



== Brazilian Presidential Elections 2022

Political Polarization

September 29, 2022



In partnership with



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A Context of Stark Polarization

In a context of high-stakes institutional clashes, massive dissemination of fake news, and stark political polarization, Brazilians are due to vote in the first round of the Presidential Elections on October 2nd, in what many have said will be one of the most consequential elections for the country and the region in recent history. Although there are twelve official candidates for the presidency, polls have indicated for months that there are only two contenders with any realistic chance of either winning in the first round or moving on to the second round of voting that might take place on October 31st: former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of the left-wing Workers Party (PT) and the incumbent candidate Jair Bolsonaro, nominated by the right-wing Liberal Party (PL).

For international observers, as well as local academics and journalists, Brazil is buying into the global trend and living in a state of deep political polarization, a term defined as “a state in which the opinions, beliefs, or interests of a group or society no longer range along a continuum but become concentrated at opposing extremes”. In fact, many Brazilians might agree that they do not need experts to tell them what they already perceive: Bolsonaro and Lula stand on opposite ends of the ideological spectrum and have forged narratives that set the other not only as an opponent, but as an enemy that must be defeated for the sake of the nation’s future.

In securing somewhere between 30% and 40% of Brazilian voters (a rough estimate made taking into consideration recent fluctuations and margins of error), both Lula and Bolsonaro have managed to create a deep schism within Brazilian society which cannot be explained solely by virtue of geographic location, social class or religious affinity. The topic of the elections has infiltrated even the

most commonplace conversations, generating heated family debates, creating rifts between social groups and even serving as pretext to conduct violent acts. In fact, according to Scott Mainwaring, a LatAm expert, what we are seeing in Brazil is a mixture of polarization and personal hatred: while some voters have chosen a candidate based on ideological affinity, others have identified an enemy and have decided to vote on their opponent, not because they agree with their proposals, but because their victory would mean the other’s defeat.

Polarization is not a new phenomenon in Brazil – in fact, researches pinpoint its origin to the 2013 national protests that sparked from a rise in public transportation fares and ended up encompassing other subjacent issues. Soon after, as immense corruption scandals were unveiled, discontent over the established political class grew, and anger seemed to be directed specifically towards the ruling Workers Party (PT). Dilma Rousseff’s second term, which started in 2014, was overshadowed by the pro-PT/anti-PT dichotomy in Congress and less than two years later, she was impeached. During the same time, a massive corruption scandal erupted in relation to the misappropriation of money from giant state-controlled oil company Petrobras. Former President Lula was portrayed as the mastermind behind the scheme and was sentenced to 12 years in prison for charges of corruption and money laundering.

It was during this difficult time that Jair Messias Bolsonaro appeared in the national political scene, transforming the pro-PT/anti-PT dichotomy into a deeper one of establishment versus anti-establishment. In positioning himself as an outsider ready to combat a corrupt political establishment, Bolsonaro won the presidency in 2018 and continued to govern based on the

foundational myth of “us versus them”. This idea pervaded almost every aspect of his tenure, and gave way to other dichotomies, such as the idea that the COVID-19 pandemic could only be managed by choosing between mutually exclusive priorities: public health or economic health.

In March 2021, the Brazilian Supreme Court determined that former president Lula’s trial had embodied a procedural error and annulled his conviction. After spending 580 days in prison, Lula made his way back to public life and declared his intention to run for the 2022 presidential elections, stating that he had been victim of political persecution and refusing to admit any previous wrongdoing.

From that point onward, the 2022 campaign unofficially began, and since then, both Lula and Bolsonaro have unquestionably led voter intentions, with the other candidates consistently lagging behind in polls by more than 20 points (none of them have been able to break the one-digit ceiling in any official poll).

Bolsonaro continues to perpetuate an “us versus them” dichotomy, placing himself as a protective barrier between his followers and the traditional and corrupt political establishment, as well as the idea of socialism (particularly the Latin-American variant, which calls the need to constantly use the economic failures of neighboring Venezuela and Argentina as warning signs). Lula has also approached the debates through dichotomies of his own, mainly that in which people must choose between authoritarianism (on Bolsonaro’s part) and the continuity of democratic institutions (with himself as President).



Candidates and their Proposals

The 4 top candidates



Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva
Worker's Party (PT)

Lula, as he is known in Brazil, was born in the Northwestern state of Pernambuco and moved to São Paulo at seven years old. A professional metalworker and union leader during the Military Regime that spanned between 1964 and 1985, he helped create the national Worker's Party (PT) in 1980 and first ran for public office in 1982. He went on to run for the Brazilian Presidency in 1989, 1994 and 1998, finally obtaining victory in 2002. He was reelected in 2006 and became one of the best-known politicians in the region after taking advantage of a global commodities boom and applying social Development programs that led millions of Brazilians out of poverty. In 2010, he left office with an approval rating of over 80% and helped elect ally Dilma Rousseff as his successor. In 2014, after Rousseff was impeached, a massive corruption scandal erupted in relation to the misappropriation of money from state-controlled oil company Petrobras, leaving Lula engulfed in the investigations, and later condemned to 12 years in prison for corruption and money laundering charges. In March 2021, after spending 580 days in prison, The Supreme Court annulled his corruption convictions. At 76 years of age, Lula is claiming to have been victim of a political persecution and refusing to acknowledge any previous wrongdoing. His running mate is Geraldo Alckmin from the PSDB party (Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira) a center-right highly experienced politician from São Paulo.



Ciro Gomes
Democratic Labor Party (PDT)

Born in Pindamonhangaba, a rural city in the state of São Paulo, Ciro Gomes is part of a traditional political family from the Northeastern state of Ceará. He is a lawyer and has occupied several political positions since 1982, including mayor of Fortaleza, governor of Ceará, and minister in the governments of Itamar Franco and Lula. He is running for the presidency of Brazil for the fourth time, having participated in the dispute in 1998, 2002 and 2018. He came in fourth place in the last presidential election, with 12.5% of the valid votes. After this, he refused to back the leftwing candidate challenging Bolsonaro in the runoff election and instead flew to Europe. Over the past few months, polls have shown Ciro has amassed close to 10% of voter intention, and although the election remains highly polarized between Lula and Bolsonaro, he is considered the most relevant alternative ("the third way") for those who refuse to vote for either of the two frontrunners. A representative of Brazil's center-left, Ciro is running for election with fellow PDT (Partido Democrático Trabalhista) party member Ana Paula Matos.



Jair Messias Bolsonaro
Liberal Party (PL)

Born in a small city in the state of São Paulo, Jair Bolsonaro is a former Army Captain and right-wing Federal Congressman for the state of Rio de Janeiro since 1990. He rose to national relevance after running for the Presidency for the first time in 2018 with the PSL party (Partido Social Liberal). His campaign was fueled by discontent over corruption scandals and was later consolidated after surviving a near-fatal assassination attempt. For his supporters, Bolsonaro represents law and order, opposition to the corrupt political establishment and the defense of traditional family values. For his opponents, he is a controversial figure who has publicly expressed disdain for several minority groups and his approval of previous military regimes. During his tenure, he had to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic (which led to investigations due to claims of negligence), and with the global disruptions caused by the war in Ukraine (which caused spikes in energy and food prices and helped boost inflation). Most recently, Mr. Bolsonaro has been accused of diverting the campaign debate by casting doubt on the reliability of the existing digital voting system and creating uncertainty about his disposition to accept the election results in case he loses. His running mate is a retired Army General and fellow PL (Partido Liberal) party member, Walter Braga Netto.



Simone Tebet
Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB)

Born in the Southwestern State of Mato Grosso do Sul, Simone is a 52-year-old lawyer who was elected in 2004 as the first female mayor of her hometown of Três Lagoas. After winning reelection with 76% of the votes, she went on to become Senator in the Federal Legislature, gaining national recognition for her leadership in the first-ever all-women parliamentary bench and in the Commission for the Fight Against Gender-based Violence. Additionally, Simone was the first-ever woman to lead the Senate's Constitution and Justice Commission and the first woman to dispute the Senate's presidency. During the Covid-19 pandemic, she took part in the Parliamentary Investigative Committee which investigated omission accusations against the Bolsonaro Administration. Now, she is running for the Presidency for the first time as candidate for the MDB party (Movimento Democrático Brasileiro), hoping to gather support from women and those who refuse to vote on either of the two frontrunners. Her running mate for this election is Senator from the state of São Paulo, Mara Gabrilli of the PSDB party (Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira), a champion for people with physical disabilities like herself.

Economic policy is usually an important factor that voters take into account when deciding their vote on any democratic election. However, it is believed that in this particular presidential election, the topic will be **especially important**: a May 2022 survey by Datafolha indicated that 53% of Brazilians considered the economic policy something “very influential” in their voting decision, and 24% thought that the matter would be “somewhat influential”, indicating a total of 77% of the Brazilian electorate who claim they will base their voting decision mostly on the candidate’s economic proposals.

Luiz Inácio Lula Da Silva

The information in this slide was based on multiple Brazilian media articles and [the candidate's government plan](#).

- Former President Lula has claimed he will “protect” the country’s assets (which to some implies an opposition to privatization of state-owned companies) and reestablish the State’s role in spearheading the country’s development.
- His agenda’s top priorities are combatting hunger and reducing socio-economic inequalities, which will be addressed through revamped social programs from his previous administrations such as “Bolsa Familia” and “Minha Casa, Minha Vida”.
- Delivering on his promises rely on public spending, which might entail a review of the current “spending ceiling” (a rule created to control public spending in accordance with inflation rates).
- If elected, he will propose fiscal reform based on principles of “solidarity, justice and sustainability”, simplifying fiscal policy and making contributions proportional to income (making the rich pay more). This would also include a review of the current income tax, which would be extended to include more taxes on profits and dividends, as well as inheritances.
- He will also propose to revoke or modify the recently reformed labor laws, mentioning a specific focus on digital labor platforms, and pension rules.
- He will create a new policy to value the minimum wage above inflation rates to increase families’ buying capacity.
- He plans to control inflation by seeking to control food and energy prices.

Proposals by Sectors

- **Energy** – Petrobras’ strategy will seek energy security and auto sufficiency through continued investment in the traditional business model, while also investing in energy transition programs. Lula also plans to control energy prices by eliminating the existing Import Parity Pricing policy.
- **Industry** – He plans to promote a reindustrialization by strengthening private and public companies through public banking loans, government purchases and investment, and policies to promote innovation on digital and energy transitions.
- **Agriculture** – He proposes subsidies for small producers to control food prices. He will also seek to strengthen institutions to modernize agricultural production and develop this sector in a sustainable way.
- **Environment** – He vouches for the development of an inclusive green economy that seeks to exploit the country’s natural resources in a sustainable way, while chastising any form of illegal mining and extraction activities.
- **Foreign Trade** – He proposes state intervention in exchange policy to reduce the real’s volatility, as well as a renewed commitment to South-South cooperation initiatives and multilateral organizations such as Mercosur, and BRICS.
- **Financial Sector** – He means to increase investment capacity for public banks, so that they may provide loans to smaller companies and to create incentives for all banks to renegotiate outstanding debts from families and small companies.
- **Infrastructure** – The Federal Government would aid state governments to execute three-to-four high-priority projects each, helping to create jobs.

Jair Messias Bolsonaro

The information in this slide was based on multiple Brazilian media articles and [the candidate's government plan](#).

- The incumbent candidate's plan refers to the principle of liberty being as important as life itself, and therefore grants special prominence to the idea of economic liberty to allow entrepreneurs and businesses to create jobs and promote innovation and social well-being.
- In this sense, he intends to lead a fiscal reform to simplify taxes (excepting low-income households from paying an income tax) and eventually reduce the breach between the country's GDP and its public debt. Said reform would also reduce obligations for companies to incentivize innovation, increase supply and bring down prices of goods and services.
- He seeks to reduce state intervention by granting concessions for public services, public-private partnerships and privatization, as well as maintaining the Central Bank's independence.
- He would implement policies to reduce existing controls and limitations for public spending, in order to sustain government-backed social programs such as "Auxílio Brasil" and help control inflation.
- He intends to maintain the recently established labor reform for the sake of legal certainty, and to prevent what he calls "abusive and monopolistic" practices by some companies and unions.
- Still on this matter, he will also seek to reduce informality, and generate more than 6 million new jobs. Additionally, he will seek to modernize the existing National Employment System to give existing job offers more visibility.
- He proposes policies to generate a productive inclusion of elderly and young citizens in the workforce, as well as to seek wage equality between men and women.

Proposals by Sectors

- **Energy** – He highlights the need to develop policies to maintain the country's energy offer and its ability to confront crises while maintaining supply at fair prices. He recognizes that the issue of pricing is a long-term process that implies reductions in operational costs. Finally, he states that mining should be stimulated to achieve socioeconomic development in a sustainable way.
- **Industry** – The steel, metallurgy and basic industries must also receive special attention as added-value activities with potential for job creation.
- **Agriculture** – Strongly popular in this sector, Bolsonaro would stimulate modern processing companies to replace fossil fuels and non-renewable resources. He also intends to support the advancement of innovative technology and increase the national production of fertilizers.
- **Environment** – He plans to consolidate the carbon market and advancements on offshore aeolic farms, while promoting a transition from fossil fuels to biogas, biomethane and other clean and renewable energy sources. He briefly mentions actions to promote responsible environmental tourism.
- **Foreign Trade** – He vouches for modernizing governance processes for economic policy and insists on the need to work for Brazil's entry into multilateral organizations such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the European Free Trade Area (EFTA).
- **Financial Sector** – This program proposes the improvement and expansion of existing financing mechanisms to reduce the costs of financial transactions, stimulate the democratization of credit, encourage new market entrants, rationalize regulatory obligations and establish good governance practices.
- **Infrastructure** – He foresees an increase in the construction of 19,000 km in railways to generate a direct positive impact on agriculture and generate up to 4,600 jobs.

Ciro Gomes

The information in this slide was based on multiple Brazilian media articles and [the candidate's government plan](#).

- **Ciro Gomes' plan** is based on what he calls the National Development Plan (PND), which proposes to resume growth in an economically sustainable manner, aiming to create jobs and guarantee price-stability.
- The candidate is pro economic decentralization, promising to radically encourage competition, defend antitrust actions and promote active confrontation of oligopolies.
- If elected, he plans to extinguish the “spending ceiling” (a rule created to control public spending in accordance with inflation rates), arguing that it prevents investments in social and infrastructure projects.
- Regarding the fiscal reform, **Ciro** promises to reduce subsidies and tax incentives by 20% in the first year of government, which would result in a reduction of R\$ 70 billion in expenses. He also says he will tax distributed profits and dividends, unify 5 taxes (ISS, IPI, ICMS, PIS, Cofins), and tax great fortunes by 0.5% on assets above R\$20 million, which could generate R\$60 billion in revenue.
- The candidate also proposes a minimum income program, which would pay R\$ 1,000, on average, to about 24.2 million families, as well as a debt refinancing program for individuals and companies.
- The maintenance of the Central Bank's autonomy is also foreseen in his plan, in a regime of lower inflation targets and full employment, with actions and strategies based on the Federal Reserve.

Proposals by Sectors

- **Energy** – **Ciro** proposes to increase the government's control over Petrobras (from 50.5% to 60%) and replace the current pricing policy (PPI). He also plans to define a new energy policy based on the integration of renewable energy generators (solar, wind and private mini hydroelectric plants).
- **Industry** – The candidate plans to foment four main industrial categories: Agribusiness, Oil, Gas and Derivatives, Health and Defense. To enable this, he foresees specific financing, public procurements and export incentives.
- **Agriculture** – He plans to use Embrapa's know-how to promote reforestation and soil enrichment in damaged areas, to diversify agriculture and favor a new model of agricultural development. He vouches for the emergence of a national industry of pesticides, fertilizers and agricultural implements.
- **Environment** – He wants to rebuild institutions such as Ibama, Inpe and Embrapa, as well as their environmental inspection policies, resuming Brazil's commitment to international treaties. **Ciro's** plan also foresees offering economic alternatives for the Amazonian population.
- **Foreign Trade** – Lacking clear foreign policy guidelines, **Ciro's** plan only says that trade and diplomatic negotiations will follow the principles of defending national interests and the sovereignty of the country. He also reaffirms national principles of multilateral relations and emphasizes blocs such as Mercosur and BRICS.
- **Financial Sector** – **Ciro** proposes a debt refinancing plan for individuals and companies, as well as an “anti-greed” law to solve problems related to credit and overdrafts.
- **Infrastructure** – Among his promises is the resumption of logistical and social infrastructure works, aiming to encourage the private sector to invest in the country and recover the public sector's ability to finance public policies.

Simone Tebet

The information in this slide was based on multiple Brazilian media articles and [the candidate's government plan](#).

- Simone Tebet’s government plan is built from a ‘green economy’ perspective, based on a conciliation between sustainability and economic development. Moreover, the candidate also defends less State intervention in the economy and a partnership between government entities and local industry to stimulate economic growth.
- In line with a less-interventionist State, Tebet promises to bolster privatizations, concessions and public-private partnerships in order to foster competition, efficiency and productivity.
- The candidate pledges to reduce bureaucracy in the business ecosystem through structural reforms, such as the administrative and tax reforms, in order to make the State more productive and efficient.
- Tebet seeks to adopt credible and respected inflation targets, fiscal responsibility and floating exchange rates, also endorsing permanent combat to inflation whilst respecting the Central Bank’s independence.
- Regarding fiscal rules, Simone promises to reorganize and simplify them aiming to modernize and amplify transparency related to public accounts. That, she believes, will help regain trust in the country’s expense control policies.
- If elected, she plans to implement, in the first half of her government, the tax reform focusing on two main objectives: simplification and social justice. With a focus on social justice, she promises to reform not only consumption taxes, but also income taxes.
- Regarding commercial relationships, Tebet plans to increase openness and internationalization of the Brazilian economy aiming to attract new investments and enable greater integration to global value chains.

Proposals by Sectors

- **Energy** – Simone places the energy transition as one of the pillars of her plan, having sustainability and the green economy at the center of her public policies. She also defends an energy open market and the review of subsidies in the electricity sector, aiming to reduce electricity costs and expand access.
- **Industry** – The candidate advocates for less state intervention in the economy and for the creation of an environment that favors private investment and economic development, supported by the strengthening of public-private companies. She also defends reducing bureaucratic burdens within business, placing tax reform as a priority agenda for her government.
- **Agriculture** – Tebet defends a “sustainable economy” that seeks a balance between valuing and promoting agribusiness and preserving the environment. She sees the agribusiness as one of the country’s economic pillars and as one of the most advanced sectors in the transition to a green economy in the country.
- **Environment** – Based on the idea of a ‘green economy’, Simone aims to regulate the carbon credit market and promote investments in sustainable energy, strengthening inspection bodies to help fight against deforestation and illegal mining (especially in the Brazilian Amazon).
- **Foreign Trade** – Simone defends the internationalization of the Brazilian economy, seeking to reduce the ‘Brazil cost’. In addition to advocating for greater trade openness with the reduction of tariff barriers and access to new markets, emphasizing the importance of the country’s involvement with Mercosur, the WTO and the project to join the OECD.
- **Financial Sector** – She would strengthen the Brazilian Development Bank’s (BNDES) role in supporting small and medium businesses, technological innovation and a net zero economy. Although proposing taxes on profits and dividends, Simone seeks to bolster the role of financial and capital markets and ensure their independence.
- **Infrastructure** – Simone aims to prioritize the expansion of basic infrastructure in marginalized regions of the country, with emphasis on electricity access, high-speed internet, basic sanitation, and improvement of mobility in cities with low environmental impact. Tebet defends the modernization of the country’s road infrastructure through greater participation of private investments, better governance of public investments and reduced logistic costs.

Comparing The Proposals

(Reforms and Other Contentious Issues)

Topics	Lula (PT)	Bolsonaro (PL)	Gomes (PDT)	Tebet (MDB)
Fiscal Reform	In Favor	In Favor	In Favor	In Favor
Labor Reform	Willing to revoke or modify	In Favor	Willing to revoke or modify	In Favor
Administrative Reform	In Favor	In Favor	In Favor	In Favor
Trade Tariffs Reduction	Unclear	In Favor*	Unclear	In Favor
IPP - Energy Policy	Opposed	In Favor	Opposed	In Favor
Privatization	Opposed	In Favor	Opposed	In Favor
Public Spending Caps	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed	In Favor
Agro Subsidies	In Favor	Unclear	In favor	In Favor

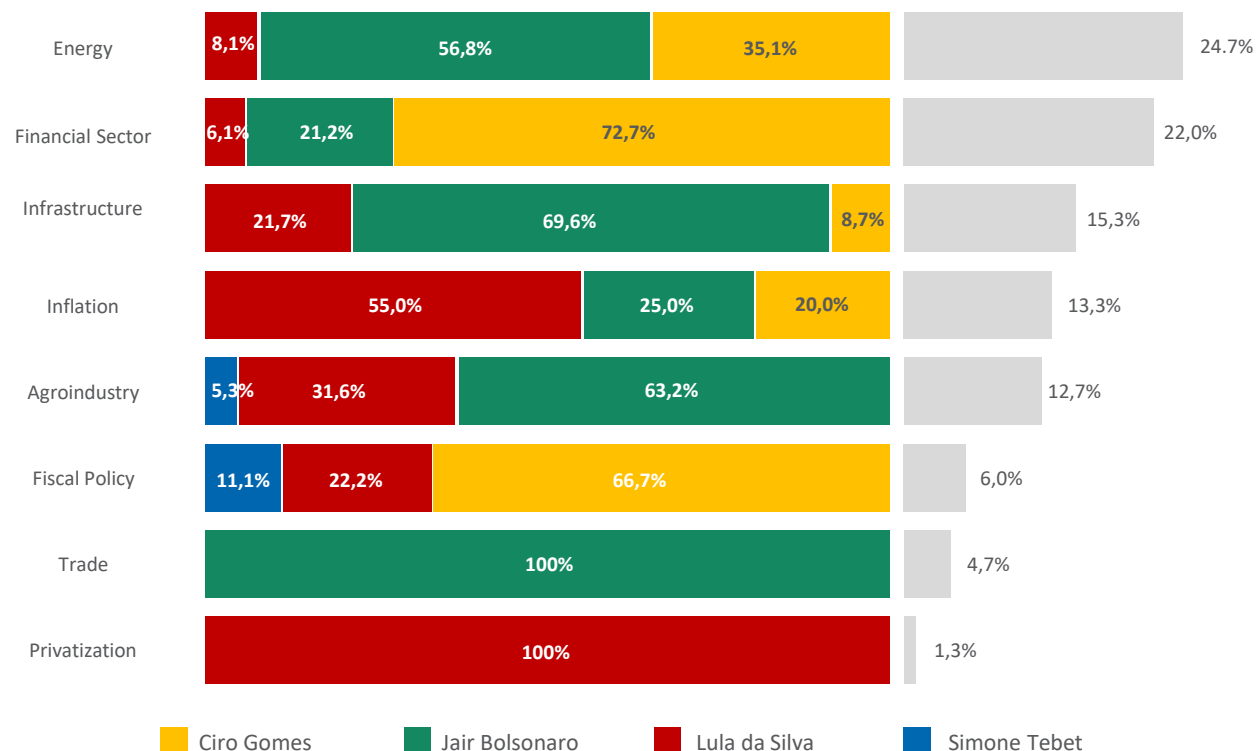
*Based on his government's historic policies and public speeches, not necessarily on his government plan.



Economic Issues on Social Media

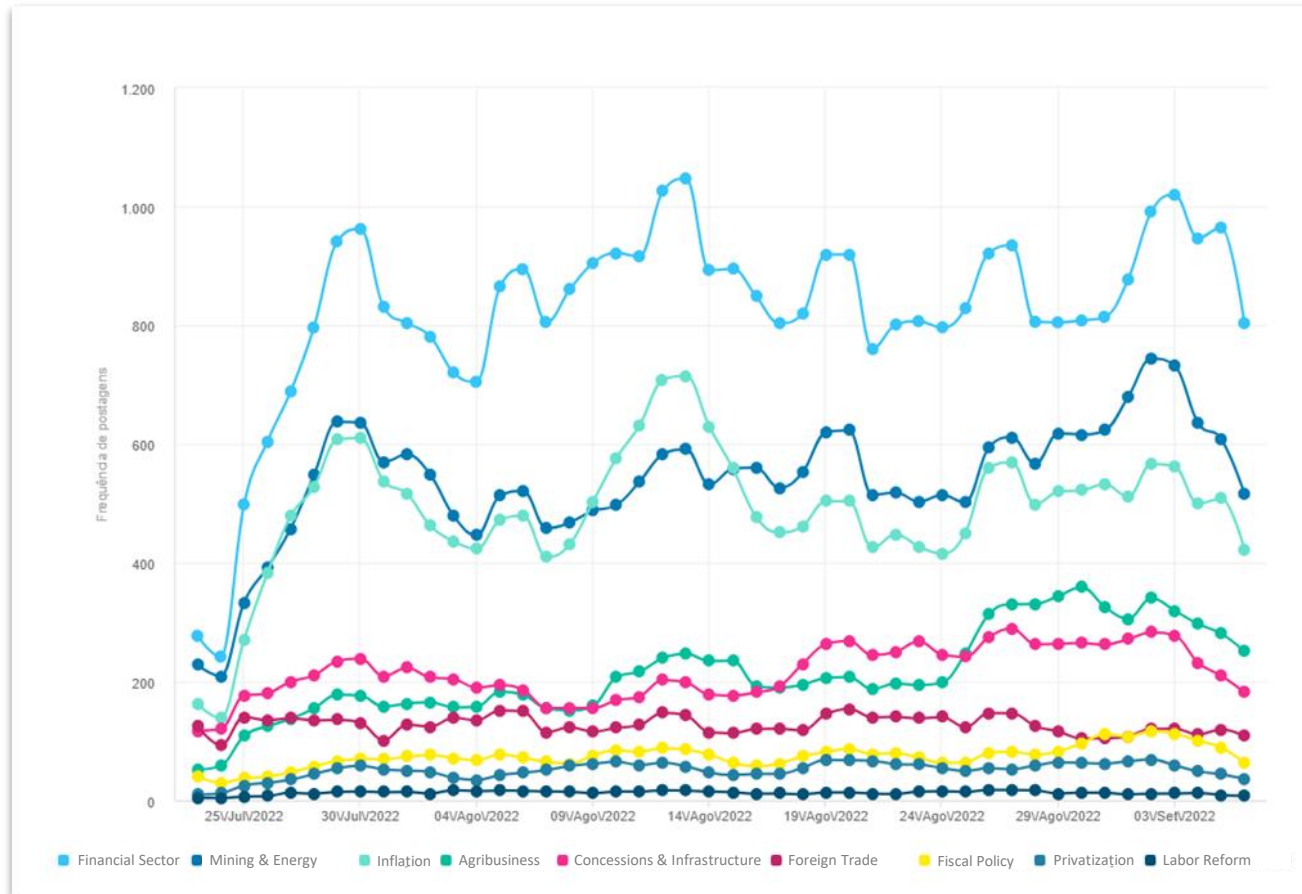
Most Relevant Economic Issues for Candidates on Social Media

For this special report on the Brazilian Presidential Elections of 2022, FTI Consulting developed a partnership with [Cortex Intelligence](#), a data-driven business intelligence company that maps-out interactions and engagement in social media platforms.



- Cortex Intelligence has analyzed the economic issues that have been most relevant in the presidential candidate’s social media publications since August 2022.
- According to the study, energy is the most relevant topic for this election. Jair Bolsonaro has spoken the most about the issue, particularly as it pertains to fuel prices and the measures adopted by his government to bring those prices down.
- President Bolsonaro has also led the conversation in topics like infrastructure, agriculture and trade. He has not, however, been very vocal about fiscal policy – a topic that is very relevant in debates and in all candidate’s proposals.
- Lula, on the other hand, has been the most vocal regarding inflation, referring to it as one of the current administration’s largest weaknesses.
- Lula has also engaged in the conversation prominently in topics related to the agroindustry and fiscal policy and has been the one to talk about privatization of publicly owned companies, according to this report.
- Ciro Gomes has been very vocal about the second most relevant topic, the financial industry, as well as on topics like energy and fiscal reform.
- Finally, we can observe that Simone Tebet has not been very vocal about economic issues on social media, according to this report, having only commented recently on issues pertaining to the agroindustry and fiscal reform.

Most Relevant Economic Issues for Voters on Social Media



- [Cortex's](#) analysis also shows which economic topics are most relevant for Brazilian voters on social media.
- Over the course of the last two months, voters made more mentions to issues related to the financial sector, which includes broader topics like banking and financial institutions.
- Energy & Mining and Inflation are the following topics at stake according to voter's interest and engagement in social media, given the impact of the rising costs of fuels and food.
- Agribusiness and Concessions & Infrastructure were the last issues on the list of the top 5 interests of voters according to mentions in social media, which could be explained by the economic relevance of these segments.

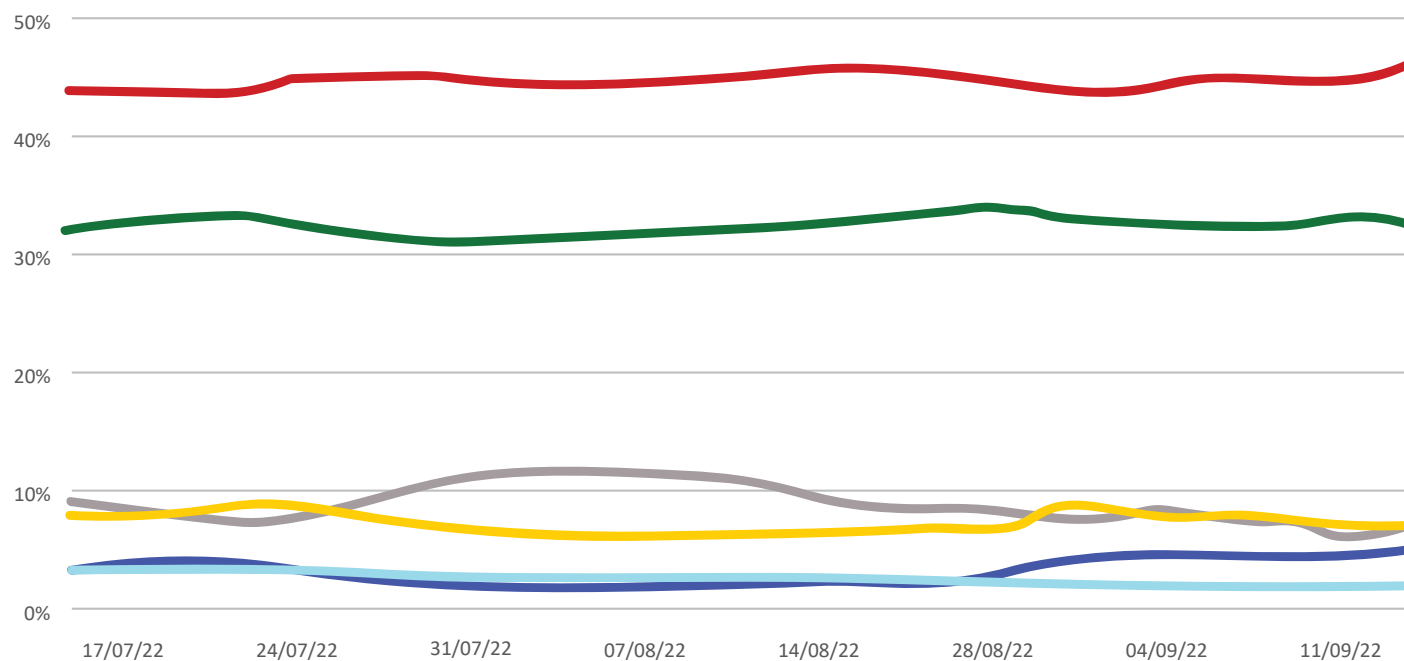


== Polarization

Polls Show: Only Two Players with Chance of Winning

CNN Brazil and Instituto Locomotiva created [a platform](#) to aggregate the results from the most relevant polls published over the last weeks in Brazil, including those produced by Datafolha, FSB, Ideia, Ipec, Ipespe and Quaest (all of which are registered with the Supreme Electoral Court). The following graph captures voting intentions for the first round in a stimulated poll, where participants were given a list of candidates to choose from.

Voting Intention – 1st Round



■ Ciro Gomes
 ■ Jair Bolsonaro
 ■ Lula da Silva
 ■ Simone Tebet
 ■ Blank
 ■ Others

- The polls have shown over the course of the last year that there are only two candidates for the presidency with realistic chance of winning. The chart on the left evidences that tendency is stable since July 2022.
- Other Candidates have failed to surpass the 10% mark of voter intention and have not experienced any relevant variation since the political campaign began.
- The platform also indicates that Lula holds an expressive lead in the Northeastern region of Brazil, with 60% of voter intention versus 20% for Bolsonaro.
- The South is the only region where Bolsonaro is leading in voter intention with 44% versus 34% for Lula.
- The Southeastern region, the wealthiest and most developed (where São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro are located), portrays a technical tie between the two leaders. Most importantly, this region holds the highest rate of undecided voters, which is the reason why candidates are expected to concentrate their campaign efforts here.

Polarization: Political Parties in Two Extremes

The Federal University of Paraná's Political Parties and Party Systems Laboratory produced a [study](#) in 2018 (and later revised it in 2020) based on a complex questionnaire applied to 519 political scientists to place all 33 Brazilian political parties along a left-right ideological spectrum. For the purpose of this analysis, we recreated one of that study's graphs, taking out the names of most political parties and placing the top-four candidates for this election in the spectrum according to where the study placed their political party.

Left

Right



PT
(Lula)



PDT
(Ciro)



MDB*
(Simone)



PL*
(Bolsonaro)



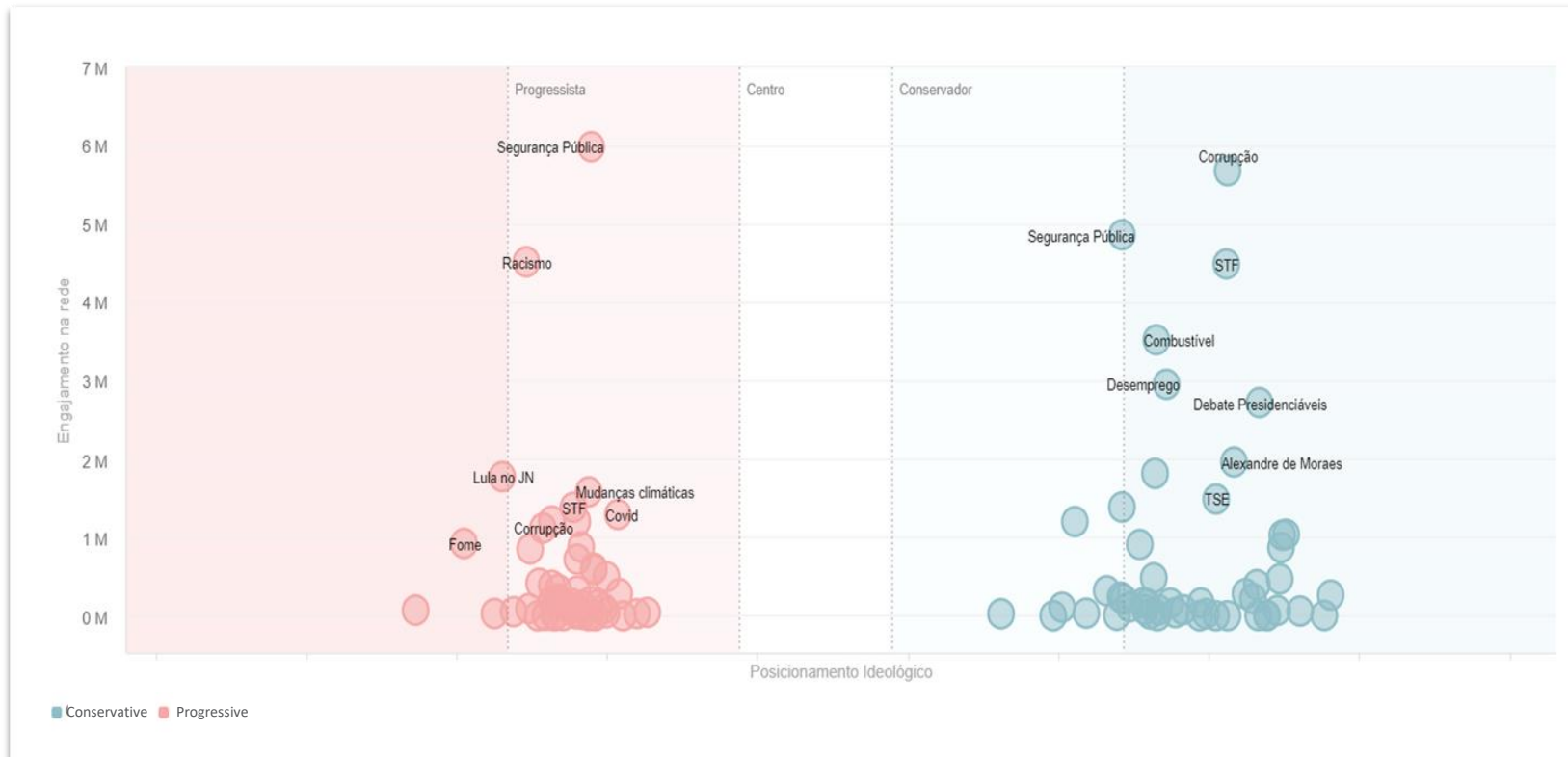
- This study provides a visual confirmation for the argument for polarization, in which “the opinions, beliefs, or interests of a group or society no longer range along a continuum but become concentrated at opposing extremes”:
- The top 2 political contenders' parties in this presidential race stand at the extremes of the ideological spectrum, with Lula's PT on the Left and Bolsonaro's PL on the Right.
- The third and fourth most relevant candidates also stand at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum, albeit somewhat closer to the center.
- However, in choosing Geraldo Alckmin from right-wing PSDB party as his running mate, Lula has tried to portray his campaign as more [moderate](#).

*In this graph, we accounted for recent changes in party names – Tebet's MDB was previously known as PMDB, and Bolsonaro's PL was previously PR.

Most Relevant Issues for Voters on Social Media

[Cortex Intelligence](#) has developed an algorithm to map-out interactions in social media platforms and group them together based on each user's ideological profile. The graph shows the (not exclusively economic) topics that have been most relevant to each ideological bubble over the course of the last month.

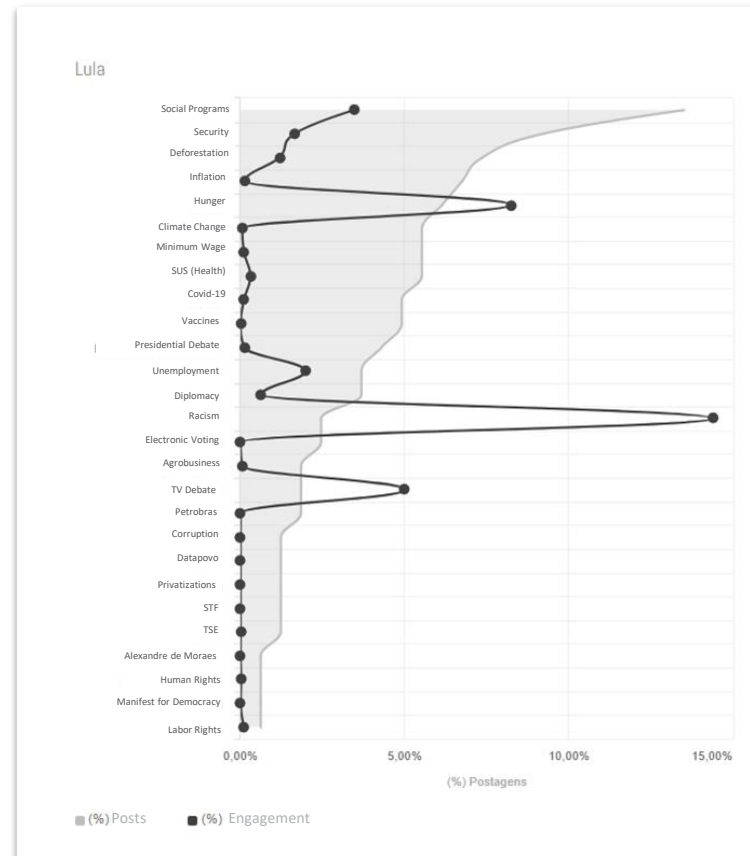
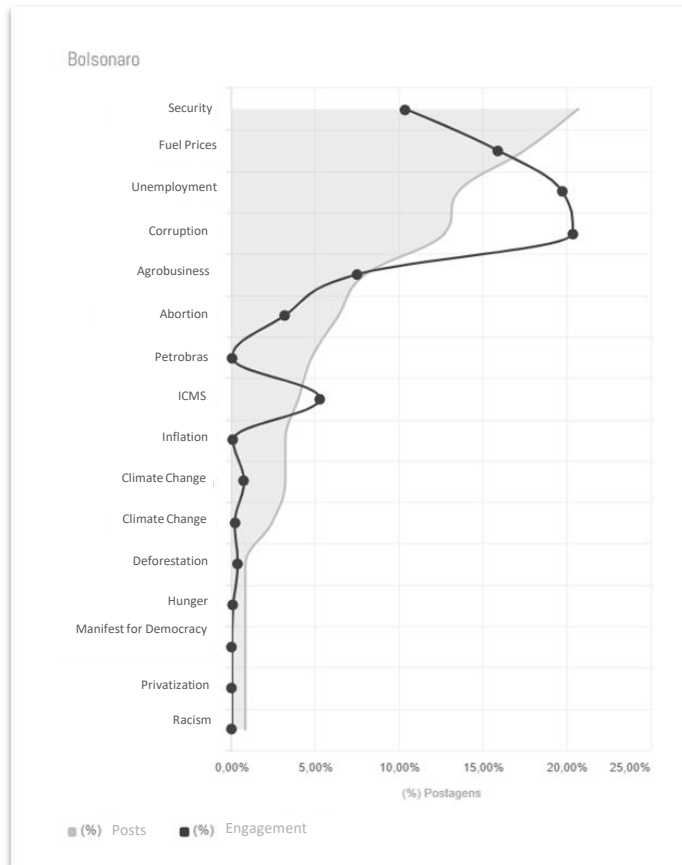
On the left side of the spectrum, referred to here as “progressive”, we can observe that the topics of public security and racism obtained the largest engagement indexes within this ideological bubble. Other topics such as climate change, hunger, COVID-19 and corruption gained more modest engagement. On the right side, referred to as “conservative”, there are more topics with which people were engaged, ranging from corruption, public security, gas prices and unemployment, to other key words like “STF”, “TSE” and “Alexandre de Moraes” – which all point towards the existing institutional clash between Bolsonaro and the Courts and the debate surrounding the possibility of election fraud.



- The topic of public security stands out as being relevant on both sides of the ideological spectrum. However, this does not necessarily imply that the people are approaching it from the same perspective –while conservatives highlight the need to increase operations to address rampant insecurity in cities like Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, progressives have been critical of recent police operations in the city “favelas” which tend to produce collateral damage.
- Conservatives seem to be more engaged in more topics than progressives. These topics are predominantly related to economic issues and are more concentrated on the far-right side of the spectrum.
- Progressives, on the other hand, tend to be more engaged on issues with social impact, and are concentrated on the center-left side of the spectrum.

Social Media Engagement with each Candidate

[Cortex Intelligence](#)'s data allow a comparison between the topics that the two most relevant candidates most talk about (in grey in the graph below) and the engagement that those topics have generated on social media (black line). In the graph on the left, we can observe that social media engagement with Bolsonaro is very much aligned with the topics that he himself proposes, indicating that Bolsonaro has great influence over the narratives discussed within the conservative base. This level of engagement also reinforces the false perception of consensus within that group. On the contrary, the graph on the right evidences that social media engagement follows its own pattern and does not correlate easily with the topics that Lula proposes on social media. Social media engagement from progressive voters depends on their interest on specific topics with social impact, rather than on other issues related to the economy or politics brought forward by Lula.



- The first graph shows that Bolsonaro gathers a more engaged audience on social media when compared to Lula. As was mentioned before, the topics most addressed by Bolsonaro range from public security, corruption and abortion (topics usually associated with conservatives), to economic issues such as unemployment, agrobusiness and fuel prices.
- On the other hand, despite gathering a less engaged audience, Lula seems to talk about a wider range of topics, and to give more importance to environmental and social issues than his counterpart.
- There are issues brought forward by both candidates on social media that relate to the economy. However, this graph shows how much they both talk about an issue, but not whether they refer to it in a supportive or critical way.

A Divided Country for a New President

- The new President, whoever that might be, will come to govern a divided country, as the issues that matter most to one candidate's followers are not the same as those that are most relevant for their opponent's base.
- Most importantly, as Scott Mainwaring [said](#), Brazil is experiencing a mixture of polarization and personal hatred which has led to political violence amongst the candidate's followers, so the new President will have the daunting task of bringing unity and avoiding further violent acts between followers of opposing political ideologies.
- The new President will also come to govern a country with eroded trust in democratic institutions, which has built up during the last decade due to corruption cases, massively disseminated fake news on a myriad of topics, and recent attempts by President Bolsonaro to delegitimize the existing digital voting system.
- Congress will likely represent the existing social schism and therefore make it difficult for the new President to form coalitions and get simple proposals approved, much less sweeping fiscal or administrative reforms.
- Finally, the new President will inherit economic issues such as inflation and slow economic growth, that surely stem from years of complex and contradicting domestic policies, but that have been severely aggravated by recent global events such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- This means that regardless of who wins, the new President will face unprecedented difficulties, with social and political divisions so extreme that they may lead to scenarios of violence and instability beyond the election, all within the context of economic challenges that are greatly influenced by external factors.

Want a deeper dive? Click [here](#) to schedule a sector- or industry- specific analysis.

ADRIANA PRADO
Brazil Lead – Strategic Communication
+55 11 99399-8963
Adriana.Prado@fticonsulting.com

GABRIEL QUILICONI
Senior Director
+55 11 99487-2836
Gabriel.Quiliconi@fticonsulting.com

NATALIA MEJIA
Senior Consultant
+55 11 91300-1292
Natalia.Mejia@fticonsulting.com

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