

The background of the entire page is a dark purple color. It features a blurred image of a large crowd of people, seen from behind, looking towards the right. Overlaid on this image is a white network diagram consisting of numerous small dots connected by thin white lines, resembling a social media or data network. The text is positioned on the left side of the page.

**THE ROLE OF
DIGITAL PLATFORMS
IN PROTECTING
ELECTORAL
INTEGRITY IN THE
2022 BRAZILIAN
ELECTION**

ASSESSMENT 1 | SEPTEMBER 2022

BRIEF PRESENTATION

Two months after the release of the document *The Role of Digital Platforms in the Protection of Electoral Integrity in 2022*, in which civil society and academic organizations demanded the adoption of more effective measures and adequacy of community guidelines against harmful content that affect the Brazilian electoral process, we present here the first assessment of the policies and actions of technology companies.

This balance sheet focuses on issues relating to **sections 1 (Electoral Integrity) and 2 (Ad Libraries)** of the document. The assessment in relation to the themes of political violence and disinformation against the environment and the Amazon will be carried out in a forthcoming document. It is possible to advance the view that actions to combat political violence are insufficient to contain political violence of gender and race. Likewise, no platform has effective policies to combat the denial of the climate and scientific crisis, which demonstrates a total lack of commitment to this central theme for the future of humanity.

The problem of the high occurrence of disinformation, hate speech and political violence is related to the business model of the platforms, being, therefore, structural. Content with these characteristics generates more engagement and is, therefore, profitable for companies. In this sense, what we do in this document is to analyze the possible immediate responses of the platforms to be taken during the electoral period, recognizing that they will necessarily be limited to deal with the problem.

Less than a month before the first round of the 2022 elections, there have been some changes by digital platforms in adapting their content moderation and removal policies, but there are fundamental unresolved issues that need to be addressed by companies before the Brazilian elections.

The main one is that almost no platform has a policy to prevent calls to insurrection against the democratic order or interference in the peaceful transmission of power that do not explicitly call for violence. This means that, in a scenario of institutional crisis during or shortly after the elections, they may become an environment for organizing and promoting anti-democratic actions. At the end of this document, the urgent demands presented to the platforms are listed.

General highlights:

- In general, the platforms have policies to combat disinformation against the integrity of the electoral process, but disinformation against candidates remains with few restrictions, either because of the absence of specific policies (as in the case of **Twitter** and **YouTube**) or because of exceptions given to politicians. and candidates (in the case of **Facebook** and **Instagram**).
- **Meta** platforms do not have policies that determine action in the face of demonstrably false content that alleges electoral fraud.
- With the exception of **Twitter**, no platform has a policy to prevent calls to insurrection against the democratic order or interference in the peaceful transmission of power that do not explicitly call for violence.
- Following the publication of the document, **Facebook/Instagram**, **Google** and **WhatsApp** announced changes in dialogue with the agenda presented in the base document released in early July. (these changes are mentioned in the detailed highlights by platform)
- **Telegram** remains without effective commitments to action in the face of disinformation and attacks on democracy. The platform has no published policy on the subject.
- All digital platforms report having protocols to react immediately to political crisis situations, but these procedures are not publicized and there is no clarity on how such companies will parameterize the severity of such acts and what type of actions will be taken.
- The **Memoranda of Understanding** signed with the **Superior Electoral Court (TSE)** are limited and clearly insufficient to limit disinformation in the electoral process. Even so, its implementation has advanced on the part of the platforms, with the exception of **Telegram**, which has not incorporated the promises it made in March this year into its policies.

After being released, the document, which already had the support of **90 entities**, had **25 new adhesions**, including the *Brazilian Society for the Progress of Science* (SBPC). An international support [document](#)¹ was also launched, which has **26 international institutions**, including Global Witness. The base document and the updated list with the **115 signatories** are at <https://democraciapedesocorro.com>.

¹ Link: <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/press-releases/open-letter-meta-tiktok-twitter-youtube-brazil-election/>

HIGHLIGHTS REGARDING ELECTORAL INTEGRITY AND AD LIBRARIES

Open networks

∞ Facebook/Instagram (Meta)

- ▶ It has partnerships with fact-checking projects, reducing the reach of verified posts on the platform and signaling that there is an effort to improve detection systems for both suspicious and checked posts.
- ▶ As of August 16, 2022, it has banned political ads that question the legitimacy of Brazilian elections, based on an experiment carried out by Global Witness that detected 100% failure in the filtering process for boosted pieces that violated the platform's rules. Despite the policy update being considered a relevant step, a monitoring carried out by Netlab/UFRJ indicates that new violating political ads continue to be undetected and blocked by the Facebook system, which shows the ineffectiveness of the measure [data and examples].
- ▶ The scope of the ad library was expanded to include the same topics considered sensitive in the United States.

NEGATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

- ⊖ The electoral integrity policy is the least comprehensive of all open platforms. It does not classify as disinformation, for example, publications that contain unfounded allegations of electoral fraud, which are not necessarily considered to violate the policy of electoral integrity. Nor does it limit direct attacks on the integrity of the electoral process.
- ⊖ Content posted by politicians (elected and candidates) is not submitted for verification and is only subject to restrictive policies if it violates any other platform rule.
- ⊖ It has no specific policy to prevent calls to insurrection against the democratic order or interference in the peaceful transmission of power that do not explicitly call for violence.
- ⊖ Due to flaws in the approval system, it has allowed the posting of advertisements with false and misleading information about the Brazilian electoral process, as shown by an experiment by the organization Global Witness and monitoring by NetLab/UFRJ.

Twitter

- ▶ It has a policy of civic and electoral integrity to address disinformation against the voting system and the electoral process.
- ▶ It curates tweets to provide reliable information about the electoral process, such as the “2022 Elections” tab and the “Moments” section.

NEGATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

- ⊖ Misleading information about applications is only moderated or removed if it violates any other rules of the platform, such as when it incurs hate speech, inauthentic account or sensitive and manipulated media, etc.

YouTube

- ▶ Electoral integrity policy covers content with false allegations of voter fraud in the 2014 and 2018 Brazilian elections, as well as incorrect information about candidacy requirements and information stolen by hackers.

NEGATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

- ⊖ Electoral integrity policy is restricted to false allegations of voter fraud in previous elections (2018 and 2014). In other words, it does not cover cases in which it is alleged, in an unfounded manner, that the electronic voting system of the electoral process to be carried out, such as that of 2022, or any election using electronic voting machines, will be or has been defrauded.
- ⊖ There is no specific policy to prevent calls to insurrection against the democratic order or interference in the peaceful transmission of power that do not explicitly call for violence. Despite establishing that it removes “harmful conspiracy” and “inciting interference in democratic processes” content, the platform does not interpret its rule for cases in the Brazilian context.
- ⊖ Recommender system favors videos from *Jovem Pan* channels both as the first option on the homepage and as a suggestion related to the first click, according to an experiment conducted by Netlab/UFRJ.

Google (political announcements report)

- ▶ Electoral integrity policy covers content with false allegations of voter fraud in previous elections and incorrect information about candidacy requirements or based on information stolen by hackers.
- ▶ Platform announced the expansion of the ad library for advertising to state positions, which was not planned in the first half.

NEGATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

- ⊖ The report does not allow downloading of ads, only links, which makes it difficult for independent researchers to analyze.
- ⊖ Ads that violate platform policies are deleted, which prevents researchers from evaluating this type of content.
- ⊖ Transparency report on political ads includes only those ads that directly refer to a party or candidate, without covering other ads of social issues and sensitive nature.

TikTok

- ▶ Has a broad policy on electoral integrity, which prohibits content that misleads community members about elections or other civic processes (e.g., allegations of electoral fraud or claims that a user's vote will not be counted; content with a false election date; attempts to intimidate voters; vote suppression, etc.).

NEGATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

- ⊖ It is not clear how he applies the broad policy, as examples are lacking to serve as a basis for the moderation analysis and implementation of his policy.
- ⊖ It has no specific policy to prevent calls to insurrection against the democratic order or interference in the peaceful transmission of power that do not explicitly call for violence.
- ⊖ There is no additional measure and convergent policy concerned with inhibiting the circulation of false and harmful videos on other platforms, especially on messaging apps.

Kwai

- ▶ It has detailed policies related to elections, including false allegations about electoral fraud, a particular candidate's victory, and voting intention polls.
- ▶ The electoral integrity policy emphasizes the commitment to respect the electoral laws of the countries and includes videos that violate rules and regulations related to the Electoral Code, such as vote buying, fundraising, etc.

NEGATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

- ⊖ It has no ad libraries, which prevents tracking of political content driven during elections.
- ⊖ There is no additional measure and convergent policy concerned with inhibiting the circulation of false and harmful videos on other platforms, especially on messaging apps.

INSTANT MESSAGING APPS

WhatsApp

- ▶ It provides in its terms of service that the app may not be used ‘involving false, incorrect or misleading statements’.
- ▶ Monitors unencrypted data (group names and images, for example) and mass shooting attempts or improper automation actions.
- ▶ He announced that he will not implement *Comunidades* in Brazil until the end of the elections.

NEGATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

- ⊖ Low or no ability to enforce its own policy of disallowing the use of the app for the circulation of misleading and false information. The company did not say if it has already sanctioned any account for this type of violation, having only said that the platform currently bans 8 million accounts every month, worldwide, for violations of the platform’s terms of service.

Telegram

- ▶ It does not have policies for civic and electoral integrity and combating disinformation, although it has signed an agreement with the Superior Electoral Court (TSE) to detect and mitigate disinformation and conduct that violates the platform’s terms of use in Brazil.

NEGATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

- ⊖ It does not have civic or electoral integrity policies or policies that cite disinformation, which does not comply with the TSE agreement.
- ⊖ It was the only platform not willing to dialogue effectively with the signatory entities of the document, having promoted a pro-forma meeting with a law firm.

The organizations involved will continue to be mobilized so that digital platforms expand their mechanisms to protect electoral integrity and Brazilian democracy. With a view to protecting the Brazilian democratic order, we urge the platforms to immediately adopt the following measures:

Meta (Facebook/Instagram):

- To classify as disinformation publications that contain unsubstantiated allegations of electoral fraud.
- Adopt specific policy (or detail existing policies) to prevent calls to insurrection against the democratic order or interference in the peaceful transmission of power, even if there is no explicit call to violence.

YouTube:

- Adopt specific policy (or detail existing policies) to prevent calls for insurgency against the democratic order or interference in the peaceful transmission of power, even if there is no explicit call for violence.
- Extend its policy to consider as disinformation subject to platform actions cases in which the 2022 electoral process' electronic voting system is unfoundedly alleged to be illegitimate and being the subject of fraud.
- Immediate reconfiguration of the recommender system to guarantee political neutrality in the content suggested to users.

Google

As it relates to its political ad transparency report:

- Keep banned ads in its report.
- Adopt the ad library format to include not only links but also ad content to facilitate review by independent researchers.

TikTok

- Adopt specific policy (or detail existing policies) to prevent calls for insurgency against the democratic order or interference in the peaceful transmission of power, even if there is no explicit call for violence.

Kwai

- Establish a policy of political ad transparency.

Telegram

- Establish and effectively enforce a policy to prohibit election disinformation on your public channels and groups.

WhatsApp

- Apply its policy of not allowing the use of the application for the circulation of misleading and false information, based on user reports.

SIGNATORY ORGANIZATIONS

342Amazônia	Coalizão Negra por Direitos	Instituto de Referência Negra Peregum	Observatório do Clima
342Artes	COESUS – Coalizão Não Fracking Brasil	Instituto de Governo Aberto	Observatório para qualidade da Lei – UFMG
350.org	Compós – Associação Brasileira os Programas de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação	Instituto E se fosse você?	Observatório Político e Eleitoral (OPEL)
4daddy	Conectas Direitos Humanos	Instituto Ethos de Empresas e Responsabilidade Social	OCM – Observatório do Carvão Mineral
Abaré Jornalismo	Cooperação da Juventude Amazônica para o Desenvolvimento Sustentável	Instituto Hori Educação e Cultura	OPG – Observatório do Petróleo e Gás
Abong	CTI – Centro de Trabalho Indigenista	Instituto Marielle Franco	Oxfam Brasil
Abpcom – Associação Brasileira de Pesquisadores e Comunicadores em Comunicação Popular, Comunitária e Cidadã	Diálogo Brasil	Instituto Novos Paradigmas	Plan International Brasil
ABRAJI	Digital Const UFMG	Instituto Piracicabano de Estudos e Defesa da Democracia – IPEDD	ponteAponte
Abrapcorp – Associação Brasileira de Pesquisadores de Comunicação Organizacional e Relações Públicas	FALA	Instituto Physis – Cultura & Ambiente	Projeto de Combate à Desinformação – Campos Gerais
Ação Educativa	Folkcom – Rede de Estudos e Pesquisas em Folkcomunicação	Instituto Talanoa	Projeto Hospitais Saudáveis
Agência Ambiental Pick-upau	Frente Favela Brasil	Instituto Terra, Trabalho e Cidadania	Projeto Mentira tem Preço
Agência de Jornalismo UEPG (Programa de Extensão)	FBOMS – Forum Brasileiro de Ongs e Movimentos Sociais pelo Meio Ambiente e Desenvolvimento	Instituto Update	Projeto Saúde e Alegria
Agência Diadorim	Fundación Avina	Instituto Vamos Juntas	Purpose Campaigns
Aláfia Lab	GESTOS	Instituto Vladimir Herzog	Rede Conhecimento Social
Aliança Nacional LGBTI+	Grupo Ambientalista da Bahia	INTERCOM – Sociedade Brasileira de Estudos Interdisciplinares da Comunicação	Rede GTA
Aprec – Ecossistemas Costeiros	Grupo de Pesquisa Cnpq Narrativas Tecnológicas	Intervozes	Rede Nacional de Combate à Desinformação
Apremavi	Grupo de Pesquisa em Mídia e estudos do imaginário	IPAD SEJA DEMOCRACIA	SBPC – Sociedade Brasileira para o Progresso da Ciência
Arayara.org	IEB – Instituto Internacional de Educação do Brasil	Ipê – Instituto de Pesquisas Ecológicas	SBPJOR – Associação Brasileira de Pesquisadores em Jornalismo
Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil	lepé-RCA	ISPN	Site Avoador da Universidade Estadual do Sudoeste da Bahia
ABRAFH – Associação Brasileira de Famílias Homotransafetivas	Im.pulsa	Jornalistas Livres	Sleeping Giants Brasil
Associação de Moradores da Vila Mariana	International Center for Information Ethics	Kurytiba Metropole	Socicom – Federação das Associações Científicas e Acadêmicas da Comunicação
Associação roraimense pela diversidade sexual – Grupo Diversidade	Instituto 5 Elementos	Marcha Mundial por Justiça Climática	SOS Amazônia
A Tenda	Instituto Alziras	Mater Natura	SPVS – Sociedade de Pesquisa em Vida Selvagem e Educação Ambiental
Casa Galileia	Instituto Arueras	Movimento Político pela Unidade – MPpU	TerraAzul
Centro de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos de Petrópolis	Instituto Clima de Eleição	Mulheres Negras Decidem	Think Olga
Centro de Estudos da Mídia Alternativa Barão de Itararé	Instituto Cultura e Democracia – Desinformante	Netlab – UFRJ	Uma Gota no Oceano
Centro Popular de Direitos Humanos – CPDH	Instituto de Desenvolvimento Sustentável Baiano – IDSB	NOSSAS	UniBrasil
Coalizão Direitos na Rede	Instituto de Direitos Humanos, Econômicos e Sociais – IDhES	Novelo Data	Via Goietê
		Núcleo de Pesquisa Mídia, Conhecimento e Meio Ambiente da UFRR	Washington Brazil Office
		Observatório da Política nacional de Resíduos Sólidos	WWF Brasil