

The *Winner-Loser Gap* in news consumption: What lost elections tell us about the demand for news

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Abstract

How does winning or losing an election alter the demand for political news? In this article, we examine Brazilian voters' news consumption patterns before, during, and after the 2022 presidential runoff won by President Lula da Silva. We study 2.5 million digital trace events from 1,714 survey respondents' smartphones and computers when the election results were reported to the public. Using a robust interrupted time series design, we show increased consumption among winners compared to losers, with changes in the partisan shares of articles accessed, browsing speed, and reading time. We then analyze whether the winner-loser gap in digital news consumption is affected by partisan, social, and attitudinal variables, including preferences on abortion, economic and racial inequality, healthcare, all-gender restrooms, same-gender marriage and adoption, and taxation of religious entities.

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Introduction: Sometimes the information you want does not exist¹

This article documents a digital winner-loser gap in news consumption during elections. When an election is decided, news consumption patterns change based on whether one’s candidate won or lost. We describe differences between winners and losers in the number of articles accessed, browsing time, and reading time. The increase in news consumption is accompanied by more gregarious interactions by the winners, a decline by losers, and more frequent access to news redirected from messaging applications. More generally, news consumption and the overall digital environment overrepresents information that aligns with the winners and underrepresents the losers. On election night, digital history is written by the winners.

The winner-loser gap in news consumption results from how motivated reasoning interacts with a change in the supply of pro-attitudinal and counter-attitudinal news. Motivated reasoning is the active and purposeful cognitive effort to reach conclusions that confirm our expectations, preferences, and priors (Kunda, 1990; Taber and Lodge, 2006). Such motivated reasoning requires us to (1) search for news that supports our world-views and (2) interpret existing information in cognitively congruent ways. However, the availability of news that confirm or refute our expectations is not symmetric across parties. As noted by (Kunda, 1990, pp 480), “There is considerable evidence that people are more likely to arrive at conclusions that they want to arrive at, but their ability to do so is constrained by their ability to construct seemingly reasonable justifications for these conclusions.” In this article, we take advantage of an exogenous shock, the presidential election in Brazil, to study how cognitive dissonance reduces news consumption.

¹Data Availability Statement: All data and code used in this study has been deposited at the Harvard Dataverse, <https://dataverse.harvard.edu>, [Reference to be added once the article is approved for publication]

The affective response to cognitive congruence or dissonance is central to understanding a winner-loser gap in news consumption. After an election, searching for news that explains our candidate’s victory is a source of pleasure and excitement. In contrast, explaining away defeat is an angry and bitter endeavor. Since winning an election is an outcome available only to one group of partisans, motivated reasoning will not ensure equal engagement with news confirming our beliefs (Hollander, 2014; Calvo et al., 2023). When “Reality has a well-known liberal bias,” as Stephen Colbert humoristically stated at the White House Correspondents’ Dinner in 2006, news consistent with the worldview of conservative readers will shrink, and disengagement will follow. Therefore, while election night is among the most attention-grabbing and memorable events in democratic representation, it will elicit varied attention from partisan winners and losers (Hollander, 2014; Calvo et al., 2023). The digital fingerprint of the winners will grow, and that of the losers will decline.

Offline, losing elections has been shown to correlate with reduced perceptions of regime legitimacy (Moehler and Lindberg, 2009), decreased levels of satisfaction with democracy (Anderson and for Political Research, 2005; Blais and G  lineau, 2007), and diminished trust in political institutions (Anderson and LoTempio, 2002). Offline effects on legitimacy, satisfaction with democracy, and trust are commonly referred to as the *winner-loser gap* in democratic representation. The study of digital trace data allows us to measure the instantaneous effect of winning or losing an election, which is central to understanding democratic disengagement.

Understanding changes in digital consumption behavior during elections is an important area of research in political communication and comparative politics. It allows us to understand how positive or negative events affect digital engagement and alter the available supply of digital news that voters may access. Winning or losing elections shifts the demand for information and the voters’ willingness to share news, making some content

more readily available to their networks of peers and voters. However, little research uses observational news consumption data to understand the effect of winning or losing an election on the demand for news (Calvo et al., 2023).

The organization of this article is as follows: in the first section, we discuss partisan differences in the search for cognitively congruent news. We follow Kunda (1990) and discuss why a positive or negative outcome alters the available pool of cognitively congruent news and how partisans consume news. In the second section, we describe our data, which includes the browsing history of 1,714 Brazilian survey respondents who accessed over 2.5 million pages and apps between October 26 and November 2, 2022, during the National Presidential Election of 2022. The data, collected with explicit consent from the respondents and under IRB guidelines, allows us to measure how supporters of the winning and losing candidates access news before, during, and after the election. In the third section, we conduct a series of analyses on the effect of partisan and attitudinal variables on news consumption. In the fourth section, we present qualitative interviews with partisan Brazilian voters to provide further insight into their strategy to search for information during the 2022 Brazilian presidential runoff election. We asked for their views on the trustworthiness of the news they read, the analogic and digital sources of news they preferred, and their reaction to the victory of Lula and the defeat of Bolsonaro. In the fifth section, we conclude by discussing our findings and possible future extensions using Google search data.

1 Hypotheses: Motivated reasoning and disengagement

There is robust literature showing that voters who support the winner of an election report higher levels of trustworthiness, satisfaction with democracy, and perceived legitimacy (Anderson and LoTempio, 2002; Anderson and for Political Research, 2005). Micro-level studies of voters' perceptions document more negative views of democracy among

losers (Blais and G lineau, 2007). Negative assessments are more pronounced among individuals who mistakenly expected their preferred candidate to win the contest, known as “surprised voters”(Hollander, 2014; Lelkes, 2016). This well-documented winner-loser gap has been shown to increase Twitter engagement among winners and reduce engagement among losers on election day (Calvo et al., 2023; Rathje et al., 2021; Justwan et al., 2018). The decline in social media engagement by losers is part of a broader pattern of information retrenchment, with declines in the consumption of analogic and digital political content.

Differences between winners and losers in the active search of digital content are further compounded by differences in their incidental exposure to news. In a recent article, Karnowski et al. (2017) show that incidental exposure to news increases news access when the content aligns with the user’s preferences. On election night, when most outlets report the victory of one of the candidates, incidental exposure to news will more frequently align with the winners’ preferences, with a comparative reduction in consumption by the losers.

Changing activity by winners and losers affects the size and structure of filter bubbles in digital news consumption (Pariser, 2011). This increase in interactions among winners does not need to be symmetric with the decline among losers. As discussed in (Guess et al., 2018, pg.6), “selective exposure tends to be asymmetric — studies find more evidence of a preference for pro-attitudinal information than avoidance of counter-attitudinal information (Garrett 2009b; Garrett and Stroud 2014; Knobloch-Westerwick and Meng 2009; Winter, Metzger, and Flanagin 2016).”Further, as ²

Therefore, ideological misalignment with the winner of the election results in dis-

²(Guess et al., 2018, pg.6) state: “Although the tendencies to prefer congenial information and to avoid uncongenial information are often treated as theoretically inseparable, there are several reasons why avoidance tendencies might be weaker (Garrett and Stroud 2014). While consonant information almost always offers psychological rewards, dissonant information is not always undesirable; some people find engaging with it to be gratifying or enjoy seeking out counter-attitudinal information when preparing to defend their views to others (Valentino et al. 2009). In some cases, a successful defense of one’s views can even elicit pleasure (Westen et al. 2006).” This view is supported by the evidence we present in this article.

engagement among losers and lower incidental exposure to cognitively congruent news. Following this literature, we expect voters who support the election’s winner to engage with news more frequently, both through an active search of related content and as the result of higher incidental consumption that disproportionally reports content they like:

H_1 : Winners will more actively access news when election results are reported to the public, displaying a faster *time-to-engage* with content that reports on the election outcome.

The first hypothesis, H_1 , also describes our main dependent variable, *time-to-engage* or Δ_t . We define time-to-engage as the time elapsed between accessing a news article at t_1 and a previous news article at t_0 .³

Since partisans should be more sensitive to winning or losing an election, we expect partisans who support Lula to have a faster *time-to-engage* and consume more news (access more articles). In contrast, partisans supporting Bolsonaro should have a slower *time-to-engage* while accessing fewer articles overall. The increased engagement with news by partisans and ideologues has been widely documented in the literature (Robertson et al., 2023). In a recent article, Arugute et al. (2023) show that partisans consume more news and different news than non-partisans, thereby tightening the subjective perception of information bubbles. Therefore, our second hypothesis is:

H_2 : Partisans will consume more news than non-partisans, increasing the winner-loser gap in digital news consumption.

A decline in overall engagement is often followed by longer exposure times among losers to the articles they access. Schaffner and Roche (2016) have shown that cognitively dissonant news also increases partisans’ reading time. In their 2016 article *Misinformation and motivated reasoning*, Schaffner and Roche exposed respondents to a current event news

³For the interrupted time series models we consider the inverse of time-to-engage, $\ln(\frac{1}{\Delta_t})$, ensuring that a higher value describes faster digital access time. Later in the article, we estimate Proportional Hazard Cox survival models, with the simple time difference Δ_t , given that the hazard rate already describes a faster time to access the news article.

article reporting positive job gains during the Obama administration. Democrats believed the report and gave more favorable estimates of unemployment. More importantly, they read the content in less time than Republican respondents, who spent more time reading the disliked article to find errors or inconsistencies. Cognitive dissonance resulted in a more thorough reading of the news article in search of missing data and missing arguments supporting the alternative outcome.

Accordingly, we expect respondents supporting the losing candidate, Bolsonaro, to access fewer news articles but spend more time on each. This results from accessing articles that rationalize the election result and provide cognitively congruent explanations of a disliked outcome. In contrast, we expect less time from Lula supporters in each article, as they access a larger set of cognitively congruent news reports on Lula’s win.

Therefore, while we expect a faster time-to-news among Lula supporters (H_1) over a large set of cognitively congruent news (H_2), we also expect Bolsonaro voters to spend more time reading in greater detail a smaller subset of news (Schaffner and Roche, 2016).

H_3 : Cognitive dissonance will increase the average reading time per article among the losers and decrease the average reading time per article among winners.

Finally, small-world social networks such as Instagram and Twitter (Jürgens et al., 2011) are characterized by shorter average distances between users, which “increase logarithmically with the number of vertices”[...]“The latter property gives the name small-world to these networks because it is possible to connect any two vertices in the network through just a few links”(Amaral et al., 2000, pp. 11149). As the election is adjudicated to the winner, the number of users (vertices) will increase rapidly among the election winners and slowly among the losers (Calvo et al., 2023). A winner’s “rising tide” will amplify the preferred content of the winners to a larger extent than for losers, increasing the likelihood that winners will be incidentally exposed to news they prefer.(Karnowski et al., 2017) Therefore, after the election results are released to the public, we expect a posi-

tive effect of social media on news consumption, increasing among winners and declining among losers:

H_4a : Winning the election will increase access to news from messaging apps and social media platforms.

H_4b : Losing the election will decrease access to news from messaging apps and social media platforms.

2 Measuring News Consumption Behavior

Our study integrates browsing history data and survey responses to provide a comprehensive insight into Brazilian voters’ online behavior. Between October 26 and November 2, 2022, we collected over 2.5 million digital access entries from 1,714 distinct Brazilian individuals. This gives us a close look at their online actions in the crucial week leading up to the Brazilian general elections and the days that followed them.

Approximately 40,000 clicks were associated with news websites three days before and after the election. Our list of news websites was meticulously curated, encompassing 22 diverse outlets spanning various political inclinations. From our observations, we consider the top 1,000 most visited websites, selecting those that serve primarily as news portals. The refined list features prominent news platforms like *Uol*, *G1*, *Globo*, *Estadao*, and *Folha*. Additionally, it includes outlets that cater predominantly to specific segments of the political spectrum, such as *O Antagonista*, *Carta Capital*, *Brasil247*, and *Poder360* (Aruguete et al., 2023).

The browsing data was collected during the election week from a nationally representative panel of respondents selected by Netquest, with IRB approval and informed consent by the individuals who provided the data. The survey data from our behavioral panel was surveyed one month after the election data was collected, between December 5 and 15, 2022. While the panel included 2,426 individuals, browsing history data was only avail-

able for 1,714 respondents. The post-election survey collected key data on demographics, political preferences, and social issues alignment. The variables are measured based on respondents’ 5-point agreement with the statements for aligning social issues. The 5-point scale ranges from strongly agree to disagree strongly. One of the significant strengths of our methodology was the ability to link survey responses with the Clickstream records using the panel ID. This linkage allows us to correlate online behavior with political preferences and other personal attributes. A summarized view of the primary variables, such as political leanings and essential demographics like gender, age, and education, can be found in the accompanying Table 1.

Table 1 Balance Table of All Observations, Unique Users, and Survey Respondents

Variable	All Observations	Unique Users	Survey Respondents
Lula	43.4%	43.1%	42.6%
Bolsonaro	36.4%	37.7%	38.1%
Blank	18.6%	18.0%	17.9%
Right Wing	4.23	4.28	4.31
Female	45.1%	51.5%	49.6%
Education	6.69	6.74	6.74
Age	39.3	39.9	39.6
Income	5.26	5.25	5.25

Additionally, Table 1 shows that the survey and Clickstream samples are balanced across multiple variables. A good balance between the survey and browsing history data reinforces the internal validity of our study and its conclusions.

Figure 1 describes the news consumption patterns of voters between October 26 and November 2, 2022. The vertical axis represents the average frequency with which desktop and mobile news websites were accessed. Leading up to the election day on October 30, both Lula and Bolsonaro voters showed consistent engagement, as seen in the stable bar heights.

On election day, a notable surge in website visits is evident for all voters, indicating a heightened desire for real-time election updates. The shaded gray area, marking the

election night from 5 p.m. to 11:59 p.m., is especially telling. Lula voters, representing the winning side, displayed a more pronounced rise in news engagement, peaking just before the official announcement at 8:57 p.m. This suggests Lula supporters were more attentive to real-time developments as news of a likely win began to be reported.

The descriptive data reflects the overall trend of news consumption during this period, with growing news engagement as election day neared. While supporters of Bolsonaro and Lula remained attentive before and after the election, the significant uptick from Lula voters on election night underscores their amplified anticipation and interaction with digital news platforms upon learning of their victory.

Figure 1 Average desktop and mobile news websites accessed between October 26 and November 2, 2022. President Lula da Silva was elected on Sunday, October 30. Lula voters are in red, and Bolsonaro voters are in blue.

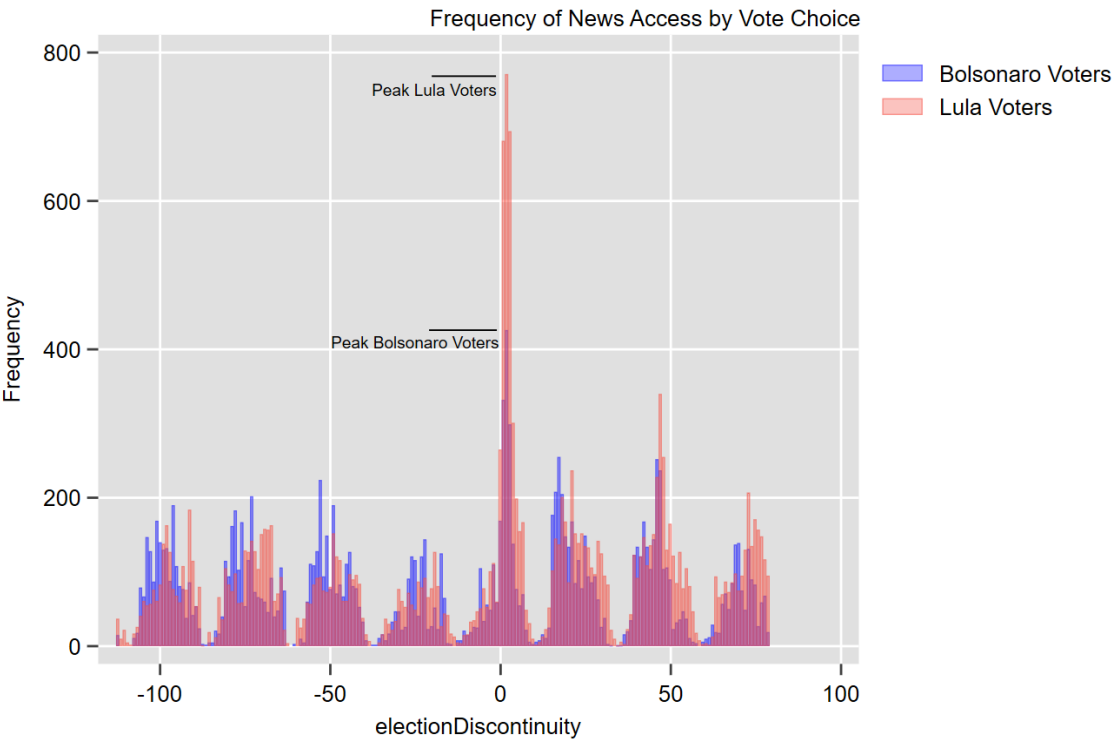


Figure 1 also visually examines news consumption patterns specifically on October 30,

the election day. The vertical axis indicates the average frequency of desktop and mobile news website visits.

The chart reveals distinct trends from the early hours to the late evening. Lula voters displayed an escalating engagement with news platforms as the day progressed. This surge peaked in the hours closely preceding and following the election result announcement, indicating their heightened interest and urgency to stay abreast with the unfolding events. Bolsonaro voters, although actively engaged throughout the day, did not exhibit as pronounced a spike as Lula voters during the crucial election night hours. The general moving average reiterates the consistent engagement of the respondents with news platforms. It also echoes the uptick in news consumption during the evening, accentuated by the winning side’s heightened curiosity and elation.

The Statistical Model

To determine the effects of event adjudication on news consumption, we use an interrupted time series analysis, a variety of regression discontinuity designs (RDD), in which the running variable is time (Morgan and Winship, 2015). Our data is ideal for this approach because we have granular and high-frequency observations from the continued engagement of users with their digital devices. We have three variables of interest in our RDD models: the change in the probability of accessing news (news access), the change in the time spent reading each news (reading time), and the time elapsed between pairs of news (time-to-news).⁴ The news frequency, the reading time, and the time-to-news are measured for 12 hours before and after the election results are communicated to the public.

Regression discontinuity models assume that effects are continuous at the cutoff. When dealing with time as a running variable, the continuity assumption requires that no omit-

⁴The variable *time-to-news* is technically the (inverse) log of the seconds elapsed between two news articles accessed by a respondent, $\ln(\frac{1}{\Delta_t})$.

ted variable that systematically affects the outcome, *time-to-news*, also changes upon adjudication of the election to a party or candidate. Given that we have the precise minute when adjudication was granted and consider data only six to 12 hours around the cutoff, it is reasonable to assume this assumption holds. The granularity of the data, together with the precise measurement of the event, makes the identification strategy highly plausible. The Supplemental Information File provides a set of tests to verify the continuity assumption, including placebo checks with the running variable and methods to estimate inconsistent patterns of anticipatory behavior among the users before the adjudication. Overall, the results ensure the internal validity of the RD design.

To estimate the models, we follow the recommended setting of using non-parametric local linear regression (LLR) to approximate the treatment effect at the cutoff point (Gelman and Imbens, 2018; Calonico et al., 2014). We employ a local polynomial with one degree to fit two separate regression functions above and below the cutoff Adjudication, with the treatment effect set as the difference in the limits of the cutoff. In other words, we model the intercepts from each direction. We employ triangular kernel weights and a data-driven search to select an optimal bandwidth for the estimation. We report the robust treatment effects and confidence intervals developed by Calonico et al. (2014) to address potential bias on the treatment effects due to approximation errors. We present various model specifications to ensure results are robust to different modeling choices.

3 Results

Regression Discontinuity of time-to-news

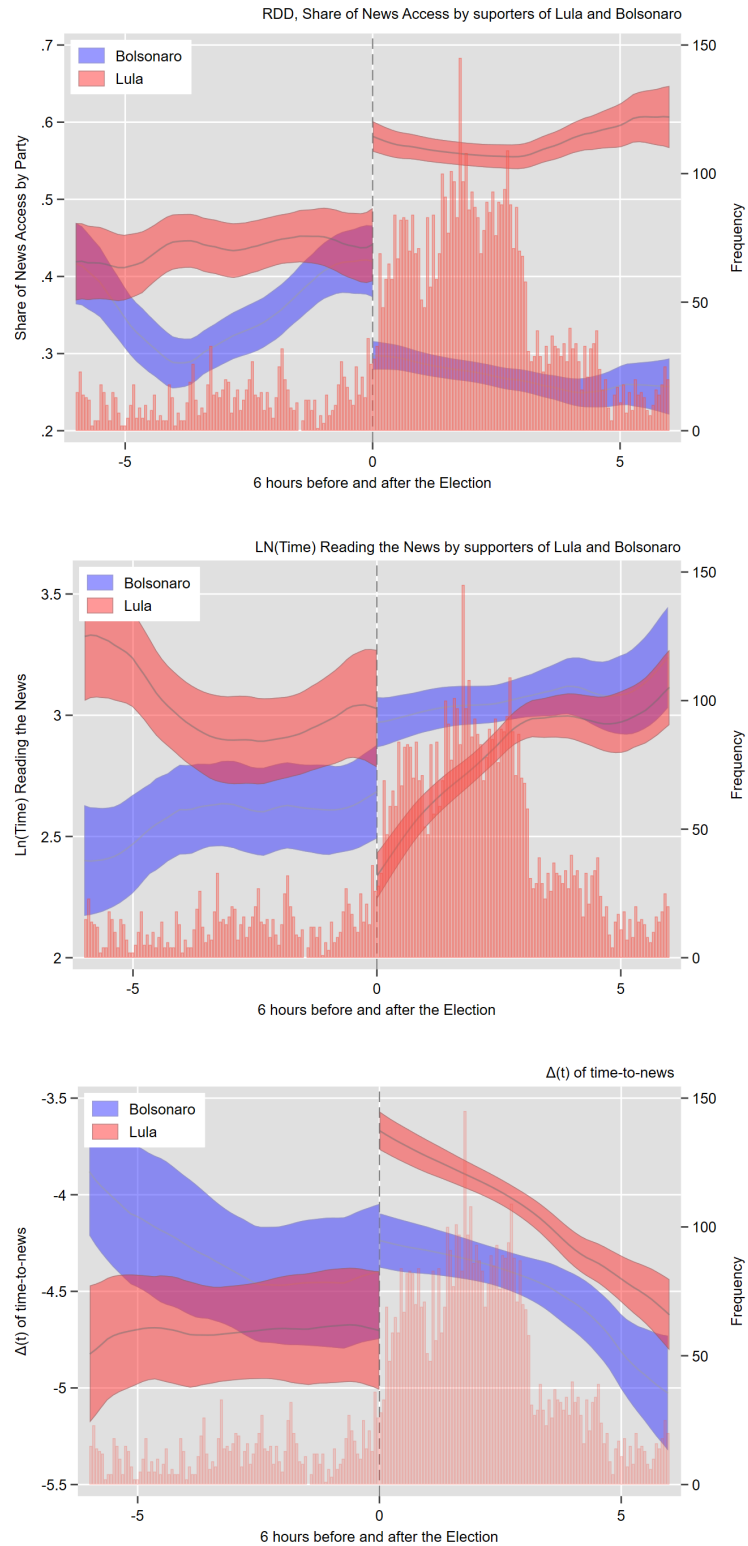
We first present results from the interrupted time series analyses on the sample of 39,360 news articles accessed by the 1,714 survey respondents, as described in Section two. Figure 2 and Table 2 present robust regression discontinuity estimates of news access,

time-to-news, and reading time for Bolsonaro and Lula voters in the hours before and after the reporting of the election results. As shown in the first two columns of Table 2, the share of news accessed by Lula voters increases .17, from around 42% of all news to 59%, compared to a decline in the share of news accessed by Bolsonaro voters, which declined from a share of 40% to approximately 30% of news. The relative share of news accessed by independents declined from around 18% to 11%, as reported in the SIF file. In all, Lula supporters increase the frequency of news access much faster than all other survey respondents, confirming H_2 .

Columns 5 and 6 of Table 2 also show a faster time-to-news $\ln(\frac{1}{\Delta_t})$ describing a faster news surfing behavior. We coded time-to-news as the inverse of the time elapsed between a respondent accessed news articles, $\ln(\frac{1}{\Delta_t})$. Therefore, a positive number describes that a respondent was quicker to access a second news article (inverse of the duration time). We can see that when the election results were reported to the public, Lula voters accessed news articles 3.4 times faster ($\exp(1.227) = 3.4$ times faster). In contrast, Bolsonaro voters did not alter their news access behavior. Therefore, there is clear support for a faster time to news as stated in H_1 .

Finally, Columns 3 and 4 of Table 2 show that Lula voters spent less time reading each news article while Bolsonaro voters spent more time in each article. Therefore, while Lula voters move quickly from article to article and quickly scan their content, Bolsonaro voters access fewer articles and spend more time on each of them. This type of behavior is consistent with cognitive congruence on the part of Lula voters and dissonance among Bolsonaro voters as described by (Schaffner and Roche, 2016), as expected by H_3 . Figure 2 provides a visual representation of the findings in Table 2, with a narrower window of 6 hours before and after the reporting of election results. The upper plot provides support for H_2 , showing the large and significant increase in the share of news accessed by Lula supporters compared to Bolsonaro supporters. The middle plot supports H_3 , with a

Figure 2 Robust Regression Discontinuity by vote choice, reading time, and Time-to-News. Brazilian Presidential Elections, 2023



(a) Share of News (b) Reading Time (c) Time-to-News

Table 2 Robust Regression Discontinuity by vote choice, reading time, and Time-to-News. Brazilian Presidential Elections, 2023.

VARIABLES	(1) News Access (Bolsonaro)	(2) News Access (Lula)	(3) Reading time (Bolsonaro)	(4) Reading Time (Lula)	(5) $1/\Delta_t$ (Bolsonaro)	(6) $1/\Delta_t$ (Lula)
Conventional	-0.102** (0.0425)	0.170*** (0.0432)	0.108 (0.187)	-1.080*** (0.217)	0.0535 (0.338)	1.384*** (0.304)
Bias-corrected	-0.0900** (0.0425)	0.184*** (0.0432)	0.0358 (0.187)	-1.153*** (0.217)	-0.0246 (0.338)	1.314*** (0.304)
Robust	-0.0900* (0.0498)	0.184*** (0.0497)	0.0358 (0.219)	-1.153*** (0.245)	-0.0246 (0.380)	1.314*** (0.354)
Observations	7,315	7,315	2,139	3,937	2,108	3,899

Note: Robust Regression discontinuity design (Calonico et al., 2014) comparing news access, reading time (Duration), and time-to-news $\ln(\frac{1}{\Delta_t})$ before and after the election (12 hours). Results show an increase in news searches, a faster time to news access, and faster reading times among Lula supporters. In contrast, there is a relative decline in news consumption and no changes in reading time or surfing time among Bolsonaro voters. Standard errors in parentheses, *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

longer reading time per article for Bolsonaro voters and shorter reading times for Lula supporters. Finally, the lower plot supports H_1 , which shows a faster time to news among Lula voters than Bolsonaro voters. Together, these three plots describe the expected change in behavior, with fast browsing and shallow reading times for a larger number of Lula voters reading news. In contrast, a smaller group of Bolsonaro voters has slower access to news and longer reading times. The confirmation of these three hypotheses is consistent with motivated reasoning aligned with cognitively congruent election results for Lula voters and dissonant for Bolsonaro voters.

Modeling News Consumption using Time-to-News, Δ_t

In the previous section, we provided support for H_1 , H_2 , and H_3 , describing changes in online behavior when the election results were publicly reported. We showed that Lula supporters accessed more news, spent less time on each news, and moved quickly to the next news. In contrast, Bolsonaro supporters accessed less news, spent more time

on each news, and moved slower between news. We now focus on the larger context of news consumption during the four days before and after the election. We describe users' overall behavior (all interactions) and how they arrived at the news they consume, with particular attention to social media redirects (H_4).

All models in this next section estimate Cox proportional hazard survival models with a dependent variable describing access time-to-digital event (browsing speed or Δ_t). We measure the number of seconds elapsed between each pair of digital trace events, with shorter times indicating more frequent access to the different types of digital events. Given that Cox Proportional Hazard models return hazard rate coefficients, with positive estimates indicating faster time to access, coefficients have the same direction as those reported in the RDD tables.⁵ Coefficients in Tables 4 through 7 describe the change in the hazard rate, with positive values indicating faster access time and negative values indicating slower access times.

Measuring the time-to-digital event for all the data allows us to measure deviations in speed for relevant news consumption products, such as news. Each respondent has a click rate from an event in time 0 to an event in time 1. An election shock alters this click rate, with increases in speed for desirable products, such as news for the winners. The instantaneous change in speed can also be modeled as a function of gateway digital trace events, such as messenger applications. Therefore, we can observe if respondents are faster or slower in accessing news when the users' previous digital event reads their WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook apps, or any other type of social interaction that may redirect traffic to the news.

Table 3 reports the estimates for all digital access interactions (left column) and news access (right column). Estimates show a 1.3% faster access to digital activity (i.e. $\exp(0.013) = 1.0131$) and a 14% faster access to news.⁶ Considering all 2.5 million events

⁵The hazard rate of time-to-news in seconds Δ_t in Cox Proportional Hazard models has the same direction as $\ln(\frac{1}{\Delta_t})$ in the linear RDD specification.

⁶From now on, when reporting the change in the hazard rate of the covariates using exponentiated

during the week, we observe that Bolsonaro supporters are more engaged (7.4% faster access to digital content or $\exp(0.072)$) and more actively consumed news (34% faster access to news or $\exp(0.310)$). The interaction between Election Night and Bolsonaro voters shows a decrease in the hazard rate of 34%, erasing the overall advantage in news access observed in the previous days. Therefore, the survival models present results consistent with the RDD models, confirming the higher time to consume news on election day for Lula supporters and the decline for Bolsonaro supporters (H_1 and H_2).

An interesting result is described by the quadratic ideology parameters, showing an increase in overall digital consumption by centrist respondents and an increase in news consumption by more extreme respondents. Readers can see that the effect of ideology is an inverse U-shape for all interactions (i.e., negative for *ideology* and positive for *ideology*²) and U-shaped for news consumption (i.e., positive for *ideology* and negative for *ideology*²). Therefore, non-ideologues have a larger digital fingerprint but consume fewer news articles. Meanwhile, ideologues are less active as users but consume more news. Results also show that anti-PT users are more digitally active and consume more news than all other users.

We also analyze the relationship between agreement to social issues and engagement with news. Respondents aligned with more progressive stances exhibited a quicker engagement with news. Notably, individuals who support unisex bathrooms (1.92%), same-sex marriage (3.87%), oppose church tax exemptions (1.88%), favor public health (1.00%), support abortion rights (5.13%), and favors state efforts to reduce racial inequality (5.13%) access news significantly faster compared to all their interactions online. Interestingly, trust in WhatsApp affects the immediacy of news consumption about 9.85% faster.

the coefficients in each table

Table 3 Cox Proportional-Hazards Model: Seconds to News with Social Issues Alignment

	All Interactions	News
Election Night	−0.013*** (0.005)	0.132*** (0.023)
Whatsapp (Previous interaction)	−0.436*** (0.002)	−0.450*** (0.037)
Political Preferences		
Bolsonaro	0.072*** (0.003)	0.310*** (0.036)
Election Night * Bolsonaro	0.047*** (0.008)	−0.310*** (0.043)
Blank	−0.028*** (0.003)	0.226*** (0.026)
Ideology	0.111*** (0.002)	−0.066*** (0.021)
Ideology ²	−0.017*** (0.0002)	0.007*** (0.002)
Anti-PT	0.063*** (0.002)	0.110*** (0.032)
Social Issues Alignment		
Favors Unisex Bathroom	−0.016*** (0.001)	0.019*** (0.007)
Favors Same-sex marriage	0.025*** (0.001)	0.038*** (0.011)
Favors Same-sex adoption	−0.018*** (0.001)	−0.002 (0.010)
Favors church tax exemption	−0.005*** (0.001)	−0.019*** (0.006)
Not favor of public health	0.015*** (0.001)	−0.010** (0.005)
Distrusts Facebook	−0.005*** (0.001)	−0.0005 (0.013)
Distrusts Whatsapp	−0.016*** (0.001)	−0.094*** (0.011)
Favors democracy	0.017*** (0.001)	−0.019** (0.008)
Favors state reducing economic inequality	0.047*** (0.001)	−0.068*** (0.009)
Brazil favors criminals	0.010*** (0.001)	0.010 (0.007)
Favors abortion	0.007*** (0.001)	0.050*** (0.006)
No racism in Brazil	−0.026*** (0.001)	−0.010 (0.007)
Favors state reducing racial inequality	−0.042*** (0.001)	0.050*** (0.009)

Table 3 (cont.) Cox Proportional-Hazards Model: Seconds to News with Socio-Demographic variables

	All Interactions	News
Personal Characteristics		
Age	0.003*** (0.0001)	-0.009*** (0.001)
Gender(F)	-0.060*** (0.002)	-0.013 (0.015)
Education	-0.012*** (0.0004)	0.002 (0.004)
Income	0.0002 (0.0004)	0.022*** (0.004)
Additional Information		
N	1666633	24543
R-squared	0.036	0.056
Max. R-squared	1.000	1.000
Log Likelihood	-22179864.000	-222839.700
Wald Test (df = 25)	56018.530***	1379.100***
LR Test (df = 25)	60443.290***	1416.758***
Score (Logrank) Test (df = 25)	56645.690***	1394.503***
***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1		

Note: Cox Proportional Hazard Survival models. Positive estimates describe an increase in the hazard rate that, in our models, describes a faster time to the digital event. Model "All Interactions" considers all digital activity. Model "News" considers only the time to access news events. Standard errors in parentheses, *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Model results also show a slower time-to-news consumption rate among those who favor democracy, about 1.88% slower. Similarly, those who identify as Anti-PT, that is, those who present negative partisanship towards Lula's party, are faster to access news compared to their other interactions, about 6.50% faster. Despite these findings, the overall data show that individuals with more progressive stances tend to access news quicker. Thus, evidence supports the expectation that partisan winners engage faster with news.

Table 4 provides insights into individuals' news engagement patterns based on previous online interactions, emphasizing social media platforms and search engines like *Google*. These online platforms were selected from the most frequented websites and applications

identified in the digital trace data. Notably, despite its global popularity, *TikTok* had a limited presence in our dataset, especially when considering the subsequent navigation to news websites from it. In contrast, *Kwai*, a short-video platform targeting an older demographic than *TikTok*, showed a significant presence in our data.

Overall, participants transitioning from social media took longer to access news compared to those with different previous online activities. Given the heightened news engagement observed during this period, this trend suggests that users were directly and actively accessing news websites rather than being redirected through shared links or online searches. Users who migrated from Google, probably searching for news using that platform, were also notably faster.

Our analysis reveals that *Instagram*, *Twitter*, and *Telegram*, platforms where users can curate their interactions and the information they consume, significantly delay the transition to news consumption. *Instagram* interactions slow down news access by about 62% (i.e. $t_{base} * \exp(-.965) = 1 - 0.38$), *Twitter* slows down access by approximately 36%, and *Telegram* by 54%. This suggests that users remain on these platforms for considerably longer than average before reaching news sources.

We now focus our attention on these behaviors that are correlated to vote choice. Table 5 explores how individual stances on social issues, combined with their voting preference, relate to news engagement. When analyzing behaviors by candidate support, we find distinct patterns in how Lula and Bolsonaro voters accessed news on election night. Lula voters showed a significant increase in speed (15.5%), indicating a heightened engagement driven by the favorable election outcome. On the other hand, Bolsonaro voters not only accessed general digital content slightly faster (1.8%) but experienced a considerable slowdown in news access (16.1%). This divergence suggests that Bolsonaro voters were more hesitant or selective in engaging with news on election night due to discontent with the election results.

Table 4 Cox Proportional-Hazards Model: Seconds to News by Previous Interaction Online

	All Interactions	News
Election Night	−0.010** (0.004)	0.075*** (0.020)
Online TV	0.097*** (0.007)	−0.174*** (0.027)
Previous Interaction Online		
Whatsapp	−0.511*** (0.002)	−0.538*** (0.032)
Instagram	−0.514*** (0.003)	−0.965*** (0.062)
Facebook	−0.246*** (0.003)	−0.381*** (0.037)
Twitter	−0.250*** (0.006)	−0.452*** (0.065)
Google	0.095*** (0.003)	0.317*** (0.024)
Youtube	−0.214*** (0.003)	0.069** (0.029)
Telegram	−0.398*** (0.010)	−0.783*** (0.289)
Kwai	−0.915*** (0.009)	−1.173*** (0.162)
Political Preferences		
Bolsonaro	0.015*** (0.002)	0.006 (0.024)
Election Night * Bolsonaro	0.030*** (0.007)	−0.206*** (0.037)
Blank	−0.034*** (0.002)	−0.012 (0.019)
Ideology	0.105*** (0.002)	−0.033** (0.014)
Ideology ²	−0.015*** (0.0002)	0.007*** (0.002)
Anti-PT	0.059*** (0.002)	0.094*** (0.019)
Personal Characteristics		
Age	0.00005 (0.0001)	−0.011*** (0.0005)
Gender(F)	−0.072*** (0.001)	0.046*** (0.012)
Education	−0.008*** (0.0003)	0.009*** (0.003)
Income	0.004*** (0.0003)	0.016*** (0.003)
Additional Information		
N	2282275	35029
R-squared	0.053	0.055
Max. R-squared	1.000	1.000
Log Likelihood	−31070246.0	−330524.7
Wald Test (df = 20)	113649.9***	1839.2***
LR Test (df = 20)	123105.5***	1987.02***
Score (Logrank) Test (df = 20)	116102.6***	1881.888***

***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1

For Lula voters, significant increases in news access speeds were observed for those favoring unisex bathrooms (2.1%), same-sex marriage (11.2%), and public health policies (2.3%). These results demonstrate that Lula voters engage more quickly with news that reflects their progressive views on LGBTQ+ rights and healthcare, aligning with their broader political and social preferences.

In contrast, Bolsonaro voters show a complex pattern in their news access speeds. Those who support progressive issues such as same-sex marriage (4.7%) and abortion (8.6%) access news faster, indicating that Bolsonaro voters with more progressive views are quicker to access information. However, those less favorable to democratic principles exhibit a significant slowdown in accessing news (12.7%). This slowdown indicates a reluctance or hesitation to engage with news sources, suggesting a selective engagement.

Table 6 elucidates the role of prior online interactions in shaping news engagement in light of a voter's preferred candidate. Post-election, with Lula's triumph and Bolsonaro's defeat, the observed trends contradict our initial hypotheses H_{3a} and H_{3b} .

On election night, Lula and Bolsonaro voters exhibited a slight increase in general digital interactions (1.1% faster for Lula and 1.2% faster for Bolsonaro), reflecting a small uptick in digital engagement due to the election. However, their engagement with news content diverged. Lula voters accessed news 6.7% faster, while Bolsonaro voters accessed news 15.7% slower.

For Lula voters, interactions with social media platforms like *WhatsApp* and *Instagram* led to significantly slower access to news, decreasing by 39.6% and 60.8%, respectively. *Facebook* and *Twitter* also showed considerable slowdowns in news access, by 36.9% and 35.4% respectively. However, users directed to news from *Google* increased news access speed by 53.0%.

Similarly, Bolsonaro voters experienced slowdowns in news access following interactions with key social media platforms, with *Instagram* and *Twitter* showing the most

Table 5 Cox Proportional-Hazards Model: Seconds to News with Social Issues Alignment by Vote

	All Interactions		News	
	Lula	Bolsonaro	Lula	Bolsonaro
Election Night	0.001 (0.005)	0.018*** (0.006)	0.144*** (0.026)	−0.175*** (0.035)
Whatsapp (Previous Interaction)	−0.408*** (0.003)	−0.409*** (0.004)	−0.393*** (0.048)	−0.443*** (0.068)
Ideology	0.050*** (0.003)	0.280*** (0.007)	−0.039 (0.035)	−0.230** (0.102)
Ideology ²	−0.008*** (0.0004)	−0.036*** (0.001)	0.008 (0.006)	0.026*** (0.009)
Social Issues Alignment				
Favors Unisex Bathroom	−0.007*** (0.001)	−0.047*** (0.001)	0.021** (0.008)	0.079*** (0.016)
Favors Same-sex marriage	0.008*** (0.002)	0.064*** (0.001)	0.112*** (0.026)	0.047*** (0.014)
Favors Same-sex adoption	−0.008*** (0.002)	−0.043*** (0.001)	−0.009 (0.019)	−0.025* (0.015)
Favors church tax exemption	−0.007*** (0.001)	−0.001 (0.001)	−0.040*** (0.009)	0.010 (0.012)
Not favor of public health	0.014*** (0.001)	0.010*** (0.001)	−0.023** (0.009)	−0.0001 (0.008)
Distrusts Facebook	0.034*** (0.002)	−0.051*** (0.002)	−0.007 (0.019)	0.076*** (0.026)
Distrusts Whatsapp	−0.012*** (0.001)	−0.028*** (0.002)	−0.074*** (0.014)	−0.167*** (0.024)
Favors democracy	0.054*** (0.001)	−0.012*** (0.001)	0.008 (0.018)	−0.136*** (0.012)
Favors state reducing economic inequality	0.052*** (0.002)	0.064*** (0.001)	−0.002 (0.021)	−0.065*** (0.014)
Brazil favors criminals	−0.027*** (0.001)	0.039*** (0.001)	−0.018* (0.010)	0.017 (0.012)
Favors abortion	0.007*** (0.001)	0.012*** (0.001)	−0.010 (0.010)	0.086*** (0.011)
No racism in Brazil	0.003*** (0.001)	−0.037*** (0.001)	0.076*** (0.011)	−0.017 (0.012)
Favors state reducing racial inequality	−0.079*** (0.002)	−0.024*** (0.001)	−0.011 (0.017)	0.033** (0.014)

Table 5 (cont.) Cox Proportional-Hazards Model: Seconds to News with Social Issues Alignment by Vote

	All Week		Election Night	
	Lula	Bolsonaro	Lula	Bolsonaro
Personal Characteristics				
Age	−0.001*** (0.0001)	0.010*** (0.0001)	−0.013*** (0.001)	−0.001 (0.001)
Gender(F)	−0.093*** (0.002)	0.040*** (0.003)	−0.224*** (0.023)	0.164*** (0.031)
Education	−0.002*** (0.001)	−0.019*** (0.001)	0.015** (0.007)	−0.020** (0.008)
Income	0.018*** (0.001)	−0.030*** (0.001)	−0.0003 (0.007)	−0.014* (0.008)
Additional Information				
N	798465	627536	10921	10111
R-squared	0.034	0.070	0.049	0.097
Max. R-squared	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Log Likelihood	−10039280.0	−7726875.0	−90359.98	−82614.6
Wald Test (df = 21)	25703.9***	44440.540***	554.8***	1001.6***
LR Test (df = 21)	27517.8***	45846.9***	545.7***	1034.6***
Score (Logrank) Test (df = 21)	25960.9***	44742.0***	556.9***	1028.8***

***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1

pronounced effects, reducing news access speed by 61.9% and 52.6%, respectively. The impact was more severe compared to Lula voters. Unlike Lula voters, the positive effect of *Google* on news access for Bolsonaro voters was less pronounced, increasing speed by only 20.8%.

Our research has revealed a relationship between news consumption, ideological predispositions, and electoral results. Our findings did not support our social media hypotheses. Surprisingly, both groups were slower to access news on social media. However, Bolsonaro’s supporters, the losers, stayed longer on social media before moving to the news, suggesting that they preferred to consume information in environments where they could control what they received and interact with partisans. On the other hand, Lula’s supporters, the winners, proactively sought information online. This direct engagement with primary news sources strengthens the heightened engagement sparked by the electoral outcomes. Our research suggests that victorious voters consume news more often and quickly after elections, while defeated voters tend to retract.

One limitation of our examination is that television was a primary source of updates for many individuals during election night. This observation was supported by our interviews, where a majority mentioned using television to stay informed about the vote count. While our Clickstream data doesn’t directly indicate television viewership, it does provide insights into engagement with online TV news broadcasts. Our analysis revealed a spike in online TV news consumption on election night, notably among those who supported Lula. However, engagement with online news sources was slower on election night. Still, despite the proliferation of online platforms, traditional television remains an important source for election results.

Table 6 Cox Proportional-Hazards Model: Seconds to News by Previous Interaction Online and Vote

	All Interactions		News	
	Lula	Bolsonaro	Lula	Bolsonaro
Election Night	0.011** (0.004)	0.012** (0.005)	0.065*** (0.022)	-0.171*** (0.030)
Online TV	0.140*** (0.010)	0.033** (0.014)	-0.267*** (0.040)	-0.135*** (0.046)
Ideology	0.074*** (0.002)	0.271*** (0.006)	-0.109*** (0.018)	-0.009 (0.070)
Ideology ²	-0.011*** (0.0003)	-0.032*** (0.001)	0.020*** (0.003)	0.003 (0.006)
Previous Interaction Online				
Whatsapp	-0.525*** (0.003)	-0.475*** (0.003)	-0.504*** (0.041)	-0.549*** (0.053)
Instagram	-0.591*** (0.004)	-0.377*** (0.005)	-0.937*** (0.073)	-0.965*** (0.123)
Facebook	-0.462*** (0.005)	-0.027*** (0.004)	-0.462*** (0.052)	-0.398*** (0.063)
Twitter	-0.357*** (0.007)	-0.299*** (0.015)	-0.438*** (0.070)	-0.747*** (0.205)
Google	0.111*** (0.005)	0.074*** (0.006)	0.425*** (0.037)	0.189*** (0.038)
Youtube	-0.340*** (0.005)	-0.130*** (0.004)	0.034 (0.046)	0.001 (0.049)
Telegram	-0.351*** (0.013)	-0.463*** (0.017)	-0.467 (0.448)	-0.808** (0.409)
Kwai	-0.954*** (0.013)	-0.844*** (0.014)	-1.259*** (0.209)	-1.078*** (0.268)
Personal Characteristics				
Age	-0.003*** (0.0001)	0.005*** (0.0001)	-0.012*** (0.001)	-0.009*** (0.001)
Gender(F)	-0.096*** (0.002)	-0.004* (0.002)	-0.096*** (0.019)	0.194*** (0.019)
Education	-0.006*** (0.001)	-0.008*** (0.001)	0.008 (0.005)	-0.014*** (0.005)
Income	0.021*** (0.0005)	-0.018*** (0.001)	0.002 (0.004)	-0.008 (0.005)
Additional Information				
N	1087660	899838	16724	13866
R-squared	0.065	0.052	0.062	0.044
Max. R-squared	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Log Likelihood	-13993546.000	-11413091.000	-145381.800	-118070.900
Wald Test (df = 16)	68722.880***	44215.070***	1001.200***	562.000***
LR Test (df = 16)	73549.200***	47661.210***	1068.443***	623.027***
Score (Logrank) Test (df = 16)	70334.860***	44926.190***	1023.998***	574.769***

*** p < .01; ** p < .05; * p < .1

4 Sofia, Thiago, Rayssa, and Felipe

In September 2023, we conducted in-depth interviews to complement our IRB-approved survey and browsing history analyses. Conversations with voters sought to provide first-hand information on how partisan individuals search for news, connecting the statistical results to personal narratives. Through these interviews, we explored the news sources favored by partisans, how users balance analogic and digital news sources, and the underlying motivations that drive access to political news. Our interviewees spanned a diverse spectrum of political affiliations and age groups. Here, we focus on Sofia L., Thiago P., Rayssa F., and Felipe P; who brought unique perspectives, adding depth and nuance to our broader understanding of news consumption in contemporary Brazil.

Sofia, Thiago, Rayssa, and Felipe have diverse backgrounds and distinct views of how news informs their political views. Their detailed answers offer a comprehensive picture of how Brazilian voters engage with information, especially during critical moments like elections. They consume analogic and digital news and exemplify the multifaceted experiences of voters in today’s polarized Brazilian society. ⁷

Sofia L., an 18-year-old college student who voted for Lula, emphasizes the pivotal role of the internet and social networks in her decision to search for news. She relies heavily on social media, particularly Twitter (“I think Twitter, because of the trending topics [tab]”) and Instagram, despite the high “prevalence of fake news during elections,” as she points out. Sofia highlights that she has watched a documentary about social media bias, “The Social Dilemma,” which made her acutely aware of her online navigation. Reflecting on her experience watching the show, Sofia said, “I think [users] are totally influenceable,

⁷For this article, we focus on four in-depth interviews with partisans who voted for Lula or Bolsonaro. This decision seeks to align the in-depth interviews with the survey and browsing data described in the quantitative section. Other interviewees, such as Mariana R. and Eduardo F., provide insightful perspectives of non-partisan voters. Mariana, self-identifying as center-right, opted for a blank vote, while Eduardo’s right-wing self-description contrasted with his vote for Lula. In this article, we narrowed our qualitative analysis to partisans who voted for candidates aligned with their preferences: Sofia, Thiago, Rayssa, and Felipe.

especially if you don't know how to discern what is really correct, right? I've already seen that documentary on Netflix called 'The Social Dilemma.' So, at least I know that the internet is unreliable and that it directs you to some tabs, right? So, I think they are highly influential for people who do not know about it. And I think some things are completely wrong, you really have to confirm them, look at different sources to ensure that the news is true, you know? Yes, a lot of fake news appeared during the election."

While Sofia relies on social media for news, she also values other more traditional sources of information, crediting her mother, an active member of political groups aligned with the PT (Partido dos Trabalhadores/Workers' Party), for keeping her informed about political matters: "[...]because my mother watches a lot about politics, she is always watching television, always looking for [news]. She is part of several political groups related to the PT." This dual approach to information underscores the diversity of her news sources, combining modern digital platforms with traditional media outlets.

Rayssa F., a 32-year-old Bolsonaro supporter, also relies on online sources for accessing news, highlighting the accuracy and reliability of these online sources. She seeks out traditional Brazilian news websites like *Uol* and *globo.com*, underscoring her commitment to staying well-informed through credible sources: "For news [and] more information about politics and everyday life, the source is Google, right? Uol and globo.com." Rayssa F. frequently visits news websites to stay informed in her everyday routine. In addition to websites, she uses Instagram and WhatsApp for lighter information, emphasizing the role of these platforms in searching for news. Rayssa F. frequently accessed Instagram and more traditional newspaper websites during elections to stay updated. Rayssa F. also sought to verify the accuracy of the news she accessed and noted that she was unlikely to change her views when reading news on social media.

Thiago P., a 27-year-old who voted for Lula, stated that he had a nuanced approach to news, staying well-informed while maintaining his critical perspective. He combined

foreign traditional media to improve his English skills and a critical eye regarding social media's polarized nature, especially regarding political events. Thiago P. leans slightly to the left and prefers to use social platforms like LinkedIn, for professional purposes only, avoiding pages he perceives as strongly biased: "There are some social networks that I know have more politicized biases[...], favoring one side or the other. And I kind of try to avoid it". He cited examples such as Jovem Pan, which he found to be "completely skewed to the right," and Mídia Ninja, which he described as "very biased towards the left."

During highly charged political moments, Thiago P. seeks to distance himself from social media and prefers traditional news shows on television. However, his apprehension about a possible coup led him to follow the news online and on TV closely. "I think it was just this apprehension, like, whether there would be a coup here or not, even though I didn't think there would be one". Thiago P. recalled that "there was an event that was talked about a lot that day, [a] problem with the PRF (Federal Highway Police), where they said that there could be an annulment [of the election] and that there was fraud." His high engagement on election day reflects his commitment to staying well-informed during what he deemed as crucial political events.

Felipe P., a 42-year-old lawyer, is a staunch Bolsonaro supporter who leans significantly to the right on the political spectrum. He represents another intriguing facet of how Brazilians consume political news. Unlike Sofia, Rayssa, and Thiago, Felipe places his utmost trust in social media for information, believing that these platforms have revolutionized how he stays informed about political and electoral events in Brazil. Felipe states that 99% of his news consumption is digital, primarily Instagram. He notes that his reliance on digital platforms transformed how he stays informed about political events.

When discussing last year's election, Felipe's perspective highlights the importance of his conservative views: "I tell you this as a conservative, which I consider myself to be." Felipe acknowledged that he had already formed his perception before the election

events and highlighted the negative role of the judiciary in addressing the election process: “The higher courts, whether STJ or STF, did not discuss the facts or the evidence.” Felipe expressed his frustration with the outcome: “The bad thing is that I already expected this [outcome].” His skepticism about the election’s outcome was influenced by prior events, such as the judicial investigations earlier in 2022: “It all goes together, understand? I just connected the dots in my head” and, without being asked or prompted, expressed his discontent with President Lula: “I didn’t vote for the PT. I’ve never voted for the PT. I find it absurd for a guy to be a quote-and-quote ‘leader.’ He is not [a leader] of the Workers’ Party; without ever having worked, he never worked. That’s the truth, he walked around, no, he never worked. He lost his finger there in the machine to retire due to disability. That’s what he did, in my view. A person who talks about education. I think it’s ridiculous. I am not belittling him, no. Many people without a degree know much more than we do. This is a fact. You know? But to put a person who, I don’t know, doesn’t have any primary education, who can’t speak his language, to preside over a nation with 200 million inhabitants, I find it a bit absurd.”

On Election Night, our interviewees pointed out that television emerged as the primary and most trusted source for real-time ballot count updates. Sofia L. noted, “I watched the TV. It’s more about monitoring the polls, right, how do you say? The result? It’s because Globo did it, you know?”. Mariana R. emphasized her preference for Globo, particularly the Sunday night news program ‘Fantástico.’ “We ended up watching it a lot; I kept a close eye on it because it was the real number,” she explained. Mariana highlighted the trustworthiness of television over other digital media: “That day, I preferred to listen to [the results] on TV, from the most reliable source I had at that time.” Meanwhile, Thiago P., despite some reservations about the political climate, stated: “It was just to monitor the result, right? That anxiety to find out who will win.” Their collective insights underscore the pivotal role television played during this crucial time.

Sofia, Thiago, Rayssa, and Felipe exemplify how we search for news when the election outcome aligns with our preferences. Sofia and Thiago, both Lula supporters, were proactive in searching for news and remained engaged on Election Day. Sofia was active on social media, browsing the internet and watching television to keep herself informed in real time. Despite his initial reservations regarding social media, Thiago kept actively abreast of the unfolding events and highlighted his search for news that addressed his concern for the *Federal Highway Patrol* controversy. In contrast, Felipe, a staunch Bolsonaro advocate, exuded a sense of pre-emptive frustration, suggesting he had a foreseen understanding of the election outcome and the lack of quality information on election day. Meanwhile, Rayssa, another Bolsonaro supporter, focused on the importance of traditional online sources of news information while remaining less engaged with her community of peers.

The interviews vividly describe news consumption incentives for the election winners and losers in a politically divided environment.

5 Discussion

“The peak of searches for *Lula* in the world was recorded at 7:56 pm on Sunday (30), close to the time he was declared president-elect by the Superior Electoral Court (TSE).”⁸ This surge in attention, however, should vary with the partisan identity of the respondents, attention to politics, and other attitudinal and contextual variables. This article describes how the demand for news changes on election day and its connection to motivated reasoning, a type of winner-loser gap that has received less attention from political behavior scholars.

⁸“O pico de pesquisas por Lula no mundo foi registrado às 19h56 do domingo (30), perto do horário no qual ele foi declarado eleito pelo Tribunal Superior Eleitoral (TSE).” Source: <https://g1.globo.com/tecnologia/noticia/2022/10/31/lula-e-a-personalidade-mais-buscada-do-mundo-no-google-nas-ultimas-24h.ghtml>

While voters of all parties engage in motivated reasoning, our findings underscore that exogenous positive shocks, such as winning an election, increase news consumption. Building on previous research, our hypotheses predicted that election winners would be more active in searching for news. Our findings support this, showing Lula voters as more engaged on Election Night. Bolsonaro supporters, especially those with opposing views on democracy, reduced news engagement after the election.

The relationship between more progressive and conservative attitudes and news engagement partly aligns with our theoretical expectations. Respondents with more progressive views on important social issues, such as marriage equality and abortion, engaged with news more swiftly on election night. Yet, Bolsonaro supporters who held progressive views on LGBTQ+ policies and abortion were also faster to seek information.

Lula and Bolsonaro voters were slower in accessing news from social media platforms. Moreover, Bolsonaro supporters were more wary of leaving these platforms than Lula voters. The heightened speed of Lula voters who sought information on *Google* indicates that this group was inclined to search for information online directly. This direct approach to primary news sources, as opposed to shared links or search outcomes, underscores the increased engagement driven by the election's result.

While the quantitative data provide detailed insights, the rich narratives from Sofia, Thiago, Rayssa, and Felipe provide examples of how these variations occurred outside online navigation. Their diverse backgrounds and unique ways of interfacing with news during the election bring to the fore the multifaceted nature of news consumption. Whether it's Sofia's dual reliance on social media and her politically active mother or Felipe's profound trust in social media, their narratives add layers of depth, bridging the macro-level patterns with individual experiences.

The narratives also provide insights into news consumption beyond our data. The balance between digital and analogic sources and the varying degrees of trust placed in

different mediums emerges as a pivotal theme. While our analyses cover extensive ground regarding online news consumption, the absence of an examination of traditional media consumption is a significant caveat. The reports from our interviewees, particularly their preference for television during crucial moments like election night, highlight this gap.

Our research on news consumption behaviors during the 2022 Brazilian election revealed that opposing partisans demonstrate different levels of attention toward news. We found that losers tended to retract their attention from online news as the official election results came in, while winners remained attentive throughout the election night. Furthermore, our study revealed that social media and policy alignment played a significant role in determining the speed of user news access. As digital information platforms expand, future research should explore how these news sources and analog ones coexist, as revealed by our interviewees. Our findings suggest that future investigations could expand our understanding of the changing news sources and their impact on democratic engagement.

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