



# YOUTH VOTER REGISTRATION COSTS & CHALLENGES BRAZIL

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# Voting is compulsory in Brazil for anyone aged 18 to 69. Besides a small monetary fine of less than a euro, those who fail to vote face restrictions in securing public sector jobs, enrolling in public universities and obtaining or renewing passports.

Although many people may never face these penalties, the psychological effect of compulsory voting has contributed to a high average voter turnout of around 80% since the 1990s. Voter registration is relatively easy, with the three main barriers being the time required to visit an electoral service unit (particularly challenging for those living in isolated rural areas), the need to take time off from work or school (permission is not always easy to obtain) and transportation costs. The combined effect of the legal requirement to vote, the relatively straightforward registration process and high participation rates is that data on the electorate closely matches census data for most age cohorts. Consequently, the campaigns conducted by the electoral authority and civil society organisations target individuals aged 16 and 17 for whom voting is optional. Brazil is a relatively new democracy, but one where the younger generations have no direct experience of the former military dictatorship, which ended in 1985. As a result, many younger voters take democracy for granted and, faced with the economic downturns of the last decade, undervalue the importance of participation in politics. Hence, get-out-the-vote campaigns for young people are crucial not only for the country's democratic prospects but also for the

formation of individual citizens. When 16- and 17-year-olds understand the value of political participation, they are more likely to develop into active adult citizens, aware of their rights and capable of demanding better services from public authorities.

The Superior Electoral Court (Tribunal Superior Eleitoral - TSE), Brazil's highest authority on electoral matters, conducts annual campaigns for youth registration that run until May in electoral years – elections are held in October. In 2022, a broad, multi-organisational campaign with significant civil society participation contributed to historically high rates of first-time voter registration. At that time, political polarisation was at its peak, and this served as a catalyst for this unprecedented engagement of civil society organisations (CSOs) in voter registration. Using social media, colloquial language, Brazilian funk music and memes along with the endorsement of public figures with youth appeal – from Brazilian pop star Anitta to Hollywood actor Mark Ruffalo – the campaign successfully reversed the post-2010 trend of declining teenage interest in voting. A total of 2,116,781 people aged 16 and 17 registered to vote, a 50% increase over the 2018 presidential election.

However, one element that contributed to this surge in registration is no longer available. From the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 until 2023, the TSE implemented an online voter registration portal, TítuloNet, which allowed voters to register online, overcoming major barriers to youth participation. This portal, costing a fraction of the TSE's annual budget, made registration easier, especially for those accustomed to digital technology. The reason given for its discontinuation is the necessity to record voter biometrics at the moment of registration, but technological solutions, such as the use of smartphones for face capture or fingerprint registration at the moment of the first vote could overcome this. For the 2024 municipal elections, voters will only have the option of in-person registration.

This case study explains the voter registration process in Brazil, highlights both good and bad voter registration and transparency practices and draws lessons from the successful voter registration campaign organised in 2022.

# Background

The voter register is permanent and is maintained by the TSE, which is composed of justices from various organs of the judiciary. The electoral justice authority<sup>1</sup> also comprises state-level regional electoral tribunals, *Tribunais Regionais Eleitorais* (TREs), which are directly responsible for overseeing the electoral process in the states and municipalities. While not an autonomous State power, the electoral justice authority is considered a specialised judicial body. It is the entity responsible for the administration of elections and for the resolution of electoral disputes.

The legal framework for voter registration is governed by the Electoral Code, TSE Resolution no. 23.659/2021 and art. 14, §1 of the 1988 Federal Constitution. Voter registration is continuous, except during election years when new voter registration (enlistment) and personal data updates are only permitted up to 151 days before the election. Updating of the register resumes after the election. The 1988 Constitution recognises three different situations regarding the legal voting age: from 16 to 17 years, voting is optional; between 18 and 69, voting is compulsory, which means that all those legally qualified must be registered; and over 69, voting is optional. The legal voting age is the same for all types of elections.

The voter register is permanent, and the registration model is active. A citizen needs to submit the required documentation in order to obtain voter registration ID within one year of turning 18 or one year after acquiring Brazilian citizenship. It is possible for 15-year-olds who will turn 16 by

the time of the election to register. Apart from age, there are additional requirements for voter registration, such as Brazilian nationality, electoral domicile, certificate of discharge or exemption from military service (for men over 18 years old) and possession of a birth or marriage certificate.<sup>2</sup> Voting rights are suspended if political rights are suspended (art. 15 of the 1988 Federal Constitution), in cases of multiple registrations, following the death of the voter and if the voter does not vote in three consecutive elections. It is possible to request enlistment if residing abroad, and the requirements are the same as for in-country registration.

The voter register is technologically advanced and, since 2008, includes digital biometric features. A digital voter ID smartphone app (*e-título*) was introduced in 2017. Either an official identification document with photograph or the *e-título* are required for voting. Short-term voter address changes are also allowed for general elections. This *voto em trânsito* (transit vote) is regulated by TSE Resolution no. 23.669/2021, which makes it possible to vote in a different municipality from that of the electoral domicile.

Voter registration itself is free of charge, but in-person registration involves indirect costs for the voter, such as transportation. In 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the TSE launched the *TítuloNet* portal for online voter registration. This relatively inexpensive initiative contributed to the surge in young voter registration prior to the 2022 elections (see below).

The TSE presents its own annual budget proposal to the National Justice Council for verification and approval. The budget proposal for the entire judicial sector is then forwarded to the Supreme Federal Court (*Supremo Tribunal Federal*) for approval. If approved, the proposal is sent to the National Congress, which is responsible for approving the state budget. For 2024, the total budget approved for the electoral justice authority was R\$11.8 billion (€2.18 billion). The body responsible for verifying voter registration expenditures is the Audit Secretariat, which is a unit within the TSE that carries out independent analysis and audit of the public accounts of the electoral justice authority. All electoral justice expenses are subject to independent audit by the Federal Court of Accounts (*Tribunal de Contas da União*).

There are more than 200 million citizens eligible to vote in Brazil. A comparison between the data on the electorate and the 2022 census shows that the figures broadly correspond for most age cohorts. Given the safeguards that are in place to prevent double registration (constant cross-checking of the register, monitoring of the register, and revision of the electorate),<sup>3</sup> this indicates a high level of voter registration (see Figure 1). While there is room for improvement, in particular by restoring the option of online voter registration, our overall assessment is that the voter registration system is generally efficient, with some important technical/security features (such as biometrics and digital voter ID), and adequately funded.

1 In Brazil, the electoral authority (TSE + TREs) is called *Justiça Eleitoral* and is a specialized judicial body responsible for electoral management. This paper uses “electoral justice authority” to represent this idea and this local perception of how elections are run.

2 Under Brazilian law, the marriage certificate can be used in place of the birth certificate as the basic identification document.

3 There are three different safeguards to keep the voter register up-to-date: (a) cross-checking (*deapuração*) of information which is automatic and carried out by the TSE on national scale, to remove voters who did not vote in the previous three elections and provided no justification, (b) monitoring (*correição*) of the register which is proposed by an electoral judge to verify errors or irregularities which may or may not result in a revision of the register and (c) revision (*revisão*) which is carried out, in cases of substantiated fraud, either at the electoral zone or municipality level.

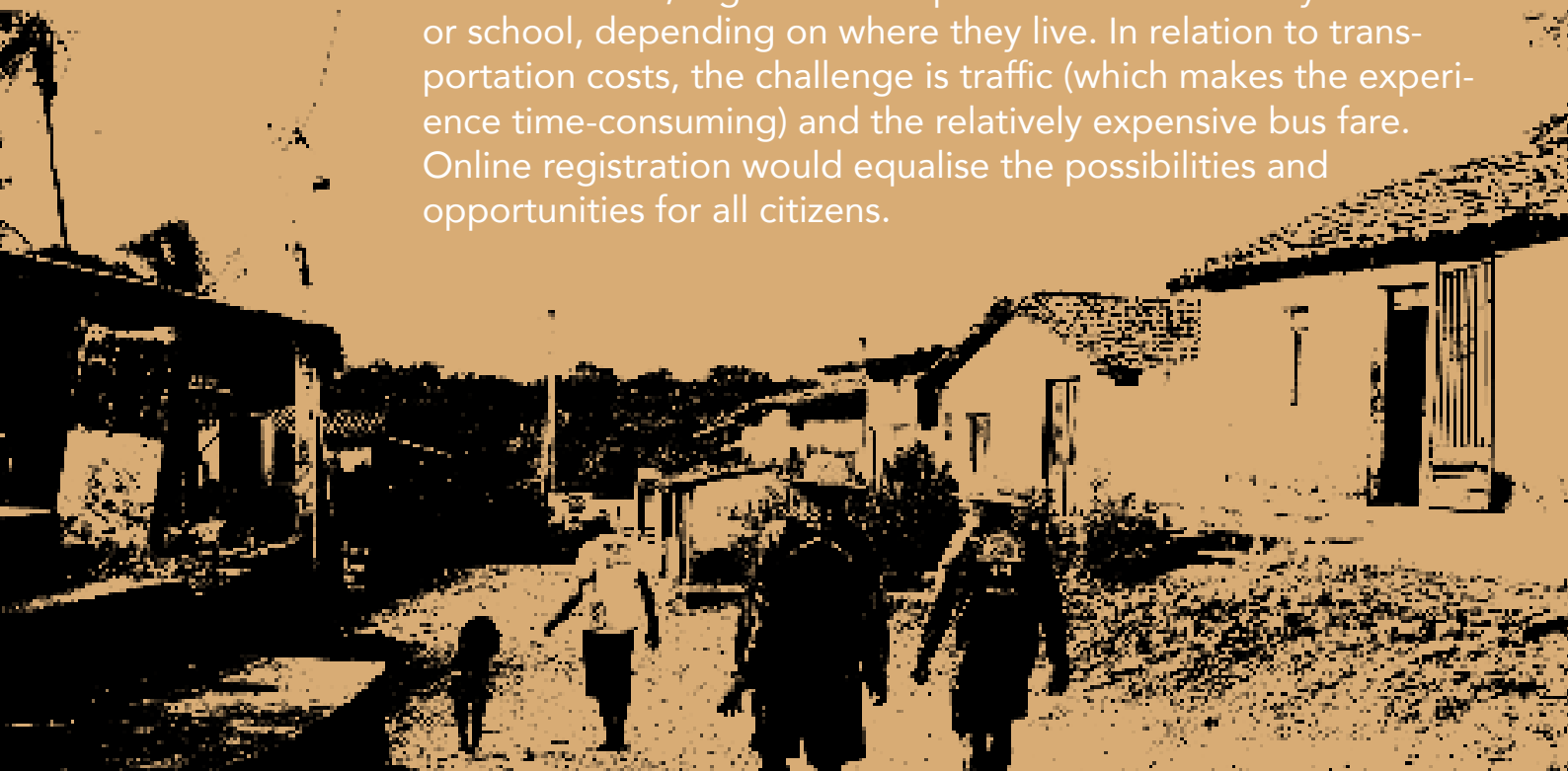
# Case Study

From 2020 to 2023, if you were a young voter, there were two possible avenues to register to vote: in person at the electoral zone service unit or online. Both processes required document evaluation by the electoral authority.

Maria turned 16 in 2022 and wanted to register to vote for the election that year. Appointments for in-person registration can be scheduled to avoid queues. If the document evaluation is positive, Maria could leave the unit with her voter ID (título de eleitor) in hand.

If Maria preferred to register online, through TítuloNet portal, the document evaluation could take more time, but the process was trackable through the system. If there were problems with the documentation, Maria would be required to present herself at the service unit. When the documentation was accepted, Maria's electronic version of the voter ID became available for printing or on the app (E-título), both of which served as valid voter identification.

In-person registration is not, however, the same for every young citizen. José also turned 16 in 2022, but lives in an isolated rural area. Residents of rural areas have to travel to the nearest electoral service unit to register. The journey requires taking a day off work or school, there are costs for transportation and often for food as the trip that can take several hours. After a wait of about an hour (José did not make an appointment), he left with his voter ID in hand, and then faced the journey back home. For urban dwellers, registration requires at least half a day off work or school, depending on where they live. In relation to transportation costs, the challenge is traffic (which makes the experience time-consuming) and the relatively expensive bus fare. Online registration would equalise the possibilities and opportunities for all citizens.



# Voter Registration Costs

Despite the provisions of the Access to Information Act (Law no. 12.527/2011), the budgets of the electoral justice authority are not in the public domain. In an interview for this study, the TSE Budget Secretariat confirmed that detailed information on the costs of the electoral process is not available. The only figures shared related to specific election expenses, such as those for poll workers, logistics, overtime and maintenance of electronic voting machines. For the 2022 election, the TSE only provided the cost per registered voter: R\$7.92 (approximately €1.37). This calculation, however, excludes important cost categories such as the purchase of electronic voting machines, investment in the electronic system, voter education campaigns, voter registration activities and the maintenance of the electoral register.

There is no clarity from the TSE, at least from an external or citizen perspective, regarding the actual costs of an electoral cycle. Annual management reports are available on the TSE website<sup>4</sup> for some, but not all, years (from 2004 to 2007, from 2014 to 2017<sup>5</sup>, 2020 and 2022). The 2022 report, the year of the last presidential election, provided a figure of R\$1.597 billion (€291 million) for the specific costs of that electoral cycle, with the “electoral register” accounting for 2.5% of the total activities/services costs, although the total budget for this cost category was not disclosed. In the 2020 Report,<sup>7</sup> 3.7% of activities/services costs were allocated to the “electoral register”, but again, the total budget allocated for activities/services was not made available.

By multiplying the cost per registered voter in the 2022 elections (R\$7.92, approximately €1.37) by the total electorate (156,454,011, excluding voters abroad), the total cost for that election is calculated, in Brazilian Reais at R\$1.23 billion (approximately €201.22 million). It is problematic that this figure does not correspond with the costs related to “elections” in the 2022 management report, which suggests that these two figures are based on different cost categories.

Adjusting for inflation, the 2005 management report<sup>8</sup> presents a budget of R\$400 million (approximately €65.57 million) for the 2005 referendum. For the 2006 presidential election, the same report projects a budget of R\$1.47 billion (€241.80 million) and the 2007 management report<sup>9</sup> projects a budget of R\$1.31 billion (€214.75 million) for the 2008 municipal election. The 2014 report<sup>10</sup> presents a budget of R\$1.15 billion (€188.52 million) for the presidential election that year. These reports provided the costs for presidential elections in 2006 (R\$1.47 billion; €240.98 million), 2014 (R\$1.15 billion; €188.52 million) and 2022 (R\$1.23 billion; €201.64 million), while 2010 and 2018 are missing. Apart from 2020 and 2022, “electoral register” costs or the percentages of costs are not provided.

Since 2020, the annual budget for the electoral justice authority (which includes the TSE and 27 TREs) has been published on another webpage.<sup>11</sup> The total budget approved for 2024 is R\$11.8 billion (€2.18 billion). This includes operational costs, staff costs, as

well as new machines, software development and resource maintenance for the TSE and the 27 TREs, subdivided by cost categories. Voter registration is, unfortunately, not one of the budget headings. For 2022, the year of the last presidential election, the total electoral justice budget was R\$10.2 billion (€1.8 billion). Given the total budget for 2022 and the specific costs reported for the 2022 election in the management report of that year, it emerges that the election accounted for 15.5% of the total electoral justice budget.

It follows that the cost per voter presented by the administration for the 2022 election (R\$7.92 or €1.37) is misleading, as it falls well short of the overall costs of elections. The budget of the electoral justice authority is ten times higher. Dividing these total electoral costs by the number of registered voters for the 2022 election (156.454.011 voters) gives a cost per voter of R\$65.19 (€10.69). If the non-electoral-year costs are added (the 2021 annual budget was R\$9.47 billion, approximately €1.55 billion), it emerges that the cost per voter for an electoral cycle is R\$125.62 (€23.25) – double the official cost per voter. It is clear, therefore, that elections in Brazil cost much more than the official cost per voter suggests.

The TSE does not provide a breakdown of costs according to electoral cycle stages, consequently, there are no costs available for voter registration. However, TSE interlocutors indicated that there is no resource limitation for voter registration.

4 “Catálogo de publicações,” Tribunal Superior Eleitoral, accessed July 3, 2024

5 For the years 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017, these reports are called “Activity Reports”.

6 “Relatório de Gestão 2022,” Tribunal Superior Eleitoral, 2023, accessed July 3, 2024

7 “Relatório de gestão fiscal do TSE – 2020,” Tribunal Superior Eleitoral, May 26 & September 24, 2020 & January 26, 2021

8 “Relatório de gestão fiscal do TSE - Exercício 2005,” Tribunal Superior Eleitoral, [no date], accessed July 3, 2024

9 “Relatório de gestão fiscal do TSE - Exercício 2007,” Tribunal Superior Eleitoral, [no date], accessed July 3, 2024

10 “Relatório de gestão fiscal do TSE - Exercício 2014,” Tribunal Superior Eleitoral, May 26 & September 25, 2014 & January 25, 2015

11 “Orçamento Anual,” Tribunal Superior Eleitoral, accessed July 3, 2024

The budget is, according to the TSE, well planned and additional funding requests made to the executive have never been denied. The only difficulty reported relates to human resources. There is a long-standing concern among TSE staff that various sectors of the institution, including the voter register, need more staff. For 2024, they indicate that staff from other sectors were relocated to temporary positions to work exclusively on voter registration at the TSE.

Regarding campaigns for the enlistment of first-time voters, the TSE conducts young voter enlistment campaigns every year, according to specific legislation (TSE Resolution no. 22.656/2007 for non-electoral years and Resolution no. 22.6575/2007 for electoral years). These campaigns are conducted on television networks,

radio, and in recent years, on social media. The TREs conduct state-level initiatives with special days focused on local communities, including the homeless population, where basic documentation, such as ID (Registro Geral, known as RG), is also issued. Costs for these voter education initiatives are also not available. As with other state institutions, the style of communication with the general public has not proved particularly effective and a more modern user-centred approach is needed.

It is recommended that the TSE provide specific costs for the different stages of the electoral cycle. Such information should be easily accessible to the public as it is necessary in order to determine the cost-effectiveness of new measures or policies, to provide transparency on expenses and allocations as well as for the development of

strategies for the future. As it stands, specific election-related costs are not readily available, and what information is available is neither consolidated nor available for every year.

Furthermore, the TSE should make public the real costs of elections and accept that overall costs are significantly higher than the figures currently disclosed. The institution should also revisit its decision not to include the annual electoral justice budget in the reported cost per voter, given that the ultimate goal of the electoral administration is to ensure efficient, genuine and transparent elections. Funding and budget availability are guaranteed, but there is a need for improvement in transparency and access to information.

Due to compulsory voting, registration rates across the population are high. The table below compares census data with voter register data according to age cohorts. The absolute number of citizens (census data) and voters (TSE data) correspond broadly for most of the cohorts, with the exception of the oldest cohorts (95-99 and 100+). The much higher figures for the voter register for this group suggests problems in reporting deaths.

Brazilian Demographic Census of 2022			Profile of the Brazilian Electorate by Age (TSE)		
Age Group	Absolute number	Frequency %	Age Group	Absolute number	Frequency %
0 to 4 years	12.704.860	0.02%			
5 to 9 years	13.749.440	0.08%			
10 to 14 years	13.674.961	0.29%			
15 to 19 years	14.375.942	0.65%	16 to 19 years	6.547.963	4.19%
20 to 24 years	15.466.463	1.22%	20 to 24 years	14.932.268	9.54%
25 to 29 years	15.469.723	1.89%	25 to 29 years	15.943.517	10.19%
30 to 34 years	16.172.791	2.88%	30 to 34 years	15.554.999	9.94%
35 to 39 years	16.072.170	3.88%	35 to 39 years	16.142.478	10.32%
40 to 44 years	12.704.860	4.9%	40 to 44 years	16.064.565	10.27%
45 to 49 years	13.640.112	5.7%	45 to 49 years	13.869.461	8.86%
50 to 54 years	12.598.581	6.2%	50 to 54 years	12.637.077	8.08%
55 to 59 years	11.569.106	6.72%	55 to 59 years	11.868.255	7.59%
60 to 64 years	9.944.389	7.91%	60 to 64 years	9.995.705	6.39%
65 to 69 years	7.876.232	7.96%	65 to 69 years	8.002.452	5.11%
70 to 74 years	5.858.536	7.62%	70 to 74 years	5.885.358	3.76%
75 to 79 years	3.847.379	7.62%	75 to 79 years	3.858.345	2.47%
80 to 84 years	2.475.030	7.62%	80 to 84 years	2.424.573	1.55%
85 to 89 years	1.329.203	7.08%	85 to 89 years	1.334.866	0.85%
90 to 94 years	579.729	6.73%	90 to 94 years	738.761	0.47%
95 to 99 years	165.178	6.77%	95 to 99 years	466.940	0.3%
100 years or more	37.814	6.26%	100 years or more	184.438	0.12%

Figure 1. Census and voter register data

#### Note

Frequency (%) is the share of the cohort related to the total population (either the census or the electorate).

By way of comparison, the following are some participation rates for recent presidential elections where voting is compulsory: Uruguay (2019) 90%, Argentina (2023) 77%, Paraguay (2023) 63%, Bolivia (2019) 88% and Peru (2021) 74%.

# Barriers to Youth Voter Registration

The traditional barriers to voter registration for young people in Brazil are the documentation requirements, transportation costs and, in the case of online registration, digital literacy. But in 2022 these barriers were overcome by a remarkable number of young voters (see below) as 35% of 16- and 17-year-olds registered to vote. For most cohorts, in particular for youth, voter register data largely matches census data, which means that the barriers to voter registration are not insurmountable. If these barriers are not deterrents, there may be another element that plays a role in keeping some young people from registering (the other 65% of 16- and 17-year-olds in 2022, for example). The research for this case study suggests that both a lack of information and disinterest in politics are the major obstacles to youth voter registration.

The documentation required for registration is any official identification document (except for a driver's licence), proof of address<sup>12</sup> and proof of obligatory military service (for men over 18 years old).<sup>13</sup> According to the 2022 census, the lack of documents such as birth certificates and ID cards affects

approximately 2.7 million people of all ages (2.59% of the total population). For in-person registration, transportation can be a major issue, especially for low-income youth, considering that Brazil has 5,570 municipalities but only 2,332 electoral zones, with some municipalities hosting more than one zone. Therefore, for people living outside urban centres, travel to electoral zone service units can be difficult and costly. On the other hand, young people in urban areas face mobility challenges, including long bus commutes in large cities, congested traffic<sup>14</sup> and high public transportation fares.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, working young people may need to take a day off to complete the voter registration process, a right guaranteed the Electoral Code (art. 48), although it is unclear to what extent private companies implement this measure.

In 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, online registration was implemented by the TSE through the TituloNet portal, which provided digital identification for voters and facilitated registration in compliance with social distancing. Brazil has high internet access rates (73% of the population

– higher for younger age groups), and the portion of the population that is digitally illiterate is small and concentrated in the over-60 cohort.

The online option helped boost youth voter registration in 2022 by overcoming the barriers of time and transportation, but only three out of ten 16- to 17-year-olds registered despite the most extensive voter registration campaign in Brazil's history (see below). The picture that emerges is problematic: most of the potential voters in this cohort were not interested in registering to vote. There are no incentives for young people to engage with politics, as evidenced by the lack of attractive get-out-the-youth-vote campaigns from political parties. For young voters in Brazil, voting is perceived as an obligation rather than a right to be exercised at the earliest opportunity. This explains why most civil society projects reviewed in the course of this research focus more on youth political participation and democratic citizenship than on voter registration: The biggest challenge for young people's participation in Brazilian elections is a lack of interest.

12 The list of possible documents that are accepted as proof of residence is broad: water or electricity bills, credit card bills, public health service registration, or even a simple declaration of residence in the absence of any other.

13 Every man must present themselves to the military service on the year he turns 18. Most are discharged and hold a discharge certificate. This is a basic document commonly required for any public interaction.

14 36% of Brazilians spend more than one hour per day on public transportation for routine activities. See Bruno Lucca, "36% dos brasileiros passam mais de 1 hora por dia em transporte," *Jornal de Brasília*, August 24, 2023

15 A single trip by public transport in Brazil costs an average of R\$4.60 (EUR 0.84), which corresponds to 0.33% of the minimum wage per trip. See Cristiane Noberto, "Passagem de ônibus pode aumentar R\$0,31 com veto da desoneração da folha, diz associação," *CNN Brasil*, November 24, 2023,



# Youth Voter Registration Initiatives

In Brazil, all three levels of the electoral justice authority are responsible for voter education. The TSE develops the campaigns to be implemented by the TREs. The TREs can adapt the campaigns and carry out regionalised actions utilising the Electoral Judicial Schools.<sup>16</sup> The schedule of actions for the social communication units of the electoral courts in electoral and non-electoral years is outlined, respectively, in TSE Resolutions no. 22.656/2007 and no. 22.657/2007, together with a monthly calendar of actions. For example, in electoral years, campaigns for the registration of 16- and 17-year-olds start in February, three months before the closing of the register. These resolutions are broad and do not include a detailed communication strategy. Also, they are almost 20 years old, and communication dynamics have changed considerably in the intervening period. Consequently, these resolutions are not strictly observed. The communication strategies of TSE and TREs vary considerably from one electoral cycle to another, in response to the communication needs of each electoral period. For example, the 2020 campaign focused on safety measures adopted for an election held amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2022 campaign had a civil society boost focusing on youth registration (see below) and the 2024 campaign for enlistment of first-time voters started only in March.

In recent years, the TSE, together with the 27 regional TREs, has taken some important actions in support of the electoral participation of young people. Since 2015, for example, the electoral administration has conducted

a Young Voter Week every electoral year to encourage the registration of 16- and 17-year-olds. This consists of TV and radio advertisements and social media posts by the electoral justice authority (TSE and TREs). Young Voter Week was particularly prominent in early 2022 when the action dominated the internet, resulting in a significant increase in the registration of young voters (see below). Another initiative was the national campaign *Bora Votar!* (Let's Vote!). Launched from September to December 2021, it received massive television and radio coverage in national broadcasts.

The advertising costs for the 2020, 2022 and 2023 voter registration campaigns amounted to approximately R\$629,580.00 (€118,120), R\$326,000.00 (€61,160) and R\$179,000.00 (€33,580), respectively. This represents 10%, 13% and 2% of the total budget allocated for advertising campaigns in those years. The youth inclusion campaigns in the years 2020, 2021 and 2022 cost R\$480,000 (€90,060), R\$129,500.00 (€24,300) and R\$89,500.00 (€16,791), respectively. This represents 8%, 4% and 1.4% of the total budget allocated for advertising campaigns in those years. These figures are not publicly available and were provided in interviews with the TSE. The higher 2020 advertising costs are due to the particular communication challenges of holding a municipal election during the pandemic. Although the resources allocated to campaigns for first-time voter registration and youth inclusion are significant in absolute terms, there is room within the overall advertising budget to increase the proportion dedicated to these vital

initiatives for Brazil's electoral future.

The adoption of online voter registration through the portal *TítuloNet* was another response by the TSE to COVID-19. According to the TSE, the annual maintenance costs of the system were R\$4,182,289.38 (approximately €774,000), but this figure does not cover staff salaries, third-party services, system development costs or the voter ID app (*e-título*). Created in response to social distancing requirements, the app effectively removed the barriers of transportation costs and time (including work/school leave) associated with in-person voter registration. Online registration was available from 2020 to 2023 but was regrettably discontinued in 2024 because it was considered necessary to register voter biometrics in person. However, technological solutions could be implemented to register voter biometrics after online registration. Face capture can be done via smartphones by the voters themselves and compared to other IDs uploaded to the system. Fingerprints could be captured at the moment of the first vote, as every voting station in Brazil has a fingerprint reader – it would only require a software adaptation for the recording of new data.

The decision to discontinue this service is perplexing, as it not only facilitated the process for voters and the electoral authority alike but was also relatively inexpensive in relation to the total budget of the electoral justice system. The TSE does not have data on the proportion of new voters registered online and those who registered in person.

<sup>16</sup> Each TRE has an electoral judicial school. These schools were created to engage citizenship and conduct voter education. They also serve to provide electoral and technical education to electoral officials.

Nevertheless, it seems that online registration played a crucial role in the significant increase in young voters registered in 2022, as the user-friendly app facilitated the registration of the computer-literate. The messaging on the availability of the app and ease of usage was an important factor in the dissemination of the app.

The 2022 voter enlistment campaign for first-time voters is a success story that deserves to be discussed in more detail. Initially driven by electoral authorities, the campaign's reach was significantly amplified through the active engagement of various CSOs, electoral stakeholders, public figures and celebrities. Despite the limited formal cooperation between the TSE and the CSOs, the unprecedented engagement

of civil society was a major success of the 2022 voter registration campaign. Interviews with some CSOs also highlighted an unprecedented level of engagement from the electoral administration in support of young voter registration. Further, it must be noticed that the re-election bid of the far-right president Jair Bolsonaro may have catalysed mobilisation.

Social media and influencers spearheaded the multi-organisational effort to enlist young voters in this election. For example, the CSO “Girl Up Brasil”, through a specially designed website<sup>17</sup> for voter registration called Olha o Barulhinho — a nod to the sound made by voting machines — compiled information and promotional materials including WhatsApp stickers, Brazilian

funk music and memes, effectively using youth language and culture. The organisation reported 92,000 redirects to the TSE website from their Olha o Barulhinho portal. Among the celebrities who endorsed the campaign were Anitta (singer), Juliette (influencer/singer), Mark Ruffalo (Hollywood actor) and Larissa Manoela and Mel Maia (young soap opera stars), along with well-known actresses Sophia Valverde and Paolla Oliveira. The list of other endorsers was extensive. Organisations such as *Politize!*<sup>18</sup>, *Lamparina*<sup>19</sup> and *Instituto Update*<sup>20</sup> also played significant roles in advocating for young voter registration. Interviews conducted for this study with various CSOs underscored the critical impact of their collective action, unified hashtags, consistent messaging and shared artwork.

Figure 2. Members of “Girl Up Brasil” in one of its mobilisations (Source: Girl Up Brasil)



17 Olha O Barulhinho: <https://www.olhaobarulhinho.com/>

18 Politize! : <https://www.politize.com.br>

19 Instituto Lamparina: <https://lamparina.org>

20 Instituto Update: <https://www.institutoupdate.org.br>

The 2022 campaign was a success. Compared with the 2018 general elections, voter registration increased by 6.21%, from 147 million to 156,454,011. This increase exceeds the population growth of 1.47% during the same period, according to the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística. The increase was particularly significant in the 16 to 17 age group for whom enlistment and voting are optional – a reversal of successive declines in voting by this cohort since the 2010 elections.

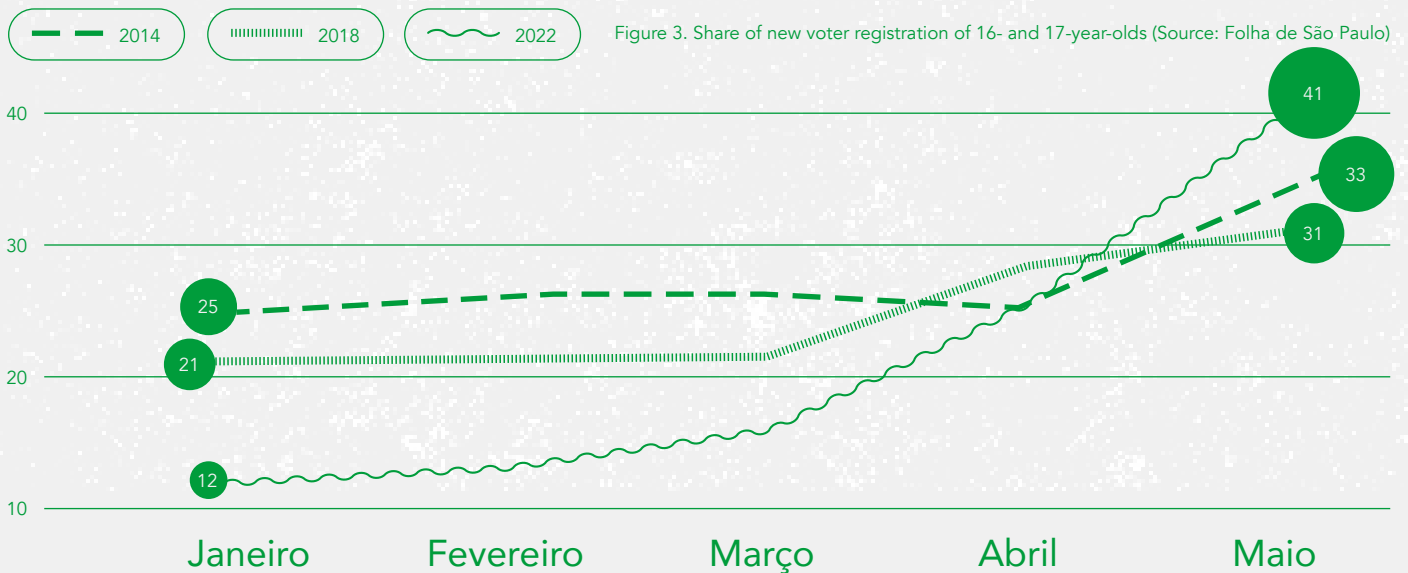
In 2022, at the closure of the voter register, 35% of 16- and 17-year-olds

had registered to vote, corresponding to 1.4% of the total electorate. Until January of that year, only 12% of this group had obtained their voter ID. The campaign started in March and ended in May, by which time 2.1 million people had registered for the first time, 50% more than in 2018. Moreover, 55% of these new voters were women, as highlighted by the Girl Up Brasil Special Report on the campaign numbers.<sup>21</sup>

Another factor in the mobilisation was the enhancement of the TSE’s social network profile (Instagram, TikTok,

Kwai, Facebook, Twitter, Telegram) and the use of language and style appropriate for young people. Interlocutors we spoke with believe this increase in first-time voter registration was due to this organised mobilisation, but it was certainly not anticipated. At the beginning of 2022, the media predicted that the number of young people registering to vote would be the lowest in 20 years.<sup>22</sup>

The graph below shows the proportion of new voter registrations among 16- and 17-year-olds in three presidential election years: 2014, 2018 and 2022.



In January 2024, the number of 16- to 17-year-old voters registered was already 14% higher than in the last municipal election (2020): 1,176,133 under-18-year-olds were eligible to vote in the 6 October municipal elections. This reverses the negative trend recorded by the TSE for the last two municipal elections. By way of comparison, in 2020, there were 1,030,563 registered voters in this age group. The TSE understands that part of this increase may still be linked to the 2022 mobilisation<sup>23</sup>, which seems to have built greater awareness among

young people about the importance of participation in elections. In light of the remarkable success achieved through collective effort and cooperation, the TSE is again inviting CSOs to conduct a united effort in support of voter registration for this year’s local elections. A dedicated website provides essential details such as dates, times, artwork, text and hashtags. In light of these positive results, co-operation between CSOs and the TSE should become standard practice.

While political parties have structures focused on youth engagement, their primary youth focus is support for young candidates, who then campaign for the youth vote for themselves rather than mobilising the registration of young voters. Generally, political parties have not been the primary drivers of voter registration campaigns. This suggests that there is scope for greater engagement from the parties in encouraging the registration of first-time voters and in promoting political participation in general.

21 “Girl Up Brasil’s Impact Report 2022: History Made by Girls.” Girl Up Brasil, accessed July 3, 2024

23 “Número de eleitores jovens volta a crescer em ano de eleições municipais.” Tribunal Superior Eleitoral, February 26, 2024

22 Carolina Nogueira and Gabriel Buss, “Número de jovens eleitores em 2022 é o menor em 20 anos,” Poder 360, April 9, 2022

# Lessons Learned

The broad, multi-organisational civil society campaign of the 2022 elections resulted in higher-than-ever rates of youth voter registration. The key factor in this success was coordinated action and messaging: different organisations resonate with different audiences, which widens the reach and increases the impact of the messaging.

The language and tone of youth voter education campaigns are crucial, as is the medium. Get-out-the-vote campaigns aimed at young people must engage them where they are and use the language and media they use every day. In this context, mobilising through social media and employing colloquial language, non-technical terminology and memes has proven to be an effective strategy. Also important was the involvement of public figures

(such as artists, celebrities, professional athletes and influencers) with youth appeal. Organic posts, which seem to be natural and spontaneous rather than paid advertisements, from such figures proved persuasive and appealed to young people from various backgrounds.

Online voter registration contributed to the significant increase in registration rates in 2022. It simplified the process, allowing people to register regardless of their location and without transportation costs or the need to take time off work or school. It should not, however, be the sole option, as there are barriers to online registration, such as digital illiteracy. The willingness of electoral authorities to conduct national-level campaigns and provide new voter registration opportunities is crucial for maintaining these results

over time. In the current circumstances, the effectiveness of voter outreach and education depends to a large extent on the commitment and competence of those responsible within the electoral authority. The campaigns, budgets and actions should be institutionalised, frequent and predictable.

In general, the non-participation of any demographic group in the electoral process diminishes legitimacy. The non-participation of young people in democratic life, however, constitutes a particular challenge both in the short and long term. Political apathy and disinterest in politics among young people can result in less responsive representation, poorer political services and a general decline in democratic stability.



# Recommendations

## Voter education and voter literacy

Voter registration should form part of a comprehensive voter education approach, which includes information on how to vote (especially where electronic voting is used), the electoral system (how votes are translated into seats), the importance of political participation and vote-buying protection. TSE Resolutions and internal guidelines should be reviewed and, where necessary, updated in line with modern communication dynamics. The Schools of Electoral Justice (at TRE level) should partner with state institutions such as the Ministry of Education to develop specific public policies to institutionalise voter education activities within the educational system (both public and private). Additionally, young people under socio-educative care should be included in special electoral education campaigns, including voter registration. Political literacy should be seen as a means of social change for these young people.

## Broad and multi-channel activities

The 2022 campaign should serve as a model for future coordinated campaigns, bringing together different organisations and the authorities in a common get-out-the-youth-vote effort using social media and “viral” campaigns. Public figures (artists, celebrities, professional athletes, influencers) should be encouraged to engage in get-out-the-youth-vote, voter enlistment and political participation campaigns. Voter registration campaigns using more traditional, non-digital means (such as billboards, public television and radio) should be maintained to reach the less digitally literate.

## Trans-parency and optimisation

The web pages of the electoral administration should be user-friendly, well-organised and information should be clear, comprehensive and easy to find. The overall budget with detailed cost categories should be published in a transparent format. Such information should be made available for all electoral years.

## Online voter registration

Online voter registration should be permanently provided. In a highly connected society such as Brazil, this option should be strengthened and promoted by the electoral authority, especially as it has the added advantage of easing the administrative workload. Technological solutions should be provided for the capture of voter biometrics, either by smartphone or at the moment of the first vote. In parallel, barriers to in-person registration should be addressed by offering free public transport passes for those with scheduled appointments at electoral service units.

## Political parties

Political parties should engage directly in get-out-the-youth-vote campaigns. They should give more attention to the political participation of young people, both in terms of voter registration and the wider issue of political engagement. This should not be seen as the exclusive responsibility of the electoral authority.

## The international community

The donor network and like-minded organisations should maintain and extend their support for campaigns, activities and research to enhance the electoral participation of young people by empowering local organisations and civil society. Future funding should take these EDGE Foundation case studies into account.

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This case study was conducted by Transparência Eleitoral Brasil, bringing in-depth local expertise and insight into the analysis. Transparência Eleitoral Brasil is a nonprofit organisation dedicated to advancing democracy and fostering democratic practices across institutions and civil society. In collaboration with partners throughout Latin America, the organisation develops projects that strengthen democratic integrity, promote these values, and reinforce a shared commitment to democracy.

Guided by the belief that democracy is a cornerstone of society, Transparência Eleitoral Brasil mobilises individuals and institutions interested in its promotion. By combining technical expertise with scientific insight, it contributes to addressing democratic challenges and proposing effective solutions. Through collective and collaborative action, the organisation works to build sustainable paths for the promotion and enhancement of democratic integrity—both within institutional frameworks and throughout society as a whole.

Authors:

**Ana Claudia Santano**

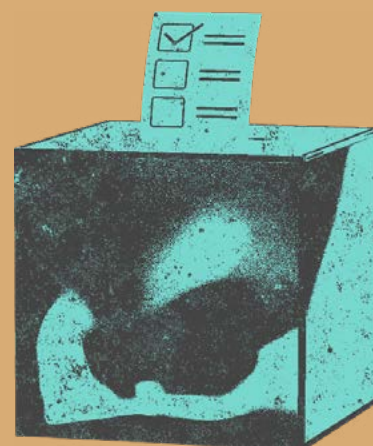
**Ian Batista**

**Vinícius Lopes Machado**

Editor: **Robert Adams**

Editorial Advisor: **Domenico Tuccinardi**

Research Coordinator: **Arba Murati**



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