

**PRINTED BALLOT? THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM UNDER QUESTIONING AND
THE POSITIONING OF TWITTER USERS BETWEEN JUNE AND JULY 2021**

***VOTO IMPRESSO? O SISTEMA ELEITORAL SOB QUESTIONAMENTO
E O POSICIONAMENTO DE USUÁRIOS DO TWITTER ENTRE JUNHO E
JULHO DE 2021***

***¿VOTO IMPRESO? EL SISTEMA ELECTORAL BAJO CUESTIONAMIENTO Y LA
POSICIÓN DE LOS USUARIOS DE TWITTER ENTRE JUNIO Y JULIO DE 2021***



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ABSTRACT: This article aims to analyze the positions on printed voting on Twitter from June 27, 2021, to July 17, 2021, considering the relevance of the topic in the Brazilian political scenario. The focus of the analysis is to study (1) the arguments that contest or support printed voting, (2) the possible strategies used by Bolsonaro to defend this measure, and (3) the main characteristics that characterize the positions regarding the subject. For this purpose, a theoretical review was conducted on the electoral system and populist strategies, followed by content analysis to understand various aspects of the discussion. The results indicated that the implementation of printed voting is not considered a viable approach and that Bolsonaro's statements have a populist ideological nature, rather than a technical basis. On Twitter, the group that supports the proposal of printed voting predominated.

KEYWORDS: Printed ballot. Populism. Twitter.

RESUMO: Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar os posicionamentos sobre o voto impresso no período de 27/06/21 a 17/07/21 no Twitter, considerando a relevância do tema no cenário político brasileiro. O foco da análise está em estudar: (1) os argumentos que contestam ou apoiam o voto impresso; (2) as possíveis estratégias utilizadas por Bolsonaro ao defender essa medida; e (3) os principais traços que caracterizam os posicionamentos em relação ao assunto. Para isso, foi realizada uma revisão teórica sobre o sistema eleitoral e as estratégias populistas, seguida por uma análise de conteúdo para compreender diversos aspectos da discussão. Os resultados indicaram que a implementação do voto impresso não é considerada uma abordagem viável e que as declarações de Bolsonaro possuem uma natureza ideológica populista, em vez de um embasamento técnico. No Twitter, predominou o grupo que apoia a proposta de voto impresso.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Voto impresso. Populismo. Twitter.

RESUMEN: Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar las posturas sobre el voto impreso entre el 27/06/21 y el 17/07/21 en Twitter, considerando la importancia que el tema ha adquirido en el escenario político brasileño. Nos enfocaremos en estudiar: (1) qué argumentos invalidan (o no) el voto impreso; (2) cuáles son las posibles estrategias adoptadas por Bolsonaro al defender este artificio; y (3) cuáles son las principales características de posicionamiento sobre el tema. Para ello, llevamos a cabo una discusión teórica sobre el sistema electoral y las estrategias populistas. Además, utilizamos Análisis de Contenido para comprender algunos aspectos de la conversación. Los resultados mostraron que adoptar el voto impreso no es un camino viable y que las afirmaciones de Bolsonaro tienen un contenido ideológico populista (y no técnico). Entre las posturas sobre el voto impreso en Twitter, prevaleció el grupo a favor de la propuesta.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Voto impreso. Populismo. Twitter.

Introduction

Considered as a guarantee of credibility to electoral results by some and defined as a setback and an element of discourse harmful to democracy by others, printed voting has regained attention in the Brazilian political debate in recent years. The flag of printed voting has been raised by Jair Bolsonaro (PL - Liberal Party) for years, long before his first presidential candidacy. However, during the 2018 elections, the subject gained visibility (Piaia; Alves, 2020) and since then, the Bolsonaro base has gradually echoed, defending and demanding the implementation of the printed mechanism.

Questioning the electoral system not only discredits all electoral results since 1996 (when electronic voting machines were implemented) but also sets a climate of tension about what to expect for the next elections. Moreover, the subject has categorized one of the main disagreements between the former Head of State and the Supreme Federal Court (STF), which political scientists categorize as a populist strategy of former President Bolsonaro³, due to the constant attacks on democratic institutions. Understanding, then, the origins, causes, and consequences of such questioning becomes increasingly important, with the certainty that there is still a purpose in the public sphere to defend (and strengthen) Brazilian democracy.

It is in view of the dimension that the argumentation about printed voting has reached and how delicate it can be to establish assumptions that undermine confidence in the electoral system, that this research proposed to develop a minimum of contextualization to understand this political debate. To this end, we will focus on studying: (1) what arguments invalidate (or not) printed voting; (2) what possible strategies Bolsonaro adopts in defending such a device; and (3) what are the main features that configure the positions regarding the subject, specifically on Twitter. The third mentioned objective is intended to understand (1) what the users' positions on printed voting are and (2) what their main intentions were when expressing themselves on the subject.

The article is divided into 4 main sections, in addition to this introduction, the final considerations, and the references. In the first section, we will address some technical points that guide printed voting and electronic voting machines, to argue about the unfeasibility of the printed voting proposal. In the second section, we will discuss how the emblem of printed voting constitutes Bolsonaro's populist strategy through theoretical concepts and how this

³ This research was written in July 2021. However, some data has been updated to reflect the Brazilian political landscape closer to the reality of the publication date of this article.

highlights the democratic crisis. In the third section, we will detail the methodology applied here with the aim of shedding light on the discussion of printed voting on Twitter, between June and July 2021. Finally, in the fourth section, we will present the results and propose to interpret the main configurations of the messages published on the subject, in the chosen temporal scope.

Anticipating part of what we will expose throughout this article, this study has shown that printed voting does not add value to the legitimacy of elections and indicates that such arguments reinforce Bolsonaro's strategy to attack democratic institutions. These actions represent elements of the populist project that had an effect on Bolsonaro's electoral base. A base that, by echoing the same arguments as its leader, proved to be the most active group within the discussion on Twitter.

Reflections on Printed Voting and Electronic Voting Machines

The electronic voting system has been adopted in Brazil since 1996, when for the first time, voters from 57 municipalities in the country used electronic voting machines to choose their political representatives (Nicolau, 2004). The adoption of this system is due to the numerous cases of electoral fraud that marked much of Brazil's electoral history. Nicolau (2004) clarifies that the main reason for this change occurred during the 1994 elections when the Regional Electoral Court of Rio de Janeiro uncovered fraud in different electoral zones and was forced to annul the elections for federal and state deputies, requiring voters to vote again. Before 1996, the paper ballot was the only voting tool. It was only in 2000 that all Brazilian voters voted through electronic voting machines.

The electronic voting system has been, and continues to be, subject to questioning and speculation regarding the legitimacy of election results (Eirado; Silva; Cordeiro, 2020). One of the main actors who echoed this sentiment was former president Jair Bolsonaro (Piaia; Alves, 2020). The allegations boil down to arguments such as "votes cannot be audited," "voters are not sure about the computation of their vote," and "there are signs of election fraud," among others (Bolsonaro, 2021). Bolsonaro's electoral base disseminated such assumptions, as we will see in the results of this research, contributing to the undermining of the credibility of the electoral system through the introduction of a conspiratorial atmosphere. One of the solutions proposed by the former president was the printed vote, a mechanism considered outdated and insufficient to ensure what is being questioned (Carvalho, 2016).

In Bolsonaro's view (2021), the printed vote represents an auditable way to verify election results by allowing the comparison of electronic votes with those on paper to investigate the existence of election fraud. This proposal is not new to the national political scene. In 2015, Law No. 13,165 suggested amending Article 59-A of the Electoral Law⁴ with the following excerpt:

Art. 59-A. In the electronic voting process, the voting machine shall print the record of each vote, which shall be deposited, automatically and without manual contact by the voter, in a previously sealed location.

Sole paragraph. The voting process shall not be concluded until the voter confirms the correspondence between the content of his vote and the printed record displayed by the electronic voting machine (Brasil, 2015, our translation).

Before 2015, the same proposal was discussed through Law No. 12,034/2009. Both had their content challenged by the Attorney General's Office through Direct Action of Unconstitutionality No. 4,543 (Carvalho, 2016), with the argument that "printing the vote with a unique identification number would imply the possibility of disrespecting the constitutional corollary of the secrecy of the vote" (Carvalho, 2016, p. 145, our translation). The identification code attached to the vote alone is a strong reason to reject the printed vote, as it opens the door to a return to the era of "vote buying," allowing for assimilations during the vote count.

Furthermore, Carvalho (2016) comments that the use of this resource could be considered unsafe for illiterate voters or those with visual impairments. This is because they are unable to verify the printed information, as "citizens who cannot read or do so precariously and those who cannot see would have to seek assistance from third parties to carry out the voting process with full security" (Carvalho, 2016, p. 150, our translation).

However, more than understanding the reasons behind the inconsistency of implementing printed voting, it is important to briefly clarify to what extent we can question the credibility of electronic voting machines. Giuseppe Janino, who was the Secretary of Technology and Information of the Superior Electoral Court (TSE) for 15 years, reinforces that the system is indeed secure and has historically been undergoing improvements and advancements (Saldanha; Silva, 2020). Eighteen Justices of the Supreme Federal Court signed a public note defending the fact that Brazil had not recorded any electoral fraud since 1996,

⁴ Available at: <https://www.tse.jus.br/legislacao/codigo-eleitoral/lei-das-eleicoes>. Accessed in: 10 Aug. 21.

when electronic voting machines became part of the electoral system. Additionally, they added that:

Electronic voting machines are auditable at all process stages, before, during, and after the elections. All steps, from the development of the program to the dissemination of the results, can be monitored by political parties, the Attorney General's Office, the Brazilian Bar Association, the Federal Police, universities, and others who are specially invited. It is also important to note that electronic voting machines do not connect to a network and are not susceptible to remote access, as they are not connected to the internet (Brasil, 2021, p. 1, our translation).

In addition to political authorities, there are studies that prove the absence of electoral fraud. This is the case of Figueiredo, Silva, and Domingues (2021), who, through the statistical method of the Newcomb-Benford Law (NBL), proved that there were no frauds in the 2018 elections. The authors also cited other scientists and studies that confirm the credibility of the results in the last elections.

It is worth noting that electronic voting machines are often considered one of the great examples of innovation, thanks to information technology within public administration (Saldanha; Silva, 2020). The fact that the equipment is subjected to various types of oversight and audit, as well as public security tests (in which any Brazilian citizen aged 18 or older can participate), reinforces the assertion that the current electoral system can be trusted, even though we share the beneficial intention that it can indeed be technically improved (Saldanha, Silva, 2020).

So, why does the electronic system raise suspicions? It was found in 2018 that 91.84% of participants in a survey believed that electoral technology could be violated (Avast, 2018). Just over 96% of respondents believe that "cybercriminals could target political parties or their candidates" (Avast, 2018, our translation). Saldanha and Silva (2020, p. 704, our translation) note that "the difficulty for citizens to understand and inspect the state's use of the electronic voting system maintains suspicion about its fairness, even after more than 20 years since its development began."

According to them, the system is considered complex and opaque, making it understood only by a portion of researchers and technicians, hindering understanding by laypeople (Saldanha; Silva, 2020). This contributes to the problematic relationship between a complex electoral system and the more than 145 million Brazilian voters, who are forced to believe in something they cannot fully comprehend.

It is certain that speculations gain greater proportions when supported by public figures. The issue of printed voting gained the spotlight again when Bolsonaro questioned the electoral system as a whole and suggested such a proposal. Thus, part of the population, considering this mechanism indispensable, began to defend it and echo Bolsonaro's statements, as we will see in the results in the fifth section of this article.

However, for conclusive purposes regarding the need (or lack thereof) for printed voting, it is important to contextualize that it was already experimented with in 2002 in 150 municipalities in the country. The trial aimed to test the implementation of electronic voting starting in 2004, through Law No. 10,408/2002⁵. The results were negative; the experiment demonstrated that printed voting is unnecessary and problematic. According to the TSE's 2002 Election Report, the polling stations presented situations such as:

(a) longer queues; (b) a higher number of null and blank votes; (c) a higher percentage of ballot-box voting – with all the risks associated with this procedure; (d) a higher percentage of faulty urns, in addition to the failures observed only in the printing module (Brasil, 2003, p. 21, our translation).

The 2002 test also showed that 60% of voters in Rio de Janeiro did not verify their electronic vote with the printed representation. Furthermore, it was possible to observe higher rates of electronic urn breakdowns (equipment failures), manual voting (paper ballots), and "sung voting" (a procedure in which paper votes are "sung" for recording in an electronic urn) in the polling stations that used the printed module. These facts contribute to increased human interference during and after elections and, consequently, greater exposure of results to fraud (Brasil, 2003).

In addition to all the arguments mentioned here confirming the impracticality of printed voting, Felitti (2021) adds that a change of this magnitude takes at least 4 years, making such implementation impossible for the 2022 elections. Considering that former President Bolsonaro is aware of these technical aspects and demanded that printed voting be used in the 2022 elections, threatening not to recognize such election results, the question arises: what is the objective behind the request for printed voting? Felitti (2021) argues that this discussion is not technical but ideological. In other words, Bolsonaro does not intend to seek a technically more qualified electoral system but rather to create an ideological movement that gains political advantages by questioning such a system.

⁵ Available at: http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/2002/110408.htm. Accessed in: 23 July 21.

The electoral system under scrutiny: a populist strategy

Bolsonaro questioned the electoral system in 2018 during the presidential elections. This discourse was seen as one of the political strategies aimed at anticipating potential mistakes (Piaia; Alves, 2020). In other words, basically, the goal was to create a framework that would support the hypothesis of electoral fraud if Bolsonaro lost the elections, which did not happen. Such a strategy presented an excellent cost-benefit ratio, as even if wrong, Bolsonaro did not incur "negative costs" by raising suspicions about electronic voting machines (Piaia; Alves, 2020). Although Bolsonaro won in 2018, we can observe that the use of this narrative extended beyond that electoral period and persisted in the following years, perhaps using the same strategy for a potential defeat. However, 2021 was likely the year when the issue of printed voting received the most attention, not only due to the media spotlight but also because it re-entered political debate through Proposed Constitutional Amendment (PEC) 135/19⁶ and Public Consultation of Suggestion No. 9 of 2018 on e-Citizenship⁷.

Felitti (2021), analyzing mentions of "printed voting" and "auditable voting" on Facebook and Instagram, noted a considerable increase in interest during April 2021, the same month that Minister Luís Roberto Barroso requested the establishment of the Covid CPI. Felitti (2021) suggests that the use of this narrative serves as a "smokescreen" for the problems that the Bolsonaro government would face from the established CPI. Proving such an assertion is not the objective of this article, but the analysis provided by the author is an important element for the reasoning we are establishing.

During a live broadcast on YouTube on 29/07/2021, Bolsonaro stated that he did not have evidence of electoral fraud accusations but rather "strong indications" (Bolsonaro, 2021). The live broadcast included a series of reports and testimonies, which, combined with the interpretation/analysis of Bolsonaro's team, would indicate the mentioned indications. However, the TSE responded to the allegations in real time and considered all of them false, claims that had already been debunked on previous occasions.

Political science professor Marcus André Melo suggests that Bolsonaro's discourse is related to the current populist wave, in which "denouncing institutions is something that is part of the common repertoire of these rulers and liberals; (in which) you have an anti-institutional

⁶Available at:

https://www.camara.leg.br/proposicoesWeb/prop_mostrarintegra;jsessionid=node0h828ceknd8hq1pwedk51eij4m13042212.node0?codteor=1807035&filename=PEC+135/2019. Accessed in: 03 Aug. 21.

⁷ Available at: <https://www12.senado.leg.br/ecidadania/visualizacaomateria?id=132598>. Accessed in: 03 Aug. 21.

discourse, even while benefiting from them" (Café da manhã, 2021). Thus, one of Bolsonaro's first possible intentions in questioning the electoral system is observed: to attack traditional institutions through populist discourses.

Among Bolsonaro's statements are expressions like "the people want printed voting" and "the people will react if there is no printed voting" (Bolsonaro, 2021). Phrases like these reinforce Bolsonaro's categorization as a populist, a theory that, in its formulation, involves speaking on behalf of the "people" and against ruling elites (Finchelstein, 2018). Political scientist Finchelstein comments on characteristics that underpin the essence of populism:

[...] A political theology founded by a charismatic and messianic leader of the people; [...] A radical nationalism. The idea is that the leader is the embodiment of the people. The identification of the movement and its leaders with the people as a whole. [...] The homogenizing idea that the people are a single entity and that once populism becomes a regime, this people equates to its electoral majorities (Finchelstein, 2018, p. 120, our translation⁸).

In line with Professor Marcus André Melo's statements, Finchelstein (2018) reinforces that the populist leader often dismisses political dialogue under the justification of a representation crisis and attacks democratic institutions. Examples of this behavior were Bolsonaro's constant attacks on the Supreme Federal Court and the Superior Electoral Court and its ministers, alleging that the institutions wanted to determine who would be the next elected person, suggesting, even that such bodies had a bias toward electing Lula, and that they intended to bring corruption back to Brazil (Bolsonaro, 2021).

This rejection of traditional representative channels in Bolsonaro's populist attitudes (Gentile, 2020), may constitute one of the former president's main strategies behind the controversy of printed voting: internally criticizing democracy. "Historically, populists have considered that, by criticizing the status quo, they radicalize democracy by returning power to the people" (Finchelstein, 2018, p. 149, our translation⁹). Reflecting on the populist ingredient in which the leader embodies popular sovereignty, we can highlight Bolsonaro's efforts to concentrate all political power on himself.

⁸ *Una teología política fundada por un líder del pueblo mesiánico y carismático. [...] Un nacionalismo radical. La idea de que el líder es la personificación del pueblo. La identificación del movimiento y los líderes con el pueblo como un todo. [...] La idea homogeneizadora de que el pueblo es una entidad única y que, una vez el populismo convertido en régimen, este pueblo equivale a sus mayorías electorales.*

⁹ *Históricamente, los populistas han considerado que criticando el statu quo radicalizaban la democracia restituyéndole el poder del pueblo.*

In attempting to answer the difficult question, "How do democracies die?" Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) emphasize the need to pay attention to those leaders who "seek to undermine the legitimacy of elections, for example, by refusing to accept credible electoral outcomes" (Levitsky; Ziblatt, 2018, p. 35, our translation). The authors report that populist demagogues often ignore democratic rules of the game and deny opponents' legitimacy, which not only sponsors the decline of democracy but also paves the way for authoritarian and dictatorial systems. To compare Levitsky and Ziblatt's statements, we can recall Bolsonaro's assertions that if printed voting were not used in the 2022 elections, they could not be considered legitimate, or even occur.

The actions of the then-president, Bolsonaro, sought to reinforce an ideological rivalry present in populism: "us, citizens of good" versus "them, citizens of evil" (Gentile, 2020). That's why the populist encourages social and political polarization, to create a hostile and disturbing environment, which will allow him to impose the so-called "will of the people," which is considered greater and truer than any other. "Populism, in short, is an authoritarian form of democracy" (Finchelstein, 2018, p. 122, our translation).

Weber (2011) brought forth a significant reflection on charismatic domination as one of the primary forms of power. This legitimacy is based on the veneration of a person, believing them to be a hero, a saint, or a model to be followed. Such charismatic domination and veneration can be easily identified and proven through the frequent use of the term "myth," directed towards the figure of Bolsonaro and used by his electoral base. Charisma is an essential element in the realization of a populist demagogue like Jair Bolsonaro (Avritzer, 2020).

Bolsonaro's authentic communication, coupled with his ability to effectively utilize social media, favored the rise of right-wing populism in Brazil (Avritzer, 2020). The scenario became "opportune," therefore, for a democratic crisis, in which democracy does not depend on traditional institutions but solely on the relationship between the leader and the people. Therefore, those who do not fit into Bolsonaro's definition of "the people" are left with accepting the legitimate sovereign power. These latter groups represent, ultimately, according to Avritzer (2020, p. 152, our translation), "an elite that, in general, is seen as corrupt and needs to be combated."

There is no doubt that Bolsonaro employs populist strategies to advance his political goals. To substantiate this assertion, we can cite the 2019 research by *Team Populism*¹⁰, which

¹⁰ Available at: <https://populism.byu.edu/Pages/Data>. Accessed in: 25 July 21.

positioned Jair Bolsonaro as the first populist president of Brazil since Collor's presidency. Therefore, it is worth reflecting: what would be the advantages for Bolsonaro in employing populist strategies and tactics such as the discussion of printed voting? Avritzer (2020, p. 152, our translation) summarizes a possible answer when stating that "one of the central elements of Bolsonarism's mode of operation is to degrade institutions with the aim of concentrating political legitimacy in the figure of the leader."

Felitti (2021), while discussing Bolsonaro's statements regarding printed voting, ventures to hypothesize that the arguments used by the former president sought to create an ideological framework for a possible coup d'état, with the support of the military base, which would occur if Bolsonaro did not win the 2022 elections. Regardless of the validity of such a hypothesis, we must recall the political-scientific context that affirms how dangerous populist actions can be:

Populism is the most devastating corruption of democracy, as it radically invalidates representative institutions (especially elections and party pluralism) and transforms negative power of judgment or opinion, which leaders who are politically elected come to control and monitor, rejecting their electoral legitimacy in the name of a deeper unity between leaders and people; opposes ideological legitimacy to that of the constitution and procedures (Finchelstein, 2018, p. 154, our translation).

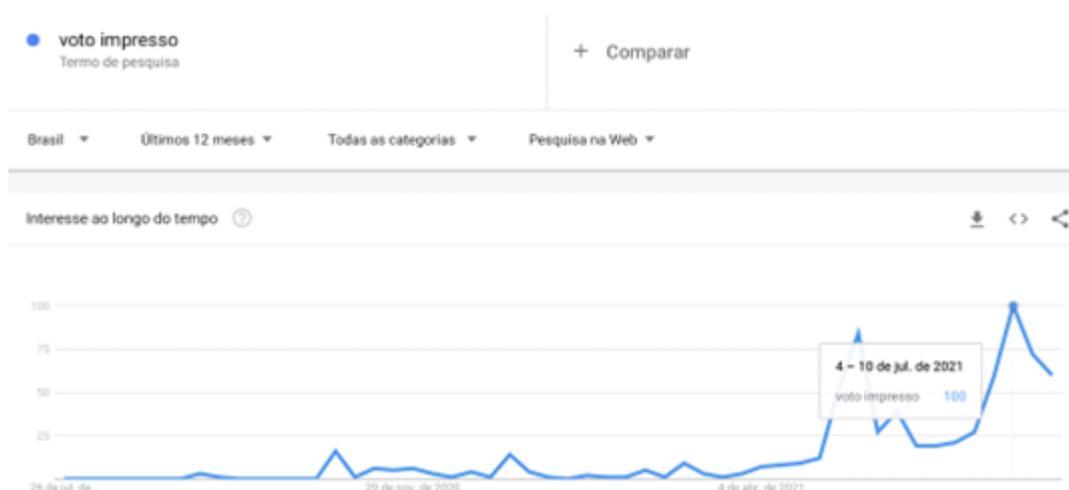
After reflecting on the need for printed voting and the implicit Bolsonarist intentions in this dialogue, we will dedicate the next sections to understanding how the discussions on the topic unfolded on Twitter. This social network was chosen because many studies indicate a considerable increase in the adoption of the platform by political figures to promote their ideals, disseminate decisions, and promote themselves (Marques *et al.*, 2019). In addition to the strong political context, Twitter has proven to be a "chaotic" environment, especially considering the high number of posts and the speed at which they are made (Marques *et al.*, 2019), factors necessary for capturing the characteristics that have been guiding the debate on printed voting.

Methodology

In order to understand some of the configurations of positions on printed voting on Twitter, the methodology applied here follows the following chronological order: (1) definition of the temporal scope; (2) collection of tweets and their respective users; (3) definition of the sample; and (4) techniques of statistics and Content Analysis (Krippendorf, 2004). The methodology employed attempts to follow some of the strategies proposed by Joathan and Alves (2020).

To define the temporal scope of the tweets, we used *Google Trends*¹¹ to verify which weeks showed a significant increase in searches for the term "printed voting" within the Google search engine. The data indicated "a peak" in searches between June 27th and July 17th (Image I). Thus, the 21 days representing the studied period were defined.

Image I - Print Screen of the Google Trends tool for the term "printed voting"



Source: *Google Trends*, consulted on 07/26/2021.

The tweets were collected using an R script utilizing the *academictwitteR* package available for the R programming language (Barrie, Ho, 2021). The *academictwitteR* integrates with the Twitter API and allows data to be collected for academic and scientific purposes.

¹¹ Available at: <https://trends.google.com.br/trends/explore?q=voto%20impresso&geo=BR>. Accessed in: 26 July 21.

In the initial collection, all data between 06/27/21 and 07/17/21 (n=3412) containing the expression "printed voting" were stored. Among the tweets, replies, retweets, and quotes¹², were also included, which we later decided to exclude from the corpus, as understanding them would require a deep understanding of each conversation, which is not our objective in this article. Therefore, the population to be studied was defined by retaining only the original tweets (n=1238). A sample of 21% was randomly chosen to represent the tweets that underwent Content Analysis (CA). Thus, the amount of data described here and that received the proper focus of this article can be summarized as shown in Table I below.

Table I - Overview of the quantity of data analyzed

Population	Sample Size	Sample Percentage	Confidence Level	Margin of Error
1238	260	21%	95%	5%

Source: Author's own.

*Google Sheets*¹³ was used to measure which hashtags, public figures, and expressions related to the political environment appeared most frequently in the selected population, through data spreadsheet manipulation. In this way, the aim was to understand the context behind the published messages.

To understand the configuration of positions regarding printed voting on Twitter during the mentioned period, we aim to mainly answer two questions: (1) what are the users' positions on printed voting? And (2) what is their main intention in expressing themselves about printed voting? With this in mind, the following coding was established for the analyzed sample:

¹² The difference between these features can be better understood at: <https://help.twitter.com/en/resources/glossary>. Accessed in: 27 July 21.

¹³ Available at: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/>. Accessed in: 27 July 21.

Table II - Coding for "What is the users' stance on printed voting?"

Stance	Description	Example
In favor	Those who expressed support for the proposal of printed voting.	"We are not afraid. But we need auditable printed voting with public counting because these voting machines are all fraudulent. You can send anyone, @jairbolsonaro wins in the 1st round #Votoimpressoauditavelcomcontagempublica ¹⁴ ".
Against	Those who disagreed with the proposal of printed voting.	"Bolsonaro was elected with electronic voting machines. Now, in the desperation of defeat, he threatens the 2022 elections by imposing printed voting. The electoral system is only flawed when the risk of defeat is his, right? We will fight with all our might to prevent this major setback!".
Undecided/Absent	Those who did not clearly state their stance or did not intend to express it.	"If the printed voting project goes to the plenary (I have my doubts), we need to surround the parliament to exert pressure. Not with a thousand people, but with a million!".

Source: Own elaboration.

Table III - Coding for "What is their main intention when expressing themselves about printed voting?"

Main Intention	Description	Example
Expression of stance and promotion of ideals	When the aim is to express one's opinion about printed voting and/or political stance.	"Elections only with PRINTED and auditable VOTE BR#QueremosVotoImpresso ¹⁵ ".
Dissemination of information/data	Those who shared information/data to defend or criticize printed voting.	"Step by step of the reality of printed voting... #euqueromeuvotoimpresso ¹⁶ in Vila Velha, Brazil https://t.co/2w8rRQ98FD ".
Journalistic coverage/Media agenda	Tweets that are primarily intended to promote content with journalistic content.	"⊖ Session of the Committee of the PEC for auditable printed voting is canceled. * Terra Brasil News https://t.co/ggMivRiIzi ".
Offense/Threat to user or user group	Those who exhibited linguistic impoliteness in their comments, attacking a political figure and/or political group.	"Printed voting and Bolsonaroism are shit #VotoImpressoAuditavelJa ¹⁷ ".
Other/Undefined	Comments that did not fit into the above categories or did not clearly state their main intention.	"Are you in Favor of Auditable Printed Voting regardless of your answer comment rtt".

Source: Own elaboration.

¹⁴ #Auditableprintedvotingwithpubliccounting.

¹⁵ #WeWantPrintedVote.

¹⁶ #iwantmyprintedvote.

¹⁷ #AuditablePrintedVoteNow.

It becomes important here to specify some points that were taken into consideration in the analyses. One of them concerns the media (images or videos) that were part of the published content. Each of them was observed and considered as an important variable during the categorizations. Similarly, links lead to an external site, but in this case, only the headline (content visible in the tweet) was a factor stimulating the analyses. In addition to these, hashtags also contributed to the proper understanding.

To verify the reliability of the research applied here, Krippendorff's alpha metric (2004) was used, which is indicated in cases of AC with only one coder (Sampaio, Lycarião, 2018). Through the ReCal tool¹⁸, it was possible to perform the test and confirm good indices in the Krippendorff's alpha (Image II), which, when above 0.9, indicates that the analysis can be considered reliable (Sampaio; Lycarião, 2018).

Image II - Screenshot of the reliability test result in the ReCal tool

	Percent Agreement	Scott's Pi	Cohen's Kappa	Krippendorff's Alpha (nominal)	N Agreements	N Disagreements	N Cases	N Decisions
Variable 1 (cols 1 & 2)	97.7%	0.963	0.963	0.963	254	6	260	520
Variable 2 (cols 3 & 4)	94.6%	0.911	0.911	0.911	246	14	260	520

Source: Own elaboration.

Results and Discussions

Through the collected data, it was possible to verify that within the temporal scope, the number of tweets adhered to the media agenda, especially in response to the moments that had the most impact and garnered the attention of politically engaged Brazilians on the subject (Graph I). The day with the most tweets was 07/16/2021 (n=126), the same date on which the Chamber of Deputies decided to postpone the vote on PEC 135/19 until after the parliamentary recess¹⁹. The second day that presented more tweets with the expression "printed voting" was 07/05/2021 (n=96), when Bolsonaro said that Minister Luís Roberto Barroso, then President of the Superior Electoral Court, would have to "come up with a way to make the vote counting

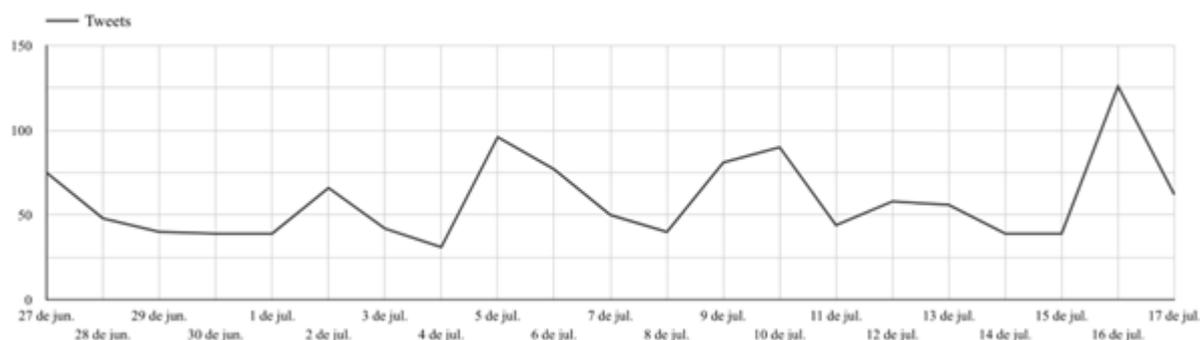
¹⁸ Available at: <http://dfreelon.org/utis/recalfront/>. Accessed in: 31 July 21.

¹⁹ More information at: <https://www.camara.leg.br/noticias/786843-votacao-sobre-o-voto-impresso-fica-para-depois-do-recesso-parlamentar>. Accessed in: 30 July 21.

transparent. Otherwise, he [Barroso] will have problems,"²⁰ in a threatening tone defending the use of printed voting.

Bolsonaro's stance was a response to the thematic session in the Plenary, which took place on the same day, in which Minister Barroso warned about the risks of fraud and judicialization if printed voting were adopted in the 2022 elections²¹. The third day with the highest number of tweets was 07/10/2021 (n=90), which reverberated discussions from the previous day, when Bolsonaro stated that, without printed and auditable voting, Brazil ran the risk of not having elections in 2022. This statement influenced some politicians to take a stand on the former president's remarks, including Senator and President of the Senate Rodrigo Pacheco (Democrats) and Deputy and President of the Chamber of Deputies Arthur Lira (Progressives)²².

Graph I - Tweets with the expression "printed voting" between 06/27/21 and 07/17/21



Source: Own elaboration.

To understand the contextualization of the stances in the tweets, we analyzed the main hashtags (Graph II), the most mentioned politicians (Graph III), and the most used politically referenced terms (Graph IV).

In the context of hashtags (23% of tweets used this feature), despite the wide variety of hashtags (n=125) used in the studied period, some points are noticeable:

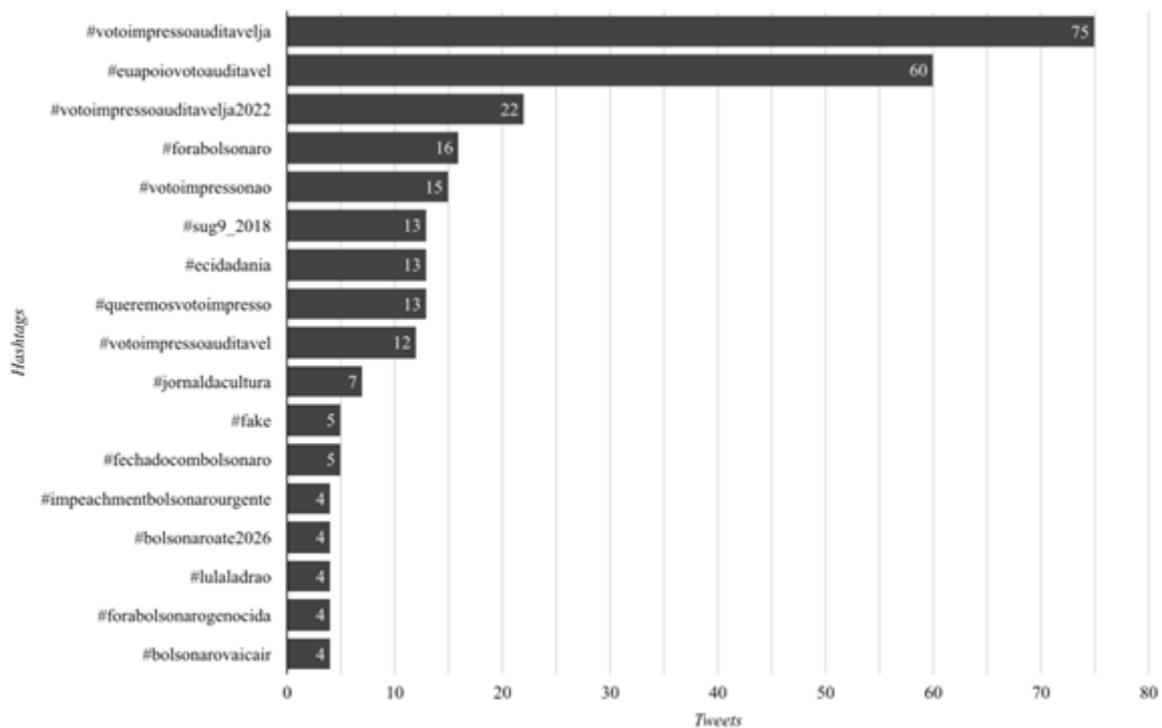
²⁰ More information at: <https://congressoemfoco.uol.com.br/legislativo/bolsonaro-diz-que-sem-voto-impresso-barroso-tera-problemas/>. Accessed in: 30 July 21.

²¹ More information at: <https://www12.senado.leg.br/noticias/materias/2021/07/05/voto-impresso-tse-aponta-risco-de-fraude-senadores-falam-em-inseguranca>. Accessed in: 30 July 21.

²² More information at: <https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/politica/2021/07/10/legislativo-e-ministros-do-stf-reagem-a-fala-de-bolsonaro-sobre-eleicao-de-2022>. Accessed in: 30 July 21.

- Greater use of hashtags demonstrating support for the implementation of printed voting, such as the top three most used: #votoimpressoauditavelja, #euapoiovotoauditavel and #votoimpressoauditavelja2022²³;
- Notable frequency of hashtags showing the relevance of the Public Consultation of Suggestion No. 9 of 2018 on the e-Citizenship portal to the discussion about printed voting on Twitter, materialized through #sug9_2018 and #ecidadania. This assertion is in line with the data presenting the most shared external websites (Graph VI), where the Senate website appears in the first place, in addition to the term "senate" (n=53), which appears several times in the studied population (Graph IV);
- The clear defense of those who did not identify with the Bolsonaro proposal for printed voting and used the moment not only to express disagreement with the proposal but also to oppose the government, for example, through the use of hashtags #forabolsonaro and #votoimpressonao²⁴.

Graph II - Most used hashtags in tweets



Source: Own elaboration.

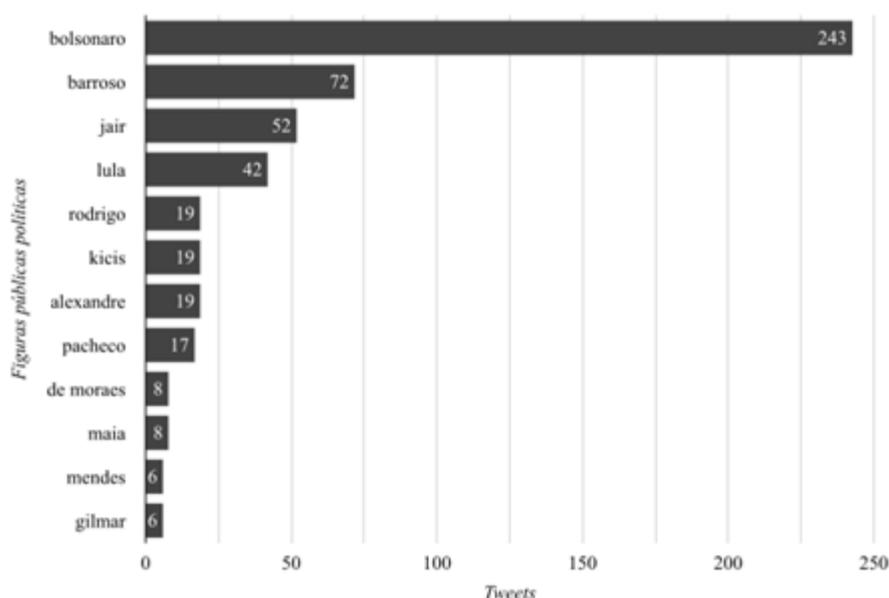
²³ #auditableprintedvoterealready, #isupportauditablerevote, and #auditableprintedvoterealready2022.

²⁴ #outbolsonaro and #noprintedvote.

Obviously, Jair Bolsonaro is the most mentioned person in the analyzed tweets, as we can see from the mentions "Bolsonaro" and "Jair" (Graph III). At times, the former president's surname also referenced his children, who endorsed their father's position. Minister Barroso, former president of the TSE, gained prominence in the dialogue due to his responsibility in the debate and mainly because of his positions contrary to Bolsonaro's. Barroso appeared mainly in tweets where the Bolsonaro electoral base criticized his statements or attacked the morality of the former president of the TSE. This highlights the influence of Bolsonaro's populist actions on those who share the same ideological stance: the attack on democratic institutions comes from the entire Bolsonaro base. It is worth mentioning that Barroso also appeared in tweets with journalistic content, aiming to update the progress of the discussion on printed voting in the political scenario.

Lula was mainly mentioned in tweets that raised the conspiratorial hypothesis that the current electoral system, considered fraudulent by Bolsonaro supporters, would favor the return of Lula and even corruption. The conspiratorial tone is an element of populist strategies (Finchelstein, 2018).

While federal deputy Bia Kicis (Social Liberal Party) represented a strong ally to those who advocated for printed voting, as she was responsible for PEC 135/19, Rodrigo Pacheco, Alexandre de Moraes (minister of the Supreme Federal Court, and the Superior Electoral Court), and Gilmar Mendes (minister of the Supreme Federal Court) are figures that appeared among the citations for opposing the proposal and in response to Bolsonaro's threats.

Graph III - Politicians with the most frequent citations

Source: Own elaboration.

Analyzing the most used terms in the positions on printed voting on Twitter (Graph IV), one of the most prominent terms is "*auditável*²⁵," which relates to those who supported the proposal, believing it is the (perhaps only) mechanism that would guarantee a reliable audit of electoral results.

Another word that appeared frequently is "people" (n=94). This corroborates the idea that Bolsonaro's populist discourse has been effective, to the point where his electoral base refers to itself as the "sovereign people" and demands the implementation of the proposal to the electoral system. Furthermore, we observed the term "fraud" (n=85), which relates to "fraud," "fraudulent," and similar terms, mainly present in the messages of those who supported printed voting, discrediting the current electoral system and echoing the negative adjective commonly used by Bolsonaro, as well as shaping a conspiratorial scenario.

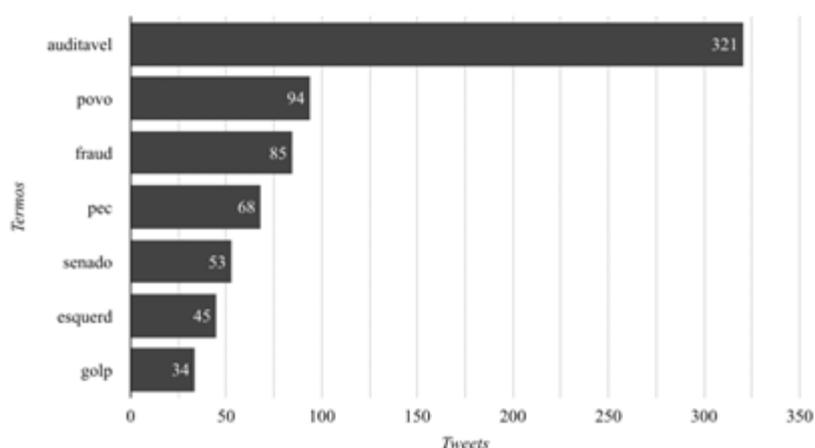
The terms "PEC" and "Senate" strengthen the argument already raised here that part of the debate is based on PEC 135/19 and the Public Consultation provided by the Senate through e-Cidadania. The term "left," related to "left," "leftist," and "lefties," shows its usage evenly divided, sometimes showing the unity of this political group, sometimes under attack from those

²⁵ That can be audited; to be audited.

who are ideologically opposed, which attests to another populist ingredient regarding the relationship between "us" and "them."

Meanwhile, the term "coup," from "coup" and "coupist," appeared predominantly in those tweets that opposed printed voting and assimilated that Brazil was at risk of a possible coup d'état to be executed by Bolsonaro if the electoral system or the election results were not in line with what Bolsonaro advocated. This last observation demonstrates homogeneity between what some users believed and the hypothesis raised by Felitti (2021), which mentions the possibility of a coup orchestrated by Bolsonaro.

Graph IV - Most frequent political terms



Source: Own elaboration.

To understand the users' stance regarding the need for printed voting during the studied period, we subjected the sample (n=260) to the AC methodology described in the previous section. It was possible to verify that the majority (45.8%) favored the alteration of the current electoral system, explicitly arguing that the current resources could be susceptible to fraud and do not provide sufficient auditable mechanisms to ensure credibility in election results. Thus, in the discussion about printed voting on Twitter during the chosen time frame, Bolsonaro's electoral base was the most active. The group opposed to the Bolsonaro proposal is second in the discussion, advocating for the current legislation that guides elections (34.6%). Lastly, a considerable percentage (19.6%) of users did not clearly express their opinion on what they support.

A large portion of the participants in the discussion about printed voting had as their main intention (Graph V) to express their stance and promote what they believed (59.2%). The dissemination of information about the progress of bureaucratic processes involving printed voting, as well as news reporting the thoughts of political figures, appeared in second place (13.8%). This behavior is much more prevalent within the group classified as Indefinite/Absent, representing 45.1% of the activity of this group. Media outlets and journalist profiles largely characterize these data.

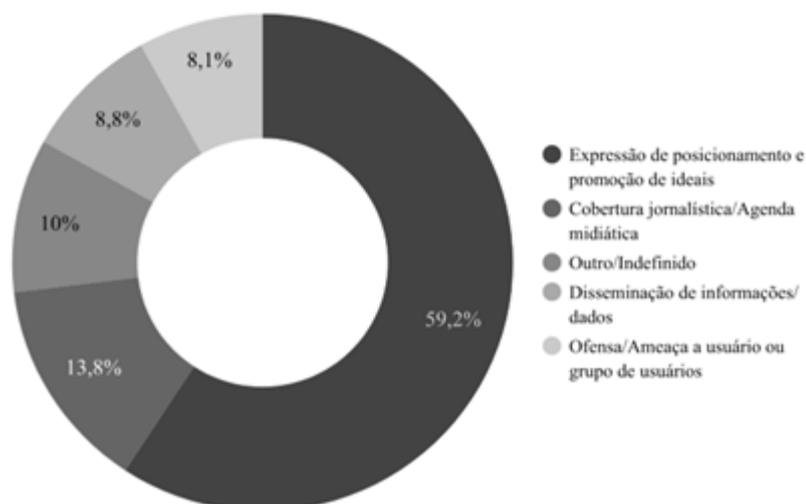
Tweets that did not have their intention clearly defined or classified within the proposed codes form the third position (10%), which unfortunately does not contribute to relevant interpretations. It is worth noting, however, that those with stances classified as "against" and "indefinite/absent" together account for 96.2% of these tweets, with 50% and 46.2% respectively.

The dissemination of information and data represented 8.8% of users' intentions, with it being possible to observe that the most active group in this category (73.9%) was those who advocated for printed voting. The most shared content relates to an explanatory video on how printed voting would work in practice, initially posted by President Bolsonaro²⁶ on his personal profile.

Lastly, those whose main objective was to attack or offend a user or group of users represented the smallest portion of this sample (8.1%). The use of impolite language is shared almost equally among different ideological stances. Among those who preferred a "heated" discussion, 52.4% are in favor of printed voting, and 42.9% are against it.

²⁶ Original tweet: <https://twitter.com/jairbolsonaro/status/1410197383397400581?s=20>. Accessed in: 08/02/21.

Graph V – Main intention when expressing oneself about "printed voting"²⁷



Source: Own authorship.

It was also verified which external links appeared most frequently within the sample. In this case, “senado.leg.br”²⁸ (16,4%) and “secure.avaaz.org”²⁹ (11%) and "secure.avaaz.org" (11%) relate to users who were concerned with disseminating voting tools to citizens to express their opinion on the paper ballot. Those who mentioned "secure.avaaz.org" propagated a campaign against paper ballots, in the form of an online petition. Both mechanisms indicated the relevance of using technology and the Internet in democratic deliberations by allowing civil participation in legislative decisions (Marques, Miola, 2007).

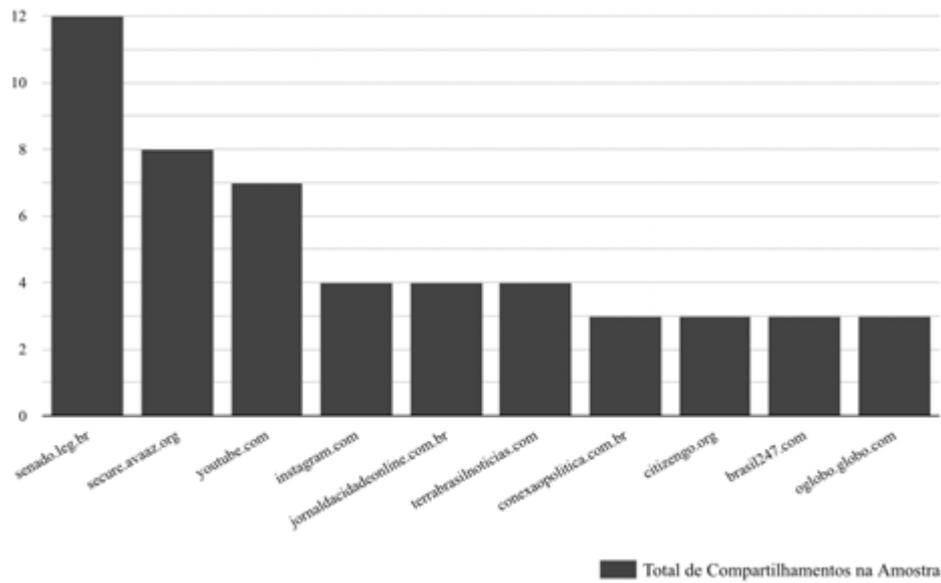
In Graph VI, the top 10 sites that appeared in the sample are listed out of a total of 31 sites. Of the 260 analyzed tweets, 28% included an external link. Among the shared sites, it is possible to find both far-right media outlets, such as “jornaldacidadeonline.com.br”, and left-wing ones, such as “brasil247.com”.

²⁷ Translation of the text from top to bottom: Expression of stance and promotion of ideals; Journalistic coverage/Media agenda; Other/Undefined; Dissemination of information/data; Insult/Threat to user or group of users.

²⁸ Related to the Public Consultation of PEC 135/19.

²⁹ In reference to the link: https://secure.avaaz.org/campaign/po/nao_ao_voto_impreso_loc/?wufVFob. Accessed in: 08 July 21.

Graph VI - Most shared sites in the sample



Source: Author's own.

Final considerations

This article aimed to delve into the theme of printed voting to understand, especially (1) what invalidates the need for printed voting, (2) what Bolsonaro's intentions in defending such a mechanism, and (3) what elements shaped the stances on the subject on Twitter between 27/06/21 and 17/07/21.

The results showed that a supposed adoption of printed voting would create an atmosphere that jeopardizes secret voting and increases the chances of human interference, consequently facilitating fraud. Additionally, electronic voting machines feature technological resources that ensure the security of the electoral process, which is constantly advancing through public testing. However, the complexity surrounding the configuration of electronic voting machines contributes to the population's lack of complete understanding, which eventually leads to questioning the electoral system.

Jair Bolsonaro used this doubt, which has always guided the history of voting in Brazil, as one of the elements to install his populist strategy. Contrary to what many think, such questioning is not technical but ideological. Among Bolsonaro's intentions, the attack on democratic institutions expressed Bolsonaro's project to focus all political power on himself by considering himself the embodiment of the people.

In the stances on printed voting on Twitter between 27/06/21 and 17/07/21, the group in favor of the proposal prevailed (45.8%), compared to 34.6% of people in opposition. Those who supported the implementation of the printed mechanism exhibited characteristics that reinforced the populist atmosphere accompanying Bolsonaro, such as expressions defending the sovereign people, political polarization, and conspiracy theories.

As we near the conclusion, it is worth highlighting that it is unlikely for an electoral model to please all of Brazil, a country with vast regional and social differences. Disagreement is natural, which means that the electoral system needs and should indeed be debated and improved. However, what is not appropriate is to bring forth a solution that has already been buried. Progress, especially with existing resources, carves a more democratic path.

We hope to have presented a more systemic view on the debate of printed voting, despite the limitations this study presents, such as: (1) data collection exclusively focused on the expression "printed voting," which did not consider others such as "auditable voting," which could provide a broader and more rigorous view of the discussion; (2) focusing on tweet content without addressing/analyzing its possible responses (replies), which would facilitate the visualization of other conversation configurations; (3) the narrow temporal focus, which, if expanded to include other moments when printed voting surfaced, would provide a historical view of the topic; and other limitations that may not have been mentioned.

Limitations like these serve as starting points for future studies, which may aim to answer other questions not observed in this article. In addition to implicit suggestions, it is worth recommending that forthcoming research may explore: (1) the role of the press surrounding the proposal of printed voting; or even (2) other populist behaviors of Bolsonaro and their effects on the public sphere and democracy. To ensure the replicability of this study, the data used here are publicly available virtually³⁰.

³⁰ Available at: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1YprErGq8S-hkEqvM5vw1hDMxnnK_f-Pt?usp=share_link. Accessed in: 02 Mar. 23.

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