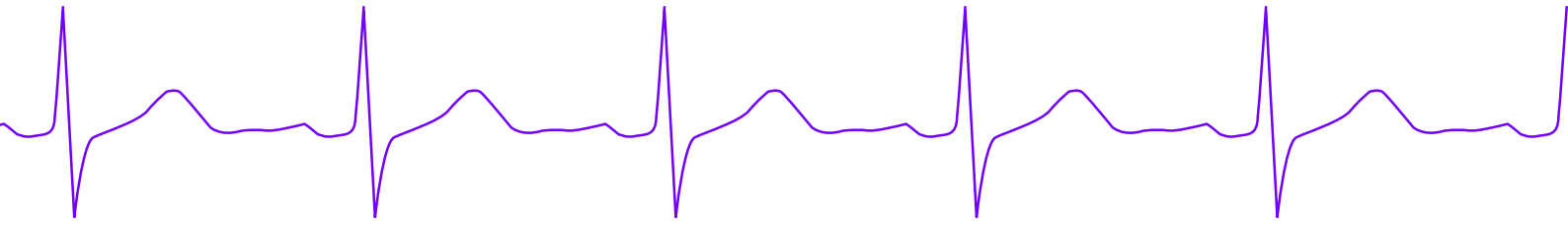




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DISINFORMATION **PULSE**

Reviewing the Impacts of Disinformation
in Brazil's 2022 Elections



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DISINFORMATION PULSE

Reviewing the Impacts of Disinformation in Brazil's 2022 Elections

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Resume

Disinformation was rife during Brazil's 2022 elections. While the spread of intentional lies and fake news began long before, their scope and virulence have markedly intensified in recent years. This paper provides an overview of disinformation trends since 2014 and delves into the dynamics of the presidential election cycle from August through October 2022. Summarizing the ongoing monitoring conducted by Igarapé Institute in 2022, it homes in on selected narratives targeting democratic institutions and their wider impacts. The paper concludes with an analysis of counter-measures undertaken by public authorities, social media platforms and civil society. It finds that the far-right were far more active and effective in spreading messages than the left, center or the mainstream media. It also observes that government and civic efforts to draw attention to and mitigate disinformation were somewhat effective, but must be improved. In preparing this assessment, the Igarapé Institute worked closely with Democracia em Xequê, a research hub focusing on threats to democracy.

Introduction

Disinformation, misinformation and malinformation are critical challenges to democracy and democratic institutions in the digital era. The rapid spread of digital harm in its various guises - particularly fake news, conspiracies and outright lies - poses risks to free speech and the electoral process itself. The widespread use of social media, messaging platforms and unfiltered online channels of communication are testing the limits of democratic governance everywhere, not least in Brazil. The Brazilian case in particular is a cautionary tale about the broader digital threats ahead. Yet it also holds object lessons for how to contain – and even reverse – the negative externalities of the global disinformation machine.

While no one knows the full extent to which fake news sways elections, recent evidence from Brazil indicates that it has become ever more sophisticated and prolific. To better understand the effects of these digital harms, the following report asks several questions:

- How widely does mis/dis/mal information spread?
- What messages resonate most?
- How much faith do users place in such sources?
- To what extent do online falsehoods spill over into real world conflicts or violence?
- How do counternarratives emerge and how effective are they in refuting disinformation?
- Can the courts thwart the spread of falsehoods, demonetize their purveyors and compel media platforms to remove content?

Answers to each of these questions can help decipher the impact of certain narratives on national politics and public opinion and shape effective measures to counter their diffusion and effects.

The Igarapé Institute produced the Disinformation Pulse series in 2022 to better understand the dimensions of digital harms and their influence on Brazil's democratic institutions. The Institute generated a dozen short reports focused primarily on monitoring online disinformation, misinformation and malinformation between August and December 2022. A core objective was to detect the ways online narratives eroded trust in the electoral system, undermined democratic institutions, goaded supporters into taking action, and discredited or maligned political opponents. Each Pulse provided a bi-weekly meta-review of the outcomes of social listening issued by Igarapé Institute partner Democracia em Xequê Observatory, synthesizing findings across multiple platforms including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, Telegram and other platforms.

The following report synthesizes the key trends identified across the Institute's 2022 Disinformation Pulse bulletins. This summary analyzes several key disinformation networks operating across the digital ecosystem during the 2022 election, their main actors, targets and tactics. Igarapé Institute went on to explore how online disinformation spilled into the public square, fueling tensions and instability in the real world. The report also examines how a variety of institutional stakeholders responded to online falsehoods, including governments, digital platforms, and civil society.

Several key findings emerged from 2022:

- Disinformation campaigns expanded dramatically in Brazil in 2022. While the country's extreme political polarization dates as far back as 2014, partisan online disinformation campaigns are more recent, having kicked off in earnest during the 2018 presidential elections. At the time, Brazilian institutions were largely caught off guard, as voters were buffeted by an unprecedented surge of misleading and conspiratorial content targeting democratic institutions and testing the resilience of the electoral system in 2020 and 2022. Four years on, with 156 million voters heading to the polls in October 2022, the broad consensus emerged that holding free and fair elections depends critically on Brazil's capacity to confront this growing tide of disinformation.
 - The Igarapé Institute detected four overarching political narratives during the culminating three months (August-October) of the 2022 presidential campaign. These included online efforts to: (i) reduce trust in the electoral system; (ii) target democratic institutions; (iii) discredit and diminish the influence of political opponents; and (iv) influence core supporters to take action. Social media posts seeking to undermine trust in the electoral system accounted for over 32% of these narratives.
 - An analysis of posts and interactions showed superior performance and engagement among the far right groups in almost all social media networks from August through December 2022. While the left led the way on Facebook, publishing 491,183 times to the right's 411,136 posts (a 16% percent margin), they trailed in online engagement. The far right logged 361,252,816 Facebook interactions, compared to the left's total of 217,605,851 - nearly 40% less. These numbers confirm the perception that even though the left kept pace on social media, the far right was much more competitive in engaging its supporters and spreading its message.
- This lopsided performance helps explain how, despite all the pushback, so much disinformation still found its way to voters.
- Analyzing disinformation over time, the Institute and its partners found that attacks shifted from democratic institutions to the electoral system. The preferential target was the Superior Electoral Court (TSE), which repeatedly ruled to remove online disinformation and restrict the Bolsonaro campaign from using images captured at official events in his reelection bid. Hence, the proportion of online attacks against democratic institutions fell sharply (from around 29% of total cases to approximately 17%) from August to October 2022, while those targeting the electoral system surged (from 24% to 35%) during the same period.
 - A persistent narrative running through the second half of 2022 was the debate over media regulation. Online chatter on this subject surged (from 4 cases in August to 43 in October) following a number of TSE's decisions to restrict information that, if not blatantly fake, was believed to spread disinformation or openly harmed the isonomy of the campaigns, that generated controversy. These rulings drew rebuke, especially from extreme-right supporters of former president Jair Bolsonaro as well as from some libertarian activists.
 - Incidents occurring online are often a reflection of events in the wider world, but sometimes the reverse is also true. Specifically, digital harms including aggressive discourse and hate speech on social media can contribute to intimidation, harassment and even the outbreak of physical violence. Consider that shortly following a spike in claims that "election polls were not trustworthy" (up four-fold from August to September), far-right Bolsonaro supporters physically assaulted a poll taker. The attackers punched and kicked a Datafolha surveyor for supposedly skewing the polling results in favor of Workers Party (PT) challenger Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

- The push-back against disinformation and misinformation was painstakingly planned. Indeed, institutions such as the Supreme Court (STF) and the TSE, social media platforms, and civil society groups worked publicly and privately over the past few years to confront disinformation, before and during the 2022 electoral cycle. Although there are many challenges ahead, these partnerships were paramount to reducing the damage and reining in the problem. Their experience offers lessons for the years ahead, both in Brazil and globally, and suggests paths to further minimize the impact of fake news and disinformation campaigns on democracy.
- Partnerships between the TSE and social media platforms were effective in combating disinformation by fostering various perspectives on potential solutions to the problem and how key stakeholders stood to be affected. While this pact represented an advance, it stopped short of generating a comprehensive debate on the role of social media platforms in content regulation. Meanwhile, the TSE and the STF were both extremely active in combating disinformation, ordering the removal of hundreds of harmful posts and the demonetization of YouTube channels that disseminated disinformation. Both benches sanctioned public authorities caught using their channels to share fake news and demanded that media platforms undertake concrete containment actions.
- Tech companies found to have repeatedly failed to combat disinformation were obliged under Court orders to implement more responsible policies. Nonetheless, this more incisive judicial approach exacerbated political polarization and drew accusations of censorship by right-wing critics. Moreover, the more assertive role by the Brazilian Judiciary was a cautionary tale about how the lack of specific regulation on this controversial subject could be an invitation to arbitrariness.
- The participation of civil society organizations in the TSE's Observatory of Transparency in Elections (OTE) helped to strengthen the Court as it fell under increasing partisan attack during the electoral process. Other organizations actively monitored the disinformation ecosystem across social networks and shared relevant findings with the key institutions tasked with containing harmful speech, bringing those responsible to account, and helping to flag risks of incitement to violence by pro-gun groups.

This report is divided into four sections. The first section analyzes disinformation trends in Brazil and how they evolved. Section two introduces the typology of narratives developed by Igarapé Institute to analyze the most commonly spread fake news and disinformation discourses on social media, and the methodology to account for them. The third section explores the ways Brazilian public, private and civic actors responded to these disinformation campaigns in the 2022 presidential election to ensure free and fair elections. The final section offers recommendations and pathways to building a stronger, healthier democracy as evidence suggests attacks will not let up any time soon.

Disinformation trends in Brazil

Brazil is a laboratory for online disinformation and misinformation. In 2018, social networks played a pivotal role in the election of a populist far-right national leader.² They have proved instrumental ever since in reshaping the national political landscape at the federal, state and municipal levels.³ Like other populist leaders around the world, Jair Bolsonaro came to power by circumventing traditional or mainstream media and other conventional means of engaging the electorate. Instead, he consolidated his presence in the digital space, as he and his entourage sought to engage constituents online, especially on Facebook, Twitter, Telegram and WhatsApp.

One reason why Bolsonaro was able to expand his appeal online is that Brazilians themselves are increasingly in thrall to digital media.⁴ Indeed, Brazilians are prodigious producers and consumers of online content.⁵ Online networks have become central to the way Brazilians interact and socialize. Citizens are far more likely to communicate on Facebook and WhatsApp than by phone or sms messaging. Yet while an increasing number of Brazilians are digitally connected, overall levels of trust in democratic institutions have declined in recent years.⁶

Meanwhile, disinformation has taken off. The first major wave came in 2014 and rose sharply during the 2018 campaign.⁷ The trend continued through the 2020 municipal elections and reached new heights in the 2022 presidential election.⁸

The 2018 elections marked a turning point in Brazil, with the debut of mass dissemination of fake news and wider forms of online disinformation and misinformation. Narratives pushing conservative morality and smear

campaigns against opposition candidates and independent journalists proliferated.⁹ So did accusations of electoral fraud – including claims that electronic voting machines were unreliable.¹⁰ Multiple disinformation messages fueled doubts over election results and sought to discredit the electoral system.¹¹ The speed by which such narratives swept across social networks allowed these messages to spread by frightening proportions. The blitzkrieg of virtual disinformation at times overwhelmed the electoral justice system,¹² which struggled to keep pace and present effective responses.

Since then, initiatives to combat disinformation have been democratized by providing ready public access to official information to prevent the spread of fake news. In 2020, the TSE created the “Fact or Rumor” page, which concentrated verification of false information in a single page, facilitating access for all citizens without data traffic charges (zero rating) by telephone operators. The page drew almost 13 million views in 2020 and was updated in 2022. The electoral court launched a WhatsApp chatbot in 2020 – renewing it in 2022 – which allowed voters to cross-check news sources and dispel doubts about the electoral process. In the same year, the media campaign “If it’s Fake News, don’t share it” alerted voters to the dangers of spreading fake news and broadcast on TV, radio and social networks, reaching around 130 million Brazilians. In 2022, the TSE unveiled its #democraciaempilulas (democracy step by step) series to highlight the actions of the Court to face disinformation.

In 2019, more than 50 public and private entities signed an agreement with the TSE to provide Brazilian voters with reliable information ahead of the 2020 municipal elections. The Program to Combat Disinformation established a series of protocols to enable people to identify and check disinformation; understand the electoral process and electronic voting machines; and recognize false information and the practices used to disseminate false content.

During the 2020 municipal elections, allegations of distrust in the electoral system flooded digital platforms.¹³ Cyber attacks, including a breach of the TSE server, only intensified suspicions.¹⁴ The attacker accessed personal data of TSE officials and disclosed them on the day of the first round of the elections. A second attack targeted the TSE systems with the intention of shutting it down (denial of service attack), but was quickly neutralized. While experts discarded any legitimate threats to the integrity and security of the elections, far-right supporters seized on the episode to double down on claims of supposed electoral fraud.¹⁵ Throughout the campaign the TSE acted proactively by expanding partnerships with digital platforms and signed agreements with at least nine fact-checking agencies to combat disinformation.¹⁶ Despite these and other measures, Brazil's electoral authorities still found themselves unable to cope with the unprecedented wave of disinformation that peaked during the 2022 presidential elections in its full extent.

In 2021, the top electoral court launched other initiatives to combat disinformation in the upcoming elections, such as the TSE's Permanent Program to Combat Disinformation (PPED). Its goal was to reduce the most harmful effects of disinformation aimed at the electoral courts, the electronic voting system, and the overall electoral process. More than 150 partners signed the agreement including leading social networks, digital platforms and internet providers such as Google, WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, as well as fact-checking agencies, public and private institutions, political parties, research entities, and social organizations.

During the 2022 campaign, the key online targets of disinformation and misinformation were the electoral system and electoral authorities, starting with the TSE and the STF. In addition to text-based digital harms, dubious video content¹⁷ gained prominence in 2022: far-right channels scored record engagement by disseminating disinformation through "Lives," interviews and "video streamed podcasts."¹⁸

Arguments seeking to delegitimize the electoral process gained traction. One of the headline accusations was that the TSE favored Lula's campaign by handing down decisions prejudicial to Bolsonaro and his supporters.¹⁹

To better understand these dynamics we must also highlight that the armed forces played a pivotal role in the Bolsonaro government, with members of the military occupying thousands of civilian jobs in the bureaucracy. Many of these appointees were placed apparently as presidential confidants to leverage executive influence over state institutions.²⁰ The same tactic of stacking the bureaucracy was used to discredit the electoral system and pressure the electoral court to accede to the demand that the armed forces take an active role in auditing the electoral process.²¹ Some military officials joined the chorus by sharing messages critical of the Superior Court rulings on the subject.²²

Bolsonaro supporters clearly took these efforts to heart. Hundreds of his loyalists gathered outside of military garrisons after results were announced, clamoring for armed intervention to revert election results.²³ They indulged in a steady diet of fake news and conspiracy theories, served up daily across the country via WhatsApp and Telegram groups. With the intense flow of messages reinforcing real time protests and mobilization, scores of discontents apparently took refuge in a parallel universe of bogus news and fakery, under the belief that a redemptive military intervention was at hand, the arrest of STF Justice Alexandre de Moraes imminent, and the cancellation of supposedly fraudulent elections only a matter of time.²⁴

Taking their cues from extremists worldwide, Bolsonaro and the far-right in Brazil sought to leverage the argument of freedom of expression to justify false claims, hate speech and the propagation of disinformation.²⁵ Although the Brazilian Judiciary clearly stated that the right to free speech was not a license to break the law,²⁶ attacks against the Judiciary – especially individual justices such as Alexandre de Moraes²⁷ and Luís Roberto Barroso²⁸ – ensued,

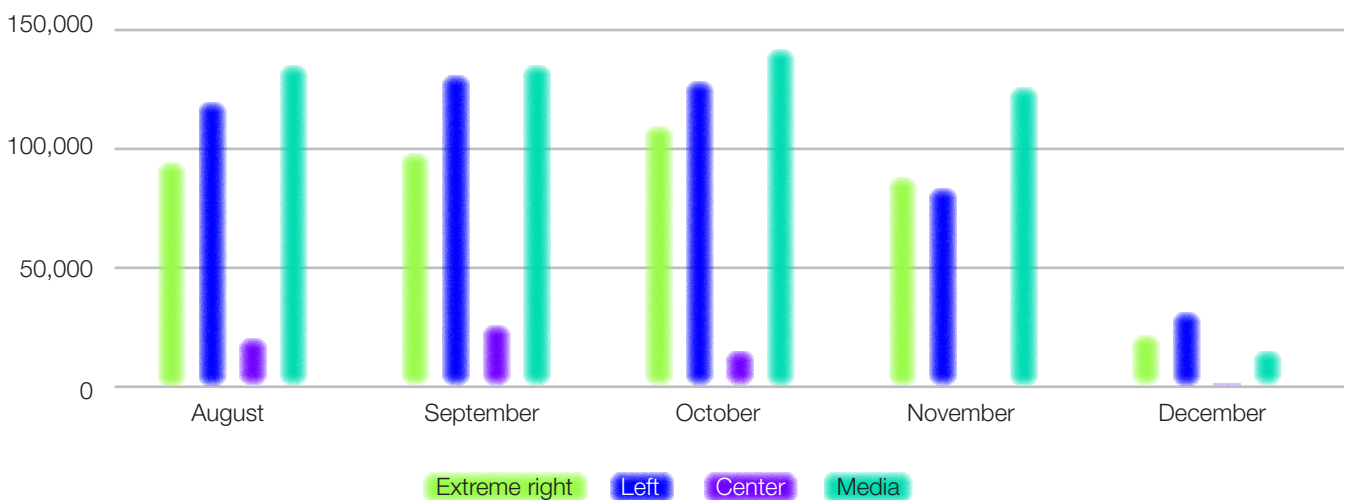
most of them alleging judicial bias in favor of Lula and the left. The STF was the target of interest through the early campaign. As the campaign entered its final phase, the spotlight shifted to the TSE following a number of rulings determining the removal of harmful content from social media, especially Youtube and Telegram. Some critics accused the courts of promoting censorship²⁹ by restricting online content they deemed harmful.³⁰ One often repeated claim was that a future Lula government would emulate communist dictatorships³¹ by restricting constitutional liberties and imposing draconian controls on social media.³² Evangelical leaders³³ also played a key role by playing on the fears of their flocks about the incoming government’s alleged plans to impose policies such as teaching gender ideology in the classroom, drug regulation, abortion and church closures.³⁴

The widespread distrust of the traditional press among far-right groups resonated on their social networks. While the left tackled a variety of themes across their online communities – denouncing cases of racism and sexism, commenting on scandals involving celebrities or sharing scientific information and innovations – our analysis showed that the rightwing

web homed in on politics. For example, these groups gave ample airtime to voices discrediting the electoral process and attacking institutions.³⁵ Judging by decibels, organization and engagement, the far right since 2018 has been winning the disinformation war, especially on YouTube and Twitter. The left, by contrast, enjoyed the upper hand during certain periods of the 2022 electoral cycle, expanding posts and interactions on Instagram and Facebook.

To analyze how these discourses were developed and spread over social media, Igarapé collaborated with Democracia em Xequê, a research hub focusing on disinformation and other threats to democracy. Besides listing viral content, the methodology also allows for aggregation by political segment. The charts below account for the total number of posts by each segment between August and December 2022, as well as their engagement numbers, on Facebook and Instagram. Even though the left posted consistently more than the far-right on Instagram, and in most months on Facebook as well, the far-right outperformed in engagement, even after they suffered losses at the polls.

Figure 1. Facebook posts involving election-related - August - December 2022 (Brazil)



Source: Igarapé with data from Democracia em Xequê (2023)

Figure 2. User engagement with election-related - August - December 2022 (Brazil)

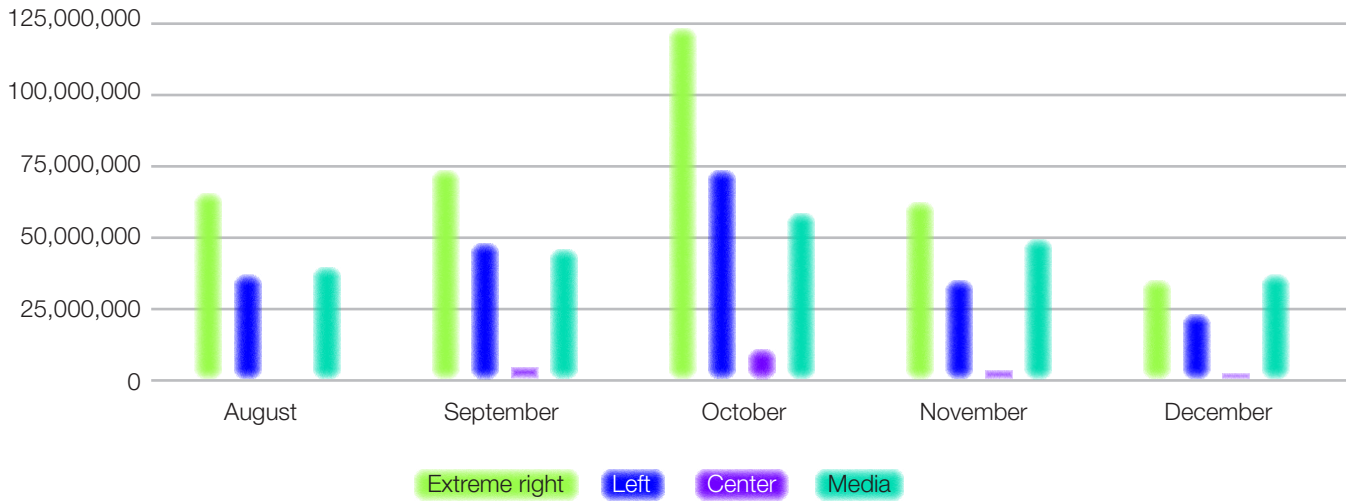


Figure 3. Instagram posts involving election-related - August - December 2022 (Brazil)

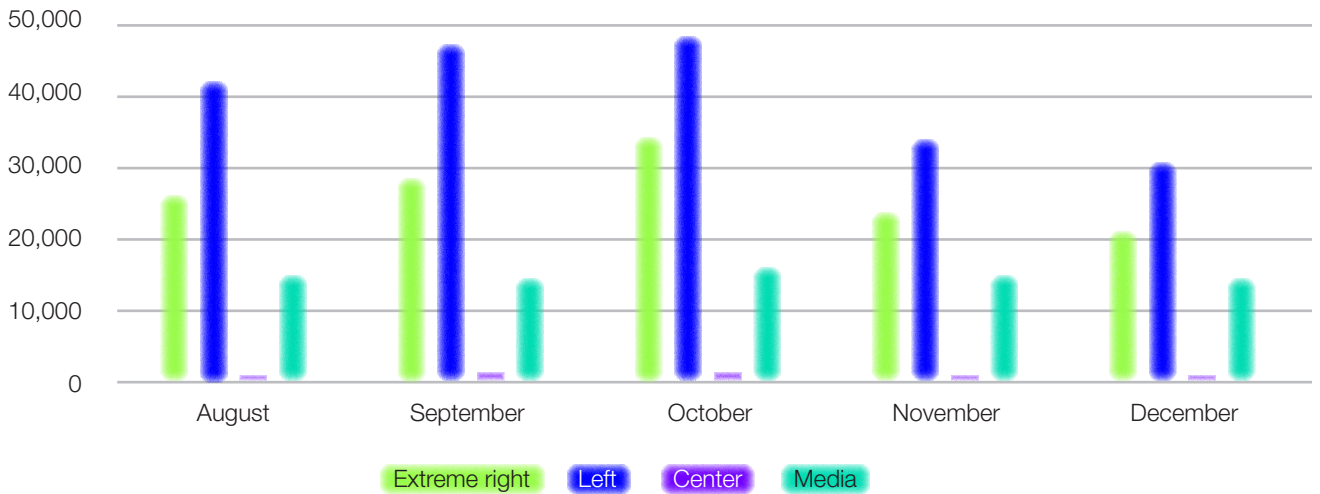
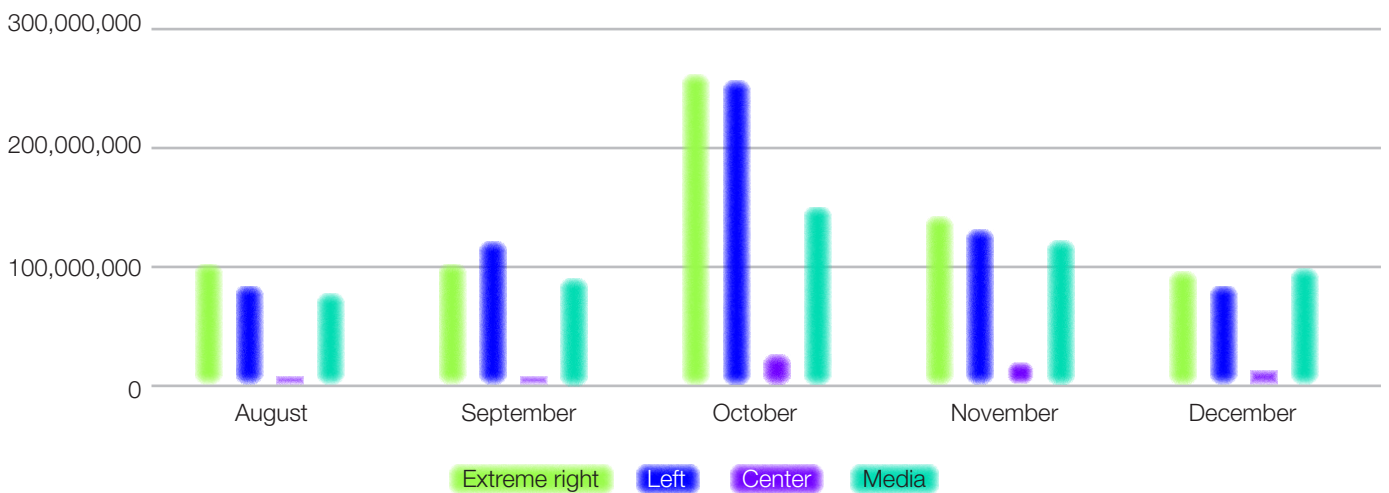


Figure 4. Instagram interaction with election-related - August - December 2022 (Brazil)



Source: Igarapé with data from Democracia em Xequê (2023)

Bolsonaro supporters proved to be formidable web warriors, ably tapping their networks to communicate directly with their broad public, spread disinformation and strengthen their political brand.³⁶ Not surprisingly, some of the right's most recognizable faces – including incumbent federal lawmaker Carla Zambelli and then-candidates Gustavo Gayer and Nikolas Ferreira – successfully parlayed fake news into impressive electoral results. Nikolas Ferreira, a 26-year-old former city councilor, and an outspoken supporter of Jair Bolsonaro, garnered 1.49 million votes, more than any other congressional candidate.

Having struggled with curbing fake news in the two previous election cycles (2018 and 2020), the TSE approached the key technology companies responsible for digital platforms. The consultations resulted in a number of measures ranging from penalizing economic sponsors of accounts propagating disinformation – such as the demonetization of media channels and pages that propagate fake news – to signing collective agreements and formal commitments to pacify social networks.³⁷ While these initiatives achieved positive results, their very success generated new controversies. Chief among them was the question of whether – and how – to punish spreaders of disinformation who nonetheless were democratically elected.

Disinformation narratives over time

Brazilians are avid users of social media, comprising the largest group of aficionados outside Asia and the United States.³⁸ In a country of roughly 215 million people (2022), Whatsapp boasts over 165 million users, followed by YouTube (138 million), Instagram (122 million), Facebook (116 million), TikTok (73.5 million) and Twitter (19 million).³⁹ Not surprisingly, fake news circulates rapidly and widely across all of these platforms, particularly since they lack the kind of robust content moderation mandated in North America and Western Europe. Igarapé Institute assessed the scope and scale of disinformation across these key platforms between August and October 2022.

In order to assess the dynamics of disinformation in Brazil, Igarapé Institute developed a conceptual typology to organize narratives, actors and vectors.⁴⁰ The four main disinformation narratives examined by the Institute included campaigns to (i) reduce trust in the electoral system; (ii) target democratic institutions; (iii) discredit and diminish the influence of political opponents; and (iv) influence core supporters to take action (or dissuade opponents to not take action). Each of these narratives also include several 'sub-narratives' explained in more detail in the table below (see Table 1).

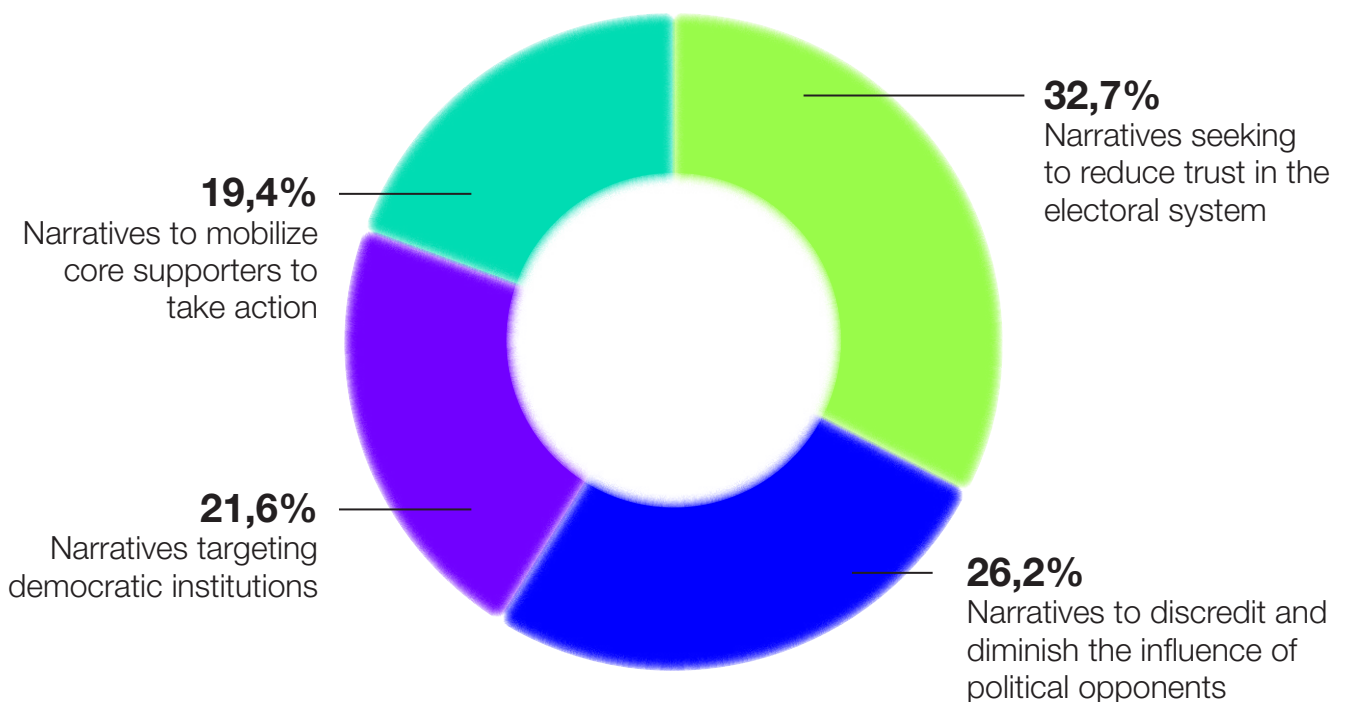
TABLE 1. A typology of disinformation narratives in Brazil

NARRATIVES	DESCRIPTION	SUB-NARRATIVES
Narrative 1: reduce trust in the electoral system⁴¹	The first narrative seeks to reduce trust in the electoral system, questioning the integrity of its institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Printed ballots are the only trusted method; • Electronic voting machines are not to be trusted; • Election polls are not trustworthy; • Increase in military involvement in the electoral process; • Increase in policemen involvement in the electoral process; • Allegation of fraud and incompetence by TSE; • Attacks against TSE; • Attacks against Justice Alexandre de Moraes.⁴²
Narrative 2: target Democratic Institutions	The second narrative targets democratic institutions and is characterized by an authoritarian rhetoric, threatening other powers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judiciary favors the Brazilian Left; • Justices impeachment; • Attacks against STF; • Attacks against other institutions (Legislative/Bar association (OAB)/Public Prosecutors Office (MP)).
Narrative 3: discredit and diminish the influence of political opponents	The third narrative seeks to discredit and diminish the influence of political opponents, mobilizing culture war and launching smear campaigns against one another.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media regulation; • False and incendiary allegations made against the press/traditional media and influencers; • Attacks on Lula/PT and their political allies; • Lula/PT's association to nazism; • Lula/PT's association with bandits and drug trafficking; • Lula/PT's association with communism and dictatorship; • Lula/PT's association with corruption; • Lula/PT's association with land invasion; • Lula/PT's association with sexism; • Attacks on Bolsonaro and his political allies; • Bolsonaro's/allies' association with sexual and moral perversion; • Bolsonaro's/allies' association with cannibalism; • Bolsonaro's/allies' association with masonry.
Narrative 4: influence core supporters to take action	The fourth narrative seeks to mobilize core supporters to take action, it shows campaigns that are intended to shape public opinion or to influence the behavior of specific constituencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fight of good against evil; • Risk of gender and identity-based ideologies; • Threat of communism and dictatorship; • Attempt to approach some specific groups; • Attempt to approach minorities audiences; • Attempt to approach the northeastern audience; • Attempts to approach the religious audience; • <u>Attempts to approach armed groups;</u> • Protests against election results.

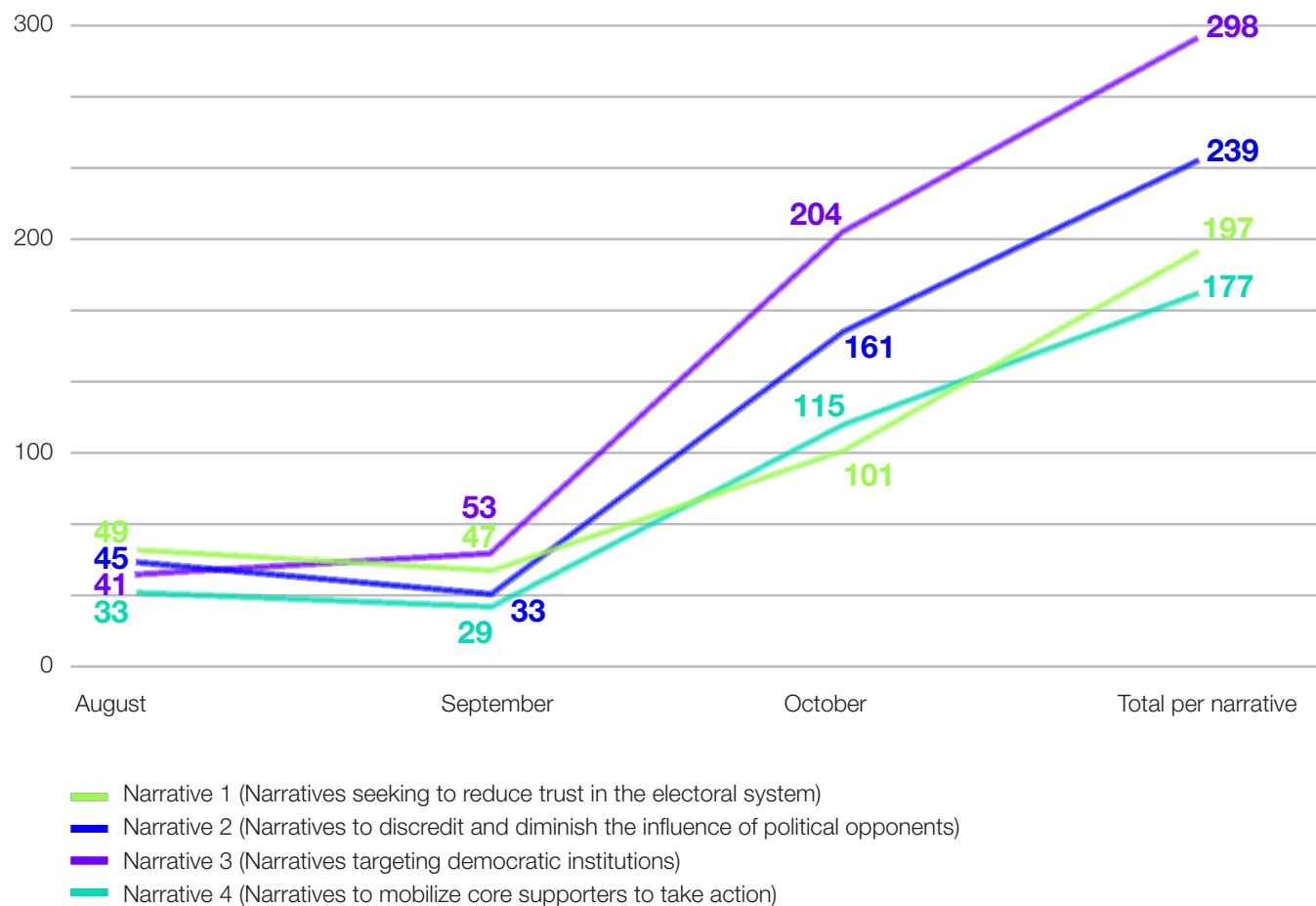
To monitor these narratives and better understand their impact over the course of the elections, the Institute worked with the Democracia em Xequê research hub. Over the course of several months Igarapé researchers examined content on the following platforms: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, Gettr, Telegram and TikTok. The Institute analyzed and categorized the data according to the particular narratives they expressed, building a list of sub-narratives in accordance to the subject being promoted. After this period of qualitative analysis, the Institute sorted all posts by their corresponding narratives and the specific sub-narratives they promoted month by month. The following is our breakdown of the data.

The Igarapé Institute identified 298 cases that include attempts to reduce trust in the electoral system, 197 incidents targeting democratic institutions, 239 efforts to clearly discredit and diminish political adversaries and 177 campaigns enjoining core partisan followers to take action on the basis of false claims. The narratives emerged from offline events, or even as a tactic to influence the electoral process progressed. Of course, these statistics do not reflect all social media posts on these issues. Rather, the Institute's database provides a sample of cases reflect several criteria: (i) engagement numbers - all cases accounted for were among the top posts in shares, likes and views on a given week in their platforms; (ii) pre-selected disinformation actors with relevance in the political scenario; and (iii) content related to the electoral dispute.

Figure 5. Narratives' total presence from august to october 2022



Source: elaborated by Igarapé Institute based on reports from Democracia em Xequê (2023)

Figure 6. Narrative's presence from August to October 2022

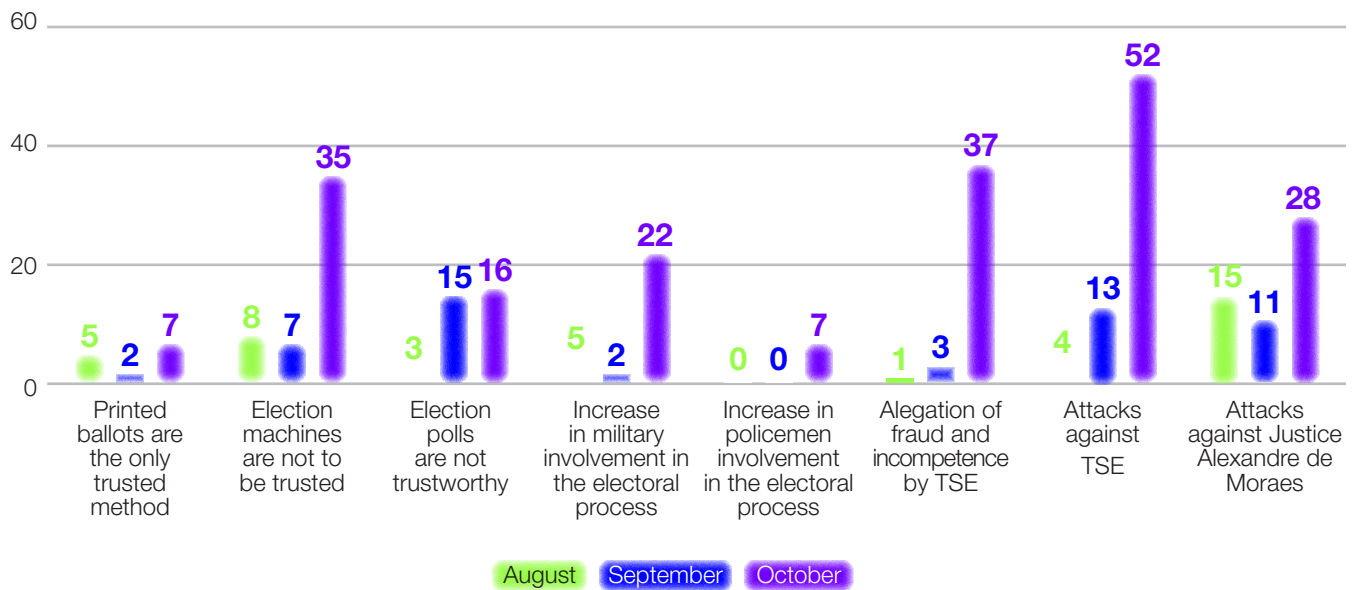
Source: elaborated by Igarapé Institute based on reports from Democracia em Xeque (2023)

Over the course of the 2022 elections, the targets of attacks appeared to shift from democratic institutions, such as the STF, to the electoral process itself, and especially the TSE. Narratives to undermine trust in the electoral institutions multiplied, rising from around 24% of total cases in August to 35% in October. The spike in anti-electoral system messages overtook those seeking to discredit democratic institutions, which had dominated early reports (falling from approximately 29% of total cases in August-September to around 17% in October).

This was hardly surprising. The TSE, after all, hears cases involving candidates and delivers ruling that can affect the campaign in real time.⁴³ Throughout the election period,

the TSE issued several decisions to take down false and misleading online content.⁴⁴ Given the viral spread of disinformation amid a volatile electoral campaign, monocratic decisions (rulings issued by a single judge) ordering the immediate removal of misleading content became common, even though they were later confirmed by the full bench, as the law determines.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the speed of such rulings drew intense scrutiny, as critics challenged the court for allegedly promoting bias and curbing freedom of expression. The more rulings the TSE handed down to remove content, the more they came under fire as allegedly biased.

Figure 7. Sub-narratives on attempts to reduce trust in the electoral system (August-October 2022)



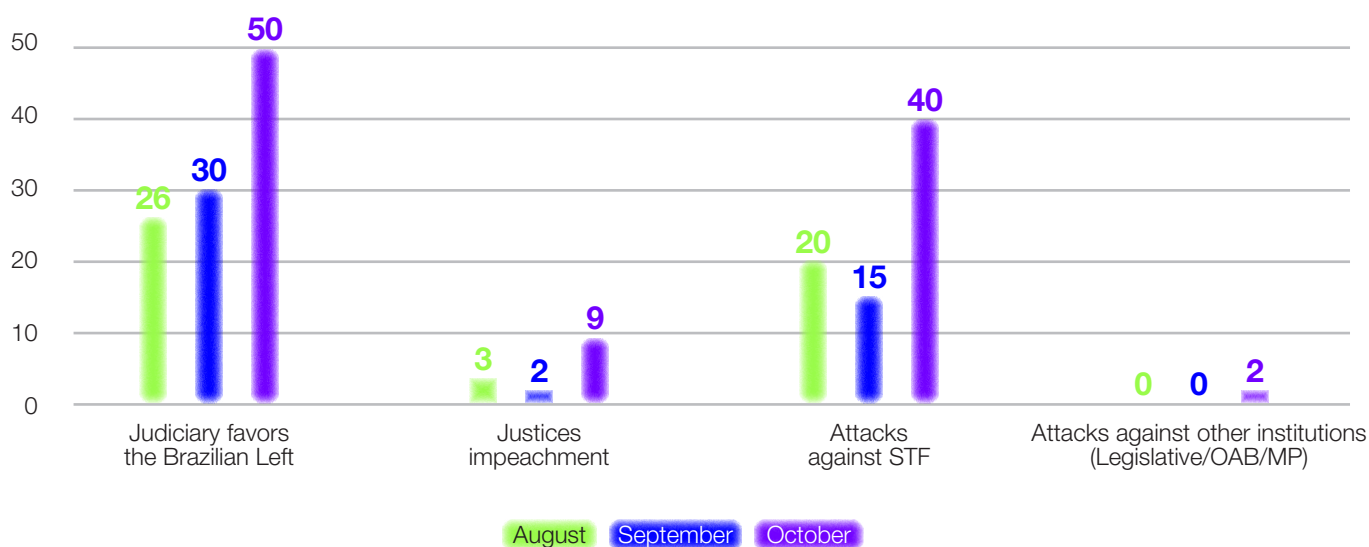
Source: elaborated by Igarapé Institute based on reports from Democracia em Xequê (2023)

In September, online claims that “electoral polls are not trustworthy” rose sharply, from 7% to 28% of all sub-narratives in this session, likely reflecting partisan attempts to rally rightwing voters at a moment when polls showed Lula as the clear frontrunner. The logic driving these attacks was the belief that the system was rigged against Bolsonaro, thus discouraging his voters from casting ballots.⁴⁶ Hence, their appeals for loyalists to ignore the “pro Lula” polls and the press, and pay attention instead to the street, where Bolsonaro supporters turned out in high numbers. They pointed to the September 7th Independence Day celebrations, which the Bolsonaro campaign turned into campaign rallies.

One particular incident dominated social media during the runoff vote on October 30, 2022. Videos showed the federal highway police (PRF) stopping traffic at multiple checkpoints across Brazil, purportedly delaying (supposedly Lula) voters bound for the polls. These barriers were particularly prevalent in the northeast, Lula’s stronghold. The federal highway police

operations were carried out despite explicit election eve orders by Alexandre de Moraes to discontinue all operations that could impede voter access to polling stations. Social media opinions on these incidents were sharply divided, with one side warning about a possible coup and asking to “let the northeast vote,” and pro-Bolsonaro posts clamoring to “let the police do their job.”

Another popular campaign narrative asserted that the system was rigged to favor Lula, therefore illegitimate. This tactic was used to attack electoral institutions as the court’s orders to curb disinformation took effect, but also to malign other democratic institutions and the judiciary branch in general. Several rightwing groups also called for the impeachment of Supreme Court Justices, some of whom also sat on the TSE, as shown below.

Figure 8. Sub-narratives targeting democratic institutions (August-October 2022).

Source: elaborated by Igarapé Institute based on reports from Democracia em Xequê (2023)

Between the first and second rounds of the October 2022 elections, tensions rose as online campaigns grew noisier. The TSE and STF were the preferred targets, repeatedly accused of encouraging electoral fraud for ruling out printed ballots, denying the military a direct role in auditing the electronic voting machines, and limiting access to the electoral system's source code. According to some critics, the absence of these supposed safeguards opened the doors to election hackers, facilitated attempts to game the voting machine's algorithm, or allowed some voters to cast ballots for others.⁴⁷ The electoral system was not the only target. Many other democratic institutions also drew flak – such as the public prosecutor's office, the Brazil Bar Association (OAB), the armed forces and the senate – for failing to curb the alleged excesses of both these courts.⁴⁸

It was no surprise that when election results were finally announced, right wing discontents pressured the government to invoke Constitutional Article 142, an ambiguously worded clause of Brazil's charter that purportedly authorizes the armed forces to intervene to restore law and order. Only hours

after Lula was declared the winner, truck drivers mobilized to block roadways across the country. Radical Bolsonaro supporters soon joined them.⁴⁹ Protestors at the barricades demanded military intervention.⁵⁰ According to the federal highway police, as many as 320 roadblocks⁵¹ were in place simultaneously across Brazil, with protestors announcing that the military would soon confirm suspicions of voter fraud and intervene to void Lula's ballot box victory.⁵² The PRF again came under scrutiny as videos spread showing highway patrols ignoring the roadblocks or even collaborating with protestors.⁵³

Only when Alexandre de Moraes authorized state-run police forces to intervene did the barriers begin to come down.⁵⁴ However, many protestors were undaunted and migrated to the gates of military quarters throughout the country, clamoring day and night for the military to overturn the election results.⁵⁵ These camps were only dismantled upon orders by the Supreme Court in the aftermath of the January 8, 2023, insurrection by Bolsonaro supporters, who invaded the Supreme Court, Senate, Chamber of Deputies and the Planalto presidential residence.⁵⁶

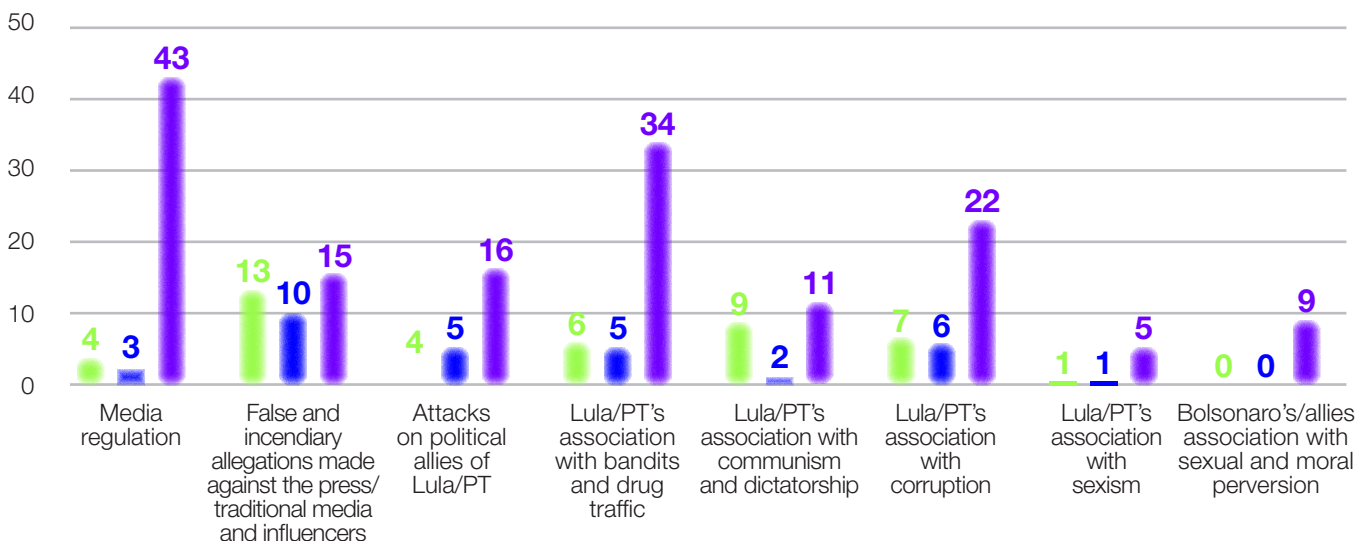
This turbulent sequence of events exemplifies how the Brazilian judiciary – both the Supreme Court and the Electoral Justice system – united to contain a credible threat of democratic rupture. Reviewing monitored cases, we also see that online anger toggled back and forth during the three-months under review. In August 2022, the STF drew five times as many social media attacks (20) as the TSE (4). The pendulum swung back in September 2022, with attacks against STF falling (15) as online anger toward the electoral court grew again (13). By October 2022, both courts became choice targets, with the STF clocking 40 attacks to the TSE’s 52. Electoral court ministers were also singled out 37 times for criticism, 28 of them directed at the TSE’s president, justice Alexandre de Moraes.⁵⁷

The judicial bodies in charge of regulating elections acted firmly and in a timely fashion as the turbulent electoral dispute ran its course. This led to one of the most resonant online sub-narratives: the far right outcry over alleged moves of “media regulation”. Driving these commentaries were a number of rulings to restrict information that was either blatantly fake or helped spread falsehoods.⁵⁸ Examples include: (i) recycled comments by former Supreme Court justice Marco Aurélio de Mello citing Lula’s corruption convictions (since annulled);⁵⁹ (ii) rightwing portal Brasil Paralelo’s

misleading documentary about Lula;⁶⁰ and (iii) offensive and disinformation content about Lula by another rightwing platform, Jovem Pan (which was ordered to grant Lula a right of reply).⁶¹ These decisions were harshly characterized, especially by extreme right groups, as partial, authoritarian and evidence of Brazil’s “judicial dictatorship”.⁶²

Direct attacks on both Lula and Bolsonaro by opposing camps escalated in October ahead of the presidential runoff vote. Although Lula was the object of most attacks, anti-Bolsonaro posts also soared across multiple platforms. This was the first time the Brazilian left had aggressively tapped social media in the campaign disinformation war. While their most virulent attacks were less frequent when compared to the choler on the right, the left’s escalating online tactics kept Bolsonaro’s campaign on the defensive, forcing rightwing voters to acknowledge and respond to the attacks. A sampling of the dueling narratives leading up to the October 30 runoff included rightwingers (i) repeatedly labeling Lula a criminal, and anything but innocent;⁶³ (ii) associating Lula with criminals and criminal organizations;⁶⁴ and counterattacks by the left (iii) accusing Bolsonaro of cannibalism⁶⁵ and paedophilia;⁶⁶ and (4) associating the incumbent with indulging in freemasonry.⁶⁷

Figure 9. Sub-narratives related to discrediting and diminishing the influence of political opponents (August-October 2022)



Source: elaborated by Igarapé Institute based on reports from Democracia em Xequê (2023)

August September October

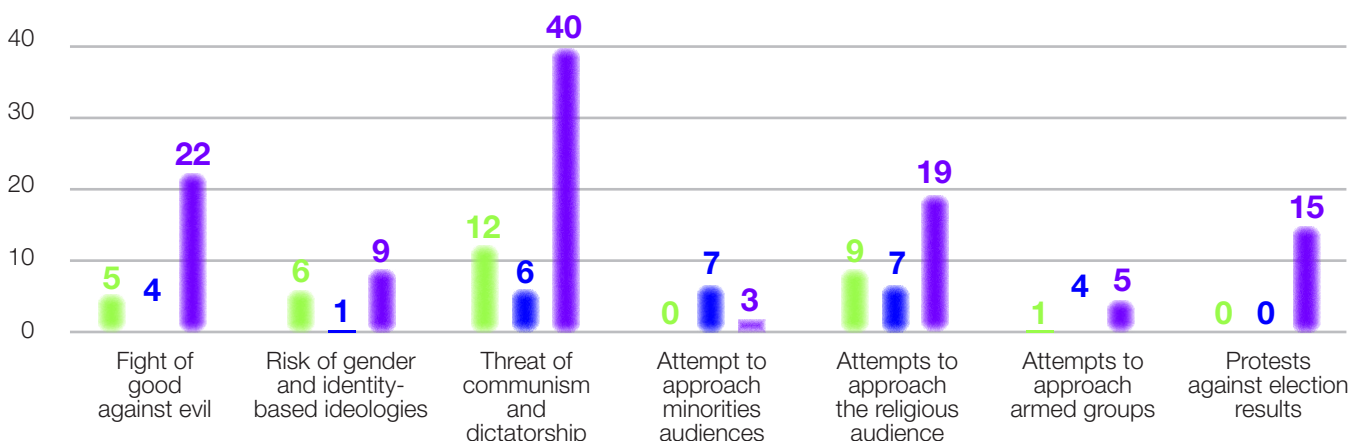
The picture changes when the focus shifts to gauging disinformation's influence on core supporters. Rightwing efforts to rally loyalists escalated quickly in the lead-up to the runoff vote on 30 October 2022. This strategy included messages to: (i) keep supporters fired up as Bolsonaro trailed Lula in polls; (ii) reach groups of voters with whom he lagged by large margins; and (iii) frighten undecided voters into voting for Bolsonaro. In September 2022, a sub-narrative labeled "attempts to approach minority audiences" (including women and black voters) gained traction, as polls consistently showed Bolsonaro trailing Lula by large margins among these constituencies. Hence, the Bolsonaro camp's eleventh hour campaign to court voters in the northeast, where polls favored Lula by a ratio of 2:1.⁶⁸

Fear-mongering also escalated, including by far-right interest groups flogging the supposed threat of communism should Lula prevail. Indeed, the Igarapé Institute observed a fourfold increase in assertions that Bolsonaro versus Lula came down to a contest of good versus evil. A common narrative had it that a Lula victory would not only be a win for communism, but also put Brazil on track to become the next Venezuela, where Bolivarian autocrat Nicolas Maduro governed, or an outsized Nicaragua, where strongman Daniel Ortega made the rules.⁶⁹

Claims about faith and morality have always played an important role in the political conversation in Brazil, where roughly 50% of the country declares itself Catholic and 31% Christian Evangelical.⁷⁰ In the 2022 campaign, however, appeals to moralism hit an all time high as politically active Protestant pastors hyped Bolsonaro's reelection bid as "a holy war" and implored God-fearing Christians not to abstain from voting. This time, however, the left joined the fray and flooded the internet with pictures of Bolsonaro⁷¹ amid a congregation of freemasons,⁷² who many Brazilians regard as a fringe sect.

In another episode, reelected federal congresswoman and one the president's most loyal allies, Carla Zambelli, – channeling the US rightwing conspiracy group Q-Anon – took to Facebook on October 9th to share a speech by then Minister Damares Alves, who associated the left with drug trafficking, rape and child-trafficking.⁷³ "You have no idea how much [Bolsonaro] really understands. We went to Marajó island and discovered that children were being trafficked from there... This war against Bolsonaro that the media has waged, that the Supreme [Court] has waged, that Congress has waged, believe me, this is not a political war. It's a holy war... We, as churchgoers, have a decision to make. Either we continue the battle to rescue these children from the Devil's hand or we surrender as a nation." Alves said, while campaigning for Bolsonaro. She went on to win a Senate seat in the October general elections.

Figure 10. Sub-narratives related to attempts to influence core supporters to take action (August-October 2022)



Source: elaborated by Igarapé Institute based on reports from Democracia em Xequê (2023)

August September October

Dealing with disinformation in the 2022 elections

After years of trial and error, Brazilian public, private and civic actors all made important strides to confront the surge of disinformation on social media, contain harmful narratives and safeguard free and fair elections. The judiciary, especially the TSE and the STF, took the lead ordering platforms to remove fake news and occasionally sanctioning its purveyors during the 2022 elections. This proactive judicial stance in turn raised debate over the limits of the State in regulating social media content without abridging freedom of expression. It also highlighted the diffidence of other national institutions in confronting the problem, so forcing the hand of the Courts.

Key partners in the fight against disinformation in 2022 included platforms, fact-checking agencies, public and private institutions, political parties, research entities, social organizations and the TSE. Together, they supported the detection, deterrence and removal of ill-intentioned digital content. Through formal agreements, the platforms committed to combating disinformation by moderating harmful content, opening reporting channels and disseminating quality information. Civil society acted as a major gatekeeper of compliance with these commitments, denouncing harmful channels and content.

The judiciary cracks down

The Supreme Court and the Superior Electoral Court joined several other official institutions and civic groups in deterring and disrupting disinformation during the elections. Between 2018 and 2022, for example, at least 33 campaigns⁷⁴ were created to that end, including programs to fight disinformation, measures to investigate and hold fake news propagators accountable.⁷⁵ Additional initiatives included forging partnerships with platforms companies to identify and control the spread of harmful content, and support the removal of fake content from social media.

Mindful of the public blowback over judicial protagonism, in 2021, the TSE launched the Program for Strengthening the Image of Electoral Justice (PROFI), to build trust in the Brazilian electoral process and reassure the public of the impartiality, professionalism and pivotal role of Electoral Justice. This electoral court also unveiled its Permanent Program to Combat Disinformation (PPED), a partnership between the TSE and more than 150 institutions, including the main social media networks, fact-checkers and civil society advocates.

In another move, the TSE launched the Election Transparency Commission (CTE), convening technology experts and institutional actors to rethink ways to improve electoral security, increase transparency, and encourage the participation of specialists, public institutions and civil society entities in monitoring elections. A National Front to Combat Disinformation (Frente) was created to reinforce the credibility of the electoral process by engaging more than 2,000 electoral justice officials and others in the fight against disinformation. Adding to these measures, the TSE also created the Disinformation Alert System tasked with flagging digital platforms about misleading content and digital harms. Depending on the severity of the case under scrutiny, the Alert System might also forward its report to the Electoral Prosecutor's office (MPE) and other authorities for the adoption of appropriate legal measures.

Complementing these actions, the TSE also sponsored a training exercise conducted by digital platforms for representatives of 29 Brazilian political parties, partners of the Program to Combat Disinformation, and electoral justice officials. Program participants learned about measures to prevent and combat fake news. The TSE also launched an Institutional Strengthening Program and Manual for Combating Disinformation and Reputation Defense of Electoral Justice.

The 2022 electoral period served as a stress test for handling fake news in an efficient and timely fashion. By partnering with fact-checking agencies, the electoral justice system's defense system managed to thwart misinformation in real time and post the results on the official Fact or Rumor page. In June

2022, the TSE hosted the "Information Session for Embassies," inviting foreign diplomats to accompany the electoral fact-checking agenda, the battle against disinformation, and the use of digital platforms to bolster democratic integrity.

At the same time, the TSE sought to counter disinformation through expedited legal procedures. In this way, the highest electoral bench succeeded in taking down thousands of fake news posts about the electronic voting process at record speed. That same agility raised concerns about an electoral court role in moderating social media content. TSE president Justice Alexandre de Moraes typically countered these objections with the argument that spreading false information amounts "not to the legitimate exercise of freedom of expression, but to abusive behavior that is incompatible with a democratic regime" with "no grounding in reality."⁷⁶

Despite the many complaints from Bolsonaro supporters, who saw their networks embargoed and channels demonetized, the TSE managed to contain, if not to halt outright, the spread of wanton election misinformation, frequently taking a proactive role.⁷⁷ On his first day in office, President Lula issued a decree creating a National Prosecutor's Office for the Defense of Democracy, under the supervision of the Attorney General's Office (AGU), which, among other functions, was designed to counter disinformation regarding government policy. Lula also created the Secretariat for Digital Policies, responsible for tackling disinformation and hate speech on the internet. The creation of these new offices is an indication of the priority that the new government has assigned to the disinformation agenda for democracy in the years to come.

Social media steps up

As social networks and their algorithms are essential mediators for containing disinformation, the most relevant platforms in Brazil were all brought on board. Specifically, Twitter, TikTok, Facebook, WhatsApp, Google, Instagram, YouTube and Kwai⁷⁸ all signed agreements with the TSE to combat the spread of fake news during the 2022 election period. This pact reinforced the partnerships established in 2019 through the Program to Combat Disinformation.

Meta, which owns Facebook and Instagram, sought to direct users to quality information by creating labels in posts and stories about the elections, which in turn linked users to the Electoral Justice website. Facebook also added a feature called ‘megaphone’ on election day with official information from the TSE. Another novelty was Instagram’s chatbot, programmed to facilitate access to reliable TSE information. Meta also worked with fact-checking agencies to flag, contain or remove harmful content. Another measure was the implementation of an extrajudicial communication channel for denouncing disinformation related to the electoral process. Finally, Facebook and Instagram tightened the rules for carrying paid electoral advertising. Despite these initiatives, a test carried out by Global Witness detected flaws in the platform’s moderation system, which allowed ads with electoral disinformation to slip through the filters.⁷⁹

Google, for its part, stocked ‘Google Play Store’ with a selection of apps featuring civic content during the election period, including official TSE apps. The tech giant also trained TSE and local electoral court (TRE) teams in application management, best practices on YouTube and how ‘GoogleAds’ works, in addition to producing informative content about the platform. To contain disinformation, a page was created with ‘Google Search’ search trends about the elections. The company also

promoted a channel for denouncing suspicious content on the electoral process. Under its new guidelines, Youtube began to exclude videos and ban users from spreading proven misleading information, according to official government agencies.

Blocked content included misleading messages about the time, place and means of voting. Other targets included baseless claims that the electronic voting machines were hacked in the 2018 elections, falsehoods about supposedly ineligible candidates, and messages meant to deter people from voting by spreading unsubstantiated rumors about electoral fraud, system errors or technical problems that purportedly altered the outcome of previous elections. One of the major sources of disinformation, the rightwing Jovem Pan web channel, was demonetized by YouTube after repeated violations. In addition, the site began to recommend content from reliable sources about politics and show useful warnings in various places on the interface.

TikTok, which had also partnered with the TSE in 2020, renewed its commitment to combating disinformation in 2022 as part of the Program to Combat Disinformation. Among other initiatives, the platform posted warnings and labels, redirecting users to an Election Information Center. The video platform made it easier to report false election information directly in the app. These reports were forwarded to a Brazilian team dedicated to reviewing content. For the 2022 Brazilian election, TikTok launched an ‘Election Guide’ which connected users with validated election information. Despite these efforts, TikTok aficionados succeed in using the platform to tendentiously edit and decontextualize videos to generate disinformation. Several of these doctored videos ended up as shared content on other channels, such as WhatsApp, making it more difficult to control.

WhatsApp, in partnership with the TSE, created the chatbot (virtual assistant), promoting access to information about the

electoral process, as well as providing official data from the TSE portal at no charge. WhatsApp also set a limit for content sharing and created a channel for extrajudicial complaints to report suspected incidents of breaching those limits for campaign propaganda. The messaging app also offered training for electoral justice officials on social media policies and best practices.

Twitter, in turn, moved to facilitate public access to reliable information and help users consult the platform's policies. It also eased the way for platform users to identify profiles of institutions, political parties, and candidates for the 2022 Elections. The platform incorporated identification tags in the candidates' accounts and a section dedicated to relevant and reliable information about the elections. A specific page on elections in Brazil was launched in the Twitter Help Center. The platform went on to post details of Twitter's Civic Integrity Policy, which establishes the prohibition of the use of digital platform services to manipulate and interfere in elections.

Twitter strengthened its partnerships with electoral authorities, such as the TSE, and with civil society organizations to develop education initiatives on how to manage misinformation and make safe use of information on the social network. The company also provided training sessions for the TSE and the TREs to familiarize officials with Twitter's features and tools. Finally, the TSE opened a permanent channel with company representatives to discuss initiatives and best practices designed to protect the integrity of Brazilian elections.

Despite the many efforts and the considerable progress made in delimiting disinformation, the speed and reach of online narratives attacking the electoral system outpaced the official containment initiatives. The decentralized

nature of content production and dissemination makes moderation challenging and allows harmful messages to escape quality filters and spread quickly. Even content taken off the air tends to be replicated on a large scale and echoed on other platforms. Frequently, screenshots from Twitter spill over to Instagram, just as TikTok videos reprise on WhatsApp.

The fluidity between platforms is another factor that must be considered, as well as the nature of the narratives that emerge on each platform. If more objective messages are shared on Twitter, with limited or more shallow content, the same narratives may take on more detail and density on YouTube, where more elaborate posts are generally shared. Indeed, our review found that many online narratives were launched on YouTube only to be broken down and abbreviated for sharing on other social media platforms. The same is true of Facebook videos, especially livestreams. Following the flow, cuts of the videos on Youtube and Facebook reached Tiktok, Instagram and Twitter to highlight more appealing speeches.

Notwithstanding attempts to curb disinformation, platforms have failed on several occasions and still have a long way to go. In the aftermath of Lula's election victory, as pro-coup radicals massed to shut down transportation networks and demand military intervention, Telegram and WhatsApp quickly moved to mute their calls for an uprising.⁸⁰ And yet the January 8th attacks were carried out by insurrectionists who freely organized, mobilized and live-streamed their every move over these same platforms, especially Whatsapp, Telegram, Facebook, Instagram and Youtube⁸¹. This goes to show that, despite some successful interventions during the election campaign, the legacy social media platforms have yet to get a grip on groups spreading hate speech and antidemocratic attacks.

Civil society takes action

Throughout the electoral cycle, civil society remained vigilant and marshaled several critical offensives in the battle against disinformation and to protect democracy. In partnership with public bodies and digital platforms, civil society organizations piloted several initiatives to spread reliable information about the electoral system, promoted debates on civic education, evaluated and monitored digital platforms, and demanded more effective actions from institutions to combat fake news and misinformation.

To bolster these efforts, the TSE created the Observatory of Transparency in Elections, formed by a group of civil society institutions, including the Igarapé Institute, with the purpose of increasing electoral transparency, deepening public knowledge about the Brazilian voting system, and safeguarding the democratic integrity. These initiatives were born of numerous meetings and intense collaboration between civil society representatives and public authorities. At all these meetings, multiple stakeholders voiced support of the electoral justice system and repudiated baseless attacks on the electoral system and democratic process. For example, the ‘Pacto pela Democracia’ network⁸² delivered an open letter to Justice Alexandre de Moraes, president of the TSE, reiterating the commitment of organized civil society to peaceful elections and a secure electoral process.⁸³ Technical notes and other information material were released throughout the election campaign with the aim of debunking baseless arguments about electronic voting machines and other topics involving the security of the electoral process.

Several organizations also met with institutional actors from other democratic countries to enlist international recognition and support for the Brazilian election results. A key example

was the US Senate resolution,⁸⁴ passed on the eve of the second-round of the Brazilian election, which pledged that the US would immediately recognize the official results and review bilateral relations in case of a military coup or undemocratic access to power. In a letter to US president Joe Biden over 70 Brazilian civil society organizations asked the US to pressure Bolsonaro to commit to respecting democracy and holding free elections. In August, a delegation from civil society traveled to Washington DC to discuss the Brazilian elections with members of the US Congress. Senator Bernie Sanders declared that he would present a motion to the Senate warning about the risks to Brazilian democracy and asking for the rupture of relations with the Brazilian government if the result of the election was not respected. Michele Bachelet,⁸⁵ then UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, expressed concern about Brazil at a time claiming that “President Bolsonaro has intensified attacks on the judicial system and on the electronic voting system.”

Political parties also played a critical role in combating disinformation. During the campaign, they frequently petitioned the TSE to exclude false content from digital platforms, including through a manifesto in defense of democracy and institutions,⁸⁶ hand delivered to Justice Alexandre de Moraes. These parties proved especially combative⁸⁷ in cases⁸⁸ of possible threats to the fairness of the electoral process.⁸⁹ Meanwhile, the PL, party of then-candidate Jair Bolsonaro, insisted on questioning the election second-round result. The party presented a representation to the TSE asking for an “extraordinary verification” and the cancelation of the second round votes in 279.000 electronic voting machines - the first round, in which they emerged with the largest representation in the chamber of deputies, was left unquestioned. In response, the TSE denied the request and imposed a fine of BRL 22.9 million for bad faith litigation.

The path forward

Over the past few years, democratic systems around the world have been facing a common dilemma: can governments and societies curb fast-breaking online disinformation without resorting to anti-democratic measures? Analyzing the electoral cycles in 2018 and 2022 in Brazil, two very different responses to this question emerge. In 2018, the discrepancy between the reaction time of democratic institutions and the speed with which social networks replicated and disseminated falsehoods and smears looked almost insurmountable. Since then, however, institutions have made important strides to test innovative solutions that at times were also deemed controversial.

In 2022, as the world watched Brazil and wondered if Latin America's largest democracy could hold the line against the crush of disinformation, constitutional democracy nonetheless remained resilient. Thanks to the joint efforts of multiple public, private and non-governmental actors, Brazil managed to reduce, if not eliminate, the damage wrought by the digital lying game. Disinformation will not disappear. Indeed, despite the official election results, Brazilian denialists appear undaunted; discontents stubbornly continue to refute the legitimacy of the October election, holler fraud, and appeal for military intervention to revert the results - despising democracy and the rule of law.

So how to navigate the likely difficult road ahead? For starters, initiatives must focus on catching and containing fake news and conspiracies before they go viral. Ultimately, digital education and verifiable information are the most reliable antidote. Nonetheless,

given that numerous studies have shown that once released news – deceitful or not – has remarkable “sticking power”, thwarting the contagion will be no simple task.

Recent experience has taught Brazilians that countering disinformation relies critically on collaborative work between different, sometimes divergent, interests. Cross-sector partnerships were a big part of Brazil's efforts to restrain fake news. Public institutions, civil society and social media platforms all played distinctive roles in engaging their respective stakeholders. Yet had Brazil failed to assign responsibilities to each of these interest groups, the strength and clout of cooperation and coordination might have been considerably blunted. To preserve that pact and continue to build common ground are among the steepest challenges for the years to come.

Finally, all of society needs to engage in the debate to draw up the rules, red lines and strategies for responsible social media content regulation. Along the way, Brazilian society must agree on ways to revitalize trust and faith in the legitimacy of institutions. Undoubtedly, many of these processes remain a work in progress. But ultimately, Brazil has emerged as an object lesson in institutional resilience, creativity and adaptability in a fast-moving digital world. After all, the daunting challenges that require governments to be proactive and assertive in defending democracy also subject the same institutions to unprecedented stresses and backlash. Solving this riddle means discovering how to build institutional trust and legitimacy in societies where representative democracy itself is deeply discredited.

Annex 1

Disinformation narratives and sub narratives per month

MAIN NARRATIVE	SUB-NARRATIVES	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	TOTAL PER SUB NARRATIVE
Narrative 1 Reduce trust in the electoral system	Printed ballots are the only trusted method	5	2	7	14
	Election machines are not to be trusted	8	7	35	50
	Election polls are not trustworthy	3	15	16	34
	Increase in military involvement in the electoral process	5	2	22	29
	Increase in policemen involvement in the electoral process	0	0	7	7
	Allegation of fraud and incompetence by TSE	1	3	37	41
	Attacks against TSE	4	13	52	69
	Attacks against Justice Alexandre de Moraes	15	11	28	54
Narrative 2 Targeting democratic institutions	Judiciary favors the Brazilian Left	26	30	50	106
	Justices impeachment	3	2	9	14
	Attacks against STF	20	15	40	75
	Attacks against other institutions (Legislative/OAB/MP)	0	0	2	2

MAIN NARRATIVE	SUB-NARRATIVES	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	TOTAL PER SUB NARRATIVE
Narrative 3 Discredit and diminish the influence of political opponents	Media regulation	4	3	43	50
	False and incendiary allegations made against the press/ traditional media and influencers	13	10	15	38
	Attacks on political allies of Lula/PT	4	5	16	25
	Lula/PT's association to nazism	0	1	1	2
	Lula/PT's association with bandits and drug traffic	6	5	34	45
	Lula/PT's association with communism and dictatorship	9	2	11	22
	Lula/PT's association with corruption	7	6	22	35
	Lula/PT's association with land invasion	1	0	2	3
	Lula/PT's association with sexism	1	1	5	7
	Bolsonaro's/allies' association with sexual and moral perversion	0	0	9	9
	Bolsonaro's/allies' association with cannibalism	0	0	2	2
	Bolsonaro's/allies' association with masonry	0	0	1	1

MAIN NARRATIVE	SUB-NARRATIVES	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	TOTAL PER SUB NARRATIVE
Narrative 4 Influence core supporters to take action	Fight of good against evil	5	4	22	31
	Risk of gender and identity-based ideologies	6	1	9	16
	Threat of communism and dictatorship	12	6	40	58
	Attempt to approach minorities audiences	0	7	3	10
	Attempt to approach the northeastern audience	0	0	2	2
	Attempts to approach the religious audience	9	7	19	35
	Attempts to approach armed groups	1	4	5	10
	Bolsonaro allies campaign	0	0	3	3
	Protests against election results	0	0	15	15

Source: Source: Igarapé Institute based on reports from Democracia em Xequê.

TSE initiatives

2018

1. Signing collaboration agreements with political parties;
2. Partnerships with political-electoral marketing professionals, entities representing the communication sector and digital platforms;
3. Establishment of a strategic office;
4. Joint action with the Federal Police and technical bodies of the Executive Branch;
5. Institution of a multidisciplinary group formed by servers of the Electoral Justice;
6. Creation of the page “Clarification on False Information Published in the 2018 Elections” (Esclarecimento sobre Informações Falsas Veiculadas nas Eleições 2018).

2019

7. Beginning of the Program to Combat Disinformation with a Focus on the 2020 Elections (Programa de Enfrentamento à Desinformação com Foco nas Eleições 2020);
8. Publication of “the Checking Minute” Program (Programa Minuto da Checagem).

2020

9. Creation of the Checking Coalition (Coalizão para Checagem);
10. Creation of the Fact or Rumor page (Fato ou Boato);
11. Development of a chatbot on WhatsApp;
12. Creation of a notification center in the applications of Electoral Justice e-Título, Mesários and Pardal;
13. Zero rating – Access to the Fact or Rumor page and the contents of the website www.justicaeleitoral.jus.br without data package charges;
14. Partnerships with some of the main internet application providers (including Facebook/Instagram, WhatsApp, Google/YouTube, Twitter and TikTok);
15. Creation of the #IVoteWithoutFake (#EuVotoSemFake) campaign and the #Don'tSpreadFakeNews (#NãoTransmitaFakeNews) and #LetsVote (#PartiuVotar) campaigns;
16. Creation of the If It's Fake News, Don't Transmit media campaign (Se For Fake News, não Transmita);
17. Creation of an extrajudicial channel for denouncing mass messaging in partnership with WhatsApp;

18. Creation of a network to monitor disinformation practices harmful to the electoral process;
19. Creation of the cyberintelligence committee;
20. Virtual training for polling station officials (mesários) and creation of a polling station manual addressing fake news;
21. Training of Electoral Justice servers by internet application providers;
22. Training of TRE servers on structuring the fight against disinformation in their locations.

2021

23. Creation of the Permanent Program to Combat Misinformation by the Electoral Justice (Programa Permanente de Enfrentamento à Desinformação da Justiça Eleitoral).

2022

24. Renewal of partnerships with social networks (Twitter, TikTok, Facebook, Kwai, WhatsApp and Google);
25. Celebration of 154 partnerships, between verification institutions, digital platforms, political parties, research institutions, civil society organizations, public bodies and media associations;
26. Continuation of pages Fact or Rumor and Electronic Ballot Box and the security of the electoral process (Fato ou Boato and Urna Eletrônica e a segurança do processo eleitoral);
27. Creation of the “Institutional Strengthening Program based on Image Management of the Electoral Justice” and the “Manual for Combating Disinformation and Reputation Defense of the Electoral Justice” (“Programa de Fortalecimento Institucional a partir da Gestão da Imagem da Justiça Eleitoral” and “Manual de Enfrentamento à Desinformação e Defesa Reputacional da Justiça Eleitoral”);
28. Launch of the Electoral Transparency Commission (Comissão de Transparência Eleitoral/CTE);
29. Creation of the National Front to Combat Disinformation (Frente Nacional de Enfrentamento à Desinformação);
30. Launch of the “Disinformation Alert System against the Elections” (“Sistema de Alertas de Desinformação contra as Eleições”);
31. Weekly publication of the newsletter “Pause!!”;
32. Training offered by digital platforms for the 29 partner political parties of the Program to Combat Misinformation; and also for the servers of the Electoral Justice;
33. Publication of the series #DemocracyInPills (#DemocraciaEmPílulas).

Endnotes

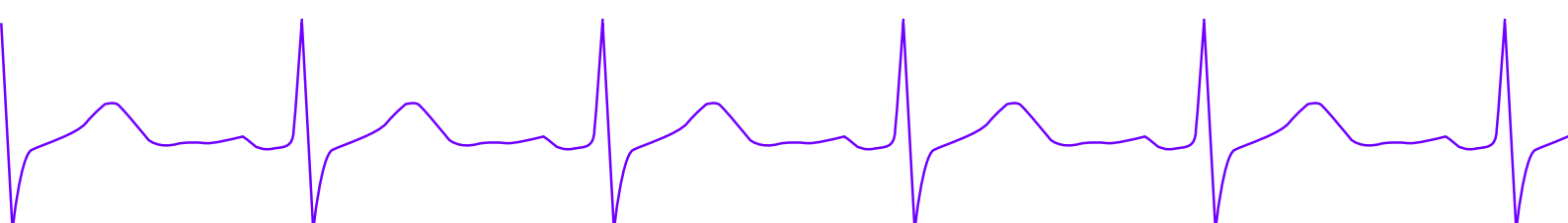
- 1 Editorial oversight and inputs were provided by Renata Giannini, Mac Margolis and Robert Muggah.
- 2 See MUGGAH, R. (2018) - Can Brazil's democracy be saved?. New York Times, October 8. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/08/opinion/brazil-election-bolsonaro-authoritarian.html>.
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- 4 See MUGGAH, R.; MARGOLIS, M. (2023) - Disinformation and consequences in Brazil. Reuters Foundation, February 2. Available at: <https://www.context.news/digital-rights/opinion/disinformation-and-consequences-in-brazil>; and MARGOLIS, M.; MUGGAH, R. (2023) - Brazil breaks new ground in the global fight against fake news'. OpenDemocracy, January 30. Available at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/democraciaabierta/brazil-crack-down-fake-news-disinformation-lula-restore-trust-internet/>.
- 5 Brazil is 2nd in the ranking of the main countries classified by the average daily time spent using social networks and it is the largest social networking market in Latin America. The country will reach the mark of 144 million users this year. Source: eMarketer, March, April and November 2022 – GWI, Social: The latest trends in social media.
- 6 The Latin America Barometer, part of the Public Opinion Project (Lapop), revealed, in 2016, that Brazil occupied the second to last position among 26 countries on satisfaction with democracy (with 48.2%). In 2018, the percentage of Brazilians dissatisfied with democracy rose to 58%. This round of questions also showed that individuals who declared themselves rightwing were at the highest rate since 2012 (39%); 35% confessed that they would support a military coup in scenario of widespread corruption, and 38% stated that they would defend the dissolution of the Supreme Court (STF) "if the country faces difficulties". See VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY. (2016) – The Latin America Barometer, Public Opinion Project (Lapop). Available at: <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/brazil.php>.
- 7 According to a research carried out by FGV DAPP (Rio de Janeiro) between January 2014 and October 2020, the frequency of messages about distrust in the electoral system was exponentially higher in 2018. Regarding posts with links about electoral distrust on Facebook, 10,083 were recorded in 2014, 12,557 in 2016, 32,052 in 2018 and 17,958 in 2020. See RUEDIGER, M. A.; GRASSI, A. (Coord.). (2020) - Desinformação on-line e processos políticos: a circulação de links sobre desconfiança no sistema eleitoral brasileiro no Facebook e no YouTube (2014-2020). Rio de Janeiro, FGV DAPP, Policy Paper. Available at: <https://democraciadigital.dapp.fgv.br/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/PT-Estudo-1.pdf>.
- 8 The number of publications confronting the electoral system increased exponentially in the context of the 2018 presidential race, and remained high throughout 2020. The year 2020 emerged as the second with the most content on the subject in the period (2014-2020), even with only nine months of collection. Until mid-October 2020, the volume of posts with links on the subject reached 56.0% of what circulated in the whole year of 2018 on Facebook and 72.4% on YouTube. See RUEDIGER, M. A.; GRASSI, A. (Coord.). (2020) - Desinformação on-line e processos políticos: a circulação de links sobre desconfiança no sistema eleitoral brasileiro no Facebook e no YouTube (2014-2020). Rio de Janeiro, FGV DAPP, Policy Paper. Available at: <https://democraciadigital.dapp.fgv.br/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/PT-Estudo-1.pdf>.
- 9 See CASTILLO, I. (2020) - O uso de fake news nas eleições de 2018: Uma análise das notícias falsas checadas pelas agências Lupa e Aos Fatos sobre o jornalismo. Brasília, Universidade de Brasília. Available at: https://bdm.unb.br/bitstream/10483/28303/1/2020_IsabelaRibeiroCastilho_tcc.pdf.
- 10 There were 1.1 million tweets with assumptions of fraud in electronic voting machines until the first round of 2018. Between August and October 2018, the last three months of the electoral campaign, 33 different narratives that were proven to be false were identified. See RUEDIGER, M. A.; GRASSI, A. (Coord.). (2020) - Desinformação on-line e processos políticos: a circulação de links sobre desconfiança no sistema eleitoral brasileiro no Facebook e no YouTube (2014-2020). Rio de Janeiro, FGV DAPP, Policy Paper. Available at: <https://democraciadigital.dapp.fgv.br/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/PT-Estudo-1.pdf>.
- 11 See RUEDIGER, M. A. (Coord.). (2022) - Desinformação on-line e contestação das eleições: quinze meses de postagens sobre fraude nas urnas eletrônicas e voto impresso auditável no Facebook. Rio de Janeiro, FGV DAPP, Policy Paper. Available at: https://bibliotecadigital.fgv.br/dspace/bitstream/handle/10438/31711/%5bPT%5dEstudo-7_Fraude-nas-urnas_Ficha%2bISBN.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.
- 12 The Electoral Justice is a specialized sector of the Brazilian Judiciary and works to guarantee democratic and free elections. It operates on three fronts: administrative, organizing and facilitating the holding of elections; regulatory, by setting rules for the electoral process; and jurisdictional, judging electoral issues when, for example, one of these rules is not complied with.
- 13 See MUGGAH et al. (2020) - Digital misinformation not only threatens Brazil's municipal elections, it undermines democracy. OpenDemocracy, November 23. Available at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/democraciaabierta/digital-misinformation-threatens-brazil-2020-municipal-elections-undermine-democracy/>.
- 14 See TSE. (2020) - Tentativas de ataques de hackers ao sistema do TSE não afetaram resultados das Eleições, afirma Barroso. Tribunal Superior Eleitoral (TSE), November 16. Available at: <https://www.tse.jus.br/comunicacao/noticias/2020/Novembro/tentativas-de-ataques-de-hackers-ao-sistema-do-tse-nao-afetaram-resultados-das-eleicoes-afirma-barroso>.
- 15 See SOPRANA, P. et al. (2020) - Ataque hacker na eleição vira arma política de desinformação para bolsonaristas. Folha de São Paulo, November 16. Available at: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2020/11/ataque-hacker-vira-arma-politica-de-desinformacao-sobre-eleicao-para-bolsonaristas.shtml>.

- 16 The consortium is part of the 'Program to Combat Disinformation with a Focus on the 2020 Elections'. The coalition includes: AFP, Agência Lupa, Aos Fatos, Boatos.org, Comprova, E-Farsas, Estadão Verify, Fato ou Fake and UOL Confere. See SENA, M. (2020) - TSE firma parceria com agências de checagem de informações para as eleições. UOL, October 2. Available at: <https://congressoemfoco.uol.com.br/temas/midia/tse-firma-parceria-com-agencias-de-checagem-de-informacoes-para-as-eleicoes/>.
- 17 In 2018, most fake news circulated in image format (59.7%), compared to 19.6% in video, 12.5% in text and 8.2% in audio. In 2022, according to UFMG, most are in video (37.3%), then text (32.9%), image (22.6%) and audio (7.2%). Monitoring also shows TikTok and Kwai videos among the most shared. See MELLO, P et al. (2022) - Fake news sobre urnas, pesquisas e TSE dominam eleição de 2022. Folha de São Paulo, September 28. Available at: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2022/09/fake-news-sobre-urnas-pesquisas-e-tse-dominam-eleicao-de-2022.shtml>.
- 18 The traditional "live" of Jair Bolsonaro on social networks, at its best moment, was seen by about 30,000 people, on YouTube and Facebook combined. During his participation in the 'Inteligência Ltda.' podcast, Bolsonaro surpassed the mark of 1.4 million simultaneous viewers in less than an hour of interview. Bolsonaro was also on the Flow podcast, where he had 535,000 people watching at the same time at the peak.
- 19 Lula's campaign submitted 67 requests related to fake news and obtained 37 favorable decisions. Bolsonaro's campaign submitted 7 such requests, of which 6 were granted. See VARGAS, M et al. (2022) - TSE atendeu Lula 37 vezes e Bolsonaro 6 em ações sobre fake news. Folha de São Paulo, October 14. Available at: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2022/10/tse-atendeu-lula-37-vezes-e-bolsonaro-6-em-acoes-sobre-fake-news.shtml>.
- 20 See FERRAZ, V. (2022) - Presença de militares em cargos civis dispara sob Bolsonaro, revela estudo. VEJA, May 31. Available at: <https://veja.abril.com.br/politica/presenca-de-militares-em-cargos-civis-dispara-sob-bolsonaro-revela-estudo/>; and VEJA. (2021) - Bolsonaro em Porto Velho: 'Meu Exército, minha Marinha, minha Aeronáutica'. VEJA, May 7. Available at: <https://veja.abril.com.br/coluna/maquiavel/bolsonaro-em-porto-velho-meu-exercito-minha-marinha-minha-aeronautica/>.
- 21 See, for example, SOARES, I. (2022) - Bolsonaro diz que militares fiscalizarão sala cofre do TSE. CORREIO BRAZILIENSE, September 23. Available at: <https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/politica/2022/09/5038866-bolsonaro-diz-que-militares-fiscalizarao-sala-secreta-do-tse.html>.
- 22 Colonel Alberto Ono Horita, for example, had more than 39 publications propagating accusations without proof of fraud in electronic voting machines and offenses against TSE and STF justices. The commander of an Army Division retweeted an article explaining "the censorship under which Brazil lives". See GODOY, M. (2022) - Oficiais da ativa do Exército criticam censura do TSE, atacam PT, Moraes, Alckmin e Lula. ESTADÃO, November 21. Available at: <https://www.estadao.com.br/politica/marcelo-godoy/oficiais-da-ativa-do-exercito-criticam-censura-do-tse-atacam-pt-moraes-alcmin-e-lula/>.
- 23 Pro-Bolsonaro rioters continued in front of headquarters in several States for two months, calling for a military intervention to annul the election and prevent Lula from taking office. Only after the January 8th invasion of Brazil's Congress, Supreme Court and Presidential Palace the eviction was determined by Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes. See JUNQUEIRA, C. (2023) - Defesa calcula 5.000 manifestantes acampados em quartéis pelo Brasil. CNN BRASIL, January 6. Available at: <https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/politica/defesa-calcula-5-000-manifestantes-acampados-em-quarteis-pelo-brasil/>.
- 24 See ALCÂNTARA, T. (2022) - Por que fake news e teorias conspiratórias ainda mobilizam acampamentos bolsonaristas. METRÓPOLES, November 24. Available at: <https://www.metropoles.com/brasil/por-que-fake-news-e-teorias-conspiratorias-ainda-mobilizam-acampamentos-bolsonaristas>.
- 25 See UOL. (2019) - Quando a liberdade de expressão da extrema direita esbarra na lei. UOL, April 5. Available at: <https://noticias.uol.com.br/ultimas-noticias/rfi/2019/04/05/quando-a-liberdade-de-expressao-da-extrema-direita-esbarra-na-lei.htm>.
- 26 Justice Alexandre de Moraes, who presided over the Electoral Court (TSE) during the election, solidified these limits in a number of decisions stating that "freedom of expression is not freedom of aggression". See Folha de São Paulo. (2022) - 'Liberdade de expressão não é liberdade de agressão'; leia discurso de Moraes em posse no TSE. Folha de São Paulo, August 16. Available at: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2022/08/liberdade-de-expressao-nao-e-liberdade-de-agressao-leia-discurso-de-moraes-em-posse-no-tse.shtml>; and VETTORAZZO, L. (2022) - 'Liberdade de expressão não é liberdade de agressão', diz Moraes. VEJA, July 19. Available at: <https://veja.abril.com.br/coluna/radar/liberdade-de-expressao-nao-e-liberdade-de-agressao-diz-moraes/>.
- 27 See BBC BRASIL. (2022) - Alexandre de Moraes: o presidente do TSE acusado de 'ditador' por Bolsonaro que já foi alvo do PT. BBC BRASIL, October 27. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-63386608>.
- 28 See UOL. (2022) - Barroso: 'Recebo ameaças de morte diárias depois de ataques de Bolsonaro'. UOL, February 24. Available at: <https://noticias.uol.com.br/politica/ultimas-noticias/2022/02/24/barroso-recebo-ameacas-de-morte-diaras-depois-de-ataques-de-bolsonaro.htm>.
- 29 See PODER 360. (2022) - Instituto Liberal acusa TSE de censura prévia nas eleições. PODER 360, October 28. Available at: <https://www.poder360.com.br/eleicoes/instituto-liberal-acusa-tse-de-censura-previa-nas-eleicoes/>.
- 30 63% of Brazilians are against measures by the Judiciary determining the blocking of profiles and accounts on social networks of people who are demonstrating against democracy and calling for a military coup. See GALF, R. (2022) - Datafolha: Quase dois terços são contra bloqueio de perfis que defendem golpe. Folha de São Paulo, December 21. Available at: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2022/12/datafolha-quase-dois-tercos-sao-contra-bloqueio-de-perfis-que-defendem-golpe.shtml>.
- 31 See ESTADÃO. (2022) - Lula não disse que vai implantar ditadura no Brasil em entrevista a canal chinês. ESTADÃO, August 11. Available at: <https://www.estadao.com.br/estadao-verifica/lula-ditadura-china/>.
- 32 See JOVEM PAN. (2021) - Lula reafirma intenção de 'controlar imprensa' e atribui à mídia a culpa pelo impeachment de Dilma. JOVEM PAN, September 1. Available at: <https://jovempan.com.br/programas/jornal-da-manha/lula-reafirma-intencao-de-controlar-imprensa-e-atribui-a-midia-a-culpa-pelo-impeachment-de-dilma.html>.

- 33 See VEIGA, E. (2022) - 'Paula moral é o voto de cabresto religioso', diz diretor de política da CNBB. BBC BRASIL, October 19. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-63292458>.
- 34 See BRAUN, J. (2022) - Eleições 2022: fake news sobre perseguição a evangélicos chegam a milhões via filhos e aliados de Bolsonaro. BBC BRASIL, September 27. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-62985337>.
- 35 See MARGOLIS, M; MUGGAH, R. (2023) - Brazil breaks new ground in the global fight against fake news'. OpenDemocracy, January 30. Available at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/democraciaabierta/brazil-crack-down-fake-news-disinformation-lula-restore-trust-internet/>.
- 36 To exemplify, considering Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram, as of February 2023 some of the most prominent rightwing influencers were: Jair Bolsonaro, 57.8 million followers; Eduardo Bolsonaro, 11.5 million followers; Nikolas Ferreira, 11 million followers; Gustavo Gayer, 3.1 million followers. Meanwhile, leftwing influencers were: Lula, 26.6 million followers; André Janones, 12.8 million followers; Felipe Neto, 78.6 million followers.
- 37 These initiatives are described in detail in session 4.
- 38 See PALAU, M. (2021) - Brazil's dangerous battle over fake news. Americas Quarterly, October 19. Available at: <https://americasquarterly.org/article/inside-brazils-dangerous-battle-over-fake-news/>.
- 39 See WE ARE SOCIAL; HOOTSUITE. (2022) - Digital 2022 Global Overview Report. Available at: <https://wearesocial.com/uk/blog/2022/01/digital-2022-another-year-of-bumper-growth-2/>.
- 40 IGARAPÉ INSTITUTE. (2022) - Reviewing digital threats to Brazil's election 2022 – a preliminar typology of narratives. September 2022.
- 41 For methodological purposes, this report includes the Superior Electoral Court (TSE) in the narrative on the Brazilian electoral system (narrative 1). While the top Electoral Court is one of Brazilian democracy's anchor institutions, given its specific mandate we opted to examine its role in our typology specifically related to electoral issues. In the broader narrative on democratic institutions (narrative 2), Brazil's three branches (executive, legislative and judicial) of government are analyzed alongside other public institutions, with the exception of the electoral courts.
- 42 Justice Alexandre de Moraes was also the president of the TSE during the electoral period.
- 43 See MARTINS, T. (2022) - Fake news nas eleições mudaram o debate público, avaliam especialistas. CORREIO BRAZILIENSE, November 19. Available at: <https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/holofote/2022/11/5051190-fake-news-nas-eleicoes-mudaram-o-debate-publico-avaliam-especialistas.html>.
- 44 See VARGAS, M. (2022) - Decisões do TSE sob Moraes devem servir de parâmetro para as próximas eleições. Folha de São Paulo, November 5. Available at: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2022/11/decisoes-do-tse-sob-moraes-devem-servir-de-parametro-para-as-proximas-eleicoes.shtml>.
- 45 The decision is part of Resolution No. 23.714, of October 20, 2022, available at: <https://www.tse.jus.br/legislacao/compilada/res/2022/resolucao-no-23-714-de-20-de-outubro-de-2022>.
- 46 Some research shows a tendency of voters to cast ballots to who they believe will win, or to not go out to vote if their preferred candidate seems to not have a chance. The narrative of discrediting polls was probably thought to avoid this movement. See GILL, D. (2020) - Voters Often Opt for Candidate They Expect to Win. UCLA Anderson Review, Research Brief, December 9. Available at: <https://anderson-review.ucla.edu/voters-often-opt-for-candidate-they-expect-to-win/>.
- 47 Electoral justice debunked these allegations. See TSE. (2022) - Fato ou Boato: Justiça Eleitoral desmentiu as principais fake news sobre o processo eleitoral em 2022. TSE, October 27. Available at: <https://www.tse.jus.br/comunicacao/noticias/2022/Outubro/fato-ou-boato-justica-eleitoral-desmentiu-as-principais-fake-news-sobre-o-processo-eleitoral-em-2022>.
- 48 Commenting on a decision in Goiás in which a butchery was punished for illegal electoral propaganda (for associating their products to Bolsonaro), Eduardo Bolsonaro tweeted: "The prosecutor has gone crazy, that one needs a drug test." He goes on to celebrate that police officers apparently refused to enact the court's order. Available at: <https://twitter.com/bolsonarosp/status/1585970023767560192>.
- 49 See BRITO, A. (2022) - Após vitória de Lula, caminhoneiros fecham vias e pedem intervenção militar. CORREIO BRAZILIENSE, October 31. Available at: <https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/politica/2022/10/5048241-apos-vitoria-de-lula-caminhoneiros-fecham-vias-e-pedem-intervencao-militar.html>.
- 50 See AFP. (2022) - Milhares de bolsonaristas pedem intervenção militar após vitória de Lula. CARTA CAPITAL, November 2. Available at: <https://www.cartacapital.com.br/politica/milhares-de-bolsonaristas-pedem-intervencao-militar-apos-vitoria-de-lula/>.
- 51 See REUTERS. (2022) - Protestos bolsonaristas perdem força e todas as rodovias ficam livres de bloqueios. UOL, November 3. Available at: <https://noticias.uol.com.br/ultimas-noticias/reuters/2022/11/03/protestos-bolsonaristas-em-rodovias-perdem-forca-e-recuam-em-todo-pais.htm>.
- 52 See OLIVEIRA, T. et al. (2022) - Atos golpistas pelo país são inflamados por fake news e Bolsonaro. Folha de São Paulo, November 2. Available at: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2022/11/atos-golpistas-pelo-pais-sao-inflamados-por-fake-news-e-bolsonaro.shtml>.
- 53 As an example, one of the cases that reverberated show a PRF agent helping radicals to cut a grid that gave access to another area. See UOL. (2022) - Vídeo mostra policial cortando grade para ajudar bolsonaristas; PRF apura. UOL, November 1. Available at: <https://noticias.uol.com.br/politica/ultimas-noticias/2022/11/01/video-agente-prf-corta-grade-caminhoneiros.htm>.
- 54 See FONSECA, C. et al. (2022) - Após ordem de Moraes, policiais de ao menos 6 estados começam a desobstruir estradas. Folha de São Paulo, November 1. Available at: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/mercado/2022/11/apos-ordem-de-moraes-policias-dos-estados-comecam-a-desobstruir-estradas.shtml>.
- 55 See UOL. (2022) - Protestos nos quartéis e tiros de guerra ganham caráter de vigília pró-Bolsonaro. UOL, November 21. Available at: <https://noticias.uol.com.br/ultimas-noticias/agencia-estado/2022/11/21/protestos-nos-quarteis-e-tiros-de-guerra-ganham-carater-de-vigilia-pro-bolsonaro.htm>.

- 56 See DE SOUZA, F. (2023) - Mesmo sob chuva, bolsonaristas mantêm acampamento no interior de SP. TAB UOL, January 9. Available at: <https://tab.uol.com.br/noticias/redacao/2023/01/09/mesmo-sob-chuva-bolsonaristas-mantem-acampamento-no-interior-de-sp.htm>.
- See AGÊNCIA O GLOBO. (2023) - Acampamentos bolsonaristas começam a ser desmobilizados; confira a situação nos estados. EXAME, January 9. Available at: <https://exame.com/brasil/acampamentos-bolsonaristas-comecam-a-ser-desmobilizados-confira-a-situacao-nos-estados/>.
- 57 However, when taking into account the total of attacks per month, it is possible to notice that Attacks against Moraes represented 36% of cases in August, 20% in September and 13% in October.
- 58 By October 15th, two weeks before the election runoff, the TSE had ordered the removal of at least 334 social media posts for containing fake News. See GALZO, W. (2022) - TSE remove 334 posts sobre presidenciais; 43 decisões foram contra Bolsonaro e aliados. UOL, October 15. Available at: <https://noticias.uol.com.br/ultimas-noticias/agencia-estado/2022/10/15/tse-remove-das-redes-sociais-334-postagens-sobre-presidenciais.htm>.
- 59 See UOL. (2022) - TSE manda suspender programa de Bolsonaro; fala de ex-ministro do STF é cortada. UOL, October 20. Available at: <https://noticias.uol.com.br/ultimas-noticias/agencia-estado/2022/10/20/tse-manda-suspender-programa-de-bolsonaro-fala-de-ex-ministro-do-stf-e-cortada.htm>.
- 60 See MESTRE, G. (2022) - TSE determina remoção de vídeo do Brasil Paralelo contra Lula. PODER 360, October 13. Available at: <https://www.poder360.com.br/eleicoes/tse-determina-remocao-de-video-do-brasil-paralelo-contralula/>.
- 61 See MARTINS, L. et al. (2022) - TSE ordena que Jovem Pan exiba direito de resposta de Lula sobre Lava Jato. UOL, October 28. Available at: <https://noticias.uol.com.br/eleicoes/2022/10/28/jovem-pan-lula-direito-de-resposta-eleicoes.htm>.
- 62 The expressions most used by critics of the decisions of the Brazilian judiciary, denoting an active stance by this power, are 'judicial dictatorship', 'judicial activism', 'toga dictatorship' and others. See LIMA, S. (2022) - Bolsonaro reagem nas redes sociais a operação da PF e falam em 'ditadura de toga'. ESTADÃO, December 15. Available at: <https://www.estadao.com.br/politica/bolsonaristas-reagem-nas-redes-sociais-a-operacao-da-pf-e-falam-em-ditadura-de-toga/>.
- 63 See CORREIO BRAZILIENSE. (2022) - Bolsonaro chama Lula de 'mentiroso, corrupto, bandido e sem caráter'. CORREIO BRAZILIENSE, October 9. Available at: <https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/politica/2022/10/5043127-bolsonaro-chama-lula-de-mentiroso-corrupto-bandido-e-sem-carater.html>.
- 64 See PODER 360. (2022) - Bolsonaro volta a associar Lula ao PCC no Twitter. PODER 360, August 24. Available at: <https://www.poder360.com.br/governo/bolsonaro-volta-a-associar-lula-ao-pcc-no-twitter/>.
- 65 See SILVA, G. (2022) - Guerra nas redes associa Bolsonaro a canibalismo. VEJA, October 5. Available at: <https://veja.abril.com.br/coluna/virou-viral/guerra-nas-redes-associa-bolsonaro-a-canibalismo/>.
- 66 See MORATELLI, V. (2022) - O comentário de Bolsonaro que o associou à pedofilia. VEJA, October 16. Available at: <https://veja.abril.com.br/brasil/o-comentario-de-bolsonaro-que-o-associou-a-pedofilia/>.
- 67 See ALBUQUERQUE, M. (2022) - Guerra santa: vídeo de Bolsonaro em maçonaria viraliza nas redes sociais. CORREIO BRAZILIENSE, October 4. Available at: <https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/politica/2022/10/5041935-guerra-santa-video-de-bolsonaro-em-maconaria-viraliza-nas-redes-sociais.html>.
- 68 See BARBON, J. (2022) - Datafolha: Lula sustenta votos no Nordeste, e Bolsonaro, no Sudeste. Folha de São Paulo, October 15. Available at: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2022/10/datafolha-lula-sustenta-votos-no-nordeste-e-bolsonaro-no-sudeste.shtml>.
- 69 Publications that associate Lula with the persecution of Christians and support for the dictatorship in Nicaragua were made by important right-wing names in the country, such as Bolsonaro's sons, Flavio and Eduardo. See COELHO, G. (2022) - Ministro do TSE manda remover postagens que associam Lula à ditadura na Nicarágua. CNN BRASIL, October 4. Available at: <https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/politica/ministro-do-tse-manda-remover-postagens-que-associam-lula-a-ditadura-na-nicaragua/>.
- 70 See G1. (2020) - 50% dos brasileiros são católicos, 31%, evangélicos e 10% não têm religião, diz Datafolha. G1, January 13. Available at: <https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2020/01/13/50percent-dos-brasileiros-sao-catolicos-31percent-evangelicos-e-10percent-nao-tem-religiao-diz-datafolha.ghtml>.
- 71 See <https://www.facebook.com/ZambelliOficial/videos/crueldade-com-as-nossas-criancas/417499797239245/>
- 72 See NOBLAT, G. (2022) - Na caça ao voto religioso, uma guerra santa irrompe (Por Juan Arias). METRÓPOLES, October 10. Available at: <https://www.metropoles.com/blog-do-noblat/artigos/na-caca-ao-voto-religioso-uma-guerra-santa-irrompe-por-juan-arias>.
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