

Municipal Elections 2024 | Brazil



AI in the 2024 Brazilian elections

a partnership



Generative AI and the first round of the 2024 elections



In October 2024, more than five thousand Brazilian cities held elections. This year, for the first time, the election process happened in a context of the popularized presence of Artificial Intelligence (AI). This novelty raised concerns, especially regarding the potential impact on disinformation. For the first time, the Brazilian Superior Electoral Court (TSE) created specific rules to limit the use of AI tools by candidates and political campaigns.

To understand the use and impacts of this technology in this year's electoral campaign, the AI Observatory in Elections mapped cases of AI usage by campaigns and citizens. We conducted monitoring and active searches on digital platforms, press outlets, and fact-checking agencies to collect and document cases. This report presents data collected between August 16 and October 31, 2024.

So far, the anticipated massive use of AI in campaigns did not happen. We identified isolated cases, most of which had little repercussion. Moreover, it became clear that AI is being used by both official campaigns, as well as — sometimes more intensely — by voters, across various media formats (images, videos, and audio). Therefore, regulatory measures or public policies on this issue need to account for different audiences. The difficulties in identifying the use of AI also emerged as a problem especially in the case of audio messages circulating on messaging apps. Regarding AI platforms, we also identified that both Google and Meta's AI platforms provided wrong information in some cases.

Among the identified uses, the following stood out: a) The broad application of AI technology to produce jingles or assist in content production for low-budget campaigns; b) The creation of deepfakes by the public, which had a relatively limited impact but highlighted the disinformation potential for future elections; c) Cases of deepnudes targeting female candidates in different municipalities.

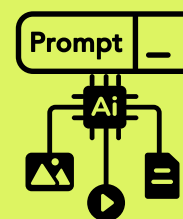


WAS THERE AN IMPACT ON DISINFORMATION?

The most impactful fake news case during the first round of the 2024 Brazilian elections involved image manipulation that did not rely heavily on artificial intelligence. Overall, there was no widespread use of AI to create disinformation, and most of the fake news that circulated did not involve this technology.

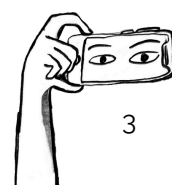
However, this does not necessarily mean that AI was not used and indicates a clear need to think of AI as a technology that can be combined with others, not only for creating images and content but also throughout various stages of information production and circulation. Additionally, the deepnude cases targeting female candidates demonstrate how this technology can exacerbate gender-based violence that women already face in political spaces.

For future elections, it is necessary to consider that the use of AI technologies will increasingly integrate people's daily lives, as well as in their production and consumption of information.



HOW IS THE JUDICIARY HANDLING THESE CASES?

This year, due to the impacts of technology, the Electoral Court innovated in [creating rules for the use of artificial intelligence in elections](#), which listed prohibitions on deepfakes, the need for labeling in AI content, and restrictions on the use of avatars and chatbots. However, although the rules were created by the Superior Electoral Court, they were applied by the Regional Electoral Courts and first-instance judges, which opened up a range of [different understandings](#).

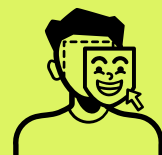


To understand how these analyses were made and what decisions were taken, the Observatory mapped 60 decisions on the Electoral Court's Jurisprudence portal that were made between August 16 and October 7 that contained the term “artificial intelligence”.

The analysis of the cases reveals that the judges' decisions vary according to the quality of the manipulation and the potential for deception. For example, one of the cases mapped by the Observatory refers to content published in Tauá, a city in the Brazilian state of Ceará, that, according to the findings, would have used artificial intelligence. However, the judge claims that the content, which uses insertions of a flying saucer, is clearly playful and comprehensive, as well as artificial.

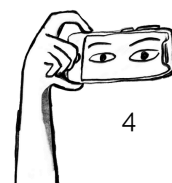


Understanding that a restrictive interpretation should be adopted in relation to the characterization of deepfake and that a high degree of digital manipulation is necessary to justify judicial intervention. For example, in cases where the manipulation is gross and easily detectable, as in the present case, freedom of expression and the use of creative resources in campaigns should prevail, unless there is a clear manipulation of the facts with the aim of deceiving the voter,” says the judge.



Another similar case analyzes content published by a candidate for mayor of São Paulo that showed the opponent in a jail cell. At the time, the judge ruled the request for removal as inadmissible and added that “it is clear that the image is not real and was crudely made.” In Cambará, in the Brazilian state of Paraná, another judge denied the request to remove the content, considering it to be “a ‘crude’ manipulation, reminiscent of satire”.

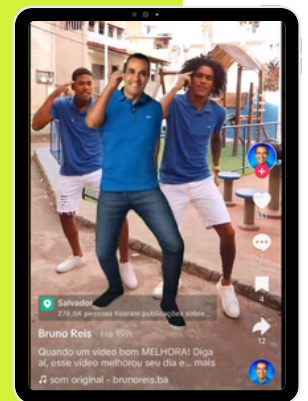
However, other decisions were confirmed in which the content was removed from the platforms and from the mandatory television and radio electoral programs, such as in Teresina, in the Brazilian state of Piauí, in which judge José Maria de Araújo decided to suspend the electoral program that did not indicate that the music was produced by artificial intelligence, as determined by the TSE resolution.



CURIOUS CASE

Before the elections, deepfakes were a source of great concern. Much of the debate about the dangers of artificial intelligence was - and still is - about this type of falsification. That led the TSE to decide to ban the use of deepfakes in the 2024 electoral campaigns. We can say that there were indeed harmful uses of this format, but with reduced dissemination and impact. However, there were also uses that, despite violating the TSE rule, were quite curious

A video with a deepfake posted by the candidate for mayor of Salvador, in the Brazilian state of Bahia, Bruno Reis, in which he himself dances to a song, caught our attention. It is a kind of parody of himself, with a clearly manipulated image, in which the candidate only dances. This type of content certainly challenges the idea that deepfakes are necessarily harmful and makes the discussion for the next elections more complex.



TYPES OF AI USE IDENTIFIED IN THE 2024 BRAZILIAN ELECTORAL CYCLE

- 1 *Synthetic videos and images created by candidates*



During the first round, some candidates posted AI-created content on their official profiles

In São Paulo, in the first weeks of the campaign, Pablo Marçal posted a deepfake on X (formerly Twitter) as an electoral campaign without indicating the use of AI.



In Salvador, the reelected mayor, Bruno Reis (União), posted two videos made with the technology on Instagram and TikTok within a week. In both pieces of content, the politician has his face added to the body of a man dancing the campaign jingle.



On Instagram, the posts were accompanied by the label “made with AI,” but on TikTok there was no indication. The candidate from Salvador, Geraldo Júnior (MDB), also posted a synthetic image on Instagram, but indicating the use of the technology.

2 Jingles and narration of videos in city council campaigns

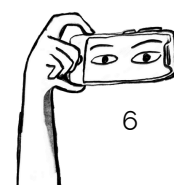


Another widespread use during this first part of the elections were jingles created with Artificial Intelligence. This was the main use of technology in ads promoted by candidates on Meta platforms, as shown by [Aos Fatos](#).

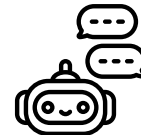


Candidates for city council positions were some of those who benefited most from technology to create campaign songs.

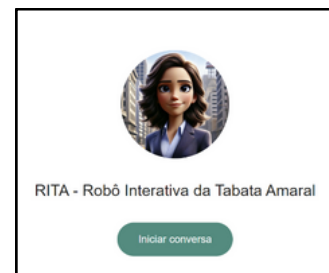
Which often took on a generic format, saying the candidate's name and some proposals in different styles, and covering different musical genres, from rock to forró. In addition to jingles, in the last week before the election, candidates also used AI to create narrations for campaign videos.



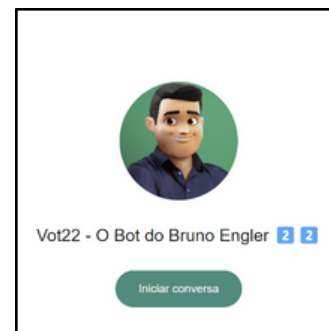
3 Chatbots answer questions



Candidate Tabata Amaral (PSB) created a chatbot to answer voters' questions. Called “Rita”, the feature has been available on WhatsApp since the end of August.



In Belo Horizonte, Bruno Engler (PL) also launched a similar feature with the aim of publicizing his government proposals. The candidate for the São Paulo City Council, Pedro Markun (Rede), developed Lex, an intelligent chatbot that ran for office alongside the programmer.



The TSE's propaganda resolution does not prohibit the creation of chatbots and avatars as a means of mediating communication with voters, as long as it is “explicitly” identified that the feature was created with AI and that it does not simulate the candidate or real person.



4 Deepnudes target female candidates



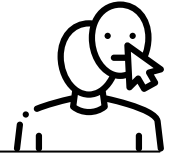
During the first round, at least five cases of deepnudes, fake synthetic images and videos with sexual content, targeted female candidates in cities in the Southeast of the country. In São Paulo, Tabata Amaral has been linked to at least two different cases. In early September, the PSB candidate took legal action after her face was added to images of an adult actress.

Weeks later, Tabata was targeted again along with fellow candidate Marina Helena (Novo). Candidates in Rio de Janeiro (RJ), Taubaté (SP) and Bauru (SP) also filed police reports alleging that they had been targeted by deepnudes posted on social media and adult content websites.



5

Deepfakes were created by voters to disinform



Synthetic content with false narratives, targeting candidates and published by voters, also occurred on social media.

A video created with the help of AI, for example, showed an alleged hug between Tabata Amaral and Pablo Marçal during a televised debate, claiming that the coach had apologized for insults made against the candidate for mayor of São Paulo.



Candidate Datena (PSDB) was also the target of a deepfake video that showed the journalist attacking a colleague.



In addition, deepfake models with manipulated audio and images of presenter William Bonner praising or indicating the candidacy of city councilors circulated on TikTok.

6

Audio deepfakes and the identification problems



One specific episode stood out during the second round of the elections: the candidate for mayor of Fortaleza, André Fernandes (PL), denounced an alleged deepfake involving his name.



It is an audio that is circulating in WhatsApp groups. In the piece, which according to the candidate was generated by AI, a voice that appears to be his says he is afraid of having been overtaken by the opposing candidate.

At the end of the audio, the voice says that by the end of the second round *“we will be pouring money into the hands of pastors and community leaders”*.

In a post on social media, Fernandes called the audio a criminal act and said he had filed a complaint with the Federal Police.

In the verification carried out by the [Comprova project](#), experts reached opposing conclusions. While one of them stated that there was a minimally robust set of evidence, such as irregularities in the rhythm and intonation of the voice, among several other aspects, which indicate that a recording may have been artificially generated, edited or even imitated, another stated that the voice in the audio was the same as Fernandes'. The analyses carried out by websites that detect the use of AI also obtained different results.

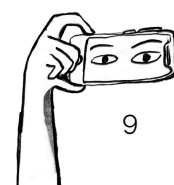
The case, which is still being processed in Brazilian court, shows the difficulty of accurately and quickly verifying the fake nature of audio deepfakes, which can generate confusion about the veracity of content shared on digital platforms and also serve as ammunition for attacks between candidates on the eve of the elections.

7 Automated analysis of candidacies and monitoring of mis and disinformation



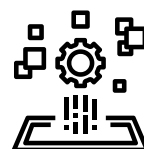
Four positive uses of technology by public and academic actors were identified during the first round.

In Goiás, for example, the state's Regional Electoral Court (TRE-GO) and the Federal University of Goiás (UFG) launched GualA, an application that uses AI to automate the process of monitoring misinformation published on social media about the state's municipal elections.



Another platform created by researchers from the State University of Campinas (Unicamp) in partnership with the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), called Vota AI, uses AI to show the most frequently cited topics in the government programs of candidates for mayor in Brazil.

8 *What about the platforms? Google and Meta's AI platforms provided incorrect information about candidates*



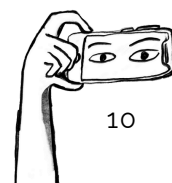
Some incidents were identified regarding generative AI platforms and electoral information. At the end of September, Jornal da Paraíba showed how Google's AI, Gemini, continued to provide information on candidates for mayor of João Pessoa (PB), despite the big tech's promises to restrict political responses through the tool.

Previously, Gemini also provided information on the candidates for mayor of São Paulo: Ricardo Nunes (MDB), Pablo Marçal (PRTB), José Luiz Datena (PSDB) and Marina Helena (Novo). Days after the first round, Gemini continued to provide information about candidates in six of the fifteen state capitals that held a second round.

The [big tech company promised to restrict AI responses](#) about politics during the 2022 Brazilian elections, but has continued to fail to fully implement the promise in the country since the first round.

The functionality responded about candidates in the following cities: Belo Horizonte (MG), Campo Grande (MS), Curitiba (PR), Fortaleza (CE), Palmas (TO) and São Paulo (SP).

In relation to Belo Horizonte, the functionality provided profiles of the two opposing candidates: Bruno Engler and Fuad Noman. Regarding Noman, in addition to the data on his political history and ideological positioning, Gemini also stated that the politician had won the elections in the first round, being reelected for a new term as mayor of the capital of Minas Gerais, which was not true at that time.



Days before the second round, Meta's AI also provided incorrect and outdated information about the elections in São Paulo, as reported by the newspaper Folha. Made available in the country gradually since October 9th, Meta's AI was asked about the candidates Ricardo Nunes and Guilherme Boulos. Regarding Nunes, the tool stated that the politician was a member of the wrong political party and that he served as a federal deputy, being the leader of the government in the National Congress during the presidency of Jair Bolsonaro. Neither statement is true.

In response, Meta stated that "this is a new technology and, as with all generative AI systems, it may not always deliver the results we expect. We share information within the features themselves to help people understand that AI can produce inaccurate or inappropriate results. Since our launch, we have been constantly updating and improving our models and continue to work to make them even better."



THE AI OBSERVATORY IN THE ELECTIONS

The AI Observatory in the Elections is an online repository of use cases of generative Artificial Intelligence in the 2024 Brazilian elections.

The initiative seeks to identify and record, mainly, possible cases of violation of the resolutions of the [Superior Electoral Court \(TSE\)](#) regarding the manipulation of information with generative AI shared during the political campaign on the main digital platforms.



The project is carried out by **Aláfia Lab** and ***desinformante** in partnership with **Data Privacy Brasil** through the AI With Rights project. The observatory also has the support of Confia, the Democracia em Xequê Institute and the University Journalism Observatory (OJU) of the Federal University of Goiás (UFG).

ALÁFIA LAB AND DESINFORMANTE

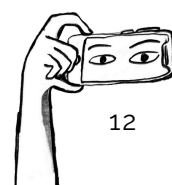


Aláfia Lab is a research laboratory that focuses on areas that intertwine the internet, politics and society. Its projects work to understand not only online dynamics, but how they concretely impact people's lives

Aláfia Lab works in the areas of **(1)** research, producing innovative knowledge about phenomena at the interface between digital politics and everyday life; **(2)** sharing knowledge with civil society; **(3)** advocacy, impacting political decisions through the expanded production of knowledge and applied research; and **(4)** media, producing journalistic coverage on topics related to the phenomenon of disinformation through *desinformante. Aláfia Lab is a digital laboratory for social transformation based in Salvador, Bahia.



Desinformante is one of Aláfia's projects. It is devoted to produce reliable information about disinformation. We analyze the impact of disinformation on society and discuss ways to combat it. Our goal is to produce reliable information about disinformation, in addition to creating spaces for articulation between various social actors engaged in the construction of a democratic digital space



DATA PRIVACY BRASIL



Data Privacy Brasil is an organization that was born from the union between a school and a civil association in favor of promoting a culture of data protection and digital rights in Brazil and around the world.

Founded in 2018, Data Privacy Brasil Ensino emerged as a space to disseminate and innovate knowledge about privacy and data protection in the country. With content adapted to a more practical language, with exercises and case studies, this is a school for all those who are interested and want to delve deeper into the rich theme of privacy, data protection and new technologies.

The Data Privacy Brasil Research Association is a non-profit, non-partisan civil society organization that promotes the protection of personal data and other fundamental rights from a perspective of social justice and power asymmetries.

As of 2023, the two institutions will join forces to form a single organization, maintaining the same principles and activities. With the support of a multidisciplinary team, we provide training, events, certifications, consultancy, multimedia content, public interest research and civic audits to promote rights in a data-driven society marked by asymmetries and injustices. Through education, awareness raising and mobilization of society, we aim for a democratic society where technologies are at the service of people's autonomy and dignity.



TECHNICAL SHEET



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In the press and other sources

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REALIZATION

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