In 2011, Brazil began allowing civil unions between same sex couples after years of national and international pressure. Yet the majority of Brazilians still express opposition for laws protecting and granting rights to homosexuals. This study analyzes the influence of religion on the views expressed by respondents in the 2002 Brazilian Social Research Survey (BSRS).

The articles goals included growing the sparse collection of scholarly writings relating religion and homosexuality and also determining if religion plays a part in attitudes about homosexuality and civil unions. What they found (and frankly expected to find) is that Protestants, then Catholics, hold the most restrictive views of homosexuality and equal rights.

 Though the majority of Brazilians identify as Catholic, Protestants (especially Pentecostals) total nearly a quarter of the population in recent years. Together representing approximately 85% of the population, members of these two “majority” religions are much more likely to oppose unions and have negative views of homosexuality.

Members of the Spiritist religions (including Umbanda, Candomble and Kardecist) and religious “nones” were much more likely to support civil unions between homosexuals and to be more tolerant of homosexuals in general. In fact, some Afro Brazilian religions not only tolerate homosexuality but practice it as well.

Due to the age of the data used and the recent changes in legal protections, this article is merely a snapshot of Brazil in the decade or so preceding equal rights legislation for homosexuals. The findings are important because they observe the correlations between religion and homosexuality while at the same time inspiring hope for future progress. While approximately 80% of Brazilians disapprove of homosexuality, nearly 20% fewer oppose civil unions. This could be viewed as a step towards greater equality, in that apparently some of the religious population are open to granting rights to individuals with different moral beliefs from their own. It would be interesting to see if/how attitudes have changed in the decade since the BSRS and with a few years of legal equality on the books.