

## Signs of hope on ending stigma and discrimination in Brazil: analysing the impact of HIV outreach campaigns and initiatives on the news coverage of Brazilian media

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## Background

Brazilian press has only recently started to recover from its decade-long silence on AIDS, especially in terms of covering the human and social side of the HIV epidemic. Studies have shown that from 2007 to 2013, major media outlets have very rarely dedicated headlines and front pages to this subject, including on World AIDS Day.

News on HIV and AIDS were almost always crammed in the middle of generic news desks and had mostly scientific and medical approaches. Oftentimes the portraill of individuals were made as tabloid-like stories, which fuel stigma and discrimination and also create an abyss between the epidemic and current young generation.



**VEJA Magazine (April 1989)** - Brazil's largest weekly magazine brings to its cover the agony of one of the country's most popular singers Cazuza. The titled "Cazuza: a victim of Aids agonizes in public" and the story fuelled stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV.

From mid-1990's on, the coverage of HIV by the Brazilian media starts to lose momentum, following what most would describe as a change in the profile of the epidemic—including its pauperization, feminization, heterosexualization, and juvenilization—, together with therapeutic advances, which started improving the quality of life and increasing the longevity of people living with HIV. This starting point of decrease in the media coverage of HIV in Brazil also coincides with the death of the last openly HIV-positive Brazilian celebrity, singer Renato Russo (in 1996), as well as the death one the most known AIDS advocate celebrity, Princess Diana (1997).

In the following years, the advent of social media has not only given birth to new platforms and new ways of producing news—and non news—content, but also generated significant transformations in newsrooms, including unavoidable cuts of specialized and more expensive professionals in detriment of generalistic and young workforce. Hence, to aggravate the issue, growing political conservatism allied with strong political and cultural polarization of the Brazilian society has led to unconstructive religion-based debates around sexuality, sex orientation, gender identity, racism, human rights—to name a few—and, as consequence, HIV and AIDS.

To counter these facts, since 2014, UNAIDS office in Brazil has invested time and resources to promote impactful communications initiatives to encourage a public and open debate about HIV and discrimination in the country. Several concrete initiatives to engage mass and targeted audiences through traditional and digital news media have been implemented, proactively contributing to rekindling the national debate on HIV through the media, paving the way for a change in the paradigm that still persists regarding the news media and HIV stigma and discrimination.



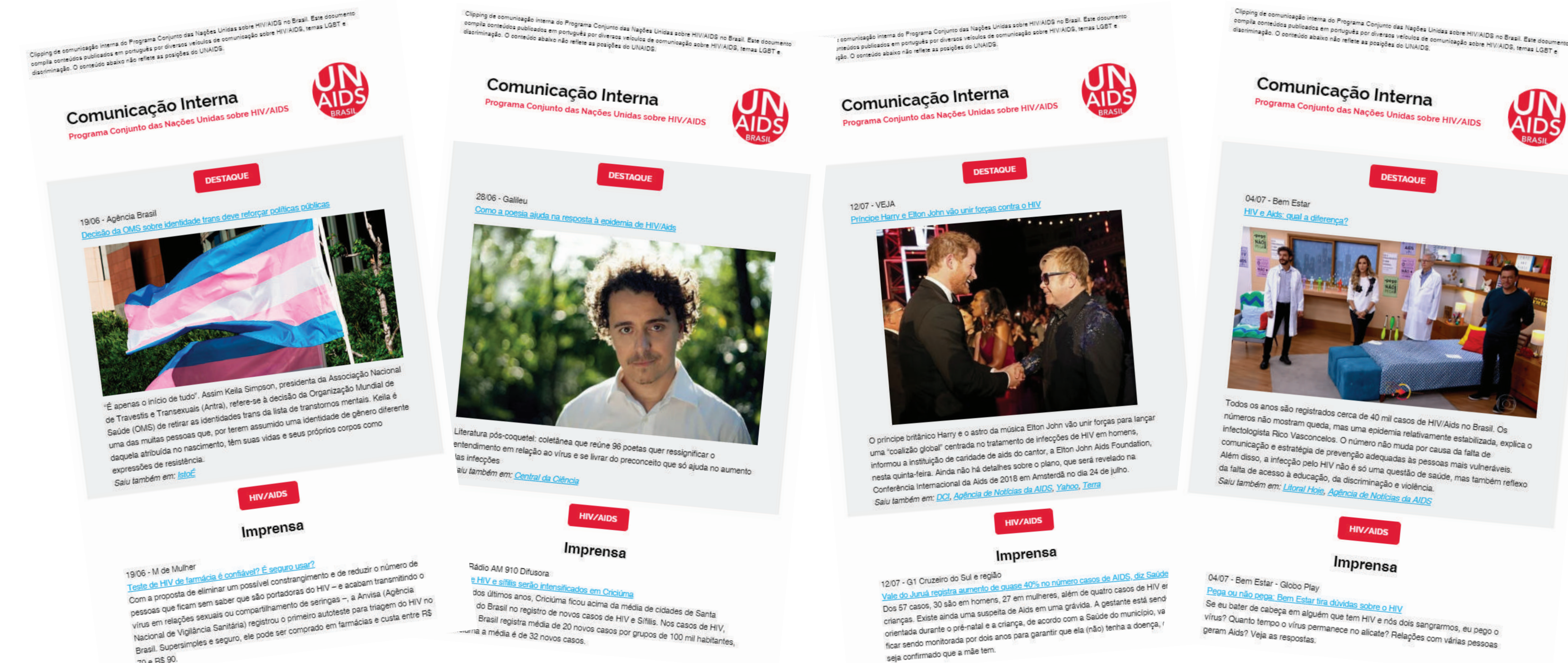
**VEJA São Paulo Magazine (June 2018)** - On the footsteps of Galileu, magazine (left), VEJA's local weekly edition for São Paulo portrays on its cover three long-term HIV survivors also highlighting a positive perspective on their experience despite all the barriers they have had to face. **Title:** "Living with HIV for decades—Scientific progress allows a normal life to 70 000 'paulistanos' who live with HIV, some of them for over 20 years".

In order to monitor the impact of this strategy, in June 2015, UNAIDS office in Brazil started to gather Brazilian news in Portuguese to use it as an instrument to help build and adapt its key messages and campaigns on prevention, treatment and zero discrimination to keep fueling the debate with the most appropriate tools.

## Methods

Since June 2015, news stories have been systematically collected every morning from an average of 30 different credible and reknown news providers divided into three categories: TV & radio, digital (new journalism) and traditional media (still better known for their print newspaper and magazine products).

Monitoring is done manually by cross-checking pre-programmed HIV-related Google Alerts with analytical targeted online searches on these different news providers. News stories selected through this method are then compiled in a chronological/relevance fashion and disseminated to specific teams at UNAIDS offices (Brazil, regional office in Panama and headquarters in Geneva) and to key partners (mainly government, UNAIDS cosponsors, and other UN agencies) as part of a broader daily news digest focused on HIV/AIDS and the rights of key populations.



Samples of UNAIDS Daily Clipping sent internally to UNAIDS offices and partners

After the collection and distribution of the daily news clipping, all stories collected from the selected credible news media providers are then classified either as negative (when discriminatory or pejorative content is used) or as positive (when they contributed directly or indirectly to the HIV response, providing important service, information and/or adequate terminology, or provided they were neutral and impartial when reporting data and human stories).

These results are fed into an Excel table, with pre-programmed formulas to facilitate weekly and monthly number updates. As graphic lines are automatically generated, describing the trajectory of news classified as positive or negative, UNAIDS cross-checks its main communications outreach activities and campaigns with these lines distributed on a month by month axis.

		TV		Impresso		Digital			
Dia	Data	Positivos	Negativos	Positivos	Negativos	Positivos	Negativos	Positivos	Negativos
Sexta	6/1/2018			1	2	2		0	3
Sábado	6/2/2018							0	0
Domingo	6/3/2018							0	0
Segunda	6/4/2018	1	1	1	6		7	2	14
Terça	6/5/2018			3	1	6	1	9	2
Quarta	6/6/2018			1	1	1		2	0
Quinta	6/7/2018	1	1	2	2		2	3	3
Sexta	6/8/2018							0	0
Sábado	6/9/2018							0	0
Domingo	6/10/2018							0	0
Segunda	6/11/2018		2	4	3	3	3	7	8
Terça	6/12/2018	2				1	4	4	5
Quarta	6/13/2018	1	1			7	4	8	5
Quinta	6/14/2018			1	2	2	2	3	2
Sexta	6/15/2018							0	0
Sábado	6/16/2018							0	0
Domingo	6/17/2018							0	0
Segunda	6/18/2018		1	6	3	10	9	16	13
Terça	6/19/2018			1	7	3		9	4
Quarta	6/20/2018			1	1			0	1
Quinta	6/21/2018	1	1	1	4	4	1	6	2
Sexta	6/22/2018		1	2		2	1	4	2
Sábado	6/23/2018							0	0
Domingo	6/24/2018							0	0
Segunda	6/25/2018		3	4	9	7	10	11	22
Terça	6/26/2018					5	1	5	4
Quarta	6/27/2018	1	2	1		9	2	11	4
Quinta	6/28/2018			1	1			2	0
Sexta	6/29/2018		1	2	1	1	2	4	3
Sábado	6/30/2018							0	0

Excel table where data is fed on a weekly and monthly basis to generate graphics for the cross-checking process regarding UNAIDS communications activities and campaigns.

Graphics are also confronted with other national key HIV-related dates, such as World AIDS Day (December) and Carnival (February-March), when there is a spontaneous increase in coverage due to public campaigns on HIV awareness and prevention.

## Results

In general, it is possible to infer that HIV-related stories have increased in the past 3 years. And that, on average, the number of HIV-related positive stories is 2.5 times greater than negative ones.

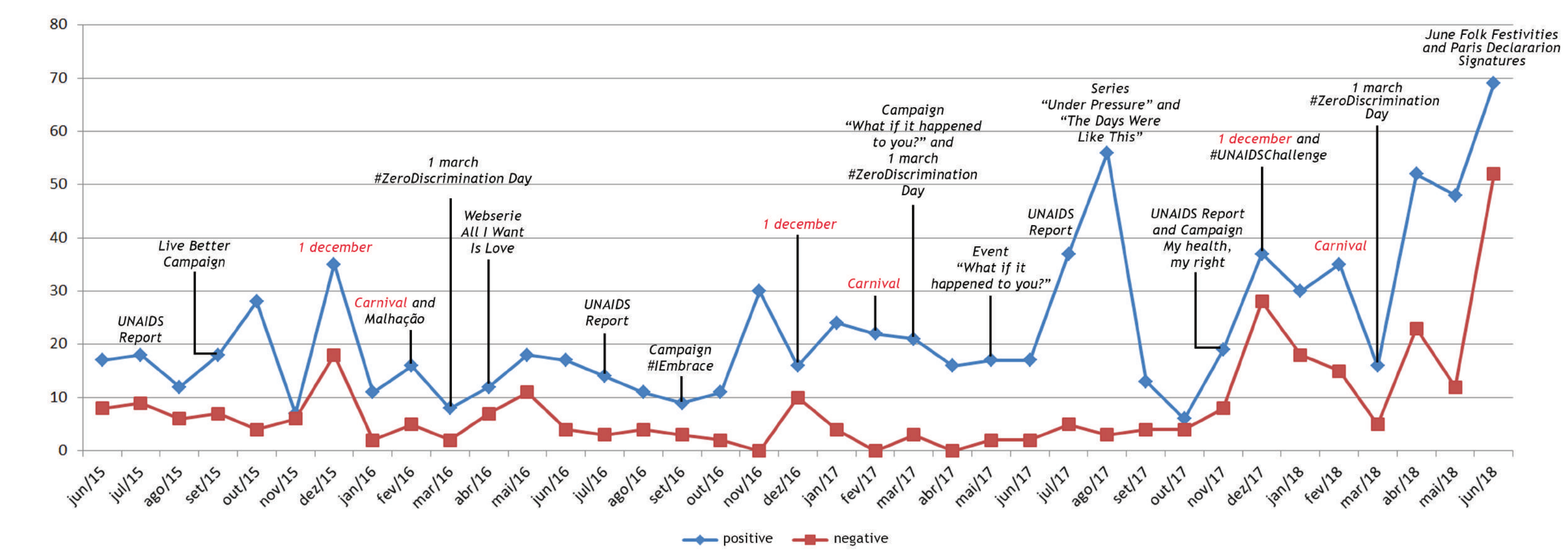
Out of 2.618 pieces analysed from June 2015 to June 2018, there were 1,878 positive and 740 negative pieces, according to the criteria described above.

The monitoring system identified increase in negative news stories occurring mostly around key dates for HIV awareness and HIV prevention campaigns, such as December 1 and Carnival time, which varies from February and March, depending on the year.

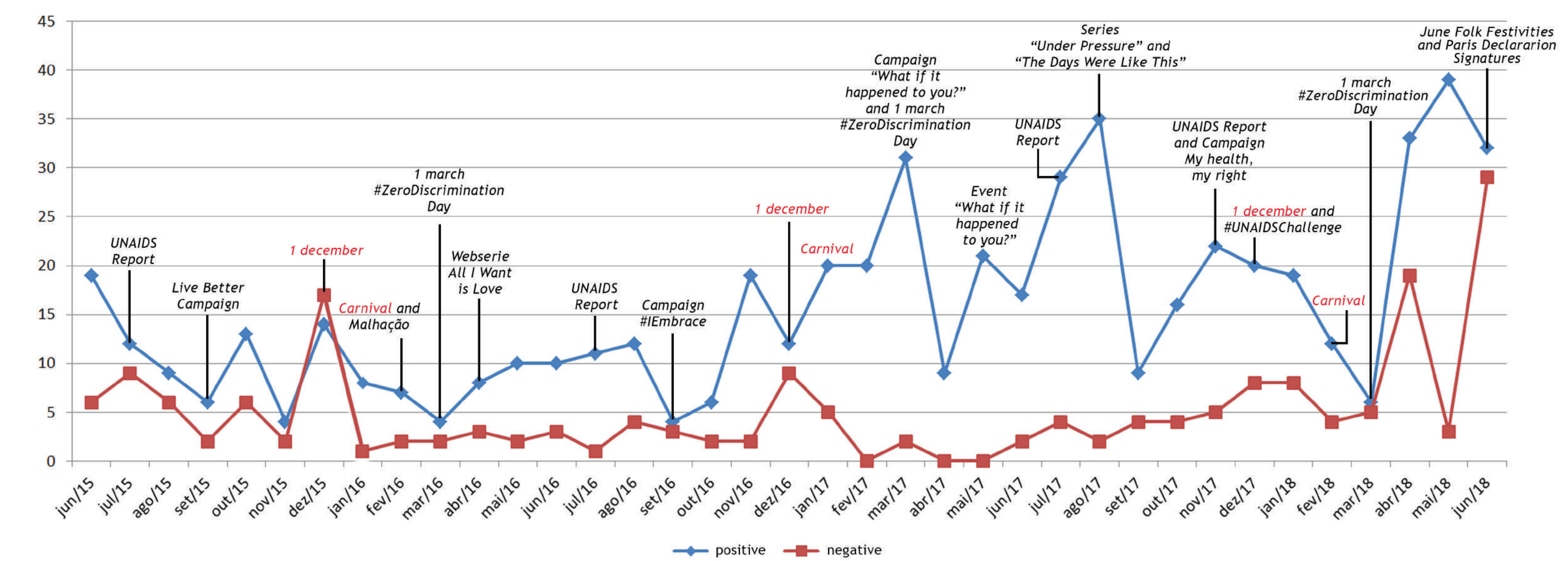
The graphics also show that there were peaks of positive news coinciding with some of UNAIDS Brazil key communications activities and campaigns in months that were, most of the time, not related to World AIDS Day or Carnival.

The daily monitoring of HIV-related news, when cross-referenced with the graphics, also allows us to understand and analyse the impact of fake news or stories that contribute to stigma and discrimination of people living with or affected by HIV (i.e., June 2018, when several HIV-related stories on “needle attacks” during a famous folk festivity in the Northeast region of Brazil).

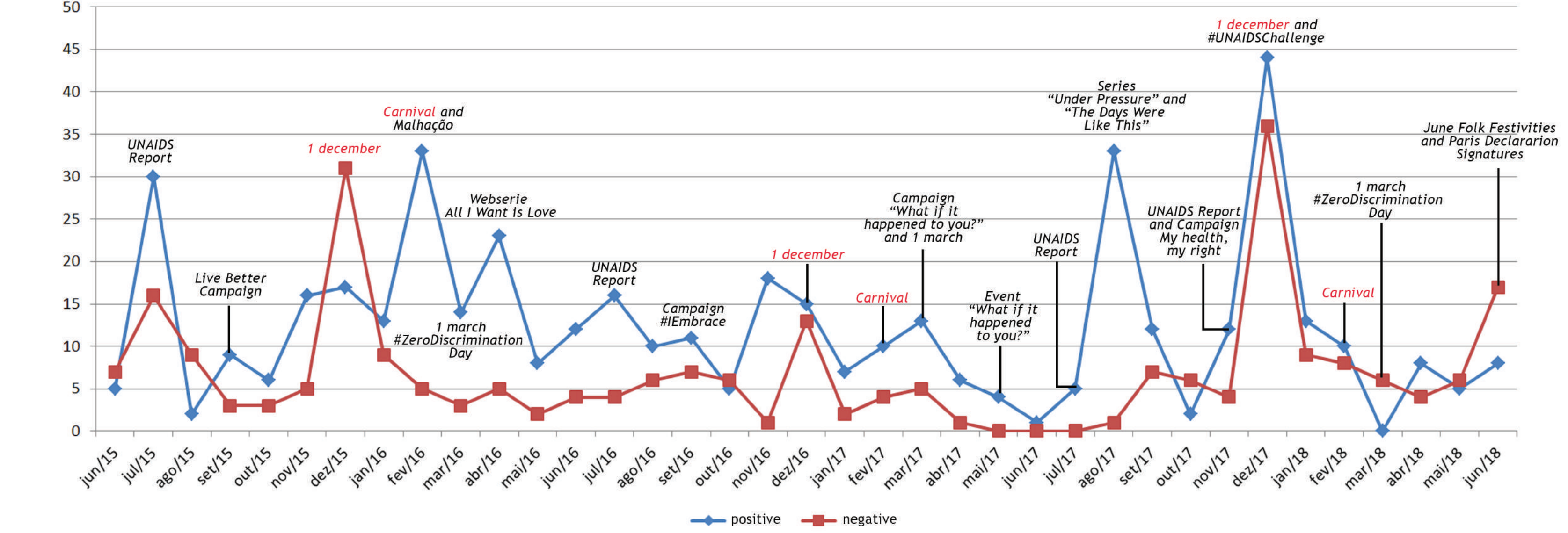
# Digital



# Press



## TV and Radio



## Conclusion

In the midst of the exponential growth of social media and the false impression that every person connected to the internet is able to produce and disseminate news, journalism and news media as a whole have a very important role to play in the response to HIV. Through ethical and objective curation of information, journalism has a moral obligation to provide the society with reliable and contextualized information so that citizens can participate more actively in social life in all its dimensions, especially when it comes to the empowerment of individuals for the realization of its rights as citizens.

Alongside other social instances (such as schools, community spaces, churches, home), the media, especially news media, can and must play an important role in molding behaviors, beliefs and world views. These dimensions, coupled with correct and qualified information about services and rights, are central to the HIV response, mainly when it contributes to changing the paradigm that still feeds stigma and discrimination against people living with, affected by or at the risk of HIV.

For this reason, this news monitoring system is a very useful tool to provide intelligence on how the media, and especially journalism, is fulfilling (or not) its social role. Some important conclusions include:

- 1) Digital and traditional print media tend to respond better to campaigns and key messages, producing more positive content on HIV and AIDS, even during key dates such as WAD and Carnival, whereas TV/radio outlets deliver peaks of negative news on key dates;
- 2) it is possible to observe an overall improvement of HIV-related coverage by the Brazilian news media, especially on digital and print, with a positive to negative ratio of: 3.7 to 1 in print; 3.4 to 1 in digital; and 1.3 to 1 in TV/radio;
- 3) Targeted media training for TV/radio appears as a very important and much needed approach, especially before key HIV-related dates so that these news providers can also follow the trend, avoid using old and discriminatory language, and could mitigate negative coverage.



Since 2014, UNAIDS Brazil initiatives and partnerships went from the support to groundbreaking communications products—such as the production of the comedy web series called *Viral*<sup>2</sup> (2014) from *Porta dos Fundos*, one of Brazil's most popular comedy group on YouTube—to the nomination as Goodwill Ambassadors of local celebrities with millions of followers on social media—actor Mateus Salano, singer Wanessa Camargo, and journalist Gloria Maria—, and to major partnerships with some of Latin America's largest media conglomerates—Globo and Grupo Abril.

## Acknowledgment

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