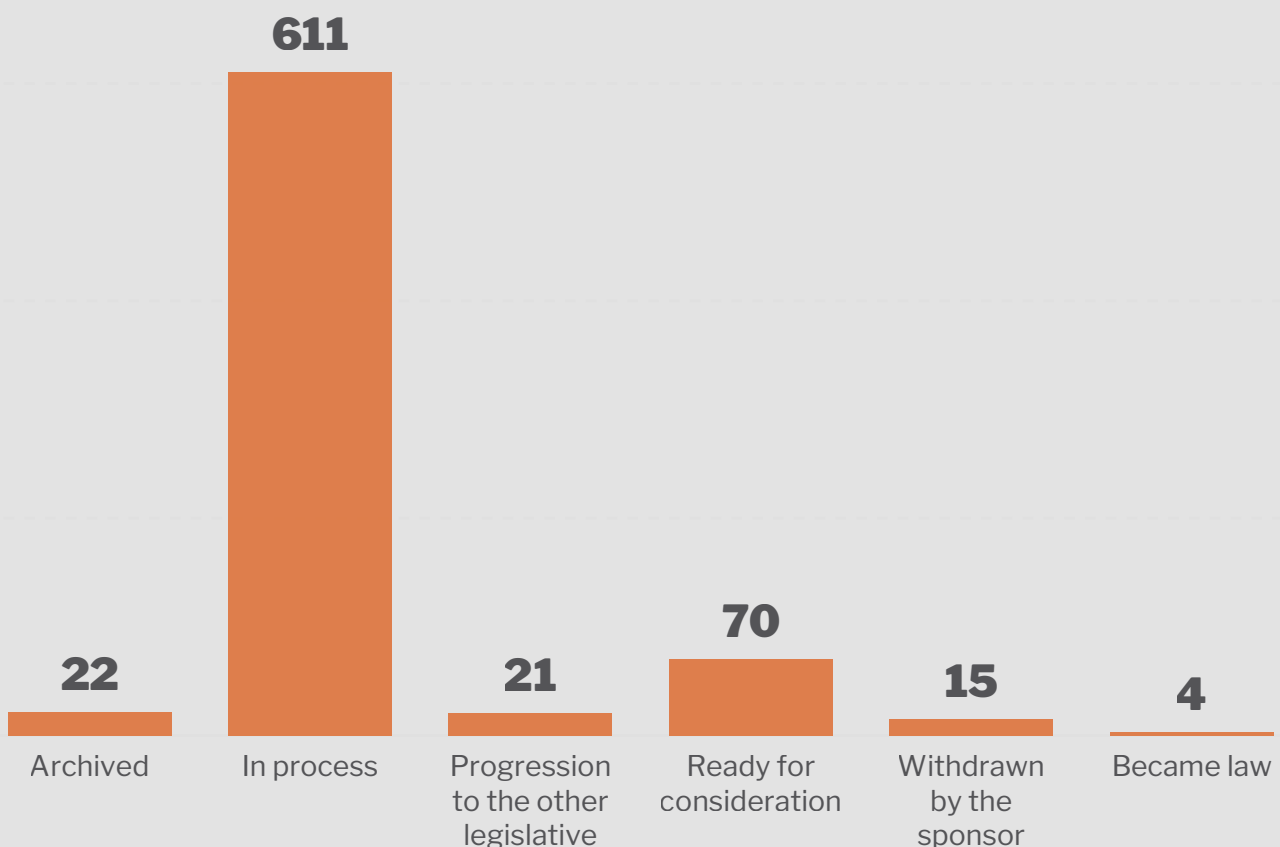
◇ Law regarding the rains in Rio Grande do Sul ([Law No. 14,917, of July 5, 2024](#))

◇ Recognizes the folkloric Festival of Parintins and Garantido and Caprichos oxen as national cultural heritage ([Ordinary law 14.960, of September 4, 2024](#))

◇ Declares the year of 2023 as “Fernando Sabino National Year” ([Law No. 14,794, of January 5, 2024](#))

This suggests that, despite the high number of bills, effectiveness in terms of bill approval is low, which may signal that many of these bills have more of a discursive and communication function to engage their bases than a proper legislative function.

— Status of bills



LAWMAKERS' PROFILE



The group of PROARMAS lawmakers mostly consists of men, and there are only 3 women (Amália Barros, Bia Kicis and Julia Zanatta) among the 23 congresspeople. This composition raises questions about how the group approaches gender-related issues, considering it is a major theme among the bills they introduced. Regarding the bills on matters of gender and domestic violence, a few lawmakers stood out as sponsors: André Fernandes introduced the most bills, a total of 8, followed by Marcos Pollon (7 bills) and Julia Zanatta (6 bills), and finally, Police Chief Paulo Bilynskyj, Corporal Gilberto Silva and Captain Alberto Neto, with 5 bills each.

Another striking feature of this group is the strong presence of professionals connected to law enforcement and the Armed Forces – 8 of the 23 who were elected. In the Chamber of Deputies, there are: Lieutenant Colonel Zucco, Colonel Ulysses, Corporal Gilberto Silva, Captain Alberto Neto, Captain Alden, Sergeant Gonçalves and Police Chief Paulo Bilynskyj. In the Senate, there is General Hamilton Mourão. This characteristic helps to better understand the focus on public safety issues, especially aimed at law enforcement, and the punitive approach found in the bills they have introduced. The civilian gun ownership lobby combined forces with the bullet caucus, which has traditionally advocated for violence as a public safety policy.

The analysis of party affiliation of lawmakers elected with PROARMAS supports shows a relevant pattern: 19 of the 23 Congressmen (83%) are affiliated to the Liberal Party (PL). The remaining lawmakers are distributed between two other parties: Republicanos (2) and União Brasil (2).

Concerning distribution among the Brazilian states, some are more represented in the group:



• São Paulo:

3 lawmakers (Police Chief Paulo Bilynskyj, Mário Frias and Marcos Pontes)



• Mato Grosso:

3 lawmakers (Amália Barros⁵, Nelson Barbudo, Peter Lupion)



• Acre:

2 lawmakers (Alan Rick and Colonel Ulysses)



• Rio Grande do Sul:

2 lawmakers (Hamilton Mourão and Lieutenant Colonel Zucco)

⁵The congresswoman died in the first half of 2024. Nelson Barbudo, her successor, took her seat in the Chamber of Deputies. The research considers Amália Barros and Nelson Barbudo as two separate sponsors. Source: Congresso em Foco, 2024. Who is Nelson Barbudo, the successor who will take over Amália de Barros' seat in the Chamber. Available at <<https://www.congressoemfoco.com.br/noticia/7099/quem-e-nelson-barbudo-suplente-que-assume-vaga-de-amalia-barros-na-camara>> Access on March 20, 2025.



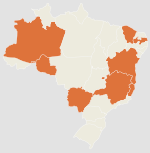
Santa Catarina:

2 lawmakers (Julia Zanatta and Jorge Seif)



• Rio Grande do Norte:

2 lawmakers (Sergeant Gonçalves and Rogério Marinho)



• Amazonas, Bahia, Ceará, Federal District, Espírito Santo, Minas Gerais, Mato Grosso do Sul, Paraíba and Rondônia elected 1 PROARMAS lawmaker each.



• Alagoas, Amapá, Goiás, Maranhão, Pará, Pernambuco, Piauí, Paraná, Rio de Janeiro, Roraima, Sergipe and Tocantins did not elect any lawmaker with PROARMAS support.

Finally, it is worth noting that a large percentage of these lawmakers is serving their first term: 18 (78%) of them. This shows there is a profile for the entrance of new players in the political game. Three other lawmakers are serving their second term in Congress, one of them is in his third term, and Magno Malta is the veteran of the group, with 4 terms.

These data point to a renewal of the pro-gun representatives in the Congress, something that had already been highlighted in the report [“What the National Congress says about civilian gun ownership”](#). 37% of overall pro-gun lawmakers analyzed in this study were in their first term. In the gun control field, lawmakers in the same situation only represented 18% of the total. The data on lawmakers supported by Proarmas once again suggest that the pro-gun field is expanding, improving their arguments, renewing its ranks and organizing itself internally. Unlike those who advocate for civilian gun ownership, the gun control group debates less and less and does not incorporate new arguments. Furthermore, there is no renewal among lawmakers involved with the topic in this field.



CONCLUSION

The analysis of the performance of lawmakers in the PROARMAS group shows a pattern of action that goes far beyond the specific issue of civilian gun ownership. These congresspeople have a broad agenda, focused on issues of public safety, criminal law, and matters related to childhood and adolescence. The fact that the group has a significantly higher productivity rate than the average of the National Congress when it comes to sponsoring new bills demonstrates a strategy of visibility and engagement with their electoral bases.

However, the low rate of progression for these bills through the lawmaking process suggests that many of them have more of a discursive purpose than an effectively legislative one. The data show that despite the high number of bills sponsored, few make significant progress moving through the legislative process, and only four have become law — none of them directly related to the issue of guns or any of the group's priorities.

The male predominance in the group (20 men and only 3 women) raises questions about representation in the discussion of gender-related topics, considering that the impacts of pro-gun policies have important gender dimensions, as evidenced in a recent study by the Sou da Paz Institute that shows that firearms were

responsible for the murder of almost 2,000 women in Brazil in 2023, accounting for 50% of women's deaths that year⁶.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that, while the specific theme of “Guns and ammunition” may not be the main one, in quantitative terms, in the production of these lawmakers, it permeates several other bills and functions as an unifying element of a broader set of visions on safety, citizenship and the role of the state. In this sense, the systematic monitoring of the activities of this group is essential to understand not only the future of civil gun ownership regulation in Brazil, but also the broader transformations in national policy.

⁶INSTITUTO SOU DA PAZ. Pela vida das mulheres: o papel da arma de fogo na violência de gênero. 4. ed. São Paulo: Instituto Sou da Paz, 2025. Available at <<https://soudapaz.org/noticias/em-1-a-cada-3-casos-de-agressao-de-mulheres-por-arma-de-fogo-vitima-ja-havia-denunciado-violencia-domestica/#:~:text=A%204%C2%AA%20edi%C3%A7%C3%A3o%20da%20pesquisa,controle%20de%20armas%20orientadas%20%C3%A0s>> Access on March 19, 2025.

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