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VICE NEWS

The U.S. Is Exporting Viral Anti-Vaxxer Content to Brazil

A single U.S. anti-vaxx website accounts for almost a third of all the misinformation found on social media in Brazil, where 13% of people don't vaccinate themselves or their children.

By [David Gilbert](#)

Nov 11 2019, 10:48am Share Tweet Snap



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A U.S. anti-vaccination website that was removed from Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube earlier this year has found a new home for its content: Brazil.

U.S. website Natural News accounted for almost one-third of all the misinformation found on social media and other websites targeting people in Brazil, according to a new study from the Brazilian Society of Immunizations and Avaaz, a non-profit human rights activist network.

"Of the anti-vaccination misinformation we investigated, which had been debunked by the most relevant fact-checking agencies in Brazil, much of the content was originally produced in the U.S. and has been reposted by Brazilian accounts," says the report, entitled "Is Fake News Making Us Sick?"

Natural News is one of the best-known anti-vaccination websites in the U.S., but in June it suffered a significant blow when **Facebook removed its account**, which had amassed 3 million followers. YouTube and Twitter also removed accounts linked to the website, and Google down-ranked it in search listings back in 2017.

But the Avaaz report shows that Natural News and other conspiracy sites continue to spread their anti-vaccination message about the dangers of vaccinations via articles that are translated into Portuguese and shared widely on social media in Brazil, as well as on encrypted-messaging platforms like WhatsApp.

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Looking at a representative sample of just 30 posts, the researchers at Avaaz found that anti-vaxx disinformation in Brazil had a massive reach.

Those 30 online articles and videos were shared on multiple platforms — YouTube, Facebook, and WhatsApp, and reposted on other websites — reaching at least 2.4 million views on YouTube. On Facebook, the videos were viewed 23.5 million times and shared 578,000 times.

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Along with articles originating on Natural News, the researchers also found content from a number of other U.S.-based sites, including GreenMedInfo, VacTruth, Conspiracy Club, and Stop Mandatory Vaccination. Most of the articles have been translated word-for-word from English into Portuguese without mistakes, suggesting this was not an automated process.

The researchers also surveyed Brazilians about their attitudes to vaccinations, and found that 13 percent of those interviewed failed to vaccinate themselves or a child under their care.

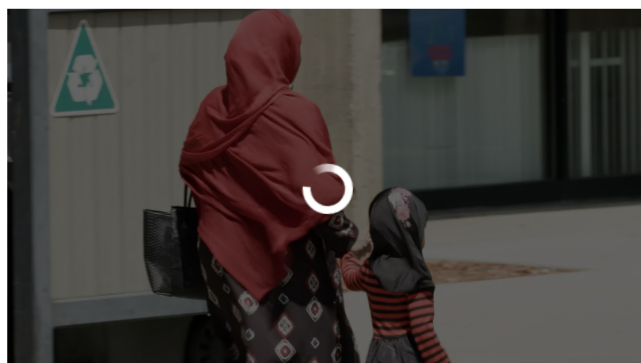
When asked why they didn't vaccinate, 57 percent gave a reason that is factually inaccurate, like the belief that vaccines increase the chances of having serious side effects, or that vaccines are not necessary. The World Health Organization has labeled both those claims as misinformation.

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Almost 50 percent of people said their main source of information about vaccinations was social media and messaging apps like WhatsApp.

The Brazilian market is particularly ripe for exploitation by those spreading misinformation: An Ipsos poll last year found that Brazilians were **the most likely to be duped by fake news**. The Avaaz report backed up this assertion, finding that 67 percent of Brazilians were willing to believe at least one inaccurate statement about vaccinations.

"Brazil is experiencing an epidemic of misinformation about vaccines," Nana Queiroz, Avaaz's campaigner in Brazil, said in the report. "This is not a political problem, it's a personal one and it's risking lives. Big platforms need to recognize anti-vaccination content is viral and contagious — spreading from country to country. That's why they must immediately begin showing corrections to people exposed to vaccination misinformation and help officials to spread reliable content across the globe."



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Cover: A health worker vaccinates a baby against measles in Rio de Janeiro, Monday, Aug. 6, 2018. Brazilian health authorities launch a nationwide vaccination campaign against measles and polio, two diseases that are showing up in larger numbers in Latin America's largest nation after being all but eradicated. (AP Photo/Leo Correa)

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