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Monitoring Report on Content targeting vulnerable groups, Information Manipulation, risks to freedom of expression and election integrity in the 2024 Election Period

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1. Introduction

The following report monitors trends of ‘disinformation’ and ‘hate speech’¹, as well as the social media behavior of Election Management Bodies (EMBs) following the 2024 Indonesian election. This is the final report of a set of three reports covering different timeframes of the election period². The monitoring period spans from February 16th to March 20th, covering the critical phase from election day to the official vote recapitulation public result. By examining these trends, we seek to highlight the challenges faced in maintaining a transparent and fair election and to provide further insight in the developments of social media use during elections.

2. Digital Attacks

2.1. Information manipulation/disinformation monitoring

The creation and dissemination of mis-/disinformation prove to be common during big political events. Information is manipulated in favor of political leaders' political gains. During the monitoring period (16 February to 20 March), MAFINDO fact-checked 235 content and found it to be

¹ While we refer to the concepts of ‘hate speech’ and ‘disinformation’ in this report, they do not have any internationally agreed definition. Any restrictions on these types of speech must comply with the three-part test under Article 19(3) of the ICCPR.¹ The falsity of information is not per se a basis for restrictions unless it is connected to one of the legitimate aims listed in the three-part test, such as the protection of public health or national security.

² The two other reports in the series can be found here: <https://koalisdamai.id/en/monitoring-report-on-hate-speech-information-manipulation-risks-to-freedom-of-expression-and-election-integrity-in-the-2024-election-period/>;
<https://koalisdamai.id/en/monitoring-report-on-hate-speech-information-manipulation-risks-to-freedom-of-expression-and-election-integrity-in-the-2024-election-period-2/>

misinformation. A majority of the content (74% or 174) is categorized as misleading, while 17% (40) is categorized as manipulated content (Fig. 1).

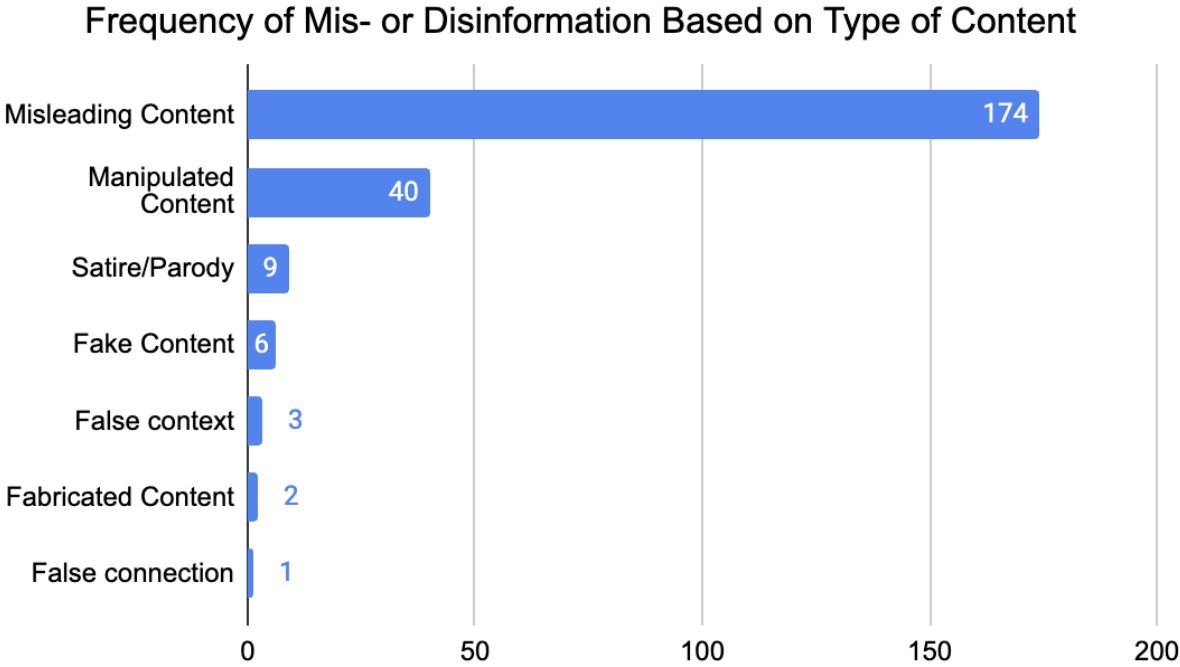


Figure 1. Frequency of Mis-/Disinformation Based on Type of Content (Source: MAFINDO)

In terms of dissemination, the spread of mis-/disinformation varies across a series of different social media platforms (Fig. 2). Most mis-/disinformation content is spread through Facebook (69 or 29.4%), TikTok (65 or 27.7%), Youtube (41 or 17.4%) and X/Twitter (35 or 14.9%). Followed by Instagram (10 or 4.3%), Whatsapp (10 or 4.3%) and Snack Video (5 or 2.1%). A total of 111 contents or 47.2% of the total found during this monitoring period is spread solely on video-based platforms. In addition, although not only video-based, platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X and Whatsapp also experience a

high share of video content. Therefore, there has been a continued increase in video-based mis-/disinformation, shifting from the traditionally text-based content. This makes fact-checking a more difficult and time-consuming task, given the complexities of audiovisual content.

Frequency of Mis- or Disinformation Based on Social Media Platform

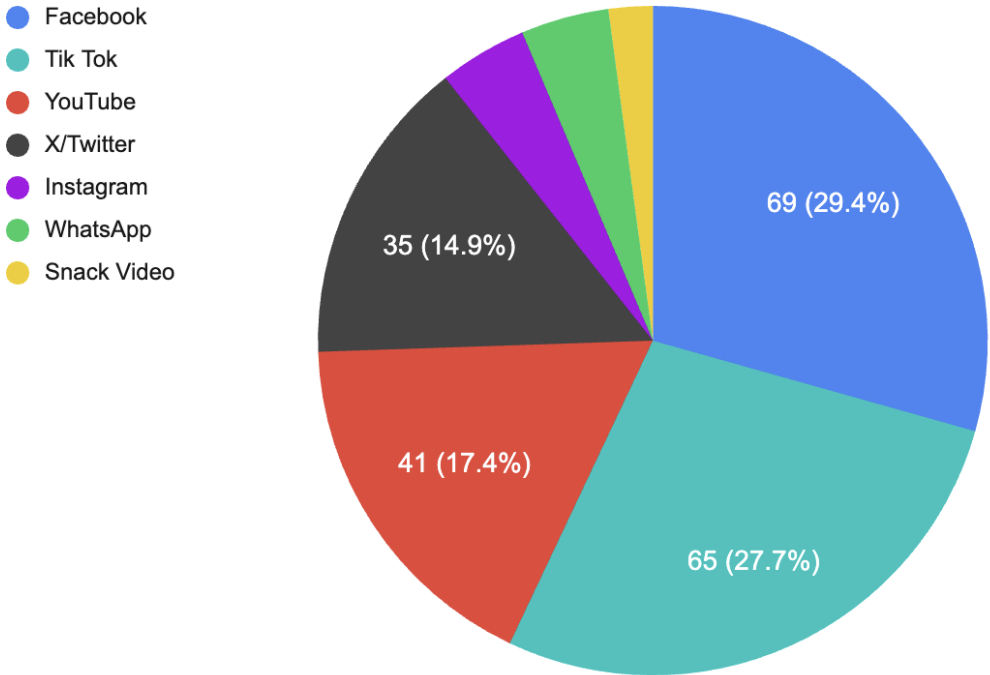


Figure 2. Frequency of Mis-/Disinformation Based on Social Media Platform (Source: MAFINDO)

2.2.1. Trends of Mis-/Disinformation

a) Disruptions and false reporting of election results

The election day occurred on the 14th of February, with the cooling period coming beforehand from the 10th to the 13th. All forms of political campaigning, including those online through social media, were ordered to

halt during the cooling period. On election day, multiple polling agencies such as Charta Politika, CSIS-Cyrus Network, and Indikator Politik, conducted quick counts, casting statistical predictions of voting results. Meanwhile, the official recapitulation of votes, also known as the “real count”, was conducted by the General Elections Commission of Indonesia (KPU), officially announcing the results on March 20th. To ensure high transparency, the KPU developed an online system called “Sirekap” for publicly collecting and publishing vote counts in real-time. However, this system widely suffered errors in the conversion of voting results from polling stations, as well as in verifying data. Due to this, KPU took down public access to view “Sirekap,” causing confusion among the public and challenging the integrity of the recapitulation system.

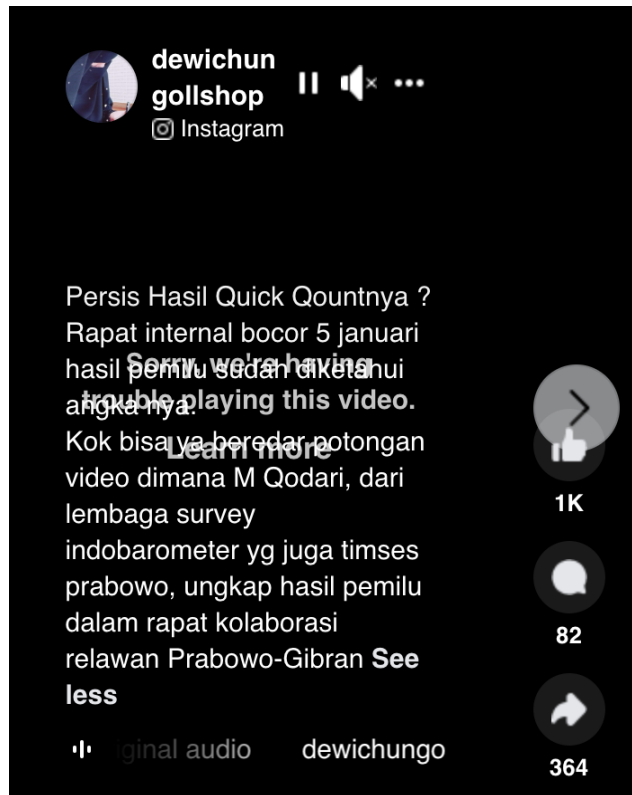


Figure 3. False claim of voting results (Source: turnbackhoax.id, <https://cekfakta.com/focus/16375>)

[Incident 1](#): Misleading information regarding quick count spread widely. For example, a video posted on Facebook (Fig. 3) that received over one thousand likes and 364 shares claimed that the quick count results had been leaked beforehand during an internal meeting of a candidate support coalition, showing results very close to the ongoing quick count. The content insinuated the presence of fraud in the statistical quick count process due to the similar results found in both.

[SALAH]: Pilpres putaran ke-2 antara 01 dan 03, 02 didiskualifikasi

Publish date — 2024-02-29

Berita

Putaran 2 01 vs 03 Viral banget



Figure 4. False claim of second round voting (Source: turnbackhoax.id, <https://cekfakta.com/focus/16390>)

Incident 2: A video posted on Facebook (Fig. 4) that received over 24.7 thousand likes and 3.3 thousand shares falsely claimed that there will be a second round of voting due to the elimination of one of the candidates. The decision for whether a second round of voting is necessary would be possible after the recapitulation of votes have been completed, and if certain requirements are met. In reality, there was only one round of voting during the 2024 elections.



Figure 5. False claim of voting recapitulation results (Source: turnbackhoax.id, <https://cekfakta.com/focus/16413>)

Incident 3: Numerous posts would make claims of one candidate garnering more votes than the others, when in fact it was reflected differently by the official recapitulation done by the KPU. For example, a TikTok video posted

on Facebook (Fig. 5) that received over 33 thousand views, 1,198 likes and 538 reposts falsely claimed ongoing voting results.

During the monitoring period, MAFINDO fact-checked a total of 28 posts across various social media platforms that were found to be spreading false information about voting recapitulation results.

b) Disruptions to the electoral process

A series of posts made claims regarding disruptions to the electoral process, such as regarding its scheduled agenda. These posts attempted to challenge the perceived trustworthiness and capabilities of Election Management Bodies (EMBs).

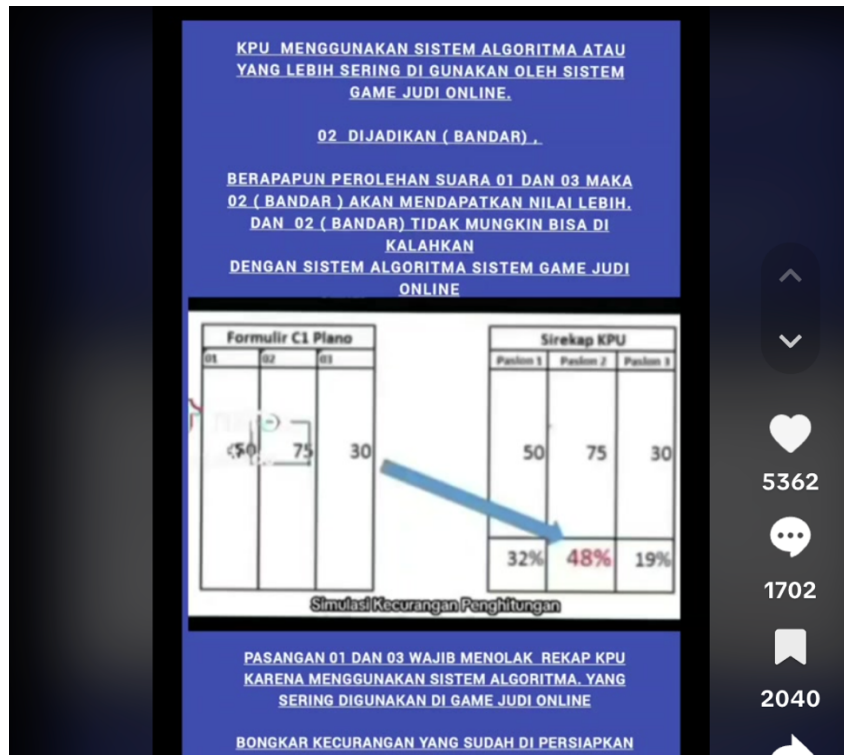


Figure 7. False claim of the use of online gambling algorithmic systems in vote recapitulation process (Source: turnbackhoax.id, <https://cekfakta.com/focus/16458>)

Incident 2: A post on Tiktok (Fig. 7) garnered over 5300 likes, 1700 comments, and 1200 shares, alleging that the KPU used algorithmic systems similar to those found in online gambling platforms to artificially inflate the vote count in favor of a particular candidate. This post aims to undermine the credibility of EMBs and erode public trust in their operations during the vote recapitulation period.

2.2. Monitoring of content targeting vulnerable groups

The Alliance of Independent Journalist (AJI), in collaboration with the Monash Data & Democracy Research Hub (MDDRH), has developed a hate speech monitoring dashboard for the 2024 Indonesian general elections³. This dashboard monitors posts on Facebook, Instagram and X (formerly known as Twitter) targeting vulnerable groups, including, Syiah, Ahmadiyah, Christians, Catholics, Jewish, Chinese Indonesians, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ individuals. The dashboard employs a natural language processing (NLP) model that detects toxic content with 89.4% accuracy. It categorizes ‘hate speech’ into five types: threats or incitement to violence, insults, attacks on identity, sexually explicit language, and obscenity/profanity.

In the period of 16 February 2024 to 20 March 2024, 8.2% of total data scraped, or 23,000 posts were detected to contain ‘hate speech’, with 2.8% (8000) being related to the 2024 elections (Fig 8).

³ 2024 Indonesian General Election Hate Speech Monitoring Dashboard, <https://aji.or.id/hate-speech-monitoring>

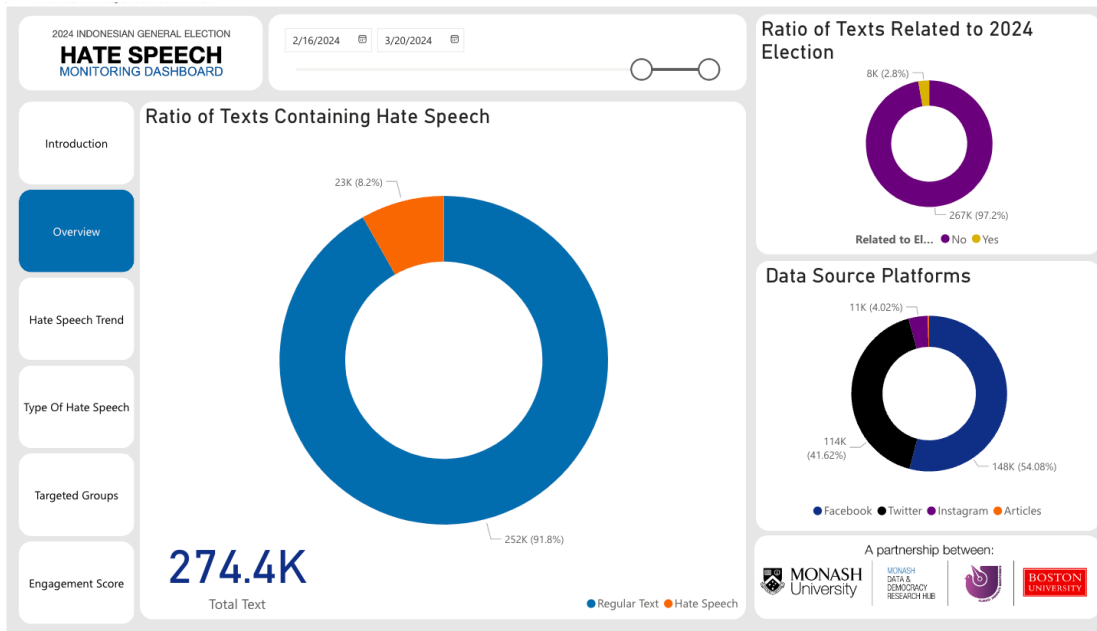


Figure 8. Monitoring dashboard: ratio of texts containing ‘hate speech’
(Source: AJI)

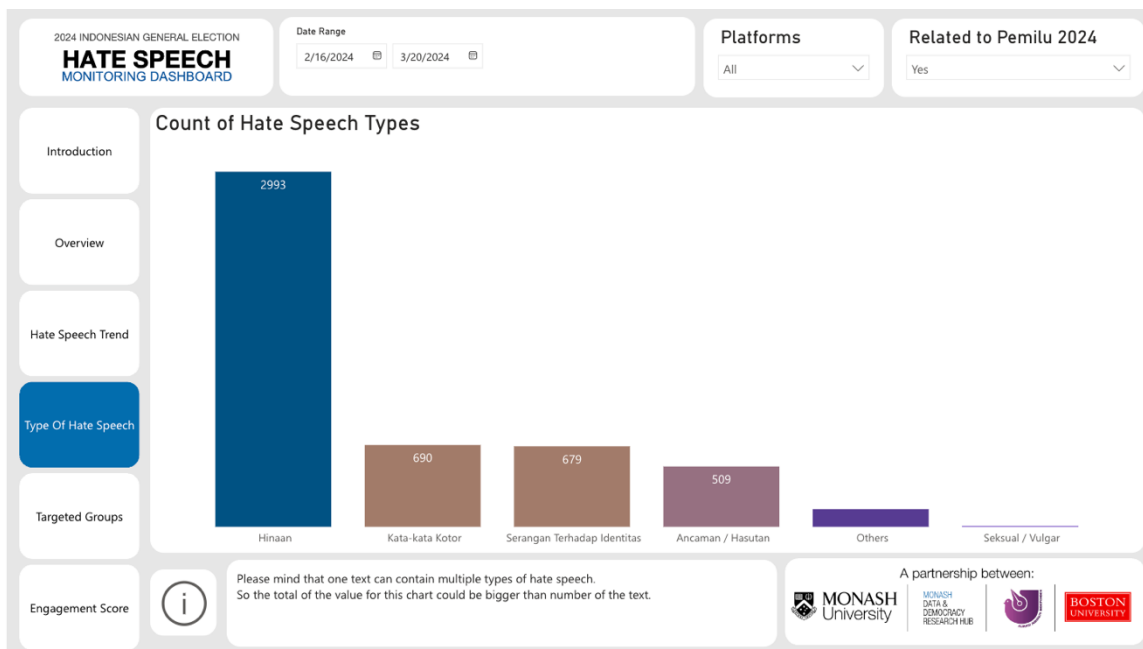


Figure 9. Monitoring dashboard: count of ‘hate speech’ types (Source: AJI)

The most common type of ‘hate speech’ found during the monitoring period are insults (2993), followed by profanity/obscenity (690), attacks on identity (679), and incitement to violence (509) (Fig. 9).

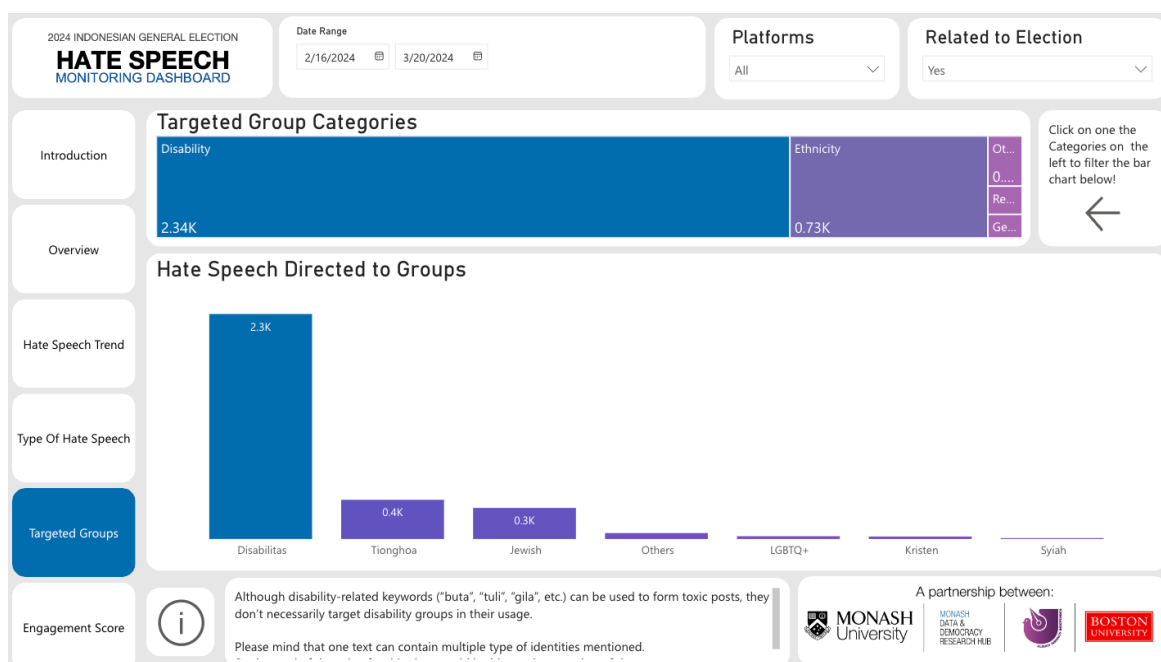


Figure 10. Monitoring dashboard: targeted group categories (Source: AJI)

The monitoring dashboard detected that people with disabilities are the biggest targeted group (2300), followed by Chinese Indonesians (400), and the Jewish (300) (Fig. 10). Most of the ‘hate speech’ content detected by the monitoring dashboard are found on Facebook (2248), garnering more than 20 thousand likes, 39 thousand loves, and 152 shares. 1157 tweets containing ‘hate speech’ was detected on X, with a total reach of 18 million, 108 thousand

likes, and 43 thousand retweets. On Instagram, 15 posts were detected to contain ‘hate speech’, garnering 19 thousand likes and 2835 comments (Fig. 11).

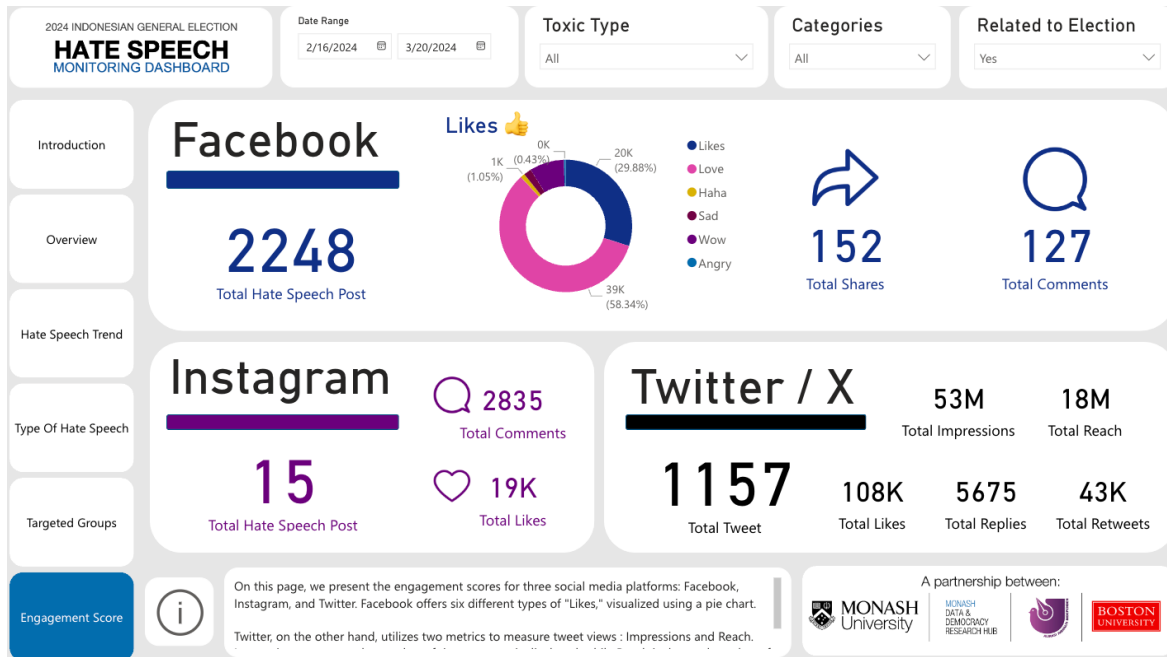


Figure 11. Monitoring dashboard: engagement score

3. Election education content after voting day up to results of vote recapitulation

Throughout the election period, KPU and Bawaslu have actively shared information regarding election procedures and regulations on their respective social media accounts, acting as hubs of information for the public. During the monitoring period, the Instagram and Facebook accounts of the KPU and Bawaslu garnered a total of 346.7 thousand likes and

reactions, as well as 29.9 thousand comments (Fig. 12). At the same time, KPU’s Facebook account experienced a growth of 4,500 new followers (1.44%), while its Instagram account added 14,900 new followers (2.45%). Bawaslu also experienced an increase of followers on both platforms, 1,400 on Instagram and 649 on Facebook (crowdtangle).

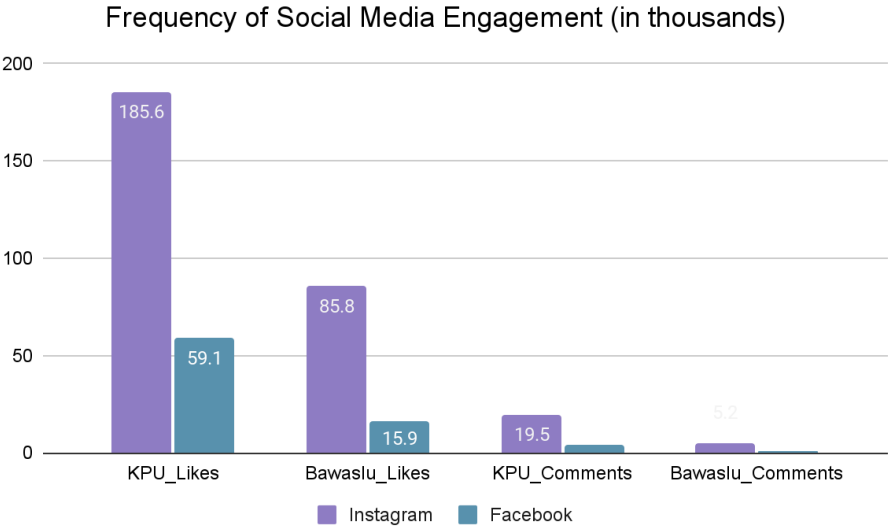


Figure 12. Frequency of engagement of EMBs on social media (Source: Crowdtangle)



Figure 13. KPU live streaming of vote recapitulation (Source: [Instagram](#))

KPU publicly provides the schedule for open meetings during the vote recapitulation process and also live-streams the final vote recapitulation on their Youtube channel (Fig. 13). On their Instagram page, Bawaslu shares a detailed breakdown of the election results determination process (Fig. 14). Bawaslu also transparently shares their findings from allegations of criminal violations throughout the election process.



Figure 14. Information of voting results process by Bawaslu (Source: [Instagram](#))

4. Conclusion and Key Recommendations

This three-part report series monitors social media use during the 2024 Indonesian election period, specifically focusing on the spread of mis-/disinformation and ‘hate speech’, as well as risks to freedom of expression. The monitoring period extended from before the official start of the campaigning period⁴, through to the announcement of the official vote recapitulation in March.

⁴ The 2024 elections campaigning period starts on November 28th, 2023 and ends on February 10th, 2024.

The key findings highlight significant challenges encountered throughout the election period:

Information manipulation during political events

Election-related mis- and disinformation persists leading up to the election year and all throughout the electoral process. Across the three periods of monitoring done from October 2023 to March 2024, we found that a majority of mis-/disinformation spread are categorized as misleading (413) and manipulated (176) content. During the monitoring period across three distinct phases of the electoral process, several critical trends emerged. In the campaign period, two main trends were observed: attacks on the legitimacy of candidates, and assaults on the electoral commission and electoral process. Even during the silent period, these trends persisted, indicating a sustained effort to influence public perception. Attacks on candidates and their supporters continued, focusing on issues related to performance, character, and criminal allegations. Furthermore, misinformation about the level of support for candidates remained prevalent. A notable shift was observed in the type of attacks on the EMB, moving from accusations of planned fraud to claims of violations and fraud in the vote counting process. In the post-voting phase, the nature of disinformation changed significantly. The manipulation of information predominantly involved false claims about vote counting results, , and allegations of fraud in the vote counting process. These findings suggest that electoral disinformation in 2024 differs from that

in 2019. Unlike in 2019, where the threat of disintegration was exacerbated by the rampant use of identity politics and exploitation of ethnic and religious issues, the 2024 elections did not prominently feature these threats. However, the intensity of hoaxes during crucial electoral phases indicates that disinformation remains a vital tool for influencing public perception and attitudes, posing a significant threat to the integrity of democratic processes.

Frequency of Mis- or Disinformation Based on Social Media Platform
(23 October 2023 - 20 March 2024)

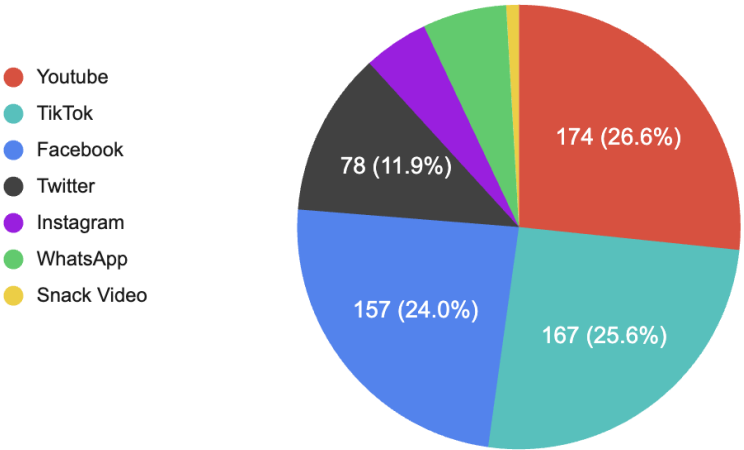


Figure 15. Frequency of Mis/Disinformation based on social media platform

There has been a noticeable shift from traditional text-based content to a growing spread of audio-visual and multimodal mis- and disinformation. This trend is evident on increasingly visual social media platforms, with 26.6% (174 posts) appearing on YouTube and 25.6% (167 posts) on TikTok (Fig. 15).

Moreover, the use of AI-generated content in spreading electoral hoaxes was a significant new trend observed during this election cycle. This included deepfakes, AI-written articles, and automated bots that spread disinformation more efficiently and convincingly. The sophistication of AI tools has made it increasingly difficult for the average voter to discern false information from legitimate news, thereby amplifying the potential impact of these manipulations.

Another critical observation is that electoral disinformation in 2024 has adapted to the context and needs of interested parties. The issues raised in disinformation campaigns have evolved in response to the different phases of the electoral process, demonstrating a strategic shift to maximize impact at each stage.

Proliferation of ‘hate speech’

The collaborative monitoring effort by AJI, Monash University, and Boston University during the 2024 elections revealed significant trends in ‘hate speech’. The monitoring period, from October 23, 2023 to March 20, 2024, identified insults as the most prevalent form of election-related ‘hate speech’, with 23.7 thousand posts, followed by identity-based attacks (6.5 thousand), obscenity and profanity (4.3 thousand), and incitement to violence (3.6 thousand).

The ‘hate speech’ identified were targeted towards various vulnerable groups, including 15.8 thousand posts aimed at the disabled community, 6.12 thousand posts directed at ethnic minorities (highlighting Jewish and Chinese), 1.19 thousand posts based on gender and sexuality, and about 300 posts targeting religious minorities.

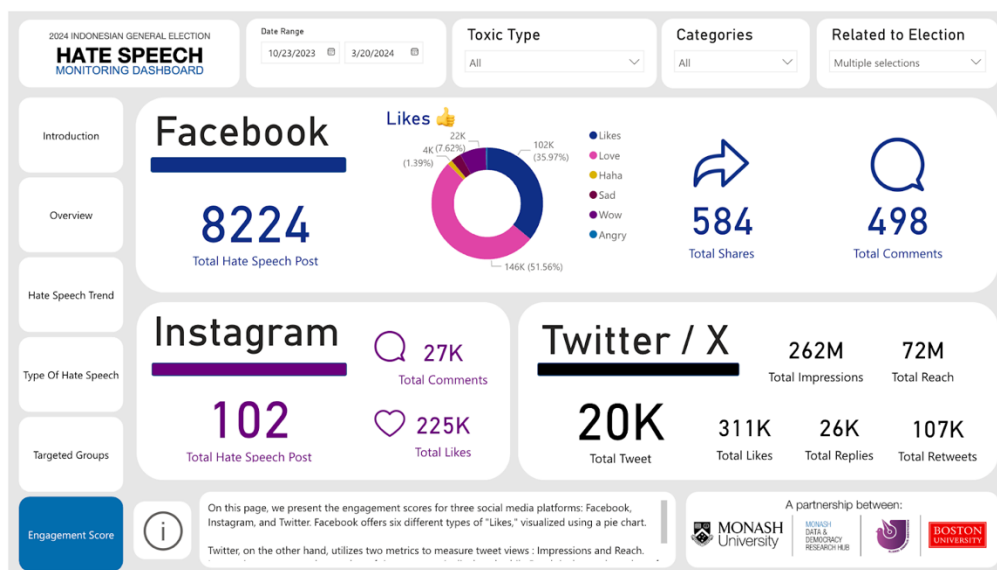


Figure 16. Social media engagement of election-related ‘hate speech’ during the monitoring period (Source: AJI)

Election-related ‘hate speech’ generated significant engagement across social media platforms (Fig. 16). On X/Twitter, there were 20,000 tweets categorized to consist of election-related ‘hate speech’, reaching an estimated audience of 72 million users. These tweets accumulated 311,000 likes and 107,000 retweets, highlighting the wide dissemination of such

content. On Facebook, 8,224 posts were identified, which collectively garnered a total of 248,000 likes and loves, along with 584 shares. On Instagram, 102 posts garnered 225,000 likes and 27,000 comments. These statistics underscore the substantial engagement that election-related ‘hate speech’ targeted towards vulnerable communities continues to generate on various platforms.

Use of social media for political campaigning and transparency in political advertising

Each social media platform has different approaches when it comes to regulations regarding political advertising. Meta emphasizes transparency, requiring ads to include disclaimers and storing data regarding ads in a public repository called the [Meta Ad Library](#). Data from the Meta Ad Library suggests that political advertisements on Meta platforms has largely surfaced prior to the start of the official campaigning period. In the month prior to the start of the campaign, a total of more than 3,7 billion rupiah across 23,732 ads. Meta also tagged the content according to the funding source. Political ads in favor of presidential candidates were mostly financed by supporter groups rather than directly from candidates or political parties prior to the campaigning period. The amount of political ads rose to more than 121 thousand, costing more than 23 billion rupiah from November to January.

On the other hand, TikTok prohibits political advertising on their platform. However, TikTok is heavily used by candidates as a campaigning tool to reach wide audiences. The traffic of political content on TikTok garnered millions of views throughout the elections.

The role of EMBs' social media as main source of information

Election Management Bodies (EMBs) such as the KPU and Bawaslu (the General Elections Supervisory Body), have used social media as an extension for public communication, fulfilling their role as the main source of information for the public regarding the electoral process. Throughout different stages of the electoral process, each EMB produced and disseminated content with essential information regarding the electoral process such as voter registration, voting procedure guidelines, as well as materials to promote accountability and fairness in the election.

Key recommendations

In light of the growing influence of social media during elections, it is essential to establish comprehensive measures to regulate its use, ensuring that elections remain fair and free from mis-/disinformation and 'hate speech', The following recommendations are aimed at various stakeholders involved in the electoral process, with a focus on fostering a positive and healthy online environment.

Election Management Bodies

- Developing Clear Guidelines for Online Political Campaigning: Election Management Bodies in Indonesia, such as Bawaslu and KPU, should work to expand and refine regulations on the use of social media in political campaigning. The Damai Coalition’s Code of Ethics for Election Campaigning on Social Media⁵ should be leveraged in order to establish a healthier online environment. To keep pace with the increasing use of social media as a primary campaigning tool, EMBs must provide clear rules on permissible activities and content, ensuring that political campaigns are conducted responsibly while preventing the misuse of platforms.
- Collaboration with Social Media Platforms: EMBs should establish partnerships with social media platforms to track and mitigate the spread of information manipulation and ‘hate speech. However, these collaborations must also prioritize the protection of freedom of expression, ensuring that measures taken to combat harmful content do not unjustly suppress legitimate political discourse. Clear guidelines and transparency in moderation processes are essential to maintaining

⁵ Joint Commitment on the Code of Ethics for Election Campaigning on Social Media for the 2024 Indonesian elections, <https://koalisdamai.id/en/joint-commitment-on-the-code-of-ethics-for-election-campaigning-on-social-media-for-the-2024-indonesian-elections/>

a balance between tackling harmful content and upholding freedom of expression during the election period.

- **Public Education Role:** EMBs should further optimize the use of their social media platforms to educate voters on electoral procedures, becoming a primary and reliable source of information. This would enhance public understanding and engagement during the electoral period.

Election participants: candidates and parties

- **Compliance with Electoral Regulations:** candidates and political parties must adhere strictly to electoral laws governing the use of social media. They should be held accountable for any violations, ensuring that their online presence aligns with legal standards.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Election participants should prioritize transparency in how they use social media for political campaigns. This includes being clear about funding and avoiding the spread of disinformation

Social Media Platforms

- **Combatting Mis-/Disinformation and ‘Hate Speech’:** In response to the high proliferation of mis-/disinformation and ‘hate speech’ on various platforms, social media companies must work closely with EMBs to ensure swift detection and removal of harmful content.

- Developing Clear Guidelines for Political Campaigning: Social Media Platforms should clearly outline and enforce policies regarding election-related content, ensuring that political campaigns do not exploit the platforms. These policies should provide transparent guidelines on permissible content, ensuring that campaigns use the platforms in a fair and responsible manner during election periods.

Civil Society Organizations

- Research on Evolving Tactics of Information Manipulation and ‘Hate Speech’: CSOs should focus on researching the developing nature of mis-/disinformation and ‘hate speech’, particularly with the ever-evolving applications of AI, and work with other stakeholders to adapt countermeasures accordingly.
- Public Education Campaigns: CSOs should lead comprehensive public education efforts aimed at improving media and information literacy, as well as critical thinking among voters.
- Defending Freedom of Expression: CSOs should work to defend and promote freedom of expression. This includes advocating for regulatory frameworks that protect speech while also addressing harmful content, ensuring that measures taken do not stifle legitimate discourse of political expression. CSOs should play a key role in holding governments and platforms accountable for any overreach that threatens this freedom.