MediaWell

News Item

The Voter-Fraud Disinformation Campaign | Harvard Magazine

By Marina N. Bolotnikova
October 8, 2020

> How did mail-in voting, a practice that U.S. states have implemented for decades, become so polarized in a matter of months? A new report by a research team at Harvard's Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society argues that the myth that vote-by-mail is susceptible to widespread fraud has been propagated in a "coordinated disinformation campaign" by President Donald Trump and other Republican Party elites—not by the fringe internet actors commonly associated with "fake news." Instead, the authors explain, the disinformation campaign led by the president has been reported by mass media outlets as though there were a legitimate debate over mail-in voter fraud, misleading the least politically engaged Americans about the security of vote-by-mail.
>
> The study, which was led by Berkman professor of entrepreneurial legal studies Yochai Benkler, used data from 55,000 news stories, 5 million tweets, and 75,000 Facebook posts between March and August. The team's conclusions are consistent with those made in the 2018 book *Network Propaganda,* in which Benkler and co-authors Robert Faris and Hal Roberts argued that "Fox News and Donald Trump's own campaign were far more influential in spreading false beliefs than Russian trolls or Facebook clickbait artists. This dynamic appears to be even more pronounced in this election cycle," the paper explains, "likely because Donald Trump's position as president and his leadership of the Republican Party allow him to operate directly through political and media elites."
>
> […]

Source: The Voter-Fraud Disinformation Campaign | Harvard Magazine