



U4 PRACTICE INSIGHT 2025:2

Carolina Martinelli  
Series editor  
Monica Kirya

## Advocating for and enacting sexual corruption legislation in Brazil

---

Corruption erodes sustainable and inclusive development. It is both a political and technical challenge. The U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre (U4) works to understand and counter corruption worldwide.

U4 is part of the Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI), an independent development research institute in Norway.

[www.u4.no](http://www.u4.no)

[u4@cmi.no](mailto:u4@cmi.no)

---

## Read online

[www.u4.no/r/PI2502](http://www.u4.no/r/PI2502)

**Brazil may join a small but growing number of countries that have already criminalised sexual corruption through specific legal provisions. This legislative effort shows how naming, strategic framing, and cross-sector collaboration can bring invisible gendered abuses into legislative concern. It offers critical lessons on the importance of political sponsorship, data collection, and media visibility for addressing complex, underreported crimes.**

## **Main points**

- Brazil currently lacks a legal mechanism to address sexual corruption, leaving victims in a grey zone between anti-corruption and gender violence laws. To fill this gap, Bill 4534/21 proposes a new penal type criminalising the conditioning of official duties on sexual acts.
- A major barrier to legal and policy innovation is empirical invisibility. Systematic data collection is essential to overcoming this challenge by revealing the true prevalence and dynamics of sexual corruption.
- Criminalisation must be paired with judicial preparedness. Laws are necessary to fill the gap, but awareness, training and capacity-building for justice and law enforcement officials are essential for effective implementation.
- Framing matters. Presenting sexual corruption as both a corruption and gender-based violence issue helps broaden political alliances and increase public salience.
- Strategic sponsorship and political champions are critical to legislative success.

Those engaging in policy reform should identify and support credible political allies who can carry proposals forward within legislative systems.

- Joint action between gender and anti-corruption actors is also critical. Policymakers, donors, and advocates should encourage collaboration between traditionally siloed sectors to address intersectional abuses like sexual corruption.
- External actors, such as international bodies or NGOs, can play a pivotal role by funding pilot observatories, data initiatives and cross-sector coalitions that document, name, and expose sexual corruption, laying the groundwork for legal change.
- Symbolic timing and political windows matter. Leveraging high-profile dates and aligning proposals with broader legislative agendas can unlock political opportunity for less visible issues.

# Contents

<b>Sexual corruption: A gendered and invisible form of corruption</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Brazilian legal framework and its limitations</b>	<b>7</b>
Passive and active corruption: Crimes against public administration	7
Extortion: Crimes against public administration	9
Extortion: Crimes against property	10
Rape: Crimes against sexual liberty	11
Rape by fraud: Crimes against sexual liberty	12
Sexual harassment: Crimes against sexual liberty	12
<b>Jurisprudence: How Brazilian courts are dealing with sexual corruption</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>The legislative process of the sexual corruption bill</b>	<b>18</b>
Challenges and opportunities in the drafting phase	18
Advocacy strategy and political dynamics	21
Status: Stalled momentum in the Senate	24
<b>From conceptualisation to lawmaking: Final reflections</b>	<b>26</b>
Towards a comprehensive response	26
Recommendations for policymakers, advocates, and practitioners working on sexual corruption	28
<b>References</b>	<b>31</b>

# Sexual corruption: A gendered and invisible form of corruption

First elucidated by the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ) in 2008, sexual corruption involves the abuse of entrusted authority to solicit sexual favours in exchange for benefits or services tied to an official duty.<sup>1</sup> Unlike other forms of sexual abuse, it is characterised by its transactional nature: a quid pro quo dynamic rooted in power asymmetries and psychological coercion rather than physical force.<sup>2</sup> Also, differently from traditional corruption, it involves sexual rather than monetary transactions. In short, sexual corruption (often referred to as sextortion)<sup>3</sup> is at the intersection of corruption and gender-based violence and remains an under-recognised and understudied phenomenon in academic and policy arenas.<sup>4</sup>

Research and case studies have highlighted prevalent patterns in which sexual corruption manifests. In the public sector, bureaucrats may condition access to goods and services on sexual compliance.<sup>5</sup> In the education and police environments, teachers may demand sexual favours in exchange for grades, while police officers may request them to avoid fines or arrests.<sup>6</sup> In the judicial and migration systems, documented cases show judges and immigration officers leveraging their authority to obtain sexual favours in exchange for favourable decisions.<sup>7</sup> In the workplace, hierarchical power imbalances often lead to demands for sexual favours tied to hiring, promotions or job security.<sup>8</sup> These patterns demonstrate that sexual corruption cuts across sectors and disproportionately affects women in vulnerable situations.

Despite its seriousness, the offence is difficult to detect, prosecute, and even define. Global data remains limited, with only recent efforts beginning to capture the prevalence of sexual corruption. The practice was recognised as a form of corruption by the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against

---

1. Bjarnegård et al. 2024.

2. Bjarnegård et al. 2022; Sundström and Wängnerud 2021.

3. There is no consensus in academic literature or policy circles on whether 'sexual corruption' or 'sextortion' is the more appropriate term. This report adopts sexual corruption, as in many contexts, including Brazil, sextortion is more commonly associated with online sexual extortion or revenge porn, rather than corruption-related abuses of power involving sexual demands.

4. France 2022; UNODC 2020.

5. UNDP-SIWI Water Governance Facility 2017; Feigenblatt 2020; Eldén et al. 2020.

6. IAWJ 2012; Stinson et al. 2014; IAWJ et al. 2015; Eldén et al. 2020; Feigenblatt 2020.

7. Eldén et al. 2020; Feigenblatt 2020; Sundström and Wängnerud 2021.

8. Feigenblatt 2020; Sundström and Wängnerud 2021.

Corruption only in 2023, and in 2019, Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer included the topic on their surveys for the first time.<sup>9</sup>

In Brazil, one in five people report either experiencing or knowing someone who has experienced sexual extortion when accessing public services.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, the country currently lacks a legal mechanism to address the issue. Existing legal frameworks, including anti-corruption and gender-based violence laws, have proven inadequate in handling the particularities of sexual corruption. An important step towards closing this gap was taken in late 2021 with the introduction of Bill 4534/21 in the Chamber of Deputies.<sup>11</sup> The bill, which passed in the lower house in March 2023 and was under review in the Senate in 2025, proposes to criminalise conditioning official services or duties on sexual acts. The legislative proposal frames the offence as a crime against sexual dignity, signalling a shift from administrative integrity to the protection of sexual freedom. It also seeks to cover situations of sexual corruption in both public and private settings. However, until the bill is enacted into law, Brazil continues to operate without a legal tool to address this abuse.

This Practice Insight explores the legislative journey of Bill 4534/21 and the broader Brazilian legal framework in which it emerged. It explores existing provisions and jurisprudence, identifies the limitations of current laws in addressing sexual corruption, analyses the process behind the bill's development, and makes recommendations for policymakers, advocates, and practitioners.

---

9. Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, Resolution 10/10, 'Addressing the Societal Impacts of Corruption', CAC/COSP/2023/21 (5 February 2023).

10. Transparency International 2019.

11. See [Bill 4534/21](#).

# Brazilian legal framework and its limitations

Brazil currently lacks a legal provision that directly addresses sexual corruption. Although some court decisions have treated the exchange of sexual favours as an undue advantage within corruption statutes, the existing legal frameworks, whether anti-corruption or gender-based violence laws, remain ill-equipped to deal with the particularities of this conduct.

The Penal Code of Brazil is structured into distinct chapters, including crimes against public administration and crimes against sexual freedom. However, sexual corruption falls between these categories: it involves a violation of sexual autonomy, especially through psychological coercion rather than physical force. It also involves the abuse of entrusted power, such as an authority figure (such as a public official or teacher) leveraging their institutional position to demand sexual favours in exchange for access to benefits, services or goods.<sup>12</sup> In other words, the power ‘entrusted’ to the official by virtue of their role is misused for personal gain. Consequently, the transactional, coercive, and gendered dynamics that define sexual corruption are not fully addressed under either set of provisions: those governing crimes against sexual autonomy or crimes against public administration.

This section provides a concise overview of the relevant legal instruments, followed by an analysis of their limitations in addressing sexual corruption. In the absence of a targeted legal mechanism, victims are left in a grey area where protections are limited, accountability is rare and justice remains elusive.

## Passive and active corruption: Crimes against public administration

Brazil’s primary anti-corruption legal framework consists of Articles 317 and 333 of the Penal Code, which criminalise passive and active corruption, respectively. These offences are legally distinct and independent. Passive corruption applies to public officials who solicit or accept undue advantages, while active corruption applies to a private party who offers or promises such advantages to a public official.

The limited jurisprudence available on cases resembling sexual corruption indicates that courts primarily apply passive corruption laws. Some rulings have explicitly

---

12. Feigenblatt 2020.

interpreted sexual favours as a form of undue advantage (see section on jurisprudence below). However, treating sexual corruption under passive corruption laws presents serious limitations due to:

1. The bilateral logic inherent in corruption
2. The public administration having more legal protection than the victim
3. The criminal offence of passive corruption applying exclusively to public officials under Brazilian law

Following is more detail on each issue.

**1)** Traditionally, corruption crimes are conceptualised as bilateral exchanges involving a public official and a private party offering an undue advantage. However, in Brazilian law, passive and active corruption are treated as distinct offences and the Superior Court of Justice (STJ) clarified that this bilateral aspect is factual rather than legal.<sup>13</sup> This understanding means that even if, in practice, there are often two parties, the law does not require proving both sides of the exchange. A public official can be convicted of passive corruption even when no active corruptor has been identified, investigated or charged. Nonetheless, this bilateral framing still matters culturally. Because sexual corruption remains largely unrecognised, there is a risk that society and even victims themselves may wrongly interpret these cases as voluntary exchanges, reinforcing stigma and misunderstanding despite the law's recognition of victims' coercion.

**2)** There is legal precedent in which demanding sexual favours was interpreted as an 'undue advantage' under corruption law.<sup>14</sup> However, this statute is primarily designed to safeguard the integrity of public administration, placing the state as the main legal beneficiary. Consequently, the protection of the victim's sexual autonomy and dignity, as well as their access to support and recovery, becomes secondary.

When such cases are prosecuted under passive corruption law, the primary objective remains the preservation of government integrity, often at the expense of acknowledging the harm suffered by the victim. Besides, in Brazil, passive corruption is a criminal offence that can only be committed by a public official against the public administration (i.e., against the integrity of the state). This means

---

13. Superior Court of Justice (STJ), Internal Appeal in Special Appeal (AgRg no REsp) [1613927/RS](https://www.stj.jus.br/portal/consultaProcessual/verProcesso?tipoConsulta=verProcesso&tipoProcesso=REsp&idProcesso=1613927), Rapporteur: Justice Maria Thereza de Assis Moura, Sixth Panel, 2016; and STJ, Internal Appeal in Special Appeal (AgInt no AREsp), Rapporteur: Justice Reynaldo Soares da Fonseca, Fifth Panel, 2017.

14. TRF1 2023, <https://www.trf1.jus.br/trf1/noticias/?id=939> and Ministério Público de Goiás, 2019 <https://www.mpggo.mp.br/portal/noticia/medico-do-tjgo-acusado-de-abusos-contraservidoras-e-denunciado-pelo-mp-por-corrupcao-passiva> (This official Brazilian legal resource is geo-restricted and can be accessed reliably using a Brazilian VPN). For more details see section 'Jurisprudence: how Brazilian courts are dealing with sexual corruption.'

that the legal attention is on the misconduct of the official rather than the coercion and exploitation suffered by the victim.

This legal interpretation carries relevant consequences. As illustrated in the section on jurisprudence below, the impact on victims is frequently overlooked, as their suffering is not regarded as central to the offence. Furthermore, any financial penalties or reparations awarded under corruption laws benefit the state, leaving victims who endure direct harm without adequate legal remedies.

Additionally, because these cases fall under corruption statutes rather than gender-based violence, victims may face further distress and revictimisation in court. Thus, a gender perspective is needed, which would enable the effective application of National Council of Justice (CNJ) Resolution No. 492/2023. The Resolution mandates the use of the Protocol for Judging with a Gender Perspective, which fills a long-standing gap by guiding judges with theoretical and practical tools to apply gender-sensitive approaches across all areas of the judiciary.

**3)** The legal distinction between public and private spheres influences how corruption cases are prosecuted. Under the current legal framework, corruption is only criminalised when it involves public officials. In contrast, corruption only within the private sector is not classified as a criminal offence and is instead addressed through civil and administrative sanctions (see Box 1). This legal deficiency results in inconsistencies, as similar acts of sexual corruption may be treated differently depending on whether they occur in a public or private context. The absence of criminal liability for private-sector corruption leaves certain forms of misconduct, such as sexual corruption in non-public settings, without adequate accountability mechanisms, further complicating efforts to ensure justice for victims.

This legislative gap becomes particularly relevant for private institutions providing public goods and services, either on their own initiative or on behalf of governments, such as in public-private partnerships (PPPs). In these scenarios, private actors effectively wield public authority and control access to essential services, such as access to healthcare, water, and education.

## **Extortion: Crimes against public administration**

Similar to passive corruption, extortion that involves the abuse of public office for personal gain is covered under Penal Code Article 316. However, the main distinction lies in the nature of the act: while passive corruption criminalises soliciting or receiving an undue advantage, extortion specifically refers to the act of demanding it.

Like corruption offences, the primary legal interest protected is the integrity of public administration. Therefore, classifying sexual corruption under extortion laws

would be inappropriate, as the legal framework prioritises the misconduct of public officials rather than exploitation of victims. Additionally, extortion offences are limited to individuals who hold public positions, further restricting applicability to cases of sexual corruption.

## Extortion: Crimes against property

Extortion as a criminal offence that involves anyone coercing someone, through violence or threats, into acting against their will for the perpetrator's financial gain is covered under Penal Code Article 158. Since the law explicitly ties extortion to economic advantage, it does not cover situations where the undue advantage is sexual.

It is worth noting that a bill currently under discussion in the Chamber of Deputies seeks to criminalise sexually motivated extortion (Bill 2058/24). The bill introduces the term 'sextortion', but it differs from sexual corruption. Under this proposed legislation, sextortion is defined as the act of extorting or blackmailing someone by threatening to disclose intimate images or videos. This interpretation illustrates that, in Brazil, the term sextortion is associated with revenge porn and digital sexual extortion rather than corruption-based sexual abuse.

### Box 1: Legal frameworks beyond the Penal Code

In the Brazilian legal system, crimes are classified and treated differently depending on their nature and severity. The distinction between crimes defined in the Penal Code and those addressed by other legal instruments is important for understanding the legal options when dealing with sexual corruption.

#### 1. Penal Code crimes

The Penal Code is composed of public laws concerning security and public order and that regulate the behaviour of citizens in relation to the state and society. Crimes carry severe penalties and are adjudicated in criminal courts. Most of the legal framework relevant to sexual corruption is part of the Penal Code (corruption, extortion by public officials, extortion by any person, rape, rape by fraud and sexual harassment).

#### 2. Crimes outside the Penal Code

Crimes that are not explicitly included in the Penal Code are often addressed through special laws tailored to specific regulations, such as administrative, civil or economic

law. These offences generally carry lighter penalties such as fines, detention or community service. Examples of non-penal laws relevant to sexual corruption are:

**Abuse of Authority Act (Law No. 13.869/2019):**

This law defines several crimes of abuse of authority by public agents. Although, in theory, it could be used to address some sexual corruption in public institutions, the penalties are less severe than those under the Penal Code. For example, the law prescribes detention rather than imprisonment. Besides, despite emphasis on violations of individual rights and institutional violence, it does not address any type of sexual misconduct.

**Anti-Corruption Act (Law No. 12.846/2013):**

This law establishes administrative and civil liabilities of companies for engaging in corruption against public administration. It includes acts such as bribery, fraud in public procurement and obstruction of investigations. However, it does not create criminal liability but rather only financial and administrative sanctions. In fact, the absence of a general criminal provision for private-sector corruption in Brazil has been criticised by anti-corruption civil society organisations, which have advocated for legal reforms to fill this gap.<sup>15</sup>

**Corruption in the private sector**

Brazilian law limits criminal corruption to the public sphere, with no overarching provision criminalising corruption between private parties. However, some sector-specific laws address private-sector corruption in limited ways. The General Sports Act (Law No. 14.597/2023) criminalises undue advantage and fraud in sports organisations, while the Industrial Property Act (Law No. 9.279/1996) penalises unfair competition involving bribery for industrial or commercial gain. These provisions are narrow and do not offer a comprehensive framework for addressing sexual corruption in private settings.

## Rape: Crimes against sexual liberty

Within sexual violence crimes under Brazilian law, rape is the most severe, and it is covered under Penal Code Article 213. The law criminalises sexual acts committed

---

15. Falavigna and Trivelin 2024.

through violence or serious threat. Nevertheless, this offence does not adequately encompass the dynamics of sexual corruption.

The core distinction lies in the absence of the ‘corruptive’ element in rape statutes, namely, the transactional abuse of authority involving the solicitation, offering or acceptance of sexual acts in exchange for goods, services or public benefits. In sexual corruption, coercion tends to be subtle. Instead of overt violence, perpetrators leverage their institutional power to exert pressure, not only through threats of withholding resources or services but also through promises of providing an advantage that they have the power to bestow. This power dynamic, where a sexual favour is the currency for a corrupt transaction, is what separates it from other sexual crimes.

The lack of physical force is a significant legal gap that can result in courts interpreting the victim’s compliance as valid consent, especially if the victim engaged in the sexual act in exchange for something the perpetrator had discretionary power to grant or deny. The unequal power dynamic at the heart of sexual corruption may be overlooked, leading to a failure to recognise the coercive context and, consequently, a failure to provide legal protection.

## **Rape by fraud: Crimes against sexual liberty**

A less commonly known offence within Brazil’s sexual violence legislation is rape by fraud and is covered by Penal Code Article 215. It criminalises sexual acts carried out through fraud or other means that hinder the victim’s free will. Although it touches on consent, it typically refers to deception, such as impersonation or misleading the victim about the nature of the act. In contrast, sexual corruption involves coercion based on power rather than deceit. Because consent in sexual corruption is undermined by structural pressure, such as the need for a service rather than outright fraud, this legal category does not adequately address the dynamics.

## **Sexual harassment: Crimes against sexual liberty**

Penal Code Article 216-A criminalises acts where someone uses their position of authority, through a job, role or function, to coerce another person into providing sexual favours. While the offence involves abuse of power, there are important differences from sexual corruption.

First, the definition of quid pro quo sexual harassment is specifically linked to the work environment.<sup>16</sup> It occurs when employment decisions are based on an employee's acceptance or rejection of unwelcome sexual behaviour. In contrast, sexual corruption involves a broader abuse of entrusted authority, where a sexual favour is traded for a service, benefit or decision that the official controls.

Following this logic, sexual harassment applicability under Brazilian law is limited to two types of hierarchical relationships: employer-employee or teacher-student.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, many instances of sexual corruption would fall outside this narrow scope. For example, a public official demanding sexual favours from a citizen in exchange for a service or benefit would not be covered by the sexual harassment statute, as their relationship does not fit these two categories. Also, the offence carries light penalties: a detention sentence of a maximum of two years, which is usually converted into other penalties, such as community service or rights restrictions.

---

16. "What are the different types of sexual harassment?" Women's Law Project, updated 29 March 2021, <https://www.womenslaw.org/about-abuse/workplace/sexual-harassment-co-workerboss/what-are-different-types-sexual-harassment>.

17. STJ 2019, <https://www.stj.jus.br/sites/portalp/Paginas/Comunicacao/Noticias-antigas/2019/Sexta-Turma-decide-que-assedio-sexual-poder-caracterizado-entre-professor-e-aluno.aspx>.

# Jurisprudence: How Brazilian courts are dealing with sexual corruption

Despite the lack of formal legal recognition for sexual corruption in Brazilian law, a few judicial decisions reveal how courts navigate cases of exchanges of sexual favours and entrusted power dynamics. These cases are handled through existing legal provisions mostly under passive corruption, administrative improbity, rape by fraud or sexual harassment.

In one notable case, the Federal Regional Court of the 1st Region (TRF1) addressed the conduct of a doctor who solicited sexual favours in exchange for a favourable medical report for a social security benefits applicant.<sup>18</sup> The court classified the conduct as passive corruption, treating the request for sexual favours as an ‘undue advantage’. Although this case marked an important precedent by recognising sexual favours within the scope of corruption, the appellate court’s decision to reduce the sentence, citing the defendant’s lack of direct financial gain revealed an implicit hierarchy of corruption types. The court appeared to place less gravity on sexual exploitation compared to monetary corruption.

Similarly, another case resulted in a lighter conviction on appeal because the offender did not misappropriate funds. It involved a local public officer who solicited sexual favours from women in exchange for daycare placements and public jobs.<sup>19</sup> The public prosecutor brought both criminal and administrative improbity charges. The criminal court convicted the defendant of rape by deception, recognising that victims’ consent was manipulated through false promises. Meanwhile, the civil court relied on the Administrative Improbity Act (Law 8.429/92), determining that the conduct violated the principles of morality and legality in public administration. While both courts acknowledged the abuse of authority, the penalty imposed in the administrative case was reduced on appeal from a fine of 30 times the defendant’s salary to only five with the justification that the defendant did not commit misappropriation of funds.

These first two cases indicate a troubling lack of gender responsiveness. By penalising the corruption of a public act through sexual means less severely than

---

18. TRF1, Case No. 0003150-97.2014.4.01.3309; See TRF1 2023, <https://www.trf1.jus.br/trf1/noticias/?id=939>.

19. TJDFT, Case No. 20150110389739APC (0007942-38.2015.8.07.0018 – Res. 65 CNJ); and JusBrasil, 2018 <https://www.jusbrasil.com.br/noticias/agente-publico-e-condenado-por-pedir-sexo-em-troca-de-emprego-e-outros-favores/577489609>.

through financial means, the judiciary risks trivialising violence disproportionately experienced by women and perpetuating the harmful notion that women's bodily autonomy has less value than financial integrity. The courts' emphasis on the absence of direct financial gain to justify lighter sentences fundamentally misses the point: the 'gain' is the sexual gratification and assertion of power over a vulnerable person, and the 'loss' is not to a treasury, but to a victim's dignity, bodily integrity and right to equal access of public services. A gender-responsive approach would recognise that sexual corruption is not a lesser form of corruption, but a distinctly gendered one, requiring sanctions that reflect its unique and severe harm.

A third case before the Federal Regional Court of the 4th Region (TRF4) involved a university professor who was convicted of sexual molestation and harassment. He promised scholarships and publications to pressure a student into unwanted physical contact.<sup>20</sup> Despite the serious abuse of academic power, the court opted for alternative sanctions including community service, loss of public office and a temporary ban from managing scholarship programmes. This illustrates how common it is for sexual harassment convictions to result in alternative penalties.

Finally, in a case decided by the CNJ, a health centre director was removed from office following several complaints of sexual and moral harassment against female subordinates.<sup>21</sup> In parallel, the official was also criminally accused of passive corruption, having allegedly demanded sexual favours in exchange for maintaining or improving working conditions. While the CNJ's administrative procedure resulted in the official's dismissal and a five-year ban from public office, in the ongoing criminal case, the prosecutor requested compensation not only for the state, as is typical in corruption cases, but also for the individual female employees who were directly targeted. This approach implicitly recognises women as secondary victims – individuals who experienced professional and psychological damage because of the director's conduct. It marks a subtle but significant shift in how such cases may be framed: not only as infractions against the public administration, but also as violations of individual rights and sexual dignity. In doing so, the prosecution seeks to uphold the integrity of public office and secure reparations for specific harms endured by harassed employees. This dual concern could signal a gradual broadening of how sexual corruption is understood and litigated within Brazil's legal system.

---

20. See TRF4 2024 and Rajão 2024.

21. CNJ, Normative Act No. [0004692-71.2020.2.00.0000](https://www.mpggo.mp.br/portal/noticia/medico-do-tjgo-acusado-de-abusos-contra-servidoras-e-denunciado-pelo-mp-por-corrupcao-passiva); CNJ, Case No. [201805000105994](https://www.mpggo.mp.br/portal/noticia/medico-do-tjgo-acusado-de-abusos-contra-servidoras-e-denunciado-pelo-mp-por-corrupcao-passiva); See Ministério Público de Goiás, 2019, <https://www.mpggo.mp.br/portal/noticia/medico-do-tjgo-acusado-de-abusos-contra-servidoras-e-denunciado-pelo-mp-por-corrupcao-passiva> (This official Brazilian legal resource is geo-restricted and can be accessed reliably using a Brazilian VPN); Rodrigues, 2022; and Supreme Federal Court (STF), Precautionary Measure in Writ of Mandamus No. [38,411](https://www.stf.jus.br/portal/consulta/consultaPorNumero).

Across these cases, courts have creatively used available legal tools to address conduct that fits the definition of sexual corruption. However, in the absence of a specific offence, cases are fragmented across administrative law, corruption statutes and sexual crime provisions, each with different standards of evidence and harm assessment. Most decisions centred on the breach of public duty, protecting the state rather than the victim's sexual dignity. Penalties were reduced when sexual favours, rather than financial bribes, were the undue advantage, indicating a lack of parity and gender responsiveness in the judicial treatment of non-monetary corruption. This reinforces the need for legislative reform recognising sexual corruption as a distinct form of corruption, grounded in power asymmetries and victim vulnerability, not just institutional integrity.

## Box 2: Recognition of sexual corruption by the Federal Prosecution Service

In Technical Note No. 01/2021, the Federal Prosecution Service (MPF) highlighted corruption as a facilitator of human trafficking, particularly in migration control and border enforcement. The document highlighted instances in which public officials accepted sexual favours in exchange for unlawful entry or exit procedures – behaviour which may involve coercion or extortion, and is typically underreported. Although there is no specific criminal offence in Brazil, the technical note underscored that such conduct can and should be prosecuted under existing criminal law.

Building on this analysis, Joint Guidance No. 02/2021, issued by the 2nd and 5th Coordination and Review Chambers of the MPF, formally recommended that prosecutors consider existing offences when dealing with such cases. The guidance states that:

*Despite the fact that there is no specific criminal type for the figure known in comparative law as 'sextortion', prosecutors should consider the possibility of classifying the conduct of requesting, demanding, giving, offering, receiving or promising sexual favours as crimes of electronic embezzlement, extortion by public officials, active and passive corruption, witness corruption, or the crime of extortion through kidnapping, all of the common Penal Code (Articles 313-A, 316, 317, 333 and 343) ... considering the respective sexual payment in the expressions 'undue advantage' and 'any advantage' provided for in these criminal types, without prejudice to sexual crimes or crimes against sexual freedom that may occur.*

The guidance demonstrates an explicit institutional recognition of sexual corruption, referred to as sextortion, as a serious form of corruption, even in the absence of a

specific legal typification. It represents a significant step towards improving legal responses and visibility in cases involving sexual coercion tied to abuses of power.

Finally, the MPF referenced good practices from countries like Peru, where sexual corruption has been formally acknowledged in institutional anti-corruption and anti-trafficking strategies. It urged Brazilian authorities to follow suit, calling for coordinated action and improved classification of such cases to reduce invisibility and impunity.

# The legislative process of the sexual corruption bill

## Challenges and opportunities in the drafting phase

Bill 4534/21, which was proposed by a centre-left congresswoman in late 2021, seeks to criminalise sexual corruption and was developed within a broader legislative initiative known as the anti-corruption package. A major motivation in drafting the bill was the recognition that corruption has gendered dimensions, which are frequently overlooked in standard anti-corruption frameworks. This perspective informed the investigation of gendered forms of corruption, with sexual corruption standing out as a particularly harmful and under-addressed practice.

The early stages of drafting were marked by technical and political uncertainties. One of the central challenges was the lack of empirical data on the prevalence or characteristics of sexual corruption in Brazil. Although a 2019 Transparency International survey reported that 20% of Brazilians had either personally experienced or knew someone who had experienced sexual extortion when accessing public services,<sup>22</sup> these data were not widely known in policymaking debates. The scarcity of empirical data and legal precedents made it difficult to define the problem in legal terms and predict the potential impact of legislation.

Legal consultants and criminal law experts questioned whether the proposed conduct already fell under existing offences such as corruption, sexual harassment or abuse of authority. They argued that adding a new criminal type risked exacerbating the overpopulation of the Penal Code of Brazil, leading to legal redundancy and overlapping statutes. Some suggested that other tools, such as prevention through education or public awareness campaigns, could be more appropriate in addressing the issue without expanding criminal law. There was also uncertainty about how to classify the offence: either as an aggravating circumstance under existing law or as an entirely new type of crime.

These technical debates carried political implications. Introducing a poorly defined or redundant criminal type could damage the credibility of the broader legislative initiative, attract criticism from legal scholars or lead to judicial resistance. There was also concern about inadvertently creating a law that could misidentify the victim as a participant in corruption – a risk associated with the current legal framing of corruption, which penalises both the offering and receiving parties.

---

22. Transparency International 2019.

Under many uncertainties, at some point, the idea of criminalising sexual corruption was nearly abandoned. However, the drafting group ultimately concluded that failure to act would perpetuate injustice and invisibility around a deeply harmful practice. The decision to propose a new crime reflected an effort to address an intersectional harm that traditional frameworks had so far failed to capture.

Despite these challenges, several opportunities enabled the bill to move forward. First, the issue was framed as addressing a clear legislative gap: neither corruption laws nor sexual violence statutes were adequate to capture the specific nature of sexual corruption, which exists at the intersection of abuse of authority and sexual violence. This reframing helped build the case for a new criminal type, one that recognised the asymmetry of power and the sexual quid pro quo dynamic.

Consultations with academic and legal experts helped clarify the conceptual boundaries of the offence and differentiate it from existing legal categories. Discussions also highlighted that under current law, victims of sexual corruption could potentially be criminalised for ‘participating’ in corrupt exchanges, especially if the conduct were interpreted solely through corruption statutes. Similarly, sexual harassment provisions were found inadequate because they did not account for the coercive leverage tied to public service access.

Consequently, the drafting team opted to propose a new offence that criminalised the act of ‘conditioning the performance of official duties or services on sexual activity’. The final draft was accompanied by a technical note outlining the rationale for the legal innovation. It drew on definitions from the IAWJ and cited global recommendations from Transparency International, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the G20 Anti-Corruption Working Group.

## Lessons learned

- **Absence of data and case documentation limits legislative innovation.** The lack of national data made it difficult to define the legal problem, justify its urgency or anticipate enforcement challenges. Even strong normative arguments struggled to gain traction without a clear empirical foundation. Future efforts in similar areas and other countries would benefit from empirical research and data collection efforts prior to or alongside legislative development.
- **Formalist interpretations that favour established norms often constrain legal innovation,** even when those norms are ill-equipped to deal with new or intersectional harms. The debate around whether a new penal type was necessary exemplified this tension. Besides, technical legitimacy matters. Even when a bill addresses a clear injustice, it must meet the standards of legal coherence and compatibility with the broader penal system.
- **Early resistance can be constructive.** While initial pushback from legal

experts delayed the process, it also prompted deeper analysis and ultimately strengthened the final draft. The outcome benefitted from a more rigorous understanding of the legal and social dynamics and from a clearer articulation of why a specific legislative intervention was necessary.

### Box 3: What does the bill propose?

Bill 4534/21 seeks to fill a legislative gap by criminalising sexual corruption. The proposal introduces a new article to the Penal Code defining the crime as ‘conditioning the performance of official duties or services on sexual activity’. Importantly, the law would apply whether the sexual act occurs. Two levels of punishment are established:

1. Imprisonment from two to six years if a service is conditioned on sexual activity
2. Imprisonment from six to ten years if the sexual act is carried out, mirroring penalties for rape

The bill explicitly accounts for power imbalances by stating that the crime may be committed by ‘any agent who takes advantage of employment, position or function, or, even if momentarily, of a position of supremacy or superiority in relation to the victim’. This language (particularly the use of ‘any agent’ and the emphasis on ‘employment, position or function’) is intentionally broad, moving beyond a strictly public official-centric view. It thereby establishes that the underlying abuse of power, not the public nature of the role, is the core element of the crime. The bill further clarifies that if the perpetrator is a public official, this offence would be punished separately from the harm caused to the public, given that it simultaneously affects sexual freedom and public integrity. This dual approach – a general definition based on power imbalance plus a specific aggravation for public officials – indicates the legislator’s intention to criminalise the conduct in both public and private settings.

By placing the offence in the category of crimes against sexual freedom, the bill underscores that the primary right violated is sexual dignity, not the integrity of public administration. This classification has important legal implications. First, it ensures that victims are treated as central to the offence with protections against revictimisation. These protections are linked to the Law No. 14.245/2021 (Mariana

Ferrer Law)<sup>23</sup> and the Supreme Court's ADPF 1107 (2024),<sup>24</sup> which apply specifically to cases involving crimes against sexual dignity. Together, they prohibit humiliating or disqualifying victims during proceedings and deem it unconstitutional to question or reference a victim's sexual history or lifestyle in investigations, hearings or judgments.

Second, the bill triggers unconditional public prosecution, meaning the Public Prosecutor's Office can pursue the case without a formal complaint from the victim. This reflects the high social relevance of the crime, like other serious offences such as domestic violence, murder and corruption. If approved, the bill will place Brazil at the forefront of nations (along with Tanzania and India),<sup>25</sup> legally recognising sexual corruption with specific legislation.

## Advocacy strategy and political dynamics

Following the proposal of Bill 4534/21, the challenge shifted from technical formulation to political support. As with many legislative efforts that address sensitive or lesser-known issues, the path to approval required strategic framing, alliance building and advocacy within institutional channels.

The bill's top-down origin was one of its defining features. While it emerged from a thorough process of research and technical consultation, it was not mobilised by civil society or grassroots movements. This absence posed challenges when it came to generating external pressure or public engagement, which are often helpful in fast-tracking or legitimising legislative proposals. With little visibility in the broader public debate, the advocacy efforts necessarily looked inward on parliamentary strategy and institutional dynamics.

The bill's multiparty co-authorship was an early advantage. The inclusion of parliamentarians from across the political spectrum offered a foundation for a broader coalition, particularly within the congressional women's caucus. Framing the issue as corruption rather than primarily a gender matter helped draw support beyond the typical parliamentarians concerned with women's rights.

A milestone in the bill's progress was strategic advocacy with the Committee on Constitution, Justice and Citizenship (CCJC), the most influential committee in the legislative process. The bill's author successfully secured an ally as the rapporteur: a

---

23. Law No. 14,245/2021.

24. STF, Claim of Noncompliance with a Fundamental Precept (ADPF) 1107.

25. Carnegie 2019, pp. 11–12; Feigenblatt 2020, p. 26; Bjarnegård et al. 2025, pp. 10–11.

respected congresswoman with long-standing experience in human rights and gender issues and strong political connections within the Chamber of Deputies. Her support for the proposal facilitated the bill's approval at the committee stage, smoothing negotiations. Throughout this process, the bill's drafters engaged in technical dialogue with the rapporteur's advisers, clarifying the proposal's objectives and legal distinctions. This engagement revealed an important challenge when legislating around underreported phenomena: the lack of conceptual understanding and empirical grounding can delay or derail support if not carefully addressed.

The efforts resulted in a favourable report approved in June 2022. To underscore the legitimacy and urgency of addressing sexual corruption as a public integrity issue, the report cited an article published by *El País*.<sup>26</sup> This demonstrated how media visibility and expert engagement can support parliamentary advocacy by offering accessible references and reinforcing the relevance of the proposal. The importance of media presence was an important takeaway from this phase. While public mobilisation was absent, the issue's appearance in respected international and national media increased its credibility and policy salience.

Another strategic moment came with the decision from the bill's author to request urgency status for the proposal. The request was approved on International Women's Day in 2023. This timing was no coincidence. The *bancada feminina*, a cross-party group of congresswomen, coordinated the approval of a set of bills related to gender issues during that day's plenary session. Bill 4534/21 was bundled into this broader agenda, which allowed it to benefit from the symbolic momentum and political will associated with International Women's Day. This political synchronisation created a window of opportunity: although the topic was unfamiliar to many legislators, the broader framing of the agenda as a gender equity push provided a favourable environment for approval. The bill was passed by the Chamber of Deputies later that day.

While the bill addressed a practice that disproportionately affects women, it was not framed primarily as a gender justice proposal. Instead, it emphasised punishing the act of conditioning a public service or official duty on the performance of sexual acts, highlighting the abuse of power and distortion of public functions. The dual framing contributed to the bill's broad acceptance across the political spectrum. The proposal was approved without opposition, with votes in favour from both left and right parties.

During the plenary debate, deputies from different ideological backgrounds spoke in support of the bill. Representatives from the Workers' Party (PT), associated with

---

26. At the time of the bill's deliberation, the article was originally published in *El País* and is now hosted on the Spanish website *Agenda Pública*.

President Lula, emphasised themes such as sexual dignity and the protection of women's rights. Meanwhile, members of the Liberal Party (PL), aligned with former President Bolsonaro, echoed concerns about corruption and abuse of public office, even suggesting the use of sexual corruption to describe the crime. At the time, the bill still used the term sextortion, and the legal text referred to the criminalisation of conditioning a public duty on the provision of sexual acts. Across the spectrum, deputies acknowledged that although women are the majority of victims, the practice can affect people of all genders.

Still, the top-down nature of the initiative limited the scope for broader mobilisation or popular advocacy, which may have prevented sustained momentum beyond the Chamber. The bill's status, awaiting deliberation in the Senate, reflects this challenge. Without visible societal demand, and given the unawareness among political actors and legal institutions, the process risks stagnation.

### Lessons learned

- **Framing matters.** Framing the proposal both as a gender and corruption issue helps increase political support. In Brazil, this multidimensional framing was crucial to building a multiparty coalition.
- **Strategic timing opens political windows.** Linking the vote to International Women's Day and embedding the bill within a broader legislative agenda created a favourable political opportunity that facilitated its approval.
- **Media visibility supports political traction.** In the absence of widespread public pressure, expert commentary and credible media coverage play an important role in legitimising issues. Visibility in trusted outlets helps shape parliamentary discourse.
- **Parliamentary advocacy hinges on technical clarity and backstage work.** When concepts are novel or ambiguous, legal precision must be paired with accessible explanations. Engaging parliamentarians and staff behind the scenes is essential for building understanding and support.
- **Success is linked to sponsors in Congress investing political capital and driving the bill forward through the legislative process.** This includes seeking out cross-party allies and negotiating for supportive rapporteurs. Political champions in the legislature, especially those with influence and good relations in the legislative house, are crucial to navigating political hurdles.
- **Naming the offence and providing specific examples is essential for effective communication.** While the formal penal type criminalises the conditioning of an official duty on sexual acts, referring to the practice in public discourse as sexual corruption makes the issue more comprehensible and accessible to the public and policymakers. Similarly, providing concrete, empirical

examples facilitates understanding and support.

## Status: Stalled momentum in the Senate

Following its unanimous approval in the Chamber of Deputies, the bill entered the Senate in March 2023 and was assigned to the Committee on Constitution and Justice (CCJ) for deliberation. Despite the initial momentum, the proposal has since stalled. Since 2023, the bill has seen two rapporteurs appointed, yet neither has moved it forward. As of June 2025, the bill remains pending the designation of a new rapporteur. This prolonged inactivity reflects an institutional inertia.

The lack of legislative priority is a challenge. Unlike in the Chamber, where the bill was advanced under the symbolic momentum of International Women's Day and supported by a coordinated cross-party strategy, no equivalent push has materialised in the Senate. The issue has struggled to gain traction, partly due to limited understanding of its relevance and scope among politicians, legal practitioners and society in general. The scarcity of data on prevalence, affected populations and social dynamics compounds this challenge. Misunderstandings persist, with some policymakers conflating the proposed crime with sexual harassment, thereby underestimating its distinctiveness as both a corruption and gender offence.

Although the bill faced no political resistance during its passage in the lower house, its stalled journey in the Senate suggests the topic lacks the institutional maturity to advance. This stagnation appears less a sign of ideological opposition and more a reflection of the issue's absence from the political agenda. Placing it there would likely require a political champion or sustained pressure from civil society, the media and the broader public to generate the impetus needed for legislative action.

### Lessons learned

- **Civil society engagement remains a gap.** The lack of civil mobilisation meant the bill lacked external pressure and sustained public attention, potentially limiting its momentum in subsequent legislative stages. When introducing novel legal concepts, public misunderstanding can be a major obstacle. Without widespread awareness, advocates may face the costly burden of defending a proposal that is not yet part of the mainstream agenda. Clear, proactive communication strategies are essential, even if difficult, to prevent misinformation and build public support.
- **The absence of reliable data, media coverage and public pressure allows important but low-profile issues like sexual corruption fall off the agenda.** To build legislative maturity around such topics, continuous advocacy, framing clarity, and real-life cases remain fundamental beyond initial

wins. Final legislative approval is not only about identifying a legal gap, but also about political coordination and public agenda priorities.

# From conceptualisation to lawmaking: Final reflections

A fundamental challenge in addressing sexual corruption lies in its conceptualisation. The conduct combines elements of corruption and sexual violence, yet it does not fit neatly within either legal framework. In Brazil, the legislator had to decide under which legal domain the new offence should be placed. The proposal was ultimately framed as a crime against sexual dignity – a choice that contrasts, for instance, with Tanzania, where sexual corruption was incorporated under the country’s anti-corruption statute.<sup>27</sup>

The Brazilian decision was grounded in an important legal and normative objective: to establish the victim’s sexual freedom as the primary protected right, rather than prioritising the protection of the public administration’s integrity. This framing enables the adoption of gender-sensitive protocols and reinforces a victim-centred approach. It also excludes the possibility of criminalising the victim. However, in public discourse, academic debates and awareness campaigns, a different perspective may be more appropriate. Following Bjarnegård et al. (2025), this report argues for understanding sexual corruption primarily as an abuse of entrusted power, shifting attention from the victim to the perpetrator’s misuse of authority.

This distinction highlights a feature of lawmaking: legal frameworks often operate passively, emphasising primarily who or what is being protected. From this perspective, the Brazilian legislative choice was technically sound, but each country’s legislators must decide which framework best fits their legal and social context. Yet, this legal technicality need not dictate how we discuss, research or advocate around the issue. In public and academic contexts, a more active framing (one that centres the perpetrator’s abuse of power) can foster deeper understanding, reduce victim-blaming and strengthen prevention strategies.

## Towards a comprehensive response

The criminalisation of sexual corruption represents an important step towards addressing a long-standing legal gap. While raising awareness of sexual corruption in the absence of legislation is possible, without a clear legal framework, victims may report into a vacuum, with little legal clarity on how their cases will be handled.<sup>28</sup>

---

27. United Republic of Tanzania 2007.

28. Bjarnegård et al. 2025.

Brazil's proposed bill contributes to filling this gap by defining sexual corruption as a distinct offence and establishing sexual freedom as the protected legal right. However, criminalisation alone is insufficient. Without complementary measures, the law risks having limited impact on access to justice and victim protection.

The actors responsible for interpreting, enforcing, and applying the law must be aware and prepared for the legislation to achieve its intended objectives. Judicial officials, prosecutors, and police personnel need targeted training, sensitisation, and structured debates to strengthen their understanding of sexual corruption and its gendered dimensions. A complementary policy involves the strengthening and expansion of specialised women's police stations (*delegacias da mulher*). These units, designed to handle gender-based violence cases with greater sensitivity, have been linked to increased trust in law enforcement and a reduction in gender gaps in perceptions of police effectiveness.<sup>29</sup>

Beyond legislative change, effectively tackling sexual corruption requires a broader policy and institutional strategy. This report explored the emergence of sexual corruption as a pressing policy challenge in Brazil, analysing its legal framework and legislative responses. It traced the development of Bill 4534/21, the Brazilian attempt to criminalise the conditioning of official duties on sexual acts, within broader institutional challenges.

The analysis revealed that Brazil's existing frameworks, both anti-corruption and gender-based violence laws, are ill-suited to address the particularities of sexual corruption, leaving victims without adequate protection. Judicial practice has resorted to creative but fragmented applications of corruption, sexual violence and administrative laws, often sidelining the victims' experiences.

Through the case study of Bill 4534/21, the report documented challenges faced during the drafting and advocacy processes: lack of data, conceptual ambiguity, legal formalism and political inertia. It also highlighted strategic enablers of progress, including targeted framing, media engagement, political sponsorship and the strategic use of symbolic political windows.

Ultimately, raising awareness, enacting a law and institutional capacity-building must go hand in hand. Criminalisation establishes a necessary foundation, but without complementary actions in training, victim-centred support and sensitive reporting mechanisms, the law risks being underused or misapplied. Brazil's legislative initiative is a relevant step, but its success depends on embedding it in a comprehensive policy framework.

---

29. Bauhr, Owasanoye and Petherick 2024.

## Recommendations for policymakers, advocates, and practitioners working on sexual corruption

### 1. Invest in research and data collection

Sexual corruption remains invisible partly due to the scarcity of reliable data. Both quantitative and qualitative research are crucial to understand how, where, and under what conditions sexual corruption occurs, who the victims and perpetrators are, and how the phenomenon is perceived by different sectors, including the general public, policymakers, and legal practitioners. Without this empirical foundation, efforts to design targeted policies or strengthen legal frameworks risk being perceived as unnecessary or unjustified.

A promising practice can be seen in Argentina, where the organisation Poder Ciudadano has launched *Reportar*, a public platform that maps cases of sexual corruption anonymously to increase visibility. Such observatories can serve as powerful tools for raising awareness and informing evidence-based policy. Also, collaborative research that engage academia, civil society organisations and public sector integrity departments can broaden impact, strengthen credibility and produce actionable knowledge. Another good example is the work of Proética in Peru, which, since 2012, has been collecting information and publishing reports on the intersection of gender and corruption. More recently, the organisation has included survey questions specifically addressing sexual corruption.<sup>30</sup>

### 2. Establish a clear legal framework while enhancing capacity across the justice system

Criminalisation is essential to prevent a reporting vacuum and provide a solid legal basis for corrective action. However, legislation alone is not enough. For the law to be effective, it must be accompanied by awareness-raising and capacity-building initiatives on the intersection between gender and corruption targeting judges, prosecutors, public defenders, police officers and other justice-sector actors. Additionally, studies and surveys should be conducted by relevant government bodies, such as the federal Public Prosecutor's Office or the Office of the Comptroller General, ideally in collaboration with specialised agencies, such as Transparency International or UNODC. Without these complementary measures, victims may continue to face barriers to reporting, and the law's protective and deterrent effects risk being undermined.

---

30. Proética 2024.

### **3. Foster joint action between gender and anti-corruption communities**

Given that sexual corruption cuts across gender violence and corruption, initiatives must link organisations and experts from both fields. Greater collaboration between gender-focused organisations and anti-corruption actors is essential to build a holistic understanding of the problem and craft solutions that address both dimensions.

Treating sexual corruption solely as a sexual violence issue or solely as an integrity threat risks further weakening political and social traction. Instead, joint efforts can strengthen advocacy, improve the quality of data collected, and foster a more comprehensive public debate and awareness. Bridging traditionally separate communities also unlocks new partnerships and broader policy windows.

### **4. Frame sexual corruption as both a corruption and gender-based violence issue**

How sexual corruption is framed significantly affects its political viability. Positioning it simultaneously as a violation of sexual freedom and an abuse of entrusted power strengthens its resonance across ideological divides. This dual framing allows actors from diverse backgrounds, whether motivated by gender equality or institutional integrity, to find common ground.

The Brazilian experience shows that combining the urgency of combating violence against women with the political weight of anti-corruption discourse can increase visibility and build multiparty coalition. Aligning messaging with these two salient issues is promising because they are prominent in public discourse and political agendas. By contrast, overly technical or narrow messaging risks alienating potential allies and underestimating the issue's broader societal impact.

### **5. Raise awareness through media and public discussion**

Media visibility is essential to overcome the silence surrounding sexual corruption. Expert commentary, investigative journalism and opinion pieces in traditional and alternative media channels help position the issue as a legitimate public concern deserving political attention.

However, assuming the topic will gain attention on its own should be avoided. Proactive engagement with journalists, communication campaigns and partnerships with media outlets are necessary to ensure the topic does not remain confined to niche circles. Linking sexual corruption to broader discussions about public service quality, integrity, and women's rights can also help increase salience and societal urgency.

## **6. Build political awareness and secure strategic sponsors**

Building political support requires sustained efforts to sensitise lawmakers. Lack of familiarity with sexual corruption remains one of the greatest barriers to legislative progress. Often, once legislators better understand the dynamics and harms, support emerges. Nonetheless, technical merit or moral arguments alone are insufficient. Success depends on securing political sponsors such as legislators willing to champion the issue, invest political capital and actively push proposals through institutional channels. In Brazil, the role of the bill's author was decisive in seeking out allies, negotiating for supportive rapporteurs and securing inclusion in the legislative agenda.

The difficulty in engaging subsequent champions, however, often stems from the issue's absence from the political priority list. Without perception of political payoff or public demand, even sympathetic legislators may hesitate to invest their limited capital.

Therefore, to ensure sustained momentum, a diverse group of actors, including civil society, the media, legal experts and policymakers, should collaborate to adapt advocacy strategies as the legislative process evolves.

# References

- Bauhr, M., Owasanoye, B., and Petherick, A. 2024. [Sexual corruption: Emerging directions in research and policy](#). The Chandler Papers.
- Bjarnegård, E. et al. 2022. Sextortion: corruption shaped by gender norms. In [Norms, Gender and Corruption](#), ed. Ina Kubbe and Ortrun Merkle, 252–267. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- . 2025. [What is sexual corruption?: Challenges of raising awareness and legislating in the absence of recognition](#). Forum on Crime and Society (Special issue on The Gender Dimensions of Corruption), 11:1–17. UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime).
- Bjarnegård, E. et al. 2024. [Sex instead of money: Conceptualizing sexual corruption](#). Governance, 37(4): 1349–1367.
- Carnegie, S. 2019. [Sextortion: a crime of corruption and sexual exploitation](#). International Bar Association.
- Eldén, Å. et al. 2020. [Sextortion: Corruption and gender-based violence](#). Expert Group for Aid Studies.
- Falavigna, L. and Trivelin, M. L. 2024. [O crime de corrupção privada](#). Folha de S. Paulo, 7 July.
- Feigenblatt, H. 2020. [Breaking the silence around sextortion: The links between power, sex and corruption](#). Transparency International.
- France, G. 2022. [Criminalising sextortion: Challenges and alternatives](#). Transparency International Anti-Corruption Helpdesk.
- IAWJ (International Association of Women Judges). 2012. [Stopping the abuse of power through sexual exploitation](#). U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre.
- IAWJ (International Association of Women Judges) et al. 2015. [Combating sextortion. A comparative study of laws to prosecute corruption involving sexual exploitation](#). Thompson Reuters Foundation.
- Proética - Transparency International Peru. 2024. [Corrupción sexual](#).
- Rajão, G. 2024. [Professor de universidade gaúcha é condenado por assédio sexual](#). CNN Brasil, 10 September.
- Rodrigues, W. 2022. [STF nega liminar contra decisão do CNJ que aplicou pena de demissão ao médico do TJGO Ricardo Paes Sandre](#). Rota Jurídica.
- Stinson, P. et al. 2014. [Police sexual misconduct: A national scale study of arrested officers](#). Criminal Justice Faculty Publications, BGSU, 30.
- Sundström, A. and Wängnerud, L. 2021. [Sexual forms of corruption and sextortion: How to expand research in a sensitive area](#). QoG Working Paper Series 2021:10.
- Transparency International. 2019. [Global corruption barometer Latin America and the Caribbean 2019: Citizens' views and experiences of corruption](#).

TRF4 (Tribunal Regional Federal 4th Region). 2024. [TRF4 condena professor da FURG por importunação e assédio sexuais contra aluna.](#)

United Republic of Tanzania. 2007. Prevention and Combating of Corruption Act (PCCA).

UNDP-SIWI Water Governance Facility. 2017. [Women and corruption in the water sector: Theories and experiences from Johannesburg and Bogotá.](#) WGF Report No. 8.

UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime). 2020. [The time is now: Addressing the gender dimensions of corruption.](#)

# About the author

## **Carolina Martinelli**

Carolina Martinelli is a political scientist with a master's degree in public policy from the University of Oxford. Her research is on issues of democracy, public integrity, political economy and gender. She has served as a parliamentary assistant and public policy coordinator in the Brazilian National Congress and currently works as an independent consultant conducting policy-oriented research in these fields.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/carolina-martinelli>

---

## Keywords

access to justice – awareness raising – Brazil – South America – gender – integrity – public service delivery – sextortion – sexual corruption

---

## How to cite

Martinelli, C. 2025. Advocating for and enacting sexual corruption legislation in Brazil. Bergen: U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, Chr. Michelsen Institute (U4 Practice Insight 2025:2)

### Publication

First published 2 December 2025

### Disclaimer

All views in this text are the author(s)', and may differ from the U4 partner agencies' policies.

### Cover photo

iStock.com/Global\_Pics – license: copyrighted

<https://www.istockphoto.com/photo/brazilian-constitution-gm1055699094-282097846>

### Creative commons

This work is licenced under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International licence (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)



---

## U4 partner agencies

German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development – BMZ

Global Affairs Canada

Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark / Danish International Development Assistance – Danida

Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation – Norad

Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency – Sida

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation – SDC

UK Aid – Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

Corruption erodes sustainable and inclusive development. It is both a political and technical challenge. The U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre (U4) works to understand and counter corruption worldwide.

U4 is part of the Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI), an independent development research institute in Norway.

