

Groups with far-right ideological profile led the debate about transgender people on Facebook between 2019 and 2023 in Brazil

Analysis by:



- *Among the most active public Facebook groups debating that stood out in debates transgender people and rights, the vast majority are aligned with the far-right and to former president Jair Bolsonaro; only one group politically aligned with the left;*
- *Specific posts about “gender ideology” peaked in 2019, having reduced in quantity over the last few years; however, commentary about transgender people, as well as events in which this population is highlighted generate negative and hostile reactions online;*
- *The transgender agenda and “the left” are commonly related in these publications, marking off the defence of gender identity as something negative, along with themes such as abortion and feminism;*
- *The sentiment of posts found in groups with a far-right political bias is predominantly negative. Predominant themes or discussion points include “gender ideology” and “gender-neutral bathrooms”, with messages that contain disinformation about transgender rights and hate speech.*

The debate on Facebook about the rights, political claims and experiences of transgender people has been permeated by themes we classified into the following categories: “gender ideology”, “religion and gender identity/expression”, “trans visibility and its repercussions”, “support networks”, “gender-neutral bathrooms”, and “non-binary language”. When discussing these topics, participants in public groups

with a predominantly far-right profile on Facebook tend to use words that are classified as negative in connotation¹, with a prevalence of anti-trans posts. This is what the analysis by **Democracy Reporting International** and the **Diversity and Inclusion Program at FGV Direito Rio** shows.

Methodology

This report examines political discourse around transgender issues and rights in Brazil. Using quantitative and qualitative analysis methods, we observed a set of posts sourced from public Facebook groups between January 1st, 2019, and April 30th, 2023. We collected 300,000 posts per month during the analysis period and ranked them according to the total number of interactions, from highest to lowest, regardless of the group in which they were published.

From a database of approximately 16.1 million posts, we selected a subset using a keyword search. For this, we filtered the posts according to a list, created by the authors of this report, with terms and expressions related to the main discussions carried out by and related to transgender people in Brazil. In total, 4,122 publications that met the established criteria were analyzed.

Our main goal was to understand how topics related to trans people were debated in those online communities and, simultaneously, to identify possible associations between the topics addressed and significant events reverberated in the Brazilian press. Furthermore, we identified²: (I) Who leads the debate — which groups dominated the discussion and identified their political profile; (II) What is said — and identification of the most discussed topics and the average of posts and reactions associated with each of them, to understand their online impact; and (III) The tone of the debate— the sentiment attached to the posts, in order to understand whether the topics were debated from a negative, positive or neutral perspective.

In the wake of this analysis, we used topic modeling to identify the main topics discussed; sentiment analysis to determine the emotional polarity of posts; and engagement metrics to identify the groups that had the highest number of posts on the topic, as well as the topics that received the most interactions. Qualitatively, we connected the themes mapped in the quantitative section with some of the key

¹ Whose parameter are words linked to negative feelings, on a scale of positive, negative, and neutral, according to VADER sentiment analysis (Valence Aware Dictionary and Sentiment Reasoner).

² The listed topics correspond to the sections that make up this report, in order of appearance.

events in the political, legal, cultural, and social realms involving the transgender population in Brazil throughout the analysed period³.

I. Who leads the debate: Mapping of the main groups addressing transgender issues and rights on Facebook⁴

The public Facebook groups where the debate involving transgender people was most pronounced were predominantly aligned with the far-right and associated with former President Jair Bolsonaro, as indicated by the majority of the group titles from the outset (Table 1). In the table below, we identify the number of members, the number of posts overall related to trans issues, the political spectrum⁵ and the most discussed topic in each group about transgender people⁶.

Table 1: Public Facebook groups with the highest number of posts that discuss being transgender and the rights of transgender people.

Period: from January 1, 2019, to April 30, 2023

³ We would like to thank *Agência Lupa*, partner of the *Media and Democracy Project*, for contributing to the development of this part of the analysis.

⁴ We would like to thank Renato Contento, a researcher at FGV's School of Communication, Media, and Information, for his contribution to the preparation of this section of the report, as well as for the discussion and review of its entire content.

⁵ By way of analysis, the authors of this study chose to classify the observed groups based on a nomenclature adopted by the site specialized in political communication "[Politize](#)." In this nomenclature, the political spectrums are considered from their respective world views, political beliefs and perspectives regarding the economy and culture. The political preference of each analyzed group was considered according to the mentioned classification, since it was expressed by administrators and/or members of the groups, for example, based on deference towards certain political actors directly associated with one of these spectrums.

⁶ The most discussed topics were mapped from a data filtering that observed as a criterion the identification of specific subjects related to the theme investigated in this research. The nomenclatures adopted to identify each topic will be better explored in the section "What is said: Main topics of posts thematizing transgenderism and rights of transgender people on Facebook" of this report.

Facebook Groups	Members	Number of posts identified	Political alignment	Most discussed topic
edita pra mim	1,4 million	143.00	Not aligned / right-wing	Gender ideology
LGBT Brasil (perfil 2)	50,7 thousand	87.00	Left-wing	Trans visibility and its repercussions
Grupo do SOLDADO DE AÇO RESISTÊNCIA PATRIÓTICA	235,2 thousand	60.00	Far-right	Anti-trans political mobilisation
GRUPO OLAVO DE CARVALHO	123,2 thousand	49.00	Far-right	Gender ideology
BOLSONARO O MELHOR PRESIDENTE	190 thousand	39.00	Far-right	Anti-trans political mobilisation
Aliança pelo Brasil 22	211,4 thousand	37.00	Far-right	Gender ideology
DIREITA RACIONAL	36,7 thousand	35.00	Far-right	Gender ideology
FORÇABRASIL	291,3 thousand	34.00	Far-right	Anti-trans political mobilisation
MULHERES COM BOLSONARO ALIANÇA PELO BRASIL [OFICIAL]	81,1 thousand	29.00	Far-right	Anti-trans political mobilisation
BOLSONARO 2022	139,3 thousand	27.00	Far-right	Anti-trans political mobilisation
Bolsonaro Opressor 2022	50,8 thousand	27.00	Far-right	Anti-trans political mobilisation
Aliança pelo Brasil	211,4 thousand	26.00	Far-right	Anti-trans political mobilisation
Libertos por DEUS LPD	37 thousand	25.00	Far-right	Religion and gender identity/expression
Sergio Moro BR	32,4 thousand	25.00	Right-wing	Anti-trans political mobilisation
BR Brasil direita Patriota BR	57,2 thousand	25.00	Far-right	Gender ideology

The table shows information about the public Facebook groups with the highest number of posts on transgender rights, political demands and experiences

Source: Facebook | Produced by: Democracy Reporting International (DRI)

- In many cases, identical messages were identified in multiple groups, which may suggest the presence of bots or users intentionally spreading hate speech and mass disinformation. Most of the messages are marked by attacks, offenses, and falsehoods about LGBTQIA+ people and tend to foster political polarization between the left and the right, suggesting that the content is based on political-party motivations;

- The groups “Grupo do SOLDADO DE AÇO RESISTÊNCIA PATRIÓTICA (Steel Soldier Patriotic Resistance)⁷,” “GRUPO OLAVO DE CARVALHO⁸ (Olavo de Carvalho Group),” “BOLSONARO O MELHOR PRESIDENTE (Bolsonaro, the best president),” “Aliança pelo Brasil 22 (Alliance for Brazil 22)⁹,” “DIREITA RACIONAL (Rational Far-Right),” and “FORÇABRASIL (Strength to Brazil)” are some that contained the highest number of posts discussing transgender people. By virtue of their own names, they tend to reinforce a direct association with the former president, and therefore, their intention to align themselves with a political party. The analysed publications utilize “moral panic”¹⁰ as a way to criminalise and dehumanise the transgender population and, on a broader level, “the left,” as well as Bolsonaro’s other opponents;



Caption: *This leftist trash and thugs have always sucked and will continue to do so!!! Many pedophiles and rapists will take advantage of this gender ideology that to me only aims to degrade the family!*

⁷ Soldier in this context refers to Bolsonaro as he was part of the Brazilian army, many supporters refer to him as “captain” or “soldier”.

⁸ Olavo de Carvalho was a self-proclaimed philosopher, former astrologer, and journalist. He was also known for putting forward some of the key concepts that oriented the far-right’s political action in Brazil, and specially Bolsonaro’s, as they were commonly associated.

⁹ 22 was Bolsonaro’s number during the election. In Brazil, due to the electronic voting system, each candidate has a number so that citizens can vote by typing the number in the electronic voting machine.

¹⁰ Conceptualized by researcher Stanley Cohen in the 1960s, the idea of moral panic characterizes the way in which the media, public opinion and agents of social control react to certain breaches of normative standards. In general, certain minority groups are assigned the status of “dangerous” in relation to societal values and interests, which can lead to the dehumanization, criminalization, or stigmatization of these groups. Cf. MISKOLCI, Richard. Pânicos morais e controle social – reflexões sobre o casamento gay. *Cadernos Pagu* (28), jan.-jun 2007:101-128.

In the school bathroom, a "trans" student according to the gender ideology, enters the girl's bathroom and gets involved in aggression with a girl who felt uncomfortable. Anyway, that's what this leftist disgrace wants: fights and confusion!

Source: Facebook | Preparation: Diversity and Inclusion Program (FGV Direito Rio)

- The “edita pra mim” (*edit for me*) group, which has the stated purpose of collaboratively editing images — something seemingly unrelated to the discussion about transgender people — stood out among the others. It had the highest number of posts about trans people and, in the vast majority of them, had a negative tone. Upon examining the reason for the mismatch between the stated objective of the group (image editing) and this type of content, it was identified that previously it demonstrated alignment with former President Jair Bolsonaro, having previously being named “Equipe do Bolsonaro de Plantão” (Bolsonaro's On-Duty Team), “Mito 22” (Myth 22), and “Direita Brasil” (Right Brazil) between 2018 and 2023. Only in March 2023 did the group change its name to “edita pra mim”.
- The group, whose content needs to be authorised by the administrators before publication, frequently received conservative and transphobic posts throughout the analyzed period, generally against “the left” and the concept of “gender ideology”; In these publications, there was a recurring attempt to criminalise LGBTQIA+ and left-wing people, exemplified by the false association between these individuals and pedophilia practices.
- The persistence of disinformation and hateful content in a group with a high number of followers who, in theory, claims to promote a different type of content, can be seen as a strategy to attract more people to a certain ideological position with political-party purposes. This interpretation is, however, a hypothesis that needs to be further investigated to verify its plausibility;¹¹
- Among the highlighted groups, the only stand out in terms of political alignment was “LGBT Brasil (profile 2)”, targeting an audience engaged in the LGBTQIA+ issues, with a strong “anti-Bolsonaro” content. According to the group's description, its objective is to “promote public policies for the development of the LGBT community.” In addition to opposing Bolsonaro, the

¹¹ In other research, for example, strategies such as the “use of coded language, iterative and context-oriented visual content, and memes” have already been identified as mechanisms to escape moderation of disinformation that targets women. Cf. JANKOWICZ, Nina et al. Malign creativity: how gender, sex, and lies are weaponized against women online. Wilson Center, Jan. 2021. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3GCIJri>. Access on: May 24, 2023.

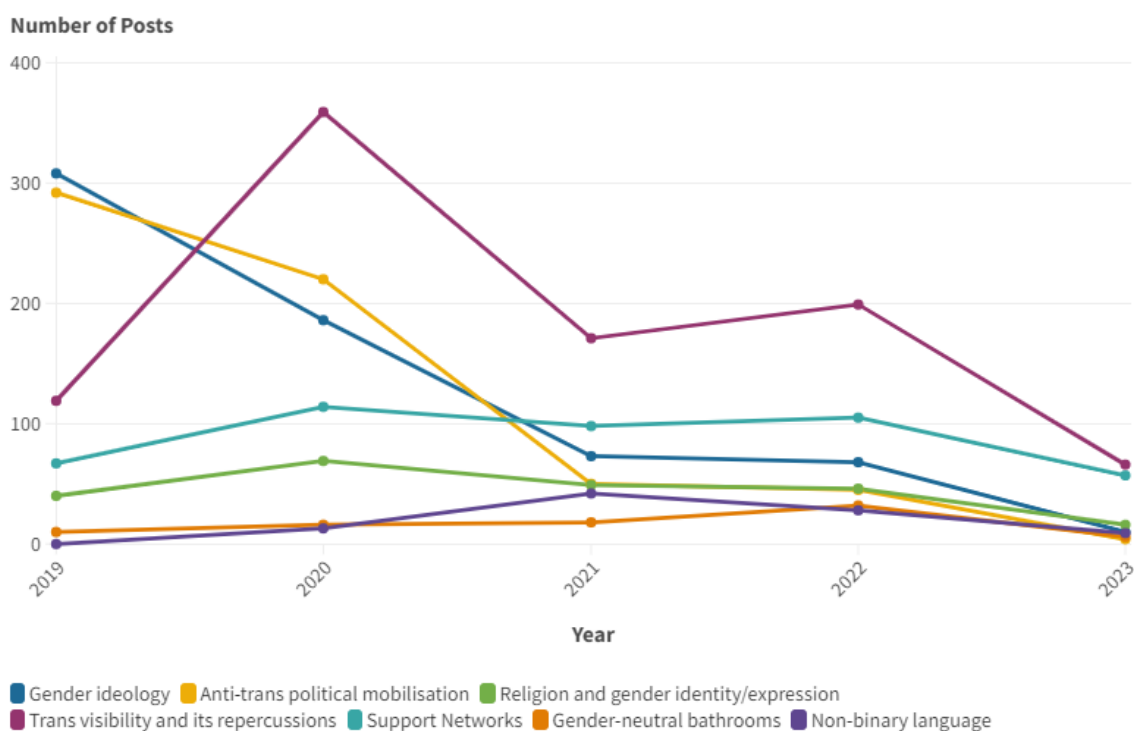
observed posts focused on denouncing episodes of violence against LGBTQIA+ individuals, especially cases resulting in homicides. Furthermore, there were also some posts celebrating achievements of LGBTQIA+ individuals and highlighting aspects of their activism, such as the promotion of events and actions for this purpose.

II. What is being said: Key topics in posts addressing transgender issues and rights on Facebook¹²

The graph below depicts the temporal evolution of key topics concerning transgender people in public Facebook groups. By measuring the number of publications associated with each topic per year, from January 2019 to April 2023, we can compare their developments over time.

Graph 1: Distribution of most discussed topics

Period: from January 1, 2019, to April 30, 2023



The graph shows the distribution of topics during 2019 and 2023, considering the number of posts on each topic in public Facebook groups.

Source: Facebook | Produced by: Democracy Reporting International (DRI)

¹² Topic modeling, used in this section, is a data analysis technique that allows you to identify and extract significant topics from a large set of unstructured data, such as posts on social media. With a pre-trained model (in this case, the [BERTimbau](#)), it is possible to calculate the probability that each word belongs to each topic. Thus, we can understand which posts can be grouped and how they are distributed and related to each other.

While some do not show significant fluctuations (e.g. “support networks”), others are marked by peaks that can be associated with events widely covered by Brazilian media. For example, the peak of “trans visibility and its repercussions” might be associated with the wide coverage of a report by Dr. Dráuzio Varella concerning an incarcerated transgender woman in March 2020. Likewise, the inauguration of former President Jair Bolsonaro in January of the same year might be associated with the rise of “gender ideology” and “anti-trans political mobilization”.

“Gender Ideology” and “Anti-Trans Political Mobilization”

- In quantitative terms, the three most common topics (by number of posts) “trans visibility and its repercussions” (914), “gender ideology” (645) and “anti-trans political mobilization” (611). While “trans visibility” showed irregular fluctuations over the analysed period, the latter two peaked in 2019 and gradually lost strength over time, suggesting that the beginning of the Bolsonaro’s government influenced an increase of anti-trans rhetoric;
- The category describing “gender ideology” clusters posts that criticise the advancement of policies in favor of the LGBTQIA+ population (e.g. education in sexual and gender diversity and non-binary language. The “anti-trans political mobilisation” category explicitly refers to the actions of far-right representatives in Brazil against the same population, with an emphasis on posts mentioning former president Jair Bolsonaro;
- In this sense, the main subjects related to these topics in January 2019 are Bolsonaro's inauguration speech, in which he expressly indicated the goal of “fighting gender ideology”; related posts present him as an honest person who would not threaten minorities; or the statement by former minister Damara Alves reinforcing gender roles, when she said, “boys wear blue” and “girls wear pink”.

4 de janeiro de 2019 · 🌐

Fiquem tranquilos, gente!

Bolsonaro não é ditador, é apenas honesto e por isso assusta.

Ladrão vai continuar ladrão (só que vai ser preso e continuará preso e ao invés de receber salário, terá que trabalhar pra pagar sua "hospedagem").

Travesti vai continuar travesti (só que não vai poder fazer programa em museu de Arte pra crianças). Maconheiro vai continuar maconheiro (só que não vai mais fumar na rua e nas escolas).

5 de janeiro de 2019 · 🌐

Ideologia de gênero, foi isso que Damares disse com a metáfora, não adianta mudar a ordem natural da vida, deixe seu apoio para nossa ministra

<https://republicuetasdebananasbrasil.blogspot.com/.../azu...> #IdeologiadegeneroNAO apoie compartilhando com a hashtag.

Top Post: Stay calm, people! Bolsonaro is not a dictator, he's just honest and that's why he's scary. Thief will continue to thief. Travesti¹³ will continue travesti. Potheads will continue to be potheads.

Bottom Post: Gender ideology, this is what Damares said with the metaphor, there is no point in changing the natural order of life, leave your support for our minister

Source: Facebook | Preparation: Diversity and Inclusion Program (FGV Direito Rio)

- In this set of posts, it is claimed that Bolsonaro and his allies will fight corruption, “cleanse” Brazil of “criminals disguised as politicians” — usually in reference to left-leaning political figures — and end the “gender ideology.” “Gender ideology” is also commonly associated with terms like “feminism” and “abortion”; this association indicates a common (and negative) regard for progressive agendas that also extend to women’s rights.

27 de janeiro de 2019 · 🌐

ESSAS ATRIZES LACRADORAS , NÃO SÃO FEMINISTAS QUE DEFENDEM MULHERES ABUSADAS. SÃO GRUPOS FEMINISTAS PARA MANIFESTAREM CONTRA O GOVERNO DE DIREITA , SÃO COMUNISTAS MILITANTES QUE USAM DO MOVIMENTO FEMINISTA UM TRAMPOLIM PARA DOCTRINAREM O POVO BRASILEIRO , A FAVOR DAS IDEIAS COMUNISTA : IDEOLOGIA DE GÊNERO , ABORTO .

Caption: These actresses are not feminists, they defend abused women. They are feminist groups against the right-wing government, they are militant communists who use the feminist movement as a springboard to indoctrinate the Brazilian people. They are in favor of communist ideas: gender ideology and abortion.

Source: Facebook | Preparation: Diversity and Inclusion Program (FGV Direito Rio)

¹³ We have kept the term in its original Portuguese form because of the political and cultural meaning associated with it, which does not apply to all contexts. Although the term can be used to discriminate against (as it is considered the case of its English usage and in the case in the Facebook post reproduced above), *travesti* is an identity claimed by some social movements and individuals in Latin America and in Brazil, also to emphasize their struggle and resistance against violence faced by transgender people. On this note, see YORK, Sara Wagner; OLIVEIRA, Megg Rayara Gomes; BENEVIDES, Bruna. Manifestações textuais (insubmissas) travesti. Revista Estudos Feministas, v. 28, 2020. doi: 10.1590/1806-9584-2020v28n375614.

Trans visibility and its repercussions

- These posts capture both the discourse around episodes of widespread coverage of transgender people in Brazilian media and trans representation in entertainment media. On the one hand, trans characters in series and films, for example, are commonly celebrated in some of the groups we analysed. On the other hand, trans women and men who occasionally occupy prominent positions in the media are often exposed to negative and/or transphobic comments, which are not always related to the central content of the reported event.
- The first peak, as seen in Graph 1, occurred in the first half of 2020. At that time, a segment aired on the show "Fantástico" featuring Dr. Dráuzio Varella, in which he presented transgender and *travesti* women in Brazilian prisons through personal interviews. What specifically triggered the reactions on Facebook was the embrace that Varella gave Suzy, one of the women who participated as an interlocutor in the report¹⁴;
- The comments about the episode were mostly negative, with mentions of the crime for which Suzy had been convicted — to criticise the doctor's affectionate gesture — and criticism of Globo, the broadcaster that aired the report (e.g. with the use of the hashtag #globolixo, which translates to #globotrash). In a few cases, critical comments about the report also associated it with the “left” or referred to it with a positive and solidarity tone. Furthermore, there was disinformation about the case, in a post that claimed that television presenter Fátima Bernardes would renovate Suzy's prison cell — this post was shared several times and later flagged as false information by independent fact-checkers on Facebook.

¹⁴ Available at:

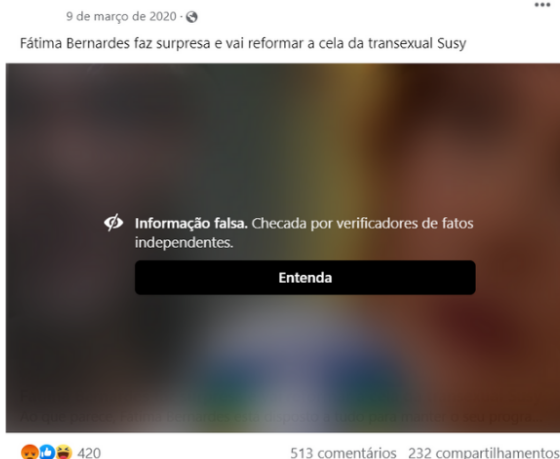
<https://www.uol.com.br/universa/noticias/redacao/2020/03/05/drauzio-sobre-reacao-a-abraco-em-pres-a-trans-como-se-fosse-inusitado.htm>. Accessed on: May 22, 2023.

9 de março de 2020 · 🌐

A ministra Damares foi estuprada e serviu de chacota pela #GloboLixo.
 Suzy, a transexual que estuprou e matou asfixiado um garoto de 9 anos recebe matéria especial e abraços de #DrauzioVarela como sendo vítima da sociedade...

É por estas e outras que a cada dia me sinto mais confortável em apoiar o PR Bolsonaro.

#EuApoioBolsonaro
 #Dia15PeloBrasil



Top Post: Minister Damares was raped and served as a laughing stock by #GloboLixo. Suzy, the transsexual who raped and asphyxiated killed a 9-year-old boy receives special story and hug from Drauzio Varela as being a victim of society. It is for these and others that every day I feel more comfortable supporting Bolsonaro.

Bottom Post: Fátima Bernardes makes a surprise and will renovate transsexual Suzy's prison cell.

Source: Facebook | Preparation: Diversity and Inclusion Program (FGV Direito Rio)

- Although it does not appear as a second peak in the graph (too few posts), many posts in this category referred to the boycott against the Brazilian cosmetics group, Natura, for featuring Thammy Miranda, a transgender man, as one of the participants in their Father's Day campaign;¹⁵
- In July 2020, a series of posts spread the hashtag #naturanão (translated to #notnatura) to criticise cosmetics company's choice, stating that it went against the values of the "Brazilian family" and was another "leftist stunt". In contrast, a supporting post by Toni Reis, President of the LGBTI+ Alliance, congratulated Natura and defended Thammy's participation in the campaign — the publication received at least 760 interactions;

¹⁵ BEZERRA, Paula. Após anunciar Thammy Miranda para comercial, Natura é alvo de boicote; entenda. *CNN*, São Paulo, 29 jul. 2020. Available at: <https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/economia/apos-anunciar-thammy-miranda-para-comercial-natura-e-alvo-de-boicote-entenda/>. Accessed on: May 22, 2023.

- The last upward trend, in March 2022, was due to Linn da Quebrada's¹⁶ participation in that year's edition of Big Brother Brasil (BBB).¹⁷ The comments were divided between expressions of support for the artist, suggesting that the program could have its first transgender woman winner, and criticism, claiming that Linn was using her transgender identity as an advantage, and that her identity as a trans woman would be the only reason for her to be the winner of the reality show;
- Linn was also compared to other transgender women (e.g., Rogéria¹⁸), indicating that she still had "a lot to learn," and was called "ungrateful," "liar" and "inhumane" when participating in conflicts with other participants of the BBB. In these posts, the artist was commonly referred to as a *travesti*, despite being referred to according to female pronouns in these cases;
- On the other hand, publications about representation in entertainment media celebrate the presence of LGBTQIA+ characters and, more specifically, transgender people in series (e.g. Heartstopper, Itaewon Class, Secret Crush on You), soap operas, movies, and comics. Studios associated with these characters, such as Disney, Marvel, and DreamWorks, are explicitly or implicitly mentioned. In addition, there is also mention of the presence of transgender and trans non-binary characters in games;
- The comparison between groups suggests that visibility strategies in media with a more enduring temporal profile, as is often the case with the aforementioned media, have had a more positive impact when compared to other events where trans issues are only briefly highlighted. It is important to consider, however, that in the cases we mentioned as peaks, the increased level of discourse may have been due to the means through which the episodes were circulated (two of them on Globo, one of the largest television stations in Brazil).

¹⁶ Linn da Quebrada is a Brazilian singer, actress, screenwriter, and television personality.

¹⁷ In the 22nd issue at the time, Linn was the second transgender person to appear on the show.

Available in:

<https://gq.globo.com/Celebridades/noticia/2022/01/bbb22-linn-da-quebrada-e-segunda-mulher-trans-d-a-historia-participar-do-programa.html>. Accessed on: May 22, 2023.

¹⁸ Rogeria was a famous Brazilian actress, make up artist and drag queen.

Support Networks

- With slight variation in posts over time, the theme “support networks” gathers publications predominantly by transgender people in groups aimed at promoting sociability, providing support and exchanging common experiences. Examples include publications with makeup tips, reports on physical health and documentation of the transition process;
- There are also a large number of posts made by transgender women seeking romantic relationships, such as: “Good afternoon. I am a trans woman, are there men looking for a serious relationship?” These publications are commonly accompanied by photos of these women and contact information, suggesting that these are safe spaces to look for potential partners;
- In this set, there is a higher number of publications on transgender men, addressing specific topics such as trans-masculinities and mentioning influential figures in the transgender community, such as João W. Nery, who passed away in 2018.¹⁹ This seems to be an environment marked by solidarity and companionship, in which cases of violence are reported with the apparent goal of raising awareness, mobilization and/or seeking help.

Religion and gender identity/expression

- Approximately 29% of the posts included in this topic refer to accounts from people claiming to be “former *travestis*”, “former drag queens”, or “former homosexuals”. Published in religious-oriented groups, these posts adopt a tone of “salvation” regarding transgender identity, which is, in turn, recurrently associated with criminality, drugs and prostitution.
- Usually made in first person, the posts indicate that God, Jesus, or the Church were central to the experienced “miracle”. The posts also suggest support systems that others in similar situations could turn to, implying (as in the case below) that being transgender is something to be overcome.²⁰

¹⁹ Cf. FERREIRA, Paula. João W. Nery, the first transgender to undergo surgery in Brazil, dies. O Globo, 26 Oct. 2018. Available at: <https://oglobo.globo.com/brasil/morre-joao-neri-primeiro-trans-ser-operado-no-brasil-23189378>. Accessed on: May 22, 2023.

²⁰ A similar pattern of discourse has already been identified, for example, in a Facebook group in Peru, against “gender ideology” and in favor of religion-oriented “conversion” strategies. Cf., in this sense, MENESES, Daniela. Con Mis Hijos No Te Metas: un estudio de discurso y poder en un grupo

8 de setembro de 2019 · 🌐

Hoje faz 1 ano que estou na presença de Deus, pra honra e Glória do senhor 🙏
 esse Deus aonde opera milagre, Eu sou um jovem resgatado [#ex_travesti](#)
[#ex_criminoso](#)

Jesus pode escrever a sua história de novo, olha o que ele fez comigo 🙏❤️

Satanás conseguiu excluir mais poste de novo 🙏

esse é meu número de contato, quem quiser fazer algum convite
 da parte do senhor, estou aqui

Bom dia a paz do senhor aqui por meio dessa foto quero mostrar o meu
 testemunho eu passei 8 anos afastado dos caminhos do senhor quando eu sair da
 igreja eu tinha exatamente 11 anos de idade irmãos eu quero por aqui dizer que
 tudo que eu passei foi para hoje ter experiência com Deus tem intimidade com todo
 poderoso talvez você esteja enfrentando uma prova tão grande que você acha que
 não vai conseguir vencer mas eu quero vir aqui nessa manhã dizer como profeta de
 Deus que você vai alcançar o teu milagre não desanime não para creia olha para
 mim olha para essa foto eu já fui um homossexual um travesti um drogado um
 prostituto ladrão um mentiroso um invejoso mas Deus curou Deus resgatou Deus
 transformou e levantou como profeta às nações e para sua manhã começar
 maravilhosa leia Jeremias capítulo 1 verso 5 a paz do senhor chame nós no
 Messenger nós estamos aqui para ajudar.....

*Top Post: Today it has been one year since I was in the presence of God, to the honour and
 glory of the Lord. This God works miracles, I am a redeemed young man #former-travesti
 #former-criminal*

*Bottom Post: [...] I spent 8 years away from the ways of the Lord. When I left the church I was
 exactly 11 years old. [...] I was a homosexual, a travesti, a drug addict, a prostitute, a thief, but
 God healed and transformed me.*

Source: Facebook | Preparation: Diversity and Inclusion Program (FGV Direito Rio)

- More comprehensive posts associating LGBTQIA+ people in general and transgender people in specific with demonization narratives are also common. For example, the possibility of religious leaders being associated with agendas such as “gender ideology” and “abortion” is condemned, and the Church is urged to reject them.
- In August 2020, at least thirteen publications with the text “Trans pastor preaches that God is a *travesti* and generates controversy on the internet; watch the video” were shared. However, none of the URLs leading to the video are still available, suggesting Facebook removed the video for containing false content.
- On the other hand, some publications take a positive tone regarding the intersections between gender and spirituality. This is the case with posts about aspects of African-derived religions, particularly regarding the interpretation of masculinity and femininity of some of their entities. In this sense, we also

de Facebook peruano opuesto a la «ideología de género». *Anthropologica*, v. 37, n. 42, p. 129-154, 2019.

identified publications that question and/or provide guidance on the inclusion of transgender people in *terreiros* (religious settings).

Gender-neutral bathrooms and non-binary language

- In our sample, the last two topics do not show a substantial number of posts, or relevant fluctuations over the analysed period. Although they are related to recurring themes in recent social debates involving transgender people in Brazil, the publications we collected in Facebook groups do not reflect, at first glance, the same predominance.
- Referred to in most publications as the “unisex bathroom,” transgender-inclusive restrooms are interpreted negatively. The narratives are explicitly transphobic, targeting transgender women, and claiming that their presence in certain spaces would increase cases of harassment and expose other women to their alleged male genitalia.
- Some of the allegations, following the trend identified in the other topics, also make associations with the left and with “gender ideology,” mentioning the repudiation of the creation of these bathrooms in schools. In the description of a shared video, it states: “In a school, a *travesti* who used the women’s bathroom, assaults a woman who disagreed.”
- At least two cases with repercussions in the media were also mentioned: the “multi-gender bathroom” in a McDonald’s unit in São Paulo²¹; and the transphobic speech by former state deputy Douglas Garcia (at the time, affiliated with the Social Liberal Party — PSL), stating in the Legislative Assembly of São Paulo that “If a man who thinks he is a woman enters the bathroom where my mother or sister is, I’ll physically remove him and then call the police”²².
- Finally, although it does not have a substantial number of posts (92, in a sample of more than 4,000), the theme “non-binary language” grew between 2019 and 2021, with a slight peak in the latter year. In our sample, however, we did not identify any specific event that increased the number of mentions (as in

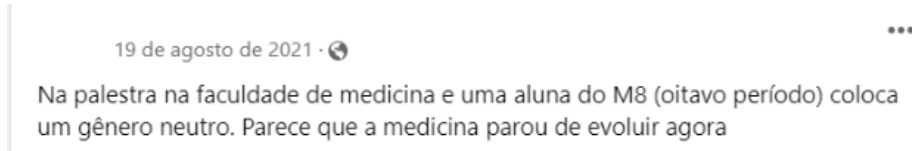
²¹ Available at: <https://catracalivre.com.br/cidadania/mcdonalds-recua-multigenero-banheiro/>.

Accessed on: May 19, 2023.

²² Available at:

<https://observatorioq.bol.uol.com.br/noticias/tiro-de-la-a-tapa-dispara-deputado-do-psl-sobre-encontra-uma-mulher-trans-em-banheiro-feminino>. Accessed on: May 19, 2023.

the other cases), with the main subject within the topic being the use of gender-neutral pronouns.



Caption: [I am] at a lecture at medical school and a student uses gender neutral. It seems that medicine has stopped evolving now.

Source: Facebook | Preparation: Diversity and Inclusion Program (FGV Direito Rio)

- Analysing the posts qualitatively, we observe that most of the posts have a mocking and critical tone, ridiculing the changes proposed by non-binary language in relation to the grammar of the Portuguese language. There are a few mentions of specific topics, such as the introduction of neutral pronouns in ENEM²³ essays. One of the most repeated posts, appearing six times, reproduces a text from someone who presents themselves as a Portuguese teacher, stating that “Portuguese does not accept neutral gender.”

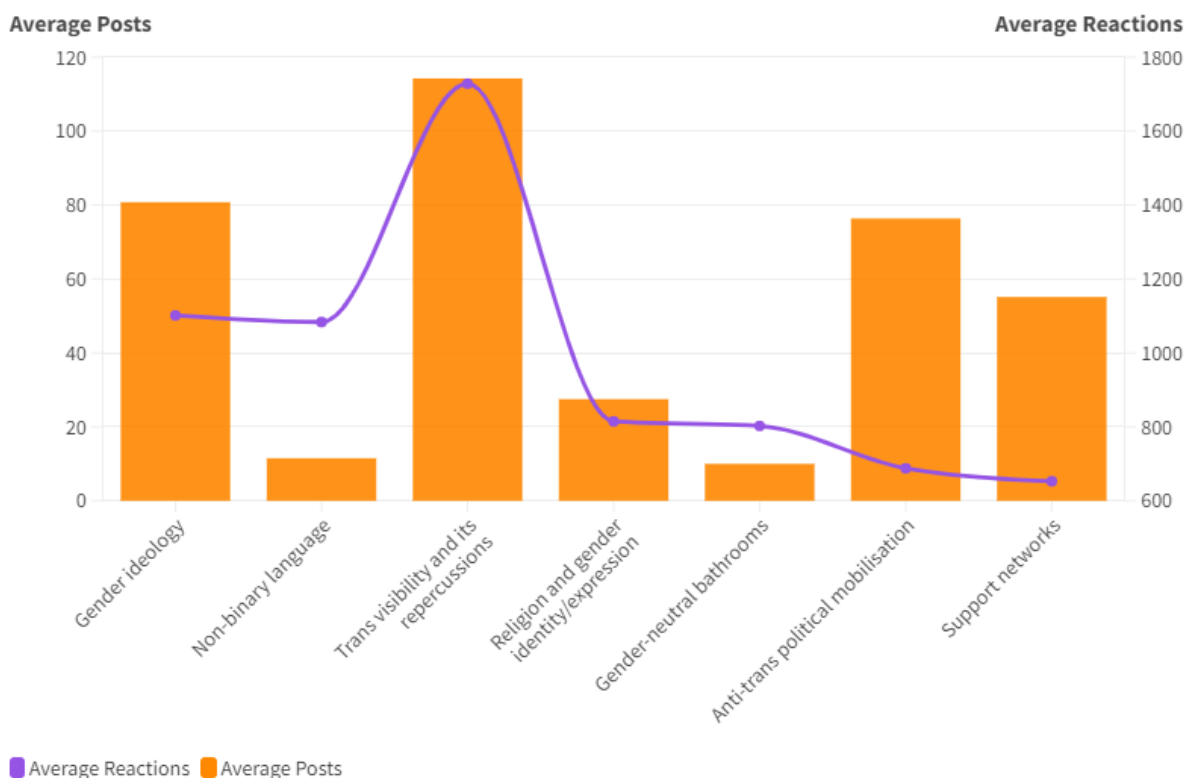
Average posts and reactions associated with the most discussed topics:

The graph below shows the average number of posts associated with each of the topics we identified for the analysis period, as well as the average number of reactions linked to them. Reactions refer to the number of likes (including reactions such as “I loved,” “care,” “wow,” “haha,” “sad” and “angry”), as well as comments and shares. To calculate the values, we summed the reactions that each post received and divided it by the total number of posts in that topic.

²³National High School Exam, shortened as Enem in Brazilian Portuguese, is a non-mandatory, standardized national exam, which evaluates high school students in Brazil.

Graph 2: Average posts and reactions per topic

Period: from January 1, 2019, to April 30, 2023



The graph shows the average number of posts and reactions per topic analysed in public Facebook groups.

Source: Facebook | Produced by: Democracy Reporting International (DRI)

- Although “gender ideology,” “anti-trans political mobilization” and “trans visibility and its repercussions” were the topics with the most posts, only the first two received a considerable number of reactions. Regarding “gender ideology,” the data corroborates other relevant studies that identify the use of the expression as a “slogan-label” against the advancement of different political mobilisations by the LGBTQIA+ and feminist movements, pointing to the gathering of different “moral entrepreneurs” who use it as a panic device²⁴;
- Regarding “Trans Visibility and its Repercussions,” the number of reactions is associated both with the previously narrated negative effects due to Drauzio

²⁴ On this note, see JUNQUEIRA, Rogério Diniz. “Ideologia de gênero”: a gênese de uma categoria política reacionária – ou: a promoção dos direitos humanos se tornou uma “ameaça à família natural”? In: RIBEIRO, Paula Regina Costa; MAGALHÃES, Joanalira Corpes (org.). Debates contemporâneos sobre educação para a sexualidade. Rio Grande: Ed. da FURG, 2017. p. 25-52; CAMPANA, Maxilimiliano; MISKOLCI, Richard. “Ideologia de gênero”: notas para a genealogia de um pânico moral contemporâneo. *Sociedade e Estado*, v. 32, p. 573-591, 2017.

Varella's interview with Suzy, Linn's participation in BBB, and Natura's Father's Day campaign, as well as positive reactions resulting from the representation of trans individuals in entertainment media, with a positive and celebratory tone.

- On the other hand, topics such as “non-binary language” and “gender-neutral bathrooms”, despite a relatively low average of associated posts, had a considerable number of reactions – with tones of mockery, especially in relation to the use of neutral pronouns.
- Overall, the highest average of reactions were in response to hostile and violent content towards trans people, suggesting that, in our analysis, posts that evoke negative emotions generate greater online engagement. It is also important to highlight that disinformation also permeates these topics, whether regarding the indiscriminate use of the term “gender ideology” to reinforce stereotypes and agendas never defended by the LGBTQIA+ community, or to claim that being transgender is something to be “corrected”, or that creating gender-neutral bathrooms is a gateway to sexual abuse.

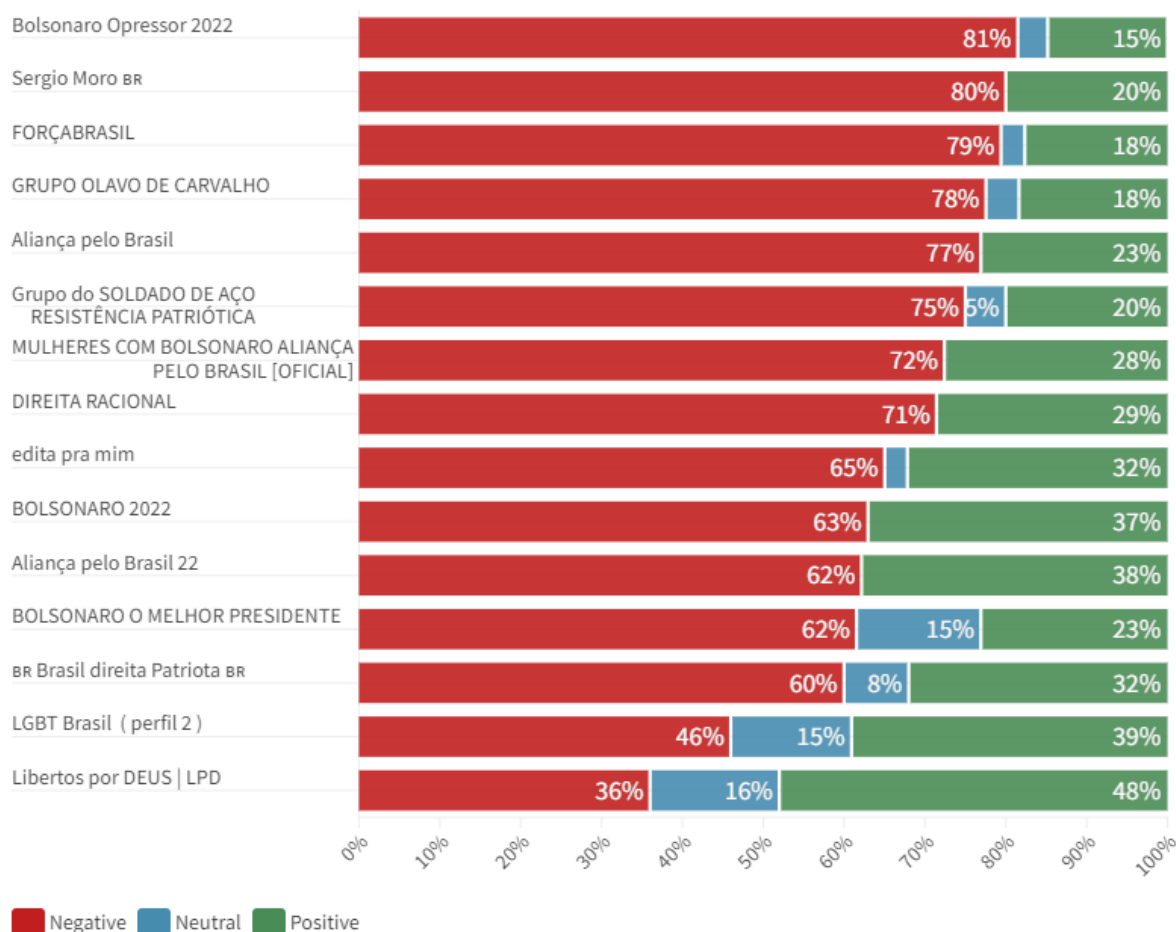
III. How the debate develops: Sentiment analysis of posts made on Facebook groups discussing trans issues and trans rights

Sentiment analysis is a natural language processing technique that aims to identify the emotional polarity in a text, usually classifying it as positive, negative, or neutral. Using a pre-trained model for sentiment analysis²⁵, we analysed the posts to understand the sentiment linked to them. The graph below shows the percentage of posts considered negative, positive, or neutral for the top fifteen groups with the highest number of posts in our sample.

²⁵ [LeIA \(Léxico para Inferência Adaptada\)](#), a fork of the VADER (Valence Aware Dictionary and Sentiment Reasoner) lexicon and sentiment analysis tool adapted for Portuguese texts. This model combines qualitative and quantitative methods to produce, and then empirically validate, a sentiment lexicon. Thus, it is possible to analyze lexical features that incorporate grammar concepts that we use when expressing or emphasizing the intensity of feelings. The model has already been used previously, in the report “Gender and women's rights in social networks: mobilizations, reactions and feelings in posts of presidential candidates in 2022”, produced by FGV Direito Rio and by Democracy Reporting International (DRI) within the scope of the project Media and Democracy. Available in: <https://shorturl.at/vKLWX>.

Graph 3: Sentiment of posts in public Facebook groups

Period: from January 1, 2019, to April 30, 2023



The graph shows the percentage of posts considered negative, positive or neutral of the 15 groups with the highest number of posts in our analysis sample.

Source: Facebook | Produced by: Democracy Reporting International (DRI)

- The results from the sentiment classification suggests that discussions about trans people's rights, political claims and lived experiences are consistently associated with topics, terms and formulations read as negative in the vast majority of groups.
- With the exception of the group "edita pra mim" – which does not currently present itself with the aim of addressing political issues – all groups with more than 60% of their messages classified as negative are explicitly political groups, with many referring to political figures such as former president Jair Bolsonaro and current senator Sergio Moro (União Brasil). The "edita pra mim" group, in turn, also draws attention due to the high percentage of messages

read as negative (65%). As already analysed in this report, these groups are aligned with a conservative and transphobic narrative.

- The messages found in these groups, as already analysed, refer to the themes of “gender ideology” and “anti-trans political mobilization.” The posts categorised as negative often use vulgar language and derogatory terms to refer to trans people and propagate conservative perspectives often endorsed by political figures referred to in the groups.
- The group “LGBT Brasil (profile 2)”, despite declaring itself as a group in favor of the rights of trans people, has some of its posts classified with negative sentiment due to the sharing of cases of violence (physical or psychological)²⁶, transphobia and hate speech against trans people – for the purpose of denouncing, mobilising and raising awareness – as well as posts with a critical tone towards the government of the former president.

22 de junho de 2019 · 🌐

...

Ser transexual é praticamente nascer morto. Pode parecer muito forte isso que estou dizendo, mas a sociedade empurra as pessoas transexuais à morte, infelizmente. Falo isso abertamente porque nunca tive tanto espaço para falar sobre isso”, diz chorando. “É necessário que isso seja dito. As pessoas não terminam de estudar porque são sistematicamente perseguidas, não conseguem trabalhar ou ter relações familiares. As trans ainda são o foco desta violência, são vistas como aberração, tidas como monstros, mas não são. Elas são seres humanos como qualquer um, com direitos à cidadania, votar, comer, respirar e viver”, levanta a bandeira.



Caption: Being transgender is practically being born dead. It may sound very strong what I am saying, but society pushes transgender people to death, unfortunately. I speak about this openly because I have never had so much space to talk about it. Trans people are still the focus of violence, seen as freaks. But they are not that, they are human beings like anyone else, with rights to citizenship, to vote, to eat, to breathe and to live.

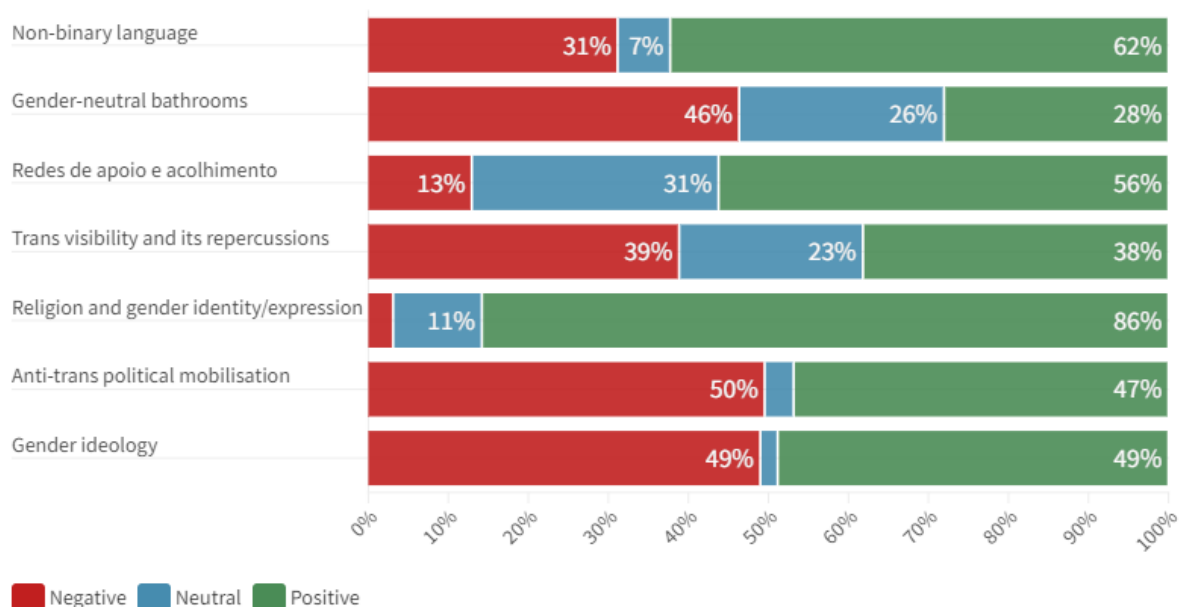
Source: Facebook | Produced by: Democracy Reporting International (DRI)

²⁶ A similar pattern had already been identified in the report “Gender and women's rights in social networks: mobilizations, reactions and feelings in posts of presidential candidates in 2022”, by DRI and FGV Direito Rio, within the scope of the Project Media and Democracy. In it, we identified that posts about some women's political agendas (e.g. abortion) and about cases of violence, made by male and female candidates aligned with leftist ideological profiles, were also linked by the model to negative feelings. Available in: <https://bit.ly/3IUOMt9>.

- Among the groups with the highest number of posts, only the group “Libertos por Deus LPD” had the majority of its posts classified as positive. The messages are read by the lexical model as positive due to the way users describe their religious experiences of “conversion miracles” using positive words and expressions, as indicated earlier in this report from topic modeling.

Graph 4: Sentiment of posts in public Facebook groups

Period: from January 1, 2019, to April 30, 2023



The graph shows the percentage of posts considered negative, positive or neutral in relation to each analysis topic.

Source: Facebook | Produced by: Democracy Reporting International (DRI)

- From this analysis, no clear trends emerge, with a variety of sentiments towards posts associated with each of the topics we identified. Some of them, such as "gender Ideology" and "trans visibility and its repercussions", show a balance between negative and positive sentiments, the latter with a considerable percentage of neutral sentiments.
- The balance within “gender ideology” can be explained by several posts that praised measures adopted during the government of former President Jair Bolsonaro. One example that appears in many posts refers to the statement by the former Minister of Women, Family and Human Rights, Damare Alves, in

which she states “boys wear blue and girls wear pink”²⁷, reinforcing a gender stereotype in society. Due to the congratulatory tone and agreement with the statement, the lexical model classifies many messages as positive.



Caption: Minister Damaris represents me and thousands of mothers and fathers who do not want gender ideology in schools with our children.

Source: Facebook | Produced by: Democracy Reporting International (DRI)

- Other topics such as "anti-trans political mobilization" and "gender-neutral bathrooms" lean towards negativity, with a higher percentage of negative sentiment. In the case of the topic “gender-neutral bathrooms” there are many posts that intersect disinformation on the subject and hate speech, suggesting, for example, that being transgender could be simulated by “anyone.”
- In these cases, the constructed narrative questions and seeks to delegitimize the gender identity of trans women by suggesting that the political claim for gender-neutral bathrooms would pose a threat to cisgender women, who would be subject to abuses, for instance.

²⁷ Available at:

<https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2019/01/03/em-video-damara-alves-diz-que-nova-era-comecou-no-brasil-meninos-vestem-azul-e-meninas-vestem-rosa.ghtml>. Accessed on: May 23, 2023.



Caption: The Council of Salvador approve men's entry in women's bathroom! You who have a mother, a sister and a daughter, and who only watch the Globe, be aware. It's not just travestis, pay attention, it's gender ideology too. Anyone can dress up as a woman and say they are transgender! As long as you give votes to gangs like PT, PCdoB and PSOL [leftist Parties], this country will be a disgrace.

Source: Facebook | Produced by: Democracy Reporting International (DRI)

- On the other hand, the topics "support networks" and "non-binary language" have a predominance of positive sentiment. In the case of "support networks," the sentiment is explained by posts made in a friendly tone and, with the purpose of meeting other people with similar experiences. As for the "non-binary language" topic, it seems to be due to the mocking tone that many posts have, which, although not classified as negative by the model, suggests the representation of the issue as something that should not be taken seriously.
- The topic "religion and gender identity/expression" receives a high percentage of positive sentiment due to the tone of "salvation" and "gratitude" that the posts receive, as already discussed in the report. It is worth noting that, although not explicitly mentioned, the posts refer to the so-called "conversion therapies," supposed treatments whose objective is to "reverse" homosexuality or, in this case, transgender identity. In Brazil, practices like these are prohibited by the Federal Council of Psychology for gay people since 1999 and for transgender people since 2018²⁸.

²⁸ Cf. Resolution CFP 01/99 and Resolution CFP 01/2018. Available at: https://site.cfp.org.br/wp-content/uploads/1999/03/resolucao1999_1.pdf

About the **Media and Democracy** project

Fundação Getúlio Vargas School of Communication, Media, and Information (FGV ECMI) and the **European Union** (EU) have established a partnership to collaborate with the strengthening of Brazilian democracy and the integrity of digital spaces. The initiative, called the **Media and Democracy** Project, will be carried out in partnership with the fact-checking platform **Lupa**, the German center for analyzing the public debate **Democracy Reporting International** (DRI), the Diversity and Inclusion Program and the Center for Technology and Society, both from **FGV Direito Rio**, and focuses on debates on gender issues, racial inequality, minority rights, hate speech and other important issues for Brazilian politics. The project includes monitoring and analyzing digital media, checking information, and creating a Council, as a public space to promote a positive dialogue, with the participation of researchers, civil society, representatives of public authorities and platforms.

Authorship:

This report was written by the Diversity and Inclusion Program of [FGV Direito Rio](#) and by the [Democracy Reporting International \(DRI\)](#), with data analysis performed by both institutions, and data collection and visualization developed by Democracy Reporting International (DRI).

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Lupa



https://site.cfp.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/resolucao_cfp_01_2018.pdf, respectively.
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STAFF



Founded in 1944, Fundação Getúlio Vargas was born with the objective of promoting the socioeconomic development of Brazil through the training of qualified administrators, in the public and private areas. Over time, FGV expanded its operations to other areas of knowledge, such as Social Sciences, Law, Economics, History, Applied Mathematics, International Relations, and Communication, being a reference in quality and excellence, with its ten schools.

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Created in 2022, the School of Communication, Media, and Information (FGV ECMI) is a pioneer in forming the new profile of professionals who will work in strategic sectors of Communication, Media and Information of public institutions, private companies, and Third Sector organizations. The School brings FGV's tradition and FGV DAPP's extensive experience in the application of Technology and Data Science to innovate and propose solutions in the field of Communication. FGV ECMI combines highly qualified professors in Brazil and abroad and an internationally recognized teaching method with an innovative curriculum matrix, state-of-the-art laboratories and student networking and professional placement experiences.

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