

ANNEX



Hate Speech on Social Media Platforms after the 2022 Elections

Information Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) of the



Summary

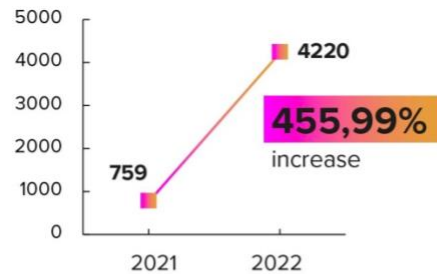
Executive Summary	2
WhatsApp in Brazil: When leaving an app might not be an option	2
Religious racism: "She's not a princess, she's a macumbeira"	4
Misogyny: "Crazy and insane"	5
Xenophobia: "They should starve to death"	6
The Attacks of January 8, 2023	7
Concluding Remarks	9

Executive Summary

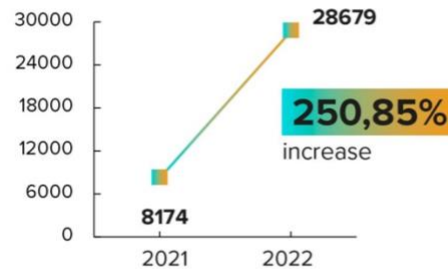
This paper provides a brief overview of hate speech at the national level after the 2022 elections in Brazil, bringing similarities and differences from the local scenario analyzed throughout the IEA. We focus on the three hate speech forms that grew the most in the country that same year:



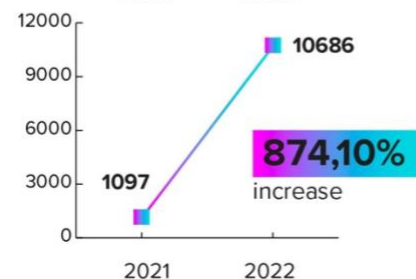
(a) religious intolerance
more specifically religious racism



(b) misogyny
and more broadly gender-based violence



(c) xenophobia,
particularly against the population from the Northeast region - legally framed as racism in Brazil



Source: <https://new.safernet.org.br/content/crimes-de-odio-tem-crescimento-de-ate-650-no-primeiro-semester-de-2022>

Public figures and their supporters entirely or partially endorsed these discourses - confirming the IEA local findings. Behind each of these three forms, radical activists justify their calls to violence, respectively, to prevent a possible civil war arising from political polarization, to win a spiritual war before Christians are victimized by 'devil worshipers,' and to denounce a culture war that is destroying true masculinity. Before addressing these three dimensions, we briefly go through data involving WhatsApp at the national level, which help understanding some of the points made throughout the IEA – in which WhatsApp appears as one of the main applications used by LGBTQIAP+ population in Rio de Janeiro.

WhatsApp in Brazil: When leaving an app might not be an option

The IEA points to a scenario marked by hate speech and the deterioration of mental health in parallel to the intensification of political polarization, and in which online social network platforms play an important role. After the presidential election, messages such as "homosexuals are the result of experiments with vaccines," "they took away a servant of God to put a candomblecista (practitioner of an Afro-Brazilian religion) as First Lady," "women shall fit into men's purposes", and "Northeasterners should starve to death to learn how to vote," are examples of the kind of messages that can reach almost the entire population of the country through the application, even considering digital divides. Viral messages invisible to public scrutiny due to the structure of the app carried hate speech-laden messages throughout the 2022 election and recruited people to participate in the attempted coup on January 8, 2023.

However, recent research, such as the two volumes of '[Vectors of Dissemination of Electoral Content in Messaging Applications](#)' (InternetLab/Rede Conhecimento Social), indicates that unlike Instagram Messenger (used by 67% of respondents in recent surveys) and Facebook Messenger (used by 69%),

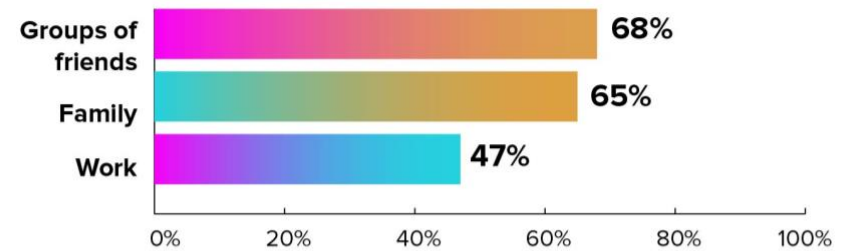


WhatsApp is used by [99.8% of people researched in Brazil during election periods, making it harder for people to leave the application. A \[National Datafolha survey\]\(#\) in early 2022 indicated a lower percentage \(92%,\) but kept the app in the lead, surpassing the 90% mark.](#)

This finding connects to the app's ubiquity in work and family matters, pervading various daily social relationships. Considering specifically messages related to homophobic and religious racism mentioned in the IEA, three factors - associated with the activism of far-right religious leaders - contextualize the relevance of WhatsApp. Although the app does not provide data on the types of groups people participate in and their behaviors, [research](#) indicates that:

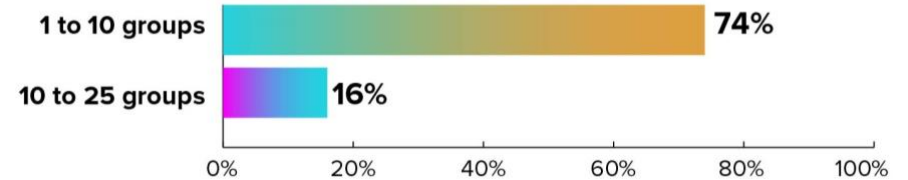
- WhatsApp groups encompass work, church, family, shopping, and free phone calls, among other functions, and it is difficult to measure WhatsApp's importance or to avoid it due to widespread use;

• Most of the groups people participate in the app are



However, it is worth to emphasize: one in four people (24%) are in groups linked to religion or spirituality,

• People are members of



Ensuring a flow in which information collected in one group can pass to many others.

Conservative religious groups' recurrent encouragement of [discrimination against LGBTQIAP+ people](#) and [African-Brazilian religions](#) becomes even more problematic when their major leaderships are aligned with the [former President Jair Bolsonaro](#). Although only one in four people are in religious groups, each of them can be in diverse other groups, enabling them to circulate far-right religious messages that eventually can get into family and friends' groups including most people in the country. This scenario, however, is only indicative of a broader and multi-layered problem.

Religious Racism: "She's not a princess, she's a macumbeira"



"They took away a woman of prayer and put a candomblecista (practitioner of Afro-Brazilian religion) in the role of First Lady! God have mercy on our nation! It will bring a curse to Brazil. There will be more bad things in Brazil."

The **mobilization of religious racism** as an **electoral weapon** helps explain why this topic appears in the IEA as an ongoing trend in the 2022 electoral period. **Considering reports of religious intolerance, the religions most affected are those with African features**, indicating the relationship between intolerance and religious racism. Mappings such as "[Respect my Terreiro](#) (place in which Afro-Brazilian ceremonies takes place)" heard leaders of 255 traditional religious communities,



78%

of interviewees reported that members of their communities **have already suffered some kind of violence - physical or verbal - due to religious racism.**

Individuals shared this topic opening quote on private messaging applications such as WhatsApp, targeting sociologist Rosângela Silva "Janja," President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's wife. Notably, [six out of ten victims of religious intolerance in 2022 were women](#). The offensive messages against Janja occurred amid comparisons between her and the then "**Christian First Lady**" Michelle Bolsonaro, indicating one of the most important lines of hate speech in 2022. Similar statements like "**Janja is not a princess, she is a macumbeira**

(an often-pejorative way of referring to Umbanda and Candomblé practitioners)" appeared on networks like Twitter, wrongly accusing her of hiding photos in which [she dresses in white – garments associated with ceremonies of Afro-Brazilian religions – next to images of Orixás](#). Janja made the images public as a response to a post in which Michele Bolsonaro complains about supposedly not being allowed to "talk about God" while [Lula could attend to Afro-Brazilian rituals](#). The comparison between first ladies and statement that, unlike Janja, Michele would be a princess, came from then President Jair Bolsonaro himself at the ceremony commemorating [200 years of Brazil's independence](#).

Some online evangelical leaders [do not hold their services in physical churches](#), but rather through videos on YouTube channels and other online social networks. Their funding may come from **monetized** access to the videos, book sales, donations and/or online courses. In some, bishops claim to have had "**revelations**" in which [God decided to punish Brazil because of the Presidential election result](#), placing responsibility on believers to prevent the result from fulfilling itself. These bishops also claimed to have seen "**demons entering institutions**" in the country. The idea of a "**fight of good against evil**" suggests political adversaries are also existential and religious enemies, transforming political polarization into a kind of "**holy war**." Videos circulating on WhatsApp showed groups of people dressed in white near cemeteries, insinuating that they were working for **evil forces** to define the outcome of the elections, as opposed to conservative evangelicals and Catholics who were praying.

Associating Lula with **evilness**, some bishops even demanded the then-President Bolsonaro to [call the Army into action](#) before the unsuccessful coup attempt in January 8th in which some of them [participated](#). These leaderships directly affect citizens' faith in democracy: a [survey from Atlas/Intel released that month](#) indicated that about



two in three evangelicals believe that Lula would not have won the election and [the result would be a fraud](#), with 64.3% of them sympathetic to a military coup. Social networks played a relevant role in the invasions in Brasilia, as indicated by [Democracia em Xequê project real-time analysis](#).

Misogyny: "Crazy and Insane"



"You have 24 hours to remove your content about me. After that, it is lawsuit or bullet. You choose."

-- Message from "masculinity coach" Thiago Schutz

After posting an Instagram video on February 13 in which she ironizes misogynistic and homophobic statements made by the **masculinity coach** Thiago Schutz, the actress [Livia La Gatto received the above threat](#). In interviews, the coach says things such as, "The man's purpose is always above the woman's purpose, the woman supports my purpose if she wants to be with me. I will help her in what I can, but I have to make sure [she understands that my purpose is greater than hers in life](#)". He is an influencer behind one of the strands of the thinking known as the 'Red Pill', which promotes ideas such as classification of women by a scale of values defined by men - where lesbian and trans women would be far from the standard imposed by these groups -, women's submission to men when in a relationship, and the idea that women are inherently manipulative. Like bishops who monetize harmful content, this group has gained space by selling books, courses, and **monetizing their ideas online**.

The image of men as masculine and providers is not only misogynistic, but also goes against LGBTQIAP+ people's norms. Those defending masculinity justify their beliefs with the idea that feminism is winning a **culture war** and taking away the 'natural role' of men. To them, 'awakening' more people to **reclaim the role of masculinity** is a matter of survival. Although this is the most radical and explicit face of online misogyny, most attacks are more subtle and socially accepted.

In an emblematic example, politicians like Jair Bolsonaro encourage supporters to **publicly compare the wives** of the two main candidates for the presidency of the Republic, [causing both to be targets of attacks as 'sluts'](#). In the election for governor in Rio Grande do Sul, a straight candidate claimed that if he were elected the state would have "[a real governor and a real First Lady](#)", which many commentators considered **homophobic**. The most voted Federal Deputy in 2022, Nikolas Ferreira, is known for his transphobic behavior, including a video he posted in which he **questions the presence of [a transgender female student in the women's bathroom](#)**.

Although this was the first election with the **Law to Combat Political Violence Against Women** in effect, women candidates became the target of several attacks, particularly associated with [mental capacities](#). Research conducted by [MonitorA](#) involving 175 female candidates on Twitter identified

4.468 attacks/insults

aimed at **97 of them**, with more than **500** appearances of terms such as

'unbalanced'

'insane'

'hysterical'

'crazy'

'out of control'

Besides attacks linked to misogyny (41.94% of the total), attacks also furthered [dehumanization](#) (17.02%) - associating women with animals - and inferior treatment (10.48%).

Although the political environment is marked mostly by white candidates, and they therefore represent the majority of electoral examples, the biggest victims of psychological violence within the national population are [Black women with low levels of education, who have children and are divorced](#). Analyses on attacks against journalists confirm differences between types of [attacks suffered by female and male journalists and also between white and Black journalists](#). This trend goes beyond the election and reflects the [record increase of femicides in 2022](#) in the country, little funding to fight violence against women, and the increase in domestic violence, in which [28.9% of Brazilian women have suffered some type of gender-based violence](#).

Xenophobia: "They should starve to death"



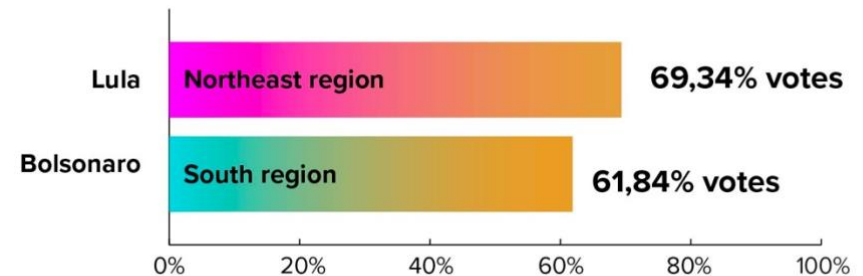
"People from the South have good judgement, but the Northeast, if they do this [elect Lula], they have to starve! (...) they have to die of hunger! They have to die with a flat head and with hunger!

-- Amaury Castanho, candidate for State Deputy for Paraná, in the [Extremistas.br series](#).

The term "**flat head**" is one of the derogatory ways of referring to the population of the Northeast of Brazil, and the above example of discourse appeared on different online social media platforms after the second round of the 2022 elections – the year in which the Superior Court of Justice determined that "[discriminating against Brazilians living in the Northeast because of their origin configures a crime of racism](#) provided in art. 20 of Law 7.716/89." The year brought an [874% increase in reports of xenophobia on the Internet](#).

States like Bahia were decisive for Lula's victory - 72.12% of its more than 11.28 million voters voted for the candidate, a percentage only surpassed by the 76.86% of the also northeastern state of Piauí (which has only 2.57 million voters). The capital of the state of Bahia is known as the [Blackest city outside Africa](#), recognized for its culture, cuisine and religions strongly influenced by African matrices.

Attacks and hate speech associated with people from the Northeast region in election periods have occurred for more than a decade and go far beyond skin color. In the 2010 elections, Tweets stating, "[Northeasterners are not people, do a favor to Sp \[São Paulo\], drown a Northeasterner!](#)," producing retweets and criminal convictions for the authors. All of the most voted presidential candidates in the South state of Paraná between 2006 and 2014 faced defeat at the national level with the help of the massive Northeastern vote for the opposing candidates. In 2022, Lula won **69.34% of the votes from the Northeast region** and Jair Bolsonaro **61.84% from the South**, marking two poles of the country's political division.



Reports that the Brazilian Highway Police force sympathetic to the 2022 administration would be [stopping cars and disrupting voting](#) in strategic regions of the Northeast during the second round of elections indicate that this discourse goes beyond simple voters' prejudice. Statements from Bolsonaro suggesting that the [Northeastern vote is the vote of the illiterate](#), and therefore different from the other regions, encourage this kind of division. The idea that the South/Southeast would be superior, coupled with messages promising a **civil war** if the election results followed, emerged before the failed coup attempt on January 8th, 2023. Calls for people to stop traveling to tourist attractions in the Northeast, [marking stores whose owners have voted for the PT for retaliation](#), and appeals for business owners to fire PT voters are among the post-election attacks found online.

The January 8th, 2023 Attacks

[Protesters aiming a coup d'etat](#) invaded the headquarters of the three branches of power in Brazil on January 8, 2023, opposing the outcome of the presidential election. A [report by the NGO SumOfUs](#) observed that the attacks were **broadcast live** via YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and TikTok, reaching **millions of viewers** in a single day. Rioters mobilized mainly through WhatsApp and [Telegram](#), and their call to action relied on [maps shared online with the terms "Festa da Selma"](#) ('Selma's Party' nickname for invasion of Brasilia) and "Viagem para Praia" ('Beach Travel' nickname for strategic refineries and distributors to target, aiming to blockade the country supplies) circulated in Telegram groups, indicating plans to act.

In Telegram groups with names such as "Hunting and Fishing," a call circulated for CACs ('Hunters, Shooters and Collectors' acronym), who had access to weapons facilitated by the Bolsonaro government, to [support those who are in the refineries, distributors and in front of the three powers](#)." After the Federal intervention in the [police of the Federal District](#)- in which the police began to respond to the federal government and no longer to the federal

district's governor - they contained **the invasion**, expelling people from the buildings of the branches of government, and arresting [more than 1,400 people](#) (most of them released with or without conditions). The then-secretary of security of the Federal District was **exonerated** and later [preventively arrested for evidence of connivance](#) with activists aiming to take power.

According to an article published in [Lawfare - Hard National Security Choices](#), there are at least **six lessons** from the similarities between the January 8 invasions in Brazil and the attack on the US Capitol on January 6, 2021: (i) the centrality of **online social media platforms** for mobilizing extremists; (ii) the need for efforts to defend **electoral integrity beyond election day**; (iii) people acting on **apps without algorithms** becoming as important as the algorithms of online social media platforms in spreading false information and mobilizing activists; (iv) platforms needing to develop **faster and more robust responses** to moderate content attacking democratic institutions; (v) the **encouragement of violence** based on false information as an essentially **cross/multiplatform** phenomenon; (vi) the solution to these problems involving **political choices** that imply possible side effects, with **no easy options**.

[Real-time monitoring](#) by the project Democracia em Xequê indicates that the main hashtags used in online platform posts were related to **#brazilianspring**, framing the invasion of the three powers as a **heroic act**, along with calls for **#grevegeral (general strike)**, attacks against the Supreme Court like **#stfvergonhanacional (STF national shame)**, attacks on Lula, and calls for the Armed Forces to intervene in activists' favor. There are also hashtags calling for the demonetization of the channel Jovem Pan (known for its alignment with the Bolsonaro administration) and pointing to real-time coverage by GloboNews (seen by the far right as a detractor). The main target of attacks on the platforms were Alexandre de Moraes - a Supreme Court member and one of the judges who was in charge of the Supreme Electoral Court in 2022 - and President Lula.



Figure 1 - Democracia em Xequê - Brasília Riots - Repercussions between 6:00pm-11:00pm [January 8th]

Hate messages mainly targeted Moraes, who oversaw inquiries on the so-called digital militias and also against fake news. When [in charge of the Superior Electoral Court](#), he took measures considered aggressive, against the dissemination of false information. A lawyer from Rio Grande do Sul made a post [inciting the rape of the minister's daughters](#), confirming this IEA's points about misogyny representing a recurring form of hate speech. His performance in the Superior Electoral Court defended the legitimacy of the elections and sought **punishment for disinformation campaigners** targeting the polls – he [ordered the removal of 135 posts with false information about the electoral process](#) – caused a stir among Bolsonaro supporters contesting the election result.

After undemocratic acts on January 8th, the Superior Electoral Court's decision to remove the influencer **Monark** from diverse online social media platforms - an [order not followed by the platform Rumble](#) - generated [debates](#) about the limits of judicial actions regarding people's access to their online social networks and freedom of expression. [Monitoring of the project Democracia em Xequê](#) indicates that Monark and Carlos Jordy were the profiles sympathetic to the January 8th acts with the **most influence** alongside the event.

The **Sleeping Giants Brazil's campaigns** with the hashtag **#DesmonetizaJovemPan** made the channel - in which commentators even **blamed the Supreme Court** itself for the invasions and destruction in Brasilia - [lose 838 thousand reais in ads](#) (approximately 160 thousand dollars). Together, the channels **demonetized** due to the Superior Electoral Court's decision responding to attacks on the electoral system since August 2021 add up to a [loss of 3.1 million reais](#).

Besides demonetization, civil society organizations have discussed - without reaching consensus - the [possibility and limits of platform regulation](#). The discussion requires finding a balance between the so-called "duty of care" of

the platforms and their liability, and, on the other hand, the limits to liability for what third parties post using their services, according to the Brazilian Internet Civil Landmark.

Concluding Remarks

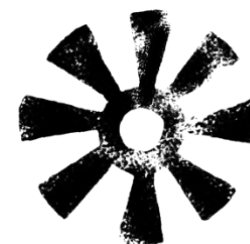
Considering the context outlined throughout this document, this research concludes that hate speech related to **religious racism, misogyny and xenophobia** indicate a larger and **deeper problem** related to the non-acceptance of differences within **democracy**. As indicated throughout this document, the idea that disagreements will lead to a **war** and the relationship between hate speech and the January 8th attacks point to a threat to the **country's democracy itself**.

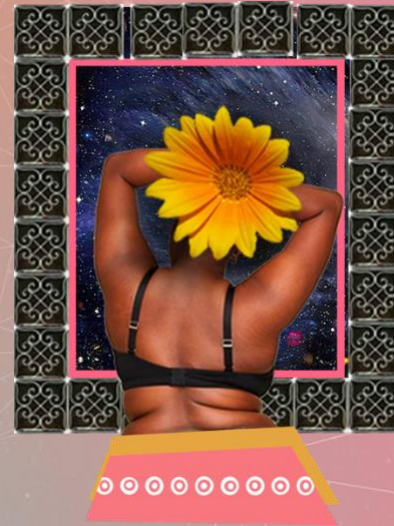
The **live streaming** of the January 8th acts and the **delay** in removing them from platforms indicate the potential harm from radical activists online. On the other hand, the presence of these actors in applications like WhatsApp and Telegram (where their influence does **not depend on visibility algorithms**) points to a more **complex discussion** than simply blaming the algorithms of online social network platforms. The influencers linked to the propagation of hate speech often run for elective office - as in the case of Congressman Nikolas Ferreira - and threaten to [provide institutional support for their arguments](#). Once excluded from the main online platforms, Monark migrated to niche platforms where his profile remains active, pointing to a problem in which effective actions involve the set of diverse online social media platforms.

The possibility of **monetization** and direct **economic gains** - whether with earnings by access, sponsorship, book sales, or online cults - appears as a factor that keeps actors interested in spreading hate speech online. Initiatives by sponsors that **withdrew their support** for brands denounced by Sleeping Giants Brasil were responsible for significant losses to actors involved in

encouraging or colluding with the attacks of January 8th, pointing to an interesting way to effectively mobilize civil society around this agenda. **As a recommendation, this is a promising line and it is necessary to involve civil society as a whole in denouncing actors related to hate speech who receive ads**, appealing directly to advertising companies to remove their support, regardless of the position of online social network platforms.

This text is an appendix to the Information Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) of the Black LGBTQIAP+ population of the city of Rio de Janeiro (2023) written by João Guilherme Bastos dos Santos and completed on March 15, 2023.





Information
Ecosystem
Assessment
(IEA)
of the



**BLACK
LGBTQIAP+
COMMUNITY**
of the city of Rio de Janeiro